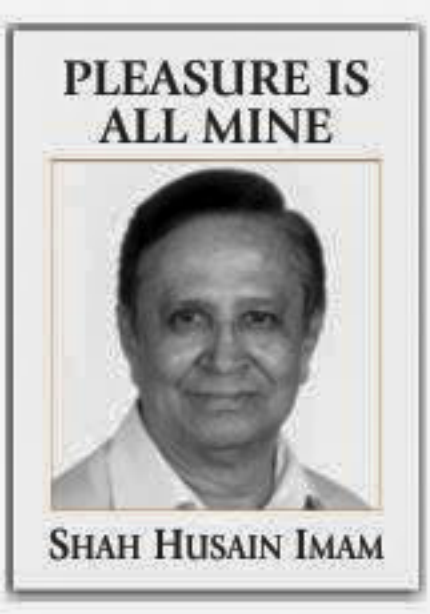


# Can the US president-elect stay the course?



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE

WHAT a silly question to ask, and may be unsettling too, for the world's greatest power! When Trump has been elected US president, has all but picked his transition team and is moving full steam ahead to his inauguration as a Republican president after a decade of Democratic rule, why this damper of a question? Admittedly, however, an issue of uncertainty dogs his steps. Why is there an eerie feeling about him? The possible answer appears to be that he is becoming a prisoner of his own vote-catching devices. He has tossed up to the public dreams and promises that are for the most part undeliverable.

People's aspirations have been so spiked by Trump's unexpectedly successful campaign that every instance of his under-achieved agenda will be held against him. The seething anger that he exploited to ride to power may recoil on him. Besides, he has some integrity issues to overcome from a position of power. Washington DC-based Professor Allen Lichtman, who has accurately predicted outcomes of US presidential elections for the last 30 years including the last one, has expressed his 'gut feeling' that Trump may not complete his tenure. He might be impeached for either 'doing something that endangers national security or because it helps his pocket.'

It is important to note that Paul Ryan,

Speaker of the House on whom Trump has to depend critically to legislate his difficult agenda, has not been on the same page with him since the primaries. He would not endorse his ticket initially and with his so-called lock-in sexual scandal, Ryan even refused to have anything to do with Trump candidacy. It is Trump's chief of staff Reince Priebus who had brought Ryan back on

ble' Trump and white supremacist Steve Bannon as his chief strategist and counselor, the value for a sobering Priebus-Pence-Ryan trio can be hardly overemphasised.

House speaker Ryan, on the back of Trump's CBS interview in which he spoke of deporting two to three million illegal immigrants with allegedly criminal records, told CNN that the focus should be on securing



PHOTO: AFP

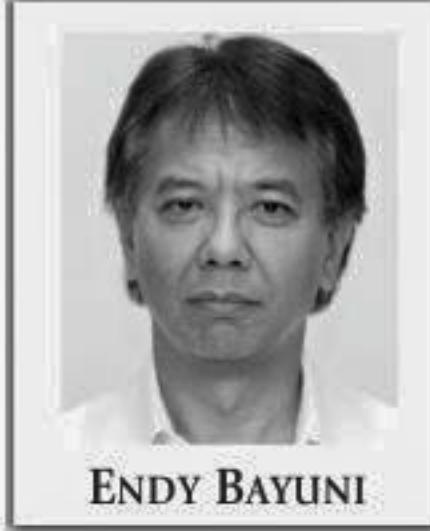
board. Priebus is credited also with having persuaded Mike Pence to accept the vice-presidential slot. And Pence is now the head of the transition team. So the equations among Ryan, Priebus and Pence are going to be a paramount balancing factor in Trump presidency.

Experts believe that with an 'uncontrolla-

the border, not mounting expulsions or putting a deportation force in place.

Discrepancies between Trump's promises and Ryan's plans may indicate that the president-elect and the future Congress do not yet know how they will go about implementing 'the mandate' that the voters have entrusted them with.

# Is the US electoral democracy showing signs of failure or fatigue?



ENDY BAYUNI

AUTHORITARIAN regimes and dictators around the world must feel vindicated by the just concluded presidential race in the United States, the one-time champion of liberal democracy that had the habit of exporting, if not imposing, its political system and the accompanying values to the rest of the world.

It is not so much the final outcome of last week's race as the entire democratic process that is being questioned or scrutinised in and outside the United States.

In the run-up to the November 8 election, spectators of American politics were served with the tale of a contest between two candidates, both with problematic backgrounds and flawed characters.

More negative revelations about the candidates emerged as the Election Day neared to raise serious questions about their credibility and competency of whoever is elected to lead the world's most powerful country.

The American media had rightly, if not unkindly, described this as an election where voters had to choose between the lesser of two evils. When that choice fell on Donald Trump rather than Hillary Clinton, there was more indignation, both at the outcome as well as the electoral process.

What went wrong with the system, many people asked?

Is the American electoral system failing that we should question its effectiveness and efficiency in picking national leaders? Or are we seeing signs of fatigue in the system that has evolved in the last two centuries?

To describe this as a systemic breakdown of the electoral process would probably be going too far, and would give

pretext for countries to conveniently discard or forget liberal democracy.

Maybe it is worth recalling that just eight years ago, the same system gave America its first black president in Barack Obama, who was re-elected in 2012. This year, the same system almost produced the first US woman president.

Still, the 2016 American presidential race, from the process to the final outcome, gives plenty of ammunition to those who doubt the ability of liberal democracy in producing great leaders. The timing could not be worse, coming as the US superpower status is waning, through a combination of its own failing strengths and the rise of China challenging America's supremacy.

Liberal democracy a la America had its strong appeals in recent history that it seemed to be the natural or only course for any nation to go. Theories were postulated about the first wave, second wave and third wave of democracy. There may not be a fourth wave, at least not until nations are convinced that this is really the best way to move forward.

Enter the China model.

Because it is a system that has proven efficient and effective, and certainly delivered the economic goods, it is now being touted as the better option than liberal democracy for developing countries looking for the right kind of nation-building model, including in the way they pick their leaders.

One caveat about the China model, however: Forget freedom and basic rights, the fundamental tenets that underpin liberal democracy.

What matters is that the system brings economic growth and development and raise people's prosperity. The suppression of some freedoms and rights - big or small is relative - is the price nations have to pay to ensure stability, a prerequisite to development. Freedoms and basic rights can come later, if at all.

In *The China Model - Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy* (2015, Princeton University Press), author Daniel

A. Bell shows how China introduced a meritocratic system that has produced leaders the nation can be proud of. The leaders that have come out of this system has consistently produced rapid growth rates that turned China from a large poor developing country to the second largest economy in the world in these last two decades.

The system still ensures periodic changes of national guards to prevent China from becoming a dictatorship. It offers a degree of predictability to ensure stability, a factor sorely missing in liberal democracies.

It is not a perfect system by any measure, but it is a model that has evolved in China out of the socialist system that the founding fathers of the People's Republic of China launched in 1949.

But if countries are not comfortable with the costs to freedom and basic rights that the China model entails, they should probably take another look at the US democracy, and consider 2016 as an aberration rather than a system that is failing, a system that is suffering from fatigue and needing reforms.

Americans need to look at the role of the political parties and the way they produced presidential candidates. Surely a country of 320 million people deserved better choices than Trump and Clinton.

How their track records and flawed characters got past the political screening system is simply baffling.

The US electoral system - including the primaries and the conventions - is simply too long and too expensive for any country to emulate. For that price, Americans should feel that they are being shortchanged by the system.

This year's voters' turnout, estimated at 58 percent, is another reflection of the growing public apathy towards the electoral system or the candidates it produces.

The 2016 American presidential race saw the ugliest and most divisive campaigns ever seen which inevitably would leave behind a sour taste, even if Clinton gave a gallant concessionary speech.

The US election has become one big

and long political show of selecting the most popular, but not necessarily the most capable candidate. One could compare it with American Idol, but even this reality TV show has been pulled out due to viewers' fatigue.

If this is the picture of democracy, then many nations around the world would want none of it.

The US electoral system actually has built-in self-correcting mechanisms such as the two-term limits and the various institutional checks-and-balances to prevent the emergence of a despot. The First Amendment, and the independent media, ensure that people will always have the right to speak up and to be heard, even if they have made the wrong choice.

But these may not be enough to restore the faith on liberal democracy in producing great leaders. This faith has further waned after the 2016 US presidential election. One could also throw in Brexit as another product of a democratic exercise in the Western world that has gone wrong.

In many countries, liberal democracy is no longer considered the best political system in selecting national leaders. It is not the only way forward. The China model has never been a more attractive alternative in some countries, including Indonesia, still grappling with nation building.

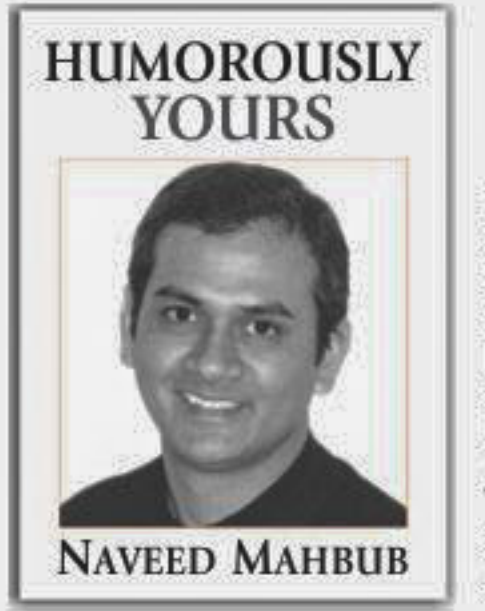
America can help restore faith in liberal democracy by carrying out the necessary electoral reforms. It needs to show once again that democracy is the best political system in selecting leaders because it is based on the principles of respecting freedoms and basic human rights.

Yes, America can be great once again. But it would probably be asking too much from the new elected president.

The writer is Editor-in-Chief, The Jakarta Post, Indonesia.

This is a series of columns on global affairs written by top editors from members of the Asia News Network and published in newspapers across the region.

# The Divided States of America



NAVEED MAHBUB

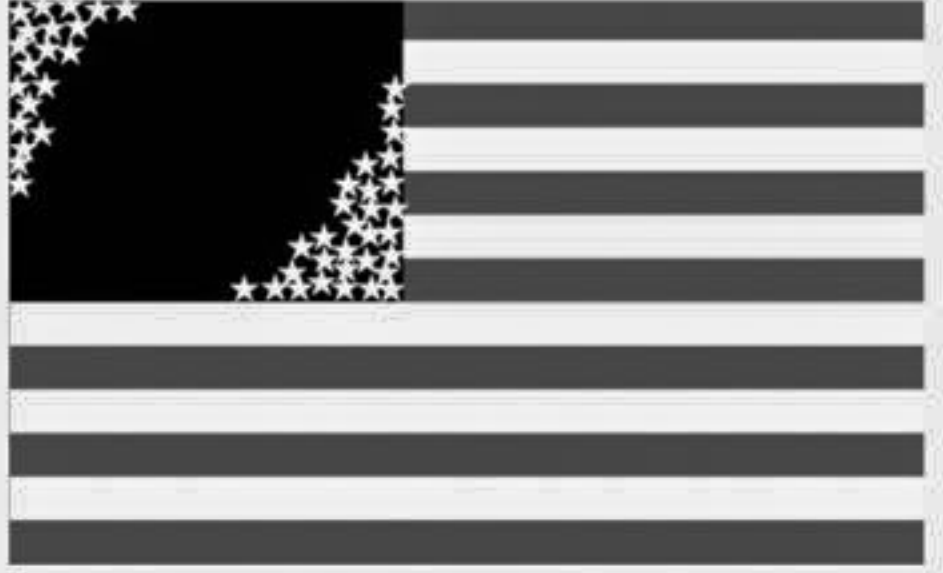
HILLARY Clinton was plagued by emails and Donald Trump by females. But the latter is now well on his way to *Make America Great Again*, starting with ensuring that the age old tradition of the White House is maintained by not allowing two Presidents to reside in there - Hillary and Bill Clinton.

The fierce battle for the White House is over. But like all conflicts, it has left many with PTSD - Post Trump Stress Disorder. Anticipating trouble, a convoy of trucks filled with sand act as barricades outside Trump Tower along Fifth Avenue in New York City. That's to keep out a mass of commoners from entering the building. Though many wished the trucks would keep the owner inside for four years. Very much possible - after all, it took just one sand truck to do the trick in front of Road 79, Gulshan-2.

Then starts the massive protests. They could have talked to us - WE know the business of protesting. How about take a few pros from here to the US on P-1 (Protest) visas (valid till January 20, 2017)?

But protesting what? Wanting to *Make America Sane Again*? That the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November has turned America into the Divided States of America? Or that Trump may start a new slogan, "*Make America Grab Again*"? Or that he may Modi-fy the US financial system by abolishing the 100 dollar bills (notes)? Or maybe he will put a dent on Silicon Valley by abolishing Uber and introducing Grab Cab.

But it's too late. It is all the result of a democratic process echoing the voice of many. It's true that the mention of the complex Electoral College makes me nostalgic about the simplicity of my beloved Alma Mater, Dhaka College. But nevertheless, through a democratic process, America has spoken. The surprise is not that Trump has been elected, but that so many Americans, both Liberals and Conservatives, believe in the bigotry he has



preached on the campaign trail, even if it were a mere 'sales' pitch.

Now let's see what he does.

First, the wall. The assumption is that it will start from the coast of California and on Trump's assumption that Mexicans can't swim. But the wall is likely to see a whole bunch of pole vault champions - Americans jumping over it to leave America. Speaking of pole vault, the border crossing point(s) can also be called Bena-pole. And who knows, to ease the congestion of the exodus (and two-way traffic), Bena-pole may also require a branch of Sonali Bank - with a tunnel of course.

What happens with Obama Care, the Iran Nuclear Deal, trade agreements with Europe, just to name a few? I just hope Trump Melania-ises some of the good work of his predecessors. How can we not hope? After all, President-elect Trump has been uncharacteristically gracious. Also, he is not without any precedence of going back on his word. But it is also not unlikely that he will, in the long run, likely to "stay angry, stay bullish" while Encyclopedia Trumpinnica keeps adding volumes. Heaven help us if that happens - and you thought October 31 was scary with Halloween? Brace yourself for a four year Halloween - Trick or Trump!

The writer is an engineer at Ford & Qualcomm USA and CEO of IBM & Nokia Siemens Networks Bangladesh turned comedian (by choice), the host of ABC Radio's *Good Morning Bangladesh* and the founder of *Naveed's Comedy Club*.  
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## QUOTABLE Quote



VOLTAIRE  
*It is difficult to free fools from the chains they revere.*

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS
- Halloween flyers
  - Doll cry
  - Candidate of the '90s
  - Halloween option
  - Tennis star Agassi
  - Twenty, in Torino
  - Halloween haunTERS
  - Zero
  - Continental coin
  - Wizard's concoction
  - Fourth-yr. students
  - Helen of "hitchcock"
  - Feared eel
  - Rio setting, to natives
  - Opening
  - Scare
  - Oz-visiting dog
  - Assist
  - Halloween haunTERS
  - Hayek of "Frida"
  - Harmon of TV
  - Halloween option
  - Maine birds
  - "Auld Lang--"
  - Halloween flyers
- DOWN
- Heston film
  - Passionate feelings
  - Trunk
  - Proofing mark
  - "Catfish" network
  - Verb for you
  - Mickey's mate
  - Shout on the set
  - Book makeup
  - Pottery oven
  - Halloween haunTERS
  - Spoken
  - Attempt
  - Dance in a pit
  - Newsstand buy, for short
  - Thorny plants
  - "Alien" director Scott
  - One followed by 100 zeros
  - Guitarist Chet
  - Does some modeling
  - Speedy
  - So far
  - Alto
  - Fellow
  - Devoured

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

8-14

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

B	L	I	P	S	C	A	D	S
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M	E	R	S					

BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott