

The Illusionist



SHABBIRI AHMED

DONALD Trump may form formidable attributes. He has united a beleaguered white population in a common goal to protect their fundamental right to be white. He is a vigilant guardian of our borders against undesirable non-whites, unattractive criminals, and essentially anyone who would not be on an Aryan Nation brochure. This is for our protection but also to make sure that America inches towards eugenic purposes. He is specific and focused, especially on his goals to prevent Muslims and Arabs from pursuing peaceful, productive lives if they come from countries whose stability have been materially undermined by the decades-long meddling of our government and indiscriminate drone dropping in this process.

Trump articulates perfectly the aspirations of bigots, misogynists, and the entitled weakly in nearly every public speech he makes, whether it be about foreign or domestic policy or just to harangue the press. His values are old-fashioned; children—in this case, the American people—should be seen and not heard, and even then, only seen if they have attractive figures. This applies mainly to women. He is a stern father figure at times, expecting his subjects to clean up their own messes as is the case with Puerto Rico, where people are still dying from lack of services, and potable water over three months after Hurricane Irma devastated the island. He also takes an active interest in the sciences, explaining the seeming lack of discernible climate change (homicidal

hurricanes be damned) with ease. He can even be conciliatory at times. In an interesting twist, he gave political sanctuary to a paedophile yet was gracious when the state of Alabama decided not to follow suit, and even congratulated the candidate who defeated his personal pick. And now the President can add magician to his list of enviable qualities.

On December 6, Donald Trump stood up in front of the world and made an entire people and thousands of years of culture disappear: a land that had been first clearly referred to in the 5th century BC when the Greek Herodotus mentioned a "district of Syria called Palaistin" (Wikipedia). He did this by waving his sceptre, and saying he recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, the country that is now, some would say, illegally occupying the Palestinian territory. If one were to go by international law, that is, in doing this, he has disavowed the existence of 5.8 million souls living between the river Jordan and the Mediterranean and six million scattered around the world. These souls



PHOTO: BERENSON SHALLOMOWSKI/AFP

No matter what Trump, Netanyahu and their supporters do, there's no denying that Palestine did, and does, exist. Not even a sorcerer like Trump can make it disappear.

identify as Palestinian. According to the United States of America, it has no capital and no claim to any portion of this holy place even though these people have been living there continuously even before the birth of Christ. A fact that is proven and indisputable. Jerusalem is considered the spiritual epicentre of the three great Abrahamic traditions, but by stating only Israel has a legitimate claim to it, Trump is telling the world that Christians and Muslims do not, that their traditions, beliefs and faiths have less or no value in this case, thus rendering them, by some estimation, irrelevant in the Holy Land.

Trump is also a hypnotist. It seems, convincing specific groups of Americans to repeatedly act against their own self-interests, and faiths. In recognising Jerusalem as only Israel's capital, he is putting one religion

above all others in the region. One would assume that this causes an ideological commotion for the Christian Right, part of the backbone of the Trump constituency, the world over. The Pope has been clear in his condemnation of Trump's decision, appealing for wisdom. He called for "an internationally guaranteed special statute [to safeguard] the freedom of religion and of conscience [and] identity and sacred character of Jerusalem as a Holy City" (Reuters). But many self-described Christians have paradoxically embraced the decision. Johnnie Moore, the informal spokesman for Trump's evangelical advisory board (how frightening is it that POTUS has such a board?) states: "This decision will be met by political praise and theological conviction... Evangelicals in every corner of the United States will be ecstatic" (NPR). And ecstatic they were. On

I have never considered the US an honest broker for the two-state solution in the region. Now, all pretence is gone. Is that good or bad?

No honking, please



BIRU PAKSHA PAUL

IT is my great pleasure to be back in Dhaka for professional purposes after having lived overseas for two decades. Staying at my brother's home in Mohammapur, I had the luxury of time to choose a peaceful place to live in, where I could be productive over my two-year stint in Bangladesh.

I rented an apartment on the fourteenth floor of a newly built tower on Asad Avenue with the hope that noise pollution would not be an issue. Frustratingly though, I experienced just the opposite.

It is so bad that car-piercing honking of buses and trucks wakes me up in the middle of the night. I took this pain as my fate. If millions of Dhaka dwellers can tolerate the endless noise emanating from buses and trucks, why can't I?

The High Court's recent verdict that there can be no honking or speeding after 10pm is a signal of progress; it shows that we have begun to realise the value of civil rules that must be in place if we want to be developed one day. Effective institutions are a precondition for development, not the other way around.

We failed to implement land reforms; we distorted market reforms. Can we at least ensure that the "horn reform" does not meet the same fate before we become a middle-income country? Simply raising per capita income isn't enough for development. Had it been the case, global migrants would gravitate only towards countries like Qatar. Real development comes with improvement in the quality of life that constantly strives to minimise pollutions of all kinds. And the High

Court's order is a significant addition to civilised institutions that care about health hazards in a bustling city.

Police officers patrol the roads and highways in all developed countries where 99 percent of drivers are duly licensed through adequate training. And the penalty for wrong driving doubles during the holidays when people tend to rush to their destination. Unfortunately, our transport sector leaders fail to even understand the justification of

punitive acts and hence always attempt to oppose "heroically" any righteous punishment for wrong driving. They define all accidents as common human errors. If these leaders win, can we never be a safe nation. Bus and truck drivers alone will take all responsibility for population control in Bangladesh as they kill thousands of innocents on the roads. The noise pollution caused by them is aggravating insomnia, hypertension, stress, and cardiac problems among urban dwellers.

During the mid-1990s before migrating to Australia, I joined a fancy driving school in Sukrabad with the hope of learning at least one skill that would be useful in securing my family's bread and butter overseas. The instructor advised me to use the horn whenever I need to go. But the need never ended. I do a sense of being the "king of the road".

Understanding my desperate need for a license, the school issued me an international permit which the

Sydney's motor vehicle authority brushed aside as trash, much to my dismay. They did not give a care in the world about an overseas license regardless of its "international" status. All they seemed to care about was how safely a person drives and whether he or she abides by the rules.

I grudgingly admitted myself into a driving school and the Australian trainer found all my maneuverings potentially dangerous. The first thing the trainer told me to do is to stop

honking—a habit I picked up during my driving practice in Dhaka. Bangladeshis usually get their license in Sydney in the first or second test. I, however, failed a glorious three times. I kept on changing trainers. My last trainer attributed my repeated failures to the wrong lessons I got in Dhaka. Over the years of my living abroad, I gradually developed the skills for honking while driving to be sheer pleasure—now that the bad habit of continuous honking was gone.

When I was a student in Binghamton, a city in upstate New York, my next-door neighbour was nice enough to give me a half-broken car to help us run errands within the town. After two months, I went to an automobile workshop to get the annual fitness certificate for the car and the mechanic diagnosed multiple problems for the vehicle—one of which was a dysfunctional horn. I argued that it did not need the horn anyway. But he insisted that the horn is fixed as it is required by law for the horn to be functional.

Our lack of care for the enforcement of rules stands in stark contrast to the above-mentioned examples. Dhaka will not turn into a peaceful city overnight. Buses in Mohammapur will continue to honk their pneumatic horns unnecessarily as they drive past Asad Avenue after 10pm. But at least now the drivers know that they will be penalised if caught in the act. Every law creates an incentive for proper behaviour if the examples of punishment are there for them to see. Thus the benefits of laws depend on how sincerely the government enforces the rules. The transport sector in particular can never be streamlined without a model of constant punishment—no matter the level of development the nation achieves.

Biru Paksha Paul is associate professor of economics at SUNY Cortland. Email: birupksha@psu@gmail.com



A WORD

A DAY

E VANESCENT
ADJECTIVE

Soon passing out of sight, memory, or existence; quickly fading or disappearing.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS	34 Football play start	10 Winged archer
1 Ipsi-	36 Crazy about	16 Goopy stuff
6 Left over	38 2006 Olympics site	18 Gunfight order
11 Howke of film	40 Top grade	19 Colosseum setting
12 Slip	43 Partners of radii	21 Unexciting
13 Pale brown	44 Light word	23 Greek group
14 Trunk	45 Mix	24 "Got it"
15 Lascivious desire	46 Small porch	25 Plant starter
17 Office bigwig		27 Perfect
18 Sink problem	1 Winter mo.	30 Omega precede
20 Whole range	2 Put away	33 March honoree, for short
22 Bird of myth	3 Dish with beans	34 Ticket souvenir
23 Drake, for one	4 Return to base	35 Empty
26 Love affair	5 Binary digits	37 Collars
28 Eric's cousin	6 Match part	39 Composer Rorem
29 Became wild charge	7 Done without charge	41 G1-entertaining org.
31 Formerly named	8 Dish with rice	42 Dupe
32 Barracks sights	9 Noted seamstress	
33 Ignored the limit		

BEETLE BAILEY

IF YOU CAN HOLD FOR A FEW MINUTES, THE GENERAL WILL BE WITH YOU

GREAT! WE HAVE A NEW GIRL IN OUR CLASS.

HER HOLD-MUSIC RECORDING IS BROKEN

SO HOW'S SCHOOL SO FAR?

GREAT! I FEEL A TIGHT GRAB!

ALL THE NEW GIRLS ARE PICKING UP WER.

ZOE! WON IS BECAUSE THAT GREAT!

BECAUSE THE SUI NOT PING NOT PONG ON ME!

I FEEL A TIGHT GRAB!

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

B	A	N	A	H	A	H							
E	C	H	O	A	V	I	A	T	E				
E	R	I	O	J	E	N	N	E	R				
S	E	T	A	P	A	R	T						
T	E	T	A	S	A	I	W	O					
P	O	R	T	E	R	H	A	N					
A	M	I	C	E	T	H	I	K	E				
P	H	O	E	R	B	I	T	E	S				
A	R	E	N	A	G	E							
A	T	O	M	I	C	A	C	A	D	E	M	I	C
R	E	H	E	A	T	I	O	G	N				
K	N	O	L	L	S	T	E	N	T				

BY MORT WALKER

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT