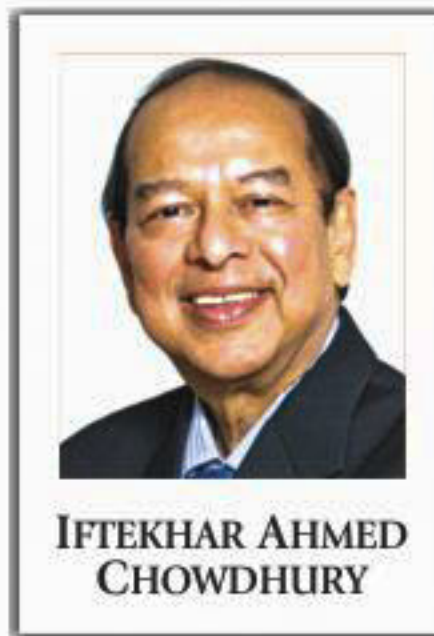


# The handling of Donald Trump

*A challenge for friends and foes*



IFTEKHAR AHMED CHOWDHURY

**Simply ignoring Mr Trump is not an option. America may no longer be a "city on a shining hill" to the rest of the world, but despite its reputation as a global leader far too damaged to be easily repaired, it still remains a power to be reckoned with.**

A seventeenth-century English satirist, Tom Brown, penned a doggerel about the Dean of Christ Church, one of the most prominent colleges, then as now, at Oxford. It went: *I do not like thee, Dr Fell The reason why I cannot tell. But this I know, and know full well,*

*That I do not like thee, Dr Fell.*

That pretty much sums up the sentiments, with rhyme but without reason, that the critics of President Donald Trump of the United States entertain towards him. In today's deeply dichotomised America, a division that Mr Trump more than anyone else has helped create, one would have thought they would comprise the liberal left. Initially, the redneck white Middle America, of the far-right, vehemently supported him with passionate fervour. They empathised with his pleas to "drain the swamp" of Washington's "putrid" politics, or so it was thought, renegotiate America's relationship with the world, and make the nation "great" again. The markets, and the overall economy, reacted extremely favourably. In unconventional ways Mr Trump reached out to perceived adversaries: Mr Xi Jinping of China, Mr Kim Jong-un of North Korea, and Mr Vladimir Putin of Russia. For a while it seemed that the threats of a major conflict were averted. There must be a method in the behaviour-pattern, friends and foes alike concluded.

Alas, the early signs of success appear to be unravelling. The market and the economy are gearing to counter the trade war with China already unleashed. The early relationship with Mr Xi is deeply strained. There is obviously complete miscommunication with North Korea. Only the camaraderie with Putin appears to sustain, but a fruition of it could be the "kiss of death" for Mr Trump. So, it may not be long that the left and right in America coalesce in the assessment of their new eccentric leader on the domestic front. The reason for their negative perception of Mr Trump, as opposed to the content of the doggerel cited earlier, is emerging in broader relief. In the

world beyond, friends and foes alike are scrambling to develop a modus operandi vis-à-vis this new leadership in the White House.

This is necessary, as simply ignoring Mr Trump is not an option. America may no longer be a "city on a shining hill" to the rest of the world, but despite its reputation as a global leader far too damaged to be easily repaired, it still remains a power to be reckoned with. This will continue to be so, at least for some time to come. Its formal allies recognise this, but there is much truth in an observation of Mr Donald Tusk, Chairman of the European Union. Bemoaning Mr Trump's "capricious assertiveness" (as in unilaterally quitting the Iran nuclear deal, a decision that raised European heckles), Mr Tusk handed the US leader a left-handed compliment for ridding Europe of illusions (of American friendship), and quipped, with a tinge of exasperation: "with friends like this, who needs enemies?"

Likewise, Mr Trump's adversaries must find him equally baffling. Mr Kim Jong-un of North Korea obviously relished the pomp and circumstance with which he met Mr Trump, the head of the world's most powerful country, in Singapore on June 12. All the more so, because it transformed Mr Kim overnight into a world leader. Amidst much fanfare, he signed a document with his American counterpart, most carefully crafted to reflect his views as well. Surely, the US State Department, doubtless containing some of the brightest diplomatic minds, would have accorded this all-important document most serious examination. Of the four significant points, a key third point was: Reaffirming the April 27, 2018 Panmunjom Declaration, the DPRK (North Korea) commits to work towards complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

The sentence merits parsing. First, it was only a reaffirmation of what was already agreed between Mr Kim and President Moon Jae-in of South Korea just weeks earlier at Panmunjom. The language was not a product of the talks in Singapore. Second, it committed North Korea only "to work towards", not accomplish, "denuclearisation"—which remained undefined—of the "Korean peninsula", not dismantling of just North Korean nuclear capabilities. It did not contain anything that

would require North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons unilaterally.

Indeed, it would have been surprising if North Koreans would agree to do so, readily, knowing full well it is the possession of such weapons on their part that brought the two sides together in Singapore in the first place. One must understand that if the North Koreans have the technological capacity to produce such weaponry, they would also be clued seriously into the nuclear deterrence theory that must have inspired them into such production. Simply stated, "deterrence" means that an inferior nuclear force could deter a more



President Donald Trump.

PHOTO: CARLOS BARRIA/REUTERS

powerful adversary from attacking it, by the threat of an extremely destructive retaliatory response.

Key western proponents of the theory, Bernard Brodie and Thomas Schelling, broadly argued that such weapons, to be effective strategic tools, must always be on the ready though never actually used. It is probably true that the practice of deterrence by the US and the Soviet Union kept the peace throughout the Cold War. So, a mathematically comparable equivalence of destructive powers led logically to a condition of stability. As a corollary, any erosion of such capabilities on one side would, by the same logic, create a "destabilising" situation, by enhancing

the propensity of the other side to strike. Till such time, of course, the parties learnt to trust each other completely. As is the case between South Korea and America.

So, when Secretary of State Mike Pompeo travelled to Pyongyang recently, asking the North Koreans for "Complete Verifiable and Irreversible Dismantlement" (CVID)—which was always an American position but apparently not reflected in the Singapore Document—without offering an acceptable or comparable quid pro quo from the American side, the North Koreans, in their somewhat exaggerated linguistic predilections, termed the demands "gangster-like". Aware of the fates that Iraq and Libya have experienced in the past, and sensing that a change of American position can be a function of a single "tweet" from either Mr Trump or a successor, the North Koreans may have decided to have their faith in the leadership dialogue, but at the same time, keep their powder dry! Pyongyang wants what it calls a "phased and synchronous approach". Obviously then, there is a major miscommunication. All is not lost, of course, but we may be seeing the beginning of a negotiation that is bound to be long and arduous with no easy win for either side!

In the meantime, Mr Trump is headed to Europe for a NATO Summit. There are those who fear the recurrence of the sad events at the G-7 Summit in Canada prior to the Kim-Trump meeting in Singapore. In much the same way, the NATO Summit will be followed by a meeting with Mr Vladimir Putin of Russia on July 16. At G-7, Mr Trump had demanded his economic allies give in to his tariff demands. At the NATO Summit, with regard to defence contributions from recalcitrant allies, Mr Trump, like Oliver Twist as in the tale of the parish boy by Charles Dickens (but with much greater clout), will ask "for more". The G-7 had ended in disarray, with Mr Trump calling his host and ally, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada, "weak and dishonest". Doubtless, Mr Putin will wait eagerly, and with a modicum of curiosity, to hear Mr Trump's assessment of his NATO "allies" before the Summit with his American "adversary".

Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury is a former foreign adviser to the caretaker government of Bangladesh and is currently Principal Research Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore.

## Nationalistic competition or cosmopolitan carnival?



SHIFTING IMAGES

MILIA ALI

While I cannot claim to be an avid football fan, the World Cup bug does attack me every four years. I write this column on a sleepless night, disturbed and disenchanted after watching the rather physical and hostile match between England and Colombia, fighting for a place in the quarterfinals. Advertisers, organisers and politicians promote the event as a unifying force that brings people of all nationalities together. But if we examine the drama around World Cup Football, it appears that strong partisan sentiments deter citizens from transcending national boundaries. In fact it is more a nationalistic competition rather than a cosmopolitan carnival. Watching the Japanese players weeping after their last-minute defeat against Belgium was heart wrenching—for a few moments it appeared as if the entire country's prestige rested on the single game! This World Cup has actually made me reflect on an issue that has been plaguing many of us—the tension between Nationalism and Universalism in our world today. This is evidenced by the rise of Trumpism as well as Brexit and the anti-immigration movement in Europe. Sadly, the World Cup is widening this gap rather than helping people unite in a global sporting spirit. It might be relevant to recall what George Orwell wrote after Dynamo Moscow's UK tour in 1945: "Sport is an unflinching cause of ill will. If such a visit had any effect at all on Anglo-Soviet relations it could only be to make them slightly worse than before". He concluded that serious sport was "war minus the shooting." Orwell's writing is, as we know, full of irony and metaphors, but then is he far from the truth? Have we not witnessed examples of aggression in the



Russia and Uruguay's fans watch on a giant screen the Russia 2018 World Cup Group A match between Uruguay and Russia, at the fan zone in Moscow on June 25.

PHOTO: AFP

World Cup arena? The players wrestling each other to the ground and overcharged spectators cheering with national flags painted on their faces, created the impression of a gladiatorial contest rather than a friendly game.

World Cup aficionados might think that I am being overly critical about this sports event. Let me clarify that I, too, experience joy when my favourite team scores a goal or spend a sleepless night after its defeat. But in all honesty, I find it difficult to revel in another team's humiliating loss. Perhaps the one positive universal aspect of the World Cup is the unadulterated personal pleasure

derived from watching good football. And I cannot deny that there is also some element of globalism generated by the sport. This has become all the more obvious to me after witnessing the selfless support that the Bangladeshis have demonstrated toward teams like Argentina and Brazil. It was particularly moving to see a young man pedalling bamboo baskets at the traffic signal in Dhaka donning an Argentinian t-shirt. He has never visited the country, neither is he likely to. But his sheer admiration for Messi and his father's nostalgia about Maradona have made him an ardent supporter of the team. Given the political and social

polarisation in the country today, it is encouraging to see people unite in their patronage for a football team which is "not their own".

Perhaps, this stateless, selfless, almost faceless attachment, partially enabled by the Internet and social media, will generate a new form of globalism. Cristiano Ronaldo apparently has 122 million Facebook followers—12 times the population of his native Portugal. Whether his fans live in a tiny village in Bangladesh or have travelled to Russia to watch him play—they have one thing in common. They love good football and want to watch Ronaldo strike one of his

classic goals. And they spontaneously hug each other despite differences when a Neymar goal happens. The bonhomie extends to social get-togethers where animated fans rave about that "flick of the leg" or the cross that was "brilliantly executed". At least for that moment they unite in their joy.

This brings me to another development I noticed in this World Cup. The ethos of individual heroes seems to be fading in favour of collective effort. Teams showcasing Messi, Ronaldo, Neymar and Salah have fallen to teams with "less star power but more unified purpose". I wonder if this is a trend or an aberration. After all, we cannot also ignore the fact that even after Portugal lost, the Chinese Super League offered Ronaldo a 200 million euro contract! I, for one, hope that the age of football heroes is not over since they help millions cross national boundaries and remain connected to each other in spirit.

As for Orwell's assertion that a "serious" sports competition is like a "war minus the shooting", we must use a qualifier. Leaders and governments may use the event to promote their agenda and hide bad news under the cover of public attention being diverted (like Saudi Arabia bombing Yemen during its match with Russia). But the general population is more ready to embrace other nations as long as good football is being played. We witnessed several instances of players giving a helping hand to their injured opponents and rivals in the stands hugging each other after a game. For me, one of the highlights of this World Cup was watching the Spanish King join in the standing ovation for Russia after Spain's unfortunate defeat and then visit the "fallen" team in the dressing room to give them a leg up. We need more such moments to make this a truly global sporting event!

Milia Ali is a Rabindra Sangeet exponent and a former employee of the World Bank.

## ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY



A flight of RAF Hawker Hurricane fighters.

JULY 10, 1940

### BATTLE OF BRITAIN BEGINS

A military campaign of WWII, in which the Royal Air Force defended the UK against large-scale attacks by Nazi Germany's air force, the Luftwaffe. It has been described as the first major military campaign fought entirely by air forces.



**NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY**  
Center of Excellence in Higher Education

#### UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

BBA in

- Finance
- Marketing
- Accounting
- Economics
- Management
- Entrepreneurship
- International Business
- Supply Chain Management
- Human Resource Management
- Management Information System

BS in

- Economics
- Microbiology
- Biochemistry & Biotechnology
- Civil & Environmental Engineering
- Environmental Science & Management
- Computer Science & Engineering (CSE)
- Electronics & Telecom. Engineering (ETE)
- Electrical & Electronic Engineering (EEE)

HSC/A-level appeared candidates are eligible to apply

**BE A GLOBAL LEADER OF EXCELLENCE**

- Enjoy 100% Scholarships on performance in the admission test
- Be a proud student of world class scholars
- Join a network of 20,000 NSU alumni worldwide
- Your gateway to top ranked Universities

**NSU provides 100% Merit Scholarships to the TOP TEN Scorners in the admission test. Over 100 more scholarships available ranging from 25-75%**

We are Accredited



**Admission Test**  
27 July, 2018  
Friday, 10:00 a.m.

**Application Deadline**  
25 July, 2018

Bashundhara, Dhaka-1229, Phone: + 880-2-55668200, Ext. 5002, 4001, 01732-903003 Email: admissions@northsouth.edu; web: www.northsouth.edu

**UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS FALL 2018**

Faisal Mahmud Khan  
100% Scholarship Recipient

Secured  
7th Position in  
The Admission Test



Apply Online  
admissions.northsouth.edu