



So Trump is US President! Anyone Still think Democracy Works?

The US presidential elections are finally over with Donald Trump crowned winner but in this whole circus performance, the joke has been on 'Democracy'. This entire cringeworthy process has showcased to the world the ingrained fault lines and dangers of the democratic system. It has been an election steeped in the gutter politics of personalized insults and attacks between the two candidates rather than a debate on real policies and principles. This is not surprising as this is a familiar characteristic of secular democratic politics the world over. And as with many democracies across the Western world, the use of xenophobic, anti-immigrant rhetoric to appeal to the basal bigoted prejudices of the electorate was also a defining feature of Trump's electoral campaign. No surprise then that many media and political commentators described the elections as reflecting America's broken democratic system. Jacob Parakilas, deputy head of the US and Americas programme at the London-based think tank Chatham House commented, *"This campaign makes the implicit argument that the US model of liberal democracy isn't what it's cracked up to be."* And a political commentator on a UK radio show on the day of the election results said, *"This is not so much a triumph for Trump but an indictment of the US political system."*

This US presidential election has been an exemplary lesson to the world of everything that a political model should NOT be. It may have played out like a reality TV show but the dangerous impact upon a society of the democratic system which gave rise to and entertained this political circus is far from a laughing matter for its fallout negatively affects the lives of millions of people. The very fact that a man who insulted half of his population, and who ran one of the most divisive US presidential election campaigns ever, and who bragged about sexually assaulting women, and who expressed openly his admiration for the tyrant and mass-murderer Putin, and who insulted almost every minority in his country – Hispanics, Muslims, disabled people, and immigrants – could even have been considered as a candidate for leader of any state, let alone become president elect of the leading superpower of the world, speaks volumes about the failings and dangers of the democratic system. Indeed, questions surely need to be asked about the credibility of any political system that allows inflammatory, divisive, racist rhetoric to be employed as a perfectly legal electioneering tool! And what does it say about the view towards women in the world's so-called most powerful 'Democratic state' when it elects as Commander and Chief a man who uttered the most repugnant words against women? Furthermore, the fact that Hillary Clinton - someone who is steeped in corruption charges and gained a reputation for being crooked, deceptive and a liar was selected as the best candidate to run for the democrats is further proof of how rotten this system is!

Many are asking the question – How could Trump be elected president? And how could two of the most unpopular, passionately despised, and least trusted nominees in American history even have been chosen as candidates for leader of the state? Well for one, in the words of the 45th US president – the system is rigged! It's rigged in the favour of the rich wealthy elite – those who can afford to spend billions on election campaigns or have cozy relationships with big business who offer their political and financial support in exchange for political pay-backs once their chosen candidate enters office. A landmark 2014 study cited by the Sydney Morning Herald, stated that the majority in the US do not in reality rule. It said, *"When a majority of citizens disagrees with economic elites or with organised interests, they generally lose ... the impact of average citizens' preferences [is] ... near-zero."*

But furthermore, this presidential election revealed the deep divisions in American society, while the election of Trump exposed the ingrained racist, anti-immigrant, and Islamophobic attitudes which are prevalent within the US and many other Western democratic societies in which xenophobic right-wing populist parties are also flourishing. It demolishes the facade that democracy is the best system to create tolerant cohesive societies where all races and religions are equally respected and treated. The very fact that Trump's bigoted statements against immigrants and Muslims made him even more endearing to millions of Americans and was clearly an asset rather than hindrance to his election is proof of democracy's spectacular failure

to deal with problems such as racism and xenophobia which have flourished under its reign, even after 8 years of a black president!

But additionally, Trump's victory was a protest vote - a reflection of the level of disillusionment of the people with their political establishment which they rightly view as corrupt and self-serving, with no genuine concern for the needs of the ordinary public. A 2013 survey by Public Policy Polling reported that Congress was less popular than cockroaches amongst the US public, and a 2013 PEW survey found that only a quarter of Americans trust Washington to do what is right. Desperate for change, many Americans therefore voted for the business tycoon as they felt that he was a break from the despised political status quo, even though he represents the same wealthy elite class that has been ruling the US for decades. One writer wrote, "*Trump is the symptom, while Clinton is the disease*" arguing that it was years of failed political and economic policies of the Clinton, Obama and other past administrations that had fueled the climate of support for demagogues like Trump who exploited the economic frustrations of many of the working and middle-class to get elected. In truth however, both Trump and Clinton as well as the whole political establishment are symptoms, while it is the **democratic political system which is the disease** because by its nature it favours the rich and powerful rather than the poor and general masses. This is the root of the massive inequality in wealth, the tax perks given to the rich, and the general double standards in privileges between the political elite and ordinary citizens. It is therefore unsurprising that, "*A QUARTER of Americans born since 1980 believe that democracy is a bad form of government, many more than did so 20 years ago*" according to a November 5th 'Economist' article. Former Democratic congressional adviser Tad Daley also said, "*More and more Americans have a vague and increasing sense that our government is simply incapable of addressing basic challenges like immigration, guns, entitlements, trade, climate and environment, privacy and security, the federal budget, spiralling inequity, money in politics ... or even a health emergency like the Zika virus....It's no longer hyperbole to say that American democracy is broken*".

So after all this, how can anyone, least alone Muslims, still believe that 'Democracy' works??? This whole presidential election has been a first-class lesson to the entire world that democracy is a broken divisive system, not fit for purpose! It has lost all credibility! Surely it is time for the world to consider an alternative system to do politics – one that is not run by a wealthy political elite for the wealthy political elite, or narcissistic bigoted business tycoons out for power and prestige, or a political establishment which is clueless about how to provide a fair way of life for all and solve the country's problems. The world surely needs a political system that truly cares for mankind – Muslim and non-Muslim, male and female, black and white – and that abhors racism, elevates the status of women and has credible time-tested solutions to the political, economic, and social problems of any society rather than being built on hot empty rhetoric of caring for ordinary people. This is the Islamic system implemented by the Khilafah state based upon the method of the Prophethood.

﴿وَلَوْ أَتَّبَعُ الْحَقُّ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ بَلْ أَتَيْنَهُمْ بِذِكْرِهِمْ فَهُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِهِمْ مُعْرِضُونَ﴾

"If the Truth had been in accord with their desires, truly the heavens and the earth, and all beings therein would have been in confusion and corruption! Nay, We have sent them their admonition, but they turn away from their admonition." [Al-Muminoon: 71]

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Dr. Nazreen Nawaz

Director of the Women's Section in the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir