



America At War - With Itself



For observers outside the United States, the daily drama that is playing out within, with the new President, his Administration, all of its most important institutions and its agitated and divided people, is simply stunning and disturbing. The most powerful and fearsome Nation on Earth is at open war with itself and that turmoil is sending out economic, political and military shock waves that are buffeting other nations, their politics, policies and people; the effect on impending European elections being the most obvious.

The angst generated by an America in turmoil is necessitating emissaries from the new U.S. Administration, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Secretary of Defense James Mattis, and Vice President Mike Pence, to travel the World reassuring economic and military allies that the status quo will be upheld, and the embattled America and particularly its new President, Donald Trump, don't mean them any real harm. That message so far has been received with healthy skepticism.

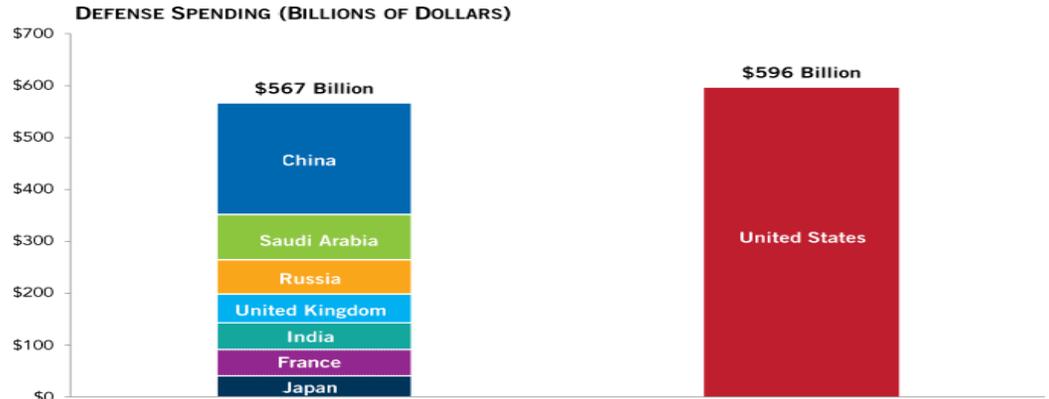
Internally, the advent of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States is the result of an increasingly partisan political system, and an extremely volatile economic system that is requiring larger and larger doses of Federal Reserve and Government interventions to reverse the devastating effects of progressively spectacular crashes in its financial system. To recover from these crashes, the Government and the Federal Reserve have been utilizing monetary policies that are leaving the majority of Americans behind, while enriching the minority to an unjustifiable degree, thereby creating an ever widening gap between the average American and the relatively few 'Super-rich'. This growing inequality at home and a changing global economic landscape abroad, has bitterly divided a deeply dissatisfied American public and polity into primarily two opposing political and social camps that have a visceral dislike for each other, creating a sputtering and dysfunctional Government, highly politicized institutions, and a fractured and angry public.

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The United States spends more on defense than the next seven countries combined



SOURCE: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Military Expenditure Database*, April 2016. Data are for 2015. Compiled by PGPF.
NOTE: Figures are in U.S. dollars, converted from local currencies using market exchange rates.

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Externally, America's long history of active intervention in global politics has resulted in a constant state of war that has cost it hundreds of Billions of dollars annually, greatly adding to its external debt, and has generated a level of anger and resentment in the larger World that prevents Americans from feeling safe when traveling abroad, necessitating at times, in certain places, the pretensions of being Canadians just to be safe.

These almost perpetual hostilities that America engaged in actively, has more recently destroyed the Middle East, and caused the rise in a blowback of extreme Islamic terrorism. That increasing external threat to American safety, both as a Country and as individuals, has added a new dimension of anxiety to an already unstable and dangerously disturbed internal fracturing, giving rise to further national conflicts in its politics and its public, such as the recent 'Immigration and Refugee ban' where public support is almost divided 50:50, with the edge going to the 'for' side.

The divide of America is political in its Two Party State, the Democrats and the Republicans. Perhaps because of the lack of additional choices, the politicians, the Institutions (*influenced by one or the other*), and the public, are divided in to two opposing camps that like any competitive opposing American sports teams, are passionately, and at times irrationally, against the other. This highly charged emotional divide colors the opposing camps into ideological and policy positions of black and white, with little to no room for shades of grey; no real desire for compromises, only a 'win – lose' mentality.

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Over the past years, into this toxic mix came a truly historic milestone for America, the election of a photogenic, inspirationally articulate, highly educated, keenly intelligent African-American Democrat, Barack Hussein Obama, as the 44th U.S. President.

The celebration of such an historic moment, both in America and the World, was quickly marred by the open hostility of the opposing Republicans, who even in the midst of an almost equally historic economic crisis underway, vehemently opposed him every step of his two-term Presidency.

The antagonism was so poisonous, the Republicans shut the workings of the U.S. Government for a period of time rather than co-operate with a Democrat African-American U.S. President. This upfront racially motivated dislike (*in places hatred*) of a black person as the President was rife within the upper ranks of Republican lawmakers, and the rich, and poor, white Republican constituents (*mainly*) of the Southern States, many of who considered it a travesty of sorts. And it highlighted the other area of deep division and conflict in America, the less-than commonly assumed integration of the diverse American society in the land of 'liberty and equality for all'.

Compared to many countries of the World, America is the land of opportunity and acceptance of all, to a significant degree. But, it has not been able to accept its black population as equals to an embarrassing degree, for an embarrassingly long time, unlike other developed Western nations, such as Canada, France, Britain, and some of the European countries, who have done a lot better at accepting human equality.

Racial discrimination is still present in America but tragically it's most disadvantaged citizens, the ones that were forcibly brought to its shores as captive slaves and then most brutally treated, are still the most discriminated against. The battle for equal rights and full acceptance has been famously waged for decades and is still very much in play today, with perceived atrocities against young black men by predominately white policemen so blatant that it spawned the recent 'Black Lives Matter' movement and its very prominent protests. This racial divide has also spilled over into the larger American society, with some whites and other races (*Latinos, Asians etc.*) fully supportive of 'Black Lives Matter' movement, while others oppose it, and are openly critical of it.

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Politically, the racial war and divide also falls into the two opposing camps, Democrats for greater integration and acceptance of Blacks and other races as more or less equals in the current American society, and the Republicans as far more reluctant, towards full acceptance, with a definitive white fundamental-Christian-bent of Southern Conservatism over-riding the political correctness politically and publically displayed normally.

In the Republican Party, since Trump's trashing of all accepted social mores in a progressive America, and still winning, improbably, the more extreme elements of the Far-Right movements such as the 'White Supremacists' took the election of the socially inelegant Donald Trump, as the verification of open season for more brazen acts of racism against Americans of other colors and religions. Racist attacks (*verbal, written and physical*) against Latinos, Asians, Muslims, Blacks and Jews have risen measurably since the election, and President Trump's reluctance to come out strongly and condemn these actions (*as a large portion of his support base fall into the hard core Republican camp*), has only emboldened the bigots, within and outside the Party. This situation has created a palpable atmosphere of fear and mistrust within the entire non-white American citizenry, while deepening the divide within the progressive versus regressive White community.

Unfortunately, the racially charged rhetoric of Trump during the campaign and the subsequent *election* of Donald Trump as U.S. President, added fuel to the simmering fires of bigotry and racism in America, and brought the fight for racial equality and acceptance literally out onto the streets, resulting in large recurring protests, and occasional riots, and the uptick in racist and 'hate' incidents. This long simmering battle to achieve equality for people of color and non-Christian religions, is now in the open, and has escalated to open anger and confrontations on the streets of this multi-cultural, multi-religious society.

As with any racial, religious and color divided society, passions often run high and are stoked by power hungry leaders, creating fear. And fear feeds on ignorance and ignorance feeds potential for violence. To see the potential for increasing trouble in American society one only has to glance at the history of older countries and societies similarly divided.

All of this of course is enveloped in the larger battle being waged between an increasingly progressive and liberal America led by the Democratic Party, and a conservative and arguably regressive one led by the Republican Party. On that front, the battle is being fought on a secular versus a religiously run State, with the new Administration putting a not-so-covert Christian stamp on America, and the Progressives fighting back to try and maintain the secularism enshrined in the Constitution.

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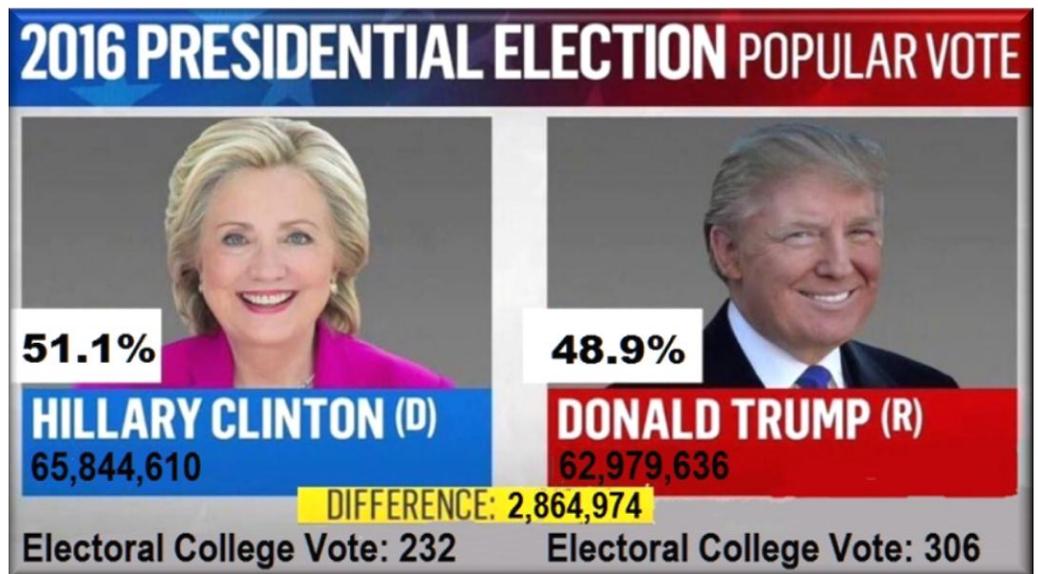
The atrocities abroad in Muslim countries, the ongoing ‘accidental-collateral damage’ killings of innocent civilians (most *recently in Yemen*) by American military operations, have triggered some of the lone wolf attacks at home, by home grown American Muslim terrorists, and have fostered and grown the threats from increasingly pissed off and damaged ordinary Muslims abroad - that then become ripe for recruiting by the existing terrorist organizations, such as ISIS.

Internally, the only bigger threat to Americans than Muslim terrorism is the gun violence that is almost an American institution in itself. The ‘Right to Bear Arms’ has turned America into a gun loving people that rather die ‘with a gun in their cold dead hands’ (*to paraphrase the late great Charlton Heston*) than have even the most basic checks put on them when purchasing guns. More Americans die from gun violence at home than from any foreign sponsored terrorists, more than in any other major developed country of the World. That aspect of America’s uniquely ‘American’ sacred tradition isn’t about to change any time soon as Americans continue to over-arm themselves, ostensibly to defend themselves from the marauding foreign terrorist hordes, but lacking any tangible sign of them at the shores till now, Americans seem to pass the time, in-waiting, by killing other Americans, including school children, periodically.

These real facts do not deter Donald Trump or the Republicans from citing Islamic terrorism as being America’s greatest threat, and from undertaking measures that would make a relatively small problem till now, from becoming a much bigger one. Islamic terrorism has been a controllable problem so far in the U.S., as evidenced by the lack of a major terrorist attack in the manner of the 9/11 attack. But the draconian measures that the Trump Administration wants to adopt to stop the so called threat, promises to incite greater anger internally, and externally, thereby upping the risk factors greatly, from home grown terrorists. But Donald Trump has locked himself into an un-retractable position by pandering to his mostly ignorant, of such facts, but definitely fearful support base by promising to be ultra tough (*bans, extreme vetting*) and therefore cannot pull back and do something more sensible. So he is going to follow through on being really tough on Muslims, and that is not going to go over well in the larger Muslim World.

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Donald Trump won the Presidency through the strange process in America's democratic system called 'The Electoral College'. While he won the Presidency, Hillary Clinton won the most 'popular' votes from American voters, beating Trump by a margin of almost 3 Million votes. That strange phenomenon, of winning the most votes and still losing the Presidency, especially to a decidedly inferior opponent and a universally derided one, has caused serious anger among the American electorate, who feel cheated knowing their valuable individual vote, an extra 3 Million of them, counted for nothing in the loss of their better qualified candidate. To add insult to injury, the disclosure that Russia and the FBI and its Director James Comey probably contributed to Trump winning, was just a bit much to take. So, the majority of the American electorate 51.1%, who *didn't* vote for Trump but got him anyway, are now vociferously against their New President (*who won 48.9% of support*), adding another volatile over-layer to the roiling discontent below it all. The majority of American voters are deeply anti- Trump, and he has little to no chance of winning them over with his bombastic, factually challenged, perpetually self promoting, and confrontational style of governing. So the turmoil in America will only grow as those that didn't vote for him (*the majority*) gnash their teeth at Trump's daily stumbles and faux pas.

America is roiling in turmoil and seething in discontent. Some of the issues are long festering such as the unequal treatment of Black Americans, women's rights, growing inequality, and the struggle between the Democratic-progressive America and the Republican conservative, regressive one. But new dimensions have been added to America's season of discontent, and most of the new angst is generated by the statements and actions of the new President, his inner circle, and the Republican Party that control all the leavers of government and power at this time.

The new battle grounds that have been added and are bound to see the most acrimony in the coming months, are the proposed immigration and refugee ban targeting mainly Muslims from 7 select countries; the singling out of Mexicans and Mexico as highly objectionable aliens, coupling with the proposal to build a wall on the Southern Border to keep Mexicans out, while deporting the illegal ones already in; and the reversal and roll back of ObamaCare, women's rights, consumer and environmental protection regulations.

President Trump is happy to add fuel to the fires that are already burning, and to the ones that are being lit anew on an almost daily basis because of his love of confrontations, egotistical weakness and the need to feel he is winning against everyone at all times. He does not handle criticism or compromise well and has an unstoppable need to attack his detractors. That personality mix is a recipe for disaster in these highly charged times, and as America splinters further politically and socially, the policies involving it and the World are going to reflect that internal war, and will bring turmoil to the rest of the World, as it has already done to a great degree (*re: anti Trump protests in Britain and elsewhere*).

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