

Trump Was Acquitted by the Senate and Remains President

By: TMO Staff

President Donald Trump was acquitted Wednesday by the Republican-controlled Senate of charges that said he abused his power in office and obstructed Congress. Democrats fell far short of the two-thirds majority required to remove Trump from office, as senators voted 52 to 48 to acquit him on the abuse-of-power allegation and 53 to 47 to clear him of obstruction. In December 2019, the House of Representatives voted on two articles of impeachment against President Trump. President Trump has officially been the third president



in United States history to be impeached by the House.

The first article he was charged of was Abuse of

Power; the article states that "Using the powers of his high office, President Trump solicited the interference of a foreign government, Ukraine, in

the 2020 United States Presidential election. He did so through a scheme or course of conduct that

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Trump has expanded his travel ban to six more countries, effective February 22

By: Aysha Qamar

Fear of a new travel ban, or Muslim ban, circulated through the Whitehouse when documents were internally shared in January. Now that fear has become a reality with President Donald Trump's announcement of extending his travel ban Jan 31. Trump signed a new order,



effective Feb 22., which will target immigration from a majority of African countries. He has expanded his current travel ban to six more countries including Nigeria, Myanmar (Burma), Eritrea,

Kyrgyzstan, Sudan and Tanzania. While the first four listed will experience suspensions in immigration visas, Sudan and Tanzania will be barred from the U.S. diversity

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Kobe Bryant inspired people of color beyond Basketball



By: Salman Masood

As kids growing up in an urban city in New Jersey many of us looked towards basketball as an outlet. We spent countless hours on the basketball courts year-round trying to replicate Kobe

Bryant's moves even shouting "Kobe" when we took our shots.

As the youngest player in the National Basketball Association (NBA) history, Bryant serves as an inspiration for people

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Progressive Turn and Conservative Backlash: The New Twist in American-Muslim Politics



By: Muqtedar Khan

For American Muslims, it is the best of times, and it is the worst of times. It is the age of Islamophobia, and it is the age of progressive politics and engagement. It is a time of conservative fears and liberal ascendance. From family values to the defense of civil rights and protection of the environment, American Muslims have become the repository of the best of the American ethos. But the community is also experiencing fissures triggered by the presidency of Donald Trump. This essay reflects on political developments in the American-Muslim community in the wake of Donald Trump's presidency.

President Trump's impeachment proceedings are dividing some faith communities. Christians are divided over support for his appointment of conservative judges and foreign policy and revulsion at his personal conduct and racist-sexist posture both before and after becoming president. American Jews are divided over his antisemitism on one hand and his unprecedented support for Israel on the other. But American Muslims are more or less united in their rejection of Trump and everything he stands for. Even American Muslims who are Republicans, and are not afraid or ashamed to acknowledge it in public, are revolted by Trump's hate-mongering and will be happy to see him impeached.

Trump's campaign in which he accused Muslims of hating

America and called for a "Muslim ban" and his multiple efforts to make that ban happen mainstreamed Islamophobia and even made it government policy. Hate crimes against Muslims went up sharply, and experiencing hate speech became a more common occurrence for American Muslims. But these developments also energized and galvanized the community to transform itself. It became more engaged politically, but it took its engagement a few notches up. The American-Muslim community went from mobilizing the vote and financing supportive candidates to actually running for office in unprecedented numbers and winning! Thank you, Donald Trump, for accelerating progress on this front. For someone like me, who has been encouraging the community to engage in politics for decades, this American-Muslim response was beyond thrilling.

The results too have been spectacular. Muslim representation in U.S. Congress went from two to three representatives. The new representatives, Rashida Tlaib from Michigan and Ilham Omar from Minnesota, are both firebrand politicians who have taken on Trump and his policies with such resolve that they have become national and international leaders. Trump supporters hate them; the world loves them. But Muslims have also won many other public offices such as attorney general in Minnesota and seats in both the houses and senates of various states. Abdul El-Sayed also ran for governor of Michi-

gan. El-Sayed lost, but he made Muslim political candidates for high office more acceptable.

The key to enhanced Muslim political success has been women candidates with progressive agendas. The community's establishment is recognizing this. In an article arguing that the American-Muslim community is at the center of resistance to the Trump administration, Abbas Barzegar makes a point to emphasize the key role that American-Muslim women are playing. While the enhanced role of women is welcomed enthusiastically, some members of the community are becoming uncomfortable with the progressive nature of this trend. They are worried that the Muslim struggle for social justice and equal rights through political measures is forcing them to compromise on "theological and religious principles" in the name of political expediency. They fear that Muslims are throwing away religion for political gain. Commentators like Ismael Royer argue that the progressive left wants to change Islam itself. This division is growing and may eventually lead to a left-right divide within the Muslim community, similar to earlier divides in Jewish and Christian communities in the United States.

American Muslims, as I have pointed out for decades, tend to be political liberals and social conservatives. This fault line is now flaring up as the new generation of American Muslims, excited by politicians like Ber-

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Pakistani Hindus reject India's offer for citizenship

By: Anadolu Agency

Pakistan's minority Hindu community has rejected India's offer to grant them citizenship under a new law.

Citing the harassment of minorities in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, the Indian parliament recently amended its citizenship law, offering citizenship rights to Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Parsi and Jain communities migrating from these countries.

The law, however, excluded Muslims, triggering mass protests across the country.

"Pakistan's Hindu community unanimously rejects this bill, which is tantamount to dividing India on communal lines," Raja Asar Manglani, patron of the Pakistan Hindu Council, told Anadolu Agency.

"This is a unanimous message from Pakistan's entire Hindu community to Indian Prime Minister [Narendra] Modi. A true Hindu will never support this legislation," he said.

He added that the law has violated India's own constitution.

Anwar Lal Dean, a Christian member of the Pakistani parliament's upper house or Senate, also said the law is meant to pitch religious communities against each other.

India citizenship law protests spread across campuses

"This is a clear violation of fundamental human



rights. We categorically reject it," said Dean, a leader of the opposition Pakistan People's Party.

"Through such unjust and uncalled steps, the Modi government wants to pitch religious communities against each other," he said, citing scrapping of Jammu and Kashmir's longstanding special rights law, Indian Supreme Court's judgment on Babri Mosque, and growing violence against minorities in India.

Pakistan's tiny Sikh community has also denounced the controversial law.

"Not only Pakistani Sikhs but the entire Sikh community in the world, including those in India, also condemn this move," said Gopal Singh, leader of the Baba Guru Nanak.

"The Sikh community is a minority both in India and Pakistan. Being a member of a minority, I can feel the pain and the fears of the Muslim minority [India]. This is simply persecution," he said.

Singh urged Modi not to push minorities "back to the wall."

Minority population figures contest Indian claim

While introducing the citizenship law, Indian Home Minister Amit Shah told parliament that non-Muslim population in Pakistan has alarmingly decreased over the years.

He said the minorities comprised 23% of Pakistan's population in 1947, when it was formed. "But now it has decreased to a mere 3.7%," he said, adding that this means either they have been killed, migrated or forced to convert their religion.

Pakistan rubbishes India's fudged numbers on 'shrinking minorities'

The official figures available with the Pakistan Census, however, contest his claims.

The minority population was never 23% in the then-West Pakistan (present-day Pakistan).

According to the 1961 census, the non-Muslim population was record-

ed at 2.83%. A decade later in 1972, the census recorded non-Muslim population at 3.25% of the total population. That means, it increased by 0.42%.

In the 1981 census, the non-Muslim population was 3.30%. In the next census carried out in 1998, it was recorded as 3.70% of the total population.

Though Pakistan carried out a fresh census in 2017, its religious data has yet to be released. However, according to Pakistan Hindu Council leader Manglani, Hindus make up 4% of the total 210 million population. Nearly 80% of Hindus — Pakistan's largest minority — inhabit the southern part of the Sindh province. Undermining rights of minorities

Pakistan's government has accused India's government led by Bharatiya Janata Party of toeing the ideology of "Hindutva Supremacy."

"The Modi government continues to curb and

undermine the rights of minorities in accordance with Hindutva supremacist ideology," Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said in a series of tweets on Monday.

"Illegal annexation of Kashmir, [handing over of] Babri Masjid [to Hindus], and [the] Citizenship Amendment Bill which excludes Muslims, are all targeted towards subjugation of minorities," he added.

Condemning the use of force against students protesting against the controversial bill in different parts of India, Qureshi said: "Concerned about the brutal and indiscriminate use of force by the state on Indian Muslim students of Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University, protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Bill."

Pakistan's main opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif too decried the Modi government for stifling the voice of dissent through state force.

"Disturbing news and images emanating from India. The state fascism being perpetrated on students of Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University, is a reminder that Modi's hatred of Muslims is ideologically driven," he said in a twitter post.

This article was published on The Express Tribune and has been republished here as is.

Mosques Hold Democratic Caucuses in Iowa

By: Dr. Aslam Abdullah

Immediately after President Trump's call before 2016, some of his supporters defaced a Waterloo, Iowa, mosque with the word Trump and a few days after his election a Muslim immigrant family from Sudan received a letter that read, "You can all go home now. We don't want [...] and terrorists here"

On February 3, 2020, the Muslim community of Iowa responded to all racial slurs by holding Democratic caucuses in five Des Moines, Iowa



mosques and voting overwhelmingly for Bernie Sander. Iowa has seen caucuses at schools, churches and community centers, but this year mosques were also included.

Des Moines has Afri-

can-Americans, Africans, South Asians, Arabs, and a large Bosnian community.

The Muslim voters in Iowa made a huge impact as they overwhelmingly voted for either Sanders or Warren who togeth-

er polled some 44 percent votes Independent observers believe that Sanders was the clear winner but the Democratic party establishment could not announce the results quoting the failure of reporting and

counting APP as the main reason. "How can the voting result be trusted when the reporting was not properly done," said one of the Des Moines residents who was actively involved in caucusing.

Fingers are being raised at Presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg whose campaign contributed money to the technological firm whose voting app contributed to reporting delays in the Iowa caucuses.

Israel allows its citizens to visit KSA, but are they really allowed to enter the kingdom?

By: TMO Staff

The government of Israel has announced that it will allow its citizens to visit Saudi Arabia for Islamic pilgrimages or for business purposes. The upcoming policy allows Israelis with official invitations to travel to Saudi Arabia for up to 90 days for business meetings and increase investment opportunities for Israel and its citizens.

This announcement came before President Trump met with Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. Prime Minister Netanyahu claims that he has been working to improve relations with Arab countries, specifically with the countries in the gulf because countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates also do not like Iran.

Even though Israel has made this announcement without any consultation



or meetings with the government of Saudi Arabia, the likeliness that Israeli citizens remain slim to none. No one can enter Saudi Arabia without an approved visa by the government. Additionally, there are no flights from Israel to Saudi Arabia and vice-versa. Previously, "Israeli Muslims", also known as Palestinian Muslims, had to use a temporary Jordanian passport to perform pil-

grimages in Saudi Arabia. It wasn't a perfect system, but the loophole helped Muslims complete one of the pillars of Islam. Saudi Arabia now says that they will not allow people to use the loophole to enter Saudi Arabia.

Muslims living in Israel are caught in the middle of politics between the two countries. Saudi Arabia does not have any

diplomatic relations with Israel, but Netanyahu's persistence might convince the Saudi government otherwise.

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan responded to Israel's announcement by saying that Israeli citizens are still not allowed to enter Saudi Arabia. Prince Farhan told news outlets that "Our policy is fixed. We

have no relations with the state of Israel, and it is not possible for Israeli passport holders to visit the kingdom presently,".

As President Trump gets aggressively involved in Israel's plans to expand its borders, tensions between Israel and Arab countries are bound to write. Israel only has peace treaties with two Arab countries, Egypt and Jordan, and that was done with the United States serving as mediator. As President Trump reveals his "peace plan" for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the world will watch what countries like Saudi Arabia will do next.

Saudi Arabia has not released any more information regarding Israeli citizens in their country. However, they might be speaking more about the Trump administration's peace plan for Israel.

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India Citizenship Amendment ACT opposed all over the world



By: Dr. Aslam Abdullah

People across the world showed their discontent over the violation of the constitutionally guaranteed human rights and democratic values by the ruling elites of India on January 26, the day India proclaimed itself a Republic. It gave itself a constitution on January 26, 1950. Millions came out in the streets of North American and European cities protesting against what many describe the re-emergence of Fascism in the garb of Hindutva led by the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), the political wing of the RSS, an organization inspired by Hitler and run by the paid informants of the British Raj.

The Preamble of India's constitution declares the country to be a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic. Its objectives are to secure justice, liberty, equality to all citizens and promote fraternity to maintain unity and integrity of the nation.

The protestors all over the world and in India strongly feel that the fascist ruling group is determined to break India and disintegrate the nation by turning the country into a Hindu Rashtra.

They felt that India was witnessing the second movement of indepen-

dence to liberate itself from the forces of hatred and bigotry. Many quoted the main architect of the constitution, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in their opposition to a recent law that attempts to undermine the constitution by discriminating against people on the basis of religion.

Dr. Ambedkar explained the purpose of India in the following words, "It is, a way of life, which recognizes liberty, equality, and fraternity as the principles of life and which cannot be divorced from each other: Liberty cannot be divorced from equality; equality cannot be divorced from liberty. Nor can liberty and equality be divorced from fraternity. Without equality, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things"

The ruling elites passed a bill in December called the Citizenship Amendment Act. The act discriminates against Muslims from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan in granting citizenship to the persecuted Hindus, Parsis, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists. The ACT is considered the first step towards the imple-

mentation of the National Citizenship Register (NCR) or National Population Register (NPR). THE NCR and NPR have not yet been formalized in the form of an act, but the Home Minister of India has emphatically called for their implementation. According to him, India's 1.3 billion residents would be asked to provide documents proving that their parents and grandparents were born in India, and they were citizens of India since 1951 or earlier.

A large number of Indians do not have such documents. The critics of such measures say that once the Indians without documents are identified, they would be put in detention camps, and those who are not Muslims would be given citizenship under CAA, and those who are Muslims would be declared illegal and stripped of their status.

Ever since the passage of the ACT, thousands of Indian cities have been witnessing massive demonstrations against the government. In some 100 cities, people are organizing 24-hour protests seven days a week. The 24-hour protest tradition was initiated by women of Shaheen Bagh, a small locality in the vicinity of Jamia Millia Islamia, the university whose students first

organized a peaceful demonstration against CAA. The demonstration became internationally famous as the police brutalized the demonstrators to silent them. This led to massive uprisings all over India especially in university campuses

Indian Diaspora living abroad did not lag behind and organized hundreds of protest rallies. However, the bigger rallies took place on January 26 in Paris, London, Washington, New York, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Sydney, Frankfurt, and many other places

Like in India, all the demonstrations taking place around the world are peaceful and inclusive. Their participants include Indians of all ethnic backgrounds and people of other nationalities and faiths who care for human rights and democracy.

The demonstrators are encouraged by the reporting and editorial comments in western newspapers and magazines that have been critical of the violation of the democratic values in India. Notable among these articles are the ones published in the Washington Post and the Economist.

These demonstrations abroad, especially the ones taking place in the US have negated the im-

pact of the Howdy Modi event that took place in August in Houston where the supporters of RSS and BJP brought some 50,000 people of Indian origin to listen to Prime Minister Modi when he shared the stage with President Trump. The presence of thousands of thousands of Indians in anti-Modi and anti-government demonstrations has raised doubts in the mind of the Trump campaign of the effectiveness of aligning with Modi.

These demonstrations abroad are being watched carefully by the western political analysts who believe that they have to exercise the utmost caution while dealing with the Modi government. Many of them believe that the Modi government is on a path of destruction, and its policies would hurt India and its financial interest in the world in the long and short term.

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Seattle City Council opposes CAA and NRC



By: TMO Staff

Seattle City Council, one of the most potent civic bodies in the USA, became the first local body to pass a Resolution on February 3, opposing Citizenship Amendment ACT CAA and National Register of Citizens passed by the Hindu party BJP in India. The resolution 31926 was passed on Feb. 3. Kshama Sawant, a member of the City Council introduced the Bill. It read:

“BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE, THAT: Section 1. The Seattle City Council reaffirms Seattle as a welcoming city and expresses solidarity with Seattle’s South Asian community regardless of religion and caste. Section 2. The Seattle City Council opposes the National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship Amendment Act in India, and finds these policies to be discriminatory to Muslims, oppressed castes, women, indigenous, and LGBT people. The Seattle City Council urges the United States Congress to (a) support legislation censuring the Republic of India for adopting these policies and (b) call for the Parliament

of India to uphold the Indian constitution by repealing the Citizenship Amendment Act, and to stopping the National Register of Citizens, and take taking steps towards helping refugees by ratifying various UN treaties on refugees.”

In its explanation of the resolution, the Council said: The far-right Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been criticized for promoting violence against religious minorities, silencing dissent, and actions which earned Prime Minister Modi the nickname “the Butcher of Gujarat,” a reference to the 2002 massacre – when Narendra Modi was Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat – in which an estimated 2,000 people were killed in anti-Muslim violence, and many Muslim women were targeted for rape and other forms of sexual violence. On December 11, 2019, the Indian parliament passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which the BJP government claims will help refugees fleeing religious persecution from neighboring countries, but which blatantly discriminates, allowing

the National Register of Citizens (NRC) to be updated for citizenship based on religion, favoring Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian immigrants, while excluding Muslim people.

The CAA is the first instance of religion being used as a criterion for Indian citizenship. In August 2019, Modi’s right-wing government published an updated NRC, requiring nearly two million people in the northeastern state of Assam to prove with documentary evidence their Indian citizenship or face detention at mass prisons and detention camps that the Indian government has begun to build and fill. Most Indians lack documentation such as birth certificates to prove citizenship, and nationwide expansion of the NRC could strip hundreds of millions of people (disproportionately Muslim, oppressed castes, women, indigenous and LGBT communities) left out of the CAA of their citizenship rights with no option to be re-naturalized. This resolution reaffirms Seattle as a welcoming city and expresses solidarity with Seattle’s South Asian

community regardless of religion and caste. It also resolves that the Seattle City Council opposes the National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship Amendment Act in India, and finds these policies to be discriminatory to Muslims, oppressed castes, women, indigenous, and LGBT people. This resolution urges the Parliament of India to uphold the Indian constitution by repealing the Citizenship Amendment Act, and to stop the National Register of Citizens, and take steps towards helping refugees by ratifying various UN treaties on refugees.”

In Seattle, hundreds from the South Asian community and allied organizations rallied in Bellevue against the fascists in India. Local organizations API Chaya, Tasveer, IAMC Seattle, Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) Washington, Seattle South Asians Building Accountability and Healing (SABAH), Khalsa Gurmat Center Federal Way, Gurudwara of Renton, Gurudwara of Auburn, Gurudwara of Kent, Gurudwara of Bothell, and the Seattle LGBTQ Commission joined national organizations Equality Labs,

Amnesty International USA, and the Ambedkar King Study Circle in calling for the passage of the resolution.

The RSS and BJP related outfits in the US opposed the resolution. These Modi supporters called Sawant misguided, misinformed and indulgent in spreading divisive and dangerous lies about India and interfering in the internal matters of another country. In their opposition, they accused Pakistanis and Bangladeshis of raping millions of women. They said: “the percentage of Hindu population in Pakistan in 1941 was nearly 14% and today is about 1.5%, similarly in Bangladesh, it was 22% Hindus in 1951, now reduced to about 10%. While the numbers may seem small in percentages, the actual numbers are in millions.”

“At the same time, the percentage of Muslims in India since 1950 has grown from approximately 9% to 15% (as per the 2011 census).” The Council members by a majority vote rejected the false claims of Modi supporters and acknowledged that the Butcher of Gujarat was leading India.

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New State Department rule to make it more difficult for pregnant applicants to get U.S. visas

By: Aysha Qamar

The U.S. State Department released a new rule on visas Thursday, scheduled to be published on Jan. 24, aimed at decreasing so-called birth tourism. "Birth tourism," according to the administration, is the action of a person traveling to the U.S. supposedly solely for the purpose of giving birth in the country so that their child qualifies for U.S. citizenship. The new guidelines will allow U.S. consular officials to screen foreigners who they decide might be coming into the U.S. for this supposed purpose, USA Today reports, and will let them require those visitors to prove that they have the money to pay for potential expenses, including transportation, living, and associated medical costs, and to guarantee that obtaining citizenship for their child is not the primary reason for their travel.

As USA Today notes, "White House officials offered no evidence or data to support assertions that 'birth tourism' is a growing problem. And critics quickly denounced the policy change, saying it's tantamount to a 'handmaid's test' and would pave the way for discrimination against female travelers."

"This change is intended to address the national security and law enforcement risks associated with birth tourism, including criminal activity associated with the birth tourism industry. We expect the rule will be published shortly. More details will be available when the rule is published," a State Department spokesperson told BuzzFeed. The State Department said in the rule document draft:

The Department is aware that many foreign nationals have sought B nonimmigrant visas for the purpose of obtaining U.S. citizenship for a child by giving birth in the United States. The Department has concluded that a more reason-



able interpretation of the statutory provision and a better policy is that the statutory provision authorizing the issuance of visas to temporary visitors for pleasure does not extend to individuals whose primary purpose of travel is to obtain U.S. citizenship for a child by giving birth in the United States. The Department considers birth tourism an inappropriate basis for the issuance of temporary visitor visas for the policy reasons discussed herein.

Consular officers do not have the right to ask visa applicants about their pregnancy status or to require a pregnancy test, but the new rule gives them the authority

to determine whether applicants are pregnant or traveling primarily to give birth in the U.S. It is unclear what protocol officials will use to determine that an applicant is pregnant or coming "for the primary purpose of obtaining U.S. citizenship for the child," as the rule puts it. Notes The Washington Post, while pregnant people will not be completely barred from obtaining a nonimmigrant visa, the application process will become more difficult, with the applicant required to prove that the reason for the travel is "legitimate."

Throughout his campaign and presidency, Trump has advocated

against "birth tourism" and "anchor babies." In an interview with Axios in 2018, Trump said he planned to issue an executive order that would end birthright citizenship. "We're the only country in the world where a person comes in and has a baby, and the baby is essentially a citizen of the United States ... with all of those benefits," Trump said. "It's ridiculous. It's ridiculous. And it has to end."

But while the president continues to advocate against birthright citizenship, his resorts and hotels remain extremely popular in international birthing forums. Russian parents looking to give birth in the U.S. often

stay at Trump-owned properties. Several of Trump's properties are mentioned as popular spots in Russian birthing forums, including the Trump International Beach Resort, Trump Palace, and Trump Royale, The Daily Beast reported.

The 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees U.S. citizenship to anyone born in the country, without reference to the immigration status of the child's parents: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside." According to the Pew Research Center, about 250,000 babies were born to foreign nationals in the U.S. in 2016. The data, compiled following announcements by the Trump administration of plans to end birthright citizenship, show a decline of 36% in the number of babies born in the U.S. to noncitizen parents since 2007.

This article was first published on Daily Kos.

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Trump and Iran: What, Why and When did it happen?

By: TMO Staff

Earlier this month, President Donald Trump ordered a drone strike on top Iranian Commander, Qasem Soleimani, in Baghdad Iraq. President Trump has said that Soleimani had to be taken out because he was plotting “imminent and sinister attacks”.

A day after the attack, President Trump from his Mar-a-Lago resort stated that “We took action last night to stop a war. We did not take action to start a war.”

Iran responded by sending a letter to the United Nations, in which they called the drone strike an act of terrorism and a criminal act. Tensions have been elevated for Iran since the United States, or more specifically President Trump decided to pull out of the nuclear deal, Joint Commission Plan of Action. Iran’s Ambassador to the United Nations, Majid Takht Ravanchi, said that “The US has started the economic war in — in



May 2018. Last night, they started a military war. By assassinating, by an act of terror, against one of our top generals.”

The United States has said that Soleimani was planning an attack on American diplomats in the region and the Pentagon blamed him and his Quds Force for the attacks on American bases in Iraq and the attack on the US Embassy in Baghdad in December.

Many Americans still do not know who Qasem Soleimani was and why President Trump saw him as an immediate threat to Americans in

the region. Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had called him “living martyr of the revolution”, so he was always portrayed in a positive light to the Iranian people. Soleimani was the head of the Revolutionary Guards’ Quds Force, a military unit that handles overseas operations for Iran’s government. He started his military career in the 1980s during the Iran-Iraq war.

Soleimani has been seen as an influential figure in Iran and the Middle East. Many believe that Soleimani and forces are behind many violent and

social conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Afghanistan Pakistan. Using the religious divides of Sunnis and Shias in Muslim countries, military conflict inflamed the already present tensions.

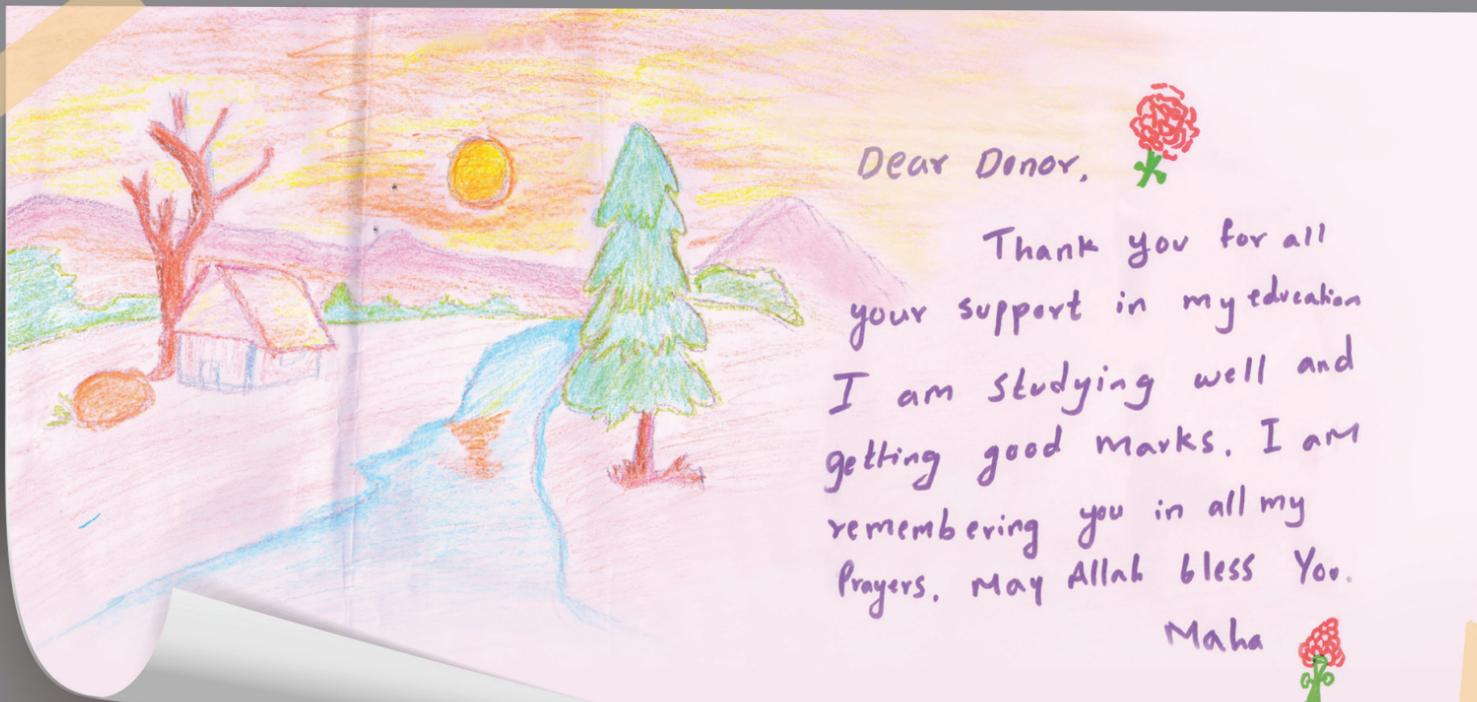
The death of Soleimani has had an unexpected effect on the world. Iranians have been fearful of a military conflict with the United States; a war is something the Iranian people have consistently been against. They have stated that they want peace with the United States and the world, but the Iranian government wants to take action for the killing of Soleimani.

Americans, as always, are divided. Some cheered at the news that President Trump took on a guy that seemed like the bully of the Middle East. Others felt sorrow for the death of Soleimani and described him as a good influential leader of Iran that fought of ISIS forces in Iraq and Syria, and now Iran has

suffered a loss. The viewpoints are polarized, but they are actually missing the point. Both President Trump and Commander Soleimani have committed vicious acts and neither would qualify as the ‘good guy’ in this situation.

What needs to be the focus is the real motivation behind President Trump’s actions to take out Soleimani. It has been stated that the drone strike was to ensure the safety of American diplomats and soldiers in Iraq, but the timing of the strike is interesting. As the world knows, in December 2019, the United States House of Representatives filed two articles of impeachment against President Trump and prepared them to be sent to the Senate for a vote and eventually a trial. On January 3, 2020, in less than a month since President Trump was impeached, he ordered the drone strike to kill

Cont on page 13



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Oman to Choose Successor to Sultan Qaboos

By: *Yousuf Ali*

On January 10, Oman's Sultan Qaboos had his death announced immediately triggering talk of a successor. This was because the Sultan had no children, and thus no direct heirs. For that reason, the royal family had to open a sealed envelope containing the name of the late sultan's designated successor. In the envelope, the name of Haitham bin Tariq, the cousin of Qaboos was found. According to Foreign Policy, the selection of Haitham "appears to signal his desire to perpetuate Oman's role as a facilitator of regional diplomacy. Yet Oman remains vulnerable to both foreign and domestic sources of instability as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates seek to expand their regional influence." The smooth choice of the successor does not mean Oman will not face any challenges in the near future.



For decades, Qaboos cultivated a reputation of Oman being a neutral country within Middle Eastern politics in refusing to take sides between regional rivals. For that reason, "Oman's reputation for neutrality and history of facilitating negotiations caused the Obama administration to seek Qaboos's assistance

in arranging secret meetings with Iran in 2012-2013 that eventually led to the Iran nuclear deal". Additionally, the US sent low ranking officials to honor Sultan Qaboos while both the prime minister and the crown prince of the United Kingdom came.

Oman has also been concerned about the

increasing power play of its neighbors such as the United Arab Emirates when one of its internal security service members was arrested. Qaboos received visits from leaders on the opposite sides of conflicts including the Prime Minister of Israel and the President of Iran. According to Al Jazeera English, "But,

for now, it is likely the vast majority of Omanis are behind the new leader, largely due to the legitimacy bestowed on him by the fact that he was selected by Qaboos, who many Omanis see as a father figure beyond reproach."

Syrian and Russian Forces Clash with Turkish Forces Following Ceasefire Violations

By *Yousuf Ali*

Over the last couple of weeks fighting between forces of the Assad regime and the Syrian opposition has intensified around the rebel stronghold of Idlib in northwestern Syria near the Turkish border. In addition to the opposition forces, the offensive has brought Syrian forces in conflict not only with opposition forces but Turkish forces in Syria meant to defend the country's interests against what they believe to be a Kurdish terrorist threat. According to the Middle East Monitor, the clashes have also involved fights between Russian forces who are aiding Assad regime forces in their offensive in Idlib. The latest offensive follows Turkish retaliation against Syrian forces for endangering Turkish forces and interests. Additionally, Turkey justifies its military intervention in Syria in terms of protecting civilians against attacks



by Russian and Syrian forces. According to TRT World, "Ankara sent in reinforcements north of the town of Saraqeb overnight, a move that came after the Syrian regime targeted Turkish observation posts killing seven Turkish soldiers and a Turkish civilian member of the military on Monday." This was following an attack that had

killed several Turkish troops and another which had killed over a dozen Syrian civilians. Turkey claimed to have targeted 50 positions of the Syrian regime and killed over 70 of its soldiers. Turkey demanded that Russia help its offensive in Idlib in accordance with previous ceasefire agreements. This is in accordance with what Turkish Pres-

ident Erdogan has stated about Turkish responses to the Idlib offensive.

Turkey has stated that it will retaliate unless the regime has halted its attacks on areas behind Turkish military posts in the Idlib area. According to Al Jazeera, "[i]f the Syrian regime will not retreat from Turkish observation posts in Idlib in February, Turkey will

be obliged to take matters into its own hands," Erdogan told his party's legislators in parliament. This was justified by saying that the Syrian regime was violating ceasefire agreements in the Idlib. The posts in the Idlib area were set up as part of a deal with Russia in 2019.

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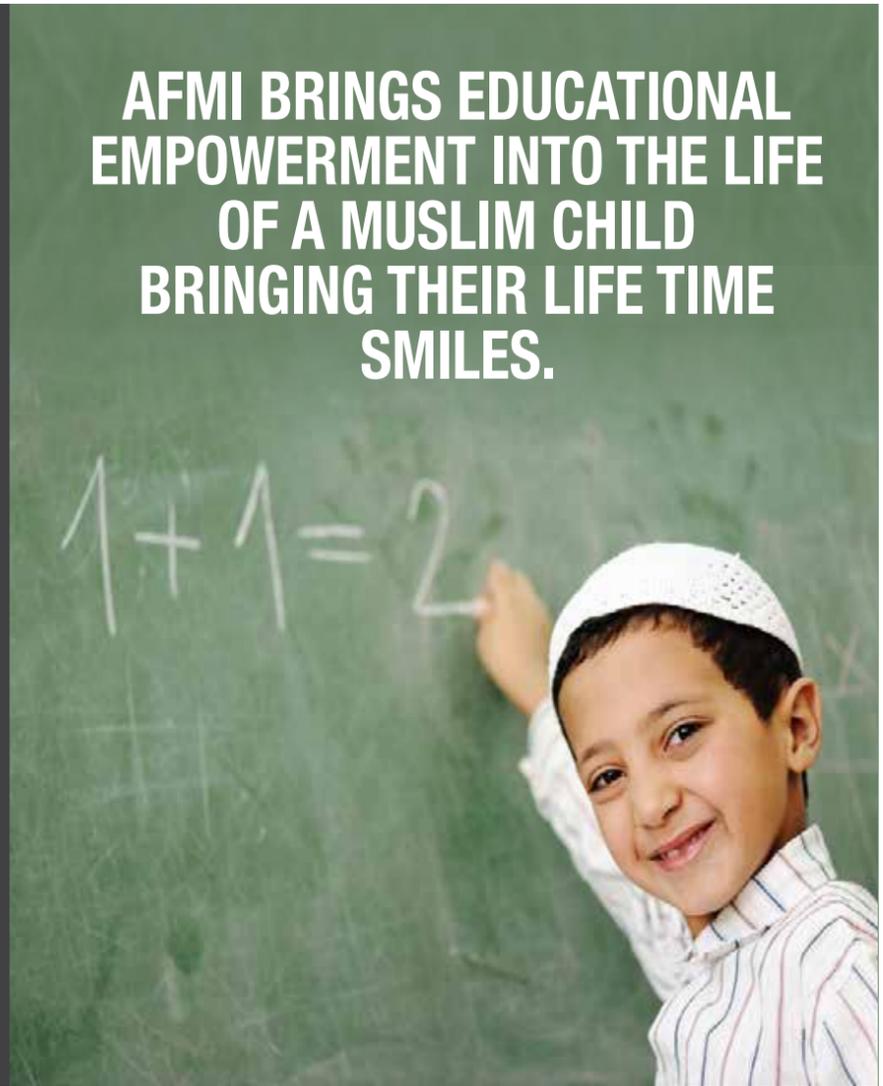


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Cont. from page 3. Progressive Turn

nie Sanders, are joining the progressive revolution in the Democratic Party. As the Republican Party becomes more and more Islamophobic, influenced by neoconservatives in its foreign policy and by white nationalism in its domestic policies, American Muslims find themselves leaning more and more towards the Democratic Party. But with the left turn comes a social agenda that cuts at traditional Islamic values and conceptions of family and marriage. This problem is becoming a wedge issue in the community.

One manifestation of this tension is over political alignment and association. Omar Suleiman, who is probably now the most prominent Islamic leader in the United States after allegations of sexual misconduct

sidelined Nouman Ali Khan and allegations of racism and betrayal took the shine off Hamza Yusuf, felt the need to pen a long article explaining his political views, activism, and political affiliations. He calls for transcending the left-right dichotomy. This might be a safe strategy for those who are not on the ballot, but for those who seek political office or a public role, the path to power at the moment requires a left turn first. Asma Uddin in her recent book, *When Islam is Not a Religion*, captures the dilemma of conservative religious Muslims like Suleiman: They are demonized by the right and rejected by the left.

There are two related issues that are simmering. One is the theological dilemma of how to deal with the growing acceptance of LGBTQ rights. Second is the issue of Muslims align-

ing politically with those who are themselves part of the LGBTQ community or are supporters of LGBTQ rights. Dr. Abdullah bin Hamid Ali, a faculty member in Zaytuna College, along with a reformed jihadist, Ismael Royer, is taking the lead on behalf of the traditional position. You can see in this video how he carefully rejects acceptance of gay Muslims who are not repentant.

The political issue is the more pressing one, because defeating Donald Trump in November 2020 is critical. Will some Muslims vote for Trump if Pete Buttigieg, the openly gay candidate who wrote a beautiful letter to Muslims, becomes the Democratic nominee? Will some American Muslims vote for Trump because he has made efforts to limit gay rights? I suspect that Hamza Yusuf, who is against same-sex mar-

riage, may have joined a Trump human rights initiative to stem the recognition of new civil rights. Will his supporters follow suit and break from the majority of the community and vote for Trump in 2020? Nearly the entire Democratic Party supports LGBTQ rights, will some Muslims turn away from it because of that and support a party whose leader called for a "Muslim ban"? This is the issue alienating some Muslims from the emerging progressive consensus in the community

In 2015, after the U.S. Supreme Court extended marriage rights to same-sex couples, I argued in an article in *Al-Jazeera* that American Muslims must accept this decision. We cannot fight against Islamophobia on the grounds that we should get the same rights as others under the law and then turn

around and promote homophobia denying gay people equal rights under the law. I received some pushback from conservatives, but it was muted and behind the scenes. Then support for gay marriage was at 27% in the American-Muslim community, and now a majority of American Muslims support same-sex marriage. This left turn, from politics to beliefs, is the new wedge, and it is likely to become an important issue in the coming election season and beyond. In my new book, *Islam and Good Governance*, I advocate that Muslims must allow the Islamic spiritual concept of *Ihsan* (to do beautiful things) to shape their public philosophy and politics. We shall see if this wedge issue leads to a beautiful outcome or an ugly political brouhaha.

China Rewrites the Quran and the Bible in Effort to Dismantle Religious Beliefs

By: TMO Staff

The government of China has been aggressively attempting to remove any religious beliefs that do not fit in with their authoritarian regime and to reflect their "socialist values".

As the world has seen the past few years, the Chinese government has been trying to remove any religious belief systems from their country. Kidnapping Uighur Muslims in putting them in concentration camps to be brainwashed or killed has been the most recent and vicious acts that have been committed by the Chinese government.

Changing the texts of two holy books, the Quran and the Bible, have been another effort to crack down on religious practices of any religion. China is a communist country and in a communist country, the national government is the highest and only thing the people can believe in, anything else, including the belief in any God, is strictly forbidden and is a punishable offense.

The Committee for Ethnic and Religious Affairs



of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, which oversees the ethnic and religious matters in China, held a meeting in November 2019 to discuss how to remove religious extremism in China. The committee did not directly state the Quran and the Bible were direct targets because they would be translating all "religious books", but if they are changing all religious books, the Quran and the Bible are included.

Chinese officials called for a "comprehensive evaluation of the existing religious classics aiming

at contents which do not conform to the progress of the times." The progress of times that they are referring to are actually the viewpoints held by President Xi Jinping and his political party. President Xi Jinping and his party has been actively working to remove the religious values of the Uighur Muslims and any dissidents that oppose the government's policies.

More information has not been revealed about this decision. It is unknown if the Chinese government has already started the process of revision of holy texts or

if this decision is more of an idea that is pending implementation. Additionally, other countries have not spoken about this issue either. Muslim majority countries have remained silent or could be unaware of what the Chinese government is planning on doing. The United States and other western European countries have also not released any statements regarding this issue.

It would not be surprising if the Chinese government decides to further this idea into a policy, because they already have placed over 1 million people in concen-

tration camps, that they refer to as re-learning centers, and they also monitor Chinese citizens heavily which leads the citizens to be fearful for their lives. However, it would be surprising if the United States, who was founded on religious freedom, and other countries, particularly Muslim majority countries, remain silent or do not speak to China about revoking an idea such as this one. While this remains a topic in China, the world awaits to see what they do next in their effort to criminalize religious beliefs.

CONTINUED STORY

**Cont. from page 1.
Travel ban**

visa program, which awards green cards to immigrants. According to the Department of Homeland (DHS) officials, the new travel ban will not apply to non-immigration visas, including tourist visas.

Trump signed the first travel ban executive order in 2017 at the end of his first week in office as part of an attempt to uphold his campaign promise of barring Muslims and creating a “complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States.” The current travel ban in effect, which was approved by the Supreme Court in 2018 after modifications were made, includes Iran, Syria, Libya,

Venezuela, North Korea, Yemen, and Somalia.

BuzzFeed News reports that the DHS media team has been preparing for questions regarding the new plan:

“Q: How many of these countries are majority Muslim? A: DHS did not consider or even research the predominate religion practiced in these or any country as part of its review. As a result, we would refer you to publicly available information about the demographics of these countries,” read one answer of a document titled “response to queries.”

The document appears to be a set of questions the agency predicts it will receive as the proclamation is announced and includes questions like

“why are these countries facing travel restrictions?” and why the new restrictions include fewer visa categories than the initial travel ban.

Two years ago, when I read the news that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a 5-4 vote to uphold Trump’s travel ban on immigration from several Muslim-majority countries, I thought back to my first experience in public school. My parents removed me from a full-time Islamic school after Sept. 11 out of fear of the threats the school kept receiving. Don’t get me wrong: They still fully practiced Islam, but they thought that as elementary school children, my brother and I should not be fearing for our safety every day.

I was excited to at-

tend a new school and make new friends. As a proud Pakistani I never thought I’d want to hide my identity, and looking back on the conversations I had as a fourth-grader is baffling. Only days after starting to attend my new school, a friend told me they couldn’t speak to me anymore because my country hated America. I was confused: My country was America. I later learned she assumed I was from Afghanistan and was under the impression that all Afghans hated America.

Years later, reading about our president’s plan to further limit Muslim tourism and immigration from Muslim countries brings back similar feelings. I remember before the countries listed were offi-

cially announced I hoped Pakistan would not be on the list and today, again, that fear arises. As the Trump administration plans to expand its travel ban, I fear for my roots, I fear for my family, and I fear for this country. As the presidential election approaches, Trump is expected to once again campaign on his promises to end illegal immigration and fight terrorism in his bid for reelection. His hate toward Muslim countries, citizens, and refugees seeking asylum is vividly displayed in the policies he creates and the conversation he invokes. We can only hope that legislators, advocates, and communities will continue to stand up against his bigotry and end the possibility of another Muslim ban before it is in place.

**Cont. from page 1.
Kobe Bryant**

of color for both his persistence and accomplishments. He spent 20 years playing for the Los Angeles Lakers and even after retirement remained a legend. Bryant not only won five NBA titles while playing for the Lakers but won two Olympic gold medals for the U.S. According to ESPN, he was “fourth on the NBA’s all-time scoring list, with 33,643 points.”

The news of Bryant and his young daughter’s death is something that can only be summed up in one word, devastating.

Bryant’s inspiration on my life as a person of color goes beyond the game of basketball. He proved that greatness does not stem from the color of your skin, religious views, or gender. It comes from within you and could only be reached through hard work, focus and dedication. If you grew up

in the 2000’s you understand that this man inspired a generation of people from all cultures throughout the world to exceed their own expectations, shoot for the moon and reach for the stars.

“The most important thing is to try and inspire people so that they can be great at whatever they want to do.”

Bryant showed us that this could only be earned through our action, self-motivation and the willingness to persevere knowing the odds are stacked against us. He was a magician on and off the court. He demanded the best out of everyone around him and he’s the reason I fell in love with the game of b-ball. He inspired me to never back down from a challenge, no matter how difficult it was and to be the best.

“Everything negative – pressure, challenges – is all an opportunity for me to rise.” Bryant was the

epitome of a true competitor and champion with a fearless approach towards overcoming all the trials and tribulations of life. He taught us that if we want something bad enough and we continue to better ourselves than failure is not an option. He inspired us to follow our passion and master our craft regardless of profession, through a universal way of life that is referred to as The Mamba Mentality.

“Once you know what failure feels like, determination chases success.”

Bryant was more than a basketball player, he was a husband and father to four children (one of which tragically lost her life in the accident). We mourn today the loss of Bryant and his daughter GiGi, who was destined to be his prodigy as well as a cornerstone for woman’s basketball. Bryant was killed Sunday when a helicopter he was traveling in to attend a

game with his second eldest daughter crashed in Calabasas, California. Bryant’s helicopter burst into flames and crashed in a nearby hillside, according to the Los Angeles Times. The reason for the crash is still being investigated.

According to the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Office, there were no survivors in the crash that killed nine people. While initial reports said there were five victims, nine individuals have been confirmed to be aboard the aircraft during this tragedy. Five have been publically identified apart from Bryant and his 13-year-old daughter Gianna Maria Onore (GiGi), with two confirmed by friends and family, Daily Kos said.

The two identified by friends and family are a mother and daughter pair, Sarah Chester and Payton Chester, the Los Angeles Times reported. Orange Coast College

baseball coach John Altobelli, his wife Keri Altobelli, and daughter, Alyssa Altobelli, were also on board, Altobelli’s brother told CNN. Christina Mauser an assistant girls basketball coach for Corona del Mar was also identified amongst the victims. Bryant’s aircraft was piloted by Ara Zobayan by Zobayan’s flight student Darren Kemp confirmed, the Los Angeles Times reported.

On January 26, 2020, nine people lost their lives and I pray that their families find peace. Bryant gave us one final lesson which is to appreciate the life we live and hug our loved ones because we will never know what tomorrow brings. On this day I lost a part of my childhood, part of my heart and my hero. We asked him for his hustle and he gave us his heart. It won’t ever be the same without you, Bean. R.I. P. Immortal one, your legacy will live forever.

**Cont. from page 9.
Iran**

Soleimani. Many have speculated if President Trump is trying to delay the impeachment process or “wag the dog”, a colloquialism that means to distract from impeachment, by starting a war with Iran.

Many people wondered this because the last president who was im-

peached, President Bill Clinton, launched an airstrike in Iraq in December 1998. The airstrike actually delayed the impeachment vote in the House of Representatives for some time.

This could have been an attempt by President Trump to “wag the dog” or it could be an attempt at “rally round the flag”. Rally round the flag is a concept used in political

science and international relations to explain popular support for war and conflict with another group, often short-run and does not last long. People have drawn comparisons to the time of President Bush and his military efforts after 9/11. People supported American military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan because the US was attacked and people were

seeking justice. After some time of no success in the region, the American people demanded that troops be pulled out of the region and the US step back from its role in delivering democracy to the Middle East.

A review of recent US history in the Middle East can reveal a lot about what is happening in the present and can give advice on what the

US should do and not do in the Middle East.

After the world’s response to the drone strike that killed Soleimani, President Trump has declared that the US will not pursue any military action further with Iran. Iran has said that they planned to take action against the US, but nothing has been revealed yet.



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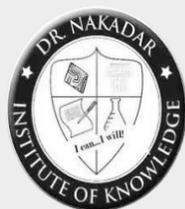
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Trump acquitted*

included soliciting the Government of Ukraine to publicly announce investigations that would benefit his reelection, harm the election prospects of a political opponent, and influence the 2020 United States Presidential election to his advantage.”

The second article was the Obstruction of Congress due to the fact that President Trump

instructed federal employees from responding to the subpoenas by the House during the impeachment inquiry. In the second article, it states that “through these actions, President Trump sought to arrogate to himself the right to determine the propriety, scope, and nature of an impeachment inquiry into his own conduct, as well as the unilateral prerogative to deny any and all information to the House of Representatives in the exercise of its “sole

Power of Impeachment”. In the history of the Republic, no President has ever ordered the complete defiance of an impeachment inquiry or sought to obstruct and impede so comprehensively the ability of the House of Representatives to investigate “high Crimes and Misdemeanors”.”

In December, the speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, made it clear to members of the house and to the public that this was

very saddening news that she did not look forward to doing. Most Democrats and Republicans voted along their party lines. However, Tulsi Gabbard decided to vote present in a roll call vote. Seeing that Speaker Pelosi was trying her best to make the vote on impeachment a non-partisan vote, Gabbard’s action was frowned up. Gabbard claims that she could not vote in good conscience on impeachment, but almost all members of the House have made it clear on where they stand with impeachment.

The White House released a statement called the impeachment “one of the most shameful political episodes” in history of the country and now has since then celebrated his acquittal.

While many thought the House impeachment was final, President Trump remained the president of the country prior to this long trial by the Senate. Had the Senate voted against Trump, he would have been removed from office leaving Vice President Mike Pence to be the next president of the United States.



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