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'Trump would ruin bilateral ties'

AGGRESSIVE

POLICIES: Trump becoming president will change the whole landscape, says expert

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REPUBLICAN candidate Donald Trump's victory in the race to the White House could hugely alter the relations that the United States have with the Muslim world.

Political pundit Associate Professor Dr Sivamurugan Pandian said while foreign policies would not be affected as a whole, Trump as president could affect ties between the United States and Muslim nations.

"Some believe that (his victory) would not have much of an impact. But for Malaysia, as a Muslim country recognised by the (Barack) Obama administration as a role model to other Muslim nations, Trump becoming president would certainly change the whole landscape.

"His policies are not friendly towards Muslim countries and his authoritarian leadership would ruin and affect bilateral relations."

During the course of the year-long campaign, Trump had called for a "complete and total shutdown" of Muslims entering the US, asking for surveillance on mosques, and had suggested a database for Muslims living in the US.

At a rally in Atlanta, Trump had said: "We have to go and we have to maybe check, respectfully, the mosques. And we have to check other places. Because this is a problem that if we don't solve, it's going to eat our country alive. Okay? It's going to eat our country alive."

In an interview with CNN, Trump had also said he thought Islam "hated" the US, and deplored the "tremendous hatred" which he said had partly defined the religion.

Professor Kamarulnizam Abdullah of Universiti Utara Malaysia, however, said Trump's extreme remarks on Muslims were merely for "domestic consumption".

He said he did not believe that Trump's ideals on immigrants, Islam and terrorism could be translated into his foreign policy, even if he won.

"Trump needs the support of Muslim countries in global counterterrorism efforts. He needs support from his major allies in the Middle East to check on Iran and the Islamic State (IS)."

Kamarulnizam said getting support from Muslim-majority countries in Southeast Asia, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, was also crucial following the "breakup" with the Philippines, to keep China in check.

Political analyst Dr Mazlan Ali, from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, predicted that US-Malaysia relations would continue to improve if the Democratic Party retained control of the White House.

He said this was because Hillary Clinton practised a more inclusive and friendly foreign policy that would not only benefit the west, but also Muslim nations.

"Muslim countries like Malaysia will prefer Clinton over Trump. If you look at her track record, during her time as secretary of state, she cultivated partnerships with Muslim nations and pledged to defeat IS," he told the *New Straits Times* yesterday.

On the other hand, he said, certain segments of the Muslim world held a

negative view of the Republican Party after the last Republican president, George W. Bush, launched wars against Afghanistan and Iraq.

Mazlan said Malaysia, a neutral country that promoted peace and religious tolerance, was wary of the previous Republican government's actions as well as the provocative statements issued by Trump on Muslims.

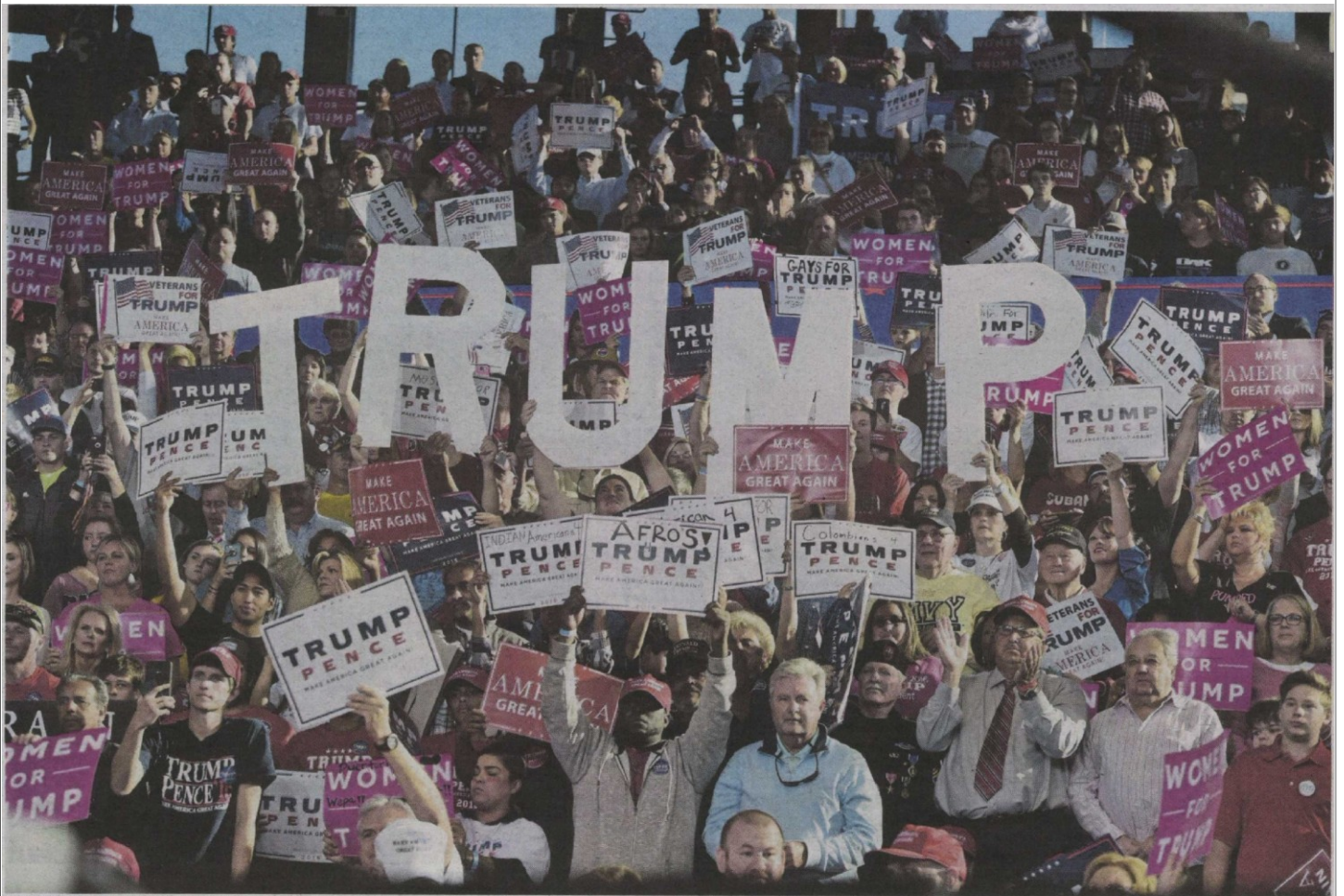
"If Clinton takes over, she follows a foreign policy similar to the Obama administration, which is non-confrontational and not aggressive. For the past eight years, there was less tension among the US and Muslim countries like Iran."

Mazlan also described Democrat leaders as "liberals" who defended Islam, unlike Trump, who held a more conservative and controversial view on the religion.

"Trump's policies may appeal to certain groups of the American population, but the world needs a more balanced leader who has had extensive experience in foreign policy and diplomacy," he said. **Additional reporting by Beatrice Nita Jay**



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Supporters **cheering at a rally** for Republican presidential nominee **Donald Trump** in Raleigh, North Carolina, on Monday. AFP pic