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India's 'Trump' Card

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Abstract:

The world's two largest democracies have developed into a "global strategic partnership" over the past few years, based on shared democratic values and increasing convergence of interests on bilateral, regional and global issues. The frequency of high-level visits of and meetings between President Obama and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have witnessed co-operation in almost all the fields covering trade and investment, defence and security, education, science and technology, cyber security, high-technology, civil nuclear energy, space, environment, agriculture and health. The road seemed quite smooth until the Presidential elections were declared in the U.S. The arrival of Donald Trump into the scene has had unprecedented impact on not only the overall political, social, economic and cultural aspects of the American community but also their counterparts in India too. The comments and remarks made by Donald Trump were applauded by many on grounds of their clear message to the international community that security of its people comes foremost. The problem arose only when the list of potential threats was put up. It included a significant population of Indians, Muslims of any country, to be more specific. India's response to the immigration problem can be handled in a diplomatic manner but the question of Muslims is of a very complicated nature. While the former can be dealt with in terms of foreign policy, the later is sure to raise issues of nationalism.

Keywords: Muslims, Hindus, minorities, American community, nationalism, democracy

1. Introduction

The last sixty-nine years after independence, India has come a long way in terms of its democratic and secular journey. The path has proved to be particularly stony for the BJP-led government or alliances. The reason behind the hiccups experienced by such governments are whether due to the discontent towards the RSS-inspired policies or due to the steadily rising insecurity of the Muslim community in the light of the Godhra riots remains to be studied in detail. It is to be kept in mind that neither Congress nor any other party led governments have fared so well as to be considered as model governments nor has the Muslim community felt any better under the non-BJP governments.

2. India's beefed up Nationalism

Nationalism for Indians, all belonging to diverse cultures, religions, languages and so on, has undergone a sea-change over the years. The distrust between the majority and minority quite evident from the first day of the fourth session of the Constituent Assembly remains more or less the same even after sixty-nine years of constitutional existence. After partition, violently bisected pre-partition community, the desire to build a unified, yet diverse, Indian society took something of the nature of an ideology. Upendra Baxi suggests that constitutions necessarily "forget" the initial violence that brought them into existence. If it were not so, the voice of discontent among any section of people, especially the minorities would not have been subject to contestations, claims and counter claims, despite the fact that the constitution clearly affirms the cultural, linguistic and religious rights of the minorities. Geelani, Afsal Guru, Zakir Naik, all three people represent a different case but all three commonly portray the complete disconnect between them and their so-called guardian, the government. The Muslim community came under fire after the 2001 census reports were out on the grounds of a so-called jump in their population while the fact remains that the 1991 census had excluded the Muslim-dominated state of Jammu and Kashmir and its population was taken into account only 10 years later. The second fatal strike to the community came in the form of a sudden surge in the feelings of sacredness of the very docile cows in the country. Those who consumed beef or even dared to dispose off carcasses were not spared. India's nationalist and secular notions were lost in the stampede of hatred towards all that was 'Muslim' and 'beef'. To add fuel to fire, Prime minister, Narendra Modi's silence on such key issues forces one to recollect his oft-reported speeches during his tenure as Gujarat chief minister, in which he said, "hum paanch, hamare pachees"(we are five and will have twenty-five offspring),to mock the Muslim community.

3. 'Fan of Hindus, Hate for Muslims'

Donald Trump, the President-elect of America triggered a chain of unpleasant reactions from all over the world for his statements regarding "Muslims" and migrants. Tens of thousands of Muslims enter and stay in the United States each year as tourists. Records show that approximately 100,000 Muslims became permanent residents of the U.S.A. in 2012 alone, according to the Pew Research

Centre. Trump's 'Make America Great Again', gave a blunt message to the world that whether we like it or not, for him, 'America comes first'. A 'total and complete shutdown of Muslims', is a clear indicator of Islamophobia that seems to be building up among the Americans specially after the terrorist attacks on the U.S. in the last 10 years. Another aspect of Donald Trump's campaign was his expression of interest in the 'Hindu' population in the U.S. While addressing a crowd of nearly 5000 people he repeatedly unabashedly conflated the words 'Hindu' and 'Indians' as if the two meant one and the same thing, according to the "Times of India". It was widely reported that to satisfy the spectacle hungry gathering, he declared that he is 'big fan of India' and 'big fan of Hindu'. Ironically in a speech delivered on another occasion he mocked the Indian call centres, where high percentage of the outsourced work from the U.S is done. Just like most of the countries of the world, India and Indian diaspora around the world has viewed the U.S Presidential Elections and the results thereafter with a lot of anticipation.

4. Deceiving Hindus, Disgracing Muslims

In his capacity as the President of the U.S, Donald Trump may be justified in putting the security of his country at the top of his preferences at least for the purpose of debating. But the Indian P.M, Narendra Modi might not be spared for allowing Togadias and Sakshi Maharajs to vent their feelings of communal hatred among the people of the country when the country is struggling hard to prevent an ostensible rise in communal polarization. The Justice Rajender Sachar Committee Report of 2006 and Mishra Commission Report of 2007 recorded that in terms of several development parametres, the condition of Muslims in India was worse than the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Donald trump has made some hard and harsh decisions. But India and Narendra Modi are yet to take some tough and sensible decisions. America's shut down of Muslims, is a step towards foreign policy but the same if done by India, is sure to destroy the very fabric of nationalism in India. While the nations of the world wait eagerly as Donald Trump is all set to take charge as the President of one of the most powerful nations of the world, the approximately 18 crores Muslim population in India is waiting eagerly to see if Narendra Modi chooses to go with or against the declarations of Trump. It remains to be seen whether India is able to identify the hollowness of Trump's words of praise about the 'Hindus' on one hand and the disgrace that he has brought upon himself and the U.S by his 'hate speech' on Muslims. For a country like India, whose existence rests in the unity of the diverse population supporting a nation that speaks of 'zero tolerance', towards populations of other nations or cultures, is very damaging to its conception of 'nationalism' and 'Indianness'.

5. References

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