



SADF COMMENT

Khalid Khan

Trump, Modi and Muslims

Abstract

Trump and Modi used similar languages during their campaign. Both mixed popular and economic aspirations with anti-Muslim sentiments to polarize their voters. But Muslims in particular and progressive sections in general, should not get scared with Trump's victory. In fact, this victory will provide a new space for dialogue on many issues which have been hitherto untouched, as it was also the case after the victory of Modi in India.

SADF - South Asia Democratic Forum

19 Avenue des Arts
1210 Brussels
Belgium

info@sadf.eu
www.sadf.eu

+12 026 834 180
+32 2 808 42 08

Reg. Num. BE 833606320

Keywords: India, US, India-US Relations, Modi, Trump, Trump presidency, President elect Trump

After Trump's election the Muslim community living in the US fears that Islamophobic statements might convert into policies. Such suspicions are natural because of the way Trump presented himself during the election campaign. Prominent among such statements is his remark on [a total and complete shutdown of Muslims" entering the country](#). Such a rise to power is not surprising for a considerable section of people living in India as is evident from the Modi's success during 2014 election. Although right wing in India has been in power in the past also but during the 2014 election progressive and secular section among Indian were worried with the rise of Modi to Prime Minister (PM) post, mainly, because of his alleged role in Gujarat violence and his anti-Muslim remarks in the aftermath. Such suspicions developed because Modi's statements were falling in thin line between supporting the Gujarat violence and condemning it. [His remark of expecting something worse as entire population of Gujarat was unhappy due to Godhra train burning and his smart quote of Newton's third of every action having an equal and opposite reaction seemed to justify Gujarat violence](#). After taking oath as a Prime Minister, Modi turned different, at least, in his speeches. Many times he extended an olive branch in the attempt to reach Muslim community as is evident from his assurance [in a meeting with the delegation of Muslim ulemas that minorities are as much a part of India as anyone else](#). At another instance, while addressing the BJP's National Council meet, he cautioned that [Muslims should not be regarded as Vote bank](#).

Violence against Muslims and Dalits are on the surge during recent year in spite of Modi's changed outlook. The incidents revolved around love Jihad, Beef ban and issues motivated by hyper nationalism. The lynching of Akhlaq over beef consumption; the suicide of a dalit research scholar, namely, Rohit Vemula in Hyderabad Central University; frequent sedition charges and disappearance of Muslim student, namely, Najeeb from Jawaharlal Nehru University, are among the most controversial incidents in this regards. What factors are prominently responsible for such incidents is an entirely different theoretical issue but India's peculiar demographic condition is also an important factor for such incidents. India's huge youth bulge with lack of education and appropriate employment played an important role in Modi's victory. Modi could touch the aspirations of youths and growing middle class through his popular language. His anti-Muslim

background helped consolidation of his voters. Series of corruption charges on the previous Congress led UPA (United Progressive Alliance) government added fuel to the fire.

Trump's success in USA happened under similar circumstances. He succeeded to crystalise the American nationalism with the economic aspirations of US voters. Like Modi, Trump also used popular Islamophobic sentiments to turn the tide in his favour. As mentioned earlier, [there are fears that his Islamophobic statements will now become his official policy](#). But the question is, will President Trump be able to maintain the temperature which he had shown as a Presidential candidate? There is no doubt that during post 9/11 being Muslim in US has become more difficult than before. [For example, anti-Muslim physical violence increased by 52 percent between 2003 and 2004](#). Trump attempted to catalyse his victory by touching this anti Muslim sentiment but it would be challenging for him to convert his speeches into policies as is evident from the fact that [his remark on a total and complete shutdown of Muslim entering US no longer exists on his official website](#). In fact, it is quite often observed that tone of politicians undergoes changes after assuming power. Former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee and [popular right wing leader LK Advani who called Jinnah a secular leader and faced controversies](#), also used similar tactics to makeover their image after coming to power.

Far more important is the responses of the communities at the receiving end. Taking example from India, Muslims have also changed their language on many crucial issues towards a more logical end. The educated sections of the community are getting more recognition in this regard and succeeded to change the approach of the Muslim community as it is observed from the issue of divorce. On the one hand, there is the Shah Bano case where Muslims were reluctant to change and on the other hand, there is the issue of Triple Talak (divorce) where Muslims are not in agreement. [Shah Bano was a 60-year old Muslim woman who went to court asking maintenance from her husband who had divorced her. The court ruled in her favour. A large section of Muslims saw this as an attack on Islam and succeeded to pressurize the then government to enact the Muslim Women \(Protection of Rights on Divorce\) Act, 1986. There were some groups among Muslims supporting court's decision but they were not influential. Triple Talak has been one of the most controversial anti-women issues practiced among Muslims in India.](#) Government attempted to reform such laws

and faced strong opposition from Muslim community time and again. However, voices against triple from within the Muslim community looked stronger during the recent years than before. [Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan which is a group of Muslim women, fiercely campaigned against Triple Talak and termed it Un-Islamic. Such movements provided enough space for the educated section among Muslims to pitch for a solid argument in favour of reforming such conservative practices.](#)

Thus, Modi's victory in India should also be seen from the viewpoint of convergence of two opposing voices somewhere in between and a growing space of dialogue. During this process, Modi has also changed his language to touch Muslim voters and looked far more responsible than before. With Trump becoming President something more welcoming should be expected from US democracy, which is far more experienced and mature than its Indian counterpart.

Biography of the author

Khalid Khan is Assistant Professor at Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi (India). He has completed his Phd title *Access to Higher Education in Public and Private Institutions in India* from School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India. He has completed dissertation for M.Phil from School of Social Sciences, JNU titled *Regional Disparities in Access to Higher Education in India*. He holds a Master's degree in Economics from The University of Burdwan, West Bengal, India. His research interest includes *Economics of Higher Education, Inequality, discrimination and human capital*. He also works on the issue of Muslim and Dalit backwardness. He has also written articles on comparative study of policies on higher education of India and Korea. He can be reached at khan.khalid7@gmail.com.