

KASHMIR
OBSERVER

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K O V I E W

AAP won, BJP didn't lose

The recent resounding victory of Aam Aadmi Party became the centre of attention in India. The victory once again proved the potential of the politics of AAP as a challenge to the BJP's nationalistic agenda. The election campaign was one of the bitterest in years, with the BJP plying an ideological agenda to mobilize people and the AAP focussing the electoral campaign on its record of governance like the visible improvement in the delivery of services in public hospitals, the quality of education and infrastructure in schools, and the cost of electricity in Delhi.

AAP's return to power in Delhi is arguably the biggest and the most significant event of 2020 in India. Arvind Kejriwal, the man who made it possible was one of the many noted activists who was once a part of the anti-corruption movement led by Anna Hazare. AAP has introduced an alternative political vision for India which transcends secular-communal politics of Congress and the BJP. This is a politics that aspires to transcend identity and ideology and represents the aspirations and expectations of the common man. It also offers a basic commitment to a clean, fair and just system, something that might seem utopian given the present state of politics in the country which basically thrives on appeal to identity and ideology.

AAP won its first election in 2013. Its first government supported by Congress lasted just 49 days. Kejriwal resigned in a huff when Congress refused to back his bill on Lok Pal. At the time, the loss of the government had disappointed AAP constituency and the party built on a sustained protest against corruption was seen as incapable of providing a stable government. Many people as much as wrote off the AAP. But as its third successive win in elections has since borne out, AAP has come a long way and re-invented itself as a political force in India. AAP's landslide triumph is a political development of profound significance for India with a likely fallout on the elections in Bihar later this year. At a time when the PM Modi is again seen as invincible, AAP victory could be the first chink in his armour.

But the BJP's defeat is not necessarily a political setback for the party. While the party may have lost, it has won the ideological battle by defining the contours of electoral politics: in its campaign. Kejriwal foregrounded his governance record, but shied away from taking on the BJP on an ideological front. He didn't advocate equal citizenship and political rights of India's Muslims. It was apparent from his general silence on Citizenship Amendment Act or for that matter the ongoing protest at Shaheen Bagh. So the AAP win isn't really a defeat for the BJP and its ideological project. And until an opposition party in the country wins on the strength of an alternative, non-Hindutva ideology, no electoral reversal is a defeat for the BJP.

OTHER OPINION

Visa power: On deportation of British MP

The government has explained its decision to detain and deport British Labour MP Debbie Abrahams, saying that she had attempted to enter India on an "invalid visa", as the government had revoked her e-business visa three days prior to her travel. It also seems clear that the decision to revoke the visa was prompted by her frequent criticism of India on the issue of human rights in Jammu and Kashmir, and a proclivity towards echoing Pakistan's line on the issue. After the government's amendment to Article 370 in August, Ms. Abrahams, who is the Chairperson of the U.K.'s All-Party Parliamentary Group on Kashmir, had stepped up her campaign, and raised the issue of J&K in the British Parliament as well. The government has not explained, however, how someone it considers so inimical to Indian interests received a one-year business visa in the first place in October 2019, and why it took four months to cancel it. Eventually, its reaction to her arrival in New Delhi, detaining and questioning her before deporting her was nothing short of ham-handed. To be clear, the government is well within its rights to deny entry to anyone that it desires to. However, if its plan was to avoid public criticism of its actions in J&K or of its democratic values, then its treatment of the MP has only ended up having spotlighted its actions even more. Parallels will also be made to the response to criticism from the U.S. Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, who like Ms. Abrahams has family ties with India, and co-sponsored a House resolution critical of India on J&K. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, in Washington in December, cancelled a meeting with the influential House Foreign Affairs Committee as a snub to Ms. Jayapal, instead of trying to engage her at the meeting. The government is apparently banking on the fact that Ms. Jayapal and Ms. Abrahams are from Opposition parties, and hence it will not face adverse consequences from the Trump administration or the Johnson government.

Where governments like those in Turkey and Malaysia have themselves been critical, India's response has been equally sharp: the démarche to the Turkish Ambassador this week and travel advisories issued earlier to Indians travelling to Turkey, or the trade restrictions on palm oil imports, most of which are from Malaysia, are notable examples. New Delhi's anger over negative comments by Turkish President Erdo an or Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad on India's "internal affairs" would seem more valid if it was not at the same time organising groups of envoys to visit J&K and encouraging them to express their positive opinions on the situation there. In the same vein, the boycott or deportation of politicians, visa denials to foreign journalists, all appear to be a part of a pattern of whimsical behaviour not suited to a democracy like India that prides in its traditions of openness and debate.

- The Hindu

Kashmir: A Bargaining Chip For Trump?

MAYA MIRCHANDANI

It can be argued that the disappointment of a flailing trade relationship has also encouraged Washington to use statements on Kashmir as a lever to pressure India on concessions. As economic expectations begin to fade, Kashmir and the CAA have become an inflection point and demand scrutiny of whether such statements and offers from Washington would have been made at all if the economic partnership were stronger.

As India rolls out the red carpet to receive US President Donald Trump next week, rough spots that have arisen in the wake of the Modi government's decisions on Kashmir and the subsequent passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act will need diplomatic resolution. The Modi government's sudden dilution of the provisions of Article 370 in Kashmir in August 2019, and the move to deny persecuted Muslims from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan the right to seek asylum in India, have not only led to protests at home, but also to disruptions in India's diplomatic ties abroad, especially with the United States. Even though India has relied on global support for its fight against Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism to defend its move on Article 370, Indian diplomats have found themselves playing defense in world capitals, as Pakistan (through China) has used every opportunity and forum to seek international censure against India.

In the last six months, India has firmly rejected two offers by Donald Trump to mediate between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, dismissed as ill-informed and motivated two hearings on Capitol Hill that raised concerns over human rights in the Kashmir valley; now, just days before Trump's arrival in Delhi, there are bad optics over a letter by four senior Senators to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo seeking an assessment on Kashmir and the Citizenship Amendment Act. At a time of partisan politics and ideological polarisation in both countries, Delhi's response to hearings and resolutions on Capitol Hill, led largely by legislators from the Democratic Party, was dismissive. However, the fact that one of the signatories to this latest letter includes senior Republican Senator Lindsey Graham (also known to be close to Trump) could indicate that concerns over human rights in India are now becoming bipartisan in a re-election year for Donald Trump.

At last week's Munich Security Conference, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar pointedly rebuffed Senator Graham's concerns at a panel they attended together, but the repeated statements from Washington, in the face of a structural economic decline in India and floundering trade ties begs the question of whether the US is using the articulation of such concerns as a bargaining tool to 'get more' from India during the Trump visit. For the last two years, President Trump's 'Make America

Great Again' and Prime Minister Modi's 'Make in India' campaigns have been at odds with each other. As the Indian economy continues to reel under the impact of demonetization and a poorly implemented GST regime, tension between Washington and Delhi over trade has mounted. Retaliatory tariff wars have led to America filing a dispute complaint against India at the World Trade Organisation, and to India now having the dubious honor of being declared a 'developed' country by the United States Trade Representative (USTR).

Under Trump, the US has consistently accused both India and China of wrongfully claiming benefits reserved for 'truly' developing countries and sought to renegotiate trade deals. India had seen nearly 2,000 goods exempted from US trade tariffs until 2019, when it was stripped of its status under the Generalised System of Preferences or GSP. These obstacles come against the backdrop of two decades of strengthening ties that saw four presidential visits to India, a nuclear trade deal, a surge in bilateral trade of goods and services from 16 billion dollars in 1999 shooting up to 142 billion in 2018 (18 billion dollars in defense, at last count), and a strategic re-alignment of the Indo-Pacific which placed India squarely as America's preferred strategic partner in Asia. The India-US relationship had received a fresh push with the elections of Modi and Trump in 2014 and 2016 respectively, in the hope that strong, decisive leadership focused on economic growth would benefit both countries.

But for Trump's protectionist, isolationist America, support for India's regional primacy in Asia has a cost. Not only has the US under Trump equated India with China on trade practices, it has also attempted to draw India in as the cold war between the US and China heats up over technology. Washington has expressed disappointment that Delhi, looking for ways to drive its new digital economy, has not taken a clear position on the possibility of acquiring 5G technology from China despite American warnings of potential security risks. It can be argued that the disappointment of a flailing trade relationship has also encouraged Washington to use statements on Kashmir as a lever to pressure India on concessions. As economic expectations begin to fade, Kashmir and the CAA have become an inflection point and demand scrutiny of whether such statements and offers from Washington would have been made at

all if the economic partnership were stronger.

That nation-states act first and foremost in self-interest is a truism. Until the arrival of Donald Trump in the White House, economic imbalances and geopolitical quests aside, the India-US friendship had also prided itself as being one of democratic equals - the oldest democracy and the largest democracy joining hands to protect and uphold of liberal values in the international arena. The early 2000s saw Washington articulate support for India's many diplomatic and security endeavours premised on this ideological partnership: for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council, as a strategic ally and partner in the fight against terrorism, and in countering China's attempts at hegemony in the region.

International opinion was once considered a moderating force in favour of citizens who have equity in the State and against governments that act against liberal principle. But as Prime Minister Modi readies to receive Donald Trump, all eyes seem to be on whether it (international opinion) can still be a game-changer. On the question of rights in a re-defined foreign policy paradigm that is no longer risk-averse and prioritizes transaction over ideology, Delhi recognizes only too well the clear advantages it offers Washington as its own lever against criticism on Kashmir and the CAA: access to Indian markets, especially for defence manufacturing, strategic leverage against China, even ideological support for Trump's America make India an important friend and ally.

And while the comity of democracies, led by the United States in the years after World War II, may well speak in the language of rights and freedoms, of values and principles, in reality one cannot ignore the fact that these norms often come secondary to more practical concerns. Strategic and security imperatives, the quest for economic growth, and the fight against terrorism globally have, over time, all proven to be greater imperatives than the upholding of international norms. So even if the divergence between India's increasingly majoritarian domestic politics and a secular foreign policy poses challenges to diplomacy, realpolitik suggests that great democracies today can just as easily claim their place in the league simply by lip-service to liberal values in an age of populism.

NDTV

Learning Through Adventure

GARY STIDDER

Learning outside the classroom through adventurous activities is known to have significant educational benefits. It helps children develop technical, intellectual and social skills by overcoming challenges and sharing decisions.

Such activities might include various forms of orienteering, using a climbing wall or different forms of cycling - as well as team building, trust games and problem-solving tasks.

From a psychological perspective, they help pupils develop a "can do" attitude that can be applied to all aspects of school life. They instil a sense of determination which gives them the confidence to face up to challenges, express and deal with emotions, and a desire to succeed.

Adventurous activities also help pupils to overcome fear, anxiety and physical stress. Quite often this means putting children outside of their comfort zones and exposing them to scenarios they are not used to. These may be situations they perceive as too difficult or potentially dangerous, but are all part of teaching them about risks and safety.

It is a physical education teachers' role to plan and put into action situations that can provide maximum mental development but with minimum risk. In the UK, the National Curriculum for physical education requires teachers to provide opportunities for taking part in outdoor and adventurous pursuits.

The idea is to present pupils with intellectual and physical challenges which encourage them to work in a team, building trust and problem solving skills.

But there are academic benefits too. This is a chance to promote cross-curricular teaching whereby pupils can improve their own learning and performance, improve their literacy, numeracy and communication skills - with applications for other core curriculum subjects such as mathematics, ge-

ography and science.

Alternatively, a focus on personal and social development using basic skills related to outdoor activities can be achieved through a number of trust games, team-building exercises and problem-solving activities which promote feelings of cooperation.

They also enhance pupils' ability to work together and develop a sense of responsibility. Many of these are particularly suited to the beginning of

brace the popularity of mountain biking, BMX biking, skateboarding, and scooting, which can all be viewed as adventurous forms of exercise. Yet few schools seem have recognised this as a means to increase pupils' activity levels and tend to ignore the potential of introducing these activities into their PE lessons.

It's also worth stressing that adventurous activities are ideal for involving all pupils (including those with additional learning needs). Minimal adaptations are required, and young people can work

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the academic year for pupils making the transition from junior schools into secondary education, when confidence building is especially valuable.

Physical education teachers also need to be open to new kinds of exercise that children may enjoy at home, which can easily be transferred to increasing the appeal of PE at school - particularly for those children who seem to lack confidence.

Balancing skills

Young people are participating in very different physical activities outside of school compared to the types of sport taught as part of the formal PE curriculum, such as cricket or rugby. For example, many enjoy cycling in their free time, so providing the chance to incorporate this could make the subject more appealing to a broader section of pupils.

At the University of Brighton, trainee teachers have been introduced to this relatively new concept of "physical education on wheels". The idea is to em-

cooperatively at a level appropriate to their needs.

Yet many children are unable to enjoy this kind of experience - often because of understandable concerns from their schools about cost, expertise, facilities and time. But an adventurous approach to PE should not be restricted to schools with access to neighbouring forests or mountain ranges.

Adventurous activities can all be taught on a school site and introduced in a safe and enjoyable way even in schools that have limited outdoor space where lessons can be adapted for playgrounds and school halls.

In this way, teachers can ensure that everyone does the same activity with minimal adaptations to the environment, and without the need for specialist equipment. All pupils can contribute to a shared group outcome - and benefit from an adventurous approach to their physical education.

By arrangements with the conversation