



NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF INDO-CANADIANS

(A Registered Not-for-Profit Organization)

Commentary (March 1, 2018)

Extremist influence on Foreign Policy on India Must be 'Righted'

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's weeklong adventure in India that began with the civilizational greeting in Sanskrit '*Namaste*', was supposed to be a memorable one, given India's cultural ethos of '*Atithi Devobhava*'. Prime Minister Trudeau, seemingly a genuine person travelled to India with his family to make it a cultural experience, apart from the prime ministerial business. Despite shared Canadian and Indian values, such as, pluralism and tolerance, 1.4 million strong Indo-Canadians, with strong cultural and economic links with India, alone should be a cause for bonhomie between Canada and India.

Yet, trade between Canada and India amounts to \$8.4 billion far below the potential. Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's 1996 mission was marred by India going nuclear in 1998. While the freeze in Canada-India relations can be traced to nuclear explosion in 1974, it became redundant subsequent to India becoming nuclear power in 1998. Globalized free trade offered opportunity for the two countries to get out of the time wrap. In 2012, Prime Minister Harper visited India to triple two-way trade by 2015, with an eventual free trade deal. The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a bilateral visit to Canada in 2015 after a gap of 42 years that brought life to Canada-India relations. The nuclear cooperation agreement between Canada and India permitted Canada to sell 7 million pounds of uranium, worth quarter of a billion dollars after 40 years. This was the beginning of a new chapter in Canada-India relations, influenced by the strong and vibrant Indo-Canadian community, based on renewed mutual trust and strategic interests.



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PM Trudeau's maiden visit to India, though not without reason, was branded as, "tragicomic, total disaster, slow moving train wreck, fiasco, bad to worse, sabotaged trip, disastrous India adventure, snubbed by Indian PM, clouded in controversies" etc. An opportunity was lost just in a week making Canada-India friendship a mirage. While most remained focused on the wedding attire, Bollywood, Bhangra dance and cultural pretensions of Trudeau family in India, it hoodwinked the ethnic-centered divisive vote-bank politics for 2019 elections at the cost of foreign policy with a friendly country. The visit aimed to win Sikh (454,000 population) voters at home who generally vote *en masse* for the liberal party. But it ignored other Indo-Canadians (population over 800,000) who usually vote by their conscience but helped advance Canada-India relations. Earlier, the Ontario legislature passed a private member's motion 46 recognizing 1984 anti-Sikh riots as 'genocide' where only a small number of law-makers voted. The MPP Harinder Malhi who moved the motion 46 was elevated to cabinet minister, despite resistance from Indo-Canadians asking to rescind motion 46. The Indo-Canadians created a harmony committee to state facts and stop divisive politics (www.sikhriots1984facts.com/hello-world/). A small number of fringe extremists, called Khalistanis, who control some Gurudwaras in Canada barred Indian diplomats, elected officials and anyone in Canada who opposed 'Sikh Nation', called Khalistan. This is reminiscent of terrorism originating from Canada in 1985 when Air India Flight 182 bombing took 329 lives off the coast of Ireland. A second bomb-laden suitcase, destined for another Air India flight, exploded and killed two baggage handlers at Tokyo's Narita airport. The only person, Inderjit Singh Reyat, convicted in the Air India bombing was released despite psychologist's assessment identifying him as a "relatively high risk" for future group-based violence and showed "a lack of true empathy and remorse". Professor André Gerolymatos, Simon Fraser University, summed up Reyat's release as, "It also sends a bad message out there to potential terrorists, that even when you're caught, you can keep your mouth shut, lie



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and we'll still let you out." Gerolymatos who served two years on Canada's Advisory Council on National Security and says the Khalistan movement is still alive in Canada, and Reyat will be free to help revive it once his sentence expires in August 2018.

Upon assuming the office of Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau boasted of having more Sikh Ministers in his cabinet than the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. What motivated such a statement just when the new government was formed? Retrospectively, it reflects the retrogressive policy of PM Trudeau's government that is engaged in ethnic-centred divisive votebank politics. PM Trudeau's foreign policy concerning India failed because of the blurred optics held hostage to Khalistani mindset. Even the prominent Sikh leader, Captain Amrinder Singh, of Punjab was not allowed to visit Canada. Last year, Captain Singh refused to meet Canada's defence minister, Harjit Singh Sajjan, accusing him of being a Khalistani sympathizer. Though Mr. Sajjan denied the charge, such a perception wouldn't change without an evidence to the contrary. Given the controversies during the visit, PM Trudeau chanced with Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amrinder Singh who politely handed the name of nine Khalistanis based in Canada funding and fuelling terrorism in Punjab. Obviously, it is not about "freedom of expression" but tacit veiled support to Khalistani extremists in Canada. Not only that, an invite to a former Khalistani terrorist, Jaspal Atwal, convicted for attempting to kill Indian minister Malkiat Singh Sidhu on Vancouver Island in 1986, to dine with PM Trudeau on two occasions put the visit in jeopardy. As if this was not enough, a picture of Jaspal Atwal with PM Trudeau's wife, Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, went viral making the entire visit a thoughtlessly planned expedition, unless it was a designed move that misfired. Another Atwal's picture appeared with the Infrastructure Minister Amarjeet Sohi at a film industry event in Mumbai. The invite to Atwal, though rescinded later, was facilitated by British Columbia liberal MP Randeep Sarai, who owned responsibility. This is obvious that Khalistani moles



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within the PM Trudeau's team wrecked Canada's relationship with a friendly country like India in pursuit of their extremist and separatist agenda. India has no appetite for separatism or terrorism, not the least Canada that PM Trudeau should know better given the Quebec experience.

What should be concerning to all Canadians is the spin given by the national security adviser Daniel Jean indicating that Atwal's presence was arranged by factions within the Indian government. How could it be when MP Randeep Sarai admitted to facilitating the invite for Atwal? While PM Trudeau stood by the statement of his national security advisor, the Indian government slammed this allegation as "baseless and unacceptable". Two wrongs do not make a wrong right, the relationship can only be salvaged by recognizing the facts.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed PM Trudeau with a ceremonial reception in New Delhi. Both India and Canada jointly announced partnership for security and growth to realize the full potential of bilateral trade and investment. Importantly, both the leaders agreed to expand security cooperation through institutionalization of security framework and an agreement on a bilateral framework for cooperation on countering terrorism and violent extremism. It is now to be hoped that cooperation on countering terrorism and extremism between Canada and India will put an end to support for fringe Khalistani and extremist elements to usher harmony and peace. India's civilizational belief, "A relationship is about thoughts and not things" holds lessons for us.

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