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# THIRD CONCEPT

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- ❖ **Women PMs of South Asia**
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## Trump's trumping tactics

American president Donald Trump's much-touted two-day India visit on 24-25 February has been high on optics. Tens of thousands of people lined the streets of Ahmedabad city in Gujarat, to greet President Trump and he along with Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi later addressed a crowd of more than 100,000 people at the Motera cricket stadium where the program was designated as Namaste Trump on the lines of Howdy Modi in September 2019 at Houston. While President Trump along with PM Modi hogged media headlines, with plenty of fanfare and botched speeches that seemed like songs sung in each other's praise with least tinge of diplomacy or statesmanship on either side. Many observers of Indo-US relations have opined that President Trump's India visit was just not a diplomatic trip, nor was it explicitly a display of solidarity with PM Modi and his government at a critical juncture when Indian economy is in doldrums and politico-social environment within the country is mired in protests and sectarian violence. As one expert has put it, Trump visited India as part of his 2020 campaign trail for re-election and definitely his visit was "strategically designed to stoke themes of nationalism and protectionism for those with a foothold in both countries."

Presence of 1.3 million strong Indian Diaspora on American soil has become to reckon with and no presidential aspirant can afford to ignore this community for which Trump has been trying hard to court over the years and his presence at Howdy Modi spectacle was also a part of this strategy. Fully aware of the fact that a vast majority of the American-Indians are traditional supporters of the Democratic Party, President Trump still hopes to garner some support with the help of the influence of PM Modi and that seems to be far-fetched idea for some experts. Barring big-ticket trade deal, just three agreements have been signed between Washington and New Delhi during President Trump's India visit. Two of these are defence deals under which India will buy American choppers worth \$3 billion and the second agreement deals with a 'letter of cooperation' in energy sector enabling India to import more LPG from US. The third agreement is a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on cooperation in the field of mental health and safety of medical products. Non-materialization of trade deal was followed by inability to hammer out a possible deal on American sale of nuclear reactors to India.

Taking cognizance of India's acquisition of US choppers that would add to India's logistical capabilities of the Indian Army and Navy, some defense analysts also draw attention to the fact that net gainer is American business in defense and energy and these deals also entail the potential of impacting India's relations with countries wherefrom India has been procuring defense-related equipment and energy-related items. In the wake of deteriorating trade relations between New Delhi and Washington, American move of taking India out from the list of 'developing' countries when it comes to trading rules, is likely to add to India's worries. Sanguinity about reinvigorating trading ties that were about to emerge from President Trump's current visit had already been pushed to the wall by American President when he said that he had saved the big-ticket trade deal for later on. In the election year when Donald Trump is seeking re-election, his every move is probably dictated by domestic compulsions that call for queering the pitch for a suitable trade catering to American economic and trade interests, especially when Trump himself is a businessman and his reported vulnerability to business interests groups within the America vitally caters to his political stakes.

Vast amount of public money spent on Howdy Modi and Namaste Trump events without any tangible gain puts a question mark on India's negotiating skills. Inability of selling the idea of India as world's leading consumer market with potential 700 consumers has culminated in not eliciting foreign investments to take the country on the trajectory of growth. In the face of India already confronted with economic crunch, slowdown impacting all sectors of economy; with unemployment at near a half-century high, and sluggish growth, President Trump's visit to India could be seen as a good exercise in event management and personal image-building wherein Trump succeeded in trumping us very elegantly.

— BK