

# Daily Times

## Political hyperbole

*Everything said, it is still uncertain to what levels and extent Mr Trump's parochial way of running a government can take him*

Osama Rizvi

February 13, 2017

The rise of the alt-right; International nationalism; Resorting to protectionist measures. Disintegration (EU); Flurry of, what may seem to others 'controversial', Executive Orders. These are the tag-lines of late embellishing the national and international newspapers and magazines. But there is a catch. Many of such written expressions would be construed differently when read by a man with some 'political' sense and those without it. Many of these may and actually are hyperboles (to some extent) as to attract the attention of the reader, to get the first click. I write this piece in response to the daily dose of unintelligent and unfounded speculations that people are wont of making without bothering themselves to read.

Mr David Runicmen, a British academic, rightly argued when he said that there is a time when politics matters little to people but then all of a sudden it matters all too much. It is very clear that since the election of Mr. Trump, the latter phase has prevailed. And it is here to stay, until or unless we do not dare to break some of the myths we believe in which is only due to our negligence for reading for indulging in a sort of investigative scrutiny trying to find the real issue. Let us start with the slogan with which the US was clamouring a few days back. "Bringing back our jobs". It is not China, bilateral trade, or the immigration that has sucked up all the jobs but if one is to blame, even though one should not, it is to be on automation. There are many examples how the technology of Artificial Intelligence has rendered many jobs not fit for humans. Take the example of Enlitic: A deep-learning system that is now being tested in Australia. The software can diagnose diseases, analyse X-rays and identify cancer.

Moreover, the field of medicine is not the only profession feeling the heat of automation. Jobs in the field of law are also vulnerable. There is software in existence that can rummage through dossiers of legal documents and quickly pinpoint the desired files. In one study, it was revealed that automation accounted for more than 70 percent of the loss of a job in the US' Rust Belt and China's share was only a paltry 20-30 percent. Thus, the claim of bringing back our jobs doesn't

quite make sense — they never left at the first place, at least not to the level which is manifested by the Trump’ tweets and his bent for protectionism. Secondly, grumbling about the lack of jobs, again at the intensified level by Mr Trump, is unfounded itself. Economic yardstick, I opine, is a better option while gauging the performance of a country as it is an outcome of many factors: political stability, peace and better standards of living. As without these a country cannot do well on the economic front.

The USA, the largest economy in the world with a GDP of \$17trillion, claiming about the lack of jobs is somehow ironic. Yes, there are issues but ‘unemployment’ is not one of them — not in the top slot. When Mr. Barack Obama assumed the position as the President of United States of America, it was a time which was replete with the residue of the 2007-08 Financial Crisis. The unemployment rate at that time stood at 6.8 percent which even crossed 7 percent after a month. Fast forward eight years, and in his last month, January, Mr Obama’s administration added 227,000 jobs as per the Job report of US Labor Department, and the unemployment rate now stands at 4.8 percent — it touched 4.6 percent level not seen since August 2007.

The last month of January marks the 76th consecutive months of job gains as well. Hence, it is evident that Mr Trump is inheriting a strong economy. This also highlights the problem of out-performing the prior administration gave their winsome economic performance. The Federal Reserve Bank of America’s Chair Janet Yellen has declared the US job economy is ‘near-full employment’. However, this doesn’t mean that US economy is free from problem. Wage growth and labour participation rates present a challenge.

While Mr. Trump is urging the Multinationals to “stay in America”, The Economist recently covered the situation faced by these companies. Very logically and convincingly the magazine lays naked the facts that how multinational companies are already in retreat. Some have grown too much, and some have not been astute enough to see the change coming. The global share of their (MNC) profits have fallen, and many have curtailed their operations as to save costs. In this light, Mr. Trump’s stance only seems to accelerate the, what may be termed, the natural process of re-adjustment and may lead to the collapse of few, and loss of others. But in any case, there is no magic wand or no magical incantation by which Mr Trump can force these companies to do what he wants them to do. It should also be known that the US’s economy hence, their soft power, military expenditure and many other vitalities depends upon the prosperity of the business of MNCs — whose budgets outshine even countries. On the visa ban, Mr Trump chose those seven countries that only accounted for one percent of visa issuance in terms of employment or education. Keeping his promise to the US nation as well as not hurting the revenues or benefits reaped by the labour of the immigrants. A recent study by The Cato Institute found out that since last 40 years there have been only three deaths attributed to people who entered the US as refugees.

Everything said, it is still uncertain to what levels and extent Mr. Trump’s parochial way of running a government can take him. He is clinging to the relics of the past-nationalism, protectionism and xenophobia. His actions, at times, are symptomatic of a catastrophic future. The recent phone call with Australian Prime Minister, the issue of South China Sea and building a wall etcetera. Yes, at times there is a flash of WWII passing through my and many other minds. But then, this flash is eclipsed by the light of hope. Does Mr Trump’s ascension to the throne bode the descent of US as a superpower? It is too early to answer that question. But one

thing is for sure, if they want to continue enjoying the privileges courtesy their acceptance, diplomacy and shrewdness, Mr Trump, if not stopped, can pose a serious threat to their current position.