**What Lies Ahead for India?**

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As India prepares for the upcoming general elections, all eyes are on Modi as he seeks a third consecutive term in power, with many predicting victory for the BJP-led Alliance (NDA). The Congress party is spearheading a determined opposition effort aimed at ending the reign of the NDA government after ten years. Nonetheless, inadequate leadership in recent years has posed problems for democratic systems and weakened the control of Parliament in India.

This election will be defined by India’s global reputation, the controversial Ram Mandir dispute, the effects of Modinomics, the Citizenship Amendment Act, increasing joblessness, and escalating communal tensions. The Modi ki Guarantee slogan, touted to offer employment opportunities, eliminate illegal wealth, and manage inflation, is seen as misleading because of unmet commitments. The danger to Indian democracy looms large, as the BJP-RSS collaboration actively undermines secularism and distorts historical facts. The essential function of Parliament in reflecting popular wishes and ensuring governmental transparency should be valued and respected. A rise in the Hindu majority within Parliament could jeopardize the very essence of Indian democracy, which relies on principles of secularism.

The inability to effectively address issues such as farmer protests, rising unemployment rates, and increasing religious tensions has raised concerns about Modi’s governance capabilities. The Modi government has been criticised for its intolerance towards disparagement and dissent, widening social rifts, particularly along religious lines. Environmental issues and climate change have not been adequately addressed, prompting controversies over development projects and fossil fuels. The implementation of demonetization and GST has negatively impacted the economy and small businesses. Furthermore, job creation efforts have fallen short of expectations.

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However, the government of BJP has secured several substantial achievements since Modi took on the role of PM. One of the most notable accomplishments is the implementation of economic reforms, such as the introduction of the GST and demonetization, which have aimed to streamline business operations and crack down on financial corruption. Additionally, there has been a focus on improving infrastructure and connectivity across the country through initiatives like the ‘Smart Cities Mission’ and the expansion of highway networks.

Before taking office, Modiji frequently spoke about the concept of ‘achhe din’ in his speeches; however, after eight years, both Congress and Indian citizens are questioning whose ‘achhe din’ has truly arrived. Is it the individuals with coffers holding over Rupees 5,000 crore, or the 142 wealthiest Indians who accumulated Rupees 30 lakh crore during the Covid-19 crisis?

The Indian relationship with China has been strained in recent years due to various geopolitical issues, including border disputes, trade imbalances, and strategic rivalries in the Asia-Pacific region. India has taken a firm stance against Chinese aggression and expansionism, particularly in the disputed region of Ladakh. In response, China has increased its military presence along the borders with India and ramped up economic investments in neighbouring countries to counter Indian manipulation. While striving for diplomatic conversations and peaceful resolutions, the Indian government remains committed to safeguarding the national security interests of China.

Modi has made significant strides in strengthening ties with the Middle East through a combination of diplomatic efforts, economic initiatives, energy agreements, and strategic trade relationships. Leveraging the economic impact of the large Indian diaspora in the Middle East is a priority for the Indian government, as they work to address their concerns and ensure their contributions benefit the economy. Overall, the Indian government understands the strategic importance of the Middle East and is working towards enhancing engagement for economic growth.

India and the USA have forged a strong strategic partnership based on shared security concerns, leading to increased defence cooperation, coordinated military manoeuvres, and counterterrorism policies. People-to-people connections have increased, with the Indian diaspora fostering cultural exchanges and business ties. Collaboration on maritime security and climate change has been a priority. The relationship has evolved into a comprehensive calculated partnership, marked by mutual interests and cooperation, leading to progress in defence, security, trade, technology, counterterrorism, and global issues. The partnership aims to promote Indian hegemony and prosperity in the region and beyond.

The Modi government has overseen a series of ups and downs in India-Pakistan relations, marked by instances of tension followed by short-lived initiatives for conversation and interaction. The relationship trajectory has been influenced by a range of significant incidents: the 2016 Uri Attack, Surgical Strikes in Kashmir, Pathankot and Pulwama Attacks, Balakot Airstrikes, and the annulment of Article 370. Both Pakistan and India are at a crucial juncture where the key to the advancement lies in India’s readiness to shift its perspective towards neighbouring nations like Pakistan and adopt a more rational approach towards resolving the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. Modi’s current focus on Hindu nationalism means that any friendly move from Pakistan will most likely be ignored. The Pakistani government should exercise patience and let India be willing to coexist peacefully.

Improving relations between India and Pakistan holds significant potential for the welfare and eradication of miseries of people in both countries. By fostering cooperation, dialogue, and mutual respect, these two nations can unlock the full potential of their shared heritage and pave the way for a brighter future for generations to come.

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