



INSTITUTE OF OBJECTIVE STUDIES

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Mr. Donald Trump

President of the United States of America
White House
Washington D.C.

Dear Mr. President,

Congratulations on your ascension to the US presidency, the most powerful position on the Planet Earth. Needless to add, and also most responsible. The entire world sees the US not as an isolationist, hedged in, protectionist country, but as America in the World. The hyper power of today is not merely an isolated, lonesome country, but a giant (even *the* giant) country that is fully engaged with a world where every country's fortunes and wellbeing are tied to every other country, more particularly to the United States. No wonder, when the numero uno in the White House catches a cold (thankfully, it's not often) all other capitals begin to sneeze. When America gets into economic trouble the rest of the world is hit and the global economy goes into a tizzy.

That's why electioneering slogans like America First are scary as the world cannot live without American engagement and leadership. Even though all US presidents since George Washington have practised what you have proclaimed—America First—an understated restraint made the rest feel that America was constructively engaged. Your election campaign has vigorously sanded off that nuance. Minus that everybody, in President George W. Bush's memorable essentialist declaration, is "either with us or against us."

The nuanceless perspective on life admits no colour or shade except black and white. It closes the door on life's real spectra, the VIBGYOR. Thus, in a way, it blinds us to an entire range of possibilities. Suddenly, we find ourselves face to face with an America with a deliberately narrowed vision. And in the heart of our hearts we know that it is not really the America of Donald Trump, but some kind of a misreading of the signals by us. There is some reason for us to question our interpretation of Trumpspeak.

During the campaign we used to hear a lot about Mr. Trump's anti-semitic, anti-Muslim, anti-black, anti-Mexican and anti-everything vituperations. It sounded as if yours was going to be some kind of an anti-Presidency, if at all something like that could be conjured. However, we were reassured to read the views of your voters from these communities who stood steadfast in their support nonetheless. It

dawned on us that much of the belligerence in your speech was your style, not the substance of your programme for White House in days to come.

Still, as Indians we feel concerned about your stern visa policies for young professionals from India (and elsewhere) who go to the US to enrich that country as well as themselves. We are anxious to learn that the country of opportunity built by immigrants, is no longer welcoming to immigrants. We are not particularly worried by your threat to ban the entry of Muslims because we think God gives us our daily bread, which will come from somewhere other than the United States. However, we are sure that "the Donald" (I remember it was Ivana's term of endearment, years ago), being the clever businessman that he is, would not cut off the business and diplomatic ties with the Muslim world and their politicians, business leaders, academics and sport persons would continue to interact with the US, which includes visits to the Garden of Eden. Otherwise, for most Muslims across the globe it does not matter.

I would like to add, Mr President, with all the respect and humility at my command, that Muslims of the world, by and large, have not got any complaint against the United States. Unlike Britain, France, Italy, Russia and Holland, it never ruled the Muslim world, never exploited the people, never brutalised them. That is why most Muslims, including yours truly, stood by the America-led West throughout the Cold War. We stood by Uncle Sam even when he was wrong: in Vietnam, in Panama, Sudan, East Timor. I must clarify here that we do not want any rewards from anyone. Never will we do that.

Mr President, I know you may be short of time and patience to go through it. Knowing the understandable Western aversion to sermonising, I am careful not to make it sound like (rather, read like) an unsolicited advice, much less a sermon. We know that as the First Citizen of the United States it is American jobs, national security, homeland security, the health of the economy, its growth, and the health of Americans that have the first claim on your time, attention and physical resources. However, in a way, being the US President, you are also everyone else's President.

Everybody working from New Delhi, Hyderabad, Bangalore and elsewhere in India for an American company is basically working for some American interest at much lower wages. This is quite in keeping with the lesson that America has been teaching the rest of the world about open markets and democracy for a century. Even though we realise that you want more jobs back home, it would be better if you review the decision keeping in mind that the employment generation capabilities of the industry in which Indians work for America from India are pretty small. The revival of manufacturing in your country will create far more jobs. Also, curbs on H1B visa would not take us far.


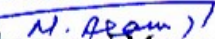
As Muslims, we are particularly worried about the current US-led war against the Muslim world. At the launch of the war, Paul Wolfowitz, then US Deputy Secretary of Defence, had announced that it would continue for a decade. It is already over one and a half decade old. Many call it the World War III, and American writers conjecture it would go on for another three decades. Will it make the world safer for us?

Finally, the trigger for this war is said to be 9/11. The terrorists did not attack New York because they hated democracy, as the illustrious Fareed Zakaria makes everyone believe. They hated America because everyday they saw Israelis usurping Palestinian land to build farms, orchards and settlement colonies. This has been going on since decades, overruling at least nine administrations. Even your administration has said the continuing Israeli settlement-building may not help restoration of peace in the Mid-East. This, plus the regular bombing of Palestinian populations with US-provided war planes, diplomatic, strategic and financial support, alienates the impressionable minds of a miniscule section of Muslim youth against America and the West.

The stabilisation of the Mid-East and creation of a Palestinian state on a contiguous, integrated territory will certainly quieten the Muslim world vis-à-vis the West, even if it may not end their internal squabbles. I hope you will address the issue.

With best wishes for your administration, American people and the First Family,

Yours truly,



Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam
Chairman, Institute of Objective Studies

