

Outrage against Russian Electoral Meddling

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- There is a palpable moral outrage in U.S. against the alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 Presidential elections.

\n

- Significantly, the outraged seem oblivious of the multiple U.S. sponsored electoral sabotages worldwide.

\n

\n\n

Does the current moral outrage stand rational scrutiny?

\n\n

\n

- U.S. President Trump and the Russian President Vladimir Putin recently met for a bilateral at Helsinki (Finland), which went well.

\n

- **Intelligence** - During the summit, Mr. Trump voiced that he didn't believe that Russia had any role in the 2016 electoral meddling.

\n

- As this was despite U.S. intelligence reports, there was widespread discontent within the U.S., and Mr. Trump had to retract his statement.

\n

- In this context, the false intelligence reports that caused the 2003 Iraqi war against Saddam Hussain seem conveniently forgotten.

\n

- **Diplomacy** - Usual joint press conference between big powers see global issues, like disarmament, conflicts in Syria and Ukraine being discussed.

\n

- But reporters at Helsinki had posed questions on the election meddling, which was clearly out of context and politically polarising.

\n

- In this context, it was prudent of Mr. Trump to have sounded positive of his Russian counterpart, as accusations would've doomed the summit.

\n

- Although, Mr. Trump could've sidestepped those questions (or rather just not had a summit currently), his responses were nonetheless decent enough.

\n

\n\n

Why is the moral outrage against "Russia Gate" hypocritical?

\n\n

\n

- Those outraged at the Russian role in sabotaging a democratic mandate within the U.S., claim ignorance to the various U.S. meddling activities elsewhere.
- \n
- Notably, on various occasions, U.S. has influenced electoral outcomes and has even toppled democratically elected popular governments through its agents.
- \n
- Significantly, during the 1996 Russian presidential elections, Clinton administration worked for the victory of incumbent "Boris Yeltsin".
- \n
- Hefty IMF loans and a delegation of political consultants were dispatched to Russia just months before the election to defeat the resurgent Communists.
- \n
- Notably, U.S. officials seemingly didn't even deny this meddling, as they were invested in the belief that they were spreading democracy through their acts.
- \n
- Starting from the 1948 Italian elections, documented evidence of significant U.S. meddling has been found in about 81 elections worldwide till 2000.
- \n
- In Italy, U.S. support had managed to sustain "Christian Democrats" in power from 1948-1994 and effectively stopped the advance of Communists.
- \n
- Significantly, organisations like the CIA are alleged to have had dedicated branches within it to influence electoral outcomes elsewhere by all means.
- \n
- Also, democratically elected leaders like Mosaddegh in Iran, Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala or Allende in Chile have been overthrown by U.S.

propped agents.

\n

\n\n

How should the Russian meddling be viewed?

\n\n

\n

- Election meddling is nothing new to USSR/Russia, which is said to have intervened at least 36 times in overseas elections between 1946 and 2000.
- Even now, U.S. government sponsors several agencies such as the “National Endowment for Democracy” (NED) to influence foreign elections.
- Notably, NED granted \$23,000 in 2006 to a political adversary of Mr. Putin and two years ago \$6.8 million to anti-Putin organisations in Russia.
- Significantly, rather than allowing foreign populations to freely exercise their will, these interventions were designed to advance U.S. policy objectives.
- Considering these historic precedence, it is important for all to view the current events in the broader context of real politicking.

\n

\n\n

\n

- Nonetheless, recognising the long history of states meddling in elections does not mean that it should be accepted much less condoned.

\n

\n\n

Is the outrage against Trump’s Russian outreach political?

\n\n

\n

- Trump has initiated a trade war with China, European Union, Canada, Mexico, and India - a policy that appeals to his supporters.
- Although his logic that such an approach will generate more local jobs in the U.S. is spurious, he seems invested in his agenda.

\n

- Trump views that a Russian detente as a significant aspect of his trade policy, although it is likely to undermining the long held U.S. policy on Russia.

\n

- He also decries the need to muscle U.S. into central Asian politics (contrary to the bipartisan view), which is causing the political churn against Trump.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n\n

\n

