Welcome to the third in a series of Conference Calls by USINPAC in \_\_\_for 2014 elections next month in India. Maninder Chauhan will be the moderator for the Conference Call ...

..........I would like to introduce the Chairman of USINPAC, Mr. Sanjay Puri. Sanjay...

**Sanjay Puri**: Robinder, go ahead?

**Robinder**: Yes please.

**Sanjay Puri**: Thank you, John. Good morning. Its real pleasure to be here. This is third in series of the Indian election expert series. We have had excellent guests who provided the detailed analysis. This election is being watched around the world. It is being called one of the most consequential elections in India. Largest exercise of democracy. But, from a US-India perspective, from Indian-American perspective, it has a special meaning. Some people are even suggesting that the resignation of the US Ambassador to India recently this week has something to do with the elections. We obviously don't know that. But, we have got two excellent guests. And to begin introduction, I will take from here. We have Robinder Sachdev, our India operations Head. Who will take it from here. Robinder..**.**

**Robinder**: Thank you, so much Sanjay. As Sanjay mentioned, we have two eminent panelists today. Each one of them will be taking around 15-20 minutes to give their views and answer some questions and our thoughts. The first speaker would be Dr. Rajiv Kumar. Dr. Rajiv Kumar is renowned world economist and presently he is a senior fellow at the Centre for Policy Research. He is also the author of several books. He was formerly the Secretary General of FICCI, the industry association in India. Without much adieu, I would invite Dr. Kumar to give us some of his perspectives of what he sees could be the impact and what are the trends in the current elections. Dr. Kumar please.

**Dr. Rajiv Kumar**: Thank you very much Robinder. And hi everybody, good morning. And, hi Sanjay there. Nice to be on this webinar. And I hope you can all hear me very clearly. What I would to do is just give you first an impression of what I think are the current trends and why they are and where these results are headed. And, secondly, I will just talk about what I feel would be the kind of impact on the India economy because I am an economist but also most specifically on India-US relations. The way I look at it at the moment is that there is very high probability of the NDA, which is BJP and allies, coming very close to if not exceeding the absolute majority number, the magic number of 272. Sample surveys that have been done, opinion surveys that have come out range now to give the figure of 246-256 to the NDA. I think this number is going to rise as we go forward. And, this tally will be historical in some sense because it would mean that BJP itself could perhaps double its tally from 2009 and this will be highest ever \_\_\_\_\_of God(?) And, this is because of the stakes rise in Hindi heartlands like Rajasthan, MP and most specifically in UP and Bihar where it is expected to do kind of in an unprecedented manner. And,it is clear now that whats happening is that there is like a Modi wave. Many people have said that this election is more about an anger with the current Govt., a sense of betryal by the Govt. not having sustained rate of growth which degenerated. But, I think, while that is true, it is also clear that it is also the persona of Modi which has helped to gravitate voter and focus their attention. I dare say we have a leader. BJP may not have done as well as he has done. And, I am told by people that I talked to in UP and Bihar and others that it has happened in India in the villages, in the remote villages, his name has got into people's mind as the people are talking about Modi more than they are talking about party or anything else. And, that shows up in the huge lead, I think pointed lead(?) that Modi has today over Rahul Gandhi as the choice for the Indian Prime Minister. And that has also been quite unprecedented. Last time we had Congress showing, you know, of this, sort of order, you know was in the 1977 elections when they just managed 164 seats. I think this year they will probably in double digits. And, there I must split into.. and that one point which I would get back to and the other enforces the faith of the some of the regional parties, the identity based parties, like the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party(BSP) or the Left in West Bengal and Kerala or the JD(U) in Bihar who have their regional failure round sometime(?) past and other identities or regional identities. I think they would suffer much worst. Any sort of thought for the Third Front getting into the Government formation has receded far more than what have I thought a month ago. Two facts here - one that the sort of near implosion of the Congress vote which you see is being confined to some States, Karnataka, Kerala, Assam and some numbers in, I think, very few in UP and Bihar, would mean that it will have to, sort of, it has to go back to the very basics to again re-emerge as a national party. And, that is a huge exercise. And, I believe, it is very interesting to see whether this exercise is undertaken under a current leadership or there is a move as has happened in the past in the Congress that when they suffer as much as they are expected to do now, there is a move to change the leadership. And if that happens, that will have a very strong and wide ranging implications for politics in India. And, the second thing that I wanted to say is that the BJP's emergence at that level in such large numbers would also put, you know, sort of, an onus on them to deliver then to the expectations. And, that is why sometimes I get scared because this expectation is very high. There seems to be, on the one hand, one should say, a very healthy democracy within BJP but this sort of, not said so nicely(?) and putting it also that there are major differences, major ideological differences within that party and so whether they will be able come over a coherent program of governance and deliverability is something that I am not so sure of. This perhaps is reflected in the fact that they have not yet been able to come up with their manifesto in spite of the fact that by this time they know (?) they have a lot of inputs on their vision of (?) and on their manifesto now for several months. So, this to me means careful watching and also requires that the people who work with the BJP are around or should continue to give their inputs for them to make up their mind in what is important economic policy. Then, let me just shift quickly to the impact on growth. I think and I am here now going on the very strong assumption that there will be a Modi Government. And, therefore, they have to see a sharp focus on providing better governance and that the huge deficit at the moment in the country and that will reawken the better sentiment.The other two would of course be - they have first to improve the investor sentiment by announcing some major steps for liberalisation of the, you know, rules and regulations that govern this modern medium and society.is also somehow the regulatory impediments on, you know, like environment and othes. I doubt they will spend too much their political capital on trying to roll back from the recent laws that have been passed that will dissipate as a political will, the political\_\_\_\_(?). But, they will probably move very quickly on trying to gainfully investment sentiment back. Finally, let me just talk about, very briefly, about India-US relations. I think any fear that a Modi government would mean a worsening of the India-US relations are misplaced. He is far too pragmatic a person for that happens and, therefore, you will in some sense let these think their own cause and there will be effort in the path of the US to reach out to him as has been now noticed. And, because of the very strong NRI presence in the campaign group,I think that needs to be further extended to ensure that chapter within the BJP vote much rather do the swadeshi bit and the US has something which, as a country, you know, would not serve India's interest. That particular group within the BJP is to be countered and I hope the India-American friends who will take that challenge that is required at the moment. Modi will focus, I think, on Japan. We will see in a quick (?)..it might be the first country that he will. He is very pragmatic towards Chaina and will give out clear signals as he has done in rallies in (?). That he will not let China(?)on, you know, politically or in security terms, he will draw very strong red lights but yet he is willing to do business and carry that forward. And, finally that he never wrote, I think, who will receive Modi's attention. He has made that clear that, and, as the Pakistanis themselves say, may be this is the time again like in the previous NDA Govt., we could see some movement in India-Pakistan relations which are positive because Pakistan would realise that any attempt to weaken or harm India's security would be taken much less lightly that has been taken in the past. So, overall, I think, you would see recovery in the economy beginning to take place soon after the elections. But, it will not be a V-shaped recovery. It will take time for the investor to get back, investment to come back and then to do and then to the economy to get on to the higher trajectory. It will be I think(?)get back to 8% that we had before 2010. That means...should I stop here and invite any questions that the audience might have.

**Robinder**: Thank you, so much, Dr. Kumar. I think you have given such a well rounded view going from, you know, in fact going from politics to economy to corner pace. Now one of the questions which is coming up from one of our guests is that it is said that India could need upto 1 trillion dollars for infrastructure projects over next 5 years. Now, how will the NDA Govt. assuming it is a Modi dispensation, you know, mobilise such funds and of course, I mean, there is ...it dove tails into the second part which you were slightly mentioning earlier that given the fact that probably,you know, more pools of capital are sitting in Asia, would such an investment be more,kind of, coming or the Govt. will be more proactive to solicit investments from the Asian pools compared to the West or the US.

**Dr. Kumar**: There is one process of economics which takes it in the direction of improving the performance of public sector undertakings and taking the...giving the rightful role to the Govt. for infrastructure development, you know, as happened in Gujarat. Now, part of that, as I am saying is that, for example, the coal mass that we have. You will probably focus a lot on improving the performance of Coad India Ltd. So, that, you know, the coal deliberating (?). But, at the same time, you will see, you know, that you will reach out the NRI in a much bigger way and to the US based infrastructure fund. As I said, he will shift to Japan,you know, he will look to Asia pools, as you are saying, of capital sitting there to get an investment. But more important, as he will get regulatory structure in chase and then get it working better than what has happened in the past.

**Robinder** : Thank you, Dr. Kumar. A question coming in from Ash, Ash Thakkar is from Atlanta. I think that the question which he is referring to - to which a lot of us are very concerned - about the banking crisis and the non-performing assets. The non-performing laws, what is your view on this?

**Dr.Kumar**: Yeah. I am on the Central Board of the State Bank of India. So, its where I noticed a lot of problems as it happens. But, and I think the reason for the non-performing loans and non-performing assets is two fold. One is the kind of draconian(?) in public expenditure that is...that the payments receivable from the Govt. are not coming forth. That would mean that the , you know, that serviceability of the borrower or this public private partner, you know, player has gone down quite dramatically. That is the one reason. The second reason is actually the downturn becoming downturn. Thisjust means that again the receivables of top clients has not worked as much as they had. Now, one (?), I think there will some improvement of the fiscal deficit and there will be sort of fiscal governance as the interim tool. And, secondly as the economy begins to look up and perk up, then there will be a better of this NPAs to be arrested and increase any further. Finally, I think the public sector banks are now pretty much (?) to improve their NPAs performance. For example, the FDI is making a huge (?)efforts to bring them into, bringing them in control. So, overall I think the NPA situation while worrysome should not be seen as something which is getting out of hand and it will, kind of, get these to an explosion(?) of the commercial banks and specially not the explosion of public sector banks in India.

**Robinder**: Thank you, so much. I think it is that issue which has been kind of hovering in the background and, I think, a lot folks, specially in the finanace and economy sector, as you are, very much concerned with that, Sir. A question coming to us from Abhijit Bhattacharya, I think, from Texas. His question is that,I think, it connects to a lot of issues. Why is Mr. Modi not responding to the issue of gas prices in India?

**Dr. Kumar**: Yeah, Mr. Modi has not responded to the gas prices issues in India like he has not responded to any substantive issue on the table at the moment in India. I think this strategy that I can notice is to remain at about 30,000 ft or 40,000 ft to show the people that you will be providing a kind of governance that the people need and the regime that is in contrast to the current one. And, for him to announce or pronounce any such substantial issue without really getting into the depth, the nitty gritty of it.(?). So, to your query, that is why he has refused to pronounce on the gas pricing issue because these are all issues that he will have to take up when he forms the Govt. More importantly, I think Mr. Modi is, in spite of all the impression that he gives, believes in the delegation of authority and in the division of work. So, he would rather consult his colleagues, who would in-charge of this issue in the M/o Petroleum and Natural Gas, rather than pronounce this. As we know, in India unfortunately, there is no system of having shadow Cabinet Ministers. There is none, for example, in the BJP who is being deputed to look into this charge.It would have been better if there was such a system but in the absence of that I don't see how Mr. Modi can make a, sort substantial, or a well thought, well considered announcement on this, rather important issue.

**Robinder**: Thank you. Quick two more questions and I do know that you have other engagement right now to which you have to pull out, Sir. One is that - what is your personal view regarding the issue of gas pricing in India. If you can summarise it in may be 30 seconds to 45 seconds or a minute please. What is your view on this issue because it seems to be.....

**Dr. Kumar**: One, there is no reason at all for anybody to have approached the Election Commission for this and it was an Election Commission's business to pronounce on that because the decision was taken in June, 2013. Only its implementation was due to start on 1st of April.That is why it was not an issue that was in the purview of Election Commission in my view. Second that the Committee headed by Dr.Rangarajan had looked at all the pertinent issues and then come out with this recommendation of 8 dollars mmbtu of the gas piping. In a situation where India is already importing LNG at 15 or 16 dollars per mmbtu, that seems reasonable to me. The last thing is that this charge by Kejriwal that this will increase double the price of electricity and fertilizers etc. is completely misplaced because these units are already maintaining, their sale price for them is 6 dollars 65 cents per mmbtu. So, the price increase will not be that much. And, in any case, any price increase would be easily prevented by just increasing the subsidy which I don't agree with but thats the rule that the Government has taken that would be affected (?)by them and not result in any increase in prices.

**Robinder**: Thank you, so much. I think one last question coming in from Mahadev Bija and we have other questions also which have just come and, I think, from Manav Chopra in DC

**Dr. Kumar:** But, I will have to leave

**Robinder**: Yes, Sir. We can just take one last question. Kind of it refers to from Mahadev, a fact that you know, and I think, you referred to it bit earlier. How can the Indian diaspora play an active kind of a role for governance over the four years rather than only the time around the elections even if it can do something. I think you referred to it in your earlier part but some suggestions to how can the diaspora really play an active or positive contributory role?

**Dr. Kumar** : The most important role that the diaspora can play is on improving the India-US bilateral relations. As I said, there is a segment within the BJP which on the misplaced notions of nationalism tend to believe, tend to see US as the force to India's (?) and tend to see US as imperialist power etc. etc. So, I think there has to be a constant effort and a constant struggle to keep pushing the segment's sentiment back in the countryland within the BJP and to show that given the current historical conjucture in the economic and global conjucture, a strategy for this between India and the US will ease off 0:22:56.2(?). Not just in terms of security, if I am not.. which I also think about but really in terms of getting the economy back, getting the investment right going there, the improvement in the B2B relation, both within the US and improving the environment for that, whether it is visa or socialisation or it is the liaison through our banks etc. all of that has to be improved and the diaspora can play a role there. They just voice much louder and the same things 0:23:30.1about the Indian situation where, you know, for examaple I am not again the Supreme Court judge and verdict against Novartis because you know, that is just one case of compulsory (?) but the fact is that IT regime mixes with much best of words in India and the (?) has to be reformed. So, there are these sectors and US interest which is to be looked after and one should not feel embarassed at all pushing those interests because they are in the Indian interests at this point of time. Getting economy back on track and to generate kind of employment that we need. And, therefore, the diaspora's real role will be to ensure that the breach?) of the India-US relationship remain on an even keys. In fact on a rising trend than what they have been in the past.

**Robinder**: Thank you, so much, Dr. Kumar. There are bunch of other questions coming in but of course we will always be in touch and continue this dialogue as part of our readership dialogue. Thank you once against for your participation and

**Dr. Kumar**: Thank you, very much. I apologise that I have to leave. But there is something waiting so bye to everybody...

**Robinder**:Now, may I move on to our next eminet speaker which is Prof. Chintamani Mahapatra.He is the Professor of American Studies at the Jawahar Lal Nehru University of India. He is, of course, the chairperson of the Centre for American Latin and Canadian Studies at JNU. He has also been the Tagore Chair Professor at the Yudan University in China. So, in the past from a specialiasation in the US, in the US relations, he has keen insight on China and India-Chaina's relations. He has also been a Fullright Fellow of Coast and an author of Cauchy's books. Professor Mahapatra, may I invite you please for opening remarks and an overview of this election process, the trends and what you see happening. Sir,

**Prof. Mohapatra**: Good evening Robinderji and good morning to all of my friends in the USA and thank you very much for giving this opportunity to say some of my thoughts on the topic you decided. At the outset, let me make some broad observations about the election. Firstly, I would say that for the first time, the opposition party in India has fielded a Prime Minister candidate before the election. It never happened before. The ruling party,of course, the Congress Party has often made it right (?) with a Prime Minister. For a long long time, when Nehru was the Prime Minister, then Indira Gandhi and things like that. But, this time the ruling party is not in a position to even name the PM candidate. Thirdly, the role of social media and the television is much more this time than ever before and besides posters and rallies, the social media and tv will definitely influence the voting behaviour of the people. Next, first time again the world is very anxiously watching the elections in India and why that. It is because India is an emerging economy and rising power. My next observation is, we have watching how the BJP is experiencing a leadership change slowly slowly. The way the veteran leaders like LK Advani or even so many are shunted out, a new kind of leadership is coming to power and that is going to impact upon India's policies -both the domestic and foreign if the BJP is able to form the next government. And, then, of course, we are witnessing tremendous amount of defection from the Congress party in the midst of elections. This is something new. Next, the name recognition of Modi is again fantastic. It is extremely important, the name of Gandhi and Nehru had been household names in India but this time Modi has really caught up and the name recognition is going to impact the election. Caste, religion, language will always have their traditional effect at the election. But, this time corruption, inflation, gender insecurity and misgovernance will shape the voter's choice. Now, I feel that BJP will most likely form the government with coalition partners under Modi's leadership after May 16. And the poor and the illeterate masses in India, which have often demostrated their political skills, this time if they are going to do so and change the government another interesting factor this time is before the election, three important movements took place. One is Anna Hazare, the other one led by Ram Dev and the third one is Kejriwal. And, this itself is going to bring down the Congress Party. Now, if BJP forms the government and Modi becomes the Prime Minister, what may be the foreign policy of the country. It has been a long time ago, Bill Clinton once said it is economy stupid. And,people who are talking about Indian election, they are saying this is Modi stupid. And, if Modi becomes the Prime Minister, his foreign policy will be economy stupid. In other words, I think his foreign policy will be largely defined by his economic agenda. Success story of Gujarat which he wants to experiment in whole of India and vibrant Gujarat he has been organising for years now, his goal is to make India a vibrant India and he can do that only when he puts economy as the number one agenda in his foreign policy priorities and all. Modi has done fantastic business with Japan and even China. He has showcased his State in South East Asia and Latin America. And, in fact, Modi happens to be the first and so far the only State leader to have got a red carpet welcome in Japan. And, he was pretty popular in quite a few States in China and he has built up that relationship both with China and Japan. And,of course, he will be very tough on terrorism. He will try to build up the Indian Military strength and will be less confrontational with neighbours. Some people think that he is going to have a very robust and muscular approach they never heard, I doubt it very much. If he wants to really achieve his economic goals then he knows that neighbourhood has to be peaceful. So, he is not going to make any kind of confrontation with the neighbourhood, whether Pakistan or any other country. Now, everybody knows that very little change in the fundamentals of the country's foreign policy but Modi is most is most likely to have (?) a peaceful neighbourhood with a larger economic mission elsewhere. And, economically he will adopt a very broad based policy furthr and put most of the action in American basket. He will try to engage Europe and Asia as well in addition to the United States.How about India-US relationship if Modi is the next Prime Minister. I feel that Modi will not take any first initiative towards United States during early years of his rule. He will rather expect the US to make the first move and if that move comes from Washington then he may appropriately respond. Now, if he going to respond positively or not. I think the way he was very willing to meet the US Ambassador Nancy Powell recently but at the same time he should only (?) General wanted to interviewhim. That shows that he is going to be choosy in this and he will respond on the basis of his ideas and not jump to any kind of invitation from the United States. However, I strongly feel if once Administration sends him an invitation to visit Washington soon then he may rather gradually accept it. And, he is going to do it. He understands that the Muslim countries in the neighbourhood which are having tremendous amount of anti-American sentiment and other people do not deny any visa to the US Official despite their perception that America plays tremendous amound of role in the innocent death of the Muslim people. In fact, no demand in India has been made so far deny visa to,suppose a New York official or any other US officials, when the hate crimes against Sikhs took place. He understands that all these things are basically domestic issues and domestic politics in the US Congress are partly responsible for visa issue. Very recently, I think yesterday or day before, I saw yet another Congressional hearing on this particular issue of religious freedom in India and all. He knows but at the same time he is a pragmatic person and he is not going to have any grudge against the United States and he will do business. So far, he has not made negative remarks against the United States although he has visited China many times and he has been friend of many Chinese in quite a few cities. But, he has made critical remarks about China when he visited Arunachal Pradesh. But, as far as the US is concerned, he has not made any negative remark. Now, I feel that if you really want some kind of big picture idea to restore Indo-US relationship which is really rocky because of Devyani Khobragade issue, one of the ways would be to...for the US Administration to invite Modi to Washington because the US has decided to exit from Afghanistan and situation in Afghanistan is going to be very difficult after 2014 whether the US troops stay on or they withdraw completely. The impact on the US will be as much as the impact in the neighbourhood because we don't know how the Islamic extremist are going to hit whom, where and all that. So, I think one of the important things that the US could do would be to reach out to India and that is going to be relatively easy if the next Ambassador to India would be a political heavy weight. He can really change the dynamics. And, he can reach out to the new India Govt. New US Ambassador, new Indian Govt., there can be a new beginning and Indo-US relationship can be back on the rail. I think, at the moment these are my observations and I can take any question.

**Robinder**: Wonderful, Sir, wonderful. You have taken a fantastic, I mean, view, overview, roadmap.In fact, this question that when will Mr. Modi visit the US. If does, one option would, I think, the upcoming UN General Assembly and therein is a right occasion for, may be, to White House to invite him to come down to DC as you are saying. That is wonderful. Now, the question coming in from one of our guests is that what do you think really happened with the US Ambassador resignation or, as is being said, retirement of Nancy Powell. I mean,of course, we have seen that partly it was, may be, the Devyani episode or may be the(?)US-India relations and expecations of the Modi Government. What do you think was the perception here in Delhi. Why the Ambassador went?

**Prof. Mahapatra**: You know, earlier, when Ambassador Roemer resigned after India failed to give those tenders to Rocket Martin and Boeing, people could quickly give a conclusion that he is leaving and resenting the Indian Govt. decision to do so. But, I think these are the perception of event which take so quickly within a given time. But, in this particular case I strongly that there are people in the State Department who felt that Devyani Khobargade issue could have been handled in a much better way than it was done. The US was very stubborn on this. And, the Govt. of India, I would say, overreacted rather too quickly took stronger position on a range of issues. And, in the process there was no face saving by the American side or the Indian side. And, partly the Ambassador was responsible particularly when the Rachard was literally been, in Indian perception, hijacked away to US from India and was given concessional tickets and visa. The US Ambassador, of course, knew of this. So, they thought that a change...now, now there is a thinking in Delhi that if a new person comes that we can say good bye to past events and start afresh. Great.

**Robinder**: Thank you so much and absolutely. Now, that kind of leads into other question. Are there any recommendations, of course not recommendations, but thoughts percolating or what India thinks could be..who could be the next Ambassador or what kind of a person or personality should that person be who could, you know, reset and lead and nurture Inda-US relations at this juncture. Some potential names..

**Prof. Mahapatra**: You know, Ambassadors are appointed not on the basis of the desire of the receiving country. It is decided by the State concerned to promote the interest of that particular country. So, I think ultimately the US would decide who would be the best person although some names are circulating and some people think that may be an Indian-American coming to India as Ambassador to do wonderful job. Nothing like that. Nothing like that. In fact, only in the recent past when a Chinese origin American was appointed as Ambassador to China, he became very unpopular in China and finally when leaving China, some people that this guy is just like a banana. And, his skin is yellow but deep inside is really white. So, I think, it would be good for US and for India to have a political appointee who would have the ear of the President like Ambassador was close to President George Bush and many Ambassadors don't have this luxury of having the ear of the President. So right now given the situation, I mean the Indo-US relationship, I strongly feel that slightly now derailed, there is a long shadow over the relationship because of Devyani Khobargade issue, we need a politically astute person who would have the ear of the President to come to Delhi so that he can really rebuild the relationship and put it back on the rail.

**Robinder**: Yeah. Very much so.In fact, you know, there are various terms of the India-American community like a coconut,brown on the eyes, outside white inside or a potato which is brown outside and may, in fact, it is why one knows of Gary Lockes and another example could also be Australian High Commissioner to India, Mr. Verghese, who was also 0:39:05.8. So, these are case studies of Gary Locke and Mr. Verghese. Next may be one question and before I hand it to my colleague Sanjay in Washington DC. Now, you mentioned that, you know, some big picture idea if could be there but probably it should come from the US side to which Mr. Modi could respond. Now, do you think is this some such big picture idea could be the ...OK, the Nuclear deal was one,there has been talk about case co-operation or may be some other big picture , could be thorean, could be solar. What could you something like that or what could be some such focus area please. Sir,

**Prof. Mahapatra**: I personally think that one particular item would be energy co-operation between the two countries partly because the 123 agreement is not taking up the ground and partly because Modi himself is very much concerned about the environmntally issues. He has written a book on environment. He is promoting solar energy in Gujarat. There is a figure that 40% of electricity comes from solar energy in Gujarat. So, Modi will be, I mean, built the idea of having big initiative on energy co-operation. Lot of things are already happening in the non-nuclear sector. But,it can be put on the agenda and that can be one of the fundamental big picture item why India and the US can renew the dialogue. Second thing would be actually terrorism. It is for a long time the Americans divided terrorism into two types. One is domestic. The other one was international. Kashmir terrorism for a long time was considered domestic issue of India. Only after 9/11 incident took there when things began to change. Now, once US troops withdraw from Afghanistan, Indian terrorism is going to take a different shap. If thousands of American troops and NATO troops could not really contain Taliban, once they get out what could be the role of new government in Afghanistan is a big headache for the neighbouring countries as well as the United States. Because, the US may have developed a good homeland security system but the US is a global power with global presence and Islamic terrorism can really hit the American interest in any part of the world. So, post 2014, Afghanistan is going to create a new kind of problem where India and the US can really co-operate. And, Indians think the US is really not consulting with the India. And now, on the exit strategy from Afghanistan, rather more recently, there was a delegation to China where they talked about Afghanistan but they put India out of the loop. So, this is another issue where actually India's interest will also be served and it can be a big initiative.

**Robinder**: Fantastic Prof. Mahapatra. That is the wonderful, you know, I think range of answers, an overview given so kindly in such a context. Now, I shall hand over the conference to my colleague Mr. Sanjay Puri in Washington DC for some rap up and some questions with are still coming. Invariably we have such a backlog right now at my end of the show. Sanjay please, with you.

**Sanjay**: Thank you, Robinder, Professor. Such wonderful insight, really appreciate it and listeners who are from all over the country and around the world will appreciate it. Our listeners are Indian-Americans, member of US Congress Staff, think tank in US. They are going to get your insight and this will also be a podcast that will be distributed. Prof. I have a couple of quick questions that are coming in from our listeners around the world. One is going down to your perception and a lot of other, we have another caller before this Rajiv Kumar who also said it looks like the NDA, the BJP led NDA is going to come into power. What do you see the combination permutations some of our folks who are really into politicking say how do they get to that number because even with Shiv Sena others, you see some parties like Jaya Lalitha's party coming in etc. what is your feeling as to, let us say, Jayalalitha coming in as a partner or Mamta Banerjee coming in. What would you say to that?

**Prof. Mahapatra**: Now, the kind of permutation and combination that we are witnessing now, it is very clear that once the election results are out, the next round of permutation combination will depend on those numbers, the real numbers. Now, if the BJP manages about 200 plus, then obviously Narendra Modi's chances of becoming the Prime Minister and some other political groups joining the NDA will be much bright. However, if the BJP gets about 170-160 like that, then a new kind of situation will be created where some of the political parties, particularly the regional political parties, might yet again read out the old month that we don't want a polarising personality like Modi to become the Prime Minister and if you have a new person then we might think about it. So, there is a likelyhood that BJP may be able to form the NDA without Modi. But, if the Modi magic really works and he gets more than 200, he manages, then, of course, certainly there are political parties which are dead against Modi now will suddenly change their colour and will join. It is all because of their respective interest to capture power.

**Sanjay**: Do you have any specific parties, like whether Mamata Banerjee's party or Jayalalitha's party, in your view that would be joining?

**Prof. Mahapatra**: You know, even Mamata Banerjee and Jayalalitha might also join because Modi actually is playing his cards very. Now, many people thought that he would take very hard line position on Muslims but he is saying that I believe that there should be more toilets than temples. That is really the link with the common man. Then he is saying that there is only one religion for me. That is India first. The nation first. Then again he is saying that there is only one holy book and that is the Constitution of India. So, by trying to convince other political parties and the people of India, he should not be regarded as hardcore communal person. Rather, he is the one who wants to rebuild India making India vibrant. Then his success in the election battle field will enable him to rope him even Jayalalitha and Mamata Banerjee and many others.

**Sanjay**: Oh, that is a very good to know. We have one last question coming in from Manav Chopra in Washington DC. There was a, you know there has been spade of hearings or at least resolutions in Congress against Mr. Modi and there was a hearing that really talked about the whole issue of Gujarat again and, you know US impact, took opposition we should not be interfering in India's elections. How does this play out in India if at all from the Congress or a party's perspective given that we obviously had people that who were talking about not interfering in India's elections. This is a closed issue and it is an India issue.

**Prof. Mahapatra** : You know, first of all let me say that majority of the voters in India would not even know what happened in the US Congress. May be some mainstream, main listeners, papers like Times of India and others will carry this news. And, it is not going to straight to the nook and corner of India and nobody is going to make much noise on this. Nor are they going to base their perception on the basis of the hearings in Washington DC. Having said that people in urban area, educated masses, who are understanding it,who understand foreign policy and all, they think that this is an interference in internal affairs of India. Many things happening within the United States of similar kind that is violation of human rights or even racial profiling and there are so many instances. People who study America, they know very well. So, they think in US Congress, this kind of politics should not be played. But at the same time they are aware that there are cetain people who are against Modi and they are the brains behind it. And, majority of the Congressmen and Senators don't have opposition on this. Only a handful of people,probably some evangelists, probably some pro-Pakistan elements may be who are actually behind all this and the unfortunate thing is that 3 or 4 people who are invited to testify. Their views are already known. That is why they think that it was an ante-Modi kind of step in the US Congress and it is all welcome in India.

**Sanjay** : And, we had some more members of Congress who spoke in favour staying out of the democracy. USINPAC has, before even there was a Resolution 417, we had the Chairman of Foreign Relations Committee saying it will never come to about and we made sure it did not. And, again when this hearing we made it clear to Congress who won Pulsing Award and Congressmen will follow more. Rather, this was a clear interference in India's democratic process but Prof. Mahapatra thank you so much for your wonderful comments. I really appreciate it and hopeful we will have a continuing dialogue because these elections are viewed with tremendous interest here because they are very consequential and I also want to thank all our volunteers, all the people who have put this program together because it takes a lot of efforts. Its John, Rises, Robinder Sachdev, Vikram Chauhan, Surbhi Garg. Its Ria Banerjee and countless other volunteers who have been doing this. Thank you and I will hand it over to John.

**John**: Thank you, Sanjay. Thank you everyone for joining .........................