'NATURAL OR TARGETED' ALLY!

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Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff cancelled her state visit to USA after the revelation that the USA's National Security Agency (NSA) had spied on her and fellow Brazilians with their cyber espionage program "PRISM". The cancellation of the visit by Brazilian President is of much importance because this was the only visit by a Head of the State to White House this year which included a business deal worth more than $10 billion on the line and the sale of 36 F-16 fighter aircrafts to Brazilian Air Force from America. The decision was in retaliation to America's espionage program.

America's "PRISM" cyber espionage program has not only targeted Brazil, but has targeted many such countries irrespective of the country's status as an ally/friend or foe to USA. Among the list of countries been spied under this program- India falls into the category of challenger according to USA's classification of the countries based on the reports from this program. All the espionage carried out by USA on India is targeted attacks to gain sensitive or strategic information of the country. It is revealed that India was one among the most targeted countries in this program and USA managed to acquire a great deal of information from the insecure networks of India.

However, India is struggling to take a hard stand against the breach by Americans on its sovereignty. India's Foreign Minister Salman Kurshid went to the extent of defending the program. He stated that, "This is not scrutiny and access to actual messages. It is only computer analysis of patterns of calls and emails that are being sent. It is not actually snooping specifically on content of anybody's message or conversation. Some of the information they got out of their scrutiny, were able to use it to prevent serious terrorist attacks in several countries." But on the other hand, several countries that were targets of America's espionage program expressed their deep concern of such an action and have even gone to the extent of openly protesting against USA, biggest example being Brazil. India also expressed its concerns after a serious critical hue and cry in the state's media against the government's attitude.

It is however, important to analyze the reason for India's reluctance to condemn the breach on India's sovereignty by USA. Some argue that it was due to the program called "Central Monitoring System (CMS)" which India is building in lines with the PRISM program in order to survey its telecommunication networks including internet. But this point loses its validation as the CMS project is still under development

phase and it would take years for it to be operational. Moreover, any country has the right to condemn against its aggressor when its national sovereignty is breached and thus India had a chance to do the same.

In addition to the reluctance, India also made another move in support of America in this issue by rejecting the asylum application of the whistle blower of the "PRISM" program, Edward Snowden. Although it can be claimed that India did not want its relations to diminish with USA by accepting the asylum plea but the rapid speed in which India reacted in rejecting the asylum plea from Snowden is surprising.

Nevertheless, the reasons for India's reluctance to criticize America's espionage program can be analyzed by the following reasons: India is located in a geopolitical location with not so friendly neighbours around. India is facing threats not only through conventional methods from its Western and Northern neighbours Pakistan and China respectively but also in its cyber cables. Cyber attack on Indian websites by Pakistani hackers has become an everyday affair and the Chinese incursion in India's cyber cables are increasing day by day. In order to tackle such threats in cyber networks and also to safeguard its security networks both in government and private- India needs around 500000 skilled cyber security experts. But the current possession of such experts of India is just meagre in number.

Therefore India needs a partner in the field of cyber security to be able to secure its networks. Although, India gets offers from various countries like UK, Israel and others for partnership in cyber security, India's fascination towards USA has made India keen to have partnership with USA. Moreover, India has fallen bait to USA's program especially by its famous statement, "India is America's natural Ally". Therefore, it can be said that India is waiting to get a nod from USA for a partnership in the cyber security arena. Hence, it does not want to annoy USA by openly condemning or protesting against USA against the PRISM program. A similar thought is also gaining momentum in America as people endorse that USA should partner with India in the field of cyber security as India is the biggest market and also it has no other option.

James Lewis, Director and Senior Fellow, Centre for Strategic International Studies' Technology and Public Policy Program stated that "One of the things that works in our favour is that they aren't particularly friends with the Chinese all the time, and they worry a lot about it. So we have an opportunity to work with India. The thing we have to avoid in doing that is giving the impression that we're trying to contain China"

This statement reveals that India is 'not a natural ally' for USA but a 'targeted ally' at least in the field of cyber security.

End Notes:

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