**Biden s foreign policy with Russia**

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What is apparent on the face of President-elect Biden’s coming tenure is that relations between Washington and Moscow are going to be on a slippery slope. Relations between both are at the lowest ebb since World War II and need sustained efforts at different levels of interaction to avoid confrontational politics. Besides other flashpoints; Russia’s annexation of Crimea [2014] and the understanding between Trump and Putin, coupled with allegations of Moscow meddling in 2016 U.S elections stick out like a sore thumb.

Under Biden’s watch, there will be no ‘mixed messages’ [reference twitter outbursts and efforts to set a redirect by his team members], the policy will be sharp, loud and clear.

Some areas where one can fairly make a clear statement by Biden are: His efforts in strengthening ties with NATO allies. He will want to address issues with them not just in traditional military support/alliance but the non-traditional security threats like cyber warfare. Biden will look for further strengthening of relationship with Germany and France. Trump was openly in contempt for U.S European allies. Bitterness arising between Germany and France on the European Defence owing also to a certain degree by Trump’s presidency showing lack of U.S commitment to European security will need urgent attention by President-elect. Though U.S European allies will probably be relieved to see Biden in the President’s office, U.S at this point stands polarized with a strong chance of Republican-controlled Senate, Biden may have a tough opposition on home ground to bring about meaningful changes.

There will be issues with NATO allies too that will make a supported policy for Russia not free from glitches [one example is Biden’s opposition to the Nord stream 2 gas pipeline, this may increase Germany’s ire. In spite of differences of multidimensional nature, Biden is expected to approach them in a very balanced manner respectful of sentiments of other nations.

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He will try a tougher approach in his Russian policy. Biden will support a multi-national base of leadership, upholding global values of human rights. Democratic norms. More leaning towards inclusivity than Trump’s interpretation of “America First.” However, Russia has been very wary of what it views “democratic values” of U.S backed revolutions. “Russia perceives anti-government protests and popular uprisings that seek to overthrow incumbent regimes to be part of a wider strategy of US-sponsored regime change, deliberately designed to undermine rival states. Such events, such as the so- called “coloured revolutions”, popular uprisings that occurred across the post-Soviet space in the early to mid-2000s in countries such as Ukraine and Georgia, are seen as a fundamental threat to Russia’s national security and regime stability. The Kremlin believes that Russia is vulnerable to foreign interference in its internal affairs via western efforts to promote democratic forms of government.” [The Conversation, November 12, 2020] Biden will oppose Lukashenko regime, backed by Moscow regime in Belarus. Biden has called Moscow opponent, as well as the biggest threat to the security of the United States today. He has openly criticized the annexation of Crimea and Moscow’s support in Ukraine’s Donbas region.

Biden will make a consistent effort to try recapture the role of American supremacy which was largely frittered under Trump’s watch under the policy of “America First.”

New York Times reports, “A former French ambassador to Washington, Gérard Araud, said that “every single European leader has had an appalling conversation with Trump.” [Nov. 8, 2020] A very interesting situation that Biden will have to face is the low ebb of relationship between U.S and China at many levels, including technological, economic, ideological areas. Trade tariffs, pressure of company like Huawei, are only tip of the iceberg.

Policies by U.S under Trump have brought China and Russia together on many platforms.

However, Russia’s foreign relation policy has been sharp- not putting all its eggs in one basket [something this writer has long been promoting Pakistan should do], instead, Russia has focused on increasing trade and technological partnerships/exchange with countries including India [with whom it enjoys a long term relationship], Iran and European Union.

What one sees on the canvas, are the indisputable areas of possibility of heightened emotions between Moscow and Washington. Russia largely believes relations between both nations will flow in a similar uncomfortable pattern as they did under Obama’s watch. There is no ecstasy in Russia over President-elect’s win. This was very obvious by the muted reaction to the American election results in Russia.

An extremely interesting one liner which says it all from an article by Ian Hill is worthy of a share, “Biden has foreshadowed that in dealing with Russia he will balance confrontation with engagement: “Hang tough but keep talking.” [The Interpreter, November 25 th 2020] Biden will have an open door policy with Russia in issues where dialogue may be the key to handling/settling issues.

Where dialogue is not the key, a hardline by U.S cannot be ruled out. Yet there are grounds, for both to engage on selective issues. An organized and subject based bilateral engagements between the two can help smoothen out flashpoints with potential to escalate into an ugly confrontation. Interaction at top-executive level and military to military interaction alone may not in themselves be sufficient. The Arctic Council for example is a forum that gives an opportunity for both nations to work together.

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Both nations at the end of the day, are smart enough to work together where needed.

They need to expand the smartness so that the areas of working together grows further.

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