**Pakistan-us foreign policy!**

[Wajid Shamsul Hasan](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/wajid-shamsul-hasan/)

March 10, 2021

The inadvertent delay and rumpus caused by former American President Donald Trump and his supporters to vacate Oval Office for some time posed a serious threat to American democracy. Resistance by Trump supporters was so severe and relentless that it certainly cast serious aspersion on national security. The unnecessary delay shrouded the future of democracy, created doubts and spelled a gloomy spell. Indeed, ‘weird’ is the word that at best could describe the delay and reluctance in the transition to the US presidency.

Nascent democracies like Pakistan that sought inspiration from advance democratic societies like United States, have been disillusioned by the strange American precedence and delay in transfer of power. This uncalled for delay strange as it sounds, compared with the electoral processes in most of the modern democracies remained a quiz for long. The Trump supporters seems to worst confounded the electoral confusion. Unprecedented as the delay has been, it singled out, “the United States as almost alone among major democracies in having taking such a long time to install a new head of the state.” It reminded of the previous stalemate that created a similar crisis following presidential elections between George W. Bush Jr and Vice President Al Gore.

One got drawn into a comparison. In France, the president took office within ten days of the election. In the United Kingdom, the moving trucks arrive at 10 Downing Street the morning after the incumbent loses. The time transition of more than over two months in the United States, is unprecedented and is perhaps second only in comparison to Mexico, where the transition once took over more than five arduous months. At long last the transfer in America took place after a long delay and great deal of tension.

Biden will have to have a team that would act positive in its strategic moves and policy pronouncements so that the Biden administration can hold the American public, reassured that his administration would look totally different from that of Trump

In contrast to last American example, in nascent democracies like Pakistan, transfer is always much quicker with no or little hassle or controversy except of course trading of allegations between the contesting parties in the last polls. The conduct of polls was questionable and it seemed clear that the Praetorian Establishment had decided to select cricketer Imran Khan as Prime Minister of their choice. While that being that and uncertainty rendering transfer of power questionably dubious casting the whole process questionable. Recent election of PPP’s Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani as Senator and favourite for the election of Chairmanship seems to have become more dangerous threatening the future of democracy in Pakistan when the Senate follow up environment has been shrouded in Praetorian machinations pulling the PPP strings and threatening engineering by the Establishment to continue the outgoing Chairman who it had brought in by bulldozing PPP. The rumours are that PPP Supremo Asif Zardari whose entry into the Senate election out-manoeuvred Imran Khan and his uniformed matrons.

It may be mentioned that President Joseph Biden’s election as the new US president though opposed by the defeated Trump has shrouded the future of the most powerful office in an aura of continued uncertainty when smooth transition in White House has a history of more than three hundred years of traditional sanctity. Instead of being a good omen for the future of the country, having suffered immensely at the hands of a quixotic president, the uncalled for delay had blocked the prioritizing of its vested interests above those of other nations. Pakistan that began its diplomatic career as the most trusted ally of the United States East of the Suez, had struggled hard to free itself from the stranglehold of the Cult of Trumpism as manifested in his orchestration of ‘do more’ mantra to blackmail Pakistan that only became lukewarm at the far end of his presidency when Pakistan got the Taliban around to sit at a conference table with the United States.

Irrespective of the fact as to who is the president, the basis of American foreign policy has remained the Monroe Doctrine that asserts irrevocably the principle of unilateral U.S. protectionism over the entire Western Hemisphere since 1823 – a concept that has expanded its sphere of influence in the last hundred years giving new definition to neo-imperialism in a new bottle! Initially the Monroe Doctrine had aimed at safer international waters for the British fleet to deter potential aggressors in Latin America. However, ever since with the advent of now deceased communism and erstwhile Soviet Empire, American emergence as a uni-polar power made its geo-strategic interests different and expansive.

It would be a long shot to forecast whether Joe Biden’s presidency will be able to change the course of U.S. foreign policy and mark a return to multilateralism for what is being called the greater benefit of other countries, especially South Asian countries like Pakistan. It is believed in Pakistan that American return to multilateralism could mean return to John Foster Dulles’ Pactomania. In the given situation, Pakistani experts hope that the US would bring in some positive changes for the better. They expect President Biden and his team to avoid gun-boat diplomacy of the Trump era and would not allow undermining of the administration trying to downgrade the powers of the presidency.

Biden will have to have a team that would act positive in its strategic moves and policy pronouncements so that the Biden administration can hold the American public, reassured that his administration would look totally different from that of Trump. No doubt the Trump administration has thrown the transition process itself into doubt and made it unpredictable. It is said that before the transition can legally begin, the head of the General Services Administration, Emily Murphy, must certify that the election has been decided and results are final.

Murphy, a Trump appointee, had refused to do so, putting the transition in limbo. Senior administration officials may delay, if not out rightly refuse, to meet with the agency review teams. If Trump officials do agree to meet, they might not be forthcoming about what they know. They could refuse to give new teams access to the documents they request or even destroy records. It must be recalled that the fall out of the Trump era delay manifested in the millions of out-of-work Americans who are going hungry with mounting anger, imminently warning of an implosion sooner than later. In that eventuality, Pakistan would be at the receiving end of American policy confusion and disarray.

*The writer is former High Commissioner of Pakistan to UK and a veteran journalist*