**Reviewing Donald Trump’s Presidency**

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Mr. Donald Trump has been the most unpredictable, unreliable, controversial, and roguish, and much maligned leader of the USA in the recent decades. He was seen as renting asunder the world instead of uniting it behind the rule-based international order dominated by his country. His policies have had profound bearing on the evolution of international political and economic order adding to the volatility of many regions from Asia-Pacific to the Middle East, Persian Gulf, Central Asian and Caucasian regions, Europe and North America.

He took many policy decisions to shake the almost consensus-based foundations of the international political, economic and strategic order. However, a few of his policy decisions were more unsettling for the weary world and kept many serious US allies on tenterhooks throughout forcing them to think of devising independent policy measures on problems and issues of immediate concern to them. His lukewarm attitude to trans-Atlantic matters including NATO was an added source of concern to the European Union.

The policy decisions of Donald Trump which jolted the world leaders the most included his denunciation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action – popularly known as Iran Nuclear Deal, trade wars with China and Japan, repudiation of trade agreements including NAFTA), Asia-Pacific Partnership, Trans-Atlantic Trade Partnership (TTP), Paris Climate Agreement, acceleration of anti-China Naval alliances, brinkmanship with North Korea, stoking tension in the Persian Gulf and the Shia-Sunni divide in the Muslim world.

The denunciation of the JCPOA was a disaster. The only two countries in the Middle East were deadly against the nuclear deal with Iran – Israel and Saudi Arabia. Maybe, the other Gulf States would not be in favor of JCPOA, but their opposition was not so pronounced. Donald Trump’s visit to Riyadh to participate in the so called Islamic Summit of May 2017 and his theatric denunciation of Iran as the epicenter of terrorism gave a fillip to the tension in the Persian Gulf and escalated the traditional Persian-Arab rivalry. Any war in the Persian Gulf would have been disastrous for the world.

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His trade war with China throughout his tenure held the world on tenterhooks making the World Trade Organization almost irrelevant. China has been following the WTO rules and regulations but has carried out trade and economic reforms in its own way. China has been willing to hold dialogue about the trade related issues including the huge trade deficit of over $350billion. But this was not enough to bring him down from his arrogant perch. His trade war was not limited to China only. He roughed up Japan and South Korea too.

His diatribe against NAFTA, TTP and NATO disappointed the US partners in the North America and Europe compelling some of them to continue with these multilateral trade agreements even without the presence of the USA. The European Union which remained stuck most of the time with Brexit thought of making its own security arrangements if the US failed to carry on its commitment to NATO. The contradictory signals emerging from Washington and Brussels encouraged Russia to make inroads in the Easter Europe and Central Asian and Caucasian countries.

He undertook his first ever12-day-long tour of Asia to unsuccessfully project his administration’s foreign policy objectives to the countries shaken by the diminishing US commitment to the region as reflected by his unilateral withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The visit aimed at urging concerted and in-sync alignment against North Korea, displaying US resolve to contain growing threat to the region by China, and driving home his preference for bilateral trade arrangements. Though the visit could not allay the concerns of the regional countries about the US commitment, it highlighted the importance of the region as a whole to the US.

The Asia-Pacific boasts of three of the largest economies, seven of the fastest-growing markets and seven of the world’s 10 largest armies. By all estimates, the region has the potential ofregistering more than half of the global economic output in the immediate future. The region has always figured as one of the most significant planks in the US foreign policy as reflected by President Obama’s elaborate Pivot to Asia policy underscoring the US political, economic and strategic engagements with emerging powersand multilateral institutions.

President Donald Trump abandoned the Pivot to Asia policy without laying down any alternative. This added to the regional states’ fear of the growing military and economic power of China. The active US engagement in the region has been maintaining a sort of equilibrium in the region reducing the prospects of strategic threat from the assertive China.

President Trump failed to assuage their security concerns even in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit which was held in Vietnam at the heel of his visit. There also he put more emphasis on his slogan of “The America First” and economic nationalism than any multilateral engagement and put aspersions on WTO as the multilateral institution saying ‘we have not been treated fairly by WTO, and that such organizations can function properly when all members follow the rules and respect sovereign rights of every member”.

In South Asia, his efforts have been directed to strengthen India as a counterweight to China trying in vain to fail the BRI and its flagship project of CPEC. His pronounced tilt to India encouraged Prime Minister Modi to clamp a kind of Martial Law in the Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh abolishing their special status and making them part of the Union of India in violation of the UNSC resolution. This has turned the region into a hotspot escalating tension between the three nuclear states.

In short, Donald Trump made every effort to undermine the US leadership of the globalized world creating doubts about the US commitment to peace and security in Europe, Middle East, Asia and Asia-Pacific. His slogan of “The America First” stirred the monstrous White racism against the black and Americans of Hispanic, Asian descent. He simply presided over the ethnic fragmentation of the American society.

*The author was a member of the Foreign Service of Pakistan and he has authored two books*