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February 8, 2021

**The Trump aftermath**

February 20, 2021 marks the end of Donald Trump’s presidency after Joe Biden takes over as the 46th president of the USA.

Four years ago, once Trump emerged as a Republican leader mandated to lead the US, he assured his supporters that he would take the country to new heights. Despite towering claims, he proved to be a total disaster; first he lost the Congress then he lost the Senate and finally he got kicked out of the White House, joining the league of single-term presidents.

Trump had never held any public office prior to reaching the highest office in the state. Therefore, the outcome shouldn’t be of any surprise. Trump’s political philosophy, commonly referred to as Trumpism, was based on racial divide, hate and discrimination. Immediately after assuming power, he placed a travel ban on a number of Muslim countries and imposed further restrictions on Mexican immigrants.

At the start of his term, many hoped that Trump would go moderate after taking over the highest office of the country. But those who knew his character had no such illusion about him. Trump always considered himself as an outsider in the White House who would hardly trust anyone and wouldn’t even hesitate to embarrass the establishment.

Soon after losing the presidential election comprehensively, Trump immediately launched a vicious campaign against state institutions and spared no effort to cast aspersions on the entire electoral process. On January 6, 2021 being a sitting president, he incited his supporters to attack Capitol Hill where a joint session of the Congress was underway to ratify Biden as the next president This shameful act will keep haunting American democracy for times to come. Thankfully, some sane voices among the Republicans held their ground firmly and did not comply with the illegitimate demands of Trump who was set to unhinge the entire system.

The four years of chaotic rule by Trump has put the US under enormous pressure and distress. The foremost damage that the ex-president could do is the deep divide and polarization of American society. This divide has been so well orchestrated that it is clearly visible in all the domains including media, institutions and political outfits. The Americans had settled for a two-party system over the years but it is likely to be challenged in the future as a consequence of the prevailing polarization and division.

For instance, the Democrats have centre-lefts like Joe Biden but there are extreme leftists like Bernie Sanders. Likewise, the Republicans have centre-rights like Mitch McConnell but there are extreme rightists in the shape of Donald Trump. The 139 congressmen and 8 Senators from the Republicans who signed the resolution to overturn the recent election results is a clear manifestation of this divide in the Republicans. Therefore, a further division in the two mainstream political parties may not be ruled out in the future if the strong polarization continues to grow.

Then comes the question of the poor handling of the pandemic by the Trump administration that played havoc with the lives of hundreds of thousand Americans. In the initial phase, Trump tried to downplay the pandemic issue and remained in a state of total denial. He mocked those who advocated wearing masks in the public places. Throughout, he misled the masses and kept them in the dark. Resultantly, the inaction by Trump made the US pay a heavy price in terms of over 400,000 deaths and the economy also came to a grinding halt rendering millions of Americans jobless. Unfortunately, the ex-president showed no empathy to those health workers and citizens who lost their lives due to the pandemic.

Interestingly, the ‘America First’ policy which was so overwhelmingly boasted by Trump also backfired. The unilateral withdrawal by the Trump administration from the Paris Climate Agreement, Iran Nuclear deal and the WHO drove a wedge between the US and its European allies. Similarly, the trade war with China also did not yield any positive outcome for US trade.

Consequently, the job of new President Joe Biden is going to be tough in view of the aforementioned challenges. Internally, the biggest challenge would be fostering unity amongst the Americans, fighting the pandemic wholeheartedly, generating jobs through better economic policies and bringing common citizens out of prevailing chaos.

On the external front, the first and foremost challenge for the incumbent president would be to restore the confidence of his transatlantic allies, which was badly shattered by the short-sighted policies of his predecessor. Second, the policies on Asia-Pacific and China need to be revamped. Third, the US once again must work in unison with the WHO and other major stakeholders while playing its due role in eradicating the dangers of pandemic from the entire world. Finally, it must re-engage with Iran to restore the previous agreement and also move forward on the ongoing peace efforts in Afghanistan. Though the challenges for the new president are myriad, it is expected that a six-time senator, ex vice-president and the incumbent president would prove equal to the task.

Needless to say, the consequences of the four years of Trump may be averted through a better leadership. Yet the chances of Trumpism hitting back may not be just wished away.

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