**The changeover in the US**

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Every four years on 20th January, winner of the Presidential elections held in November of the previous year, is sworn in as the US President. He could be a new face or the sitting President who can return to White House for a maximum of one more term. This year’s 20th January and the events of the day were unique and vastly different than any of the previous occasions. The sacred event of the oath-taking of the President-elect and Vice President-elect was marred by the fears of violence or disturbance by the supporters of the out-going President Donald Trump, who had stormed on to the Capitol Hill on January 6 in protest to election results. Secondly, Donald Trump himself had boycotted the proceedings and had left for his South Florida residence in Air Force One, hours before the Presidential inauguration. Trump, the only US President to have been impeached twice, becomes the first US President since Richard Nixon, who had resigned after impeachment, not to attend the event of great significance for the American democracy. Thirdly, the ceremony was attended only by the VIPs and not the general public because of Pandemic restrictions on large gatherings. Fourthly, Trump planned his own departure with a 21-gun salute and a military band at Joint Base Andrews, an Air Base in Maryland, in front of handful of supporters. Trump’s unceremonious departure from the US Presidency might be a fair warning to those who consider a State to be their Estate, particularly in a democratic state.

President Biden’s entry into White House at this critical time in history due to deep divisions in US polity and unprecedented impact of Pandemic, calls for an extremely measured action. Very few would understand the American systems of politics and governance than President Biden and his inaugural speech said it all. “Yet hear me clearly: disagreement must not lead to disunion. And I pledge this to you, I will be a President of all Americans, All Americans.”

Immediately after his inauguration as the 46th President of the United states, Biden reached his Oval Office with a tweet that there is no time to waste.True to his words, President signed as many as 17 Executive Orders aimed at protecting the young immigrants and ending a travel ban. Biden’s focus in the initial days of his presidency would be to heal the wounds caused by divisive policies of Trump and move on faster pace to tackle the Pandemic crisis which has already cost US over 400,000 lives.

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The construction of Trump’s obsessive Mexico wall has been stopped. Likewise, Trump’s decisions on climate change, and leaving the World Health Organization (WHO) have also been reversed. Biden’s undoing of Trump’s actions in office and that too on day one is also unprecedented in US systems of governance.

Pakistan would be keenly looking at President Biden’s actions particularly on Afghanistan. Pakistan would like that the ongoing peace process for which it has strived for so long is not rolled back or slowed down and US troops’ withdrawal continues as per the Doha Agreement. Secondly, Pakistan would be closely monitoring the execution of Indo-US Strategic Partnership concluded with the signing of ‘Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement’ (BECA) on October 27, 2020. BECA completes the long-drawn process of negotiations which led to signing of four different Agreements, usually referred as ‘Foundational Pacts’ between India and US over a period of 18 years. India has now become a major defense partner of the US. BECA allows India and the US to share sensitive and classified information in real time. India’s access to real-time picture from American geospatial intelligence would significantly enhance the accuracy of its missiles and armed drones; a capability India desperately needed during its limited military clashes with China in eastern Ladakh last year. A careful analysis of these Agreements suggests that Indian Air Force(IAF) would be a major beneficiary and in the next 5-7 years may be able to reach its defined targets of reforms in its combat plans for which certain strategic platforms are also required. India’s Chief of Défense Staff (CDS) General BipinRawat’shas claimed that India is ready for a two-front war.Bipin gave this statement when he was Chief of Army Staff in July 2018. It is envisaged that US would act as ‘eyes and ears’ for India with all its intelligence-sharing and exchange of satellite data with spot/barrage jamming of signals at critical junctures giving India an edge in time and space in the real time, particularly in the north and north-east. However, the same would be of major security concern for Pakistan. While Pakistan can take up the issue of potential strategic imbalance with Biden Administration, it will still have to take certain necessary safeguards in the months, not years to come.

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