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**The war within**

The US presidential election is mostly over and in a couple of weeks the results will be certified by each state and submitted to Congress. While outgoing President Trump refuses to acknowledge his defeat, most serious observers have accepted the results and are looking forward to the new Biden administration which will be sworn in on January 20. Almost all lawsuits filed by the Trump campaign have been dismissed for lack of merit.

The vote count shows Joe Biden with almost 80 million votes while Trump has received about 74 million. Both are the highest vote counts ever received by a winning candidate as well as by the losing one. The Electoral College similarly shows a clear win by Biden of 306 votes, versus a minimum of 270 needed to win.

While the outcome is quite clear, what is also clear is that the US is a deeply divided country. Going into the election, supporters of each side felt that a win by the other side would be a calamity for the country. Trump has continued to tweet that he actually won and that there was massive rigging, for which his campaign has provided no proof. He is refusing to cooperate with the incoming administration and facilitate a smooth transfer of power. As a result, about 70 percent of Trump supporters believe the election was stolen. It is safe to say that a high level of grudge will be carried well into the Biden administration.

This is the last thing the country needs as it grapples with multiple crises. The ravages of the coronavirus pandemic are resulting in over 150,000 new infections a day, and a daily death toll of about 1500. Large sectors of the economy are struggling badly. While there has been good news in vaccine development, chances are that much of 2021 will be spent fighting the virus even as the vaccines get administered.

How exactly Trump is made to leave office remains to be seen. Speculation about it is a source of national embarrassment. The US electoral process, while far from perfect, is well-documented and well-established. But the country is faced with a circumstance that it did not envision – not only in the refusal of the losing candidate to accept defeat, but also in the militant attitudes of many of his supporters, fueled by a doctored sense of grievance. It has been reported that many right-wing militias have armed themselves, preparing for what they believe is an impending civil war. This is after all a country with more guns than people.

As if this wasn't enough, we're also starting to see fissures within Joe Biden's Democratic Party’s progressive and moderate wings. Democrats like to call themselves a big-tent party. It was the inability of these two groups to come together in 2016 that led to the defeat of Hillary Clinton. Having cooperated closely in 2020, the progressive wing now wants to have a meaningful say in the Biden administration.

Prominent progressive Bernie Sanders has stated they are closely watching cabinet announcements. President-elect Biden's instinct is to reach out to moderate Republicans so he may govern with bipartisan support. This approach in the eyes of progressives, is a fool’s errand. Republicans have no interest, they say, in cooperating with Democrats. Quite frankly, there is much history from the Obama years to bear this out.

While the deep differences between Democrats and Republicans had started to appear two decades ago, the Trump presidency has taken it to levels not seen since the civil war of 1860s. Regardless of how things unfold, the impact on the country can hardly be good.

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