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**Trump vs Biden**

US President Joe Biden’s cabinet nominations and the steps he has taken so far prove that he has a full understanding of the nature, volume and solution of the problems in front of him and is fully prepared to deal with them.

Some of the major challenges he is confronted with include restoring America’s global reputation as a bastion of democracy, protecting its democratic traditions and constitution, countering internal extremism and promoting tolerance, eliminating white supremacy and racial/religious discrimination, protecting the nation from Covid-19, reviving the economy and providing financial assistance to the poor till then, the fulfillment of US obligations under the environmental and other agreements, and the protection of the US from external terrorism.

“We will confront and defeat the threats of political extremism, white supremacy and internal terrorism,” Biden said in his inaugural address. No American president before him has declared white supremacy as a threat. In his 2,411-word speech, Biden used the words “unity”, “together”, nineteen times and the word “democracy” more than any other former US president.

Trump’s cabinet consisted mostly of old, male, inexperienced and white members while Biden has considered experience, diversity, racial and gender equality and required skills more than Trump and other presidents when nominating his cabinet.

The average age in the Trump cabinet was 63 years while it is 58 years in Biden’s. Trump’s cabinet comprised 80 percent men while the ratio is 51 percent in Biden’s. Sixteen of Biden’s cabinet secretaries and 10 equivalent to the rank of secretary already have work experience. For example, his foreign secretary is Anthony Blinken, a former deputy foreign secretary. There are also some newcomers in Biden’s cabinet, such as Deb Holland, the first Native American cabinet secretary, Ms Yellen, the first female secretary of finance, Retd Gen Lloyd Austin, the first African-American head of the Pentagon, and Alejandro Murcas, the first immigrant chief of homeland security.

Former Secretary of State Senator John Kerry has been named presidential envoy for the environment. This is a new position and it underscores the importance of global warming, environmental policy and multilateralism in Biden’s administration.

It is worth mentioning here that Trump had excluded the US from the Paris Environmental Agreement and President Biden has issued an administrative order for the US rejoining therein. This process will be completed in 30 days. He has also rescinded Trump’s order to expel the US from the World Health Organization.

In the US, more than 1,250 presidential nominations require Senate approval. These include not only cabinet secretaries but also, inter alia, assistant administrators of the Environmental Protection Agency or members of the St Lawrence Sea Development Corporation Advisory Board. Biden made over 60 nominations before taking oath of office while Trump had 25 nominations by then. In their first 100 days, Obama had 240, Bush 200 and Trump 90 nominations.

The president also makes several appointments in the White House such as chief of staff and his national security adviser. They do not require Senate approval. Biden made 180 such appointments before his swearing-in against Trump’s 40. Trump had only 90 appointments in the 15 weeks after he took oath.

Administrative rules are not laws, but American presidents can do a lot with them. So far, every president except one has used them more or less. On his first day, Trump issued one while President Biden issued seventeen orders. Biden also issued over 30 administrative orders and memoranda in the first three days. It took Trump 72 days to reach that number. Biden’s orders mostly concerned the coronavirus or were meant to overturn several Trump’s orders. In the future too, executive orders may be widely used to provide financial and employment assistance to the public.

Trump first denied the presence and threat of the coronavirus. Then he kept spreading conspiracy stories about it and continued to ignore it until hundreds of thousands of Americans died. Trump had promised 100 million vaccines would be delivered by the end of 2020 but only 21 million could be delivered by the time Biden took office. Biden plans to vaccinate all Americans this year with a target of 100 million vaccines in his first 100 days. By February 15, 39.9 million people have been vaccinated including 15.2 million fully vaccinated and 71.7 million doses. He has suggested that vaccines will be available for every American ‘by the end of July.’

The success of the campaign depends on the availability of vaccines, local government performance in distributing them and an end to the reluctance to use vaccines. It will also require an extensive awareness campaign.

Trump has left behind a damaged government, a legacy of disillusionment and despondency across federal agencies. Key posts are vacant, talent has departed, departments are politicized, and morale is very low. Now Biden has resolved to repair institutional damage and boost flagging morale with his policy of merit, respect and heal.

Trump filled the ambassador corps with political appointees, hitting 57 percent in 2019, well above the 30 percent common in most administrations.

Unlike Trump who preferred the Pentagon and the CIA, Biden visited the state department first to talk to an incoming class of 165 young diplomats – an annual inflow of talent that was suspended by Trump – announcing that America, diplomacy and democracy were back, telling them “I believe in you. We need you badly.”

Biden has so far appointed only nine political appointees for dozens of posts available in the state department and intends to install mostly career staff diplomats there, especially on the top management posts.

Some of his other preferences and announcements are freezing troop withdrawals from Germany, focusing on ending the war in Yemen and for this stopping support to Saudi Arabia for its military intervention in Yemen, announcing the US would no longer be “rolling over in the face of Russia’s aggressive actions, declaring diplomacy back at the center of US foreign policy and joining the Paris Climate agreement, the WHO and Nato.

Unlike Trump, President Biden is all for repairing alliances and engaging with the world once again. He thinks strong alliances are key to deterring Moscow as well as the “growing ambitions of China to rival the United States".

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