[Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani](https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/dr-ramesh-kumar-vankwani)

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**All about interests**

The election process in the US is always of great interest for the people of Pakistan. Different reports are being presented about the incumbent US President Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Every Pakistani is keeping an eye on the polls results. Currently, this is the talk of the town: how the US elections affect Pakistan and what kind of policies the new US government could adopt.

History shows that a change in American government never ever leads to a change in state policies. Every US government used to focus on achieving national interests. However, the change in national interests may result in modification of policies, according to the situation. Sometimes, friends of the United States become enemies and opponents are declared allies. During World War II, the US and the Soviet Union were on one page to fight against Hitler's Nazi Germany. After winning the war, American interests were changed and confrontation with its former ally, the USSR, was started on all fronts.

Similarly, the tussle with the other superpower USSR during the cold war demanded the United States to support all those elements in Afghanistan who were later declared terrorists after the 9/11 attacks. Today after nineteen years of declaring war against terror, the United States is seeking cooperation with the Taliban, whose government was toppled by force as a reaction to the 9/11 tragedy.

Bilateral ties between Pakistan and the US have also been in turmoil. Following its interest, the US sometimes declared Pakistan a frontline state and sometimes demanded we 'do more'. Initially, Trump adopted an anti-Pakistan narrative during his past electoral campaign but after coming into government, his attitude towards Pakistan gradually changed.

In fact, Trump's meeting with Prime Minister Imran Khan was a big success in every aspect. Trump declared Pakistan as a friendly state and expressed his desire to visit Pakistan and also talked about mediation on the long-standing issue of Kashmir. I was quite hopeful that Trump could play a historical role in resolving the seven decades old Kashmir dispute amicably. Unfortunately, no further progress on the Kashmir dispute was made during the Trump tenure.

In my view, Trump’s state policy towards China and Iran will be followed by the next US administration until there is a change in American interests. Pakistan has cordial relations with its both neighbours, Iran and China. If the US launches any new venture across our borders then Pakistan will certainly face severe pressure. Cordial ties with our neighbours could also be at stake if the US demands support.

Therefore, we have to be very much active on the foreign front in order to face such emerging challenges. All political parties in Pakistan should pledge that our foreign policy should not be formulated to please any particular country or individual but should be for the protection of Pakistan's national interests. Our foreign policy must revolve around our national interests including peace, prosperity and regional stability. In this regard, I suggest that the government must establish a think tank consisting of senior politicians from all political parties, retired bureaucrats and secretaries who have strong grip on foreign affairs. No matter, whoever becomes the Prime Minister, Pakistan's foreign policy must protect our national interests.

As a responsible state, we should avoid any unnecessary statement about the US polls. We must understand that whoever becomes future president, their interaction with Pakistan would be decided by US interests. I hope that the recent elections in the only superpower will result in peace across the globe.

The writer is a member of the National Assembly and patron-in-chief of the Pakistan Hindu Council.

Twitter: @RVankwani