**Helsinki Summit a diplomatic fiasco for Trump**

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In one sentence, the just-concluded Helsinki summit can best be described as “Russia first”. This is all what Donald did in those five hours of discussions and one-on-one meeting with Vladimir Putin. In the post-summit press conference, both failed to tell the world about a single concrete point that would have a positive impact on global peace and stability. This agenda-less meeting was destined to be a diplomatic fiasco for Trump – but it is a success for Putin who has been able to weaken Trump in his home ground. Prior to the meeting, during the session and after the summit, President Donald Trump did nothing but defending the Russians and Putin and blaming his predecessors and the American establishment for all the troubles between Moscow and Washington.

“Our relationship with Russia has NEVER been worse thanks to many years of U.S. foolishness and stupidity, and now the Rigged Witch Hunt!!” is how Donald Trump tweeted just a couple of hours before the start of his much-touted summit with Vladimir Putin in Helsinki.  But Vladimir Putin “reciprocated” this welcome tweet by arriving at the meeting room 35 minutes late, while maintaining his long tradition of arriving late at international summits and keeping his counterparts to wait for him. But interestingly, contrary to his extremely egoistic nature, President Donald Trump completely ignored this and remained silent on this deliberate delay. Just imagine, if any of the European leaders had kept Donald Trump waiting like this, then Trump would have made a big issue out of it and walked out of the meeting in rage. But Donald Trump devoured this “mild diplomatic offence” without any hitch and did his best to maintain a jolly mode throughout the marathon sessions with Putin and his team.

Donald Trump’s affection for Putin is an open secret and he has been vehemently pushing for closer relationship with Moscow ever since his campaign days. Against the advices of his close aides and top national security advisors who were requesting him to cancel this meeting particularly in the aftermath of last week’s announcement by the Justice Department of a new round of indictments against 12 Russians for their alleged attempts to interfere in the presidential election, Donald Trump went ahead with this summit and also declared it a “deeply productive dialogue” at the end. As expected,  the summit between the two mavericks did not produce that can be termed as tangible step forward on any of the contentious issues between Moscow and Washington, but still both Trump and Putin are claiming “success”. "We have great opportunities together as two countries that frankly we have not been getting along very well for the last number of years. I think we'll end up having an extraordinary relationship," predicted US President Trump after his historic meeting with Putin. The question is why Donald Trump took such pain to arrange this meeting with Putin when he knew that he would not be able to bring home any “war trophy” from Helsinki – and that too at a time when the allegations of Russian election meddling are very much alive and swirling in the corridors of Capitol Hill. The answer to this question can be traced to the traits of extreme arrogance and over confidence in his personality. Trump’s disdain for routine diplomatic norms and discipline is an established fact and he seems to be thoroughly enjoying his non-traditional way of deal making.

Time and again, Donald Trump has demonstrated that he does not see any difference between managing a personal business empire and running a government as a head of state. The impulsive and bullying tendencies of his core personality dominate every sphere of his management style. The same personal traits were very visible in his demeanour during his entire tour of Europe. Courtesy his blunt ruggedness and cragginess, he has been able to push away all traditional US allies. Not surprisingly, American foreign policy, under Donald Trump, is fast re-defining its priorities and direction. In simple words, President Trump is embracing old enemies as new friends, while alienating old friends as new detractors – creating a different kind of isolation. Unlike his predecessor Barak Obama, who had frosty relationship with Vladimir Putin and very convivial connexion with the European leaders, Donald Trump has adopted an altogether opposite line; pushing away the traditional European allies and alluring his counterpart in the Kremlin with equal intensity. On the contrary, he has demonstrated fair amount of softness towards all those strongmen who have been previously the cheerleaders of anti-US camp – Kim Jong-un, Rodrigo Duterte and Vladimir Putin etc.  He is doing all this at the expense of inviting further disapprobation of the American establishment, which is already quite sceptical about all his efforts to re-shape the US foreign policy. Donald Trump is trying to change the anti-Russia module of US foreign policy – and that too with such a fervour and eagerness. This is a risky venture. But he seems to be determined to take the risk. This sums up Donald Trump’s whole thinking towards the US establishment’s decades-old anti-Moscow stance.

Ever since taking charge of the White House, President Donald Trump has been exhibiting his fondness for the dictators and autocrats like Putin, Rodrigo Duterte - and North Korean Kim Jong-un with whom he has developed a “special bond” recently. His personal liking and tendency to favour the autocrats and totalitarians has strongly influenced the pitch of his foreign policy to a large extent – and towards Russia in particular. His management style profusely exudes the autocratic tendencies and it does not come as a surprise to see Donald Trump to slant towards the like-minded autocrats. The rollercoaster diplomacy being executed by Trump is seriously challenging the stability of existing global power equation. For obvious reasons, the just-ended Helsinki summit has generated a lot of noise across the globe and it will also remain the main topic in the editorials and opinion columns for quite a long time.  Simply speaking, three basic questions revolve around this summit between the two mavericks. One, why Trump has initiated this melodrama at this time when the controversy over Russia’s election meddling is hovering in the air? Two, what are the key positives for the Americans that Trump has won out of this get-together at Helsinki? And third question is related to Trump’s ability to manage the post-summit scenario, particularly in the face of intense resistance from the US establishment which, apparently, is not ready to let Trump have a free hand in making rapprochement with Russia at his own will and terms.

During his meeting with Putin, Trump did not try to alleviate the concerns of his NATO allies, who were already sceptical about his accommodating gesture on the Russian annexation of Crimea and intervention in Ukraine, instead showed quite flexibility on the issues fairly sensitive for the European nations, particularly three Baltic states once claimed by Russia. The Helsinki summit did not burry the cold war, as was being bragged by Donald Trump, and, in fact, there is new resurgence of anti-Moscow rhetoric in the United States. At the moment, President Trump is alone in his pro-Russia campaign and there is little chance for his bullying strategy to succeed in the near future against the exceedingly strong American establishment, which has full support of American media and intelligentsia at this moment.

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