



File Photo: Trump Putin Meet at Helsinki/AFP

In the meeting of US President Trump with Russian President Putin in July 2018 in Helsinki, immediately **after organizing Football World Cup, Putin seems to have scored a diplomatic goal over Trump in context of US accusations of Russians muddling in their elections. On return to Washington, under pressure from his critics, President Trump did a U-turn to what he had said.** A few days later he invites Putin for talks in Washington, despite continued economic sanctions on Russia. Such a **diplomatic flip-flop and rapid changes in US policies are not the first one in his Presidency.** Let me enumerate some other major ones, which raise a **question mark on US credibility and stability of its policies as a strategic partner:-**

- **The US and North Korea call Trump and Kim Summit a historic success, in light of lack of alternatives. Presumably, this was the only practical option because a failed summit was not suiting either side. Later North Korean idea of 'US Stance as regrettable, gangster-like and cancerous' clearly indicates a wide gap in expectations of both towards each other. Mike Pompeo's visit changed nothing worthwhile, as North Korea has already done enough tests. Kim comes out as a winner, giving enough leverage to China to press on for lifting sanctions. The US can only hope of Korean denuclearization, much against the rhetoric of strong nation ready to punish North Korea prior to the Summit.**
- **Trump's 'America First' announcement gave a perception of 'Inward looking America', which was a significant departure from the global leadership role. He did not take much time to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) with Iran, fulfilling his election promise, even at the cost of annoying its allies and strategic partners, who have critical trade relations with Iran. With Countering America's Adversary through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) in place, it involves all oil importing countries to be under US sanctions from November 04, 2018 including its allies and China.**
- **US started a trade war with China, the biggest trade partner, tariff war with EU. It expected Japan to pay for its defence, forcing it to think for being self-reliant in defence. With continued sanctions on Russia, technically EU nations drawing gas from them also fall under the sanctions due to CAATSA.**

- The US rolled out a strong South Asia **Policy to control terrorism, criticized Pakistan for nurturing terrorists and now gives an indication of direct talks with Taliban, a U-turn to old 'Good and Bad Terrorist' theory.** One would not be surprised if the US starts helping Pakistan again if latter helps them in targeting LeT and Haqqanis.

## How is India Affected?



Washington DC: Prime Minister Narendra Modi meeting the President of United States | PTI Photo /pib

The US is putting pressure on India, along with other major oil consumers to stop importing oil from Iran or face economic sanctions effective from November 4, 2018. Nikki Haley's during her visit to India earlier in July 2018 advised India to rethink its relationship with Iran, with a subtle threat of sanctions, despite knowing that the **'Energy Security' and 'Chabahar Port' are core interests of India. During Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran's interaction with Indian officials in New Delhi in the second week July 2018, it came out quite clearly that cooperation in key areas like crude oil supply, trade and connectivity will continue despite any pressure.**

Russia is the largest supplier of military hardware to India and a long-term strategic partner. **Ruling out dealings due to CAATSA with Russia and Iran is impractical for India, especially when the US has given enough examples of its inconsistency in policies in the last few years. The progress of S-400 deal with Russia is indicative of the fact that India will act in its national interest.** I do not see any change in the continued independent foreign policy of India, which cannot be held hostage to any other country. **India has good relations with most countries affected by US policies' shift and will be able to manage the same with all of them including the US with concessions/waiver on CAATSA or any other methodology.**

## The Future Realities?



File photo: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Russian President Vladimir Putin

**The US and other aspiring global powers need to realize that an era of multilateral relations is a reality, and dictating strategic choices to any country are unlikely to work in future, irrespective of economic/military muscles.** When most countries voted against the US in Jerusalem issue in UN, despite stern warnings by US permanent representative to UN, it was clear that **the theory of "Either with us or against us" will not work anymore, due to multilateral linkages of each country.** A large number of US allies joining AIIB is also a case in point. CAATSA may have been relevant when the dollar was the only credible currency and the world was scared of US economy. Later so many countries have survived US sanctions and not given in to its pressure. It is not necessary that the world will abide by a domestic law of US(which is not even a UN law). **It is time for the US to realize that archaic laws like CAATSA need to be scrapped, as they are not implementable.** With a large number of strategic partners/allies/ friendly countries of US, trading with Iran/Russia coming under CAATSA, and trade war with many more including China, how can the US expect to improve its economy? **The core interests of its strategic partners and allies need to be considered to ensure that 'America First' does not lead them to 'America Alone'.**

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