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Trump Heavy Lifting on Foreign Policy a Gift to Biden

By Matt A. Mayer

Democrats have spent the better part of the last four years denigrating Donald Trump's foreign policy agenda. Their complaining gave aid and comfort to our allies and enemies who had grown far too comfortable in the status quo in which America paid for their security or capitulated to their demands. The Davos-oriented foreign policy left the American taxpayer footing the bill in taxes and lost jobs.

Trump's "America First" approach tried to change all of that by demanding our allies pay their fair share and our enemies not be given a free pass. Trump's approach wasn't easy or popular among the establishment in both parties, the media, corporate America, and Davos. Nonetheless, in four short years, Trump reset America's global position in a manner that benefits Americans and increases the security and economic position of our allies.

As a result, Joe Biden inherits a position in which Trump's heavy lifting will allow Biden to simply accept the fruits of Trump's labors.

In the Middle East, Trump's withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal sent a strong signal to our allies in the area that America wouldn't allow Shia Iran to ever acquire nuclear weapons, which the Iran Nuclear Deal did. Concurrently, Trump's relocation of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, as countless other presidents promised to do, made it clear America stood resolutely behind the Israelis regardless of what happens with the Palestinian statehood issue.

Those two acts, along with the crushing of ISIS and withdrawal of troops from the Middle East, directly led four Sunni countries to normalize relations with Israel under the umbrella of a Trump-led peace process. Trump understood Sun Tzu's maxim that the enemy of my enemy is my friend could drive peace deals. Shia Iran's enemies are coming together to oppose its grand design to control the Middle East via terrorism and nuclear hegemony. With only six weeks before Biden is sworn in, don't be surprised to see several more countries, including Saudi Arabia, normalize relations with Israel as a hedge against Biden reentering the Iran Nuclear Deal.

Next, Trump's trade war with China finally got China to understand that it could no longer steal our jobs, intellectual property, and global position without a fight. The bright light Trump shined on China's trade abuses have made it impossible to return to the status quo. Even European countries want to recalibrate their trade positions with China. With China's near-criminal role in the spread of COVID, Trump's true Asia pivot leaves Biden with a strong hand to play in getting

accountability and improved trade behavior out of China.

Equally importantly, Trump put enormous weight in strengthening our alliances in Asia-Pacific to counter China's increased pressure on the countries therein. Trump also pushed back militarily on China's South China Sea ambitions. It will be hard for China to succeed in its domination goal if Japan, South Korea, Australia, Indonesia, India, and America remain strong partners in countering China's every move.

In terms of Europe, Trump's demand that European NATO members meet their own commitments to spend 2% of their budgets on defense has left NATO stronger than ever. Hurt feelings among Europe's elite is a small price to pay for NATO receiving more of the funds it needs to meet the challenges of the 21st century, especially if NATO pivots from focusing on a declining threat from a weak Russia to a growing threat from a strong China. Biden will certainly be more welcome in Europe than Trump, but he shouldn't allow their smiles to cover a betrayal of their pledge to meet their spending obligations.

Biden also would be wise to keep the focus Trump put on Europe opening its markets for U.S. goods and services. The goal should be a zero-tariff environment for trade between the Northern Hemisphere and European democratic allies. Trump made progress in this area by demanding better access to European markets, especially in agriculture and services. Biden should be cautious in automatically reversing Trump's stances before getting agreements on key issues from Europe.

On Russia, though the Democrats spent four year trying to paint Trump as a Russian stooge, the unequivocal facts remain that Russia's territorial growth ended when Trump entered office, the Nord Stream 2 pipeline is in limbo due to Trump's opposition to putting more petrodollars in Vladimir Putin's pocket, and, as highlighted by The Empowerment Alliance, America's energy independence has made Russia weaker due to the lower prices that came with America's energy renaissance. Biden would do well to heed Trump's lesson vis-à-vis Russia.

Finally, even Biden had to admit during the election that the United States-Canada-Mexico Trade Agreement was superior to NAFTA. Trump got important protections put in place for American workers and greater access to Canadian and Mexican markets for agriculture, milk, and other U.S.-made products. All Biden needs to do now is enforce the new

trade agreement.

Every new administration understandably wants to reject the prior administration's accomplishments and chart its own course. Given the incredible results Trump obtained across the globe, however, Biden should accept those gains and try to more diplomatically build upon them. It would be a grave mistake to walk away from Trump's foreign policy achievements just because those wins got notched by Trump and came with Trump bravado.

Biden should accept the foreign policy gifts Trump is giving him.

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