



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

Can Biden plug the foreign policy holes in the key year of his mandate?



Joe Biden announced his candidacy for a new presidential term on the same day as four years ago when he announced that he was entering the presidential race for the first time. Meanwhile, the world has become a more dangerous place. Is this his fault?

The official announcement of the candidacy was only a routine confirmation of Biden's intention to enter another race. Last February, he gave the most serious hint during his State of the Union Address.

However, three days ago, the pre-election end of Biden's presidential term began, which will be the predominant factor that will determine his future decisions.

Even now, the president has no competition within the Democratic Party, probably until August, when the Chicago Convention will decide on the candidate.

Within the Democratic Party, Biden has support that can satisfy him - about half of the party's supporters want him to enter the presidential race again (47% according to the Associated Press-NORC Centre for Public Affairs Research).

If he is accepted as a candidate, which is now only a matter of procedure, Biden, according to the current figures, will have almost unanimous (81%) support of his party's voters in the November 2024 elections.

Biden now has over a year left to raise the parameters that keep him in the competition for a new mandate. Foreign policy decisions will be significant, even though they will not predominantly bring profit in domestic voting.

In Biden's case, there is a lot of scope for foreign policy changes.

Ukraine is an important pre-election asset

During his tenure, a security crisis unparalleled in the post-World War II period, that of Ukraine, escalated.

The US presidential administration has positioned itself regarding Russia's aggression against Ukraine as a decisive and unquestionable democratic world leader.

Policy towards Ukraine could be a significant trump card for Biden in the upcoming pre-election year and the pre-election campaign itself.

"The question we are facing is whether in the years ahead we have more freedom or less freedom, more rights or fewer", was part of Biden's message as he announced his candidacy, which refers to America and Americans, but certainly reflects his foreign policy attitudes, particularly towards the war in Ukraine.

In one year, the US sent \$75 billion in support to Ukraine, which included military, financial, and humanitarian aid, the German Kiel Institute for the World Economy announced last February.

This is only the value of direct US support for the defence of Ukraine, which is massive in itself and reflects the policy of the Biden administration to support resistance to the Russian invasion without reservation, and for as long as necessary.

However, the indirect effect of US support is much greater, because Biden's administration directed its influence on all partners to support Ukraine as much as possible, which

they have been doing for the past 14 months.

The Ramstein Group is the key mechanism in the allied support for the Ukrainian defence. At the initiative of the US, 50 allies coordinate delivery of military support to Kyiv every month.

Without this kind of US leadership, it is quite clear that the Ukrainian resistance to Russia would not be nearly as effective or could even have been crushed by now.

Therefore, Ukraine will remain one of Biden's priorities in the next year. It might even be more pronounced, due to the opposition of conservative Republicans, who persistently seek an end to this policy.

China at ground zero

Biden will be forced to manage relations with China in the coming year with more uncertainty. The current balance in this strategic field for the US cannot satisfy his ambitions.

After meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Indonesia last November, it appeared that Biden turned his course toward easing tensions over Taiwan and, in general, the Pacific.

The optimism was short-lived, despite China's opening up after a three-year hard lockdown and its aspiration to boost its faltering economy through stabilising trade ties.

Partly due to China's favourable position towards Russia regarding the aggression against Ukraine, then due to incidents with Chinese spy balloons over security-sensitive areas in the US, the expected thaw did not

follow, and relations with China are perhaps as strained as at the beginning of Biden's term.

Four years ago, when Biden entered the first presidential race, he noted China as a "serious challenge" and criticised its abusive trade practices, and nothing has changed in that regard so far.

However, the timing is not in Biden's favour and his possibly more aggressive approach to China. The campaign will surely expect that from its candidate, but there are not many options to turn the negative Chinese record in his favour in the short term.

The Middle East is slipping out of US hands

Over time, China's economic recovery will give it even more energy for offensives on the foreign policy front, which are already visible.

This primarily refers to the Middle East, where China has shown that it wants to and is able to threaten traditional US dominance.

The recent agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran is China's baby, and is rapidly shaping the direction of a new Middle Eastern political and security architecture over which the US has almost no influence.

In this regard, the scope for a potentially more offensive US policy in the pre-election year exists primarily in the Middle East.

Biden's previous mandate regarding this region was marked by the sudden and problematic withdrawal from Afghanistan, which was a signal to all other actors - both

regional and China - to start what we are seeing today, which is the de-Americanisation of the Middle East.

If he wants rapid success in the region, Biden will need key support from Israel, but the government of Benjamin Netanyahu cannot be a reliable support in this.

Netanyahu's government is burdened by internal conflicts, which could easily lead to new elections and a political vacuum that will deny the necessary support to its traditional ally in the key year of Biden's mandate.