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Afghanistan's Turbulent Neighbourhood 2020-Implications Analysed

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Afghanistan already suffering the tyranny of its geostrategic location generating Major Powers' conflicting rivalries and if the decades-long disruptive strategies against it by its meddlesome neighbour Pakistan were not enough now stares at a turbulent Islamic neighbourhood with implications of pushing distant any chances of peace and stability.

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Afghanistan's neighbourhood at the commencement of 2020 comprising Islamic nations of Pakistan, Iran and the Western-most Chinese controlled Muslim majority Xingjian Region find themselves in agitated turbulence induced by a mix of domestic and externally induced factors---all of which impinge one way or the other on peace and stability of Afghanistan.

Pakistan which has been incessantly meddling in Afghanistan for nearly forty years now is today itself in a state of marked internal political and economic turbulence. Pakistan's provinces bordering Afghanistan have seen continuing incidents of violence against Pakistan Army violent suppression in Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunwa. Gilgit-Baltistan regions bordering Afghanistan and Chinese Western Region of Xingjiang are also in ferment demanding self-determination.

Pakistan finds itself in a piquant situation where having honed terrorism as an instrument of State-policy for decades now finds indigenous terrorism of freedom movements in its border areas paying back the Pakistan Army for the brutal suppression of these border provinces. Pakistan can hardly blame Afghanistan for the restive upsurge in its Western Frontiers bordering Afghanistan.

Pakistan as pointed out in my earlier writings stands besieged internally and externally affecting its credibility to continue as a viable Nation State. Politically, Pakistan Army-selected Prime Minister Imran Khan's government has failed to deliver good governance. Political dynamics within Pakistan in 2020 suggest that people of Pakistan have become resentful against PM Imran Khan failing to deliver on his political promises and that resentment will be exploited by Pakistani Opposition parties

Economically, Pakistan in 2020 continues to exist on economic life-support systems funded by countries like China and Saudi Arabia. Pakistan had to seek billions dollar loans from World Bank to service its external debts.

Such disturbed political and economic conditions provide a ready recipe for Pakistan's ruling regime propped by Pakistan Army to be easily tempted to divert domestic attention by increased military adventurism against Afghanistan. Moreso, when in 2020 when the restraining hand on Pakistan Army of the United States stands weakened by Pakistan Army's buoyant dependence on China.

Iran is in a state of ferment in the wake of United States targeted killing of IRGC's iconic military leader General Solemani commanding the elite Quds Force of the IRGC. It has set in motion increased levels of US-Iran conflict escalation where a small unintended incendiary spark could throw the whole of South West Asia with Iran and Afghanistan as major constituents in unimaginable spiralling of violence and war. Afghanistan sharing long contiguous borders with Iran can hardly escape the adverse effects of conflict and war between United States and Iran.

What adds more disturbing contours for Afghanistan's stability and security is that with the United States militarily embedded in Afghanistan it would be logical to assume that in the event of United States-Iran conflict escalation the United States would be tempted to use Afghanistan as a springboard for additional flank of military operations against Iran. In such a scenario, would Afghanistan have any alternative option to stop United States use of Afghan territory for military operations against Iran?

Afghanistan's third neighbourhood of Islamic turmoil is the Xingjiang region of China. Xingjian is a Muslim majority region of China where the

Uighurs have been waging an independence movement to free themselves from Chinese occupation. In 2020 widespread reports suggest that China has imprisoned nearly a million Uighurs in reorientation camps. This has increased violence to greater levels with possibilities of more violence in response to Chinese latest ethnic and religious repression.

With Pakistan in strategic connivance with China and pushing out Uighur rebels earlier ensconced in Frontier Areas of Pakistan bordering Afghanistan, it would be logical for such elements to move into Afghanistan's remote areas of North East. This would invite Chinese and Pakistan wrath against Afghanistan unwittingly caught in a conflict not of its making.

Afghanistan's future prospects of peace stability and security primarily hinge on policy acts of commission and omission of the United States as the global predominant Power and also as the Major Power firmly embedded in Afghanistan militarily for over seventeen years now,

Contextually, for the record it needs to be highlighted that while the United States could not be defeated in Afghanistan by a combination of Pakistan Army's duplicity with United States and Pakistan Army's Taliban proxies, it also needs to be highlighted that it was the United States own permissive political expediencies in relation to Pakistan Army that led to a military stalemate.

Keeping in mind that Afghanistan has defied all possible solutions for restoration of peace and security mainly due to United States policies being permissive on Pakistan Army's delinquencies and disruption strategies with end-aim to ensure that any Government in Kabul should be of Pakistan Army's selection, the United States has no choice but to continue its military embedment in Afghanistan. The alternative easy option is to militarily disengage from Afghanistan and leave it to its fate of repetition of another civil war generated by Pakistan Army.

The United States has to recognise that since Afghanistan's future is no longer confined to the triangular state of relations between United States, Pakistan and Afghanistan but has become more global in character by renewed interest of Russia and increased interest by China, the United States has to consider strategic perspectives of Afghanistan falling under dominant influence and control of Russia and China and in that eventuality what would be the effect on United States national security interests in Greater South West Asia?

With Afghanistan's neighbourhood of Islamic nations in increased turbulence as per situation obtaining in 2020, the United States has to factor this contextual development also in its analysis on the strategic desirability of abandoning Afghanistan for a second time, yet again.

The United States so far has baulked at disciplining the Pakistan Army for its disruptive strategies on Afghanistan through its military proxy—the Taliban. In utter strategic contradiction, the United States persists in dialogue with the Taliban whose avowed aim is to pressurise the military abandonment of Afghanistan by the United States and re-assuming political power and control in Kabul.

Ironically, the United States policy establishment is oblivious and blind to the prevailing reality which stands pointed in my writings for some

time that the United States much favoured Non NATO Ally-Pakistan is no longer United States' Frontline State but has morphed into "China's Front Line State in South West Asia" and a committed vanguard protector of China's military aims and objectives in the region

If the above is a correct assessment, and it is very much so, then do any plausible justifications exist for the United States to persist in being mindful of Pakistan Army's sensitivities over Afghanistan and should the United States persist in its peace dialogues with the Taliban when it is clear to everyone that the Taliban's stances adhere to the script laid down by Pakistan Army GHQ in Rawalpindi?

Concluding, one cannot but help re-emphasising ad-nauseum what stands repeated in my writings so far that the United States for its own strategic good and safeguarding of its national security interests in Greater South West Asia should not consider military abandonment of Afghanistan whose security is further complicated in 2020 by a turbulent Islamic neighbourhood but that the United States should plan for a Forward Military Presence permanently embedded in Afghanistan on the lines of US Forward Military Presence in Japan and South Korea.

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