

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind

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Terrorism in Afghanistan: Consequences for National Security and Economic Development

According to the history, terrorism is not a new phenomenon in world history in that it has existed in every age for several centuries. Historically, the following examples of important terrorist groups can be identified during the course of history: Baader Meinhof gang of West Germany, the Japanese Red Army, the Italian Red Brigade, the Palestinian al Fatah, Israeli Haganah, Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda, Khmer Rouge of Cambodia, the Viet Cong in Vietnam, Somalian al Shabaab, Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM), ISIS in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan, Afghan Taliban, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan to mention but a few prominent ones. Terrorism in the world at large has risen to a sublime and the global community in a bid to stave-off this act which has constituted a threat to global peace and stability unanimously agreed to counter terrorism in all its forms and to also bring its perpetrators to justice. Terrorism is an insidious act common and conducted daily over decades and has been responsible for the physical and or structural violence experienced by many people in Afghanistan. The increase in the circulation, use and transfer of sophisticated weaponry and the consequences for violence, increased mass casualties and violence in Afghanistan, the past years have spirited scholarly efforts towards identifying the underlying causes, proffering solutions and curtailing futuristic tendencies of terrorism in Asia- particularly Afghanistan.

To aver that terrorism has far reaching implications for national security is to state the obvious. This is an aphorism considering the devastating effects of terrorism in Afghanistan recently. Aside from creating an ambiance of desolation and displacement, it further exacerbates the spate of instability in such an area and threatens peaceful coexistence.

The resultant public security volatility in the region has been an impediment to trade and investment, peaceful co-existence and stability, as well as sustainable livelihood and development. This scenario has since complicated and accentuated the plight of the region as a developmentally challenged section of Afghanistan. In respect of the implications of terrorism for the wider polity of Afghanistan, it is to be noted that the Taliban insurgency has led to negative perception of Afghanistan as an unsafe country by the wider world. This has damaged Afghanistan's profile as a favorable international destination for investment, travel, and tourism. The implication of this is that Afghanistan is gradually drifting into the status of an ostracized nation. This does not promise well for the sustenance of the country's national security. Furthermore, the extent of violence and destruction that has been associated with the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan has been horrific. The advent of suicide bombing as a strategy for prosecuting terrorism by members of the sect has since signaled a new dimension to the national security challenge in the country. To say the least, the rising incidence and prevalence of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan have exposed the country to serious levels of humanitarian and territorial vulnerabilities. In the face of this situation, the sustenance of Afghanistan national security is at best problematic. Aside from this, terrorism in Afghanistan increases public insecurity, threatens livelihood, increases human right abuses, amplify population displacement and refugee debacle and swells human casualties/fatalities.

To be sure, desiring for development amidst terrorist attacks is illusory, as no real development can be attained in a war prone society characterized by incessant bombings and attacks, considering that Afghan democracy is nascent and can be easily disrupted by unrest.

In many of the attack-ridden areas, economic activities have come to a halt and this traumatic episode has affected mostly the petty traders who earn their meal on daily routine. Thus, while the country is striving towards capacity building, the Taliban is crumbling such efforts.

Direct Investment (FDI) towards the development of the Afghanistan economy can never be over emphasized. This means that states need the relationship and partnership of one another to pursue development goals but the quest for foreign direct investment in Afghanistan has been compromised by the level of insecurity in the country. The Afghan government long before now understands the importance to woo foreign investors. And governments being aware of the limitation and incapability of the local investors wasted no time to vigorously and financially make provision for the injection of foreign capital in form of investments in the country. This it did through the use of shuttle diplomacy. This was protected and facilitated by the country's confidence in its new found democracy which most foreign firms have pointed out as the basis for investigation.

The world we live is seriously under threat; domestic and international threat perpetuated on the basis of frustration, aggression, marginalization, ideology and such other excuses by terrorists, otherwise enemies of development. Without trivializing the grievances of the aggrieved parties, it is instructive to note that their perceived-misalignment does not absolve them of escalating violence and demeaning the political process but instead attracts the wrath of the government that will stop at nothing to crush such anomaly. To be sure, terrorism must be seen for exactly what it is- a threat to national security and development. Therefore, terrorism is an impediment to development in Afghanistan and has increased violation of human rights whilst deepening insecurity in the society. The social ills experienced in Afghanistan are both a means and end to terrorism in the country, thus to ensure sustainable development and national security in Afghanistan, it is imperative that terrorism is nipped in the bud. Mitigating the adverse effects of terrorism will surely pave way for a meaningful, systematic, holistic and responsible development which will be co-operative, responsive and co-responsible in its entirety.



The Jaw-dropping Result of China's Reform and Opening-up

By: Hujjatullah Zia

Forty years ago, the third plenary session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China ushered in courageous endeavor of reform and opening-up which has made incredible headway so far. To rejuvenate the national dream, China hurdled the bulk of national and international barriers and played the best possible role the world has ever seen.

When China started reform and opening-up policy in 1978, its foreign exchange reserves were roughly more than 100 million dollars, Chinese reformist Deng Xiaoping said, "Imagine, one day China may have a foreign reserve of 10 billion dollars. How much can we do with that much of foreign reserve". Forty years later, China's foreign reserves are close to 4 trillion dollars.

China has devoted its resources and efforts to building infrastructures and manufacturing capacities and improving the people's living standard. In turn, China became the world's second largest economy overtaking Italy, France, Britain, Germany and Japan; the largest car manufacturer; and the largest producer of steel, cement, chemical fiber and more than 100 other major products. By 2014, China became the world's largest importer of crude oil and the accumulative overseas investment of Chinese energy companies exceeded USD200 billion. China is also the largest exporter of wind power and solar-power equipment in the world.

China has made a significant contribution to the world since it joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 when China's export of goods was \$266.1 billion or 4.3 percent of the world's total. However, it overtook US in 2007 and Germany in 2009 as its export volume had reached \$2.27 trillion - 13.76 percent of the world total - in 2015, becoming the largest exporter of goods. And its average contribution rate to world economic growth has reached nearly 30 percent. Likewise, China's import of services surged from \$39.3 billion in 2001 to \$467.6 billion in 2017, with an average annual growth of 16.7 percent. The figure was equivalent to nearly 10 percent of the world's total services import volume.

"In 2017, overseas Chinese-funded enterprises paid \$37.6 billion in taxes to the countries where they invested, up 36 percent from the same period last year. At the end of the year, 1.71 million foreign employees were employed, an increase of 370,000 from the end of the previous year," said Ning Jizhe, deputy director of the National Development and Reform Commission, at Central China International Production Capacity Cooperation Forum and Enterprise Matchmaking Conference in 2018 held in Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei province, on October 19. He added that

China attracted \$86.5 billion in investment, a year-on-year increase of 6.1 percent, from January to August this year. From January to September this year, non-financial direct overseas investment by Chinese enterprises reached US\$82 billion, according to him.

Before 1988, China did not have any highway. But now with 123,000 km of highways, it is ranked first in the world. China also launched its high-speed railway, Beijing-Tianjin Intercity Railway, in 2008 and at the end of 2015, its railway mileage in operation had reached 19,000 km, ranking first in the world.

China has established about 30,000 companies around the globe - with USD6.4 trillion in overseas assets - lifted 800 million Chinese people out of poverty, and the per capita income in China's urban areas increased from 343 yuan in 1978 to 13,400 yuan.

According to Liu Xiaoming, China's ambassador to the United Kingdom, since adopting the reform and opening-up policy, China has opened up a market of over \$1.7 trillion to foreign investment, and invested over \$1.2 trillion overseas.

China is one of the most dynamic markets - with more than 1.3 billion consumers and more than \$10 trillion demand in goods and services only in the next five years - where enterprises are pushing forward. As the first national level import-themed expo in the world, the expo attracted more than 3,000 companies from 130 countries and regions. The business deals at the expo reached \$57.83 billion.

What is more, China has shifted from an agrarian economy to a highly industrial community. Statistics show that in 1978, 70.5 pc of China's population was engaged in agriculture, 9.1 pc in service, and 17.3 pc in industry. By 2017, only 7.9 pc of population was doing farming, whereas 51.6 pc of the Chinese were engaged in service and 40.5 pc in industry, which is a tremendous change from agriculture to industrialization.

All in all, all the aforementioned China's tremendous achievements are the result of its reform and opening-up. That is, opening to the outside world is the backbone of China's development. With this in mind, Chinese officials have reiterated on multiple occasions that its door will never be closed rather it will open wider. Hence, it is a lesson for all nations to practice multilateralism and keep their doors open to one another so as to not only boost trade and economic development but also strengthen people-to-people contacts and friendly relations.

Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan and freelance writer based in Beijing. He can be reached at zia_hujjat@yahoo.com

US Troop Withdrawals Threaten to Fuel Greater, Potentially Problematic Gulf Assertiveness

By: James M. Dorsey

As far as Gulf leaders are concerned, President Donald J. Trump demonstrated with his announced US troop withdrawals from Syria and Afghanistan that his insistence that the "world is a dangerous place" has never been truer.

The troop withdrawals coupled with Mr. Trump's praising of Saudi Arabia's alleged willingness to foot the reconstruction bill in Syria, moves that emphasized his lack of geopolitical interest in the Middle East, leave primarily standing as a common interest between the United States, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates only Iran and a shaky Afghan peace process. If former US president Barack Obama's seeming unwillingness to wholeheartedly support embattled Arab leaders during the 2011 Arab popular revolts that toppled the heads of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, was at the root of at times reckless greater assertiveness displayed since then by the leaders of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Mr. Trump's moves literally threaten to leave them hanging in the air.

A similar conclusion can be drawn for Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who appears to have successfully persuaded Mr. Trump to postpone publication of his Israeli-Palestinian peace plan until after Israel's April 9 early elections because it portends to be less favourable to Israel than expected.

Despite Mr. Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, the plan reportedly sees the city as the capital of both the Jewish and a Palestinian state.

The troop withdrawals and the peace plan confirm Middle Eastern leaders', particularly those in the Gulf, worst fears: they are left without a reliable ally that will unconditionally protect their interests and they have no one to turn to who could fully replace the United States as their unquestioned protector. The resignation of US defense secretary Jim Mattis deepens the crisis for Gulf leaders. "Mattis' departure means the loss of a key interlocutor at the Department of Defense, the Cabinet-level agency with which the Gulf countries deal most. It also means losing a senior figure who views Middle Eastern strategic realities in terms very similar to their own. The fact that Mattis resigned over policy disagreements with the president does not bode well for future trends in Washington from a Gulf Arab perspective," said Middle East scholar Hussein Ibish.

Mr. Trump has proven to be unreliable. His granting of waivers to Iran's major oil buyers as well as for Indian investment in the Iranian port of Chabahar, viewed by Saudi Arabia and the UAE as a threat to their geopolitical and economic interests, was the writing on the wall despite the harsh sanctions imposed on Iran by the president. Syria and Afghanistan cement the fact that Mr. Trump is both unpredictable and unreliable.

The world's other three major powers, Europe, Russia and China, have at best aspects of what the United States has to offer but lack the ability and/or interest to fully replace the United States as the Gulf leaders' protector in the way that Mr. Trump seemed to do at the outset of his presidency.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE already have fundamental differences over Iran with the three powers who oppose US sanctions and want to salvage the 2015 international agreement that curbed the Islamic republic's nuclear program. Similarly, the three world powers have refused to back the 18-month old Saudi-UAE-led economic and diplomatic boycott of Qatar and call for a speedy resolution of the crisis.

Russia, moreover, is keen to sell weaponry to the Gulf, who are among the world's biggest buyers, exploit vacuums created by US policy, and capitalize as a non-OPEC producer in enabling Gulf efforts to manipulate produc-

tion and world oil prices but is not eager to inherit the US defense umbrella for the region.

Said Russia and energy expert Li-Chen Sim: "The Gulf is not a key focus of Russian foreign policy... I don't see the Russians taking any advantage of the problems between the Saudis and the Americans to play a larger security role." Ms. Sim was referring to US Congressional blaming of Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman for the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi and condemnation of Saudi conduct of the war in Yemen.

By the same token, China has neither the ability nor the appetite to replace the United States in the Gulf. On the contrary, China has preferred to benefit from US regional protection, prompting US assertions that the Chinese were free-riders. As is evident across Eurasia in projects related to China's infrastructure and energy-driven Belt and Road initiative, Chinese support does not come without strings. The same is true for Europe.

China's brutal crackdown on Turkic Muslims that is expanding to other Muslim groups in the country, moreover, represents a potential black swan in China-Gulf relations.

The impact of Saudi and UAE uncertainty with no one world power available to cater to all their needs is reflected in apparent efforts to rebuild bridges with Syrian president Bashar al-Assad whose ouster they sought for much of the Syrian civil war.

A recent visit to Damascus by embattled Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir, the first by an Arab leader since the civil war erupted in 2011, was widely seen as the beginning of a thaw in Syrian-Arab relations.

Ali Mamlouk, the head of Syrian air force intelligence and a close associate of Mr. Al-Assad, met in Cairo days later with Egyptian intelligence chief Abbas Kamel.

The UAE is, according to unconfirmed reports, refurbishing its embassy in Damascus that has been empty since Gulf states broke off relations with Syria early on in the civil war.

Adding to Gulf leaders' uncertainty, Mr. Trump left many guessing when he this week thanked Saudi Arabia on Twitter for agreeing to "to spend the necessary money needed to help rebuild Syria, instead of the United States." With Saudi Arabia refraining from comment, it was not clear what Mr. Trump was referring to. Saudi Arabia transferred in October in the immediate wake of the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi US\$100 million to the US to help stabilise parts of Syria.

The vacuum created by Mr. Trump risks fuelling greater Gulf assertiveness with potentially messy consequences.

A close associate of Tunisian president Beji Caid Essebsi asserted earlier this year that the UAE had offered Tunisia financial assistance if Mr. Essebsi followed the example of Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, who imposed a brutal autocracy after staging in 2013 a military coup to topple Mohammed Morsi, Egypt's only democratically elected president.

Saudi Arabia this month pledged US\$830 million in aid for Tunisia following Prince Mohammed's controversial visit last month as part of a tour designed to demonstrate that his position remained strong despite Mr. Khashoggi's killing.

Mr. Trump described the world as a dangerous place in shrugging off allegations that Prince Mohammed may have been responsible for the killing. Gulf leaders are likely to share that perception in response to the president's seeming unwillingness to fully take their interests into account.

Dr. James M. Dorsey is a senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, co-director of the University of Würzburg's Institute for Fan Culture, and co-host of the New Books in Middle Eastern Studies podcast.

Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida

Vice Chairman / Exec. Editor: Moh. Sakhi Rezaie

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net

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