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Russia's unprincipled rebound to Afghanistan clearly visible in 2017 in the company of Pakistan and the Taliban who jointly spearheaded the Soviet exit from Afghanistan reflects the Russian depravity of political expediency.

Russia would be sorely disappointed if it has concluded that its renewed rebound to Afghanistan by an unholy coalition with Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban groups would result in the United States withdrawal from Afghanistan.

On the contrary, noting the above developments ending with Russia's reachout to the Afghan Taliban, Russian arms supplies to the Taliban and Russian increasing military and political contacts with Pakistan, there is a growing call within United States policy circles that the United States must resort to a US Military Surge in Afghanistan. The US Defense Secretary has publicly commented on the United States observing growing inter-action between Russia and the Afghan Taliban.

United States hackles would be further raised after last week's visit of the Russian Deputy Chief of General Staff to North Waziristan and South Waziristan where they were much feted by Pakistan Army 12 Corps Commander. Surely, this is not an innocuous visit by a Russian senior officer and his team to some ordinary border area of Pakistan. North Waziristan is the region from where the Pakistan proxy war against Afghanistan is incessantly being launched through the Haqqani brothers and Afghan Taliban groups. Why the sudden Russian interest in Afghanistan?

Russia's pivots to Pakistan and arms supplies to the Taliban defy political and geopolitical logic in that no Russian national security interests are served. Russia's pivot to Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban only serve the national security interests of Pakistan and China.

Both these nations comprising the China-Pakistan Axis are not committed to the stability of the war-ravaged hapless nation of Afghanistan. Their only strategic aim is that Afghanistan be pushed into an exit from the proximate Afghanistan-India Strategic Partnership.

In the new found context of the security of the Western Flank of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, China's flagship project to colonise Pakistan, it is a pressing strategic imperative for China to ensure that Afghanistan is reduced once again to a vassal state of Pakistan.

The Major Powers with the exception of China should not forget that China was the only Major Power to have relations with the Afghan Taliban in the heyday of the Taliban regime in Kabul. China's strategic aim in Afghanistan in those decades has remained constant right upto 2017, and that is keeping India out of Afghanistan.

China's actions in the context of its policy of containment of India are understandable but what does one make out of Russia's unprincipled rebound to Afghanistan to proactively assist Pakistan's and Afghan Taliban's end-aims in Afghanistan?

Only two plausible answers strike one's mind. The first being that Russia stands politically diminished and reduced in global stature to being a junior ally of China. The second deduction that arises from Russian rebound to Afghanistan to keep company of Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban patronised by China, is to payback the United States in using Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban as American instruments for exit of Soviet Forces from Afghanistan in earlier decades.

The second deduction above is debatable as Russia today has any number of pressure points against the United States and more effective ones than Afghanistan. Does Russian President Putin really believe that by Russia's rebound to Afghanistan to assist Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban under Chinese tutelage would really force the United States to negotiate with Russia on Afghanistan?

Does Russian President Putin have realistic hopes that Russia by emerging as another prominent actor in a China-Pakistan-Russia Trilateral could overturn the American strategic blueprint on Afghanistan? Even if this dubious trio resort to this stratagem, it cannot be forgotten that the United States enjoys greater leverages and pressure points to desist them from such a misadventure.

But then when have authoritarian regimes revelling and drunk on their unquestioned and unrestrained power have desisted from military adventurism. The China-Pakistan Axis nations, Russia and the Afghan Taliban are unabashedly authoritarian in nature and outlook. To such authoritarian nations strategic thought and strategic logic are alien matters.

Russia's rebound to Afghanistan to keep company of Pakistan and Afghan Taliban combine with Chinese oversight and control has inflicted

serious and irreparable collateral damage o Russia not only on Russia’s standing as an ‘independent power centre’ (Putin’s foreign policy goal spelt out some time back) but more significantly and damagingly on the Russia-India Strategic Partnership forged over decades. In case of the latter, Russia seems to have realised the colossal costs and lately initiated ‘damage-control’ evidenced by the flurry of Russian dignitaries to New Delhi in recent weeks.

The likes of Zamir Kabulov in the Russian foreign policy establishment advocating a Russian pivot to Pakistan beginning with intrusive political and military initiatives in Afghanistan to spite India for its growing proximity to the United States has misfired and extracted heavy Russian costs. The greatest casualty in Russia siding with the China-Pakistan Axis and extending military aid to Afghan Taliban is the sowing of “Strategic Distrust” between Russia and India. Moreso, the impact is tremendous on Indian public opinion which for decades valued Russia as a dependable friend of India.

On the global plane, Russia could suffer a major setback in a reset of Russia-United States relationship as the United States discovers these latest Russian cosy strategic games with Pakistan on Afghanistan.

In conclusion, it needs to be stressed that Pakistan has traditionally as a rentier state turned its back on its benefactors and strategic patrons beginning with the United States and Saudi Arabia too and one can expect that the same would be repeated in due course in case of China and the new ‘born again’ political benefactor of Pakistan on Afghanistan, namely Russia.

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