**Post-US Withdrawal Scenario**

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After the two-decades-long occupation, the US and NATO have completed their exit from Afghanistan. Now, the withdrawal from Afghanistan should reflect on the broader and longer-term reverberations. The withdrawal, US-Taliban agreement, recent dynamics of militia building, the presence of extremist groups in Afghanistan and the Taliban regime will be a threat to Iran, Russia, China and Pakistan. The Taliban is being pressurised by the neighbours and the West for delivering against different terrorist and extremist organisations operating from Afghanistan. The Taliban will ask Iran, Russia, China and Pakistan to negotiate with concerned terrorist organisations and settle their issues themselves. A very complicated situation is going to prevail in Afghanistan in near future. The conflicts have entered a new phase post-US and NATO troops withdrawal. The US will be buffeted by the consequences of the predatory behaviour of Afghanistan’s neighbours and non-state terror organisations. The best course for the US is to reengage, rather than renege on the commitments to protect interests in this important region.The objectives of the 2001 US intervention in Afghanistan were to fight al-Qaeda and its host (the Taliban) government and ensure that Afghanistan could not be used again as a haven for terrorists that threatened the US. But these threats have been resilient. This war against al-Qaeda and Taliban continued for two decades on all fronts unless they expelled the US and NATO from Afghanistan.Post-US and NATO expulsion, new uncertainty, instability and insecurity have emerged with three back-to-back jolting blasts of the IS on Kabul airport, which claimed 170 lives, including 13 Americans, and injured over 200. Following this brutality, the other day rockets were fired on Kabul airport by the IS. Taliban have completed their control over the country. Uncertain peace and prosperity prospects of Afghanistan send the message that the Taliban will seek financial and diplomatic favour from the US and Western world because Pakistan, Iran,  Russia and the Central Asian States are not in the position to extend financial support and strength to Afghanistan while China goes for investment only.

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China doesn’t give loans and aids to any country. Ultimately, the Taliban will seek financial help from the countries against whom they have been fighting in Afghanistan for two decades. As international financial institutions are in the US and Western control how would the Taliban consolidate their Emirate e Islami in Afghanistan unless they request the US and the West for financial support? Taliban will have to request the US and West to combat the financial crunch of Afghanistan.  Recent attacks of the IS on Kabul airport have resulted in a new wave of migration of highly skilled Afghans. The deteriorating security situation will further divide the political factions in Afghanistan and invite regional players to join the conflict;fuelling the proxy war and creating space for violent extremism to emerge and thrive. Over the last 20 years, different terrorist groups have patiently exploited opportunities to exert themselves.  Radical movements have expanded their influence in various localities, resulting in ideologies that contradict the systems that promote an open society and its values. The Taliban have not been ambiguous about their plans for a political settlement, stating that they envision an Islamic system that embraces all Afghans. They are clearly for the restoration of an Emirate dominantly similar to the one they ruled in the 1990s. The Taliban still have links with al-Qaeda, which further exacerbates the security situation and shows how the Taliban’s victory would help strengthen transnational terrorist groups.The insecurity in Afghanistan raises major concerns among its neighbours, particularly as threats of cross-border militancy and drug trafficking reach their borders and affect internal security and stability. The regional actors in Central Asia are especially on edge, as the recent surge in violence in Afghanistan affects certain border areas in the country’s northern provinces. For the sake of their security, these countries don’t want a direct armed conflict or high-level insurgency in Afghanistan. The relationship between Central Asian countries and Afghanistan continues to be cordial, with the former expressing their ambitions for cooperation through bilateral agreements to expand trade, development, and diplomatic relationships. After 20 years of support, Pakistan relates the recent Taliban win as its win while it has throughout been denying its influence on the Taliban.Will Afghanistan be outsourced to the US, opening the door to political engagement and economic incentives? Such a deal will concern India, which worries about the potential security threats that  Pakistan-supported Taliban could pose. Pakistan and India strive to impede each other’s political influence in Afghanistan, and their policy of engagement will take into consideration this common objective. The uncertainty in Afghanistan makes it hard for India to cement its policy of engagement. If India sees Pakistan controls and influences Afghanistan, there will be a new phase of conflict between them in and outside Afghanistan, which will further aggravate the instability and insecurity and add more elements of radicalisation and violent extremism. Russia intends to play a leading role in developing regional consensus on Afghanistan’s future power structure through an expanded “troika” along with the US, China and Pakistan. China has already announced that the Belt and Road Initiative will be extended to Afghanistan. It will enhance connectivity by extending CPEC. China’s success in these endeavours depends upon political stability in Afghanistan. So it will strive to play a convening role to ensure security for the realisation of its economic interests in Central and Southwest Asia. The Taliban government may reach out to China to supersede the US presence at Bagram and fill the vacuum left by the Americans’ withdrawal.

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