**Chasing shadows**

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These days when one sits down to write and wonders what topic to write on, one has no option but to write on Afghanistan.

To say that Afghanistan is in turmoil would be a rank understatement. It is a land trashed and turned from a bustling country into a graveyard. And not for the first time. The Soviets had done it earlier and got a thrashing at the hands of the Afghans. Now the Americans have tried and have also left a massive graveyard and been defeated and humiliated by the sons of the same rag-tag army.

Afghanistan is not just a graveyard in the conventional sense nor is it a necropolis. It is a graveyard not just of dead bodies but also of dead ideals. Of dead dreams. Of dead hopes and dead aspirations. But luckily for them it still moves on and one day it will come out of this desperate situation. What bothers everyone right now is what Afghanistan will do in the interim.

Will it turn into a safe haven for what America considers terrorists and would-be terrorists? Come to think of it, America has shown itself to be the biggest terrorist of them all. The excuse for starting the bootless Afghan war despite the lessons of history were the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington because ostensibly Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda had done it. It could very well be but no cogent proof of their involvement has been furnished in 20 years.

It is all propaganda, propaganda and more propaganda. It defies belief how Osama bin Laden lying in a cave, his kidneys attached to a dialysis machine could have pulled this off without serious help. People have always blamed portions of the CIA and MOSSAD to be behind this. God alone knows. And when we are reduced to such heavy conjecture then everybody with any kind of preconceived notion can conjecture what they will.

The Americans in their flight have left behind a huge cache of armaments, vehicles and other equipment. They claim that they disabled them before they ran away. But, given their incompetence, they may not have succeeded. And, given how perfidious they have proved to be in the last half century, they may even have deliberately not properly disabled them so that their use can later be blamed in a false-flag operation against a country they wish to trash.

Here Pakistan should look out because it is one of America’s favourite hits. So too should Iran, Turkey and Iraq. And now since the fear of communism has finished, America (which cannot operate without an adversary) will use the juvenile fear of rising Islam as the excuse.

In the meantime, these arms could fall into the hands of people that the US cannot control. They are already in the hands of the Taliban and could come into the hands of Pakistan but that is fraught with danger so we should try and avoid it. The Afghans, desperate for money, might start selling them to the Indians for example or whoever is the highest bidder. America has stolen most of their bank reserves so they must be desperate.

Apart from Pakistan, the country most interested in the future of Afghanistan and its stability has to be China. Luckily, China and Pakistan are so friendly that they work together on most things. In tandem, we can steer Afghanistan in the right direction. But again, the greatest inducement will be financial help which only the Chinese can give. Afghanistan should be absorbed into the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and economic zones should be created there. But this will take time. So I might be getting ahead of myself.

The Russians will also have a big say and, like the Taliban, they too seem to have learnt a lesson. So to persuade Russia to join hands with China and Pakistan in the rebuilding of Afghanistan should not be so difficult. If we get Afghanistan involved in these things, the chances that it will drift into aiding and abetting terrorism will become very limited.

I can go on but I do not want to at this stage until I see how the cookie crumbles further. America’s defeat in Afghanistan was certainly foretold – but not so fast nor the shameful way it happened. America has not exited; it has only partially exited. It has left behind about 200 military men and some thousand Afghan helpers and interpreters. Their fate is up in the air. If the Americans left behind meet some disaster or are killed, America may once again be tempted to go back into Afghanistan and we will have another war on our hands.

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