**Back to Square One**

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The American establishment might need to introspect for years to identify flaws in their policies and decision-making. One wrong decision has cost the American economy trillions of dollars paid by the American taxpayers. The economy can revive but what about the lives of millions of Afghans that were lost in the rugged vastness.

Being in the lead, the American policy-makers compelled their allies to join hands in crushing local governments and the governance system around the world so that western democracy could be imposed everywhere. The imposition was never peaceful and the US found itself engaged in a series of wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Yemen among countless others.

Sitting opposite the Taliban who Americans had been fighting against for decades; negotiating terms of peace and kicking out the puppet regime that the US had itself imposed on Afghans should all be considered signs of defeat before its humiliating, haphazard withdrawal from Afghanistan?

What purpose has been served? What was the target and why did it take so long to achieve that target? And at what cost? Millions of people have already lost their lives, properties, livelihood and land.

Now, when the American forces have left and their wheels are up in the skies, is the region safer? Has terrorism ended? Did allied forces manage to execute the western style of democracy?

Unfortunately, the answer to each question is a bold “NO”.

Western and Indian media are blaming Pakistan for their unfinished agendas in Afghanistan. How ironic!

Is Pakistan so powerful that it can turn the tables of a superpower and the union of powerful countries in the horizon to defeat an army of ragged-tagged Taliban? If Pakistan can achieve its goal through around 80 thousand Taliban—a loosely knitted group—why had the international community not already declared Pakistan a superpower? Why do we not have permanent membership in the UNSC?

Western and Indian media are blaming Pakistan for their unfinished agendas in Afghanistan.

The truth remains that the war in Afghanistan was as flawed as it was in Iraq: wrongly planned and wrongly executed. The only right in all wrongs was the thriving arms industry in the US, which filled the bank balances of those who pushed the American army into wrong battlegrounds. The arms corporation is not kind. It gobbled few thousand American marines, trillions of dollars from American taxpayers and millions of lives of children of lesser god—the Afghans.

The Iraq war was imposed with a false narrative of WMD and one million Iraqi Republican Guards. A savvy mind probing the fallacy behind these false claims would have ordered the death penalty to propagandists. There were no WMD and no one-million-strong force. It was the collection of all cadets, who underwent mandatory army training equivalent to NCC in Pakistan. It does not transform a student into an army officer. What has happened to Iraq now? A society divided into ethnic and sectarian lines, war-ravaged cities, failed and corrupt government.

What was different in Afghanistan? The claim of one million fell to 0.3 million army personnel with American training and their attachment in Indian military academy. What about the performance? The well-equipped and well-trained army crumbled faster than a sandcastle on a beach. The democratically-elected president ran away with suitcases stashed with dollars. Afghan Vice-President was roaring on Twitter only in the recent past. Sadly, his roar can now deafen him. His eulogy for his erstwhile darlings’ sheepish escape is full of sarcastic praise.

With slogans of nation-building and imposition of western democracy, the “Great Escape” of the world’s mightiest force has left more chaos in Afghanistan.

Afghans are desperate for economic migration and even hiding in aircrafts’ engines for greener pastures. Unfortunately, being the children of a lesser god, they are destined for doom: whether clinging to aircraft or waiting for their number in queues at Kabul Airport. They do not have strong arms to cling to aircraft, traversing the skies at thousands of feet high. While standing in long-drawn-out queues, they have to be shot by the children of superior god—the Americans—to clear the passage.

My question to the American establishment and the custodian of the White House: Will they have nightmares about Afghan Soccer player Zaki Anwari died falling from an American evacuation plane?

Will they be traumatised by the painful cries of innocent Afghans who died in collateral damage?

Will they be able to smile again after trusting artificial intelligence and bombing wedding parties? Will an ordinary Afghan be able to trust his fellows again, who ruled them with a promise of modernism and development?

The answers to all the above will be incomprehensible, which means an innocent and ordinary Afghan will essentially find refuge in the Taliban. The English phrase remains the answer to all my unanswered questions: “Back to Square One!”

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