**Talking Turkey**

BY Z A R R A R K H U H R O | 10/14/2019

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| LIKE a broken clock, Donald Trump too can be right twice a day. In one of his tweetstorms on the Turkey-Syria situation, hidden among claims of his `great and unmatched wisdom` and obscured by rants in full capslock, were kernels of truth.  Calling out America`s propensity to initiate `stupid, endless wars` that cost `trillions` of dollars, he made an admission that a normal president never would have, that the US went to war under a `false & now disproven premise, WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION. There were NONE! Clearly, out of the mouth of (orangemaned) babes there do occasionally come words of truth. Now one can argue that the entire episode is aimed at distracting from his continued domestic troubles, but even in this Trump is unique, as he is likely the first US president to try and shift the focus by withdrawing from a conflict, as opposed to the time-honoured tradition of starting a new war in order to bask in the impenetrable glow of exploding daisy-cutters.  Coupled with his bulldozer-like determination to keep his election promises (no matter how odious) and propensity to tell it like it is, it is safe to say that America, and the world, have not quite seen his like before.  `Who will ever trust America again?` cry politicians and analysts who have perhaps never actually understood the nature of America`s foreign policy and have never heard of the South Vietnamese army, various rebel groups and militias and others that the US has funded, used and then discarded.  As far as the Kurds go, well, they are ideally positioned to be used and abused given that they are a population of 40 million people, inhabiting territories within the borders of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey.  Depending on which day of the week one of these countries is considered an `enemy` by the US, the local Kurds who are all united in the hope of eventually having their own nation-state can be funded and armed.  And that`s how it`s been for the better part of the past century, and this chronicle of betrayal has been well-documented by Jon Shwarz in The Intercept.  The Kurds in Syria may have had no choice but to risk this unreliable port given the storm that was raging, but it is beyond laughable that America is unaware of its legacy of perfidy. To be fair, they probably do understand this, but hypocrisy is a central part of any foreign policy the oil to its engine. That`s why Turkey can be threatened with sanctions by the US while Saudi Arabia, engaged in a far bloodier war in Yemen, gets troops and arms sales.  Of course Saudi Arabia and the UAEhave also added their voices to the choir, though they may get drowned out by the sounds of bombs exploding and the screams of dying children.  The European Union isn`t far behind either as many of the European countries currently screaming bloody murder over Turkey also have no qualms selling the weapons used in Yemen to such devastating effect. Then we have ethnic cleanser in chief, Benjamin Netanyahu, warning that Turkey is committing ethnic cleansing and Egypt`s Sisi, that doyen of righteousness and human rights, also condemning Ankara.  All of this is only shocking if you somehow feel that morality and righteousness play a part in international relations beyond virtue-signalling. When you strip down the rhetoric, all that remain are interests cold, hard and utterly amoral.  So when it comes to Pakistan, should we expect anything different? No. We will remain silent on Yemen while carefully avoiding entanglement. We will supportTurkey in its offensive while ignoring the Kurds. We will talk about Islamophobia while pretending we never heard of the Uighurs.  And all this, make no mistake about it, is par for the course especially for a country in sore need of allies. You don`t have to like it, you`reallowed to rage against it, but it would be silly not to understand it.  For Erdogan, the calculation is clear: a de facto Kurdish state on his borders simply cannot be tolerated, as it may provide a springboard for PKK attacks in Turkey and also provide a base for regional powers.  More, it fits perfectly with Erdogan`s image as a born-again Ottoman sultan and regional strongman. And, let`s not forget, it also provides Ankara something to bargain away in any future deal or dispensation.  Regionally, the operation provides an opportunity for Russia to further embed itself in the Middle Eastern theatre, and given another hint that the US will not likely go to war with Iran on its behalf may make Saudi Arabia more inclined to come to a settlement, a cold peace if you will, with Iran. And here, to my infinite and cautious surprise, it seems Pakistan may actually play a role. Will wonders never cease? The writer is a joumalist.  Twitter: @zarrarkhuhro |  |