**Fruits of `wisdom`**

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| IT is telling that no one batted an eyelid when, in a tweet threatening to `obliterate` Turl(ey`s economy if it did anything `off limits`, the commander-in-chief of the United States referred in passing to his own `great and unmatched wisdom` After all, this is the same person who routinely describes himself as `a very stable genius`, ignoring the fact that anyone with an average IQ who has even a tentative grasp over reality would recognise that such boasts are, at best, entirely superfluous.The `genius` and the `unmatched wisdom` both came under question on Sunday night when Donald Trump, following a telephone conversation with Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, decreed that American troops would get out of the way of any military operations by Turkey in northern Syria.That was inevitably interpreted as giving Ankara the go-ahead for what Erdogan has long been itching to do: to establish a Turkishcontrolled enclave on the border with Syria an approximately 30-kilometre `buffer zone` that would serve a dual purpose. It would provide a dumping ground for a million or so Syrian refugees who have fled their homeland in recent years, while distancing the Kurds from the frontier.Syrian Kurds have spearheaded the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, an entity that was instrumental in combating the militant Islamic State group and its associates in Syria`s north. Erdogan, whose nation was indubitably the conduit for most of the foreign fighters attracted to IS and its ilk, and whose regime is hardly innocent of the charge of providing succour and support to a range of jihadists, sees the SDF as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has long fought for Kurdish rights in Turkey, and been dubbed a terrorist force in the bargain.It would be strange if there weren`t links between the unfairly derided PKK and the freshly beleaguered SDF. Divided across Middle Eastern borders from Iran to Turkey and Syria, the Kurds are the largest ethnic group anywhere without a nation state to their name. And in forging alliances in their quest for regional autonomy, they are accustomed to routinely being betrayed by a range of regimes, so while the latest move by the US is inevitably dismaying, it could hardly have come as a surprise.What Trump may not have foreseen, notwithstanding long-standing Pentagon resistance to his urge for a pullout, was that some of his closest congressional Republican allies including Mitch McConnell and Lindsey Graham, not to mention former UN ambassador Nikki Haley would interpret the sudden abandonment of Kurds as reprehen-sible evidence of American unreliability.Most of the critics tend to ignore the fact that historically America`s reputation as an unreliable ally is well established. In this sphere, as in so many others, Trump is hardly an innovator. The accidental president probably realises, however, that he can ill afford to antagonise his allies in Congress amid the looming threat of impeachment. Hence the tweeted threat to Turkey, which fails to clarify what he might perceive as `limits`.His`wisdom`mayindeedbe`unmatched` in recognising that American participation in what he describes as the Middle East`s `Endless Wars` ultimately causes far more harm than good. But that instinct ought to be supplemented by the recognition that at least some of these wars may not have occurred at all had the US butted out. Furthermore, there`s a considerable difference between not intervening in the first place and pulling out when the going gets tough.Across most of the 20th century and beyond, the history of US military interventions is a sordid saga of mass destruction withoutreasonable cause and, often enough, ultimate betrayal.The generally destructive US role is not restricted to boots on the ground, however.Throughout modern history it has unhesitatingly propped up the most odious regimes in living memory from Pinochet toZiaul Haq and continues to do so today, not least in the Middle East, where Saudi Arabia and Israel remain its primary clients.And let`s not overlook the extent to which it bolstered and helped to breed jihadist tendencies in Afghanistan, where today the only way out seems to be some sort of deal with the Taliban, the illegitimate offspring of Uncle Sam`s extended dalliance with the regime in Riyadh and its subsidiaries in Islamabad.The Syrian Kurds may now seek an alliance with Bashar al-Assad`s regime in order to resist the expected Turkish assault. Assad is broadly beholden to Russia and Iran for his continued rule, and both those countries have dealings with Erdogan, while neither particularly gives a damn for the Kurds. The Syrian leader couldn`t have forgotten, though, that his Turkish counterpart was particularly vociferous once in demanding Assad`s departure.As in so many other parts of the world, no one really knows what happens next. As Trump likes to say, we shall see. m mahir.dawn@gmail.com |