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Strategic Realignments in Asia - II (Pakistan Observer)

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All the analysts expecting a dramatic turn through the newly emerging Russo-Pakistani cooperation were disappointed by the rescheduling of Russian President’s visit to Pakistan. This sends a strong message that credible partnerships between states cannot be built overnight but over a period of time. While the exact reasons of the visit remain shrouded in mystery, one doesn’t need to go far to find the plausible reasons behind the cancellation of the visit.

There could be multiple reasons for the strong and impulsive President Vladimir Putin to call off the visit like, the Russians understandable disappointment over the impasse on the IPI and TAPI pipeline or a divergent Pakistani and Russian position regarding Afghanistan which also compelled Pakistan to cancel the quadrilateral summit involving Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan more time would be required to reach for a consensus. While in the first case the purpose could have been to pressurize Pakistan to move beyond symbolic gestures of signing MOUs, towards something more meaningful even if it means annoyance of the US.

Russia and China are worried of a possible spill over of Islamic militarism in the aftermaths of a post 2014 Afghanistan and therefore, Pakistan’s role becomes significant for them. The Russian and Chinese policies in the Middle East have so far remained oblivion of the rising anti-US sentiments, but in future the situation may help China and Russia to strengthen their hold on the region.

So far it remains a difficult to forecast the projected trajectory of militant or political Islam which either has entered the phase of a bloody renaissance or is on the confrontationist course with the West. Whatever the case, China and Russia are likely to emerge as the biggest beneficiary of a US strategic defeat in Afghanistan and Middle East. Consequently, not only US role in world politics would reduce, but such a retreat would enhance the Russian and Chinese global influence beside the regional dominance. With other vibrant regional economies like Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, India and Turkey, the Asian region would become axis of the economic and strategic affairs.
The divisive fault lines between US and Russia/China running over the expansion of NATO, projected deployment of missile defence shield in Europe and Middle East and possible military intervention in Syria and Iran, would further deepen. However, a post 2014 Afghanistan could emerge to be another controversial issue between Russia/China and US thus possibly bringing these major powers face to face with each other. Consequently, regional countries in Asia like Turkey, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan along with Pakistan would become vital. Pakistan besides maintaining a criterion based relationship with the US therefore, needs to look within the region where global and regional players have started to re-posture themselves.

Decision makers of Pakistan believe that remaining relevant to the strategic environments and geo-politics imply “submitting to the dominant global power” even if it defies the national interest or the logic of economics. Resultantly, Pakistan has almost become an economic pariah in the region which could have extremely destabilizing implications. Seeking for relevance on the international stage with looming bankruptcy is a self allured fallacy which would eventually fall on its face. Moving on the current course, Pakistan not only risks becoming completely irrelevant to contemporary geo-strategic and geo-economic environments but would also be seen as a state impeding the economic integration within the region. Pakistan therefore, has to economically overhaul itself besides reaching for a political settlement on “US war on terror”. All military conflicts including that of World War I and World War II eventually were brought to an end on a negotiation table and Pakistan on going military campaign is no exception to this rule.

The path leading to a political settlement would be extremely tumultuous with numerous tactical diversions like Salala and Malala. Pakistan has to keep the strategic destination in mind avoiding any impulsive tactical decision. The future of Pakistan largely depends on how it positions itself in the changing geostrategic and geo-politic environments.—Concluded.

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