

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



May 26, 2018

Political Rivalries Will Jeopardize Regional Stability

The tension between Iran on the one side and Israel and the US on the other side will pose serious threat to regional stability. The Tehran-Washington emerging cold war following the withdrawal of US from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – signed in 2015 under which Iran scaled back its uranium enrichment program and promised not to pursue nuclear weapons – will be court disaster.

After the Donald Trump's decision to abandon the nuclear deal in May 8, Washington threatened to impose sanctions on Iran but left it with one more option which was accepting a list of dozen demands released by the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Monday and calls on Iran to practice tighter restrictions on its nuclear program than those of 2015 nuclear deal, halt its ballistic missile program, release the US prisoners, etc. It was added that Iran will face "the strongest sanctions in history" if she did not comply with the demands. Iranian officials showed a backlash against the list and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said, "Who are you to decide for Iran and the world? The world today does not accept that the United States decides for the world. Countries have their independence".

On the contrary, Israel, the US long-term strong ally, hailed Washington's pledge to impose "the strongest sanctions in history" and called other countries to follow the lead. Israeli Prime Minister said, "We believe that it is only policy that can ultimately guarantee peace".

The tension and cold war have been mounted in the Middle East recently after a number of events. The US, UK and France carried out more than hundred missiles in Syria in April 14 following a week of threats of retaliation for an alleged chemical weapons attack on civilians in Damascus. The act, which made the UN Security Council to hold an emergency meeting, was condemned by Iran and Russia as Vladimir Putin called the strikes an "act of aggression" adding that they would add to the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria, but the strikes were supported by Australia.

In May 14, at least 60 Palestinians were killed, including a baby who died from tear gas inhalation, and more than 2,200 were wounded in the wake of gunfire and tear gas carried out by Israeli soldiers as the US sought to relocate its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The violence drew widespread international condemnation. The UN General Secretary Antonio Guterres said he was "profoundly alarmed and concerned by the sharp escalation of violence and the number of Palestinians killed and injured in the Gaza protests." Similarly, Riyad Mansour, ambassador of the permanent observer mission of the state of Palestine to the UN, condemned the issue in the strongest terms and called it "odious massacre".

However, Netanyahu blamed Hamas for the Gaza violence and he was backed by White House saying Hamas "intentionally and cynically provoking this response" – the allegation denied by Hamas. The move narrowed the chance of peace between Palestine and Israel as Palestinian said that US could no longer serve as an honest broker any peace process despite the fact that Trump said he would remain committed to peace between the two sides. Subsequent to the death of 60 Palestinians, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) convened by Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and called the killing as "savage crimes committed by the Israeli forces" and Erdogan compared the action of Israeli forces to Nazi Germany's treatment of Jews in World War Two. Iran's President called on Muslim countries "to cut their relations with the Zionist regime and also to revise their trade and economic ties with America".

All the aforementioned issues are believed to result in tense relations between US and Iran. In other words, the confrontation between US and Israel on the one side and Iran on the other has underlain the recent tense relation. Now the question is what is the implication of this tension for the regional stability?

The cold war and political rivalries in the Middle East will destabilize the region and fuel the conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Palestine. That is to say, both political opponents and proponents will seek their interests and act to protect them even at the cost of people's life. As a result, Israeli officials said that they killed Palestinians to protect their territory. This issue will apply everywhere in the Middle East and political parties will seek to defend their interests by jeopardizing the life of others. In such a case, no respect will be shown to international law.

Moreover, Afghanistan will not be immune to the consequences of regional conflicts, either. If the US be engaged in bigger issues, Afghanistan will be left behind. Despite Trump's initial claim to eradicate the radical groups from the surface of earth, the unmitigated violence continue unabated in Afghanistan and both the Taliban and IS group carry out large-scale attacks killing soldiers and civilians in large number. The escalated insurgency in Afghanistan shows that the US pays less attention to the country's conflict.

Regardless of the fact that who is right or wrong in the Middle East issue, the security situation will be worsened across the region, including Afghanistan, if the cold war and political rivalries continue. The world will have to stop political confrontation and practice upon international law so that no life be lost and no opportunity for peace agreement be missed.



What Sank the Kim-Trump Summit?

By Ramesh Thakur

When US President Donald Trump abruptly canceled his summit with North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un, he blamed "tremendous anger and open hostility" from the North. In fact, the summit, scheduled for June 12 in Singapore, was doomed for three reasons.

First, the two sides mirrored each other's misperception of the main motivation for the summit. Both thought the other had agreed to meet because of weakness and had made major concessions. Kim believed that his nuclear strength had forced Trump to the summit without pre-conditions, making him Trump's equal as a head of state. He could afford to explore possible avenues for a peace regime, he thought, because North Korea's nuclear sword provided immunity from US attacks.

But the Americans concluded that international sanctions had brought North Korea to its knees, leaving Kim desperate to conclude a deal on US terms. Part of the US strategy was to place additional pressure on China to rein in its client state or itself face tough financial penalties from Washington.

South Korea's President Moon Jae-in, who deserves the most credit for recent developments on the Korean Peninsula, unwittingly stoked this misperception by attributing his summit with Kim to Trump's policy of "maximum pressure" on the North. This was calculated flattery on Moon's part. By validating Trump's self-serving belief that tough sanctions bend countries to America's will, Moon gained political cover from US foreign-policy hawks unhappy about diplomatic overtures to Kim.

Unfortunately, endorsement of this narrative emboldened the US hard-liners now surrounding Trump to prevail upon him to exit the Iran nuclear deal. To Kim, who expects to rule for decades, the reinstatement of US sanctions against Iran signaled that a deal concluded with one administration could be canceled without penalty by the next. To China (and Russia), it signaled the futility of falling in line with US demands against an ally and the pointlessness of engaging in tough multi-party negotiations over several years. To the rest of the world, it highlighted America's growing international isolation.

The second reason for the summit's cancellation was contradictory understandings of "denuclearization" – the single most critical issue in the entire episode. The US, believing Kim had buckled under pressure, understood this to mean achievement of its long-sought goal of "CVID": complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of North Korea. The North, mistakenly concluding that its nuclear deterrent had brought Trump to the summit, believed it was on the cusp of achieving its own long-sought goal: a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, including an end to the US nuclear umbrella for Japan and South Korea. If it played its cards right, it could even end the US alliance with South Korea and Japan, with all US troops withdrawing from East Asia.

Because the US misread Kim's primary motivation and expectations, it ran into a third problem – in fact a trap of its own making, from which

there was no escape.

The North Koreans made it abundantly clear that they understood what can happen to regimes that pick fights with America without having the ultimate weapon. They were very conscious of what happened to Slobodan Milošević, Saddam Hussein, and Muammar el-Qaddafi. And the example of Qaddafi turned out to be especially important.

After abandoning his quest for nuclear weapons in exchange for normalization of relations with the US and the world, Qaddafi died a horrible death (during which he was tortured and sodomized with a bayonet). And then, on April 30, Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton, made the incendiary suggestion that North Korea could follow the "Libya model" of denuclearization.

Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan delivered the North's furious response: "We do not hide our feeling of repugnance toward him." The North was not interested in a dialogue aimed at a coerced "unilateral nuclear abandonment." The "world knows too well that our country is neither Libya nor Iraq, which have met miserable fates."

Although Trump distanced himself from Bolton's remarks, Vice President Mike Pence warned three weeks later that if North Korea did not make a deal, it would indeed meet with Libya's fate. Choe Son Hui, vice minister of foreign affairs, replied by threatening a "nuclear-to-nuclear showdown" if Washington stuck to "unlawful and outrageous" belligerence.

So what happens next? If North Korea resumes nuclear and long-range missile tests, Trump, whose instinct is to escalate the rhetoric of conflict, will come under pressure to respond forcefully. Amid a re-run of last year's lurid schoolyard taunts – "little rocket man" and "mentally deranged dotard" – Moon will be desperate to rescue a semblance of improvement in relations with the North. Kim could try to drive a deep wedge between South Korea and the US. Japan's hardline Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is probably relieved that the summit has been called off.

The best the rest of the world can hope for is that, however slim the prospects, a diplomatic process will be maintained, along with channels of clear, accurate communication. A modest goal would be to reach an agreement to keep North Korea's nuclear and missile program at current levels of capability.

But the US may have cornered itself by rejecting such a cap with respect to Iran. Having made the perfect the enemy of the good in the Middle East, the Trump administration will find it humiliating to agree to a comparable arrangement on the Korean Peninsula. For Trump, the art of breaking deals is more important.

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European Involvement in Afghanistan War: Progress Toward a Viable EU Foreign and Security Policy

By Farhan Obaidee & Dr. Egmen Bagis

The Afghanistan war began in October 2001 in response to the terrorist attacks in the United States (US) on September 11. Immediately following the attacks, the EU and its member states declared solidarity with the US, vowing that the EU "stands firmly and fully behind the US." It was agreed by European leaders that the attacks were not just an aggression against the US, but against all democratic states of the world. Economically, the EU took the lead on the humanitarian mission, becoming the second largest donor to the humanitarian and economic development in Afghanistan. Politically, the EU utilized its expertise in multilateralism by playing a critical role in the organization of the crucial international coalition used to find a solution to the crisis. The EU also contributed to the commitment to the rule of law and establishment of good governance by taking over a portion of the police training mission in 2007. When the Afghanistan war began in 2001, the EU had evolved into a unique civilian power that was prepared to complement the allied efforts. It was understood clearly by the EU that military efforts were necessary to respond to the attacks, but they were not enough to resolve the crisis. Afghanistan's crisis won't be resolved militarily" and that "a military solution is neither the sole nor the best option, particularly during the stabilization of a crisis. The EU was able to respond more quickly and with a more unified response than anyone had seen before, even though this was one of the areas that saw the least amount of improvements. Through commitments to its most natural and strongest assets, the EU proved to be a great leader in diplomacy and humanitarian aid to the Afghan people. And finally, thanks to the EU's redefinition of its military capabilities, the EU was able to contribute to the US-led military mission and large police training mission. The mandate is to contribute to the integrity and full implementation of the EU Afghanistan Joint Declaration, encourage positive contributions from regional actors and support the role played by the UN. The EU-led international coalition efforts were tested at the Bonn Conference in November 2001. Hosted by the German capital Bonn, the UN-sponsored conference was attended by the international coalition members and representatives from the main Afghan ethnic groups. The drastically different groups eventually agreed to the creation of a temporary transitional government and more generally the establishment of a process for the political, social and economic reconstruction of the war-torn country. The Bonn Accord was officially signed on December 5, establishing an interim government led by Hamid Karzai and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). This was followed by the adoption of a new constitution in 2003, a presidential election in 2004 and National Assembly elections in 2005. The Bonn Conference was not only a very proud moment for Germany, but for the EU. Following the completion of the political transition process set out in the Bonn Agreement, the EU-Afghanistan Joint Declaration was signed in 2005. The Joint Declaration committed the EU to formalized bilateral cooperation and commitments with Afghanistan leaders. Key priorities for Afghanistan's transition process

were identified in the Joint Declaration included "consolidating a democratic political system, establishing responsible and accountable government institutions, strengthening the rule of law, and safeguarding human rights (including the rights of women) and the development of civil society. Through the creation of the international coalition, the crucial role played in the Bonn Conference and the EU-Afghanistan Joint Declaration, the EU made a clear commitment to diplomacy as an effective instrument. Moreover, these multilateral efforts coupled with the new confidence of the EU as an international actor renewed the EU's confidence in the EU taking the lead in specific areas of a larger mission. The EU humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan began a decade before the war. Before 2001, the EU Commission committed roughly \$500 million in aid to Afghanistan. Before the terrorist attacks in 2001, the EU was the main supporter of Afghan refugees. EU programs have built and financed the only system of rural health clinics in the country and provided clean water for more than 5 million people. Some say the humanitarian mission in Afghanistan is fueled by self-interest, in other words most of the heroin on European streets comes from Afghanistan. Through humanitarian aid, the EU can break the chain of opium harvesting and help the Afghan people grow alternative crops and find alternative markets. Despite this criticism, humanitarian aid to the EU is more than just building roads, but it is about making an investment in sustainable development. In 2001 and 2002, EU Commission and the member states combined committed over 250 million Euro. After September 11, money has been allocated to such areas as food stocks and medical supplies, and particularly to the efforts of demining Afghanistan, the country that is thought to have the largest concentration of landmines anywhere on earth. As a result of the EU's dedication to the humanitarian efforts, the EU has established itself as the second largest donor to Afghanistan (second only to the US). In November 2001, the Big Three of Europe issued a joint statement on behalf of the EU member states to President Bush, stating that Europe stood firm with the US but insisted that the response to terrorism had to include a "massive humanitarian effort" for Afghanistan and "a revitalized Middle East Process. The EU realized that the US was devoting the majority of its resources to the military campaign, and therefore the Europeans saw the opportunity to take the lead in the humanitarian crisis. In the period of 2002-2006, the European Commission and EU member states contributed 3.7 billion Euros in aid to Afghanistan. From 2007-2010, the European Commission provided 610 million additional Euros. The package focused primarily on three key priorities, to which 90% of the funding was allocated to: reform of the justice sector (40%), rural development (30%) and health (20%). An additional 420 million Euros is expected to be allocated in the 2011-2013 period. In total, the EU and its member states have honored their commitments to the humanitarian mission, providing over 4.5 billion Euros in aid since 2001.

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