

India's Afghan Mission

In today's geo-political scenario, the United State's role in the world is more like 'the sun's relationship to the rest of the solar system'. And India's role as a satellite to the American solar system is getting increasingly naked, threatening security and stability of the entire region.

Indian expansionism got special currency in political vocabulary, particularly on the left, during the Bangladesh liberation war in 1971. During the last 30 years or so only the far left has periodically raised the issue of Indian expansionism in their political discourse, without really substantiating the idea concretely, backing it by economic compulsions. They still agitate over Indian expansionism only in the context of Indo-Nepal relations. Given the changed strategic equation in South Asia, particularly after the demise of Soviet Union, Indian expansionism can thrive only as a collaborator of a bigger evil—American hegemonism. Afghanistan may be a new testing ground for hawks in New Delhi.

Since last month or so there are speculations and discussions in the political circles about the possibility of Indian forces being sent by the Government of India to Afghanistan to help and aid the American led forces, fighting the Taliban on the one hand and facing the resistance from smaller Afghan nationalist groups, on the other, on the request of the American-led alliance and the European Union.

The hawks favouring the deployment of Indian forces may have numerous arguments but the move would be disastrous, politically and historically, to align with the forces which are messed up in the situation created by their misadventures in the troubled nation.

In the last 25 years or so, India's approach to the Afghan crisis has not only created ill will amongst even ordinary Afghans but also has given a clear wedge to Pakistan, India's traditional foe in the region. Having advantage of being a next-door neighbour to the troubled nation, Pakistan has exploited the Afghan crisis to fulfil its political ambitions to the maximum and nobody can deny the hard fact that Pakistan, being the mentor of the Taliban, has greater influence over the majority of its leadership and also over a large section of other small groups resisting the American-led forces being regarded there as occupation forces, even today.

Even the slightest reflection of being with the American led forces in Afghanistan would have severe consequences and would send wrong signals not only to common Afghans but also to domestic population in India, apart from putting minute Hindu and Sikh population in Afghanistan at great risk.

Political activists in India shiver to recall the events that followed with the late Rajiv Gandhi's mis-adventure in Sri Lanka.

One reason India's economy has been in the grip of a cyclic crisis is India's decision to send troops to Sri Lanka in the 1980s. And Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by Tamil Tigers for the reverse role New Delhi played in the Sri Lankan conflict. In those days they used to spend Rs 3 million a day to contain the Tigers and keep peace in the island republic only to get body bags in return. But India was under the Soviet influence then. Uncle Sam somehow accepted India's regional power status as it was not against American strategic interests in South Asia.

This time India is very much in the American orbit, expressing shameless willingness to serve American interests all the time, even by sacrificing national self-respect. If New Delhi's Afghan mission takes off, the possibility of which cannot be ruled out anymore, given the growing India-US strategic partnership culture, Indians will have to face even more severe economic crisis at home. ❄❄❄