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UNITED STATES AND SOUTH ASIA : ANALYSIS BY DR. RICHARD BENKIN

👤 Dr. Richard Benkin 🕒 17 mins ago 📁 Geopolitics & National Security, recent post 👁 12 Views

With the United States of America (US or USA) taking a more isolationist tone and actions under President Donald Trump, it is not surprising that some South Asians are looking to other powers for support; not surprising but not wise either. People have been counting out the US since its birth when many Europeans thought the ragtag American revolutionaries would fall apart before the mighty British army. Before World War II, Japanese leaders believed that the US did not “have the stomach” for a prolonged and bloody war and that their surprise strike on Pearl Harbor plus a few other victories would be enough to force the US to sue for peace. The Japanese people paid the price for their miscalculation. In 1961, experts wrote that the Soviet Union (USSR) would become the world’s top superpower and that the Soviet economy would overtake America’s by as early as 1984. It never happened, and the USSR passed into history in 1991, its various populations still struggling to achieve even a measure of security.

Today’s experts who tout China as the rising power that will overtake the United States fail to note that the Chinese economy would collapse without a prosperous USA to develop technology and buy its goods. China’s fortune in unpaid loans, especially through its imperialist Belt & Road Initiative (BRI), has it in a race against time to get something more than baubles before the economy can no longer support its adventurism; for instance, seizing Hambantota port didn’t come close to covering the losses from Sri Lanka’s prospective loan default. Whether China’s recent seizure of Tajikistan’s publicly owned TALCO aluminium plant will yield anything greater remains to be seen.

Leftist academics are almost joyful in predicting the fall of the US. France’s Emmanuel Todd wrote that “America is fast losing its grip on the world stage.” That was almost a generation ago and his “fast” decline never happened. In 2000,

Norway's Johan Galtung predicted a US collapse by 2025. The fact that he changes that date when Americans elect a Republican President betrays his leftist bias, and the inaccuracy of his predictions. After Donald Trump's 2016 election, he said the US was moving toward fascism and that US global power would collapse while Trump was in office. Galtung better hope that Trump is re-elected in November 2020 because he could not be more wrong.

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US power and influence is not going away, even if US troops do in some places. The influential US News and World Report again ranked the US as "the world's most dominant economic and military power." And there are serious implications for the fight of Pashtuns against Pakistani aggression. Those foolish predictions aside, the only force with the ability to undo the injustices done to them is the United States.

Radical Islam is pretty much dead as an international force, even if Islamists continue to cause intermittent death and destruction. States like Pakistan and Iran, which dance with radicals, are divided by self-interest and religious sectarianism. Russia is a declining power, with a weak economy and little to offer potential allies; a mere afterthought without the left-over Soviet nuclear arsenal. China has an economy teetering on decline, overextended credit that it can't support without egregious manipulation of its currency; and a trade war with Donald Trump's new US that has it on the verge of economic crisis. The US, on the other hand, remains the world's most powerful military; and as we have seen in the past three years, a self-confident US has the ability to bring adversaries to the table and force associates in NATO and elsewhere to shoulder the economic burden they previously foisted on US taxpayers.

America's heterogeneous nature presents significant opportunities, with its many Pashtun and Afghan US citizens in strategic locations. Every US community and interest group can lobby elected officials on behalf of its members. While there are some pretty strict rules about what is and is not allowed, experienced professionals know how to approach lawmakers about issues of importance to them lawfully and effectively. Over the past few years, I have spent a lot of time bringing Pashtun matters to some of the most influential people in Washington. Although the US has not come out in support of an independent Pashtunistan or scrapping the Durand Line; people are beginning to listen and take notice.

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Two of the most powerful Senators in Washington (one Democrat, one Republican) are looking seriously at the Pashtuns, the atrocious human rights violations they face, Pakistan's active role in them, and other humanitarian and security matters. Pashtuns are making progress in Washington. The best way to help move the United States toward open support for Pashtuns is to help me provide them with evidence of the human rights atrocities. It is crucial that these lawmakers know that I have strong, credible evidence to support any allegations I make. That means, confirmation by at least two independent witnesses, pictures or tapes, direct testimony, and the like. We all know that Pakistan's war against Pashtuns, Baloch, Sindhi and others is real; and that China supports it to strengthen BRI.

Without that evidence, however, all US lawmakers will have is Pakistan's version of things.

Unfortunately, there is no shortage of human rights atrocities perpetrated against Pashtuns, and anyone who can provide evidence of them will get Washington's. Based on our efforts thus far, 2020 should be a significant year for those of us who are fighting for freedom and justice for Pashtuns. I urge you to get that evidence to me, either through this paper or by contacting me directly at drrbenkin@comcast.net.

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– Dr. Richard Benkin is a reputed American Jewish Human rights activist, co-founder of 'Interfaith Strength', journalist, writer and lecturer. He's also a member of Folks Magazine's Editorial Board. He also specialises in South Asian affairs and geo politics.