

US Efforts to Halt Eurasian Integration Are Failing Miserably

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The operation of the Syrian Arab Army in the province of Idlib represents the last step of the central government of Damascus in the liberation of the country from the scourge of Islamist terrorism. With the defeat of Daesh and the removal of the remaining pockets of resistance, Assad's soldiers have accomplished an extraordinary task. Meanwhile, the United States continues its illegal presence in Syria, through its support of the SDF in the north of the country for the purposes of sustaining the destabilizing potential of terrorist networks in the region and beyond. In light of this unfavorable situation for the Americans, it is easy to explain the transfer of commanders and high terrorist spheres from Syria and Iraq to Afghanistan, as [confirmed](#) by several official [Russian](#), [Iranian](#), [Syrian](#) and Iraqi [sources](#).

The logic behind such a move has everything to do with the ongoing process of Eurasian integration. Progress in this regard has been multifaceted in recent months and years. It ranges from the most important event, namely the entry of Pakistan and India into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), to other [less known](#) events, such as the signing of the Caspian Sea treaty by Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan. The United States is committed to stopping this integration. Staying true to Brzezinski's grand strategy, based on the concepts of [Heartland and Rimland](#), it has not been difficult for policy makers and advisors of the current US administration to understand the importance of Afghanistan in helping the process of Eurasian integration by fomenting terrorism. Afghanistan plays an important double role as a hinge between both Eurasia and the Middle East and the Persian Gulf.

The central geographical position of the Afghan state gives it an important geopolitical role, especially from 2001, when it was illegally invaded under false pretenses and without justifying proof (as recently [documented](#) by The Corbett Report). The complicated relations between India, Pakistan and Afghanistan derive essentially from the destabilizing role played by Pakistan (especially its military and intelligence wings) in Afghanistan from the 1980s to today, courtesy of financial support received from Saudi Arabia and the political, and military and intelligence support from the US. Islamabad has for decades made itself available as a launching pad for more or less official operations since the times of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. The Mujahideen, supported by Reagan and declared "Freedom Fighters", are none other than the forebears of today's Al Qaeda terrorists, which has mutated into other appellations in Syria like Al Nusra and Daesh. The formula has changed little over the last 30 years, the ingredients being Saudi money, Pakistani support, and American weaponry and intelligence.

Eurasian integration has accelerated considerably in recent years thanks to the influence of Russia and China in the region. Over a short time, Beijing has proposed the construction of various infrastructure projects (the most famous being the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, or CPEC) in Pakistan to improve the transport network as well as the delivery of goods and trade. Pakistan was one of the first countries to adhere politically and economically to the Chinese initiative known as One Belt One Road (renamed the Belt Road Initiative, or BRI). Thanks to Moscow's skilful diplomatic and political work, New Delhi's pronounced distrust of the new alliance between China and Pakistan has decreased. Putin and Xi Jinping have literally accompanied over months, if not years, the process of rapprochement between Pakistan, India, Russia and China, with the aim of laying the foundations for an entry of the two countries into the SCO. The idea of Xi and Putin is based on a strategic parity between New Delhi and Islamabad, well balanced thanks to two friendly countries like Russia and China.

The entry into the SCO was already broached in 2015 as a revolutionary act for the region, with the clear objective of working together to pacify Afghanistan and to advance the commercial and social integration of the Eurasian continent. Terrorism is a monumental challenge in this context and one of the main threats to the Chinese BRI project. Both Moscow and Beijing need to protect their commercial and financial projects in the region by preventing the use of terrorism as a means of sabotaging future rail, road and energy-development projects. The intention to use the SCO as an international framework to bring the five key players of the region (Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, China and Russia) to the same table is a master stroke for which Xi Jinping and Putin will be remembered.

Putin and Xi Jinping have a lot to offer in almost all the proposals made, from military defense guaranteed by alliances or arms sales, to economic benefits stemming from Beijing's financial power. Moscow and Beijing offer both military sovereignty and economic cover to countries that have always been easy targets for terrorism, corruption and malfeasance as a result of the attention they attract from Beijing and Moscow's political opponents, mainly Washington. Afghanistan is an example, but the agreement signed concerning the Caspian Sea is also a clear example of Eurasian integration prevailing over every external attempt to influence events in Washington's favor. The agreement signed in Aktau, between Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan, forever seals any military expansionist aims of the United States or its allies. In the Caspian Sea, no foreign military presence will ever be allowed, not even temporarily.

The agreement on the Caspian Sea is a great victory for Moscow, together with the tripartite discussions between Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, which allow for Russia to strengthen its southern borders, expand new trade alliances, and actively combat terrorism in all its forms (including the Taliban in Afghanistan). For Beijing, these tripartite talks advance two key factors influencing the development of the BRI. Firstly, it mitigates, and if necessary combats, the danger of terrorism, often used as an instrument against the BRI's infrastructure by China's adversaries, typically the US. Secondly, it deepens talks with the Indian counterpart and opens more channels of communication between Beijing and New Delhi as well as between Modi and Xi Jinping. Although both countries are members of the BRICS, India has an intense relationship with Washington allies Australia and Japan. New Delhi tries to present itself as a balancing actor that offers an alternative to minor countries in Southeast Asia. Washington would like to use Indian influence to play these countries against China, but New Delhi and Beijing are working to prevent this in favor of broader Eurasian integration.

In spite of what Washington may hope for and encourage, New Delhi's role does not necessarily come into conflict with Beijing's policies in the region. To overcome existing tensions, especially after the clashes on their common border more than a year ago, it was crucial to create a framework suitable to eliminate distrust between the two countries and increase mutual confidence. In this sense, India's entry into the SCO represents a great incentive for a constant improvement in relations between the two countries. It should be remembered that trade between Beijing and New Delhi is constantly increasing and personal relations between Modi and Xi Jinping have repeatedly shown themselves to be at important levels. The entry of Pakistan and Afghanistan into the equation makes the picture more complicated, but certainly not impossible. Such forums for negotiations as the SCO provides allows for the ironing out of differences.

Meanwhile, Washington is not standing idly by watching this Eurasian integration proceed unopposed, and has begun to create the ideal conditions for further chaos in Afghanistan. The Taliban, having remained undefeated over the last 18 years of war, have started new offensives in the country, even [expanding](#) into areas they have never controlled since the Americans arrived. They could end up controlling more territory than before the War on Terror began. Washington struggles to impose stable control over the territory. But it also has every interest in ensuring that Afghanistan remains a source of instability in the region, also involving Pakistan in this process, exacerbating the frictions between New Delhi and Islamabad and possibly involving Beijing as well.

Persistent and credible reports continue to indicate the relocation from Syria of a large number of local leaders and commanders of terrorist groups supported by Washington. In addition to saving them from sure defeat at the hands of the Syrian Arab Army, the United States has begun to relocate numerous extremist Salafists loyal to the ISIS to the Eurasian country for more than a year. It is therefore not surprising that the increasing presence of ISIS in Afghanistan has led to clashes with the Taliban, engaging in a power struggle over money and drug-trade routes.

As the contrasting examples of Syria and Libya showed, alliances between countries is what make a genuine struggle against international terrorism effective. In Afghanistan the situation is complicated by the presence and interference of the United States. But after 18 years, the White House's excuse of being there to fight terrorism is wearing thin. Not coincidentally, Afghanistan is an observer member of the SCO, holding increasingly frequent talks with all the parties involved, specifically with China, Russia, India and Pakistan. The direction is decidedly towards an alliance that has as its ultimate objective the elimination of Daesh in the country and a political dialogue with the Taliban, even if this second objective is only currently a vague possibility.

The United States is committing the same mistake in Afghanistan that it committed in Iraq following the war in 2003 and in Libya following the killing of Gaddafi in 2011. These countries, which were not openly hostile to the United States (especially Saddam Hussein, who was strongly anti-Iranian), today find themselves in chaos (Libya), with Washington and Italy playing a weak hand in supporting the Fayeze al-Sarraj government while that of General Haftar controls more than half of the country with Russian and French support. In Iraq, the government is openly pro-Shia, maintaining privileged, direct relations with Iran and allowing Russia to use its airspace to target US-backed terrorists.

Washington, using tactics of destruction and chaos, has forced several countries to seek protection from the likes of Russia and Iran. Afghanistan is moving in the same direction,

even though the country currently has tens of thousands of foreign troops who will eventually have to end their war mission under the the NATO banner, finally freeing the region from the negative influence of Washington and her allies.

Washington's recent choices certainly do not help advance American interests in the region. Trump has blocked some funding for the Pakistani armed forces as well as several joint training courses between the Pakistani and American intelligence services. Washington is also blocking 300 million dollars of aid on the basis of Islamabad not acting sufficiently to combat militants.

Russia in the north, China in the east and Iran in the South are ready to integrate the strategic triangle between their borders (the Caspian Sea, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India), into the Eurasian plan of development and progress. Despite Washington's attempts at sabotage, whether economically or militarily, covertly or overtly, the path towards a new Eurasian century seems linked to events like the treaty on the Caspian Sea, the ending of the war in Syria, and the deterioration of security conditions in Afghanistan. These are all events that mark the end of American hegemony in the region.

Piece by piece, China, Russia and Iran are snatching historic allies such as Turkey and Pakistan away from Washington, with the ultimate goal of pushing American influence out of the region. Without these key allies, Washington's capacity to destabilize the region is reduced considerably. The agreement on the Caspian Sea, like the SCO in Central Asia, therefore serves the purpose of preventing external interference, especially by the United States.

In the name of effectively fighting terrorism and stabilizing key countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria, China and Russia are advancing the project of Eurasian integration for the benefit of the whole region and beyond. Washington will have little capacity to throw a spanner in the works and attempt to sabotage the whole project as it finds itself progressively pushed out of the region.

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