

Headlines:

- **Lose Now or Later: America's Uneasy Choices in Afghanistan**
- **Pakistan asks Russia to help stabilize Afghanistan**
- **China 'Bans Extreme Islamic Baby Names' among its Muslim population**

Details:

Lose Now or Later: America's Uneasy Choices in Afghanistan

Donald Trump wants to focus on his “America First” slogan, with budgetary priorities that center on job creation and quick wins in foreign wars. But the lingering war in Afghanistan – both the struggles to defeat extremists or organize peace – will detract from other military endeavors. The trouble with foreign wars is that, while easy to start, they are hard to finish. The United States learned the bitter lesson after invading Iraq in 2003: Operational victory was easy, but strategic victory defied even the world's most powerful military. And after sweeping the Taliban from Kabul with a dramatic campaign, the mighty United States remains stuck in Afghanistan. The United States did not learn from George W. Bush's experience. Barack Obama recalled American troops from Iraq in 2011, but gradually returned, periodically inserting Special Forces, as if that tactic was not part of America's involvement in the ongoing Iraqi ground war. In the case of Afghanistan, for Obama and now Trump, there is no likely victory for the American military in Afghanistan. The country offers a grim and uneasy choice – lose now or later. After US forces dropped the country's largest non-nuclear bomb – colloquially known as MOAB, or the “Mother of all bombs” – on an ISIS tunnel network in the Achin district of Nangarhar, Trump called the mission “very successful.” But he has offered little strategy on the Afghan war. A logical assumption is that he will either fulfill General Nicholson's request for more troops or ignore it. While the stated US reason for dropping the MOAB was to destroy the tunnel network, the expectation in Washington was to increase the fear factor and encourage the Taliban to return to the negotiating table. Those expectations were dashed when the Taliban carried out their own massive attack against the army base in Northern Afghanistan, killing more than 100 Afghan security personnel. Given the complicated nature of Afghanistan's role in the Indo-Pak great game, the Trump administration has its work cut out – if it wishes Pakistan to play any role in stabilizing Afghanistan. This role could range from serving as an intermediary in any peace negotiations between the Taliban of Afghanistan and the Ghani government, or by taking direct military action to eradicate ISIS in Afghanistan. Depending upon how important it is not to lose the Afghan war without initiating a ground war, leaders like US Secretary of Defense James Mattis and National Security Adviser General H. R. McMaster are likely to push for at least trying the Pakistan option to stabilize Afghanistan. [Source: Eurasia Review].

But, America has been here before several times and failed on each occasion. Bush tried but failed. Obama was renowned for changing the AfPak strategy several times and he failed each time. Trump's fate will be no different.

Pakistan asks Russia to help stabilize Afghanistan

Pakistan has asked Russia to lead the process of stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan. This was suggested by Defence Minister Khawaja Asif during a meeting with his Russian counterpart in Moscow. Khawaja Asif is in Russia to attend VI Moscow Conference

on International Security, where he met Minister of Defence Russian Federation, Sergei Shoigu on the sidelines of the moot. Active bilateral cooperation between Russia and Pakistan contributes to the strengthening cooperation between General Staffs, the Russian minister said, according to a statement released by the Russian Defence Ministry. The security situation in Afghanistan was also discussed during the meeting. "The world is not getting calmer and stable, and in these conditions, we are again and again saying that fighting international terrorism requires the consolidation of all interested forces," said the head of the Russian military department. On this, Khawaja Asif said that Russia should lead the process of stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan would support all initiatives to bring peace in the country. The participants noted the importance of defence ties between the two countries. First-ever joint military training 'Friendship-2016' last September was dubbed as a new chapter after strained relations the Cold War era. "This year, our departments have rich programme of joint events. This is participation in counternarcotic exercises "Arabian monsoon – 2017", and the mutual visits of the leadership of the armed forces, and visits of military ships in the ports of both countries," said Sergei Shoigu. Khawaja Asif also noted the improvement of bilateral relations. Sergei Shoigu also expressed his condolences in connection with terrorist attacks in the cities Parachinar and Lahore, which had taken dozens of lives, including servicemen. [Source: News International]

For several decades Pakistan under the auspices of America has opposed Russia, and now is seeking Russia's help. Recently, Trump and Putin agreed to work together in Syria, and it appears that is cooperation may extend to encompass Afghanistan. Pakistan should be working hard to expel both foreign powers from Afghanistan, as this compromises its security. But the Pakistani leadership enamored with America is seeking to implement Washington's latest effort to stabilize Afghanistan by inviting Russia to intervene.

China 'Bans Extreme Islamic Baby Names' among its Muslim population

Chinese authority has reportedly banned the nation's Muslim parents from giving radical names to their children. A list of 29 names - including Jihad, Imam and Saddam - are said to bear 'separatist and religious tendencies', and have been prohibited by the authority of Muslim-dominant Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, according to media. Muslims in Xinjiang have already been banned from keeping 'abnormal' beards or wearing veils in public places as China hardens its rhetoric on Islam. The children of those who break the new rule would be denied their legal identity by their local police station, reported Radio Free Asia. An officer from a police station in Ürümqi, the provincial capital of Xinjiang, is said to have confirmed the rule to a reporter from Radio Free Asia. The officer said any babies with a banned name would not be able to obtain their Hukou, the birth registration in China. Officers at the Hukou registration counters would receive relevant training to identify what names are allowed. Xinjiang is home to ethnic Uighur people, who follow Islam. The new ban, known as 'Naming Rules For Ethnic Minorities', has been introduced to the residents of Xinjiang in the form of flyers, claimed the World Uyghur Congress. The organisation, based in Germany, also claimed that this is not the first time certain names have been banned in Xinjiang. [Source: Daily Mail]

Not content with banning Islamic practices and rituals, the Chinese government has set a new low by choosing to ban names. How can China become a great power and a leader for the people of the region, when it is frightened of Islamic names?