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The superpower under siege

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On 7th October 2001, President Bush launched the ‘Sock and Awe’ Crusade against Taliban, hoping to defeat them and consolidate hold over Afghanistan but failed. The Taliban emerged victorious and are not prepared to give concessions unless the occupation forces leave Afghanistan. The shame of defeat, at the hands of the rag-tag Taliban is the greatest embarrassment for the sole superpower of the world. Instead of accepting defeat, USA has opted for a ‘Strategy of Siege’ worked-out at NATO headquarters in Brussels, by their Strategic Plans Division. The ‘strategy of Siege’ is a vicious plan, of deceit and despair, with defeat writ large in itself. The plan envisages pulling-out of most of the troops by end 2012, less 10-12000 troops, comprising mainly Special Forces and the Marines to hold the fortresses of Kabul, Kandhar and Herat and the nearby air bases, at Kwaja Rawat, Kandhar and Shindand. Jalalabad will be held as a fortress by the Afghan Army. Mazar-e-Sharif and the air base at Dehdadi, will be developed as fortresses by the Northern Alliance. The areas in the South, from Helmand to Laghman will be left in control of the Taliban, as the beginning of the vicious plan, to divide Afghanistan in three zones. Mazar-e-Sharif, will thus be an important fortress, to guard the alternate supply and exit route through the Central Asian territories, because passage through Pakistan is hazardous. The American claim, that 40% of their supplies are coming through this route, may not be true, because it is very long and hazardous. The Russians also, won’t like that their ‘near-abroad’ gets radicalized by the militant organizations, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), who would try to interdict the movements along this route. The American Strategy of Fortress

Defense, envisages a kind of “secretive war, involving armed drones and special operation forces to carry out surgical operations, employing ‘unique assets’ against terrorist threat.” Washington has already extended covert drone attacks to Yemen and Somalia. Such operations will be “particularly focused on Pakistan, on eliminating the Al-Qaeda safe heavens.” How Pakistan and Taliban in Afghanistan are going to react to this strategy, is important. Focusing operations against Pakistan has already pushed Pak-American relations to the brink. Under public pressure, Pak forces, now have no option but to retaliate, against such blatant violation of country’s sovereignty. How and in what manner, retaliatory actions will be taken, is a matter of Command Decision. The strategic cost of such clandestine actions by the Americans, therefore, would far outweigh the tactical gains and the fall out on relations with Pakistan. The Taliban have already accelerated the pace of their summer offensive against the occupation forces, inflicting heavy casualties on the retreating enemy. And as the American forces, get holed-up into the fortresses, possibly by mid next year, the Taliban would enjoy the advantage of space and freedom of movement, to conduct operations more effectively against the fortresses. The combination of ‘Men and Missiles,’ which helped Hezbollah, shatter the myth of invincibility of the Israeli army in 2006, would also help the Taliban to break the will of the forces holding the fortresses, because Taliban would be enjoying greater freedom of movement and the resultant operational advantages. The operational environment also is not at all favourable for the strategy of fortress defense. There is hostility within the country and hostility without, of the neighbouring countries, particularly Pakistan and Iran. Russia and China won’t like the Americans to hang-on in Afghanistan any longer. The sooner they leave, better it would be for peace to prevail in the region. External pressures and support to the Taliban will add to the problems of the forces, under siege. After the exit of the Americans, it is the Taliban, who ultimately will gain control over Afghanistan. They have the bitter experience of betrayal by the Americans since 1990 and have trust only in themselves, to form a broad-based government, which is the only viable course to secure peace in Afghanistan. The Americans must therefore exit from Afghanistan, sooner the better, than to extend the pain and shame of defeat, through the ‘strategy of siege’ which has already failed, before implementation.