

Is His Asia Pullout Trump's last Death Twitch?

by Tom Luongo via stacey - Strategic Culture Foundation *Monday, Dec 24 2018, 8:20pm*
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With his shock announcement of a rapid pullout of all US troops from Syria and Afghanistan Donald Trump finally became President. The neocons called him that when he bombed the Al-Shairat airbase in April 2017, a move I said at the time was the biggest geopolitical blunder in years.



But with Trump's enemies closing in on all sides despite the flimsiness of the case against him he was faced with the stark reality that he was about to become the scapegoat for everything that was going wrong since the mid-term election rout engineered by his party's leadership and the ruthless election fraud perpetrated by the Democrats.

We were watching Trump sink farther and farther into irrelevancy as he was consistently outmaneuvered by his staff, his enemies (or do I repeat myself) and even his allies.

He had ceded foreign policy to the worst people in D.C. and allowed them to concoct policies which were antithetical to what got him elected. His former lawyer was going to jail for doing his job. His cabinet members were all resigning over the mildest of criticism, a clear sign they wanted nothing to do with him anymore.

There was no movement on going after the Clintons or ending the Mueller investigation.

His second Chief of Staff, a general, was quitting.

We'd sent weapons to Ukraine, assisted Ukrainian President Poroshenko in a dangerous provocation over the Kerch Strait. Trump meekly stood by, canceled meetings with Putin and let John Bolton speak on his behalf on anything important.

And with the Democrats coming into the House impeachment proceedings would begin the minute Nancy Pelosi gaveled in the first session. Things looked terrible.

And Trump, despite his ravings, had no one to blame but himself.

He allowed all of this to happen. He didn't squash Mueller earlier. He didn't fight the GOP

establishment hard enough. He didn't hire one D.C. outsider to provide any balance to his cabinet. He folded on foreign policy and was only allowed to tinker with domestic policy, just like every other president.

He gave his base absolutely nothing to work with. He wouldn't even release the unredacted documents pertaining to the FISA warrants. In short, he was done and exposed as a bully whose bluff was called.

So, when he announced the US was pulling all of the troops out of Syria it was met with both shock and disbelief. Then when the reports came that he ordered 7000 troops out of Afghanistan which prompted the resignation of James Mattis as Secretary of Defense the outrage in D.C. clicked into overdrive.

Apparently, Trump finally realized that everyone in D.C. was against him, including most of those generals he surrounded himself with to protect him from the intelligence community.

From Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, James Dunford, to Mattis himself, they were all in favor of permanent and extensive central Asian presence. Trump sent an envoy to open up peace talks with the Taliban, Dunford declared we needed more troops there not less.

Peace could only be had on the precondition of keeping all the bases there. Why? Iran.

Trump has been adamant that Syria wasn't our fight past ISIS but Mattis, Dunford, Bolton and Pompeo all argued for us to stay there permanently. Why? Pressure Iran.

He couldn't look weak in dealing with Russia because Russia.

Staying was needlessly complicating relations with Turkey who was hurting Trump badly where he lived, in his reputation. Exposing the details of the death of Jamal Kashoggi the way he did, Turkish President Erdogan made Trump look not only vicious but weak by staying loyal to the clearly unstable and unpalatable Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Staying in Afghanistan was even worse. Like in Syria, Russia simply moved forward with political negotiations without the US at the table two years ago. Putin brought together all of the willing interested parties and began trying to craft a peaceful settlement between amenable factions of the Taliban and the government in Kabul.

Trump could see this but the foreign policy orthodoxy of Washington D.C. wouldn't allow us to be a part of this process because it 1) wasn't on our terms and 2) didn't work towards the ultimate goal of destroying Iran.

So, here we have Trump backed into a corner, a victim of 1) his own insane views of foreign trade which made it easy to sell ruinous sanctions and tariffs on everyone he considered a thief and 2) his need to be liked and respected which hamstrung him on making unpopular decisions.

He outlined his strategy of energy dominance - trading the military empire abroad for a financial one built on America's energy reserves - and it was used against him by his staff to betray his base on no nation building.

Turn by turn, inch by inch they boxed him in on Russia, Iran, Syria, China, India and Afghanistan. He figured he had enough support at home with a rising stock market, falling unemployment and high

nominal GDP growth that he could weather the foreign policy mess.

Nope. Because, as he's finally figured out, the Empire is the Swamp. The sanctions and tariffs are exacerbating a global slowdown that's a consequence of the Fed finally winding down its zero-interest rate policy for domestic needs.

While Trump, to appease everyone, approved insane budget expansions which further destabilize the US's fiscal position. These things, along with Europe's own political degradation, prompted the falling equity markets of the past few weeks while high-yield corporate and leveraged loan markets collapse.

Guys like John Bolton only think in terms of inflicting pain to get what they want. So, hurting China's or Iran's trade is only viewed through the geopolitical lens of leverage, not the reality of an interconnected global economy and the fragile confidence we all have in it after a decade of ruinous central bank policy.

The generals fight the wars but the civilian politicians have to weigh their worth, including the sunk costs, the wasted lives and time.

So, what comes next will be a full-bore attack on Trump's competency, his fitness for office. The neocons in the Senate will throw him to the wolves at the first moment it becomes convenient for them to do so. Lindsay Graham, Tom Cotton and the rest will bray for more war, to push back against Russia in Ukraine.

Expect new legislation to try and countermand the orders about Syria and Afghanistan. But Americans don't want more war. No matter how hard Bolton, Bibi Netanyahu, Graham and the rest try to sell the Iran bogeyman to a war-weary American electorate the arguments simply aren't convincing.

The Democrats will work hard to get GOP defectors to back a bid to remove him from office over the next month.

Trump's got a lot of work to do to regain the trust of his anti-interventionist base. Leaving Syria starts the next phase. He needs more bold action like this before the Democrats take control of the House in January. A meeting with Putin is a minimum. This move to pull out of Syria and Afghanistan was exactly what he needed to do to even get Putin to come to the table.

Because that's what you have to do when you've abused the other side for this long. He's got a lot of ground to make up with Putin and Putin will extract a terrible price.

Guys like Bolton do not get this. They only see the stick, they always feel justified in using it.

And now that Trump is committed to leaving these places, he will get very little in return as guarantees for the region's future safety with respect to Israel, which was his original goal in the first place. He is now leaving their security in the hands of Putin as the only guarantor of regional stability.

No matter what he does at this point someone will call him a traitor for something. There will be a challenge to him staying in office. He can't avoid that now. Good. The fight is on. He wasn't elected by us to be liked by Fox News, MSNBC or the Democrats. He was elected to end the empire abroad, end the entangling alliances and clean up the corruption at home.

Syria and Afghanistan were messes left to him by his predecessors and made worse by his, to this point, inaction. These withdrawal orders are a good start. But only a start.

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