

1. COMMON CHALLENGES

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Common challenges

COMMENTARY
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The chaos in Afghanistan has led many to engage in prognostics about future developments. The tarnished image of the West is a key focus of the international commentary. It's not the right time, however, to imagine how the world might look in the long term. The current challenges are critical and have the capacity to – almost immediately – cause destabilization in both the West and the East.

A fundamental difference emerges when the US disengagement from Vietnam is compared to that from Afghanistan. In the first case, the Viet Cong had significantly fulfilled their mission by the time the war ended. In the second case, the Taliban are arguably satisfied with the result of the withdrawal of American and NATO forces. Hence, the scenario of a new wave of terrorism cannot be excluded. It will be dramatic if some terrorists are re-energized 20 years after the 9/11 atrocities and if their admirers-practitioners gain ground in some countries.

The scale is global. Anti-US, generally anti-Western terrorism appears likely but China and Russia are not complacent either due to their previous traumatic experiences in some of their regions. International cooperation is the only way forward. Today's world cannot be understood in Manichean terms. In tandem with a potential surge of terror activities stemming from an unstable Afghanistan, the narcotics trade and women trafficking add to the list of problems which are of a transnational nature and require joint responses.

Coexistence between the US and China is possible, even if competition will occasionally grow. There is no one to benefit from the Afghan imbroglio – with the exception of radicalism and extremism.

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