



Written by on June 24, 2010

What to Do About Afghanistan?

On June 7 of this year, our ongoing war in Afghanistan surpassed the Vietnam War as the longest war in American history. In his December 1, 2009 speech at West Point, President Obama followed the pattern set by several predecessors and employed the deceptive tactic of presenting false alternatives. He deftly and swiftly discounted terminating U.S. efforts in what was then already an eight-year-old war. He dwelt instead on what were, to him, the only alternatives worthy of consideration. Should the United States send tens of thousands more troops to Afghanistan? Or should the current force level be maintained? Of course, we know he has opted for sending an additional 30,000 troops.



Meanwhile, our troops are being killed and wounded by Afghans who resent the presence of Americans in their land. Their nation's U.S.-backed leader recently triumphed in an election widely deemed fraudulent. Not surprisingly, corruption flourishes in the Kabul-based government but support by our country continues. And the American people — especially those who grieve because of lost or wounded loved ones — wonder when the struggle in this faraway land will ever end.

Throughout all of the past eight years, support for this effort has been buttressed with claims that everyone must “support the troops.” Yes, once our troops have been committed to battle, our nation must support them. But does that mean that every political decision to deploy them must be supported? Wouldn't bringing them home be the best way to show our support? This is the alternative that isn't being considered. It's time it was not only considered; it's time it was adopted.

The U.S.-led attack on Afghanistan began in 2001. Initially aimed at capturing al-Qaeda's chieftains, only a few were captured or killed. The mission then became a war against terrorism in general. When has any military force ever waged war against a tactic? Terrorism is a tactic. If fighting against a tactic had been the goal in World War II, our forces might have ended up opposing aviation. And they might still be at it.

A few years later, the Afghan war morphed into a campaign to eradicate opium production, another task not accomplished. Along the way, enormous amounts of financial aid have been supplied both to Afghanistan and to neighboring Pakistan, where al-Qaeda leaders are supposedly encamped. Soon, the war became a mission to impose “democracy” on a people who haven't the faintest notion of what that is. It has lately become widened to protect Pakistan from terrorist infestation. The current dominant goal of our forces and the small contingents of troops from allied nations calls for creation of a centralized government in a nation where tribal rulers maintain centuries-old domination over their separate fiefdoms. Instituting Western-style government is the furthest thing from their minds. We are not alone in labeling all of this a confusing pattern of “mission creep.”



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Obama's Top Advisors

Several key advisors supply President Obama with their perspective on what America's course of action should be. One such advisor was obviously Afghanistan theater commander Gen. Stanley McChrystal — that is, until his "resignation" on June 23 in the wake of his remarks to *Rolling Stone* critical of administration officials. McChrystal long claimed that tens of thousands more troops are needed.

Obama is replacing McChrystal with General David Petraeus, who served as the top military official in Afghanistan prior to McChrystal, and who was heavily relied upon during McChrystal's tenure in the position. He will surely be heavily relied upon now.

An earlier predecessor of General McChrystal as the commander in Afghanistan was Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry. Now our nation's Ambassador to Afghanistan, Eikenberry initially opposed any troop surge in Afghanistan, opting instead for maintaining the current troop level. And the special U.S. ambassador to this beleaguered part of the world, Richard Holbrooke, has visited several European capitals to inform their leaders about U.S. plans while his deputies trek to China and elsewhere for the same purpose.

Another advisor, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, is a holdover from the George W. Bush administration. During the 1980s when the Soviet Union's army sought to conquer Afghanistan, Gates served as the CIA official in charge of funding, supplying, and training Afghan fighters defending their nation from the Russians. Leaders of that effort, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Jalaluddin Haqqani, are now leaders of the Taliban forces who target the newest wave of invaders in their nation, the Americans and their NATO allies. Are they using U.S.-supplied equipment left over after the Soviet Union abandoned its attack 20 years ago? No one wants to address this possibility.

Completely absent in all of the reporting about the advice given the President by the above-mentioned aides — McChrystal, Petraeus, Eikenberry, Holbrooke, Gates — is the revealing fact that each is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). McChrystal spent a full year (1999-2000) at CFR headquarters after being selected by Dick Cheney and Caspar Weinberger (both CFR) for the organization's "Studies Program." The privately run CFR, known to many as the seat of our nation's ruling establishment, has for decades worked to force cancelation of U.S. sovereignty in favor of a world government. Its leaders will either generate or support any project and promote those individuals that will involve the United States in questionable entanglements and make our nation vulnerable to the goals of the world's globalists. Its members also dominate the major organs of the mass media.

Affiliating with such a thoroughly un-American organization has always limited one's options to backing what is deemed politically correct by these insiders. President Obama, though not enrolled in the CFR, has turned to its membership roster to fill numerous positions in his administration. During the run-up to his nomination and election, he paid obeisance to the organization by writing an article for its flagship journal, *Foreign Affairs*. He thereby indicated his awareness of the CFR's unwholesome clout.

The aforementioned advisors are just the tip of the establishment iceberg in the Obama administration. They are assisted in foreign policy and national security matters by:

U.S. Ambassador to Kyrgyz Republic Tatiana Gfoeller (CFR)

Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Maria Otero (CFR)

Deputy Secretary of State James B. Steinberg (CFR)

Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Jacob J. Lew (CFR)



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Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William J. Burns (CFR)

Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Ellen Tauscher (CFR)

Under Secretary for Economic, Energy and Agricultural Affairs (and former Goldman Sachs vice chairman) Robert D. Hormats (CFR director)

Special Representative for Global Partnerships Elizabeth Frawley Bagley (CFR)

Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues Melanne Vermeer (CFR)

Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy Richard L. Morningstar (CFR)

Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell (CFR)

U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Susan E. Rice (CFR)

Under Secretary of Defense Policy Michele Flournoy (CFR)

Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor Tom Donilon (CFR)

The above-mentioned members are but a fraction of the CFR brain trust operating in the Obama administration. All CFR members and many others who are cognizant of the immense influence possessed by this organization realize that stepping outside the limits it establishes can be a career-ending move. The individuals named above know this well. Therefore, the choices they offer do not include options that are deemed to be outside the bounds of the establishment's blessing.

In his 2009 West Point speech, Obama skipped over the fact that Congress had ignored the U.S. Constitution when it approved the launch of the Afghan war in 2001. He dutifully stressed that the effort had been authorized by Article 5 of the NATO treaty and by a United Nations Security Council resolution. Because he planned to ignore the U.S. Constitution, he avoided mention of its requirement that a formal declaration of war must be issued by Congress before troops can be sent into battle. Nor did he note that NATO derives its legitimacy from the Charter of the United Nations and that NATO has, from its creation in 1949, always been one of the UN's authorized "regional arrangements." The U.S. Constitution, not the UN or any of its subordinate groups, should dictate U.S. policy.

The Missing Alternative

Once again, the American people are being subjected to the deceptive game that limits their choices. Why should continuing the Afghan struggle with the 60,000 troops already on the ground, or adding another 30,000, be the only alternatives? How about bringing the troops home? Adding more or keeping their number at the current level should not be the sole options.

As to what bringing the troops home would mean, it would surely mean no more casualties. But it would also relieve taxpayers of an enormous burden estimated to be \$1 million per year per soldier. Also, calling a halt to the operation would sharply lessen ever-intensifying hatred for America abroad, shrink the possibility of more terrorist attacks within our borders, diminish the role of NATO and other international entanglements into which our nation has been placed, restore morale among the troops everywhere, crimp the plans of Washington's neoconservative empire builders (most of whom are also CFR members), terminate a war that was never authorized by the Constitution, and encourage similar withdrawal from Iraq.

Some of America's military personnel have served three, four, or five tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. Morale is low; suicides are high; stress disorders are rampant both numerically and in their intensity; and broken marriages approximate the numbers that remain intact. Representatives of



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the UN's International Criminal Court have entered Afghanistan, where they are monitoring the performance of our troops as they look for some personnel to prosecute in non-U.S. tribunals. At home, the Department of Homeland Security has hurled an incredible insult at returning veterans by listing them as potential terrorists. The troops certainly deserve better. Their willingness to protect our nation should not be abused by putting them into quagmires where their mission is questionable, their well-being endangered, even their patriotism demonized.

Related Considerations

Our current enemy in Afghanistan, against whom we are sacrificing so much in lives and treasure, is the Taliban, a militant Islamic group. Both American and British leaders have recently taken to bribing members of the Taliban in hopes of cutting into its strength. Buying friendships is notoriously a poor way to conduct a war. Once the money stops flowing, its recipients return to their previous paymaster.

War always means more government. It also encourages moral decline. The longer the war, the longer these extremely damaging consequences result.

The purpose of maintaining a U.S. military force can never be other than protection of the lives, liberty, and property of the American people, the individuals who pay the bills and supply the personnel. And sending any man or woman into combat without the constitutionally required formal declaration of war must never be allowed.

Getting America back on its proper path should begin by bringing the troops home now, from Afghanistan and from Iraq, and then from numerous other locations where they are not welcome and should not be compelled to serve. Addressing numerous other problems besetting our nation can and should then be undertaken.

Photo of Gen. David Petraeus: AP Images



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