

# America is a “Failed Democracy”: Its People want Peace, and its Elected Officials make War

By [Sherwood Ross](#)

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The war in Afghanistan today hangs like some cloud of poison gas over Washington that won't blow away. It sickens everything as it spreads. It continues to suck precious tax dollars out of the Treasury, money this country cannot afford to squander, especially as millions of Americans are sinking into poverty and joblessness exceeds ten percent. Writing in USA Today last March 10th, Susan Page reported, “In one year, 24 million slide from ‘thriving’ to ‘struggling’ and “Some fear that the American dream may be in peril as well.” Worse, the U.S. is turning poverty-plagued Afghanistan, a long-suffering nation of 25 million souls into another Iraq, perhaps even another Viet Nam. Afghanistan has already been under U.S. assault for eight years and President Obama's top military advisers are telling him it will take many more years to achieve “victory,” a term having utterly no meaning for skyrocketing numbers of dead and dismembered civilians.

U.S. troops dispatched to “build long-term stability” in Afghanistan (the phrase was uttered by Obama accomplice British Prime Minister Gordon Brown) went from 5,200 in 2002 to 62,000 currently while the cost has shot up from \$21 billion to \$60 billion a year in that period for a grand total of \$228 billion—dollars that could have been far better spent in America, on Americans, for Americans. And dispatching more troops means dispatching more targets. “Deaths from bombings soaring,” the Miami Herald reported last August 12th. IED explosions soared to 828 in July, more than twice as many as in the previous July and the highest level since the war began. U.S. casualties are at record highs. This is the road to “victory”?

Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, calls the Afghan crisis “serious and deteriorating” as U.S. casualties hit new highs. The Pentagon throws crack Marine fighters at the Taliban in southern Helmand province yet they are not enough. General Stanley McChrystal may shortly have to ask to increase his forces by nearly half. Worse, President Obama has escalated the fighting into Pakistan, where the Pakistani Taliban control areas close to the capital of Islamabad, and where the fighting has created two million refugees. Congratulations to the White House and Congress: America is now at war in three Middle Eastern nations, on behalf of governments in all three that are weak, unpopular, and corrupt. Who would have thunk it? And even though McChrystal says “the most important thing is to not hurt the Afghan people”, Obama is escalating, not withdrawing, and children just like his own daughters are being carted to the cemeteries.

Even conservative columnist Pat Buchanan asks, “What is so vital to us in that wilderness land worth another eight years of fighting, bleeding and dying, other than averting the humiliation of another American defeat?” Buchanan rightly adds, “And if Obama yet

believes this is a war of necessity we cannot lose, and he must soldier on, his decision will sunder his party and country, and put at risk his presidency.”

George Will, another conservative columnist, wants to continue the war but by doing “only what can be done from offshore, using intelligence, drones, cruise missiles, airstrikes and small, potent special forces units, concentrating on the porous 1,500-mile border with Pakistan, a nation that actually matters.” He wants land forces out. Apart from the smug arrogance with which Will dismisses Afghanistan as a no-account nation (!), this theep dinker’s strategy of bombarding from untouchable bases at sea will only inspire fresh hatred against the U.S. Afghani rage is white hot because the Pentagon attacks with unmanned drones and Afghans regard this method of warfare as “unfair” and unmanly. Reuters reported that in Farah province the district leader lamented an air attack in Bala Boluk that killed 108 civilians. Does Obama really believe he is doing the Afghans a favor?

Americans need to recognize that violence only begets violence, that attacks only beget more attacks, and that each round of reprisals gets ever deadlier. Also, there would be no war today if U.S. meddling hadn’t jump-started Osama bin Laden. “(President) Clinton’s bombing of Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998 effectively created Al Qaeda, both as a known entity in the intelligence world and also in the Muslim world,” Noam Chomsky is quoted as saying in “Imperial Ambitions” (Metropolitan Books) by David Barsamian. “In fact, the bombings created Osama bin Laden as a major symbol, led to a very sharp increase in recruitment and financing for Al Qaeda-style networks, and tightened relations between bin Laden and the Taliban, which previously had been quite hostile to him.” The U.S. is by no means innocent in bringing war and misery to this country.

While the only reason many Americans initially approved of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq is because their politicians lied to them, a weak-kneed Congress has consistently funded the White House. As David Swanson notes in “Daybreak”(Seven Stories Press) the only member of the House to oppose letting President Bush pounce on Afghanistan was Barbara Lee., who wept honest tears of shame and rage. “She alone, would refuse to authorize the president to use powers the Constitution does not give him, and trust him to use those powers wisely.” Again, Swanson writes, when the House last April voted on President Obama’s budget to expand the Afghan conflict, “this time Congressman Dennis Kucinich stood alone in voting No in opposition to war.” “We are now a nation,” Swanson laments, “that regularly bombs civilians, detains the innocent, and tortures suspects—sometimes to death.”

As Francis Boyle, international law professor at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, puts it, “Now we have a situation where Obama is off on his own without authorization from the UN Security Council and also now illegally exceeding the authorization that had been given to Bush by Congress after 911...plus he has now escalated the conflict into Pakistan...(and) set off a humanitarian catastrophe for people of Pakistan akin to what Nixon set off in Cambodia.”

America today is a “failed state.” It is a failed democracy. Its people want peace and its elected officials make war. After taking the lead in establishing the United Nations at San Francisco after World War II, America is today the chief occupier, the chief war-maker, the chief arms-maker, and the chief arms-peddler, on the planet, and the nation that is most feared by humanity at large. It spends nearly 200 times as much for war as diplomacy. America’s Founders envisioned a nation that would show “a decent respect to the opinions of mankind” (Jefferson) yet today the Pentagon spends more taxpayer’s dollars on war than

all other countries combined. And while it frightens its citizens into thinking they are in danger from terrorists with fabricated color-coded alerts it is itself spreading terror in the Middle East. Mr. Obama is only the latest, slickest model in its long succession of imperial presidents. Maybe he should heed the advice President George Bush dispensed in Milwaukee on October 8, 2003, but never took himself: "See, free nations are peaceful nations. Free nations don't attack each other. Free nations don't develop weapons of mass destruction."

Of far greater importance than what the Afghan war will do to Obama's presidency or the national debt or even the lengthening casualty lists of our troops is what it is doing to the innocent people of Afghanistan. The managers of the military-industrial complex who are promoting this war for their own profit apparently lose no sleep when they read reports such as the one from Farah cited above. Perhaps they should be made to live among the Afghans for a time and share their peril or carry water to the wounded in the hospitals and change the blood-soaked sheets. Maybe they should be required to put their own sons and daughters in Kabul and Bala Boluk and see if they continue the Predator attacks. Back in 1955, when Richard J. Daley first ran for mayor of Chicago, the public was unconvinced he had their best interests at heart. He won them over with the words, "When I see your street, I see my street. When I see your house, I see my house. When I see your children I see my children." That's the kind of thinking those who hold power in America today need to adopt. When will President Obama see Afghanistan's daughters as his own?

**Sherwood Ross** is a Miami, Fla.-based media consultant who runs the Anti-War News Service. To comment or contribute to his work reach him at [sherwoodr1@yahoo.com](mailto:sherwoodr1@yahoo.com)

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