

Fraudulent Afghan Election Raises Odds Against U.S. “Success”

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The fraudulent Afghan election of last August 20th has delayed the possibility of a new regime taking over promptly to replace the corrupt rule of the discredited, U.S. hand-picked President Hamid Karzai.

The ballot box stuffing has blunted a key aspect of President Obama’s stated desire to bring about domestic reform there, not just to wage war, in that tortured nation.

While the recount drags on over what the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) called “clear and convincing evidence of fraud,” Pentagon officials are claiming the Taliban is growing ever stronger and they need tens of thousands of additional troops. General Stanley McChrystal, the Afghanistan commander, warned of possible “mission failure” without them. Civilians continue to die from U.S. air strikes aimed at Taliban targets as well as Taliban explosives and U.S. troops continue to die in record numbers in the fighting. Each day brings fresh headlines detailing the slaughter.

“This war has slogged on for nearly nine years, making it longer than America’s involvement in World Wars I and II combined. We’ve already spent \$228 billion, 826 Americans have been killed (nearly 200 so far this year), and Obama’s summer surge has muscled up America’s Afghan presence to 68,000 troops (plus another 42,000 from NATO,” Jim Hightower and Phillip Frazer note in the October Hightower Lowdown. “Yet the Taliban forces we’re fighting are stronger than ever, and our own military commanders concede that not only is the war going badly for us, but the situation is rapidly ‘deteriorating.’”

What’s more, by backing Hamid Karzai, the “leader” designated by the Bush-Cheney regime in Dec., 2001, Hightower and Frazer say, Obama is strengthening a central government that is “infamously incompetent, openly corrupt, criminally abusive, and thoroughly despised.”

Sarah Chayes, an adviser to U.S. General Stanley McChrystal, the American commander in Afghanistan, told a reporter for The New Yorker magazine (Sept. 28), “What the Afghans expected of us was to help create a decent government. Instead, we gave them warlords, because we were focused on counterterrorism.”

The reporter, George Packer, noted that in areas the Taliban took over, they “collected taxes and even set up a commission to hear grievances against their fighters, something that neither the Afghan government nor NATO had done.”

Capt. Jason Adler, a company commander in Wardak province, where fighting continues, told Packer, “The biggest complaint you hear from Afghan folks is there’s no connection to

the government.” Said an Afghan watermelon seller, “If you go to government officials, they just put money in their pockets. They have their properties in Dubai—they don’t care about the poor.”

Added a mechanic, “Most of our police, they’re no good, they have drug problems. We want the police to take responsibility and bring peace for us. We don’t want police who are there to take money.” And one man described by Packer as an old man in a turban, observed, “Our government is all corrupt. We need a system to give more money to the poor. When the Taliban were in power, there was peace, there wasn’t one gunshot at that time. They didn’t help the poor, but there was peace. The last eight years, we’ve had nothing.”

Polish NATO troops stationed in Ghazni province, south of Kabul, saw things much the same way as the mechanic. “The Poles found that support from the Afghan Army was woefully lacking; the police were barely present,” Packer wrote of them.

He called the August vote “a disaster” as “The evidence of fraud by Karzai’s campaign was so overwhelming that it threatened to render the entire vote illegitimate.” Packer went on to say that publicly, Richard Holbrooke, the U.S. Special Representative to Afghanistan, “hailed the election” but privately, according to his colleagues, he suggested that a runoff between Karzai and his main challenger, Abdullah Abdullah, might be necessary for the appearance of legitimacy.”

“Now there is a strong possibility,” he continued, “that a stolen election will leave Karzai in power for five more years, at the very moment that Obama has to answer his generals’ request to send thousands more troops to fight, and perhaps die, on behalf of the Afghan government.”

Packer goes on to say, “Holbrooke once told me that three things could cause America to lose the war: the Taliban sanctuary in Pakistan, civilian casualties, and corruption.” Packer added, “The Afghan government was so crooked that NATO considered it as much of a threat to success as the Taliban.” (Note: all three of those warning flags are flying.)

Packer concludes his report in *The New Yorker* stating, “Holbrooke must know that there will be no American victory in this war; he can only try to forestall potential disaster.”

As Holbrooke told Packer, “Americans cannot think of a situation where, in the face of attacks by Al Qaeda, they would give up, they would say, ‘The hell with it, we have to leave,’” he told me. “It’s just not an acceptable course of action.” (Note: by last month, more than half of all Americans and 70 percent of Democrats had concluded the war is not worth fighting.)

Holbrooke told Packer, “I still believe in the possibility of the United States, with all its will and all its strength, and I don’t just mean military, persevering against any challenge. I still believe that.”

The key word in the above sentence is “still,” a word that strongly suggests that Holbrooke knows better. As for Americans refusing to “give up,” perhaps it is time to remind them of the illegality of the U.S. attack on Afghanistan by President George W. Bush in the first place. Bush, a former oil company executive, and Vice President Dick Cheney, former CEO of Halliburton Corp., have been tied in with major oil interests.

Francis Boyle, the international legal scholar at the University of Illinois, Champaign, and author of "Destroying World Order," (Clarity Press), writes there is "no evidence that implicated the Taliban government of Afghanistan in the 11 September, 2001, attacks upon the United States" and there is "no justification for the U.S. to wage war against Afghanistan, a U.N. Member State, in gross violation of the United Nations Charter."

Boyle pointed out, "The Clinton administration had already negotiated with the Taliban government over letting it have the U.N. Seat as well as extending it bilateral de jure recognition in return, in part, for the construction of the UNOCAL pipeline across Afghanistan, a negotiation from which, ominously, in light of the onslaught to come—the Taliban government demurred."

Moreover, Chalmers Johnson points out in "The Sorrows of Empire" (Metropolitan/Owl) that plans to destroy the Taliban in Afghanistan had been discussed for months before the U.S. was attacked on 9/11/2001, including at a Group of Eight summit in Genoa, Italy, the previous July. "Pakistani insiders have described a detailed American plan of July 2001 to launch military strikes against the Taliban from bases in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan before mid-October of that year."

Morton Abramowitz, former chief of the State Department intelligence bureau, is quoted by Packer as saying, "Obama, in a fit of absent mindedness, to show he was tough, made Afghanistan his signature issue because he wanted to get out of Iraq. And this is going to be God damned difficult."

In considering his options, President Obama might reflect that U.S. bombing of Afghanistan, launched in October, 2001, claimed victims among whom "not one was ever identified as having a connection" to 9/11, author William Blum writes in "Rogue State" (Common Courage Press).

As a result of U.S. actions, "countless homes and other buildings have been destroyed; depleted uranium (radioactive ammunition) has begun to show its ugly face; the warlords have returned to extensive power; opium cultivation is booming anew; crime and violence are once again a daily fact of life in the cities neighborhoods... (and) U.S. forces seize Afghans and take them away without explanation and keep them incommunicado indefinitely... (and) in Kabul, the number of children suffering from malnutrition is almost double what it was before the American invasion..."

The CIA earlier, Blum added, had supported Mujahedeen rebels "engaged heavily in opium cultivation" that provided "up to one half of the heroin used annually in the United States." He alleged that "CIA officers may also have gotten their hands on a portion of the drug money, using it to help finance their operations, or even themselves."

President Obama's argument the U.S. is in Afghanistan to "disrupt, dismantle, and defeat" al Qaeda is bogus as al Qaeda is no longer even in that country, political analysts Hightower and Frazer point out.

"While Afghanistan could be an attractive terrorist base, it is not at all crucial to al Qaeda, which now has many 'homes,' including fiery spinoffs in Indonesia, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen, as well as in enclaves in France and England," they note.

"By investing so much to block off Afghanistan as a safe haven, we're not

blocking out al Qaeda at all—we're blocking ourselves in. If al Qaeda doesn't need Afghanistan, neither do we."

Given the eight destructive years of the illegal U.S. occupation in Afghanistan, the indiscriminate bombings, the thousands of innocent people killed, arrested, detained without legal rights, and tortured, the use of polluting radioactive ammunition, the fraudulent election of puppet Karzai (previously a long-time U.S. resident), and the worsening conditions of daily life, plus the tragic losses to American troops stationed there, it ill behooves President Obama to pursue the war President Bush started one day longer. Afghanistan is now Obama's War and Obama's disgrace.

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