

How soon will Americans flee from Afghanistan?

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In Afghanistan, they make a kind of deal securing their presence in four to five heavily guarded military bases, simultaneously giving assurance that they will not interfere in the local affairs – poppy cultivation in particular (which is the case already anyway). And outside Afghanistan, the fierce attacks on Syria and the fuss surrounding “Iranian problem” show that those two countries are definitely among future possible victims of a new “Enduring Freedom”.

[I]t would be better for the US not to wait for another 2,000 Americans killed in the region and flee (all talk of an orderly “withdrawal” seems ridiculous) from the countries they invaded and still plan to invade – the sooner the better.

Reports of Americans and other NATO soldiers killed in Afghanistan (more often than not as a result of insider “green on blue” attacks by Afghan police and army soldiers) have become too commonplace lately, and it is extremely difficult to follow each incident of the kind.

It would probably be enough to say that over the weekend the number of Americans killed there exceeded 2,000, and has grown slightly in the past few days.

All incidents of the kind take place against a background which is both routine and unusual. The routine thing about it is, for example, the new accusation made by Afghan President Hamid Karzai that it is the US which, with its strategy of placing contracts, is really fostering corruption in the country. The accusation made by the leader of one of the most corrupt countries in the world (second only to Somalia, according to Transparency International) sounds weird but not unexpected.

Another routine matter is the use of the American death toll in Afghanistan in the US electoral process. Recently, GOP vice-presidential candidate Paul Ryan said that the Americans in Afghanistan became less safe thanks to President Barack Obama’s policy. This may be true, but one may ask who is to thank for Americans’ presence in Afghanistan in the first place? And wasn’t it the GOP President George W. Bush who, prompted by a clear-cut provocation of 9/11 (organized and instigated by unknown forces and executed by a dozen Saudi nationals accompanied by a couple of guys from other Arabic countries), who sent troops to Afghanistan, a country in no way responsible for the attacks?

What is new in the discourse surrounding Afghanistan is the statement made by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen over the weekend. In an interview with London’s The Guardian he said that NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan may be speeded up. He also conceded that the recent Taliban strategy of “green on blue” killings had been successful in sapping morale.

Again, it is probably not the right time to discuss the morale of NATO troops in Afghanistan after all the Koran burning and urinating-on-dead-bodies incidents. But the fact that the low morale has been admitted by the topmost NATO official speaks for itself.

Also, as reported by the New York Times on Tuesday, US generals and civilian officials have acknowledged that they have all but written off what was once one of the cornerstones of their strategy to end the war here: battering the Taliban into a peace deal.

The task of dealing with the Taliban has been loaded on Hamid Karzai's government and Pakistan. This leaves really few options, or in fact only one – the Americans concede that the Taliban has already won the war. Hamid Karzai's government is too weak to last more than a few months after the coalition leaves Afghanistan, and Pakistan has always been sort of sympathetic to the Afghan Taliban, so there would not be too many objections on the Pakistani side to the Taliban's return to power.

The big question remains, though – that is, whether the US is going to strike a deal with the future rulers of Afghanistan on their military presence in Afghanistan after 2014, or whether it is going to choose some other location for getting a foothold there. The current events in the Middle East hint that both options are on the table. In Afghanistan, they make a kind of deal securing their presence in four to five heavily guarded military bases, simultaneously giving assurance that they will not interfere in the local affairs – poppy cultivation in particular (which is the case already anyway). And outside Afghanistan, the fierce attacks on Syria and the fuss surrounding “Iranian problem” show that those two countries are definitely among future possible victims of a new “Enduring Freedom”.

One thing is obvious, the US will not abandon the region altogether. But whether the people of the region will subscribe to it is another problem. And maybe it would be better for the US not to wait for another 2,000 Americans killed in the region and flee (all talk of an orderly “withdrawal” seems ridiculous) from the countries they invaded and still plan to invade – the sooner the better.

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