

The Obama Enigma: Imperial Interventionism and Militarism

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“We do not want a PAX Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war. Not the peace of the grave or the security of the slave. I am talking about genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living, the kind that enables men and nations to grow and to hope and to build a better life for their children — not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women — not merely peace in our time but peace for all time.” President John F. Kennedy, 1963

“I will not hesitate to use force unilaterally, if necessary, to protect the American people or our vital interests wherever we are attacked or imminently threatened. ...We must also consider using military force in circumstances beyond self-defense, in order to provide for the common security that underpins global stability — to support friends, participate in stability and reconstruction operations, or confront mass atrocities.” Sen. Barack Obama, Foreign Affairs (July/August 2007)

“Our interest in Afghanistan is to prevent it from becoming a haven for terrorists bent on attacking us. That does not require the scale of military operations that the incoming administration is contemplating. It does not require wholesale occupation. It does not require the endless funneling of human treasure and countless billions of taxpayer dollars to the Afghan government.” Bob Herbert, The New York Times, January 6, 2009

Those who thought that the election of Barack Obama as American President would mean a fundamental shift in U.S. foreign policy should have lost their illusions by now. Faces change but the system remains. When you want change, it's necessary to look beyond a single individual and evaluate the team he is working with ...or for. And the Obama team is what can be called a soft neoconservative team, all devoted to maintaining the military-industrial complex, [http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20090610/pl_nm/us_arms_boeing] and all sold out with the ideology of permanent wars rather than permanent human progress.

The truth is that during the last election, both candidate McCain [<http://www.TheNewAmericanEmpire.com/tremblay=1088>] and candidate Obama [<http://www.TheNewAmericanEmpire.com/tremblay=1090>] were favorable to the policy of permanent wars [<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=9616>] under the cover of fighting terrorism. That is the reason I had concluded then that candidate Obama was only marginally superior to candidate McCain, but not fundamentally different. In fact, I believe that as far as character goes, McCain was probably more his own man than Obama, who has demonstrated a tendency to align himself with powerful interests in order to bolster

his political career.

There seems to have been a deal here: Obama will be kept busy shaking hands, traveling and delivering grand speeches or sermons, while Chief of cabinet Rahm Emanuel [http://www.theweek.com/article/index/92267/Rahm_Emanuel_Obamas_main_man] would run the White House. Everything then fell into place: Marine Corps General James Jones [<http://www.acus.org/press/general-james-jones-named-national-security-advisor>] was named National Security Advisor (N.B.: The national security adviser heads the National Security Council, which is the part of the White House structure that deals with foreign policy), and Bush's Defense Secretary Robert Gates [<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1108/15986.html>] was asked to remain at his post. This alone should have persuaded most everyone that U.S. foreign policy would only change in tone, not in substance.

By enlarging and expanding the Afghanistan-Pakistan war [<http://news.antiwar.com/2009/06/10/moves-rhetoric-reveal-massive-us-commitment-to-afghanistan-war/>], just as U.S. troops reduce their unwelcomed presence in Iraq, Obama has de facto endorsed interventionism and militarism as the cornerstone of his foreign policy. This is a failed policy, besides being immoral, because it requires the pursuit of a contradiction, i.e. killing civilians [<http://news.antiwar.com/2009/06/11/us-says-investigating-reports-of-afghan-civilians-killed-in-wednesday-air-strike/>] and supporting authoritarian regimes while attempting to obtain the support of a foreign population in favor of democracy.

What is more, Obama is enlarging a war that has no clear rationale behind it and no clear objectives. If the main rationale is to build his political image as "commander-in-chief", then Obama is falling into the same trap as George W. Bush. The Afghanistan-Pakistan war will be his war and it will be a quagmire. When he signed an order increasing U.S. troops by 17,000 combat and support personnel in Afghanistan, then newly sworn in President Barack Obama [http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=a4Z44._h7ZNY] said the war in Afghanistan was "still winnable". What did he mean? Does it mean that the U.S. will have troops over there for decades?

It seems that nothing is learned from history and that everything has to be relearned. —Such a policy failed miserably in Vietnam, [<http://www.lotsofessays.com/viewpaper/1686794.html>] and it is most likely to fail again in Afghanistan-Pakistan, two countries whose borders are highly artificial, having been imposed by imperial Great Britain in the nineteenth century. It also failed for the Soviets who had to withdraw from Afghanistan after eight-and-a-half disastrous years. Soon after, the entire Soviet regime collapsed.

Indeed, by enlarging the Afghanistan-Pakistan War, President Obama is embarking on a course of action that could eventually destroy his presidency. It will be a repeat of President Lyndon B. Johnson who was destroyed politically with his Vietnam War, [<http://faculty.smu.edu/dsimon/Change-Viet2.html>] even though this was a war he had not started. As in Vietnam, the ill-conceived Afghanistan war will become a war of attrition that will drain public support and finances as the war becomes more and more americanized. This will be another tragedy.

If Obama listens to the military, as he obviously seems to do, he will be fed the deadly

pabulum that every problem in the world is a military problem. But this is false and counterproductive. In fact, bombing civilian populations will only enrage them against the invaders, just as bombing the United States would naturally enrage Americans. On that, Obama and his team are on the same wavelength and on the same path to disaster as Bush-Cheney and their neocon sycophants.

This is too bad. President Barack Obama is quickly wasting his political capital and his political credibility. And once lost, it will be difficult to regain them.

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