

The Phony Pullout from Afghanistan

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Those wondering what lies in store for Afghanistan need only look at the way the British Empire ruled Iraq in the 1920's. As Shakespeare wrote, "what is past is prologue."

Imperial Britain created the state of Iraq after World War I to secure Mesopotamia's vast oil deposits that had become vital for the Royal Navy. To control this artificial nation seething with unrest, Britain imposed a puppet king, Faisal, and created a native army commanded by British officers.

Britain's colonial rule was formalized by the 1930 Anglo-Iraq Treaty, a deal between puppet and master.

But real power in Iraq was held by the Royal Air Force, which was "granted" two permanent bases at Habbaniyah and Basra. The RAF ruled supreme over the open wastes of Iraq.

Winston Churchill, patron saint of today's war-lusting neoconservatives, authorized the RAF to use poison gas against "unruly" tribesmen in Iraq and Afghanistan. Britain created public institutions and sham political parties in Baghdad that had no links at all to Iraq's population, which mostly hated their British rulers.

British Iraq was the prologue to today's Afghanistan. The British Empire's heir, the American Imperium, plans to duplicate the Iraqi Britannica in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's US-installed current ruler, Hamid Karzai, a former CIA "asset," may stay on after 2014 or be replaced by another US-designated president. Change the title of president to king, and, voila!, Iraq's puppet king, Faisal.

Washington says it will withdraw all US combat troops from Afghanistan by 2014. But read the fine print. As of now, 14,000-16,000 US troops will remain on so-called "anti-terrorism" missions and for "training" - though Washington admits there are not more than 50 al-Qaida members in Afghanistan.

In other words, the old British system of white officers commanding native troops. A good \$4-5 billion annually from the US and allies will go to hiring up to 400,000 pro-government troops (under US command).

These mercenaries will fight half-heartedly for the Yankee dollar, not ideology. CIA will maintain another mercenary force of about 2,000, and a fleet of killer drones. Add commandos from the shadowy US Special Ops Joint Command (JSOC), a copy of Her Majesty's assassins, Britain's famed SAS.

The ongoing US stealth occupation of Afghanistan will be enshrined by a new US-Afghanistan security treaty (read 1930 Anglo-Iraq Treaty), another deal between puppet and string-puller, made respectable by rigged elections and bribed chieftains and a big dose of drug money.

The Soviets did the same thing after they invaded Afghanistan. It's good old imperialism 101.

US public relations firms will keep up a steady drumbeat of happy news about the US-run government building girl's schools and improving public health.

Not a peep will come about the US-backed and paid tribal and government chiefs who run Afghanistan's ever growing export business in morphine and heroin. Under US control, Afghanistan has become the world's leading exporter of heroin and opium. Drug output rose 50% last year according to the UN. Drug money and laundering it has corrupted the entire Afghan government and provides most of Kabul's revenue, aside from US handouts.

Most important, just like the British in Iraq, the US will retain 2-4 key airbases. Bagram, built by the Soviets, will be the nerve center of the US control of Afghanistan. In Afghanistan's arid, treeless terrain, air power is decisive. Without its total, 24-7 control of the air, the US would not be able to sustain bases in Afghanistan. The US Air Force, the primary tool of US global power, will police the skies of South Asia and defend the puppet regime in Kabul. India is expected to lend discreet support for the ongoing US occupation of Afghanistan.

That's Plan A. But Afghanistan, rightly known as the "Graveyard of Empires," has a way of frustrating grand imperial designs. That nation's fierce Pashtun tribesmen, with whom this writer took the field in the 1980's anti-Soviet struggle, have withstood the full might of US military power and its panoply of high-tech weapons, armed with nothing more than AK-47's rifles and dauntless courage.

The British Empire, which invaded Afghanistan four times, also sought to maintain garrisons there - and utterly failed. The ongoing US occupation, re-labeled "reconstruction," will also likely fail. So far, America's longest war - some 12 years - has cost nearly \$1 trillion, 2,000 US dead, 17,000 wounded and innumerable Afghan dead and wounded.

Taliban - a coalition of Pashtun tribes - will fight on as they always have. America faces another decade of war unless it finally decides to admit failure and depart.

So why then will the US continue to occupy and run Afghanistan? Geopolitics. US bases deep in Afghanistan will overwatch the vital energy-rich Caspian Basin. Oil has the same effect on America policy-makers as catnip does on felines.

Washington can't bring itself to admit it was defeated in Afghanistan - and by lightly-armed tribesmen. Better to stay on and pretend victory, though supporting a US occupation garrison in Afghanistan costs billions annually.

What's more, western politicians can't face their voters and admit the Afghan war was an idiotic folly, a waste of a trillion dollars and the lives of their soldiers. Or admit that Taliban was never involved in the 9/11 attacks, that were mounted from Europe, and knew nothing about them. The truth is too painful and dangerous.

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