

The US and NATO sinking in Afghanistan

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It is now very clear that the US and NATO have achieved nothing of substance in their adventure into Afghanistan and are sinking in the quagmire deeper every day.

The US now desperately needs an exit strategy that looks like a win for two reasons: First its reputation as a mighty military power that can't be beaten, and especially by tribal clansmen. Second if it withdraws empty-handed, how does it explain the rising number of troop deaths and the billions that are still being poured into a narco-state that is corrupt, in the middle of an economic down-turn at home.

The insurgency in Afghanistan is spreading rapidly as the latest survey conducted by the International Council of Security and Development (ICOS) shows. Its latest research indicates that 80% of the country has a permanent Taliban presence, up from 72% in 2008, and that 97% of the country has "substantial Taliban activity."

The organization has tracked Taliban movement throughout Afghanistan since 2007. Even with such alarming figures the organization's president, MS Norine Mc Donald QC, told the internet web-site Huffington Post that she believed the figure was "conservative."

"Its bad numbers and bad news" she said. "They (the Taliban) have the momentum, their strategies and tactics are working and our's are not..... its not a question of where they are operating its more a question of where they are not."

Increased resistance activity has led to more occupation soldiers dying and an alarming escalation in airstrikes that have caused massive civilian casualties. On September 4th, an air strike on two fuel tankers hijacked by the Taliban who were dispensing fuel to locals in Kunduz resulted in more than 90 civilians deaths. Villagers were able to retrieve only fragments of their loved one's body parts after the Americans deployed one of their favourite strategies of winning hearts and minds by dropping 1,000 pound bombs from the air.

Combined with instability arising from the recent presidential election in which allegations of widespread electoral fraud were made and the country even more divided between the majority Pashtuns and the minority Tajiks, this is a sure recipe for disaster. Hitherto, northern Afghanistan was relatively calm and there was little resistance activity there but as the Kunduz episode shows, this has now spread much further.

What have the US and the NATO achieved in Afghanistan? They failed to get Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omer. They failed to secure the country. They failed to introduce Western democracy. They failed to better the lot of women and girls. They failed to halt the poppy trade, they failed in their reconstruction efforts and they failed to win the hearts and minds

of the people of Afghanistan. All in all both the US and NATO have failed miserably. The only way out is to adopt an exit strategy to look like a win.

This experience should teach the powerful nations not to in future invade countries and force their ideologies and culture on the indigenous people and exploit their natural resources. Afghanistan has historically been the graveyard of empires. In modern times both Britain and Russia were compelled to withdraw, burying thousands of their soldiers in Afghanistan.

If Obama is smart, he will take a page from the approach adopted by Alexander the Great more than 2,000 years ago. His generals told him the Afghans were such ferocious fighters that they would maul his forces. It was best to leave them alone.

Alexander bypassed Afghanistan to take on the much easier prey in the Indus plains. Whether Obama suffers the fate of the Russians or achieves Alexander's greatness will depend on what he decides to do next. Current thinking in Washington does not allow for much optimism. The US and NATO must continue to bleed before they realize [they must] withdraw from Afghanistan with a nasty and bloodied nose. Its only a matter of time before this occurs.

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