

Why Obama's Surge in Afghanistan?

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Tuesday's announcement that President Obama will send an additional 30,000 soldiers to Afghanistan — while begging his foreign allies to send an extra 10,000 — will have dramatic effects throughout the American and world society.

The hope that Obama's election would drastically change U.S. foreign policy has been destroyed. The effects of his troop surge will change the minds of millions of Americans, who, until this point, were giving Obama the benefit of the doubt.

Such moments in history are capable of instantly removing piles of dust from the collective eyeball — just as the bank bailouts did.

The announcement will also send tremors throughout the military: many soldiers and their families remained silent about fighting with hopes that Obama would bring them home. They see little point in dying in a pointless war. Thus, morale is likely to continue deteriorating, while more brazen acts of defiance will surely increase.

The reasons behind the surge — Al Qaeda, "rooting out terrorism," etc. — are unlikely to fool many people, with the exception of the media. This "war on terror" propaganda is based on the same illogical catch-phrases that Bush's limited intelligence tripped over. Coming from Obama, such stupid reasoning sounds especially bizarre, akin to an evolutionary biologist forced to argue in favor of creationism.

Obama is compelled to tell the really big lie because the truth is too damning. If he remotely approached the real motives behind the war, the public would be pushed into total defiance — Obama's new \$660 billion military budget for 2010 would have caused mass demonstrations.

In reality, the war in Afghanistan was a convenient way for U.S. corporations — who dominate U.S. politics — to get a firmer hold in the resource-rich Middle East. For example, soon after Afghanistan was invaded, we were told that Iraq was a "ticking time bomb," while now Obama assures us that Pakistan is the real threat — and don't forget Iran! When considering the above military budget, these countries are threats to the U.S. in the same way that a flea is a threat to an elephant.

Who really benefits from war in the Middle East? So far, U.S. weapons manufacturers have (Boeing, etc.), U.S. oil companies (Exxon, etc.), and the big banks that help move the spoils around (Citigroup, etc.) who also dominate the finances of the conquered country. Corporations that deal with "reconstruction" contracts love war (Halliburton, etc.), while also the multitude of "private contractors" that specialize in everything from cooking (Halliburton again) to mercenary fighting (Blackwater, etc.).

The many U.S. corporations that export abroad also benefit from the war, since a dominated country offers them a monopoly market to sell their goods in, or the ability to set up shop where none existed before. It is these collective interests that are driving Obama's foreign policy; they would rather see the U.S. and Afghani people bled dry than allow a foreign competitor — China, Russia, etc. — to dominate Afghanistan's resources and markets.

The U.S. is certainly not fighting terrorists in Afghanistan — the Al Qaeda bogey men and the "evil genius" Osama Bin Laden are not directing military operations from a cave. The vast majority of people fighting U.S. troops are not "Islamic extremists" (another catchphrase), but average citizens enraged by foreign troops rummaging around in their homes, patting them down at check points, indiscriminately detaining them at torture centers (U.S. Bagram Air base), and killing their family members.

Yes, many Afghans are deeply religious, but the presence of U.S. troops is the motor force behind their "radicalism," i.e. resistance to military occupation. Islam is not inherently violent, but a military occupation unquestionably is.

Those wishing to end these wars must end their reliance on the corporate-bought two-party system, and begin organizing independently. The anti-war movement was strong while Bush was President, based not only on mass outrage, but the cynical maneuvering of those sitting atop of Democratic Party front groups like MoveOn and others — who helped organize and fund anti-war (Bush) demonstrations.

When Obama became President, the leaders of these groups played a thoroughly destructive role in the anti-war movement, shifting away from the effective measures used against Bush, or abandoning the struggle altogether, taking their funding with them. This disruption in organization, plus the mass-effect of the Obama illusion, had a temporary derailing effect on organizing.

But Obama's troop surge may very well breathe new life into the deflated movement. Demonstrations are being organized for the spring, and there is plenty of time to join local groups/coalitions to help with the planning.

Mass demonstrations are a very effective tool, since they educate about the undemocratic nature of the state, while showing demonstration participants that there is power in collective action. More importantly, large marches prove to U.S. soldiers that they will have public support if they collectively choose to publicly oppose the war (by marching in a demonstration), or individually opt not to fight in these illegal wars. The Vietnam War was ended largely because so many soldiers opposed the war, demonstrated against it, or refused to fight; a courage they found by the massive public support felt at home.

Mass demonstrations do not organize themselves. It will take ordinary people working together to make it happen, while collectively demanding:

BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!

END THE U.S. WARS IN THE MIDDLE EAST!

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