

Nobel Peace Prize winner Obama launches Afghan surge

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Jeff Albertson argues that giving President Obama the Nobel peace prize cannot hide the warmongering policies of his administration

Centre stage amidst a sea of grey-uniformed cadets, Barrack Obama gave perhaps the most defining speech of his presidency to date. While the youthful faces of the future West Point graduates remained fixated on the commander-and-chief throughout his speech, millions of anxious and sceptical Americans sat glued watching their television sets or listening attentively to radios, waiting to find out not if more troops faced deployment to Afghanistan but just how many would end up going.

The Obama administration knew it would be a tough sell ? especially with the majority of the American public now firmly against any occupation of Afghanistan in general ? to convince Congress to approve sending 30,000 additional US forces to Afghanistan, eventually bringing the total number of American military personnel in the region up to approximately 100,000 by the summer of 2010. Perhaps ironically, the surge announcement came only a couple of days before Obama flew to Europe to receive his Nobel Peace Prize.

Republican or Democrat ? the same failed strategy

While never once proclaiming on the campaign trail to be the candidate that would order U.S. and NATO forces out of Central Asia, intent on pursuing what his advisory team repeatedly dubbed the ?good war?. In deliberately adhering to the fundamental aspects of the foreign policy objectives of his predecessor, Obama is pursuing the same failed strategy: increased militarization and reliance on and support for an unpopular, puppet regime. The prospects for a repeat of the events that unfolded in Iraq (political calamity, a generalized bloodbath, etc) are set; the strategy envisioned by the Obama administration in the coming years ensures this course of events.

The current and future strategy of the Obama administration is two-fold. First, it seeks to address the chronic instability plaguing Afghani society by militarily and economically reinforcing the tottering, corrupt regime of Hamid Karzai. After the debacle of the Afghan elections which only revealed even more clearly to the world and the Afghan people that Karzai is a corrupt gangster politician, more people began to question whether the loss of life in the Afghan war was worthwhile. Above all, what the United States seeks is to buy time for the Karzai administration to ?clean up its act? in order to win back whatever popular legitimacy amongst the Afghan people it once enjoyed, while the increased U.S. military presence focuses on counter-insurgency measures, including greater training of, and reliance on, Afghani forces. This is the same strategy that the Nixon administration pursued in the dying days of the Vietnam war,

?Vietnamisation? of the conflict so that the local people do more of the fighting so the imperialists soldiers see less frontline combat.

The general staffs of the U.S. military recognize that it would be next to impossible to eliminate militarily Islamist forces operating throughout Afghanistan, to prevent them from participating in the national political terrain. Their goal, therefore, is to utilize the troop influx to weaken systematically the Islamists until the central government of Afghanistan has recourse to its own effective defence forces.

Second, perhaps now more than ever before, is looking to Pakistan as a sort of litmus test to judge accurately the progress of US and NATO forces in the region. During his speech, Obama made it a point to address the situation unfolding in Pakistan, to point out the necessity of the United States involving itself ever more in the political affairs one of its most important, from the standpoint of fighting the ?War on Terror,? allies in Central Asia: an ally well stocked in nuclear warheads coupled with the scientific capacity to produce more of them.

Focus, then, is equality paid on the situation developing in Pakistan. The Obama administration knows that it cannot stop the marauding, guerilla armies of the Islamists from crossing border to border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. That is why the United States has now included ? in a vein similar to the era of the Vietnam War when, suddenly, both Laos and Cambodia became targets of the U.S. military ? Pakistan into resolving the Afghanistan question.

The strategy of General McChrystal and Obama?s national security team, despite its supposed ?benchmarked? approach in the recent decision to escalate troop forces in Afghanistan, the surge, like in Vietnam, like in Iraq, is destined to fail in the medium to long-term.

30,000 more troops means more dead Americans and Afghans

The basis of the insurgency in Afghanistan is the occupation itself. By increasing the presence of American and NATO forces, the imperialist governments of both the United States and the European Union serve to increase the destabilisation of the country, immiserating the lives of the Afghan people in the process.

The logic of the surge ? more troops mean greater security ? is fundamentally flawed. Even with Obama?s prior commitment of some 22,000 additional forces, the rate of growth of the strength of Islamist forces along with month-on-month military casualties went up considerably over previous years. There is no documented evidence to suggest that putting more ?boots on the ground? will serve to defeat the Taliban. If anything, statistics suggest that it would only serve to increase support for the resistance and, in turn, lead to an exponential increase in deaths ? particularly of Afghans caught in the crossfire.

The strength of the Islamists is the occupation and the continued existence of the illegitimate, corrupt Karzai government. They will continue, undoubtedly, to grow in stature and strength so long as the armies of imperialism remain. The workers and peasants of Afghanistan have nothing to gain by supporting the puppet government defended the imperialists out of fear of a potentially new Taliban regime on the horizon.

Indeed for many of the villagers and rural peasants the forces that are labelled as ?Taliban? by the west to them represent a struggle against occupation and domination by the foreign powers. Almost the entire border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan is in open revolt against the central governments in Kabul and Islamabad, reflecting the tribal value system of the region, but compounded by the presence of foreign troops. Therefore, socialists support the struggle of those people fighting against imperialism, even if they are led by Islamist forces, as part of the democratic right to self determination.

But we are clear that even where Islamist forces do take up the struggle against imperialism, they are not consistent fighters, unable to break the economic and political bonds that tie their country to the world capitalist system. Even were they to come to political power, the influence and permeation of finance capital would continue unabated. Thus, there would be no economic break from either American, French, German, or British imperialism. The Islamists are a politically reactionary force, one hostile to the independent organization of workers and peasants, seeking to construct a society steeped in political, economic, and social oppression.

The only path for the workers and peasants to take, a path that leads to liberation from the yoke of imperialist oppression, is to turn the anti-imperialist struggle into a struggle for socialism, for a workers' and poor peasants' government in Afghanistan. Only such a government — one based upon workers' and peasants' councils, one supported by the armed people — could drive out the armies of imperialism and provide a credible political alternative to the Islamists.

To achieve this, however, the workers and peasants of Afghanistan need to arm themselves, but, above all, they need a party, a revolutionary workers' party independent of the capitalists, the large landowners, and the Islamists.

Nevertheless, a workers' state in Afghanistan would be open to further rounds of attacks by the imperialist world. It would not be able to survive for long without help both militarily and economically. The social revolution would have to spread, and quickly, at that. A socialist federation of South and Central Asia could counter the attempts by the imperialists to strangle the revolution, and help spread the revolution across the region, indeed, the world, even faster.

The solution to the Afghan quagmire is not more troops; it is, in fact, the opposite: their complete removal from the region. It is social revolution, uniting together all of Afghan society against the exploiters both at home and those whom exact tribute from abroad.

And as a step on the road to revolution we must fight for the immediate removal from Afghanistan of all U.S. and N.A.T.O troops and the closure of all the military bases erected in Afghanistan and Central Asia more generally since the beginning of the war eight years ago.

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