

AFGHANISTAN

Promise, Peril and Prospects

As a military man of some background- WWII, Korea and Vietnam- I view the continued trial and tribulation of Afghanistan with hope, concern and skepticism. In WWII we were beset with a major conflagration, our enemies, Japan and Germany, formidable, tenacious and very serious about world domination. Strategy of unconditional surrender accepted no compromise or rationalization, and they were defeated totally and completely with no evidence, or desire for any continuance surfaced. Korea and Vietnam had the shadow and influence of the Soviet Union and our response though incomplete seemed to contribute to the ultimate downfall of what Reagan called, 'An evil empire'. No such strategy as well as an inability to define our enemy –if one is there in Afghanistan- and Iraq remains somewhat Quixotic full of windmills; alas there is the rub!

As this old soldier sees it, we have taken 'the war' to the terrorists and not to those who harbor them - in many ways, money, support and ideology. In my view if we are to continue, we must go to those nations who provide the rationale for what is certainly Islamic influenced –a militant and uncompromising mission to insert the ideology to convert many, perhaps even all to Islam as religion, ideology and nation. We would ask how to combat the hate, the teaching, and the commitment of those who visualize this creation and pose the question, do you really wish a 'war of civilizations'?

We must define the enemy to continue: Unlike fascism, communism, which we realized was a fait accompli, we are confused by the many attempts to rationalize what militant Islam has done and continues to do. Osama bin-Laden believed Islam with the aura of Allah won the war with the Soviets in Afghanistan.....and America is next, he says. What do we say?.....Do we remain, or get outleave the devil to the hind post?

Either McChrystal was suffering from delusion or playing a Shakespearian tragicomedy via Rolling Stones to vent his ire with the administration, the representatives there(Elkenberry, the ambassador, Holbrooke, the envoy)and strategy/tactics with the questionable rules of engagement, the ridiculous tipping of one's hand as to the next operation and the concern about withdrawal plans next year, all unacceptable to an Eisenhower, and maybe Petraeus. Kabuki theater or 'send in the clowns'!

Historically, Afghanistan reminds of the many failures of those like Russia, Great Britain and even Alexander the Great who found the terrain untenable, the people ready to fight, and chase them out. Even Genghis Khan, his Mongol army met defeat. Many of us find problems with counter-insurgency in this expanse of land, peoples, tribes and war lords: Uzbeks, Tajiks, Pashtuns, Turkomens, and nomadic Arabs have abounded throughout history. Karzai corruption, Taliban(essence of militant Islam)prevalent and, again, like Iraq, a never-ending war with no guarantee of stability and peace after we leave.

So with my hallucination –a visit to the Islam heartland- a put-up or shut-up premise of total war or else, it most likely will continue as we muddle on in futility. If this is the process then I say, "Let us leave Iraq as scheduled and began our draw-down in Afghanistan in 2011. Our strategic vision should include vigilant hindsight together with an assurance Iran is prevented from nuclear threat and bellicosity."

This President has failed in leadership and strategic vision and the house of cards may tumble: an Armageddon: economically, militarily, and idealistically. He is an ideologue, entrenched in a Socialistic mantra that has no bounds. His moment has come and perhaps gone.

