

THE TENOR OF THE TALIBAN

Do you recall when President Bush sat down with his General, Petraeus –I wrote, speculating, in an article called, “A Stillness at Camp David”-and decided on a new strategy, or perhaps a revision of an old strategy which resulted in the so-called ‘Surge’? This like ‘war on terror’ were misnomers, vague and did not explain the concepts, specifically. The former was actually an increase in troops and application of a more thorough concept called Counter-insurgency: invest, clear, stay and build. It worked in Iraq, yet with tongue in cheek, its nature suggests a return of insurgents when time has changed or situation ripe. One wonders if this President has in contemplation sat down with his top military and civil advisors war-gaming the future.

With economy struggling, the financial structures being tested, and prospects to counter debt and inflation with a multitude of tax increases, Obama’s plate is full. Leaving Iraq and a draw-down being considered in Afghanistan does not augur well for the war scenarios. A look at the Taliban, its origin, rationale, and tenor must be placed conceptually and realistically in perspective.

What is the Taliban? Is it Al-Qaeda revisited, part of a world Islamic jihad, or merely just ‘terrorists’ seeking their place in the sun, more an internal nation thing rather than an external menace.

Taliban-a many splendored thing of pure, ideal Islam that Islamic scholars (Talmiyya, Wahab, al-banna and Sayid Qutb) would heartily agree to was created by a product of Pakistan influence: ISID (Interservice Intelligence Directorates) via its collusion of Pakistan Islamic military government, Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq, US CIA and Saudi money, and inspired by the soon to be exiled Saudi, Osama bin-laden’s example of personal involvement in the Jihad, money and materiel in the grand Jihad against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, circa 1979. From the many who fled the Russian Bear came the dedication to become the counter-insurgents who would be trained to return and throw out the oppressor. Religious schools by the thousands were to sprout up along the Pakistan-Afghan border to inculcate the ideological fervor to meet the challenge; the so-called madrassas tutored in Wahhabism by Saudi scholars and paid for by Saudi money. Mullah Muhammed Omar, in time, became the titular leader of the Taliban movement born in the Madrassas.

Ahmed Shah Massoud, a Tajik of Northern Afghanistan became the Robin Hood of the people who would thwart Soviet military excursions there and was billed as ‘Lion of the Panjshir’ and like other warlords (Hekmatyar and

Haqqani) Pashtuns fought the Soviets from their tribal areas. Sometimes in conjunction with Massoud, other times flaunting their own agenda. The latter two would join with the fledgling organization (Taliban) along with aid from bin-Laden.

United States aid was apportioned via money and materiel through Pakistan auspices, mainly by the CIA and its rather 'delicate' relationship with ISID. Carter and Reagan sanctioned these efforts without troops. The Stinger hand-held air defense weapon was a godsend to the Afghan mujahedin taking a grievous toll on the Soviet Hind –a troop carrying and firing platform-helicopter. Together with rising UN condemnation, a rising Jihad, main monetary and materiel support from the Saudis and the United States arguably convinced the Russian Bear to pick up and go home. They did.

Soon the US would leave only a small aid and intelligence CIA group and little else while al-Qaeda and the Taliban remained, extolling Islamic superiority and soon, Afghanistan became the cradle of a revitalized and pure Islam, boding no compromise.

Nineties came and went, bubbling over with unrest and war....response to Iraq's intransigence over land and oil...encroaching tentacles of Islam obviously aimed at US interests, Africa, Aden, Saudi-Arabia...and anger over US military in the land of Islam...a declaration of war by bin-Laden, a promise of more...9/11!

In the land of historical defeats of major powers we face Taliban, and irony tells us, we again join with Pakistan (friend or foe) in questionable recompense.