

AFGHANISTAN: THE UNWINNABLE WAR

The West's failed strategy in Afghanistan
and an alternative path for the region



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Hizb ut-Tahrir is a global Islamic political party established in 1953 under the leadership of its founder - the honourable scholar, thinker, author, and judge in the Court of Appeals in Jerusalem - Taqiuddin an-Nabhani. The current leader of the party is the erudite scholar 'Ata ibn Khaleel Abu Rashta.

The objective of Hizb ut-Tahrir is the resumption of the Islamic way of life, manifested through the return to Islam by Muslims individually, and the re-establishment of the Islamic Caliphate (Khilafah) in the Muslim world collectively. The Caliphate will be an independent state having an elected and accountable ruler, an independent judiciary, political parties, the rule of law and equitable rights for all citizens regardless of race, religion, gender or ethnicity.

The current situation in the Muslim world is a lamentable one, with deeply embedded corruption, open oppression, injustice, no accountability, disregard for the rule of law and widespread discrimination. These are real problems which affect hundreds of millions of people every day, and these are problems which Hizb ut-Tahrir is working to change.

Hizb ut-Tahrir's roots in Australia stretch back to the early 1990s. It has ever since been highly active within the Muslim community on the grassroots level, with great success in the spreading of its ideas of Islamic political activism and Islamic revivalism. Our work in Australia is aimed at supporting the global effort to re-establish the Caliphate in the Muslim world, whilst also projecting a positive image of Islam in the West.

The reason we operate in the West, given our primary goal is relevant to the Muslim World, is two-fold. One, in a globalised world any serious political work cannot be bound by geography. Two, the reality of the intimate role Western Governments play in the politics of the Muslim World means they form a central part of the struggle for Islam there. Indeed, it is Western governments, in their capacity as the patrons of the regimes that rule in the Muslim world, that are the major obstacle to positive change there.

Further, with growing numbers of Muslims living in the West, Western Governments have brought the struggle home by adopting similar agendas locally. This includes the attempt to re-construct Islam on the model of the Christian reformation by promoting a secular, apolitical, so called 'moderate' version of Islam. They have sought to force the Muslims to 'integrate' by abandoning Islamic values and ideals, and accepting Western secular liberal values instead.

Thus, in Australia, as in other Western nations, our work with the Muslim community is focused on directing Muslims to resist the dilution of their Islam and, conversely, to make a positive contribution to society based upon the preservation of their Islamic identity. We reject both integration and isolation, and advocate positive interaction for Muslims in society based solely upon Islam. We believe the Muslim community, with its transcendent Islamic values and culture, can present itself as a sublime model of tranquillity, prosperity and positivity.

This report on the US led strategy for Afghanistan was produced in this context. When the 'war on terror' was launched in 2001, Capitalism and Liberal Democracy were portrayed as the 'end of history' – i.e. the pinnacle of civilisation on Earth. But attempts to impose this model upon the Muslim world by force of arms have failed miserably, as have the attempts to win hearts and minds. Whilst that experiment appears to have been set aside for the time being, Western governments and media still continue to present Islam as something violent and backward.

This report – largely an updated version of a report published by Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain in January 2010, updated with an eye for the Australian context – exposes the fallacies in the current Western strategy in Afghanistan, demonstrates how it has been a resounding failure, and presents the only hope to bring stability, security and justice to the region – the Islamic model of governance under the Caliphate.

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Executive Summary and Recommendations

A major sign of incompetence is that a person does the same thing over and over again while each time expecting different results. President Barack Obama and Prime Minister David Cameron, and in the Australian context, Prime Minister Julia Gillard, seem to be trapped in such an illusion with respect to their endeavors in Afghanistan.

In 2001, when Western leaders ordered the invasion of Afghanistan, they set out their objectives for its occupation. They spoke of bringing peace to the region, establishing a government which is accountable, promoting economic and industrial development, ending the opium trade and securing the rights of the Afghan people.

A decade on, the West has been unable to deliver in Afghanistan. Instead, the people of Afghanistan have been subjected to a brutal occupation, tens of thousands of civilians have been killed and many Afghans have witnessed firsthand the West's empty promises of 'freedom' and 'human rights' when detained and tortured in Bagram and Kandahar. The Karzai regime, thoroughly discredited by ineptitude, corruption and dealings with brutal warlords, continues to be propped up by Washington and London, with Canberra obligingly tagging along. The opium trade is booming and politicians with close ties to the West are alleged to be wrapped up in it. There is no economic or industrial development and despite pledges of billions of dollars in aid, there is little evidence of the rebuilding of Afghanistan that was promised.

After ten years the West has lost any form of moral authority to continue its occupation and its support of the widely discredited Karzai regime. There is no cogent reason to believe that progress would even begin to be made given another decade, the possibility of which was alluded to by Prime Minister Julia Gillard in October 2009. The neo-colonial mission in Afghanistan has failed. The West and its client regime in Kabul have no legitimacy or credibility in the eyes of the Afghan people or wider Muslim world. This decade-long folly must now come to an end.

Although it was their warmongering predecessors

who launched the Afghan war, both Obama and Cameron, and Rudd and Gillard in Australia, have been equally foolish in their vain attempt to 'finish the job' and 'stay the course'. But with no coherent strategy, an excess use of violent tactics coupled with gross incompetence, NATO rule has led to Afghanistan being controlled by drug barons and corrupt officials. Far from being able to defeat al-Qaeda or the Taliban in Afghanistan, the war will cause more resentment and hatred especially in the Muslim world where the West's reputation is already in tatters given decades of an exploitative and oppressive foreign policy.

There is little doubt that the latest strategies of the 'coalition of the willing', like all the previous strategies conducted since October 2001, will fail and that Afghanistan will continue to suffer as a nation and as a people. This is because these strategies were not just hopelessly executed, but hopelessly conceived. The narrative on the basis of which the policy is built is flawed and ignores key factors:

1. This war is unwinnable (Chapter 1), as America learned so painfully in Vietnam and has discovered again to its detriment in Afghanistan. Historically, nations such as the Soviet Union have tried and failed to win in Afghanistan and could not placate its population. It is not without basis that Afghanistan is known as the 'graveyard of empires'.
2. The promise that this war will provide extra security has and will fail to transpire. British forces in Northern Ireland, India's occupation of Kashmir, 'Israel's' annexation of Palestine have never provided an iota of extra security for citizens of the occupying country. Occupation naturally breeds resentment and hatred which leads to retaliation, continuing the cycle of violence and counter violence we now witness.
3. Western occupation since October 2001 has an atrocious track record when it comes to governance (Chapter 2). Afghanistan today is more corrupt than it was in 2001, it produces more drugs than it did in 2001, and it has less security than it did in 2001. It has

a President who rigged a sham election and whose family is notoriously implicated in the opium trade. After ten years, where much of the Afghan aid has been wasted in the pockets of private consultants and government officials, Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world. With this kind of lamentable record, NATO should not be allowed to run a small market stall, let alone a country with 28 million people.

4. You do not need 140,000 NATO troops and 190,000 Afghan troops to defeat 100 al-Qaeda operatives in Afghanistan (Chapter 3). If the mission is to defeat the Taliban (a group that evidently had no role in 9/11), then NATO should say so upfront and then prepare its domestic population for decades of conflict in the dusty Afghan countryside, which will cost their tax payers dearly. The fact is that the Taliban are part and parcel of the indigenous population who have seen off foreign invaders for centuries. As NATO increases their troop numbers, they will also increase theirs. The Pashtun Muslims comprise 50 million on both sides of the Durand line with strong religious, tribal and ethnic linkages between people on both sides of the border. Hence, it must be understood that if NATO goes to war with the Taliban then they are effectively going to war with the whole of the Pashtun community.

5. The exit strategy (Chapter 3) assumes that even if they ever achieve operational readiness, the Afghan security forces will do NATO's bidding and are ready to fight the insurgency. It is clear from the increasing number of cases of Afghan security personnel turning their fire on NATO soldiers that they are neither aligned nor bought in and trust is already breaking down. Yet, if NATO has no viable exit strategy then it will preside over a permanent occupation which will increase fatalities as well as incurring hundreds of billions in additional costs.

6. If al-Qaeda is indeed the target of the West, then according to most experts they are largely out of Afghanistan, with operatives now in Pakistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Somalia amongst other countries. NATO and Western governments should therefore come

clean with their own public on their mission, that Afghanistan is actually a base to project the war both into Pakistan and to spread it to the Arabian Peninsula and the horn of Africa. However, this kind of war requires significant resources – human and financial – a long term commitment and an agenda for perpetual war in the Muslim world for decades to come.

7. Growing and influential voices are now questioning the cost to Pakistan of supporting America's war. America is carrying out an undeclared war in Pakistan because it is not in a position to wage a conventional campaign, due to both political and military limitations. In order to counter America's aggression, Pakistan must obviate what is apparent to many, that the US has transgressed Pakistan's sovereignty as an independent state, and is pursuing actions that have resulted in the indiscriminate killing of civilians, economic hardship, political chaos, severe social distension and violent opposition around the country. This is one of the many negative repercussions of the war which is downplayed.

8. There is no need for the West to occupy Afghanistan today. By withdrawing their forces, Western states would not be undermining their civilisation nor would they be increasing their insecurity. Guantanamo Bay, the human rights abuses in Afghanistan and at Abu Ghraib and the rounding up of thousands under draconian anti-terror legislation has damaged the reputation of the US and her allies in far greater ways. Nor does occupying Muslim land provide greater security for Western citizens; as the number of attacks since 9/11 evidently demonstrate.

9. The West needs to urgently re-evaluate the nature of its engagement in the Muslim world. As the current uprisings in the Muslim world demonstrate, a people will only tolerate oppression, imposition, brutality and injustice for so long. It is only a matter of time before the people stand to reassert their political authority and exercise their independent will. The war in Afghanistan is but one example of the West's brutal, exploitative and downright xenophobic policies in the Muslim world. Given the seismic shifts in the geopolitical sands across the Muslim world,

the perpetuation of these policies is now entirely untenable.

10. It is only the Caliphate with its tried and trusted political system that can end the cycle of violence and provide the much needed stability the region deserves. Those who believe an Islamic system would be a backwards step can no longer credibly make such claims. This is because it is becoming increasingly apparent that the only system which takes account of all the core ingredients required to bring prosperity to the Muslim world – a stable economy, an accountable and representative executive, a system consistent with peoples’ values, independence from foreign control, and which prioritises people’s basic needs over the gains of a few – can only be secured by an Islamic system. Images of television hangings, denial of women’s education, random justice and religious zealotry are the hallmarks of a local tradition, not the Islamic state. The Caliphate has a history of embracing and propelling learning and scientific innovation, granting rights to women and a leadership held to account by an independent judiciary with considerable powers (Chapter 5).

Recommendations

What we have presented in this report is a reasoned perspective. Millions of people share our discontent with the war on Afghanistan and still hope, at least, to achieve some good from this terrible episode. Nevertheless, we conclude that there are root causes of the problem in Afghanistan that have not been fully debated and there are solutions to this conflict. The evidence for this is presented in the chapters that follow.

Our conclusion is not a message of doom but a message of hope, because the politics of hope are not the sole preserve of the West – in fact, Western style democracy in Afghanistan has only brought horror and despair. Islam has an alternative system of government – the Caliphate – worthy of consideration, which stands for the rule of law, political authority resting with the citizens and accountability. Surface similarities notwithstanding, it is distinct from secular liberalism and so we present its main features in some detail in the final chapter.

We recommend a genuine end to the occupation of Afghanistan in order to allow the people of Afghanistan to realise the successful system of government that lasted for thirteen hundred years in the Muslim world, and thus call for the implementation of the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

Afghanistan and Pakistan should stop supporting the West’s war and Western forces should be asked to leave immediately by their host countries

This can be broken down into five more specific recommendations:

1. The leaders of Pakistan and Afghanistan should seek the removal of all foreign military forces in their respective countries.
2. The Government of Pakistan should prevent its airfields from being used for US drone attacks and should cease providing intelligence to support such efforts. It should also stop providing logistical support to NATO’s Afghan war effort by precluding the use of the Karachi port and logistical routes in the NWFP and Baluchistan.
3. The Government of Pakistan should stop its brutal attacks in FATA region and realise that such attacks against its own indigenous Pashtun tribes will only result in further destabilisation in the whole country.
4. Pakistan should also revoke their support of the Kerry-Lugar Bill – legislation which completely strips any remaining sovereignty that Pakistan currently enjoys.
5. Western forces should also be withdrawn from the region, including those stationed in Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the horn of Africa.

Recommendation 2

Western governments must stop material support of dictatorial leaders in the region

Instead of endlessly praising and propping up corrupt leaders in the region, who are utterly despised by their populations, the likes of

President Hamid Karzai and President Asif Ali Zardari, the US, the EU and Australia should understand very clearly that failure to end their continued political and military support for such leaders will inevitably have serious negative consequences for Western-Muslim relations.

The Muslim world has seen a resurgence of Islam amongst all sections of society and a re-emergence of a strong religious identity in recent years. Arguing that the West does not discriminate against the Muslim world will be much harder if Western governments continue to support corrupt leaders who consume their country's wealth while tens of millions are denied access to shelter, electricity and education.

The uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa, which took place earlier this year and continue in some countries till now, show clearly that the people have had enough of corrupt and imposed dictatorial regimes, and are willing to pay the ultimate price for change. This should be an ominous sign for Western governments if they intend on continuing to support the regimes in the Muslim World.

Recommendation 3

The Muslim world should be left to decide its own political destiny without interference

The US and UK governments need to stop imposing by force a secular Western value system in the Muslim world. Australia, on its part, needs to stop copying such policies. The idea that there are universal values is a myth which cannot be justified in the face of both contemporary societies and historical achievements. Though there may be surface similarities in shared aspirations, the idea that secular liberal values are the only means by which societies can progress equates to cultural imperialism. This 'Henry Ford' approach to civilisation in the Muslim world, i.e. 'you can have any political system you want as long as it is Western,' fails to acknowledge that many in the West are themselves questioning the vitality, sustainability and probity of their own democratic systems.

The Muslim world has shown throughout its fourteen century history an alternative basis for a rich and open civilisation based on its own value construct and emanating from a uniquely

different ideological source. Contemporary societies as diverse as China, Russia and large parts of Latin America currently have distinct social, economic and political models to those practiced in Western capitals. The Muslim world should therefore be allowed to develop its own political destiny free of external interference.

As history has demonstrated in this troubled region, there are no easy options and no guarantees of success. We believe the above steps are a viable blueprint in breaking the deadlock, bringing new hope to the region, and stability and security to the rest of the world. However, what is abundantly clear in the Muslim world is that 'staying the course' or trying again what has failed in the past, is not an acceptable strategy. Unless the scourge of foreign occupation ends the region will continue to remain in the dysfunctional state it currently is in. Once foreign occupation is ended, the region can then independently tackle the innumerable other challenges it faces head on.

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Chapter 1

Afghanistan: An Unwinnable War



Introduction

Whatever were they thinking? The world's only superpower, with uncounted resources, the largest military arsenal, coupled with NATO, the world's dominant military alliance, invades and occupies in October 2001, one of the most impoverished countries of the world with a population of 28 million, two thirds of which live on less than two dollars a day. Yet a decade on, it is almost universally accepted as having failed to subdue the country and is losing the war.

On September 16, 2001, the then US President George W. Bush set the tone when he said: "This crusade, this war on terrorism, is gonna [sic] take awhile." The legal argument used by Washington and NATO to invade Afghanistan was that the September 11 attacks constituted an undeclared 'armed attack' from abroad by an unnamed foreign power, and that consequently as a 'nation under attack' the United States could strike back with impunity in the name of self-defence.

Taking control was a formality, making it stick a decade later – far less convincing. As US and NATO troop casualties mount and Western public opinion moves decidedly against the occupation, more searching questions are being asked about this war and despite overwhelming military and resource superiority it remains an unwinnable war.

The Soviet Occupation – troop numbers were not the solution

In December 1979, Soviet troops streamed into Afghanistan. Ten years later not only had they been defeated, but the whole edifice of the Socialist Soviet state was in disarray. The Berlin wall collapsed and the Soviet state fragmented and ended thereafter.

“We control Kabul and the provincial centres, but...we have lost the battle for the Afghan people.”

In retrospect, the Soviets had many advantages over the recent invaders. They held a direct border to Afghanistan through what are now Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. They used far greater military force numbers – 125,000 at its peak. Being strong regional players they also had vast pool of language skills (Uzbek, Pashto and Tajik) which has been the Achilles heel for the Americans and NATO, who are now relying on essential Afghan professionals including doctors and teachers to act as translators for them.

The Soviets did not find it difficult to control the major population centres, but, despite a compliant imposed central government, could not control the rural areas. Literally thousands of towns and villages remained outside of their remit. As the Americans have recently discovered, it is not difficult to take towns, but the holding, the leadership, the provision of basic necessities to an impoverished people, the convincing of one's intentions is where the difficulties lie.

Marshal Akhromeyev mentioned in 1986,

“We control Kabul and the provincial centres, but... we have lost the battle for the Afghan people.” [1]

The Russian forces also demonstrated an obvious lack of agility, constraining themselves to conventional military doctrines and utilisation of mechanised/heavy forces – tactics and strategies which were wholly unsuitable for counter-insurgencies in rugged mountain and urban terrain. The Mujahideen forces were much more agile and could easily mount guerrilla style attacks which proved devastating on poorly motivated and ill-prepared troops (the Russians previous major war was WWII). Thirty years on and the Americans seem to have learnt little from the Soviets conventional clear, hold, and build tactics, poorly motivated troops (why are we here?) and a sheer lack of success in winning ‘hearts and minds’.

President Obama in his 1 December 2009 speech

promised to halt or slow down the downward spiral towards defeat in Afghanistan. Yet his speech was notable for not bringing forward anything new from the failed strategy of the past eight years.

Essentially Obama promised “more men, more money, and we must try harder”. In fact, not dissimilar to Mikhail Gorbachev's infamous ‘bloody wound’ speech that led to a similar-sized,

temporary Soviet troop surge in Afghanistan in 1986.

Vietnam repeated?

With attacks on American and NATO forces steadily increasing since 2003, little headway in curbing corruption or legitimising the Karzai regime and a sharply rising opposition in the last three years, it is easy to bring a parallel with the deeply flawed Vietnam War. Afghanistan is landlocked, so requires logistical support via neighbouring countries, the populations of which are antagonistic to the US. Afghanistan is also four times the size of Vietnam, yet troop numbers will not come anywhere close to the stalemate achieved in Vietnam with 535,000 troops. The US/NATO troop concentrations in Afghanistan are 1/32 that of Vietnam. Yet despite these obvious inconsistencies many refuse to cede defeat.

There are many other uncanny resemblances between the two conflicts that foreign policy advisors would do well to heed:

a. History of European/Imperial aggression

France in Vietnam and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan were the most recent in a long line of aggressors. Both conflicts share a history of expelling the aggressors who had bigger and stronger armed forces. This history helped form and shape formidable resistance fighting forces in both conflicts.

b. Asian based: thousands of miles from the US

In both cases the invading forces had limited experience of fighting in these conditions and with difficult logistical problems to face. In Afghanistan there is the added problem of no coast line, severely limiting the Navy's impact.

c. Rural based wars

In both conflicts there are greater than 80% rural populations in which the invaders were intensely

unpopular.

d. Difficult terrain and a lack of roads

Difficult terrain forced the aggressors in both Afghanistan and Vietnam to rely on air support, and making conventional tanks and similar vehicles obsolete.

e. Ethnic ties and sanctuary

In both cases resistance forces enjoyed sanctuary behind long, closed borders, inhospitable to the invading US forces.

f. Infiltration

In both wars interpreters often informed local militias of the invading forces every move.

g. Cultural insensitivity

In both wars the aggressors used heavy-handed tactics including indiscriminate bombing and a complete lack of understanding of the local beliefs and customs making it easy to recruit for domestic opposition forces. In both wars the infamous US ‘body count’ of enemy killed was popular although General Stanley McChrystal suspended it in Afghanistan late in the war.

Barack Obama’s December 2009 speech announcing his troop surge for Afghanistan was redolent with President Lyndon B. Johnson’s fatal decision in 1965 to acquiesce to the request from US commanders to enlarge the Vietnam War by sending scores of additional US soldiers. Obama lost the opportunity to reverse the disaster of Bush’s war in Afghanistan and even imitated Bush’s practice of announcing policies surrounded by more than 4,000 army cadets at the West Point Military Academy.

The Mythic Coalition

Obama in his December 2009 speech put forward reasons why the two wars are different. Chief amongst those was that in Afghanistan there is a much stronger coalition, as if strength in numbers would add legitimacy to a war against one of the poorest of nations.

However, a closer examination of the ‘coalition’ (see p.25) reveals that only nine of the 43 countries in Afghanistan have more than 1,000 troops there, most of the other countries have sent tiny numbers including only a handful in the case of ten countries. Many others restrict their forces to non-combat roles – unwilling to annoy the superpower – but prepared to provide a token presence. Actual numbers of combat troops were higher from other nations in Vietnam and those nations have

learnt the lesson of the futility of such American adventures.

Other Problems

Eric Bergerud, a respected Vietnam War historian highlighted that:

“The Government of Vietnam (GVN) lacked legitimacy with the rural peasantry, the largest segment of the population... The peasantry perceived the GVN to be aloof, corrupt, and inefficient... South Vietnam’s urban elite possessed the outward manifestations of a foreign culture... more importantly, this small group held most of the wealth and power in a poor nation, and the attitude of the ruling elite toward the rural population was, at best, paternalistic and, at worst, predatory.” [2]

Echoing the same situation in Afghanistan the Karzai government has little legitimacy either globally or, most importantly, in Afghanistan. Anthony Cordesman highlighted this fact when setting out the key chronic failings of the US policy in Afghanistan.



“...the need to structure other police and security elements in ways that suit the constraints imposed by a lack of government capacity, corruption, differing cultural values; and the need to create a “rule of law” or civil order based on host country standards rather than US or Western values.” [3]

Not only is the Karzai government corrupt and incompetent, it shows little inclination to offer any leadership based upon Afghan values which are predominantly Islamic. It would also mark an

extreme about face for the Americans to endorse Islamic based leadership structures and civil society in a country it controls.

The ‘Dominoes’ return

Perhaps the most contentious of justifications for Vietnam was the infamous domino theory foreseeing a rapid and uncontrolled spread of Communism country by country should South Vietnam fall. A theory that was thoroughly discredited by the facts post the withdrawal of the US and the failure of Communism to gain a foothold in any significant manner to this day. Equally contentious is the assertion that without direct control of the homeland of terrorism – as Afghanistan is accused of in this case – the US will continue to face the threat of terrorism domestically. While the Taliban have always argued that they have no issue with the American people per se and have no ambitions to wage a war in the US, it is also clear that the key source of antagonism within the Muslim world is the continued occupation of Muslim lands. Unfortunately, it has taken too long for this view to gain the acceptance it deserves.

Contrary to the claims that the US military will stabilise the region and reduce the threat of terrorism, a 2008 study by the RAND Corporation found that US policies emphasising the use of force tend to create, rather than dampen opposition. In *“How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering Al-Qaeda,”* Seth Jones & Martin Libicki argue that the US military “should generally resist being drawn into combat operations in Muslim societies, since [a U.S. military] presence is likely to increase terrorist attacks”. [4]

“And fight in the Way of Allah those who fight you, but transgress not the limits. Truly, Allah likes not the transgressors.” [Qur’an 2:190]

Islam in Afghanistan

{وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ}

“And fight in the Way of Allah those who fight you, but transgress not the limits. Truly, Allah likes not the transgressors.” [Qur’an 2:190]

{وَقَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ}

“Fight against the disbelievers collectively as they fight against you collectively, and know that Allah is with those who are conscious of Him.” [Qur’an 9:36]

There are many verses in the Qur’an imploring Muslims to fight to defend their lands. As with all sovereign nations there is no shyness amongst Muslims to ensure the integrity of their land. For Muslims this is a vital (life and death) issue and means the believers are exhorted to strive in Jihad with their wealth, their tongues and their lives to repel an invader. No cost or effort is spared – with either victory or martyrdom the outcome.

The Qur’an also requires that the authority over Muslim lands remains with Muslims and Islamic law (Shari’ah).

{وَلَنْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلًا}

“And never will Allah grant the disbelievers a way (authority) over the believers” [Quran 4:141]

‘Taliban’ literally means students, or seekers of knowledge in the Pashto language. The knowledge referred to is Islamic knowledge – the seeking of which is also obligatory upon all Muslims. Military occupation, imposition of a puppet government (Karzai) and removal of traditional Islamic regional and village Jirga (councils) was never going to be accepted by the Taliban and Afghans in general. Extending central government control throughout Afghanistan rather than being a solution to the resistance has been one of the causes. It was never difficult to motivate the Jihad from the rural areas.

It was also never feasible to imagine that the US could conveniently turn on the ‘tap’ of Jihad, motivating and covertly funding the Mujahedeen in their just cause of repelling the Soviet aggressor, but then just as easily turn off that tap when the aggressor happened to be a former friend. Similarly, the indiscriminate killing of civilians belittles the oft quoted mantra of winning hearts and minds; instead it has only diminished the West’s credibility and integrity, appalled the nations of the world and more significantly emboldened the Afghan resistance.

The Taliban are not foreign fighters

“As for the Taliban, whatever else they may be, they

are native to Afghanistan. This cannot be said of Al-Qaeda, but it cannot be said, either, of the soldiers, trainers, advisers, and contractors sent by the United States.” [5]

Central to the US strategy for Afghanistan is to develop the Afghan National Army, in readiness to take on the resistance when the US eventually falls back. This policy is failing. Recruitment and training has been slow and is plagued with desertion and a chronic failure of recruits to re-enlist. Re-enlistment is less than 50%, and despite 40% unemployment levels in the country, recruitment is far below targets and too heavily skewed by Tajiks in ethnic origin. In an exercise in building a credible and loyal army for the regime as a counterweight to the Taliban, it simply has no chance of success. The past ten years has provided ample evidence of this.

“The Afghan National Army (ANA) – slotted to take over the conflict when the coalition pulls out – will not even be able to feed itself in five years, much less turn back the mounting Taliban tide.” [6]

Any form of association with the Americans is tainted. Rather than spreading a blotter like range of peace and security throughout the region and rural areas in particular, the Americans have left a stained footprint that horrifies the indigenous peoples. The policy of assassinations is only one example of the mistrust engendered by the occupation. In a recent New Yorker article Jane Mayer spoke of the impact of the targeting (by unmanned drones) of Baitullah Mehsud:

“16 strikes were necessary, over 14 months, killing a total of as many as 538 persons, of whom 200-300 were bystanders. What comes of the reputation of policemen in a crime-ridden neighbourhood when they conduct themselves like that? And what makes anyone suppose the reaction will be less extreme when the policeman comes from another country?” [5]

David Kilcullen, a former senior counterinsurgency advisor to David Petraeus, wrote,

“Every one of these dead non-combatants represents an alienated family, a new revenge feud, and more recruits for a militant movement.” [7]

Afghanistan, the Graveyard of Empires

“From its invasion by Genghis Khan and his two-million strong Mongol hordes to the superpower proxy war between the United States and the Soviet Union, Afghanistan’s trade routes and land-locked position in the middle of the region have for centuries rendered it vulnerable to invasion by external powers. Although Afghanistan has endured successive waves of Persian, Greek, Arab, Turk, Mongol, British, and Soviet invaders,

no occupying power has ever successfully conquered it. There’s a reason why it has been described as the ‘graveyard of empires.’” [8]

An entrenched new political leadership, even an imposed one, requires legitimacy and the support of the populace. The former Deputy Head of the UN mission in Afghanistan described the August 2009 elections as a “train wreck”. With little sign of legitimacy either before or after these elections, Karzai enjoys perhaps at best a 30% approval rating. The key for quelling an insurgency is support for the ruling authority of 85 to 90% [9]. Karzai’s regime is more a case of “an utterly illegitimate, incompetent kleptocracy.” [6]

With an imposed government and imposed systems of rule should there be an expectation of success with no history of such in the region?

Much is made of domestic opinion polls pointing to support for the introduction of democracy and opposing the ‘insurgency’/Taliban. But can any form of poll in a country under occupation be taken seriously?

“Afghans are famously polite; Western opinion polls show only what Afghans think the questioner wants to hear, as their culture demands, not what they actually think.” [10]

Why should anyone answer otherwise when asked at the end of the barrel of a Western television camera, with the Western occupier military force close by?

The US has grossly underestimated the degree of opposition it has generated from this tiny and impoverished nation – a nation that has taken great pride in expelling successive invading forces over several centuries. Dick Cheney did speak of the axiom of “endless war”, a notion that has hardly taken hold in the materialist US – whereas the Afghan people live it, not of choice but through necessity in defense of their land and as their beliefs command of them. They are battle hardened in the harsh rural conditions, and generation after generation knows little else.

Despite clear military superiority in weaponry the US/NATO forces have followed the classic traps of controlling major population centres and have made little headway amongst the predominantly rural population. It is only a matter of time before they too join Alexander the Great, the British Empire, and the Soviet Union in being forced to abandon this unwinnable war.

From one failed strategy to another

The US and her allies in Afghanistan have moved,

in the last few years, from one failed strategy to another. Following the first large-scale withdrawals of troops from Iraq, troop numbers were increased in Afghanistan in 2008, where after seven years of war, the invaders were not gaining any significant headway in putting down the resistance. In the first five months of 2008, US troops numbers increased by over 80% with a surge of over 21,000 troops. [11] Notwithstanding this, the year ended being the deadliest year for both the US and the UK since the start of the war.

“The US and her allies in Afghanistan have moved from one failed strategy to another...”

Following this, US strategy shifted to expand the war into Pakistan, albeit covertly at this stage, resulting in a long spate of attacks by the resistance on NATO supply lines in Pakistan. Drone attacks on Pakistani territory also increased – by early 2009 rising 183% from 2006. [12] The thinking here was that resistance fighters had safe-havens in the FATA region of Pakistan, along the Pak-Afghan border, where they could easily retreat to and re-emerge as needed. Thus the war had to be taken into Pakistani territory. But doing this properly would require more than just unmanned drone strikes and the odd troop mission, as was occurring up until 2009 as the US effectively waged an undeclared war on Pakistan.

President Obama came to office in early 2009. His first move in Afghanistan was to send an additional 17,000 troops in order to “stabilize a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan,” an area he said had not received the “strategic attention, direction and resources it urgently requires,” [13] statements which reveal the extent of the failure in war now eight years old - a pronounced failure that can gleaned also from briefings of intelligence personnel. Major General Michael T. Flynn, for example, the top U.S. intelligence officer in Afghanistan, admitted, in December 2009, that the Taliban can sustain itself indefinitely. He wrote in a briefing that,

“The Taliban retains [the] required partnerships to sustain support, fuel legitimacy and bolster capacity.” [14]

In late 2009, President Obama announced another troop surge, the largest yet, in his December 1 2009 speech at the Westpoint Military Academy. He also formally and publicly adopted the strategy of expanding the war into Pakistan, consequently pressuring the Pakistani Government to use its army to combat ‘insurgents’ in the FATA region. The results of these operations in Pakistan were

devastating with millions of people being made refugees and with resultant attacks in all major Pakistani cities. The desired result for America in Afghanistan did not transpire either, with 2010 being even deadlier for US and NATO troops than 2009. The surge and ‘Af-Pak’ strategy was another failure.

Having failed on all other fronts, the US and NATO were forced to go down the path of engaging in talks with the resistance – something they earlier said they would not do. In September

2010 General David Petraeus commented on the progress of the so-called ‘peace talks’, stating,

“The prospect for reconciliation with senior Taliban leaders certainly looms out there...and there have been approaches at (a) very senior level that hold some promise.” [15]

President Karzai has also made claims on multiple occasions that talks were underway. On their part, the Taliban’s position has been quite clear,

“The Islamic Emirate has a clear position. We have said this many, many times. There will be no talks when there are foreign troops on Afghanistan’s soil killing innocent Afghans on daily basis.” [16]

Whatever the reality of the alleged move for a political settlement, it too is bound to fail given that it comes in the context of troop surges and other escalations of war by the invading forces.

Worse still, May 2010 saw the beginning of a new ‘kill/capture’ strategy on part of NATO which seeks to target resistance leaders through ‘surgical operations’. Like most other ‘surgical’ missions undertaken by the US and NATO, these have been anything but surgical. Many innocent civilians have been killed, and in many cases, the wrong people have been killed by being mistaken for the intended target. This has further dented the attempted ruing of ‘hearts and minds’ on the part of the invaders. As for the attempt at a political settlement, one wonders how the US and NATO can expect to reach a peace deal with an opposition whose leaders they concurrently seek to assassinate.

This is the reality the US strategy in Afghanistan, and it is a tale of one failure after another. Such a outcome is the direct result of building policy and strategy upon false narratives, as will be demonstrated in upcoming chapters. By any measure, the war in Afghanistan is now as unwinnable as ever.



Chapter 2

NATO's Incompetent Rule

“The US and its allies—including Australia—trumpet that they are making progress. The question is what kind of progress? Killing more civilians? Turning the province into a more insecure place for people to live in? Making it a better and easier trafficking route? Preparing a more fertile ground for poppy cultivation?” – Defense Committee for former Afghan politician Malalai Joya, July 2011. [1]

Introduction

In 2001, when Western leaders ordered the invasion of Afghanistan, they set out their objectives for its occupation. They spoke of bringing peace to the region, establishing accountable government, promoting economic and industrial development, ending the opium trade and securing the rights of the Afghan people.

At the end of the decade, the West has been unable to deliver in Afghanistan. Instead, the people of Afghanistan have been subjected to a brutal occupation, thousands of civilians have been killed and many Afghans have witnessed firsthand the West's empty promises of 'freedom' and 'human rights' when detained and tortured in Bagram and Kandahar. The Karzai regime, thoroughly discredited by ineptitude, corruption and dealings with brutal warlords, continues to be propped up by Western Governments. The opium trade is booming and politicians with close ties to the West are alleged to be wrapped up in it. There is no economic or industrial development and despite pledges of billions of dollars in aid, there is little evidence of the rebuilding of Afghanistan that was promised.

Despite this, in a 2009 speech, US President Obama cautioned about the consequences of the West leaving Afghanistan:

"For the Afghan people, a return to Taliban rule would condemn their country to brutal governance, international isolation, a paralysed economy, and the denial of basic human rights to the Afghan people – especially women and girls." [2]

In this chapter we review what ten years of foreign intervention have brought to Afghanistan and unravel the story behind the West's incompetence and complete loss of credibility.

Brutal Occupation

Since the Western occupation of Afghanistan, tens of thousands of civilians have lost their lives.

Up to 20,000 Afghans may have died solely as a consequence of the first four months of U.S. airstrikes on Afghanistan in 2001. [3] Since then, there has been a steady flow of civilian deaths on a yearly basis, with the last few years being the deadliest. According to the UN, over 2,118 civilians were killed in 2008 alone, an increase of about 40% from 2007. [4] This figure increased in 2009, according to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), to 2,412 [5], and increased further in 2010, the deadliest year thus far, to 2,777. [6] The first half of 2011 has been worse still, seeing a 15% increase in

civilian deaths as compared to the same period in 2010. [7]

While Western governments would claim that some of these civilians were killed in attacks by 'insurgents', it is clearly the Western occupation that has caused turmoil in Afghanistan leading to the situation where thousands of civilians are dying every year.

The West lost further moral legitimacy through its policies of secret prisons, extra-judicial detention, brutal torture and extraordinary rendition. What happened at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay was no aberration. In relation to the American detention facility at Bagram in Afghanistan, The New York Times reported that,

"The Bagram file includes ample testimony that harsh treatment by some interrogators was routine and that guards could strike shackled detainees with virtual impunity. Prisoners considered important or troublesome were also handcuffed and chained to the ceilings and doors of their cells, sometimes for long periods, an action Army prosecutors recently classified as criminal assault;" and,

"The investigative file on Bagram, obtained by The Times, showed that the mistreatment of prisoners was routine: shackling them to the ceilings of their cells, depriving them of sleep, kicking and hitting them, sexually humiliating them and threatening them with guard dogs – the very same behaviour later repeated in Iraq." [8]

Other prisoners were tortured at the US prison at Kandahar airport in Afghanistan. One of the detainees was Shaker Aamer who was subjected to weeks of torture including sleep deprivation over nine days, cold water torture which led to frostbite, 'hog tying' and regular beatings along with threats that he would be sent to be tortured in Egypt, Jordan, or 'Israel'.

More recently, it was revealed by a senior Canadian diplomat, Richard Colvin, that Canadian troops routinely handed over Afghans swept up in security sweeps to the torturers in Afghan intelligence. Colvin said that the Canadians "detained, and

handed over for severe torture, a lot of innocent people." He went on to say that the "detainee

"The investigative file on Bagram, obtained by The Times, showed that the mistreatment of prisoners was routine: shackling them to the ceilings of their cells, depriving them of sleep, kicking and hitting them, sexually humiliating them and threatening them with guard dogs..."

practices (were) un-Canadian, counterproductive and probably illegal.” [9] Australian troops have also been handing over prisoners to the National Directorate of Security, an intelligence agency known for torture and horrific detention conditions. [10]

The Corruption of the Western-backed Kabul regime

Over the last ten years, the West has made repeated claims that it will work to eradicate brutal governance and corruption from Afghanistan. It was also claimed that the influence of warlords across the country will be removed. However, the central issue is that the corruption in Afghanistan is not merely occurring on the periphery of politics but is closely associated with the main political players, who themselves have been nurtured and patronised by the West.

“Australian military officials have also chosen to cooperate and work with warlords, such as Matiullah Khan, to the extent that his men have even been flown to Australia for training.”

After Karzai won his second term in office following sham elections, President Obama publicly urged him to tackle the issue of corruption. Ironically, the election result accepted by the West revealed that the election was plagued by so much corruption that one in three ballots cast for Karzai was deemed to be fraudulent by the UN.

In its 2009 report, Transparency International rated Afghanistan as the second-most corrupt nation in the world, with public sector corruption worsening for the second consecutive year. Only war-torn Somalia rates worse on the Berlin-based organisation’s Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) of 180 nations [11]. The group said of Afghanistan:

“Examples of corruption range from public posts for sale and justice for a price to daily bribing for basic services... This, along with the exploding opium trade - which is also linked to corruption - contributes to the downward trend in the country’s CPI score.”

In March 2009, a report by the U.S. Agency for International Development reported that, “Pervasive, entrenched and systemic corruption is now at an unprecedented scope in the country’s history.” [12] A 2008 survey by Integrity Watch Afghanistan found that a typical household pays about \$100 a year in bribes in a country where more than half the population survives on less than

\$1 a day.

In response to these widespread concerns, Karzai set up a new anti-corruption unit, with the help of US and British law enforcement agencies. It is the third structure set up by the Karzai regime to tackle the problem; the first structure was disbanded when it emerged that its head had been convicted and imprisoned in the US on drug charges.

While London and Washington spout rhetoric about good governance and human rights, their client regime in Kabul continues to forge relationships with warlords. Abdul Rashid Dostum, a notorious former warlord, endorsed Karzai’s election campaign and recently returned to Afghanistan from Turkey. He is accused of overseeing the deaths of up to 2,000 Taliban prisoners during the 2001 invasion. Karzai’s two vice presidents, Mohammad Qasim Fahim and Karim Khalili, are also former warlords accused of rights abuses.

The Karzai regime has struggled to establish any authority beyond Kabul. Western governments have lost any confidence that his regime will be able to control the country. While publicly criticising the continued strength of warlords, in private the NATO allies are relying on them. A September 2009 report released by New York University’s Centre on International Cooperation said that Western states are fuelling the problem by relying on militias loyal to local commanders – some involved in rights abuses and drug trafficking - in an effort to bolster security [13].

Australian military officials have also chosen to cooperate and work with warlords, such as Matiullah Khan [14], to the extent that his men have even been flown to Australia for training. [15] The Australian Department of Defence shamelessly justified this in the name of ‘working within the cultural norms of Afghanistan’, as if the working with criminals is a cultural norm in Afghanistan!

The West remains confident in Hamid Karzai’s ability to govern Afghanistan and root out corruption. However cronyism, graft and the flourishing drug trade have destroyed any public confidence in the Western backed Afghan regime.

Western Intervention = Burgeoning Opium Trade

In October 2001, a few days before the start of the Afghanistan war, Tony Blair told the Labour Party conference that “the biggest drugs hoard in the world is in Afghanistan, controlled by the Taliban”. He said then that 90% of the heroin on London streets was from Afghanistan: “The arms the Taliban are buying today are paid for with the lives of young British people, buying their drugs on British streets.” He repeated this claim a week later in the Commons, when he announced that the military campaign had begun, telling MPs that the Taliban “is largely funded by the drugs trade”.



A US soldier walks through a opium poppy field in Marjah, Helmand, April 2011.

In an interview in December 2005 Blair again argued that an important part of the Western mission in Afghanistan was to tackle the drugs trade:

“...in the case of Afghanistan it is obviously important because we need to tackle also the drugs trade that is still there and that was built up over the Taliban years.” [16]

Blair’s view that the drug trade in Afghanistan had been built up over the Taliban years is clearly an erroneous one. In January 2004, the Loughborough University criminologist Professor Graham Farrell authored a report which described the Taliban’s fight against opium production as the “most effective” of modern times [17]. Professor Farrell’s study found that the Taliban crackdown on drugs led to global heroin production falling by two-thirds in 2001. He also noted that poppy cultivation increased sharply following the fall of the Taliban.

Despite eight years of occupation, the West has been unable to stem the flow of drugs from Afghanistan.

In 2008, the Afghan government succeeded in

destroying only 3.5% of Afghanistan’s 157,000 hectares of poppy because eradication teams were either attacked or bought off by local drug lords. In December 2009, Viktor Ivanov, the head of Russia’s anti-narcotics federal agency accused British troops in Helmand Province of not doing enough to stem production of heroin. He said that,

“Sixty percent of all opiates in the world are produced in the area that the British forces are responsible for... There were 25 hectares of opium in 2004. Now there are 90,000. This shows you how effective they are.” [18]

Although some recent UN reports have shown very small reductions in the area under poppy cultivation, the stockpile of illegal opium is now more than twice the world demand or more than 10,000 tonnes. While overall production has fallen slightly, more efficient production methods mean yields per farm are higher. The misery and disease of drug addiction are growing problems. The destruction of crops has failed and criminal cartels are spreading through Iran, Russia and Central Asia.

There is widespread evidence that the Western backed rulers of Afghanistan are involved in the illicit drug trade. In October 2009, the New York Times reported that the brother of Hamid Karzai, Ahmed Wali Karzai, was being paid by the CIA and was a suspected player in Afghanistan’s booming opium trade. A senior American military officer was quoted as saying,

“Hundreds of millions of dollars in drug money are flowing through the southern region, and nothing happens in southern Afghanistan without the regional leadership knowing about it...If it looks like a duck, and it quacks like a duck, it’s probably a duck...Our assumption is that he’s [Karzai] benefiting from the drug trade.” [19]

The armed forces of Western countries have also been affected by the sharp rise in the availability of illicit drugs. Addiction rates to heroin amongst US forces have doubled in the space of four years. It has also been revealed that hundreds of Australian soldiers have tested positive to a string of illegal drugs since troops were sent to Afghanistan [20].

The Elusive ‘Rebuilding’ of Afghanistan

“...2.6 million Afghans have registered as refugees in neighbouring countries. In displacement camps, Afghans lack access to essential health care, safe

water, a basic education and child protection services. Nationwide only 31% of Afghans have access to safe drinking water and only 12% sanitary toilets. More than half of school-aged children are not in school because of inadequate infrastructure, poverty, armed conflict, and climate-related disasters...nearly 44% of the country remains inaccessible to the humanitarian community due to armed fighting and inadequate security.” – UNICEF 2010 Humanitarian Action Report [21]

The ‘rebuilding’ of Afghanistan is more fraud than failure. Half of Kabul lies in ruins, many people still live in tents, thousands cannot find jobs, children go hungry, schools are overcrowded and hospitals dirty, women beg in the streets and turn to prostitution, and children are kidnapped and sold into slavery or murdered for their organs.

Since 2001, the US Congress has appropriated more than \$39 billion in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance for Afghanistan, according to a report by the U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. European nations send about 1 billion Euros a year, a total of 11 billion Euros since 2002.

According to 2008 data, US military spending is \$100 million a day, while \$7 million goes to development, and 40% of that \$7 million is lost to administrative costs. So, only around \$4 million goes to the community. Of that \$4 million, less than 5% goes to agricultural development, yet 80% of the population relies on agriculture for their livelihood [22].

Western leaders continue to convene conference after conference and promise billions in aid to Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan rightly ask “where has all of this aid gone?” While the official answer is “corruption”, many reports have suggested that only part of the aid – maybe 40% – is “real aid”. The rest is ‘phantom aid’ that never even shows up in the recipient country. Some countries count debt relief or the construction costs of new embassies as aid. Much of the money never leaves Western banks as it is paid directly to Western ‘experts’. Much of the aid has strings attached, obliging the recipient to use the money to buy products from the donor country, even when the same products are available cheaper at home.

“Much of the aid money goes to foreign companies who then subcontract as many as five times with each subcontractor, in turn looking for between 10% and 20% or more profit before any work is done on the project.”

Much of the aid money goes to foreign companies who then subcontract as many as five times with each subcontractor, in turn looking for between 10% and 20% or more profit before any work is done on the project. The biggest donor in Afghanistan is the US, whose overseas aid department USAID channels nearly half of its aid budget for Afghanistan to five large US contractors. One of USAID’s proud accomplishments was the Kabul-Kandahar Highway which was constructed by the Louis Berger Group. Other international companies had been ready to rebuild the highway for \$250,000 per kilometre, while the American company awarded the contract got the job at \$700,000 per kilometre.

The Americans subcontracted Turkish and Indian companies to build the narrow two-lane highway at a final cost of about \$1 million per mile and there are reports that it is already falling apart. It was therefore no surprise when the Former Minister of Planning, Ramazan Bashardost, complained that when it came to building roads, the Taliban did a better job.

Across Afghanistan there are stories of half finished bridges, roads to nowhere and hospitals that threaten to collapse in the first heavy storm, mainly because of dishonest contractors who skimp on materials or work. Many of them are ex-warlords who have used their connections with the regime to receive lucrative contracts.

There is no economic or industrial development. Indeed there is almost no economic activity in the country, aside from international aid and the production of illegal narcotics.

Afghanistan’s experience of receiving foreign aid is not dissimilar to that of many other nations. Since World War II the United States alone has provided \$1 trillion in foreign aid to countries around the world. However, according to the United Nations, 70 of the countries that received aid were poorer in 1997 than they were in 1980, and an incredible 43 were worse off than in 1970. [23]

Despite billions in aid and a decade of occupation, the Western backed regime has failed to even start to rebuild Afghanistan. According to the

UN, Afghanistan currently ranks 174th out of 178 countries on the Human Development Index – a ranking that mixes per capita income with public health statistics, crime rates and other indicators. Out of every 1,000 babies born in Afghanistan, 142 die before reaching their first birthday. A woman dies in pregnancy every 30 minutes. Overall life expectancy is estimated at just under 42.5 years. Afghans scrape by on about \$1,000 per year, on average. More than half of the population earns less than \$2 a day. According to the National Human Development Report of 2007, literacy levels have fallen from 28.7% in 2003 to 23.5% in 2007. The occupation has made the country a greater mess than it was prior to the invasion.

The Failure of the Neo-Colonial Mission

In August 2002, US Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, was already arrogantly proclaiming the new Afghanistan “a breathtaking accomplishment” and “a successful model of what could happen to Iraq”. However, after ten years of occupation the West has lost any form of moral authority to continue its occupation and support of the widely discredited Karzai regime. Even the former British Ambassador to Washington, Sir Christopher Meyer, was recently forced to admit that the war in Afghanistan is “madcap” and “futile” and serves “no conceivable national interest”. [24]

In a leaked cable, the British ambassador in Kabul advised the British Foreign Office in 2009 that “In the short term we should dissuade the American presidential candidates from getting more bogged down in Afghanistan...The American strategy is doomed to fail”. He went on to suggest that the best hope was to install an acceptable dictator in Kabul. [25]

Ten years on, the last ditch plan put forward by Western policymakers is that they want to stem the opium trade, end corruption, establish human rights, nurture economic and industrial development and establish a legitimate and accountable regime in Kabul. However, this is not a plan but rather a description of what they have been unable to achieve over the last ten years. There is no cogent reason to believe that they would even begin to make progress given another ten years.

Despite their abject failure in Afghanistan on all fronts, Obama and Cameron, and Gillard in Australia, present a utopian vision which is implausibly optimistic. They want to hide the undeniable truth that Western intervention in Afghanistan is intimately associated with political corruption, brutal governance, torture and brutality, burgeoning drug production, and a lack

of economic and industrial development. After ten years of refinement, the West’s policy remains characterised by illusions, shrouded in ambiguous Orwellian language and encrusted with hollow moral claims.

The neo-colonial mission in Afghanistan has failed. The West and its client regime in Kabul have no legitimacy or credibility in the eyes of the Afghan people or wider Muslim world. This decade-long folly must now come to an end.

{وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ
قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ (●) أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ
الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ}

“And when it is said to them: ‘Make not mischief on the earth’ they say ‘We are only peacemakers.’ Verily! They are the ones who make mischief, but they perceive it not.” [Quran 2: 11-12]

Chapter 3

Myths Surrounding the Afghanistan War



Introduction

In the nineteenth century Lord Palmerston talked about a British national interest best served by the strength of permanent interests. In the eighteenth century in the New World, George Washington led an armed force to remove a brutal occupation presided over by a colonial Western power. Yet today, the successors to Palmerston and Washington preside over a brutal occupation in Afghanistan arguing that the war in Afghanistan is one of necessity and not of choice. However, this chapter will demonstrate that the arguments advocated for the war in Afghanistan do not stand up to scrutiny. For Palmerston's successors Afghanistan, like Iraq before it, is nothing more than a chess board to be used for wider geo-strategic considerations.

The following myths exist about the current Afghan war:

1. Fighting the war in Afghanistan makes the streets of Western capitals safer.
2. Training the Afghan security forces is a viable exit strategy.
3. There is an international coalition fighting in Afghanistan.
4. There is no political solution within the region.
5. Pakistan is the source of the insurgency in Afghanistan.

Myth 1: Fighting the war in Afghanistan makes the streets of Western capitals safer

It is stated that the war in Afghanistan is a war of necessity, not a war of choice; that the war in Afghanistan will make the streets in the West safer; that by fighting over there, they won't fight over here. Yet many experts argue that al-Qaeda operates in a number of countries all across the globe and only a small number now reside in Afghanistan. Indeed much of the detailed operational planning of 9/11 is alleged to have taken place in Bonn in Germany. Hence, it cannot even be argued that defeating Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan – or in Pakistan – would make a decisive defeat. Even if we ignore the imperial mindset that treats the Afghan people and their country as mere appendages in the West's latest war, the very premise of the security argument is flawed.

The occupation of Kashmir by 500,000 Indian troops has not prevented attacks in Indian cities. Israeli occupation of Palestine has not made Israeli citizens safe from attack. The presence of 27,000 British troops in Northern Ireland for 38 years did not prevent the IRA from attacking the UK mainland. Nor has the invasion of Afghanistan stopped worldwide attacks. As has been confirmed by extensive commentary, it is Western foreign policy, such as that of support of Israel's brutal occupation, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the propping up of Muslim dictators across the Islamic world that is causing a significant backlash.

The occupation of Kashmir by 500,000 Indian troops has not prevented attacks in Indian cities. The Israeli occupation of Palestine has not made Israeli citizens safe from attack. The presence of 27,000 British troops in Northern Ireland for 38 years did not prevent the IRA from attacking the UK mainland.

The purported mission in Afghanistan is plagued with contradictions:

Firstly, the number of al-Qaeda operatives in Afghanistan is less than 100. In an interview with CNN in October 2009, Whitehouse National Security Adviser, James Jones, stated that,

“The good news is that the al-Qaeda presence is very diminished...I don't foresee the return of the Taliban. And I want to be very clear: Afghanistan is not in danger – is not in imminent danger – of falling... It would be unwise to rush to a final judgment here.” [1]

Further, in April 2011, General David Petraeus himself confirmed that al-Qaeda number less than 100 in Afghanistan and had been contained. [2] If this is the case, why are 140,000 Western troops required in Afghanistan? If al-Qaeda is less than 100 strong then why aren't the Afghan security forces, currently at 190,000, able to cope with such a small number of al-Qaeda operatives?

Secondly, if the argument is that al-Qaeda exists in the border regions between Afghanistan and Pakistan (according to former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown three quarters of the most serious plots facing the UK have links to Pakistan) [3], then what are NATO troops doing in Kabul, Herat, or Mazhar-e-Sharif? If al-Qaeda is on the Pakistani side then presumably the responsibility to deal with them lays with the Pakistani security services.

Thirdly, if the argument is that the size of this force is necessary to degrade the Taliban, then this is also flawed. The Taliban were not responsible for 9/11 and are not responsible for the majority of serious plots facing Western cities. What NATO is doing is intervening in a civil war by supporting the Northern Alliance against the Taliban in the south and east of the country. Contrary to some commentary, the Taliban are indigenous Afghans hailing from the same Pashtun tribal groupings that many in the Afghan government hail from and who have roots on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistani border. Their ancestors before them saw off the invader, whether it be the British or Soviet, and today the members that make up the resistance view

it as their obligation to see off NATO.

Fourthly, al-Qaeda as a construct operates in multiple countries and is largely a decentralised structure. Even if, theoretically, NATO was able to defeat every al-Qaeda member in Afghanistan and Pakistan this would not achieve the strategic goal of defeating the group. Even the Pentagon admits many foreign fighters have now migrated to other countries like Somalia and Yemen [4].

Fifthly, the British Government's own statistics and a recent US think tank report completely contradict the idea that most terrorists emanate from the shores of Pakistan or Afghanistan. According to the UK's own statistics between 11 September 2001 and 31 March 2008 of the 142 'terrorist'/extremist prisoners in England and Wales at 31 March 2008 only 3 had Pakistani nationality and none had Afghan nationality. [5]

Sixthly, the British experience in Northern Ireland provides yet further evidence. There, the use of military occupation, internment, torture, killings of civilians (all of which we have witnessed in Afghanistan in abundance), did not provide the people in Britain any additional security. British troops arrived in 1969 apparently to act as a referee between Catholics and Protestants, but actually exacerbated the conflict between the two communities, with Catholic groups targeted and Protestant loyalist groups given a pass. After a period of internment which backfired massively and in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday, attacks on the British mainland became regular and bloody. Whether it is the attacks in Birmingham, Canary Wharf, Warrington or Bishopsgate – having troops in Northern Ireland was no guarantee against IRA attacks. Indeed, having at its peak 27,000 troops did not stop the IRA from attacking the Conservative Party conference in Brighton, narrowly missing the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Seventhly, an independent report by Sarah Ladbury on 'Why do men join the Taliban and Hizb-i-Islami' [6] also shines some light into the debate. The report tested a number of hypothesis as to the reasons why people join groups such as Hizb-i-Islami and the Taliban and concluded that there was evidence that the perceived global attack on Islam such as witnessed in Palestine and Iraq was a factor, as was the perception that the Afghan government was corrupt and

partisan, the behaviour of foreign occupying forces was another factor with the failure of the Afghan government to provide justice and security also being viewed as key.

Lastly, contrary to what Western politicians say [1] al-Qaeda has not been degraded by the war in Afghanistan nor has it ended the cycle of violence. The following is an extract from a 2008 report by the RAND Corporation.

"The evidence by 2008 suggested that the US strategy was not successful in undermining Al-Qaeda's capabilities. Our assessment concludes that al Qaida remained a strong and competent organisation...Al-Qaeda has been involved in more terrorist attacks since September 11, 2001, than it was during its prior history. These attacks spanned Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa." [7]

The RAND report also concludes that the presence of the US military conducting combat operations in Muslim societies is likely to increase terrorist recruitment. Indeed, according to a recent US intelligence assessment, Taliban numbers have almost quadrupled from 7,000 in 2006 to 25,000 now [8].

Myth 2: Training the Afghan security forces is a viable exit strategy

It is stated that the way to exit the war in Afghanistan will be to train up the Afghan security forces. That as the Afghans stand up, NATO will stand down. Today's Afghan security forces already numerically outnumber the Taliban and al-Qaeda by a factor of over 7 to 1. However, a lack of support



A soldier from the U.S. Army's 118th Military Police Company teaches a group of Afghan National Police officers how to clear and secure a room, Logar, March 2010.

for NATO’s war and tactics, core capability and political factors undermine the exit strategy. The changing goalposts by NATO on targets, coupled with their unsuitability in training up armies in Muslim societies is a clear illustration that the exit plan after ten years of occupation is a pipe dream.

According to the US Department of Defense, the numbers in the Afghan National Army (ANA) at the end of May 2011 were 160,000, and combined with the police force, Afghan forces total some 290,000 strong [9]. In August 2009 U.S. and NATO commander General Stanley McChrystal recommended more than doubling the Afghan forces to total 400,000, with 240,000 soldiers and 160,000 police [10]. At present, numbers are still significantly below this. However, the issue is not so much with the numbers, as it is with quality and reliability. Many question the current state of the Afghan Army. John Kerry, in a speech at the Council for Foreign Relations in 2009, said that,

“Despite the 92,000 number, I will tell you that most of the assessments I got told me that we’re really considerably lower – that today, at 50,000, maybe even less range of those who can actually work in the way that we desire.” [11]

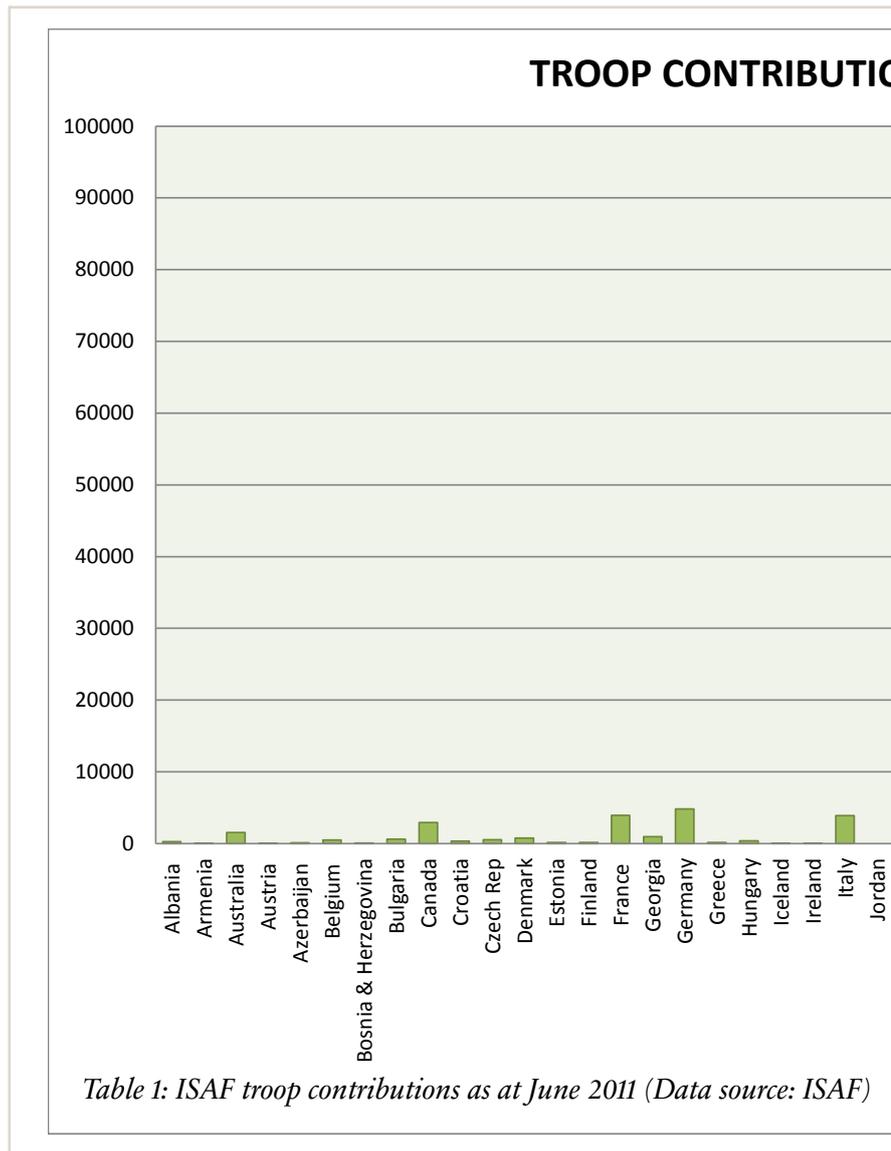
According to US capability measures, 78% of the Afghan Police are incapable of carrying out their duties [12]. With over 1000 police being killed every year since 2008 and salaries low, it isn’t a surprise that morale is so poor. According to congressional testimony by the International Crisis Group (ICG), on any given day, about 20% of the supposed police force are absent from duty – another 17% are listed on the rolls but are actually the names of dead or wounded police, but remain there so their families will receive a pay check. [13]

To achieve numbers of 400,000 would require substantially more progress in the next few years, even if you believe the current numbers are credible. According to an article in the Military Review [14], ANA recruitment quality is poor, virtually all are illiterate, readiness is low even by the lenient standards imposed by pressure to show progress, and drug use is a large and growing problem. Re-enlistment is below 50 percent, so with five-year contracts, another 12 percent of the force quits every year. With casualties, sickness, etc., 25% of the ANA evaporates annually.

Even NATO commanders, who approved a plan to

accelerate the training programme, said that the Afghan army is plagued by defections and drug addiction. According to General Egon Ramms, the German commander of the operational headquarters in charge of the NATO-led International Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF), of the 94,000 Afghan soldiers trained so far, 10,000 have gone missing, and around 15 per cent are drug addicts. [15]

Even if we put the capability point on one side,



does anyone really believe that the US would leave Afghanistan completely after the building up of Afghan forces? If the threat is really that existential, the US would always want to keep a strong presence in the region as it has in South Korea and Germany, decades after previous hostilities have ended. It would never outsource this to the Afghans.

However, even if one ignores the capability and threat point, Western forces are completely the wrong people to train soldiers in Muslim

societies. After Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, 'extraordinary rendition' and what happened in Basra, British and American forces should be the last people on earth trying to train armies in Muslim societies. This is why there is now growing instances of Afghan security forces killing NATO soldiers. Putting the religious and cultural differences aside, Western soldiers often exhibit an arrogant superiority complex when it comes to those in the developing world. In the British Independent newspaper, an unnamed

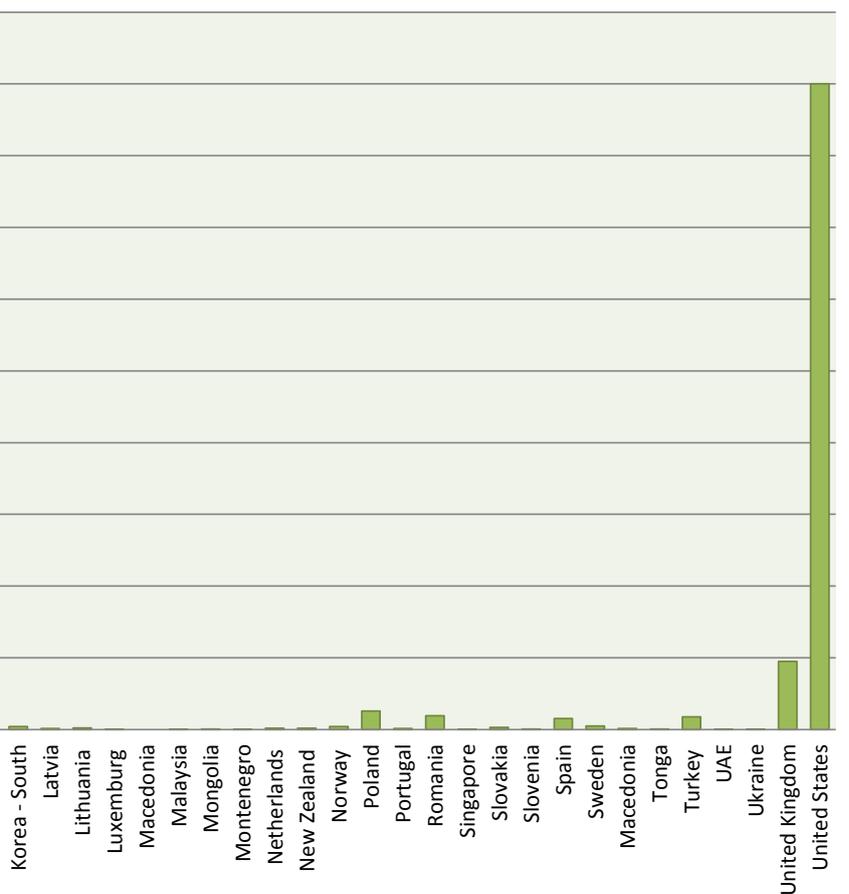
more a PR strategy than an exit one. The so called exit strategy is obviously an attempt to placate growing opposition in Western capitals who are getting tired of the ten year old occupation and the escalating losses of their young soldiers.

Myth 3: There is an international coalition fighting in Afghanistan

It is stated that the war in Afghanistan has the support of the international community; that 43 nations have a stake and have invested precious troops and treasure in this vital enterprise. However, the problem with this is that only two nations have more than 5,000 troops, and one of the two, the United States, provides 70% of all troops, approximately 100,000 out of the total 140,000. Thirty-four nations have 1,000 troops or less and ten countries have 10 troops or less. Add this to the fact that most countries have put strict caveats such that their troops are more likely to get a tan than see any real fighting, and it is clear the whole premise of an international community who think the war in Afghanistan is an existential one is just not the case. This is also creating disproportionate losses; the UK has lost more men than all other NATO-EU members combined.

The cheerleaders for the war in Afghanistan often cite that there is a 43 nation international coalition operating in Afghanistan to justify the critical nature of the mission. On the surface a coalition of 43 nations sounds impressive and is assumed to suggest a depth of international legitimacy that the Iraq war did not have. However, in Iraq the infamous 'coalition of the willing' was often espoused by George W. Bush and Tony Blair to cover up their illegal war in Iraq. But a closer examination of the actual numbers deployed by different nations in Afghanistan exposes the so farce that is the so called 'coalition' (see table 1 overleaf).

ONS - ISAF (June 2011)



senior serving British soldier demonstrated his views of the Afghan police in a candid interview, citing them as "A band of idiots," "That mentoring amounted to changing nappies," "That they had the attention span of gnats," "That most of them are corrupt and would take drugs, go to sleep, leave their post and have sex with each other." [16]

With this kind of arrogant attitude and the capability challenges discussed previously it is clear that building up an Afghan capability is

Britain's contribution exceeds the combined total of France, Germany and Spain. If major Western powers such as France, Germany, Italy and Spain are not contributing large numbers of troops to the war in Afghanistan, then either of two conclusions can be derived. Firstly, they are genuinely unable to provide more troops either due to capability reasons (which we can rule out as they all have large armies) or domestic political reasons prevent a larger deployment. Or secondly and this is more likely, they do not buy the notion

that Afghanistan is an existential war for the West.

Even if we ignore the numbers of troops each nation is providing, a more revealing factor is the number of restrictions or caveats each nation puts on how their troops can be used. According to a Heritage update [17], European members of NATO are the worst offenders in terms of national caveats. Testifying before the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee in June 2009, current Supreme Allied Commander for Europe Admiral James Stavridis stated that there are 69 national caveats in Afghanistan. Notable caveats include the following:

- German troops are restricted to conducting operations in Northern Afghanistan before night time and never more than two hours away from a well-equipped hospital;
- Turkish troops are restricted to Kabul;
- Southern European troops are barred from fighting in snow;
- Troops of one unidentified member country are required to consult their national government before deploying within one kilometre of the Pakistani border; and
- One unidentified member country prohibits troops from other nations from flying in its aircraft

The United States makes up over 70% of the forces in Afghanistan, with other nations contributing very little in either numbers or finance. Though support for the war in Western capitals is dwindling, major Western countries, if they really thought this was an existential conflict, would devote more resources (military, economic, political) to the Afghan war. The fact that they don't, and actually impose extensive caveats on what their troops can do, speaks volumes about their real support for the Afghan war.

Myth 4: There is no political solution within the region

It is stated that the war in Afghanistan is part of a wider struggle that is taking place in the world against 'extremist' Islamic ideas that seek the creation of a pan-national Caliphate and removal of the current governments in the Muslim world, demands which are, it is argued, impractical,

unacceptable, and non-negotiable. In 2005, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair characterised Shari'ah and the Caliphate as part of an 'evil ideology' [18] and his Home Secretary Charles Clarke, in a speech to the Heritage Foundation in the context of the war on terror, said that Shari'ah Law was non-negotiable anywhere in the world [19].

However, far from being non-negotiable, the demands of most Muslims in the Muslim world, as evidenced by extensive polling data, show a genuine desire for a Caliphate and strong opposition to Western foreign policy [20]. Therefore, Western policymakers have two choices: either they accept the political reality that the Muslim world has rejected the Western secular model and wants Islam to play a central role in politics or they can continue to put their heads in the sand and fight wars for decades to come.

Most mainstream Western commentators have long espoused the myth that the demands for the replacement of the dictators and despots that rule in the Muslim world with a Caliphate or withdrawal of Western forces

from the region are pie in the sky. Yet this is mere arrogance wrapped in a mask of objectivity. The current uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa show clearly that these beliefs are indeed myths and that the people of the Muslim world want radical change. Further, the demand of seeking the removal of all foreign forces, their bases and the cessation of centuries old Western occupation and interference in the Muslim world is just a continuation of the anti-colonial struggles of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The demand of stopping the unadulterated support of 'Israel; an entity that has been responsible for usurping Palestine since 1948, should be seen through the prism of mass injustice against the people of Palestine, with many in the West now questioning the utility of this relationship. Finally, the demand to stop all support for the region's tyrannical dictators and to allow the Muslim world to define its own political destiny can only be controversial to those that have graduated from the school of hypocrisy and neo-conservatism.

Discussing *Shari'ah* law in the abstract is therefore difficult and yet when Muslims begin to call for its implementation in the Muslim world, we often hear dire warnings about the dangers of the re-

“Referring to your opponents as violent fanatics, whilst being responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands in the Muslim world, is hardly credible.”

emergence of such a state. Yet the Caliphate has been the norm in the Muslim world, for 93% of its history the Muslim world has had a Caliphate. It is one thing for the West to argue that they oppose *Shari'ah* law; it is another to say that the Muslim world cannot have it either.

It therefore only suits those who seek perpetual war in Washington and London to constantly recite the mantra that there is no political solution to the current crisis. Referring to your opponents as violent fanatics, whilst being responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands in the Muslim world, is hardly credible. Political solutions are entirely possible for those who switch off their ideological blinkers and challenge their own entrenched views.

Myth 5: Pakistan is the source of the insurgency in Afghanistan

It is stated that the resistance in Afghanistan could not take place without support from Pakistan. In effect, without the oxygen provided by Pakistan, the resistance would soon end. However, though there are strong links between the Pashtun tribes on both sides of the border, the main cause of the resistance is the foreign occupation of Afghanistan. NATO's attempt to invert the truth, blaming others for its own recklessness, is breathtaking and masks a covert agenda to destabilise Pakistan.

In fact, experts believe the 'insurgency' in Afghanistan is actually self-sustaining and that Pakistani efforts are at best helpful but not necessarily decisive. Some see a more concerted crackdown by Pakistan on militants on its side of the border as key to turning the tide in Afghanistan (the so called hammer and anvil approach), yet U.S. intelligence agencies, in a report by the Reuters news agency, see little correlation, citing

the Afghan insurgency's autonomy and increasing home-grown sophistication. [8]

For instance, when U.S. intelligence analysts tested that assumption during Pakistan's recent crackdown in the Bajaur region near the Afghan border, they found no corresponding reduction in militant infiltrations and attacks on U.S. forces across the border. A defence official was quoted as saying,

"It goes to the idea that Afghanistan is a very resilient and a very flexible insurgency. And by

the very nature of insurgency, you do not need a lot of insurgents to inflict a lot of damage, because they are able to choose the time and the place to engage?"

A U.S. counter-terrorism official said Pakistani crackdowns on militants were "helpful" but added,

"The Taliban, unfortunately, have already strengthened their presence – in numbers and in organisation – inside Afghanistan, so what happens on the other side of the border

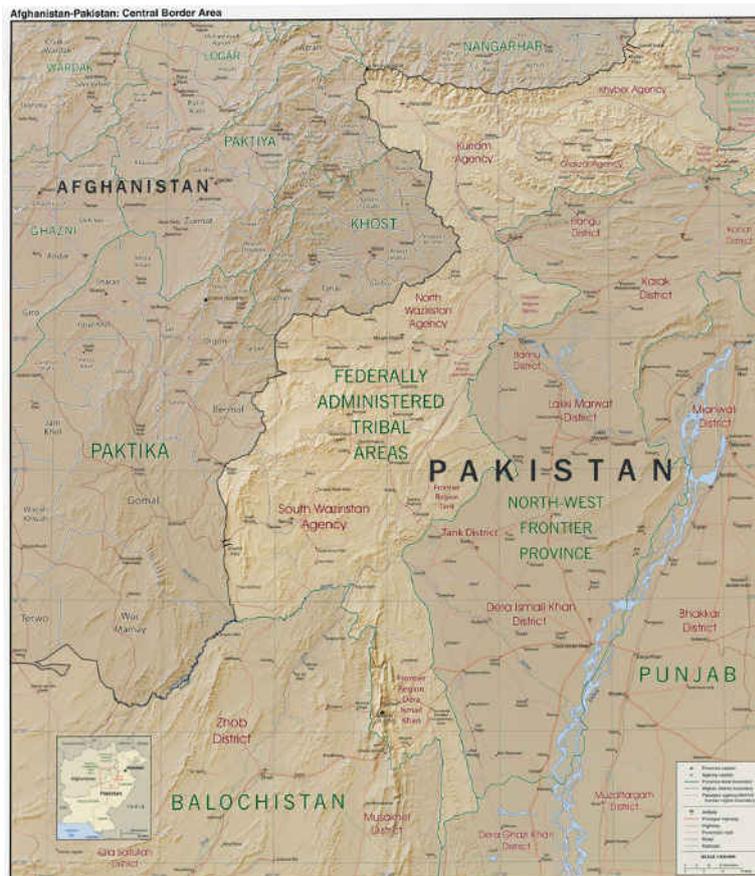
isn't particularly relevant to many of their operations."

This is a devastating riposte to those who continue to pedal the myth that the epicentre of the insurgency in Afghanistan is in Pakistan.

Conclusion

This chapter comprehensively refutes the myths surrounding the war in Afghanistan.

No Afghan prisoners and only three Pakistani prisoners are in Western jails on terrorism and related charges, yet we are told this is the central hub for organising attacks on Western streets. Very few al-Qaeda operatives exist in Afghanistan and the numbers of Taliban forces



The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) region on the Af-Pak border.

have been increasing as Western forces have risen in number, yet we are told that this is a war against al-Qaeda and not the Taliban. Nor is the purported exit strategy viable as Afghan forces are neither operationally ready or seem willing to fight NATO's war. Most Western nations are only providing a token presence as they realise this war is not an existential one. The attempt to blame Pakistan for NATO's failings is also not backed up by the facts on the ground. Political objectives, far from being non-negotiable, have to be met if we are to end the cycle of violence and instability that has plagued the Muslim world for a century – particularly when those objectives have historical precedent and are genuine demands from the Muslim world.

The war in Afghanistan is built on a set of flawed assumptions and premises, which in turn have been built on a tissue of lies and deceit. It is inconceivable that anyone armed with the true facts would support a war that is costing hundreds of billions of dollars, which will not defeat Al-Qaeda, that is causing further hatred for the West and which will cost thousands of lives on both sides.

Chapter 4

Australian Involvement



Introduction

The reality of the war in Afghanistan is that it has been, from the very beginning, an unjust and unjustifiable invasion; an act of state aggression against an innocent population. The United States exploited 9/11 as a pretext for war, through which it would consolidate its economic and political interests in the region, similar to how it used the pretext of Saddam Hussein and his non-existent WMDs to invade Iraq. It is instructive to note that the political leaderships in the US, UK and Australia who led the war in Iraq were the same as those who led the war in Afghanistan. Yet it is, quite incredibly, presumed that people should accept their endeavour in Afghanistan as a bona-

vide one, whilst knowing that in Iraq they lied to the entire world to go to war.

As for Australian involvement in the invasion, it has little to do with any threat to national security – Afghanistan is over ten thousand kilometres away from Australia and no credible evidence has been produced to show that Australia was at risk in 2001 of any attacks originating from Afghanistan. Rather, Australian involvement represents little more than the continuation of a superficially thought out acquiescence to American foreign policy.

The war has been a failure, and thus, so too has Australian involvement in it – a failure that has come at an astonishingly high cost. Australia has spent over \$20 billion thus far, and continues to spend over \$1.5 billion a year [1], whilst total cost in increased spending on homeland security over the past decade has been around \$30 billion. [2] These are tax-payers funds which the Government could have used to help the thousands of Australian families struggling to make ends meet on a daily basis, or on any one of the numerous pressing domestic considerations requiring urgent solutions and appropriate funds.

As for the human cost, as at 29 September 2011, 29 Australian troops have been killed, and 199 injured. [3] On top of this, there is the significant, and often underplayed, cost to soldiers who have returned. A study [4] conducted by the *The West Australian* earlier this year revealed that 3400 Afghanistan-related claims were received by Veterans' Affairs over the past decade. Of these, 920 Australian troops had received compensation for physical injuries as well as mental and psychological injuries such as mental trauma, post traumatic stress and depression, and alcohol or drug dependence.

This should be a sobering reality for all concerned Australians as the costs for a war fought, unsuccessfully, for all the wrong reasons.

“Australia has spent over \$20 billion thus far, and continues to spend over \$1.5 billion a year.”

“920 Australian troops had received compensation for physical injuries as well as mental and psychological injuries such as mental trauma, post traumatic stress and depression, and alcohol or drug dependence.”

Playing to the American tune

It is obvious to all impartial observers that, with regard to the War in Afghanistan, Australian politicians are merely playing to the tune of the American agenda – using Australian resources and lives to fulfil American political and economic interests. They first ran to aid the folly of George Bush, and now they blindly follow Barack Obama. This is an American War, plain and simple, and the crumbs the American master affords Australia should not be deemed worth the blood being lost or wealth being spent.

The subjugation of Australian foreign policy to foreign powers has, and continues, to utilise Australian blood cheaply for the attainment of the imperial agendas of others, in particular Britain and America. This is why we find broad bipartisan support on most key foreign policy issues, by the same politicians who cannot agree on almost anything when it comes to domestic policy.

John Howard's chapter on Iraq in his autobiography, *Lazarus Rising*, reveals the extent of Australian blind compliance with the foreign policy of the US and UK. As Graeme Dobell mentions,

“[The autobiography] shows that there was never any question, or even debate, about Australia joining the US in the war. Australia did not keep its options open, nor even explore the options. No questions asked of the US. No internal questions asked in Australia. Howard is amazingly explicit in sinking the big fib without a moment of regret or repentance. The prime minister thinks it is “inconceivable” that the US could go to war without Australia tagging along. He elevates the alliance from vital to sacrosanct.” [5]

The subjugation to foreign agendas is not just a de facto, and undeclared, outsourcing of foreign policy, but also amounts to complicity in the unjust foreign policies pursued by the US and UK – policies which largely boil down to political, economic and military exploitation. Ignoring this stark reality,



US President George W Bush presents the Medal of Freedom to former Prime Minister John Howard, January 2009.

Western politicians, Australian officials included, display a virulent form of amnesia when their pronouncements on the war against ‘terror’ are built on the implicit basis that the conflict between the West and the Muslim World began on 9/11, with an aggression by ‘radical’ Muslims against America that had to be avenged in order to stop the spread of ‘Islamic terror’.

These sorts of counterintuitive presumptions were clear in the response to the killing of Osama bin Laden. Australian politicians, past and present, lined up to express their approval of his killing. Julia Gillard, Tony Abbott, Stephen Smith, Julie Bishop, Alexander Downer and John Howard all ‘welcomed’ his death [6], claiming that he had been responsible for some of the worst terrorist attacks in history, that his killing brings justice and closure for victims around the world, and that his death is a significant success for the United States and its ‘War on Terror’.

The reality is, of course, that the worst terrorist attacks in our times have, in actuality, been the likes of the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, wherein the United States and her allies have killed hundreds of thousands of innocent people. This terror continues unabated as unmanned drones kill innocent people in Pakistan, and as bombs rain down on mothers, fathers and children in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The real terrorists therefore are Western Governments, led by the American administration, the victims of whom, in their millions, cry out for justice and closure.

To deny this reality, the US, and her allies, adopt and use politicised definitions of terrorism. Edward Peck, Former U.S. Chief of Mission in Iraq and Deputy Director of the White House Task Force on

Terrorism in the Reagan Administration, revealed in an interview in 2006,

“In 1985, when I was the deputy director of the Reagan White House Task Force on Terrorism, they asked us - this is a Cabinet Task Force on Terrorism; I was the deputy director of the working group - they asked us to come up with a definition of terrorism that could be used throughout the government. We produced about six, and each and every case, they were rejected, because careful reading would indicate that our own country had been involved in some of those activities.” [7]

The Western spotlight on Osama Bin Laden is a case in point in this context. Western officials and media sought to veil the real issues by making the issue of Osama bin Ladin, in both his life and death, revolve around his person. The reality is that Osama bin Ladin was fighting in resistance to Western aggression against, and subjugation of, the Muslim World. He was resisting the existence of Western military bases in the Muslim World, the West’s support for dictators and their repressive policies, the exploitation of the resources of the Muslim World, the support for the illegitimate state of ‘Israel’ and her many crimes against the long-oppressed people of Palestine, and many like aggressions. This context is crucial for all those sincere about dealing with the problem of terrorism, both in its individual and state varieties, as terrorism cannot and does not exist in a vacuum.

As for those who perpetrate large-scale crimes against entire nations, only to then make an issue of those who react to this aggression, they play a dangerous game that only serves to perpetuate the cycle of violence, leading us all to endless quagmires, the like of which we now see in Afghanistan. Indeed, all oppression will naturally generate a reaction against those who oppress. Critically, these consequences will not be limited to the major players alone – the US and UK – but also to those who tag along like loyal sheriffs, such as the case of Australia.

Political failure

“...[T]here is a serious policy failure in Afghanistan because I think we are proclaiming objectives that we have no serious prospect of achieving...all of the strategic objectives we have declared for ourselves I think are likely to fail. And we therefore have to ask ourselves, for what purpose are we putting young Australian lives at risk with a very high probability, really a certainty, that more Australians will die between now and the time when our forces pull out?”

- Professor Hugh White, ANU and former senior Defence Department official, Sep 2011. [8]

In formulating a position on Afghanistan, Australian politicians, of all persuasions, have been

suffocated by the demands of the Australian-US alliance. The consequence has been devastating policy paralysis and the absence of rationality on the issue of Afghanistan. Justifications for Australia's continuing presence in Afghanistan have become increasingly farcical and even mutually contradictory. In 2001 it was said Australia was heading to Afghanistan to come to the aid of its ally in order to avenge 9/11. Come the turn of the decade and behold, they are there to allegedly save its oppressed women!

Whatever the objectives, and however they expediently morph, none have been achieved. The world, Australia included, is now, palpably, not more but less safe than before the 'War on Terror' was launched.

Kevin Rudd admitted as much when he revealed the Australian Government's latest White Paper on Counter-Terrorism in February 2010. [9] In expressing the findings of the paper Mr. Rudd, the then Prime Minister, stated that the threat of terrorism was not diminishing, it had in fact become a permanent feature of Australia's security environment, with an increased threat from people born or raised in Australia. [10] This is a clear admission of the failure of the 'War on Terror', nine years after which the security threat, according to the Australian Government, was increasing, not decreasing. A large part of this failure was due to the failure of the war in Afghanistan.

The Federal Parliament decided to debate the question of Australian involvement in Afghanistan in late 2010 [11], nine years after the war's beginning. This fact alone is enough of an indictment on the political leadership of this country. The Howard Government ran to support the folly of George



Counter-Terrorism White Paper 2010, released by the then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, February 2010.

Bush in 2001 without stopping for a second thought. The Rudd Government, when it came to office, slavishly followed the same policy of unquestionable support for the war, as did the

Gillard Government.

The reality is that politicians, from both major parties, have repeated the same meaningless lines about the war from the very beginning. Every time an Australian soldier dies, we hear the same empty platitudes repeated again and again by both political and military leaders. The Orwellian language used is given meaning, not through its having any real precise meaning, but through repetition, emotion and nationalist sentiment.

A clear example of this is the oft-repeated mantra of the need to 'stay the course'. [12] We have heard this so many times from Julia Gillard and other Australian political and military leaders. Yet, it means nothing, and explains less than it makes obscure. It is based on a logic that presumes the existences of a defined course and endgame, and one that is achievable. What that course is, where it is supposed to end, and how close we are to that end, is never explained. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this detail does not exist.

Following the revelation the US has begun 'talks' (another buzz word) with the Taliban [13], how can Australian officials still speak of 'staying the course'. What course? The one that was intended to remove the Taliban and now may well end with their restoration? Further, what is the Australia Government's position on these talks? Are they involved? If so, what do they seek to achieve? What is the endgame? Are Australia soldiers now dying, as it appears, simply to improve the US's bargaining position with the Afghan resistance? Does the Australian public not have a right to know this information?

Finally, the new political and moral lows reached by Australian politicians are also exposed through in the asylum seeker policy debate. On the one hand, both major parties support the war in Afghanistan – a major cause in the increase of Afghan refugees – and on the other, when these refugees come here, being forced to risk their lives on leaky boats, seeking asylum, both parties trip over each other in competing as to who can treat them more inhumanely.

This is the ugly reality of the political leadership in Australia.

Parliamentary Debate on Afghanistan

When waning public support and increasing failure finally forced the Australian government to debate the war in Afghanistan, the parliamentary debate saw little more than politicians tripping over each other to demonstrate bipartisan support

for Australia's commitment in Afghanistan, in complete disregard of public opinion on the Australian street.

Speech after speech filled with jingoistic platitudes from the Federal Parliament was only contrasted by the uncountable expressions of amazement at the lack of substance in the debate found in opinion pieces and letters' sections of the press and public commentary online. Critics have rightly pointed to the lack of identifiable objectives, clear benchmarks, and the inconsistency in the supposed rationale behind the invasion.

The reality is that the parliamentary debate was extremely misplaced, far too little and far too late.

It comes nine years too late given that a solid justification for involvement in the war should have been debated before it was undertaken. It is worth too little insofar as it has no direct implications on any change in policy - not even a vote on whether the involvement should continue. What good is the mere expression in words of what the Government and Opposition have held about the war from its onset? Most concerning of all, the debate was entirely misplaced as politicians from all sides continue to peddle false narratives about the rationale of the invasion.

The tough questions that need answers were ignored. Does Australia gain in national security by partaking in an imperial war and continuing its subservience to the United States? What are the real threats that would actually justify and sustain such an imbalanced relationship, and are those justifications present in Afghanistan? Is the cost borne in the lives of Australian soldiers worth the perceived benefits?

Further questions of more strategic import were also disregarded. With the blatant political, economic, and military decline of America, is it the right basket for Australian eggs? Given the US's loss of moral authority - post Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, Bagram, torture by rendition, and the numerous atrocities in Iraq and Afghanistan that continue to be exposed to a globally connected audience, does Australia want to stand by the US in the firing line of world public anger?

The moral questions were swept under the carpet in the name of 'national interest'. For even if on certain assessments a case for 'national interest' can

be made, is the inevitably destructive invasion of a nation, it's being brought to ruin, and hundreds of thousands of innocent people being killed and injured as 'collateral damage', a justifiable means to that end?

These are the difficult questions that were not debated, rendering the parliamentary 'debate' to be of nominal, symbolic value alone.

Politicisation of national security

The Afghan War is subject to heavy politicisation by Western leaders who have, time and again, put politics before security. There is a distinct lack of honesty in the discourse surrounding Afghanistan. Rather than state plainly the true nature of the war and its progress, the public is kept in the dark with false hopes and embellished assessments.

It is an open secret that Obama's Afghanistan strategy is as much designed to further the American cause in the region as it is designed to aid Obama and the Democrats re-election in 2012.

In the UK, the politicisation is no less. Earlier this year, the Ministry of Defence paid £151,450 of taxpayers' money to buy the entire first print run of *Dead Men Risen: The Welsh Guards and the Real Story of Britain's War in Afghanistan* by Toby Harnden, in order to censure information of actions of the UK military in the war which were deemed to be of potential political embarrassment. [14]

Australian officials too are more interested in engineering public opinion than to tell the Australian people the truth. According to a Wikileaks cable, in 2009 Daniel Clune, the then Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Canberra, reported to Hillary Clinton that,

"...Most important to Rudd...was the domestic political context; he needed to demonstrate to the Australian people, a majority of whom now opposed military involvement in Afghanistan, the importance of maintaining their commitment, which meant leader-level engagement..." [15]

We learn from another cable titled 'Australian Defence Chief's Concerns Over the McChrystal Report' that,

"Australian Defence Force Air Chief Marshall Angus Houston told Charge on August 20 that he planned to call Admiral Mullen, General Patraeus and General

"The reality is that the parliamentary debate was extremely misplaced, far too little and far too late."

McChrystal in the next few days to explain that it will be important that General McChrystal's upcoming assessment on the situation in Afghanistan not inadvertently undermine Prime Minister Rudd's attempts to maintain public support for Australia's participation in the conflict." [16]

This is the reality behind the façade we see in Government and Defence press conferences. Even when the writing is so indelibly printed on the wall, when experts [17], former intelligence officials [18], political correspondents [19], generals [20], academics [21], and aid agencies working in Afghanistan [22] are all saying the war is unwinnable or there are grave problems with the coalition strategy, and when a majority of people in the US [23], UK [24] and Australia [25] oppose the war and want to see its end, Australia's political leaders arrogantly and irresponsibly continue to perpetuate myth over reality.

In 2010, the Defence Minister and the Prime Minister visited Afghanistan, and came back with glowing assessments, notwithstanding the fact that 2010 saw soaring civilian deaths, heightened insecurity and chaos, and the highest coalition casualties since the beginning of the war.

Stephen Smith visited Australia troops and coalition commanders in Afghanistan in September 2010. [26] He thanked his troops and expressed pride in their work "to help bring about the peace and stability of a country that needs our assistance"; and "came away with the impression that...[our] approach is proving much more successful than previous methods employed."

The Prime Minister's visit, in October 2010, was undertaken in secret [27] - a fact which so powerfully demonstrates the failure of the Coalition in establishing security in Afghanistan. She met with Australian troops and officials, General Petraeus, and Afghan President Hamid Karzai. Of note in her visit was the fact that she did not travel beyond the Green Zone and Coalition bases, which are artificial, imposed realities in stark contrast to the rest of the Afghanistan which lies in tatters. She was also unashamed in rubbing shoulders and having dinners with the likes of Hamid Karzai. Indeed, the

persistence of the Australia Government to support and prop up corrupt regimes in the Muslim World speaks volumes of their true intentions with regards to these lands.

Australia & the changing geopolitical landscape

The insistence of Australia's political leadership to follow America has all the more adverse implications for Australia given the evident decline in American power globally. The United States is increasingly weaker on all fronts: economic, political, cultural, ideological and military. The signs are clear, for all those who care to pay them heed, that the peak of American dominance has passed, and she is now on the path of terminal decline.

In May 2009, the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd launched the Australian Government's first Defence white paper [9] since the turn of the millenium. Entitled '*Defending Australia in the Asia-Pacific Century: Force 2030*', the paper was intended as a 20-year defence blueprint. It showcased the plan for a multi-billion dollar build-up of naval and air forces, built on the assessment that Australia will need to work toward self-sufficiency in defence as US supremacy in the region wanes. This was, therefore an official admission, as much as Kevin Rudd also sought to underplay it, that US power in the world is on the decline.

"...Most important to Rudd...was the domestic political context; he needed to demonstrate to the Australian people, a majority of whom now opposed military involvement in Afghanistan, the importance of maintaining their commitment, which meant leader-level engagement..."

Since 2009, this decline has only become more pronounced. The American economy lies in tatters, its political system is faltering as President Obama fails to deliver on any of his 'hopes' or 'promises', and the American military is on its knees in Afghanistan - having copped a battering in Iraq - looking for a way out of its quagmire.

Of course, the White paper missed the point, which is that Australia would have much less to worry about in terms of defence if it did not create enemies by partaking in the invasion and bombing of other nations. In essence then, this is a self-perpetuated cycle of aggression followed by military build-up to deal with the reaction to that aggression. In classic Machiavellian style, the Government seeks to exploit and justify both the aggression and the response to that aggression.

In the process, Australia's name is being soiled along with the already sullied name of America. The war in Afghanistan has always been seen by the people of Afghanistan as an unjust occupation. It has produced systematic abuses at the hand of Coalition forces, and it has seen to the wholesale destruction of Afghanistan, village by village, province by province.

It is evident that Afghanistan will be the nail in the coffin of the American empire. Australia can choose to go down with it by continuing a misplaced foreign policy of tagging along with America, or can move forward by recognising the changing realities of international politics. Australia would do much better by distancing itself from America and working on a more balanced global and regional policy, one which pays particular attention to the rapidly changing geo-political dynamics in the Muslim world.

The Islamic revival in particular, which gains enormous momentum day by day, should be of particular interest to policymakers here. It is only a matter of time till Western-backed dictators in the Muslim world crumble under the resounding weight of the call for the re-establishment of the Islamic Caliphate, thereby decisively flipping the international balance of power on its head.

Earlier this year in Indonesia – the largest Islamic nation by population and Australia's direct neighbour – Hizb ut-Tahrir held 29 Caliphate conferences in all the major cities of Indonesia, attended by a combined total of over 150,000 people. [28] Australian policymakers need to listen to the public opinion in the Muslim World, particularly in their own backyard, and to think about the future instead of living in the past. Yet, thus far the Australia Government is conducting its foreign policy does not want to face the inevitable reality of a different future.

This was evident in the role of the Australian Government in the uprisings that took place this year in North Africa and the Middle East, a role that was intrusive and exploitative.

No one was fooled by Kevin Rudd's rhetoric in February 2011 against the Egyptian regime following its demise [29], given that only a few months earlier in December 2010 he was wining and dining with

Mubarak and officials of his regime [30], celebrating sixty years of Australian-Egyptian ties that he said were economically strong and politically good. [31] Sixty years of tyranny for the people of Egypt, justified for Australia's political and economic elite in the name of profits. He also travelled to Saudi Arabia in March 2011 [32] furthering economic ties, whilst having nothing to say about Saudi tyranny at home or its repressive intervention in Bahrain.



L-R, Egyptian Foreign Minister Gheit, Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd and Egyptian President Husni Mubarak, December 2010.

The Australian Foreign Affairs ministry is also complicit in seeking to prevent the implementation of Islam and the Shari'ah in the Muslim World. In a speech to the National Press Club in Canberra on the 21 February, Kevin Rudd mentioned five reasons as to why he thought Australia had to be active in the region following the uprisings. [33] Most of these reasons were related to the potential of the emergence of an Islamic government in the region. He had the audacity to count such an occurrence as a threat and something to be fought, as if he has the right to dictate to the people of the Muslim World which types of governance are acceptable for them and which are not.

This type of approach is unsustainable into a future that is increasingly looking very different to the present and the past, wherein Australia invariably tagged along with the UK and US in their exploitation of weaker nations, feeling protected from the consequences of such injustice by the umbrella of Western power and dominance.

“Australian policymakers need to listen to the public opinion in the Muslim World, particularly in their own backyard, and to think about the future instead of living in the past.”

Conclusion

The invasion of Afghanistan is not in the 'national interest'. There is nothing to be gained from perpetuating the cycle of violence, from destroying a nation, impoverishing its people and generating deeper resentment. There is nothing to be gained by allying with a failed power, of fighting another's imperial war, of wasting precious resources and sacrificing more lives whilst ultimately being abandoned by the very nation in which you held so much trust. There is nothing to be gained by being defeated by a handful of ill-equipped and ill-trained individuals, being forced to withdraw under the most humiliating of conditions.

National interest, in any case, should not be placed above basic human morals. Nothing can justify the organised and brutal state-terrorism inflicted upon Afghanistan over the last ten years. Nothing can justify the lives of innocent mothers, fathers and children, the devastation of entire villages and towns, and the wanton destruction of infrastructure and the environment.

The only responsible course of action for the Australian Government is to withdraw its troops, end the invasion, and, if it has the political will, to end this shameful legacy of serving the imperial agendas of others, which will no doubt gain ignoble mention in the chronicles of history.

Chapter 5

An Islamic Alternative – Separating Fact from Myth

Introduction

The Muslim world has long suffered at the hands of its rulers and foreign interference in its internal affairs. Afghanistan and the surrounding region are no exception: endemic corruption, rampant poverty and a crippling national infrastructure have long plagued the region and continue to threaten regional stability as well as basic functions of state and society. With little sign of change the prospect is one of continued paralysis extending for decades to come.

Over 60% of Pakistan's population lives on less than \$2 a day [1] and nearly a quarter on less than \$1.25 a day [2]. According to the World Food Programme, 7.4 million Afghans – nearly a third – are unable to get enough food to live active, healthy lives, and 8.5 million, or 37%, are on the borderline of food insecurity [3]. Corruption is rife; in a recent corruption assessment for 2008, Pakistan and



Afghanistan were ranked 134 and 176 out of 180 countries respectively [4]. To make matters worse, we are now witnessing the onset of violence on an unprecedented scale, both with American forces attacking targets in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the recent bombings across major Pakistani cities.

It is in this context that serious questions need to be asked about how these problems can be alleviated. It is becoming increasingly clear that if the status quo is not challenged, the picture of the region may soon look quite different and the lives of ordinary people will worsen beyond what is already a dire situation. The occupation of Afghanistan installed a political process underneath the banner of introducing ‘democracy’ that has achieved nothing other than confirm the previous tribal structures and interests and opened the doors for poppy cultivation and corruption. It is also clear that since the onset of the occupation, instability and random violence have seriously escalated and now threaten to engulf the entire region.

To overcome this rapidly deteriorating situation, there is an urgent need for a transformational change from the regimes and systems that currently govern Islamic lands in the region (and beyond) and an end to the foreign occupation of Muslim territories. It is no longer acceptable to simply see a few heads change; or for there to be a re-run of corrupt electoral processes, because the track record of these has resulted in the very problems we see before us. This transformational change will only be brought about through the re-establishment of the Islamic system of governance – the Caliphate (Khilafah) – an accountable, representative, forward looking system with an unrivalled history of success.

Those who believe an Islamic system would be a backwards step to a medieval era can no longer credibly make such claims. Because it is becoming increasingly apparent that the only system which takes account of all the core ingredients needed for the Muslim world’s success – a stable economy, an accountable and representative executive, a system consistent with peoples’ values, independence from foreign control, and which prioritises people’s basic needs over the gains of a few or of private enterprise – can only be secured by an Islamic system. Furthermore, images of television hangings, denial of women’s education, random justice and religious zealotry are the hallmarks of

a local tradition, not the Islamic state.

The Muslims of the Indian sub-continent, and beyond, are proud of their association with Islam. The suggestion that their countries should be governed by Islam is therefore not unusual or unnatural. In the context of the sub-continent, many lost their lives in the struggle for the creation of a Muslim homeland and all those who strove to make that vision possible are remembered as heroes. They supported the Caliphate in its final days and many of the supporting voices became the founding fathers of Pakistan itself. Frustration towards various Muslims parties over the decades has never been towards Islam, but with the misuse and abuse of Islam for political ends by certain groups.

It is also worth noting that the demand for the Islamic State around the Muslim world is growing. Various polls taken in recent years show that up to 70% [5] in countries across the Muslim world want the *Shari’ah* to feature in how their countries are run. It’s a trend that hasn’t gone unnoticed amongst Western commentators and politicians, who have made clear their aim is to prevent its establishment. For it is a fact that of the few trends that may finally halt the West’s neo-imperial mission in the Muslim world and beyond, the emergence of an Islamic state is among the most certain.

“The ruling system of the Caliphate bears no resemblance to any of the governments in the Muslim world today”

What is the Caliphate?

The Caliphate [6] is a state based on Islam, ideologically and politically. Its responsibility is to equitably manage the affairs of all citizens, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, through the implementation of the laws of Islam (*Shari’ah*) in their capacity as divine

laws which, given their divine origin, are the most suitable laws for humanity.

The ruling system of the Caliphate bears no resemblance to any of the governments in the Muslim world today. It is a unique system, different from any other in terms of its political philosophy, form of government, and aims and methodologies, for the simple reason that its source is divine and not man-made. The systems of ruling that exist in the Muslim World at present, on the other hand, are all fruits of a colonial legacy.

The Caliph is the head of state in the Caliphate. He is not a king or dictator but an elected leader whose authority to rule must be given willingly through

a particular contract of ruling. He is not like the Pope; he is not a spiritual head, nor is he infallible. His post is an executive post of governance. He can make mistakes, which is why checks and balances exist within the Islamic ruling system to ensure he and his government remain accountable.

The Caliph is not appointed by God, and the Caliphate is not a theocracy as understood in Western political and religious discourse. Its legislation is not restricted to religious and moral codes alone. The Shari'ah is a comprehensive system that legislates on political, social, economic, foreign policy and judicial matters. Economic progress, elimination of poverty and enhancing the people's standard of living are all goals the Caliphate aims to achieve. This is completely opposite to the medieval theocracies founded in Europe during the Middle Ages where the poor were forced to work and live in squalid conditions in return for the promise of heaven. Historically the Caliphate was an immensely wealthy state with a flourishing economy, high standard of living and a world leader in industry and scientific research for centuries.

Further, the Caliphate is not a totalitarian state. It cannot spy on its citizens. Everyone in the Caliphate has the right to express his or her opposition to policies of the state without fear of arrest or imprisonment. Torture and imprisonment without trial is completely forbidden, and these rules are not allowed to be bent on grounds of political expediency as we see occurring in the 'Counter-Terrorism' policies of modern Western democracies. Non-Muslims are protected by the state and not forced to leave their religions or to adopt Islamic values. Rather non-Muslim citizens are protected and their homes, properties and lives cannot be violated. They have the same rights and responsibilities as Muslims.

As for foreign policy, the Caliphate is an expansionist state but it does not conquer new lands in order to steal their wealth and resources. Rather its foreign policy is to convey the Islamic message with the best interests of others at heart. Historically the Caliphate did not conquer lands to fill the coffers back in the capital, as the British Empire did for example. Rather it sought to develop those lands and bring the standard of living of its people up to match and even exceed its own, and was highly successful at this.

Many key issues facing humanity in the 21st century, such as human-induced environmental degradation and financial crises, indicate that the model of nation-states is now obsolete and a barrier to progress. In this respect, the Caliphate is

a model alternative which excels the nation-state model in all respects.

This is the Caliphate which Hizb ut-Tahrir works to establish in the Muslim World, and on which Hizb ut-Tahrir has written extensively and published a draft constitution together with numerous books detailing its proposed ruling [7] [8], economic [9] [10] [11], social [12] and judicial systems.

The Caliphate & stability in the region and wider Muslim World

The Caliphate will be a stabilising force for Muslim countries that move to adopt its model. In order to understand how, the causes of the current instability and violence should be understood to be rooted in a combination of political, economic, social and ideological problems. They are connected directly with the impact of failed systems in the region, regimes not acting in the interests of their people, foreign interference, perceived weakness by regimes in the face of this foreign meddling and the fear that deeply held values are being eroded and that no action is taken to prevent this from happening. As political processes continue to fail, factions have reverted to violence as a way of challenging the situation.

In the Caliphate that government bears a responsibility for looking after the people. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, "The political leader (Imam) is a guardian, and he is responsible for his subjects." [13] This desperately needed guardianship and care for citizens is, sadly, utterly absent in the ruling structures of the Islamic world today.

► Resolving the causes of violent unrest

The Caliphate is able to address these root causes of current violent unrest in the region due to the following reasons:

1. The Caliphate will be independent and free from foreign control.

The inability of current regimes in the Muslim world to oppose or even challenge foreign interference and defend their land from unscrupulous foreign interests and demands is a cause of significant anxiety in the Muslim world. The track record of foreign interference, since the onset of colonialism, has been to the detriment of local populations. Perceived subservience to foreign interests, permitting their military presence and allowing them to pursue their own local strategies unchallenged, has led to violent unrest as groups take the situation into their own hands and attack not only foreign targets and installations but also government departments

because of this perceived complicity. The choice of their targets is highly revealing.

Part of the Caliphate's appeal for Muslims is that it will stand up to foreign aggression and wrestle back what they believe is rightfully theirs. The Caliphate will deal with foreign states, but will reject any attempts to control its policies or further the cause of foreign powers to their detriment. This is widely recognised; Western commentators and politicians argue that the Caliphate must be prevented from emerging exactly because it will challenge the status quo and act in a hostile manner towards foreign powers. It is farcical to suggest that asserting independence from foreign powers who attempt to control the Muslim world will render it unstable. To be clear, the current instability and cause of much violent unrest is due to foreign powers imposing their will and wars on the Muslim world, none of which accord with Muslim interests.

2. The Caliphate is an open, accountable and representative political system

The Caliphate is an open, accountable and representative political system whose head is appointed only through popular consent. It will therefore be unlike the regimes that currently litter the Muslim world, who are both unrepresentative and unaccountable, and inherently fragile and unstable as a result. With no means of recourse within these regimes and no channels to express dissent or criticism, peoples' concerns have become threatening political undercurrents, threats of rebellion, overthrow and the cause of violent unrest. People are locked out of the political processes and are unable to influence the political situation of their countries, and some have reverted to violence. The situation is exasperated by the widespread use of brutality by security services to deal with opposition.

The Caliphate, in striking contrast, engages voices of dissent through the political system by providing extensive channels for accounting all parts of the State's apparatus as well as a consultative assembly ('Council of the Ummah') made-up of elected representatives with significant powers and the right to hold the rulers to account on all matters that take place within the state, whether these are related to domestic

affairs, foreign affairs, financial affairs or military.

The Caliph is appointed to his position according to the will of the people through the process of '*bay'ah*' [lit., voluntary pledge]. The existence of political parties too is a key feature in the Caliphate and will also act as a mechanism of accounting the executive.

3. The Caliphate will protect deeply held Islamic values perceived to be under threat

“The Caliphate system is consistent with – not alien to – the values of the people in the region and the wider Muslim world.”

The Caliphate system is consistent with – not alien to – the values of the people in the region and the wider Muslim world. It will therefore act as a guarantor for deeply held Islamic values considered to be at threat with the import of foreign values. Values deemed 'Western', for example, are tarnished by perceptions of Western moral and sexual decadence but whose greater

penetration in the Muslim world in recent years has remained unchallenged. Again, this has been the cause of considerable apprehension in the Muslim world and unrest as groups attempt to challenge their regimes over failing to protect their sublime Islamic values.

The Caliphate therefore has deep roots and a better chance at working in partnership with its populations because it engages them on a common point of reference and works for common goals. The secular, autocratic even atheistic regimes that emerged in the Caliphate's wake significantly curtailed Islamic practice and engineered new readings of Islamic values and history. They often imposed views that broke with orthodoxy to demand loyalty to divisive and failed ideologies, and therefore remained in a bitter struggle with their own people. A political system that credibly protects Islamic values is therefore fundamental to securing public confidence and partnership.

4. The Caliphate enshrines the rule of law and will address corruption

The arbitrary rule by the whim of self-appointed kings, presidents and military dictators that have plagued the Muslim world are an anathema to the principle of the rule of law within Islam's political system. The application of the law is in the hands of an independent judiciary that has a special section called the 'Court of Unjust Acts' [*Mahkamat al-Madhalim*] whose task is to

investigate impropriety on the part of members of the executive against the people.

The judges in this type of court are appointed to remove every unjust act perpetrated by the State against any person, whether this person were a citizen of the State or a person living under its authority, and whether this act were perpetrated by the Caliph or those working under him, be they rulers or civil servants. As for individual wrongdoing – the Caliph is subject to the same laws and penalties as the rest of the people because he is not considered sovereign over his subjects.

► **The Caliphate & the dangerous vacuum in global Islamic leadership**

The fall of the Caliphate in 1924 brought with it an unprecedented loss of authority and leadership on Islamic issues. The resulting vacuum allowed individuals to become global figureheads for merely speaking the rhetoric of anti-colonialism and standing-up to perceived aggressors. This crisis in leadership after the Caliphate dangerously allowed its functions to be dismembered and claimed by virtually anyone who was willing to take them on from tax collection, to defending Muslim territory (including deciding when and how), to defining the relationship between Islam and other peoples.

The Caliphate is the only institution able to provide credible leadership on Islamic issues and which can hold a convincing Islamic debate that denounces weak or erroneous understandings that threaten both Western and Muslim populations. In the absence of the Caliphate, there is no credible mechanism to challenge those who have assumed current roles or dangerous narratives nor is there a credible entity that ‘speaks for Islam’ with which foreign countries and Muslim peoples can engage. Organisations such as the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) lack credibility and consist of the same rulers that lack popular support; they are characterised by useless gestures and ineffective declarations.

“The Caliphate has an unrivalled history in dealing with different ethnic and religious minorities, much of which has been shattered through the emergence of artificial nation states that have subsequently competed and fought each other over boundaries that lack any historical or Islamic precedent.”

► **The Caliphate & separatist unrest**

The emergence of the nation state and nationalism has created strangers out of regional neighbours and has also led to the slow disintegration of states that hold multiple ethnicities, or communities, who have continued the demand for independence and thus undermined the overall integrity of the nations they live in.

The examples of this across the Muslim world are numerous. In the case of Pakistan, separatist movements exist across every province, many hostile and violent, and aim to eventually break away from Pakistan, as East Pakistan did in 1971. This is a cause of tremendous unrest, another source of serious instability and ongoing upheaval across the Muslim world.

The Caliphate does not engage its population through the prism of ethnicity but rather enshrines the concept of citizenship. It also has an unrivalled history in dealing with different ethnic and religious minorities, much of which has been shattered through the emergence of artificial nation states that have subsequently competed and fought each other over boundaries that lack any historical or Islamic precedent.

► **The Caliphate & dealing with poverty**

The desire amongst Muslims for a Caliphate is fuelled partly by the need to address extreme levels of poverty despite possessing huge reserves of natural resources. With all this wealth it is clear that the region could become an independent economic power.

In the Islamic economic system, the people own the natural resources and revenues generated would be used to build infrastructure and facilitate economic growth. This is derived from an edict of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, whereby he said, “The people are partners in three things: water, pastures and fire [energy]”. [14]

Instead, foreign aid has stifled many states through the imposition of conditions that include mass privatisation, as well as liberal secular reform. It would have been better to have

used the resource wealth amounting to billions to invest in education, health and infrastructure such that the region became more economically powerful and independent instead of relying on foreign loans and attendant interest payments.

The Islamic economy not only makes a distinction between basic needs and luxuries, it also sets priorities in solving the needs of the people by ensuring all the basic needs of the people are met. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

“The son of Adam has no better right than that he would have a house wherein he may live and a piece of cloth whereby he may cover his nakedness and a piece of bread and some water.” [15]

If this were central to economic thinking then millions would not be suffering from malnutrition or starvation. The free market does not distinguish between the needs of the people and luxuries and neither does it ensure that the basic needs of people are satisfied rather it hopes that the ‘invisible hand’ will solve the problem.

► The Caliphate’s Economic System

In addition to the Caliphate’s priority in dealing with poverty, there are a number of other items that mark out the Caliphate’s economic policy. To demonstrate some of these, the following are highlighted policies in the context of Pakistan:

- The state will fund its priorities by abolishing Income Tax and General Sales Tax, and will replace them with wealth taxes (*Zakah*) on those who can most afford it and land taxes (*Kharaj*) on feudal landowners.
- The state will bring all energy resources into public ownership and end all current contracts with the foreign owned Independent Power Producers (IPPs). Not a single megawatt has been added to the National Grid since 1999 and power shortages (load shedding) are an everyday occurrence.
- WAPDA and KESC will be in public hands. A clear distinction will be made between national ownership of such resources and the use of private expertise for services in these sectors.
- To ensure effective land redistribution and to avoid an over concentration of wealth, measures will be put in place to dissolve Pakistan’s feudal structure. Land will be confiscated from existing landowners if not productively used for more than three years and will be given to those who can use it.

- The state will eliminate all interest and short term speculative based transactions replacing them with economic transactions which align with Islamic principles of risk and reward sharing, which channel investment into the real economy rather than obscure financial instruments.

- Savings on interest paid on domestic bonds and other foreign exchange liabilities, including the external debt of \$40 billion will be invested into solving poverty and public services.

- The state will initiate industrialisation as a long term strategy and shift Pakistan away from its dependence on the agricultural sector. This will be done through greater investment in education, skills and training.

- The currency will be formally pegged to the Gold and Silver standard rather than shadowing the US dollar. The US dollar as a fiat currency has no intrinsic value and as such depreciation is common as has been witnessed in recent times.

- The state should provide free health care for all but will not prevent the use of private medical services.

Dealing with the myths and addressing concerns

Much of the preceding chapter has addressed a number of features that clearly distinguish the Caliphate from, for example, the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the monarchy in Saudi Arabia and the theocracy in Iran. There are, however, a number of additional points that are of particular relevance to understanding the nature of rule the Caliphate would bring.

► The Caliphate & modern technology, innovation and scientific progress

Many will recall images of television hangings in Afghanistan which fostered the belief that an Islamic State would be anti-modern, shun advances made over the past few centuries and return its subjects to a medieval, pre-technology era.

Contrary to such images however, the Islamic State will embrace technology and scientific progress. This is based philosophically on the belief that Islam does not, nor came to, define reality. So whether the earth orbits the sun or vice versa, water boils at 100 degrees Celsius, HIV leads to AIDS etc are for the human mind and scientific and intellectual inquiry to discover. The *Shari’ah* therefore does not insist people believe, say, the world is flat; its role is to provide

solutions, guidance and a legal framework in which to conduct human activity whether social, economic, political or scientific.

The Muslim world is embarrassed by images of television hangings and previous opposition to, for example, the printing press and telephony. Such attitudes demonstrate the decline in thinking which has affected parts of the Muslim world and is one of the key reasons for its decline over many centuries. Contrary to such antagonism, contributions made by the Muslim world to science, medicine, mathematics, astronomy and various other fields is well documented and flourished under the Golden Age of Islamic rule.

The Caliphate historically has been a very innovative state, a point noted by those who know the history. Carly Fiorina, for instance, a former CEO of Hewlett-Packard said in a speech in an conference on technology and innovation in 2001,

“There was once a civilization that was the greatest in the world. Within its dominion lived hundreds of millions of people, of different creeds and ethnic origins... Its armies were made up of people of many nationalities, and its military protection allowed a degree of peace and prosperity that had never been known...Its architects designed buildings that defied gravity. Its mathematicians created the algebra and algorithms that would enable the building of computers, and the creation of encryption. Its doctors examined the human body, and found new cures for disease...While modern Western civilization shares many of these traits, the civilization I’m talking about was the Islamic world from the year 800 to 1600, which included the Ottoman Empire and the courts of Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo, and enlightened rulers like Suleiman the Magnificent.” [16]

Adam Smith, the father of Capitalism, had this to say about the Caliphate:

“...the empire of the Caliphs seems to have been the first state under which the world enjoyed that degree of tranquility which the cultivation of the sciences requires. It was under the protection of those generous and magnificent princes, that the ancient philosophy and astronomy of the Greeks were restored and established in the East; that tranquility, which their mild, just and religious

government diffused over their vast empire, revived the curiosity of mankind, to inquire into the connecting principles of nature.” [17]

► Women in the Islamic state

Under the Caliphate system women had the franchise and participated in the political process from the very beginning of Islamic rule. Not only were women able to vote, but they were able to own property – the wife of the Prophet Muhammad, Khadijah, was in fact a wealthy businesswoman and his employer – and enjoy personal and financial independence. In contrast, the right of women to own property is a relatively recent concept in the West.

Education is open to men and women and this is considered a necessity rather than a luxury. The idea that women are to be deprived of an education has no basis in Islam.

Women are, however, limited from holding ruling posts, such as Caliph or Wali (Provincial Governor). The limitation is not explained in terms of superiority or inferiority. In this respect

the system does limit the political posts a woman can hold – both in practice and principle. That this limitation seems to so preoccupy those who attack the Islamic system is laughable. Liberal secular democracies may theoretically offer equal access to these areas but in practice the results are so poor, they do not give any license to offer lectures on the woman’s role in society. We believe that men and women gain honour by their work, and that women have a special

privilege in being the mothers of every nation and for that they deserve special regard.

► Non-Muslims in the Islamic State

It is a known matter in Islam that non-Muslims are treated well under Islamic rule. It is the responsibility of the state and the Muslims at large to protect the rights and fulfil the needs of non-Muslim citizens. As Imam al-Qarifi, a well known classical Islamic authority, mentioned,

“It is the responsibility of the Muslims to the non-Muslim citizens to take care of their weak, fulfil the needs of the poor, feed the hungry, provide clothes, address them politely and even tolerate their harm even if it was from a neighbour, even though the Muslim would have an upper hand. The Muslims

“...the empire of the Caliphs seems to have been the first state under which the world enjoyed that degree of tranquility which the cultivation of the sciences requires.” - Adam Smith

must also advise them sincerely on their affairs and protect them against anyone who tries to hurt them or their family, steal their wealth or anyone who violates their rights.”

Many non-Muslims used to live with Muslims under Islamic rule for almost thirteen centuries. Throughout those periods non-Muslims used to have the same high standard of living as the Muslims did. They enjoyed equal rights, prosperity, happiness, tranquillity and security. This is attested to by historians, Muslim and non-Muslim alike.

Richard W. Bulliet, a professor of history at Columbia University, writes,

“...minutely studying case after case, they have shown that justice was generally meted out impartially, irrespective of religion, official status, gender... not being subject to the sharia, Jews and Christians were free to go to their own religious authorities for adjudication of disputes; but in many cases they went instead to the *Qadi* [Islamic Judge].” [18]

Heinrich Graetz, a 19th century Jewish historian, wrote,

“It was in these favourable circumstances that the Spanish Jews came under the rule of Mahometans [sic], as whose allies they esteemed themselves the equals of their co-religionists in Babylonia and Persia. They were kindly treated, obtained religious liberty, of which they had so long been deprived, were permitted to exercise jurisdiction over their co-religionists, and were only obliged, like the conquered Christians, to pay poll tax...” [19]

► Islam forbids ruling by Police State

There is an assumption, given the dictatorships in the Muslim world seek to portray themselves as Islamic are authoritarian police states, that an Islamic state would be the same. This is utterly false. It is neither borne out in history nor in Islamic thought. The Caliphate would be violating Islamic principles if the governing authority became a ‘force’; regimes in Arab and Muslim countries exemplify how this would lead to harm and poor management of society. We believe that in a state based on force,

“...the concepts and criteria [of society] would become the concepts and criteria of coercion, oppression and dominance, and not the concepts and criteria of looking after people’s affairs. Ruling would then turn into an oppressive rule that knows nothing but terror, dominance, oppression, coercion and blood shedding.” [20]

Moreover the Caliphate is a state that prohibits spying on its citizens – something endemic in Muslim countries but also on the increase in many Western countries. There are also clear Islamic

prohibitions on torture and abusive behaviour amongst other things – as applied to the police, armed forces and security services as well as the general population - as a protection from such forceful rule. These are constitutionally enshrined as well as the Islamic injunction that every individual is innocent until proven guilty, and these rules do not change based on political expediency as in seen increasingly occur in Western secular democracies.

Conclusion

The term ‘balkanisation’ is synonymous with disintegration and evokes images of instability. It is forgotten that this term originated from the destruction of the Ottoman Caliphate. Some have recognised that this breakup of the Ottoman Caliphate was the very thing that caused the Middle East and Muslim world in general to descend into instability for the best part of the twentieth century and beyond. [21]

Since that time, the Muslim world has been rightly considered unstable. Yet, the powerful nations in the world have sought to keep the Muslim world ‘balkanised’, and in addition have worked hard to make it ‘secularised’, all in the hope that this would make it a weakened region, easier to control and exploit. These policies of colonial powers are, in fact, the very policies that have created and perpetuated the current chaos in the Muslim world. Afghanistan in particular has suffered at the hands of the British Empire, the Soviet Empire and, most recently, the American Empire. In between these interventions it never achieved stability for any meaningful period.

But, the desire of the Muslim world to return to an Islamic footing, based on their beliefs and values, and consistent with their heritage, which some in the West describe as ‘radicalisation’ or ‘extremism’ is actually the antidote to this.

Every society needs ideological ‘glue’ that binds the governed to those that govern. In Muslim countries it is only Islam that commands the trust and respect to rise above individual politicians, and to underpin much needed institutions. The Caliphate is the means by which Islam has defined this underpinning and cohesion of society.

Moreover, it is only under the Caliphate that the very real economic, security and political problems of the Muslim world can start to be tackled. It is our belief that this sublime alternative is the only ray of hope for a people hitherto condemned to live decades under misery and chaos.

{ إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا }

“Verily, with hardship comes ease.” [Quran 94:6]

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