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## Afghan Election's Outcome Doesn't Matter

**Why? Because US has thwarted, not supported, democracy there**

by Murray Dobbin

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*"History repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce." -- Karl Marx*

The Afghan presidential election will prove to be simply irrelevant. The U.S., whose imperial hubris renders it ignorant of other cultures and societies, invaded Afghanistan with the stated purpose eliminating Al Qaeda (remember them, the few hundred armed followers of Osama bin what's-his-name?). In doing so, they repeated the same blind arrogance of their imperial predecessors, the British and the Soviets.

Getting in was easy. Getting out on their own terms -- with a credible pro-Western government in place -- is proving almost impossible.

Ironically (and imperialists tend to lack a sense of irony), the U.S. made their defeat in Afghanistan a virtual certainty by their previous meddling which featured the creation of the mujhideen as an anti-Soviet proxy fighting force. In doing so, the U.S. elevated to political and cultural primacy the kind of oppressive and violent Islamic fundamentalism that until then had never been a dominant feature of life in Afghanistan.

In their zeal to rid the region of Soviet influence, the U.S. created in Afghanistan a country overflowing with arms and weapons where bullets rule and ballots are a joke. The U.S. has slowly awakened to the grotesque morass they have entered, and the presidential election was

supposed to be key to an exit strategy it desperately needs. But this is sheer fantasy. There is no exit strategy, unless you visualize the last U.S. helicopter, with desperate Afghanis clamouring to get aboard, lifting off from the roof of the U.S. embassy. That was the eventual U.S. exit "strategy" in Vietnam. And it may be the only one available here.

If you're having trouble with that image, take into account the fact that the humiliating retreat from Vietnam began with a dramatic decrease in public support for the war -- exactly what is happening in the U.S. Two recent polls reveal that a majority of Americans now think the war is not worth fighting. Almost twice as many want a troop decrease as support Obama's commitment to an increase. By a two to one margin, Americans **do not believe** the election will result in "effective government." Almost as many think the U.S. is losing the war as believe it is winning, despite media complicity in the White House public relations spin.

### **Good dictators are hard to find**

The lack of a viable exit strategy for the U.S. is tied directly to the real reason for its invasion and its continued occupation: the need for a pro-U.S. regime in Kabul to back its goal of controlling oil and gas supplies in the Middle East. Exiting without such a regime is seen as unacceptable. Hamid Karzai was supposed to play that role, and according to Jack Warnock, author of *Creating a Failed State: The U.S. and Canada in Afghanistan*, he was imposed on the Bonn conference held in November 2001. Even the U.S.'s hand-picked delegates refused to give a single vote for Karzai as chairman of the Interim Administration. The large majority voted for Abdul Satar Sirat, "who represented the Afghans who wanted a constitutional monarchy as they had under the 1964 Constitution," Warnock **has written**. The threats from the U.S. to withdraw all funding for the future government led the conference to reluctantly reverse itself and agree to choose Karzai. It was the end of any genuine commitment to democracy from the U.S.

Instead of a constitutional monarchy, with government by a parliament, Afghanistan got a Republic with almost all the power held by the president. To virtually ensure that there was no check on the powers of the president, the constitution bans participation in general elections by political parties: only individuals can run for seats and their affiliations are not allowed on the ballots. In addition, candidates associated with secular parties are effectively banned from running as the new constitution (never seen by the Afghan public before it was

passed by the Interim Administration) makes it illegal for any policy to contradict the "holy religion of Islam."

### **'Serious and deteriorating'**

By manipulating the constitutional process and the rules of democratic elections, the U.S. and its NATO allies aimed at ensuring that no nationalist, secular government would ever take power. Why? Because such a government would be virtually certain to oppose U.S. imperial designs for Afghanistan. But the price the U.S. paid was the virtual certainty that any government that did hold power under U.S. rules would be beholden to the war lords and drug lords who fill the vacuum left by non-existent civil society. It would also, of course, be a government characterized by rampant corruption and total incompetence, incapable of providing services to the people and equally incapable of inspiring troops and police to fight the Taliban.

The U.S., as in Vietnam, has two mutually exclusive and contradictory goals in Afghanistan and the conflict between them will continue to bleed the U.S. financially and psychologically, kill thousands more Afghan innocents and American (and Canadian) soldiers, and create the very terrorists its war was supposed to eliminate. In order to maintain a level of public support sufficient to justify his highly personal redefinition of this "good war", Obama has to be able to point to real advances on the democracy and social progress fronts. Only a genuinely nationalist, secular government can deliver this. But Obama's predecessors have made this literally impossible.

The democracy exit has been nailed shut and buried in concrete. And just this past weekend the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Michael Mullen, did a round of TV interviews revealing that the situation "[is serious and it is deteriorating](#)".

He was trying to soften up the American public for a request for a much larger troop increase than already committed to -- just as Americans are saying, two-to-one, they think the government should be reducing those numbers.

General Mullen didn't talk about troop levels he thinks would 'do the job.' But he might want to go back a year when his colleague, General Dan McNeill, the former commander of U.S.

and NATO forces in Afghanistan, [stated](#) it would take 400,000 troops to pacify the whole country.

The U.S. army couldn't produce those numbers even if it was asked to. The military victory exit doesn't exist.

Watch for the helicopter.