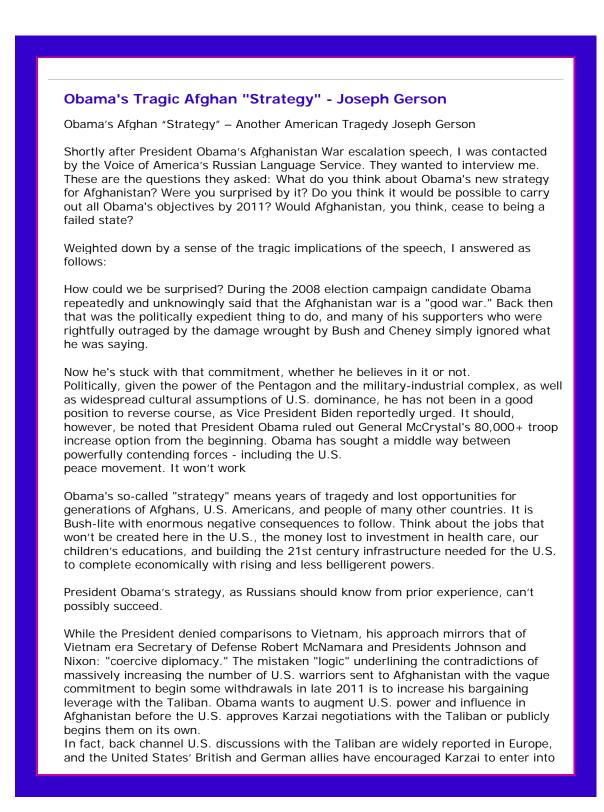
From: Sent: To: Subject: Joseph Gerson [afsc_pes@topica.email-publisher.com] Wednesday, December 02, 2009 8:26 AM AFSCHAWAII@afsc.org Obama's Tragic Afghan



a process initiated by the Saudis.

Unfortunately, like LBJ and Nixon, Obama's approach won't work. With its extraordinary corruption, its reliance on repressive and misogynist warlords, and the deaths and suffering of civilians caused by U.S.-NATO attacks, Afghan hearts and minds will not rally to the Karzai government or to U.S. occupation forces. Similar to the failures of "Vietnamization" in the early 1970s, the idea that the U.S. will be able to triple the size of the Afghan military, isolate it from corrupting warlord and Karzai government influences, and provide it with élan and modern warfighting capabilities in just two years is a deadly pipe dream. So too is his plan to vastly increase the size of and professionalize the Afghan police.

Note too that President Obama's pledge to begin reductions of U.S. forces in Afghanistan in late 2011 was very vague. At best, we will likely see a minimal reduction of forces in the months leading up to the 2012 presidential and congressional elections. There remains, however, the possibility of further increases in U.S. forces as the war continues to go south.

The most obvious flaw in Obama's so-called strategy is the impossibility of the U.S. transforming Afghanistan's corrupt and failing government into a modern functioning state. Here too the similarities with Vietnam, where the U.S. imposed and supported a series of corrupt dictators, is striking. The question that President Obama failed to answer was what happens when Karzai, the warlords on whom his power depends, and his corrupt allies refuse to cooperate with the U.S. plan. If a U.S. victory in Afghanistan is so "vital to U.S. interests", would the U.S. simply withdraw its troops and leave in defeat when Karzai and company continue to make matters worse?

This leads us to a situation analogous to that described in the Pentagon Papers in which 85% of the reason for continuing the war, and even escalating it, will be "perception," to defend the image of the U.S. as a military superpower that must not be challenged.

Like the U.S. in Vietnam and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, this is a strategy that will bleed the foundations of prosperity within the U.S. and is global reputations and influence.

Societies are not changed in two years or even in a single generation. The way forward is for the U.S. to press for all party negotiations within Afghanistan to create a new Afghan social contract. This would need to be reinforced by an international conference and actions on the part of all major states involved in the war to help build and support that social contract. This, of course, also means dealing with the source of Indian-Pakistani tensions, and the geostrategic ambitions of the major powers who have insisted on playing, and losing, the "Great Game."

Dr. Joseph Gerson is Director of Programs and Director of the Peace and Economic Security Program of the American Friends Service Committee.

Unsubscribe | Update Profile | Confirm | Forward

Delivered by TOPICA-