

Trump Continues Failed Military Policy in South Central Asia

Afghanistan occupation has lasted for sixteen years leaving death and destruction

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Badly damaged from the political fallout surrounding President Donald Trump's posture towards white nationalists and neo-fascists, the forty-fifth head-of-state has now shifted his focus toward war policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

With the 16th anniversary of the United States and NATO occupation of Afghanistan coming up in October, Trump has sought to justify the escalation of the war in the aftermath of decades of Washington's failure dating back to the destabilization of the Socialist government of the 1970s and 1980s. It was during this period that the U.S.-backed Islamist groups opposed the People's Democratic Party (PDP) which oversaw social advances inside Afghanistan involving land reform, the rights of women and the maintenance of a secular state.

During Trump's 2016 presidential campaign he suggested that the war in Afghanistan had been a total failure and would not be a priority of his administration if elected. However, on August 21, the president said that the U.S. troops stationed there would not be withdrawn. Moreover, Trump announced the deployment of 4,000 more soldiers and an escalation in the bombing which has been carried out since 2001.

Trump said that the focus of his policy on Afghanistan would not be nation building. He went on to say that all he wanted to do was kill "terrorists." Despite the speech delivered before a military audience, this is not a departure from what has already been done over the last 16 years.

Former President Barack Obama often boasted about how many Muslim "terrorists" he had killed in targeted assassinations. Drone attacks escalated under the Obama administration while tens of thousands of additional troops were sent to Afghanistan during his two terms of office.

Consequently, the Trump administration is not making any fundamental changes in Pentagon policy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan. Trump is attempting to scapegoat the Pakistan government saying they have received billions in U.S. dollars and have not been considerate of Washington's wishes for the region. Under Obama the airstrikes inside Pakistan accelerated. The speech on August 21 signals the potential for ongoing bombing operations inside of Pakistan.

The Consolidation of Power Among the Generals

What is never said by the Trump administration and the corporate media which criticizes the presidency around the clock is that thousands of Pentagon and NATO troops have been killed and wounded in Afghanistan since 2001. There have been untold numbers of Afghans and Pakistanis who have lost their lives. Estimates are that several million people have been displaced both within and outside of the borders of the two nations.

In light of the rapid turnover of White House functionaries close to the president, the rise of even more high-ranking military personnel has caught the attention of even the Washington Post. General John F. Kelley was recently shuffled from the director for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to White House Chief of Staff. The departure of chief strategist Steve Bannon on August 18 connotes the further elevation of Pentagon interests in managing the day-to-day affairs of the oval office.

The Washington Post noted in an article written by Robert Costa and Philip Rucker that:

“Inside the White House, meanwhile, generals manage Trump’s hour-by-hour interactions and whisper in his ear — and those whispers, as with the decision this week to expand U.S. military operations in Afghanistan, often become policy. At the core of Trump’s circle is a seasoned trio of generals with experience as battlefield commanders: White House Chief of Staff John F. Kelly, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and national security adviser H.R. McMaster. The three men have carefully cultivated personal relationships with the president and gained his trust.” (Aug. 22)

Claiming the military influence on Trump serves as a “moderating” factor illustrates the blurring of lines between the apparent Democratic Party allied corporate media and the hawkish elements among the Republicans. Interestingly enough it has not been the questions of foreign policy and the waging of wars which never seem to end that have divided the two wings of the U.S. ruling class. Antagonizing relations with the Russian Federation, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Cuba and the People’s Republic of China seem to have bipartisan support. The disagreements derive from tactical and procedural issues on how to best implement the imperialist project of Washington and Wall Street.

This same Washington Post article goes on to say:

“Kelly, Mattis and McMaster are not the only military figures serving at high levels in the Trump administration. CIA Director Mike Pompeo, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Energy Secretary Rick Perry and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke each served in various branches of the military, and Trump recently tapped former Army general Mark S. Inch to lead the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Together with other allies in the administration, Kelly, Mattis and McMaster see their roles not merely as executing Trump’s directives but also as guiding him away from moves that they fear could have catastrophic consequences, according to officials familiar with the dynamic.”

White Nationalism, Neo-Fascism and Militarism

A campaign speech delivered by Trump in Phoenix, Arizona on August 22 reinforced the ultra-right wing character of the administration. The president praised the role of the police, military forces and the DHS.

Although Trump read a previous press statement ostensibly condemning the racists and neo-fascists, these sentiments were very much in evidence in Phoenix. His labeling of immigrants as criminals and terrorists provides a rationale for the further implementation of repressive measures impacting the majority of people in the U.S. and internationally.

The rally was yet another attempt to mobilize a mass base for his neo-fascist agenda. Belittling his critics within the corporate media as well as the thousands of people who had gathered outside to protest his policies, Trump emboldened his followers who applauded and screamed at every outrageous assertion uttered by the commander-in-chief.

So much so that in the aftermath of the Trump speech police fired teargas canisters, pepper spray and concussion grenades to disperse peaceful demonstrators surrounding the venue to protest the rally. During his gathering Trump praised Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio who was convicted of contempt of federal court and is waiting to be sentenced. The president hinted that Arpaio will be pardoned. Trump said that the pardon would not be announced in Phoenix since it would cause too much controversy. Arpaio enacted law-enforcement measures which many people felt racially profiled and humiliated immigrants.

Capitalism Cannot End Poverty and Low-wage Labor

Despite Trump's bragging about the 4.3 percent unemployment rate in the U.S., the growth in the second quarter of 2.3, the additional points added to the stock market and the purported creation of over a million new jobs, contrastingly the labor participation rate of approximately 62 percent and the decline in real wages paints a more accurate portrait of the actual social situation prevailing in the country. The promises of massive mining, manufacturing and infrastructural projects remain an illusion waved before the susceptible largely white political base to maintain their allegiance.

Under modern-day capitalism the desire for maximum profitability guides economic policy. The profitability is closely intertwined with the export of capital seeking low wages and minimal resistance from the workers. Therefore the disbanding of the administration's manufacturing and business councils represents the evisceration of the illusionary promises of better conditions for the distressed population inside the U.S.

Reverting back to the methodology of warmongering and race-baiting as a diversionary tactic is nothing out of the ordinary. Successive administrations have used these ploys in an attempt to confuse the masses. The dissolution of the war machine and the ascendancy of a planned economy operating in the interests of working people and the nationally oppressed are required at this juncture.

Republicans and the Democrats have proved incapable of satisfying the needs of the people. It will obviously take a new political dispensation to correct the contradictions that are rising rapidly within the U.S. during this time period.

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