

Will NATO Die at The Gates of Kabul?

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Nearly seven years into the NATO occupation of Afghanistan, following the post-9/11 U.S. invasion, serious rifts are coming to the surface among the NATO allies, over how to proceed. American and European defense officials are nearly unanimous that the current course of action is failing, and that the Afghan-Pakistani border region has become a new command-and-control hub for al-Qaeda and Taliban forces. In effect, from a military standpoint, the war has been lost. And the 42,000 NATO troops currently deployed in Afghanistan are incapable of waging the kind of campaign needed to unseat the insurgents—not to mention the skyrocketing opium production, which is generating an estimated \$1 billion in black-market revenue inside the country, and hundreds of billions of dollars in global Dope, Inc. loot, laundered through Anglo-Dutch offshore financial havens.

U.S. Pentagon and intelligence sources have estimated that a minimum of 100,000 combat troops, and a total of nearly 400,000 troops altogether, would be needed to stabilize Afghanistan militarily. History suggests that Afghanistan will never be tamed by foreign occupation. A series of U.S. and European think-tank studies—by the Atlantic Council and the SENLIS Council—have sounded the alarm, but offer no viable policy alternative.

In response to this crisis, which could reach disaster proportions by April-May, when Afghan elections are scheduled, and a major Taliban offensive is expected, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates has written to his counterparts in the other NATO countries, asking for a deployment of additional forces. However, Gates, himself, acknowledges that European NATO forces are not trained to conduct the kind of counterinsurgency warfare being proposed, to disrupt and unseat the insurgency. And the Secretary was forcefully told by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, according to Pentagon sources, that the United States cannot afford to send any additional troops to Afghanistan, because the U.S. Army has been “broken” by the Iraq occupation, and the Marine Corps is a close second.

Despite these JCS warnings, which Gates reportedly endorsed, President Bush recently ordered the deployment of 3,200 U.S. Marines from the Second Marine Expeditionary Force into southern Afghanistan, to reinforce U.S. and British troops there.

Is NATO Also About To Implode?

In a statement released on Feb. 4, Helga Zepp-LaRouche emphasized that the Afghanistan situation is lost, from a mili-

tary standpoint, and any idea that a new “surge” of NATO forces can bring stability to the country and the region is pure folly. Furthermore, she warned it could bring down the German government, along with other European governments, that are already facing massive public pressure for their failure to deal with the onrushing global financial collapse, which has devastated the conditions of life for a majority of citizens—and could not survive the popular blowback from increased military deployments and casualties.

It is in this context that Lyndon LaRouche denounced the latest scam by the neoconservative American Enterprise Institute, which is promoting a new American military “surge,” in Afghanistan, modeled on the Iraq surge, to add 12,000 American troops—three combat brigades—to the 26,000 already deployed there.

The AEI report was prepared in early February, by almost the same cast of characters, led by Fred Kagan and Gen. Jack Keane (USA-ret.), who sold the White House on the Iraq surge; it not only calls for the expansion of American counterinsurgency operations inside southern Afghanistan, but also for American and NATO military operations inside Pakistan—unless the Pakistani government launches its own invasion into the North West Frontier Province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) bordering Afghanistan. Such insane conduct by the Bush Administration, LaRouche warned, could assure the breakup of Pakistan, as well as the further unraveling of Afghanistan. And this is precisely the kind of “managed chaos” and “post-Westphalia” destabilization that has been Britain’s longstanding policy towards this region—and the world as a whole.

Some U.S. military specialists have observed that, if the Bush Administration adopts the insane plan coming out of the AEI “Afghan Planning Group,” the one likely outcome will be the final demise of NATO.

LaRouche agreed, noting that, since 1989-91, NATO has been an alliance without a legitimate mission. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, NATO should have been simply disbanded, amid much fanfare and back-slapping over the West’s “victory” in the Cold War.

Instead, a hard-core faction of British, American, and Continental European neocon wanna-be imperialists, is determined to keep NATO going, under the guise of “out-of-area” peacekeeping missions, which have thinly concealed a new round of imperial “mandate” occupations—as in Afghanistan and the Balkans. Below the surface, this faction has been building up a NATO encirclement of Russia and China, in anticipation of a future confrontation.

However, as a military force, NATO is broken. All the pressure in the world is not going to move the other NATO states to wage global asymmetric war, in the midst of the biggest financial and economic crash in modern history.

So, NATO now faces an existential crisis, and the prospects are growing, by the day, that NATO will die a not-so-quiet death at the gates of Kabul.