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Colonialism, Obama-Style

By Justin Raimondo

June 27, 2010

Everyone is shocked – *shocked!* – that the [indiscretions](#) of Gen. Stanley McChrystal failed to provoke a general reevaluation of [our course](#) in Afghanistan, rather than merely a review of who’s in charge of it. I find this shocking.

After all, as I recall, Obama ran on [ramping up](#) the war on the Afghan front, and even [threatened to invade Pakistan](#), two campaign [promises](#) he has [kept](#). Furthermore, he is committed to prosecuting the war in Afghanistan and now Pakistan on a scale that even the nuttiest neocons never dared suggest, a “nation-building” project that is nothing less than the construction of a US colony, or satrapy, from scratch. [McChrystal](#) went into Afghanistan declaring he was ready to roll out a “[government in a box](#),” i.e., a puppet regime such as the Japanese set up in [Manchuko](#) in 1931. This is the CNAS-Obama-ite “national security” doctrine in action: pretending to be the Viet Cong while reenacting every mistake the US ever made in Vietnam, starting with getting involved to begin with.

This idea that the Obama-ites are really peaceniks in disguise, who have to hide their “true” beliefs in order to pass electoral muster, is a myth [woven](#) by [Fox News](#) and the neocon Right: he and his Pentagon are no such thing. Indeed, they are even more serious – albeit not as visibly enthusiastic – about projecting American military power globally than their predecessors in the White House. If the Bushians left behind [the doctrine of preemption](#) as their geopolitical and military legacy, then the contribution of the current

crew appears to be the “new” COIN (or counterinsurgency) doctrine developed by the Obama White House in tandem with the [Center for a New American Security](#) (CNAS) – the semi-official Obama-ite national security think-tank, whose cadre [oversee](#) the Pentagon policy shop.

The [indiscretions](#) of Big Mouth McChrystal are only the latest and the least of the “COIN-dinistas” problems. Their [neo-Maoist](#) “live and fight among the people” doctrine is [failing big time](#) in the field, and they are falling back on the “revolution betrayed” explanation for the [inability](#) of their new-fangled counterinsurgency strategy to turn the tide against the Taliban. Like their neoconservative predecessors in the Bush administration, this crew is [retreating](#) behind the alleged lack of support coming from Congress and the civilians in charge of the war effort. [Just in time](#) for the debate in Congress over re-funding the war.

As in the Bush administration, so in the age of Obama: the “antiwar” Democrats will make a lot of noise [and then cave](#), in the end: bribery works every time. Their “antiwar” stance is just a bargaining chip: what they really care about is how much lard they’ll be allowed to pack into the legislation.

The outing of McChrystal as a lout and a loudmouth is not a very big deal except to those Washington insiders who like to play the game. All this brouhaha over personalities is just a smokescreen so as to avoid the real issue: what in the name of all that’s holy are we doing in Afghanistan, not to mention Pakistan?

The administration [insists](#) they’re out to get Osama bin Laden and his gang, but when asked by Jack Tapper on ABC on Sunday if there’s any new intelligence on bin Laden’s whereabouts, CIA Director Leon Panetta [admitted](#) – in an offhand, [almost carefree](#) manner – that they hadn’t been on his trail since 2001, when he slipped away at [Tora Bora](#).

What COIN is all about is nation-building: if the Afghans can be won over to a government that provides them with both physical and legal infrastructure, the Taliban can be bypassed and made irrelevant as the lives of the people improve. “[Clear, hold, and build](#),” or so the COIN-dinista aphorism goes. Yet what, precisely, are we building over there? Surely not an independent state: our obstreperous client, “president” [Hamid Karzai](#), is little more than [the mayor of Kabul](#) – [and that’s on a good day](#). On most days his authority barely extends outside the presidential palace.

In a move that would have had the Hollywood-Huffington left screaming bloody murder if done by the Bush administration, Team Obama is busy building [the foundations](#) of a full-fledged US colony in Afghanistan, [and Iraq as well](#) (where a “residual” force [will stay long after](#) the official “withdrawal.”) With the alleged discovery – or, rather, [rediscovery](#) – of untold mineral riches in the mountains of the Hindu Kush, the Money Power and its vassals in government have added incentive to push for this wacky “nation-building” strategy. That infrastructure Uncle Sam keeps promising the Afghan people sure will come in handy when it’s time to bring all that lithium to market.

“Government in a box” – McChrystal’s phrase just about sums up the facile banality of the COIN-dinistas, who imagine they can build a real nation in their social engineering laboratory, and not have it resemble the Frankenstein monster, at best. Such a “strategy” is perfectly suited to the grandiosity and self-consciousness of this administration, which does everything with one eye on History, and the other on the main chance.

NOTES IN THE MARGIN

The [implosion](#) of David Weigel was all too predictable: the *Washington Post* hires someone who’s an ostensible “libertarian” to cover the conservative-libertarian milieu, and it finally comes out that he’s not exactly what was advertised, as [evidenced](#) in remarks on a private email list. It turns out he positively *hates* the people he’s supposed to be covering, and said so in no uncertain terms to his fellow liberal journalists on the now-defunct “[Journo-list](#).”

You’ll [recall](#) that it was Weigel who “[reported](#)” on the Ron Paul campaign for *Reason* magazine, frantically pushing the Ron Paul newsletter [non-story](#), smearing both Paul and his supporters as not-so-secret “racists,” and making the [incredibly](#) stupid [argument](#) that the [Austrian theory of bank credit expansion](#) as the cause of economic turmoil is somehow “anti-Semitic.” At the time I was highly suspicious of the “libertarian” credentials of anyone who would attack Paul’s “End the Fed” campaign from this nutty angle, and now it turns out I was right: from his published comments on Journo-list, it looks like Weigel was plenty steamed at conservatives for opposing the government takeover of the health care system. Now you may agree with him on that or not, but you have to agree that no “libertarian,” not even his fellow “cosmotarians” over at *Reason* (where Weigel is a contributing editor), would go there. From the Kochtopus to *WaPo* to the Graveyard of Pundits Best Forgotten, Weigel’s meteoric career is a testament to the idea that there is, after all, some justice in this world.

However, I have to ask what the brouhaha is really all about. Weigel’s “reporting” has never been objective: he’s always been a fierce partisan of the Militant Center, eagerly policing the political margins to make sure no politically incorrect ideas get past the gates. Here, after all, is a guy [who wrote](#), at the height of the Iraq war:

“So here are all my least favorite things about this war – the lack of a sense of national duty or sacrifice, the partisan pissing contest, the unwillingness of leaders to listen when people talk to them.”

Yes, we have to “sacrifice” for the war effort – in the sacred name of National Duty, no less! He doesn’t mind [all that killing of innocents](#), or being [lied to](#): what’s really important is that we aren’t being asked to sacrifice enough. Now that’s a real “libertarian” talking! In bemoaning Weigel’s fate, the Huffington Post tried to spin him as a “left libertarian.” What a laugh! This guy is the exact opposite of a libertarian, left-wing or otherwise: he’s bad on economics, bad on foreign policy, and just plain bad all over.

That's why *WaPo* hired him. That's why he regularly [appeared](#) on the *Rachel Maddow Show*, snarking with her on almost a weekly basis, her go-to man for the latest dirt on Obama's political enemies. Rather than admit it, the editors chose to let Weigel go so they could maintain the fiction of their journalistic impartiality.