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Afghanistan : The "Graveyard of Empires" Strikes Back. Coalition Forces are in Retreat

by Felicity Arbuthnot
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"He uses his folly like a stalking-horse,
And under the presentation of that,
He shoots his wit."
("As You Like It", William Shakespeare, 1564-1616.)

As Britain's new Prime Minister struggles with reality and attempts to dress abject defeat up as resounding success - and whilst ordering the troops to leave Sangin, delusionally calls it: "Consolidation", a very brief return to the whole woeful Afghan disaster seems timely. As Iraq, a course embarked on blindly by his predecessor Charles Anthony Lynton Blair, QC., in blind, puppy-like determination to obey His Master's Voice.

It seems some serious lobal affliction strikes those who enter No 10 Downing Street. But not since its previous incumbent stated: "I'm a pretty straightforward sort of guy", has such a departure from reality occurred as David Cameron declaring today: "Any suggestion that British troops have been beaten in Sangin and are retreating with their tales between their legs, is not just wrong, it's disgusting."

Those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it. In another (nineteenth century) British

folly in Afghanistan (where they again met their match in Sangin, in spite of: "better guns, better communications, better everything..") Sir Lepel Griffin, wrote to The Times:

"This policy consists in spending a quarter of a million annually on a post of defence and observation which defends and observes nothing, and on the maintenance of a road which leads nowhere".

How history repeats.

On the death of the three hundredth British soldier, Britain's new boy Prime Minister opined:

"The truth is that we are there because the Afghans are not yet ready to keep their own country safe ... That's why we have to be there. But as soon as they are able to take care of security ... that is when we can leave." Here, on planet earth, they seem to be doing pretty well at defeating invaders in "their own country."

General McChrystal is sacked, General Petraeus has fainted, David Cameron's flight was diverted on his last visit to Afghanistan, due to the base he was going to visit being under sustained attack. He turned tail, so to speak, in mid-air and fled, whilst committing others to potential death sentences.

The sign at the entrance to the British base at Sangin reads: "Welcome to Sangingrad." The name of David Loyn's excellent new book on Afghanistan, from which the Lepel Griffin quote is taken, is: "Butcher and Bolt." A recent newspaper heading read: "We can beat something in Afghanistan - a retreat."

Tony Blair has failed to cover up one monumental folly, and may yet be charged with war crimes. International law experts, worldwide, are working on it.

David Cameron should take heed and be big enough not to compound another. Defeat in an invasion which should never have been undertaken or enjoined, is writ large.

For politicians to continue to ignore that, is to - willfully - have uncounted more British, "coalition" and Afghan deaths, more grief and indeed more global hate, generating, maybe, more bombs on home soil (subway, airport, iconic building) haunt their tenure, retirement and, indeed, the rest of their lives.