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History is repeated but lessons not learnt

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The West is killing Afghans in the name of democracy whilst Taliban killing them in the name of religion.

They are both equal in the eyes of Afghans After 9/11, Afghans welcomed the international community with open arms. Many were optimistic and hoped for a better tomorrow. Yet eight years later, the promised 'Marshal Plan' has not yet been delivered and the relationship with the West is now at a turning point as innocent Afghans mostly Pakhtuns are killed by indiscriminate US-led and British air raids. The sad fact is that the West has yet to comprehend two important realities: First, the Pakhtuns are the foremost victims of terrorism and extremism in the current conflict. Second, for the last three decades, the Pakhtun population has suffered immensely. The crisis in Afghanistan has been a slow-motion disaster. This was not the case in Iraq where guerrilla warfare against the US occupation erupted within weeks of the American occupation. In 2001 the Taliban appeared to have been swiftly and decisively defeated in a campaign in which the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance (war criminals) advanced with the support of the US air force directed by small teams of American Special Forces on the ground. Prior to the conflict, critics of American intervention had warned that Afghanistan was a notorious graveyard for foreign armies. They recalled that it was in the Kabul gorge just east of the capital that an army of British and Indian soldiers were slaughtered by Afghan tribesmen in 1842. Afghanistan is often promoted as the enduringly justifiable, and winnable, war. But this is not the case. This is the fifth Afghan War. The first Afghan War was in 1838, when the British invaded to make Afghanistan part of the Indian empire. The Afghan barons and warlords did not resist as it is the same today. It was the ordinary people who rose up under the leadership of the village mullahs and slaughtered a whole British army. The British were defeated. In 1878 the British invaded once more. Again the warlords did not resist, and there was another Muslim

popular uprising. The British left, but kept control of Afghanistan's borders and foreign relations. That was the second Afghan War. In 1919 came the third Afghan War. The Afghan army marched towards India, and the British surrendered before the Afghans lit a fire of Muslim revolt across the subcontinent. The Afghans had built a tradition. They fought invaders under the banner of Islam, and they won and I am sure it will be the same again. In 1978 there was a Communist coup by Afghan army officers. The Communists had support in the cities, but little in the villages, where most people lived, and where the ordinary Afghans led anti-Communist revolts. The current resistance will win the fifth Afghan War, as they won the four before. But the extent of the killing, maiming, and permanent devastation of land and society depends in part on what we do now, here, in Britain to stop the war in Afghanistan. If good intentions ever paved a road to hell, they are doing so in Afghanistan. History rarely declares when folly turns to disaster, but it does so now. Barack Obama and his ally, Gordon Brown, are uncannily repeating the route taken by American leaders in Vietnam from 1963 to 1975. The best thing about the Great Depression is that it warned against another. Vietnam began with Kennedy's noble 1963 intervention, to keep the communist menace at bay and thus make the world safe for democracy. That is what George Bush and Tony Blair said of terrorism and Afghanistan. Vietnam escalated as the Diem regime in Saigon failed to contain Vietcong aggression and was deposed with American collusion. By 1965, despite Congress scepticism, American advisers, then planes, then ground forces were deployed. Allies were begged to join but few agreed - and not Britain. The problem with conflict is that the way we describe it does not necessarily conform to reality. We think in terms more appropriate to a bygone era: by the desire to seize, destroy or conquer. The present war in Afghanistan is a case in point. We have been encouraged to believe that with the application of sufficient military force, backed by some state building, victory can be achieved and the country can be transformed into a modern democratic state after the western ideals. Thousands of US troops, backed by their British allies, who have fanned out into Helmand province are propelled by two equally flawed ideas. The first is that the Taliban can be defeated in a conventional sense. The second is that by displacing the Taliban's activities during the run-up to August presidential election a political space can be created that will legitimise the corrupted Hamid Karzai government which the West has for so long, and so obviously, propped up. The August Presidential election in Afghanistan will be over soon and the US and UK will not be able to maintain their position in the south, especially in Helmand Province. We are sure that the Taliban will be back soon after the election and this time they will be more organised and stronger than before as the US and UK are not sincere in their promise. If the campaign in Helmand appears purposeful at all, it is because the west choose to make it seem so through a combination of how it is presented (depictions of military manoeuvres devoid of real meaning), and because for too long west especially Britain have uncritically accepted that the end is achievable - in Gordon Brown's words, "democracy must win". The reality is that the war in Afghanistan is increasingly aimless and lacking in coherent strategy. Brown's notion that a strong Afghan state can be quickly forged is contradicted by the nature of the competition for power inside Afghanistan: between Kabul and the regions; between the Pashtu-speaking south and the rest of Afghanistan; and between weak state institutions and powerful social affiliations. The Afghans have been told that we are bringing "democracy and freedom to your country and fighting a war on terror". However, if a fair and democratic election was held in Afghanistan in August this year I am certain that those opposed to the American and NATO occupation of Afghanistan would win a landslide victory. We the Afghans are like any other people on Earth do not like being bombed, shot at and militarily

occupied by foreigners who have little or no understanding or respect for our culture, history and religion. From the Afghan perspective we are resisting foreign invaders and fighting for their independence and freedom. We have not gone to the west and attacked you but instead you have come here and occupied our country. We are not the invaders but it is you who are killing and destroying us in our own country. Till today not even one Afghan is found around the western world to be involved in any sort of terrorist activities but in fact those who attacked you are your close friends and allies who feed you with oil and gas. A poll published in the Globe and Mail last year showed that Afghans want the fighting to end, and they support negotiations with the Taliban. The Globe and Mail said: "Despite the enmity towards the Taliban, 74 per cent [of Afghans] said they supported negotiations between the Karzai government and Taliban representatives as a way of reducing conflict. Afghans are no different from the west when it comes to desire for peace, freedom and independence. If the West was invaded and their government overthrown, their infrastructure destroyed, land poisoned with depleted uranium, with tens of thousands being killed, hundreds of thousands wounded they would resist the invader. You would fight the invading army even if they claimed that they were bringing "democracy to your countries and said they were "fighting terrorism." One hundred and seventy six young British soldiers died for the lies of Tony Blair, George Bush and now for the latest deception of Obama and Brown in Afghanistan. We the Afghans offer our condolences and prayer to their loved ones who are and were deceived by the lies of their governments. The Afghan deaths are not even recorded and their blood does not matter to the West because the Afghan blood has no value and it is cheaper than the blood of the west in their eyes. It is being estimated that between 30,000-80,000 innocent Afghans are killed by the illegal invaders of Afghanistan. We, the Afghans are fiercely independent. We defeated the British Empire at the height of its power and defeated the Soviet Empire too. And now we are defeating the American Empire and its allies and it is clearly a war that the west cannot decisively win. I am not a supporter of the Taliban but would like to insist that if the Northern Alliance who are only a bunch of warlords, thieves, thugs, rapists, mass murderers and drug traffickers are part of the government and are living without prosecution, then the Taliban and other opposition groups who resist the illegal occupation have every right to fight for a place to live in Afghanistan. They are also the children of Afghanistan and have the right to be in their country and the government must recognise this and should try to reach them for a political settlement. It is time that the west especially the US and Britain leaders use common sense and follow the wishes of the majority of Afghans and the wider world that see no-good purpose in the war in Afghanistan. It is time to work towards a political solution, to help rebuild Afghanistan for the Afghan people and end a futile destructive war before it is too late. Afghanistan should be left to Afghans to decide their destiny and the invaders must leave Afghanistan immediately.