

# Is Trump's Agenda Being Eclipsed?

"I have not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire," said Winston Churchill to cheers at the Lord Mayor's luncheon in London in November 1942.

True to his word, the great man did not begin the liquidation.

When his countrymen threw him out in July 1945, that role fell to Clement Attlee, who began the liquidation. Churchill, during his second premiership from 1951-1955, would continue the process, as would his successor, Harold Macmillan, until the greatest empire the world had ever seen had vanished.

While its demise was inevitable, the death of the empire was hastened and made more humiliating by the wars into which Churchill had helped to plunge Britain, wars that bled and bankrupted his nation.

At Yalta in 1945, Stalin and FDR treated the old imperialist with something approaching bemused contempt.

War is the health of the state, but the death of empires.

The German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman empires all fell in World War I. World War II ended the Japanese and Italian empires – with the British and French following soon after. The Soviet Empire collapsed in 1989. Afghanistan delivered the coup de grace.

Is it now the turn of the Americans?

Persuaded by his generals – Mattis at Defense, McMasters on the National Security Council, Kelly as chief of staff – President Trump is sending some 4,000 more U.S. troops to Afghanistan to augment the 8,500 already there.

Like Presidents Obama and Bush, he does not intend to preside over a U.S. defeat in its longest war. Nor do his generals. Yet how can we defeat the Taliban with 13,000 troops when we failed to do so with the 100,000 Obama sent?

The new troops are to train the Afghan army to take over the war, to continue eradicating the terrorist elements like ISIS, and to prevent Kabul and other cities from falling to a Taliban now dominant in 40 percent of the country.

Yet what did the great general, whom Trump so admires, Douglas MacArthur, say of such a strategy?

“War’s very object is victory, not prolonged indecision.”

Is not “prolonged indecision” what the Trump strategy promises? Is not “prolonged indecision” what the war policies of Obama and Bush produced in the last 17 years?

Understandably, Americans feel they cannot walk away from this war. For there is the certainty as to what will follow when we leave.

When the British left Delhi in 1947, millions of former subjects died during the partition of the territory into Pakistan and India and the mutual slaughter of Muslims and Hindus.

When the French departed Algeria in 1962, the “Harkis” they left behind paid the price of being loyal to the Mother Country.

When we abandoned our allies in South Vietnam, the result was mass murder in the streets, concentration camps and hundreds of thousands of boat people in the South China Sea, a final resting place for many. In Cambodia, it was a holocaust.

Trump, however, was elected to end America’s involvement in Middle East wars. And if he has been persuaded that he simply cannot liquidate these wars – Libya, Syria, Iraq, Yemen,

Afghanistan – he will likely end up sacrificing his presidency, trying to rescue the failures of those who worked hardest to keep him out of the White House.

Consider the wars, active and potential, Trump faces.

Writes Bob Merry in the fall issue of The National interest:

“War between Russia and the West seems nearly inevitable. No self-respecting nation facing inexorable encirclement by an alliance of hostile neighbors can allow such pressures and forces to continue indefinitely. Eventually (Russia) must protect its interests through military action.”

If Pyongyang tests another atom bomb or ICBM, some national security aides to Trump are not ruling out preventive war.

Trump himself seems hell-bent on tearing up the nuclear deal with Iran. This would lead inexorably to a U.S. ultimatum, where Iran would be expected to back down or face a war that would set the Persian Gulf ablaze.

Yet the country did not vote for confrontation or war.

America voted for Trump’s promise to improve ties with Russia, to make Europe shoulder more of the cost of its defense, to annihilate ISIS and extricate us from Mideast wars, to stay out of future wars.

America voted for economic nationalism and an end to the mammoth trade deficits with the NAFTA nations, EU, Japan and China.

America voted to halt the invasion across our Southern border and to reduce legal immigration to ease the downward pressure on American wages and the competition for working-class jobs.

Yet today we hear talk of upping and extending the U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, of confronting Iran, of sending anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons to Ukraine to

battle pro-Russia rebels in the east.

Can the new custodians of Trump's populist-nationalist and America First agenda, the generals and the Goldman Sachs alumni association, be entrusted to carry it out?

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