WINNING IN AFGHANISTAN REQUIRES REGIME CHANGE IN IRAN

You shouldn't be surprised that Generals McMaster, Mattis, and Kelly convinced President Trump to send more American troops into Afghanistan. It's what they know, after all, recalling the old gag: if you've got a hammer, you look for nails to hit.

And it also, alas, reminds me of Alexander Haig's concerns about our covert support for the Contras. He feared the operation was "too big to hide, too small to win."

Sigh.

As Angelo Codevilla has rightly asked: How will we know when we have won? Are a few thousand more men and women sufficient for that task?

Notice that you can't answer the questions by simply looking at the Afghan battlefield. It's bigger than that.

The Taliban are vigorously supported by Iran, yet our Afghan strategy does not discuss it. I don't believe it's possible for us to dominate Afghan fighting without defeating the Iranians. We must put an end to Iranian training and arming of Taliban terrorists. This can't be done without cutting off the Taliban killers from the Islamic Republic.

Indeed, there is a better way. As I wrote a week ago in TTP:

> "Instead of little tactical expressions of our displeasure, we should do to the Persians what Eli Lake and Stephen Bryen want to do to the NORKs: mount a direct challenge to the Tehran regime. Iran is at the center of the enemy alliance; if the regime came down, it would change the world."

But I can't find any reference to the Persians in the president's Afghan speech. Insofar as the president's speech looks at the regional correlation of forces, it's mostly about Pakistan, which is certainly worthy of serious consideration.

But Pakistan has limited geographic and ideological passions. Their main concern is India. The Iranians have bigger appetites: they intend to dominate the whole region (and eventually, as they have often said, the whole world).

You can't win in Afghanistan without coming to grips with Tehran, but we don't do that. Mike Flynn wanted to -- with a political campaign similar to the one that brought down the Soviet Empire -- but his successor prefers to send Americans to fight terrorists on the ground, and neither he nor I nor anyone else I know wants to send troops into Iran.

So we do nothing and say nothing, except the tedious discussion of the nuclear deal, when the serious question isn't about the deal but about Iran.

Generals McMaster, Kelly, and Mattis know this. But like every U.S. administration since 1979, *they are unwilling to design a strategy for regime change in Tehran.*

Some knowledgeable people believe that our generals think that eventually the Iranians will do something so egregious that we will have to act, but I find myself wondering if this isn't just an excuse for inaction.

On other days, I wonder if that scenario would actually produce real action, anyway: Remember that Iranian plot to blow up a D.C. restaurant, thereby killing the hated Saudi ambassador, and incidentally many well-paid Americans? That was pretty egregious, and we caught them.

What did we do? We clicked our tongues. Yes, that was Obamatime, and Trump has already shown a willingness to act violently against enemies. But still, I wonder.

That by itself is worrisome, because I want Khamenei & Co. to be absolutely certain that Trump would violently and relentlessly bring them down if such a thing happened on his watch. Are they certain?

The Afghan "strategy" doesn't give them cause for such certainty.

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