

I believe that sending thousands more American troops into Afghanistan, as some in the administration appear to be urging, is a mistake. An escalation of U.S. military forces would further create the impression of an occupation and, in turn, provide a powerful rallying point for those we are trying to defeat.

In last Sunday's New York Times, Nicholas Kristoff cites a statement by many former U.S. intelligence officials warning that the more troops we put in, the greater the opposition.

Madam Speaker, I am not suggesting that we walk away from Afghanistan. We, along with the international community, should help with development aid, investments in education, school feeding, training of their police and military and help with strengthening their civilian institutions.

I also understand the threat from al Qaeda. I still strongly believe that we should hold those responsible for September 11, the attacks of September 11, accountable; and we should be committed to defeating them. I voted for the authorization to use military force after the terrorist attacks.

But, Madam Speaker, al Qaeda is more of a problem in Pakistan than in Afghanistan. And for those who justify our expanded military presence in Afghanistan as a way to prevent al Qaeda from ever coming back and establishing a safe haven, I would ask, are we going to send more troops to Somalia and Sudan and other countries that have provided safe havens for al Qaeda in the past?

Madam Speaker, there are no easy answers in Afghanistan. It is a complicated place, from its people to its geography. I don't pretend to have all the answers.

But I do feel deeply that an escalation of American military forces there would be a mistake and would not solve the many problems and challenges of that country. I fear it would only further complicate matters at a very high cost to our troops and our country.

[From the New York Times, Sept. 6, 2009]
THE AFGHANISTAN ABYSS
(By Nicholas D. Kristof)

President Obama has already dispatched an additional 21,000 American troops to Afghanistan and soon will decide whether to send thousands more. That would be a fateful decision for his presidency, and a group of former intelligence officials and other experts is now reluctantly going public to warn that more troops would be a historic mistake.

The group's concern—dead right, in my view—is that sending more American troops into ethnic Pashtun areas in the Afghan south may only galvanize local people to back the Taliban in repelling the infidels.

"Our policy makers do not understand that the very presence of our forces in the Pashtun areas is the problem," the group said in a statement to me. "The more troops we put in, the greater the opposition. We do not mitigate the opposition by increasing troop levels, but rather we increase the opposition and prove to the Pashtuns that the Taliban are correct.

"The basic ignorance by our leadership is going to cause the deaths of many fine American troops with no positive outcome," the statement said.

The group includes Howard Hart, a former Central Intelligence Agency station chief in Pakistan; David Miller, a former ambassador and National Security Council official; William J. Olson, a counterinsurgency scholar at the National Defense University; and another C.I.A. veteran who does not want his name published but who spent 12 years in the region, was station chief in Kabul at the time the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979, and later headed the C.I.A.'s Counterterrorism Center.

"We share a concern that the country is driving over a cliff," Mr. Miller said.

Mr. Hart, who helped organize the anti-Soviet insurgency in the 1980s, cautions that Americans just don't understand the toughness, determination and fighting skills of the Pashtun tribes. He adds that if the U.S. escalates the war, the result will be radicalization of Pashtuns in Pakistan and further instability there—possibly even the collapse of Pakistan.

These experts are not people who crave publicity; I had to persuade them to go public with their concerns. And their views are widely shared among others who also know Afghanistan well.

"We've bitten off more than we can chew; we're setting ourselves up for failure," said Rory Stewart, a former British diplomat who teaches at Harvard when he is not running a large aid program in Afghanistan. Mr. Stewart describes the American military strategy in Afghanistan as "nonsense."

I'm writing about these concerns because I share them. I'm also troubled because officials in Washington seem to make decisions based on a simplistic caricature of the Taliban that doesn't match what I've found in my reporting trips to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Among the Pashtuns, the population is not neatly divisible into "Taliban" or "non-Taliban." Rather, the Pashtuns are torn by complex aspirations and fears.

Many Pashtuns I've interviewed are appalled by the Taliban's periodic brutality and think they are too extreme; they think they're a little nuts. But these Pashtuns also admire the Taliban's personal honesty and religious piety, a contrast to the corruption of so many officials around President Hamid Karzai.

Some Taliban are hard-core ideologues, but many join the fight because friends or elders suggest it, because they are avenging the deaths of relatives in previous fighting, because it's a way to earn money, or because they want to expel the infidels from their land—particularly because the foreigners haven't brought the roads, bridges and irrigation projects that had been anticipated.

Frankly, if a bunch of foreign Muslim troops in turbans showed up in my hometown in rural Oregon, searching our homes without bringing any obvious benefit, then we might all take to the hills with our deer rifles as well.

In fairness, the American military has hugely improved its sensitivity, and some commanders in the field have been superb in building trust with Afghans. That works. But all commanders can't be superb, and over all, our increased presence makes Pashtuns more likely to see us as alien occupiers.

That may be why the troop increase this year hasn't calmed things. Instead, 2009 is already the bloodiest year for American troops in Afghanistan—with four months left to go.

The solution is neither to pull out of Afghanistan nor to double down. Rather, we need to continue our presence with a lighter

military footprint, limited to training the Afghan forces and helping them hold major cities, and ensuring that Al Qaeda does not regroup. We must also invest more in education and agriculture development, for that is a way over time to peel Pashtuns away from the Taliban.

This would be a muddled, imperfect strategy with frustratingly modest goals, but it would be sustainable politically and militarily. And it does not require heavy investments of American and Afghan blood.

VAN JONES' RADICAL PAST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, one of the important functions of a President is to make sure that the people he puts into important positions have no real background problems that will cause the administration to founder. This administration, this President, has appointed a whole bunch of czars and special assistants to the President, and they really haven't been vetted. They haven't been checked out thoroughly.

One of those is a gentleman who was appointed a special environmental adviser to the President. And, Mr. Jones, who we have all heard about in the last few days, has been found to be an admitted radical communist and leader. Now, that does not reflect well on the administration, and it does not reflect well on the entire Government of the United States because we are not supportive of the communist philosophy.

Now, Mr. Jones said that he was slandered when he resigned, and that was the reason he resigned. So tonight I would like to put some things in the RECORD that show exactly why he should not have been appointed in the first place. And I think it's important that my colleagues understand that these czars and these people that are being appointed really need to be properly vetted. And we certainly don't want people that have a radical agenda being put in positions of leadership.

Jones was a founder and leader of the communist revolutionary organization called Standing Together to Organize a Revolutionary Movement, or STORM. That organization had its roots in a grouping of black people organizing to protest the first Gulf War. STORM was formally founded in 1994, becoming one of the most influential and active radical groups in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The leftist blog Machete 48 identifies STORM's influences as "third-world Marxism (an often vulgar Maoism)."

Speaking to the East Bay Express, Jones said he first became radicalized in the wake of the 1992 Rodney King riots, during which time he was arrested. He said, "I was a rowdy nationalist on April 28, and then the verdicts came down on April 29. By August, I was a communist.

"I met all of these young radical people of color—I mean really radical:

communists and anarchists. And it was, like, 'This is what I need to be a part of.' I spent the next 10 years of my life working with a lot of those people I met in jail, trying to be a revolutionary."

Trevor Loudon, a communist researcher and administrator of the New Zeal Blog, identified several Bay Area communists who worked with STORM, including Elizabeth Martinez, who helped advise Jones' Ella Baker Human Rights Center, which Jones founded to advocate civil justice. Jones and Martinez also attended a "Challenging White Supremacy" workshop together challenging white supremacy.

Martinez was a long-time Maoist who went on to join the Communist Party USA breakaway organization Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism, the CCDS, in the early 1990s. According to Loudon, Martinez still serves on the CCDS council and is also a board member of the Movement for a Democratic Society, where she sits alongside former Weathermen radicals Bill Ayers and Bernadine Dorhn.

One of STORM's newsletters featured a tribute to Amilcar Cabral, the late Marxist revolutionary leader of Guinea-Bissau and the Cape Verde Islands. The tribute is noteworthy because Jones reportedly named his son after Cabral and repeatedly concludes every e-mail with a quote from the communist leader.

Jones then, of course, moved on to environmentalism, and that's the position that he took with the administration. But there is no question he is a radical and a member of the Communist Party and has been for a long time and supported their goals and approaches to government.

So I just would like to say, if I were talking to the President tonight, Mr. President, please be careful who you are appointing to these positions of leadership. It's important for the country; it's important for your administration and the image of the United States throughout the world as a beacon of freedom, justice and democracy.

MOST AMERICANS SAY WAR IN AFGHANISTAN IS NOT WORTH FIGHTING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, I rise to express my deep concern about the recent developments in Afghanistan. Sadly, 51 American troops were killed in August, making it the deadliest month for the United States since the conflict began 8 years ago.

August also was the deadliest month of the war for the combined coalition force. Many innocent civilians were tragically killed in the air strikes during the month of August, and there is growing evidence that the recent elections may have been marred by fraud.

Madam Speaker, for over 8 years we have relied almost exclusively on the

military to stop violent extremism in Afghanistan. But these recent events show that this strategy isn't giving us a victory on the ground or political solutions to the problem. The American people are beginning to recognize that relying on the military option alone isn't the best way to go.

The latest Washington Post-ABC poll shows that 45 percent of the American people want to reduce our forces in Afghanistan, while only 24 percent want to increase our forces. This latest poll from the McClatchy Newspapers came up with similar results.

□ 2000

It is clearly time, Madam Speaker, to develop a new strategy and a new mission for America in Afghanistan. We must begin to use all of the tools of "smart power."

Smart power means improving police and intelligence work in the communities where extremists hide. Well-trained Afghan policemen, who are familiar with local people, with customs and conditions, can often do the best job of hunting down extremists. Smart power also includes regional diplomatic efforts, education, better governance, and a civilian surge of experts and workers to support economic development in Afghanistan. These are the things that will give the Afghan people real hope for their future and eliminate the root causes of violent extremism.

As National Security Advisor James L. Jones has said, This war will not be won by the military alone. We tried that for years. The piece of our strategy that has to work in the next year is economic development. If that is not done right, there are not enough troops in the world to succeed.

I know that President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton agree that improving the lives of the Afghan people is the key to victory. They have pledged to do everything they can to help rebuild Afghanistan and show the Afghan people that we offer them a better future than the Taliban.

Madam Speaker, I and other Members of the House who oppose our occupation of Iraq watched for years as Congress did nothing to prevent that disaster. But we still have time to get it right when it comes to Afghanistan. This time, let's use smart power. It will save lives, save money, and make our country safer.

PRESIDENT SHOULD HOST CONGRESSIONAL TOWNHALL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Madam Speaker, Congress will gladly welcome the President tomorrow night to speak to a joint session of Congress about health care. All of us here have been asked hundreds of questions by our constituents over the past month. The Presi-

dent is an innovator in communications. He tries new ideas and is a trendsetter when it comes to new ways to be in touch with the American people.

So as the President addresses Congress on his health care ideas tomorrow night, why doesn't he take some health care questions from Members of Congress, questions that have been asked by the people we represent? After all, we call this the People's House, so why not address questions the American people have?

The questions could be submitted before the President speaks and he can choose the ones he wants to address. This could be a congressional townhall hosted by the President.

Here are just some of the questions I have been asked by the people of Texas.

One: The health care bill seems to cost too much. How are we going to pay for it? This question brought much concern to the people in my district. The Congressional Budget Office says that the pending House bill will cost anywhere from billions to even \$1 trillion to just implement.

Tax increases are in the current plan to pay for this bill, more spending of what we don't have. I made a pledge to my constituents not to vote for a bill that will raise taxes, and I haven't. So how do we pay for this without a forced tax increase on the American people?

Two: Why is this bill so confusing? It is written in a way that even the most reasonable people from even the same political party can honestly disagree on its meaning. The 1,017-page bill, if it passes, will then allow the bureaucrats to determine the meaning of the bill. Also, Texans don't want unelected bureaucrats in this city making their medical decisions on what services they get and don't get. Can we get a clearly written bill that everyone can understand?

Three: Why shouldn't Congress, the czars and members of the Cabinet be required to sign up for the public option? If it is going to be so good for the American people, shouldn't everyone supporting this plan be required to be under the public option, like government officials?

Four: People on Medicare are scared and afraid they are not going to receive any medical treatment. What is in the plan to make sure there is no rationing of medical care for the elderly?

Five: Why not eliminate the hundreds of billions of dollars of fraud and waste in our current Medicare system before we tackle anything else?

Six: All of the amendments offered in committee that would specifically require proof of citizenship to sign up for this new government-run health care were defeated. Americans and legal residents should not be required to pay for the health care of illegals. The bill is confusing on this issue since it doesn't require proof of citizenship.

Seven: Small business owners are afraid they will have to lay off people or shut their doors altogether if they