

Last Monday, Jackson Diehl wrote an Op-Ed for The Washington Post, which highlighted some necessary steps for success in Afghanistan. Writing from his position in the country, Mr. Diehl noted that troops continue to stream into Afghanistan and the counter-insurgency strategy by General David Petraeus, which was so successful in Iraq, is being implemented. Further, "Polls show a chance to win over the population: Less than 5 percent say they support the Taliban, while more than 60 percent still accept the presence of foreign troops." Yet, "McKiernan believes the Afghan army, now at 80,000 members, will have to grow to 240,000 before it can defend the country on its own -- and that raising it to that level will take until 2016."

Diehl notes that we are on the right track in Afghanistan. However, the war is as unpopular as ever, and is still far from a guaranteed success. These remarks are strikingly similar to those of Heritage Foundation expert James Carafano, who in a recent Washington Examiner Op-Ed, articulated the need to avoid a half-measure war in Afghanistan. By a half-measure war, he specifically refers to President Johnson's actions during Vietnam. In order to fund his vast and ambitious domestic agenda, Johnson devoted only the bare minimum in allocations to the Pentagon, while simultaneously gutting parts of the defense budget. The result was an incremental strategy in Southeast Asia, which allowed our enemies to adjust and recalibrate their forces.

For President Obama, who is currently focusing on a domestic agenda of unprecedented scale, it would be extraordinarily easy to repeat the failures of Johnson. To his credit though, Obama's early moves as president don't indicate the onset of a half-measure war. Our President did not cut-and-run in Iraq, and he has been consulting our Generals and making use of helpful reports from the previous administration. But as the administration turns more and more to its vast domestic agenda, it would be all too easy to put crucial military decisions on the backburner.

The question is, will President Obama have the stamina to follow a hard line in Afghanistan? Or will he find it necessary to abandon an aggressive fight in order to advance his colossal domestic agenda? We certainly hope for the former.

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