

It's the beginning of the end by [Justin Raimondo](#) , July 01, 2011

IN THE TOILETS WITH THEIR TAILS BETWEEN THEIR LEGS

Critics of the war in Afghanistan are fond of asking: "What would victory look like? How will we know when we've won?" In view of the [latest events](#) in that war-torn country, it's fair to stand that question on its head and ask: What would defeat look like?

It [looks like this](#) : as Afghan government officials gather in Kabul's fanciest hotel, the place where foreign journalists and other high mucka-mucks take up residence when in the capital, a group of Taliban fighters storms the lobby, kills at least 12 civilians and police officers, and sends Afghan officials scurrying for their lives. A five-hour gun battle ensues, which is ended only when NATO forces launch a helicopter attack on the assailants, strafing the hotel from the air. The *Telegraph* [describes](#) the scene:

"Political governors, ministerial advisers and senior police officers described how they hid from the fighting. ... The militants passed Maulawi Mohammadullah Orsadi, who heads the provincial council of Takhar, as he chatted with a senior judge in the hotel's forecourt, forcing him to do a double take as he spotted their guns and grenades.

"I counted at least eight rocket-propelled grenade rounds strapped to the back of one of them and they were in traditional clothes,' he said. 'As soon they passed us they began firing on the guards. The judge ran towards the lobby but we stayed and he was shot dead.'

"Mr Orsadi survived by diving into a ditch and staying there for five hours.

All over the hotel, dignitaries, who had come to the capital to discuss the future of Afghanistan's security, locked themselves in lavatories or hid under beds as the killing began."

After ten years of fighting, of "nation-building," of telling ourselves that "progress" is being made – and racking up costs [calculated](#) in the trillions – we can't even ensure the security of Afghan government officials in their own "capital city." If that doesn't constitute a massive defeat, then I don't know what does.

Even the smooth-talking President Obama, an expert at depicting the unpalatable as perfectly normal, seemed [a bit shaken](#) by news of the humiliating attack:

"Despite claiming that the Afghan capital was 'much safer than it was,' Mr Obama said he expected attacks such as the one on the Intercontinental Hotel to continue for 'some time.' 'Keep in mind, the drawdown has not begun, so we understand that Afghanistan is a dangerous place, and the Taliban is still active and there will be events like this on occasion,' Mr Obama said."

"A lot safer than it was" – when?

[Like](#) the Russian commissars of yesteryear, the Obama administration has announced a minuscule and essentially meaningless "withdrawal" of some troops — which now, however, seems rather iffy. In spite of all the happy talk about the Afghans making the "transition" to "self-determination," the truth is that, eventually – again, just like their Russian predecessors – the Americans will be forced to acknowledge defeat.

How long will that take? The Russians didn't hightail it out of there until their own system began

to collapse at home: they, too, spent a decade fighting fierce Afghan resistance to their occupation, and in the end, as they snuck away, a Soviet commander [told](#) a Western reporter:

"We came here with a very honorable task, and with open hearts. We are leaving with a sense of not having accomplished our mission to the end."

An understatement, to say the least: within a few years, the Soviet-installed Marxist regime of "President" Mohammed Najibullah had collapsed, and Kabul was in rebel hands.

It is worth recalling that, as the Red Army was being beaten on the battlefield, the Intercontinental Hotel – the hub of foreign journalists and Afghan government officials – was considered relatively safe, or at least safe enough for the Russians to have convened there a session of the "Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organization" — whose 41 delegates were sent fleeing by a [rebel rocket attack](#) .

That a similar propaganda exercise – an Afghan government [conference](#) on making the "transition" from dependence on the US to local control – was being staged by the Americans, some thirty years later, with similar results, underscores our stubborn refusal to learn from history. "We stand not for empire," intoned Obama in his recent Afghanistan speech, "but for self-determination." Somehow, the Afghans don't see it that way.

Our empire, like that of the Soviets, is on the way out, inevitably receding before the tides of nationalism — and economic decline — on the home front. Yet still we persist in nurturing the illusion that we're in control, that we can manage the scope of the unfolding disaster and delay indefinitely the day when, [like this Soviet official](#) , we'll be forced to admit defeat:

"It's a defeat, no question about it,' an aide in the Communist Party's Central Committee told an American friend this week. 'We had your experience in Vietnam right before our eyes, and we still went in like fools. The only thing we've been able to avoid is having to evacuate the last people from our Embassy in Kabul on helicopter skids.'"

We had the Russian experience right before our eyes, as well as our own bitter memories of the Vietnam disaster, and yet we still went in — like even bigger fools. Not only did we go in, but we stayed in — long after the last remnants of al-Qaeda had fled — and attempted to set up a puppet government, confident we would succeed where the Soviets failed. Yet "President" Hamid Karzai — or whoever is in office when Kabul falls — will share [Najibullah's fate](#) , of that we can be sure.

As to whether our imperial delusions will implode in the same way the Russians' did — and with the same rapidity — remains to be seen. However, I suspect — or, rather, fear — we'll know [soon](#) enough.