

opinion

Narco-terrorism makes Afghanistan important issue for next president

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In 2001, when the president declared a war on terrorism, there was little objection. The idea, in and of itself, of tracking down international criminals and bringing them to justice is quite appealing to not just American citizens, but to most people around the world.

In the process of implementing this war, it seems that the nation has tripped and fell on its face. With the invasion of Iraq and the turning over of Afghanistan to NATO control, the Taliban actually regained strength and now controls over half of the country.

While the US military is stuck occupying Iraq, Afghanistan is now producing most of the world opium supply. The main profiteer of this business venture is of course, the Taliban, who offer protection to the farmers and buy their poppy crops at a premium price. They

then sell it on the world market and pull a profit. Afghanistan, in 2007, produced 95 percent of the world's opium supply, according to the Associated Press.

Why is this industry profitable? The United States and most of the world practice a prohibitionist drug policy, which effectively drives up the price of drugs on the world market. This is the policy that makes a drug more expensive on the streets. The goal, ultimately, is to deter narcotics consumption due to high prices. Many American politicians on both sides of the aisle support this policy. Its negative implication, however, is the high profitability within the inevitable black market for the product.

Since this has become an ongoing issue in Afghanistan, American federal lawmakers must acknowledge this simple fact. Terrorists - to pull a profit, consolidate power and possibly fund a future attack on our nation - are now using our

policies against us. The wars on drugs and terrorism now affect one another, and narco-terrorism is on the rise.

Afghanistan as a state is very tricky to work with. It has spent 18 of the past 30 years dealing with foreign invasion and occupation. Between 1978 and 1988, the Mujahideen forces, led by Osama bin Laden, fought off the occupying Soviet forces. Traditional military action is more than likely seen as just another foreign invasion of Afghani land. Furthermore, the mountainous terrain of Afghanistan is not ideal for ground operations. Therefore, our military options are limited on this front. Air strikes on training camps and militant leaders are possible, but will more than likely exacerbate anti-American sentiment.

So how do we fight narco-terrorism? Many argue that narcotics legalization and/or depenalization would effectively drive down prices, but many feel this would also

lead to increased corruption and an increased flooding of the market with cheap, pure heroin. Others contend that eradication is the only way to keep the poppies out of militant hands. However, spraying and burning farmer's crops destroys their livelihoods and proves to only drive them further into the arms of the militant groups. There may, however, be another route.

Afghanistan's constitution has a provision to allow poppy growth for medicinal purposes. Currently, the United Kingdom, France, India and Turkey all do the same. The World Health Organization has requested this of Afghanistan so they might stock up on opiates, in order to treat people in the developing world who cannot afford pharmaceuticals. The Bush administration opposes this idea on grounds that the licit market is not lucrative enough for the farmers to switch over from the black market.

An approach that is being

thrown around would be to compete with this black market. We are now spending over \$500 billion per year on the War on Terror. With some of that money, would it not make sense to invest in competing against the Taliban?

My suggestion for dealing with Afghanistan is that governments should invest in the purchasing of these crops from farmers in Afghanistan at a higher price than the Taliban would offer. There is the chance that there may be a lack of willingness in these farmers to work with the West. This could pose a problem. Of course, it would be necessary to offer security for these farmers to suppress a backlash of violence from the Taliban.

This should all eventually lead to the further training of the Afghani military to take control of all regions outside

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Satire and parody offer comical relief in serious politics

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When the news on TV is anything but good news, it is best delivered as satirical and sarcastic as possible. I want news that mocks the serious aspects of politics and politicians. Stating that our economy is floundering is an understatement and this year's presidential election means more for Americans than it has in years. I'd rather just laugh at these predicaments because the reality of it all is much scarier.

I have grown cynical towards politics to the point of a non-partisan political status. Especially after the election of 2000, do our votes actually matter? Political satire tells the news like it is and then some. It does help if the viewer has insight into the context

of the parodies for a frame of reference. You do not have to know a lot about politics to find political satire funny; all you just need a sense of humor and an acceptance - or tolerance of the liberal media.

The portrayal of current political affairs by "The Daily Show," "The Colbert Report" and the sketches from "Saturday Night Live" is based on what is happening now, so it is accurate. By using political satire to poke fun of and over exaggerate nuances in American politics and politicians the news is delivered in a much more creative way. At the same time, it is informing the public about what is going on regarding which politician or the state of our economy.

The coverage of "The Daily Show" and "The Colbert Report" are funny, but not strictly a parody like "Saturday

Night Live." Even through the constant mockery of our politicians, there are also serious undertones. Toward the middle of the show, each host sits down with someone prominent in politics or in the media. Jon Stewart, host of "The Daily Show," recently interviewed Michelle Obama, and Stephen Colbert, host of "The Colbert Report," interviewed political consultant and presidential adviser, David Gergen.

In "The Daily Show," Jon Stewart, tends to say what we're all thinking. On Oct. 4, Sarah Palin accused Barack Obama of associating with terrorists. Then four days later, Stewart showed a clip where McCain was asked when he was going to "take the gloves off" and just go after Obama.

He responded, "How about Tuesday night?" referring to the second presidential debate

on Oct. 7.

Then clips of the second presidential debate were also shown. Rather than "taking the gloves off," McCain played it safe and criticized Obama's various tax proposals and his wanting to spend \$3 million on an overhead projector for Chicago's Adler Planetarium. Stewart hilariously commented, "McCain, you finally get face to face with country-hater McFeisty jab and you're just talking about senate procedural shit. Wow, it turns out underneath McCain's gloves - were softer gloves."

In "The Colbert Report," everything Colbert says is oozing in sarcasm while delivering the "conservative" views, intending to make fun of them. "The Colbert Report" is a balancing act between extreme satire and real news - definitely more so than "The

Daily Show."

For years, "Saturday Night Live" has covered all things political. Recently, Tina Fey made headlines with her dead on impersonation of Alaska's governor and McCain's running mate, Sarah Palin. Fey captured the governor's quirks and semi-Canadian accent. Working in Fey's favor, she bears a scary resemblance to Palin.

Unfortunately for Palin, she is a walking punch line. It is not difficult to ridicule a person who stated the only difference between her and a pit bull is that she wears lipstick.

We need to take our mind off of what is going on, but not ignore the facts. The cliché expression is, "laughter is the best medicine." The future of our country is unstable and laughter may be the only remedy right now.