

After the NATO summit: Afghanistan Slaughter to Continue

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Global Research, May 23, 2012

23 May 2012

Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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The official declaration on Afghanistan issued from the NATO summit in Chicago on Monday speaks of a country “on its path toward self-reliance in security, improved governance, and economic and social development,” where “the lives of Afghan men, women and children have improved significantly” over the past decade of US-NATO occupation.

It promises an “irreversible transition” from the US-led war to a situation in which “Afghan forces will be in the lead for security nation-wide” by the middle of next year. And it envisions the emergence of a “peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan” that will “contribute to economic and social development in the wider region.”

Readers unfamiliar with the tone and rhetoric of such NATO documents can be excused for rubbing their eyes in disbelief. What country are they talking about?

The claims about Afghanistan emerging as a “prosperous” and “stable” nation are as preposterous as the pretense that the Afghan government is providing improved security, governance and development.

This is a country where over half the population lives below the official poverty line, and 30,000 children die every year from the ravages of malnutrition. Surveys continue to rank Afghanistan as one of the world’s ten poorest countries and the worst country on the planet to be a mother, given the astronomical rates of maternal and infant deaths. The unemployment rate has remained at roughly 40 percent since the US invasion of October 2001. A meteoric rise in emigration is a sure measure of deteriorating social conditions, with three times the number of Afghans fleeing their country in 2011 compared to four years earlier.

As for attributing “improved governance’ to the US-backed puppet Hamid Karzai, his government is universally recognized as one of the most corrupt on the planet, with a thin layer of warlords, crooks and crony capitalists pocketing billions of dollars in aid money. This wholesale and shameless graft has earned Karzai’s regime the hatred of the Afghan people while generating popular support for resistance to the foreign occupation that keeps him in office.

A recent series of high-profile attacks in the center of the capital have called into question even the old characterizations of Karzai as the “mayor of Kabul.” The tripling of the number of US troops deployed in Afghanistan under Obama has succeeded only in spreading what the Pentagon describes as a “robust” insurgency throughout the country.

As for the Afghan puppet security forces taking the “lead” in June of 2013, as recently as February the deputy commander of US forces in Afghanistan, Lt. Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, admitted that only one percent of Afghan army and police units are capable of operating independently. And even this tiny handful of units depends on US forces for intelligence and logistics as well as fire support. The Afghan military possesses neither an air force nor artillery.

The rosy declaration issued in Chicago makes no mention of the steady rise in so-called “green on blue” killings, the shooting of US and other NATO troops by their supposed Afghan allies, which has devastated morale among the occupation troops. Nor, for that matter, does it even hint at the occupation’s endless series of atrocities, from a US soldier massacring 17 civilians, to American troops urinating upon and desecrating corpses of slain Afghans, to aerial bombardments and special operations “night raids” claiming the lives of entire families.

The rhetoric about an “irreversible transition” followed by a “decade of transformation,” supposedly beginning in 2014, is meant to convince the public in the US—where polls show barely one quarter of the population supporting the war in Afghanistan—and in Europe that, as Obama put it, “the Afghan war as we understand it is over.”

The corollary to this bare-faced lie is that the new phase of the war is just beginning. An indication of the character of this new phase was provided by Gen. John Allen, the top US commander in Afghanistan, who stressed that US and NATO forces would continue engaging in combat operations throughout next year and 2014 in what threatens to be a near-genocidal campaign to exterminate popular resistance.

A report issued on the eve of the Chicago summit by the Center for National Policy, formerly chaired by Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, suggests what is to follow. It calls for keeping indefinitely in Afghanistan—and certainly for the ten years that are covered by the strategic partnership agreement signed by Obama and Karzai earlier this month—some 30,000 troops, three quarters of them American, under special operations command. They are to be backed by “fire and air support.” Working “in conjunction with the Central Intelligence Agency,” they will continue the “direct action campaign” against insurgents in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

This force is to maintain control of three strategic bases—Kandahar Air Field, Camp Bastion/Leatherneck in Helmand Province and Bagram Air Field.

In other words, the “transition” is to more killing on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, more bombings, more night raids and more drone attacks. The aim, in what NATO leaders referred to as “the age of austerity,” is to prosecute the carnage more cheaply, under conditions where the US alone is spending some \$10 billion a month on the war.

Obama is pursuing the same strategic goals as his predecessor, George W. Bush. Under the cover of the so-called global war on terrorism, US imperialism is determined to secure permanent bases in a country that borders both China and Iran, as well as the oil-rich region of Central Asia. The country is viewed within US ruling circles as a strategic launching pad for new and bloodier imperialist wars to come.

Since Obama came into office in 2009, thanks in large measure to popular hostility to the war policies of the Bush administration, 1,350 US soldiers and Marines have been killed,

along with untold thousands more Afghan and Pakistani civilian men, women and children. Hundreds of billions more dollars have been expended on the nearly eleven-year war.

The NATO summit in Chicago only underscores that American working people can wage a struggle against war only by mobilizing their own independent political strength against the Obama administration and the entire two-party system. Such a struggle must be armed with a socialist program directed at putting an end to capitalism, the source of war and militarism.

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