

‘Al-Qaeda is a U.S.-sponsored Intelligence Asset used to Justify War in the Middle East: Interview with Michel Chossudovsky

The Use of 9/11 as a Pretext to Wage War

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‘Al-Qaeda Is a U.S.-sponsored Intelligence Asset’

Michel Chossudovsky, author of the international bestseller [America’s War on Terrorism](#), personally graced the jam-packed local launch of the Philippine edition of his latest book held at the Asian Center at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City last June 24. During the launch, he gave a lecture about the imminent danger of a U.S.-made nuclear catastrophe amid the Bush administration’s preparations for war with Iran.

BY JOEL GARDUCE

Contributed to Bulatlat



Michel Chossudovsky is the author of the international bestseller [America’s War on Terrorism](#), made locally available by IBON Books. An economics professor at the University of Ottawa in Canada, he personally graced the jam-packed local launch of his latest book held at the Asian Center at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City last June 24. During the launch, he gave a lecture about the imminent danger of a U.S.-made nuclear catastrophe amid the Bush administration’s preparations for war with Iran.

Joel Garduce of Center for Anti-Imperialist Studies (CAIS) caught up with the director of the

Centre for Research in Globalization (CRG) during his short weekend stay in the Philippines and conducted the following interview.

Chossudovsky

JPG: How would you characterize your book's contribution in giving a better understanding of the events surrounding 9/11?

MC: Well, there have been many books on 9/11. In fact, I would say that we have a lot of coverage of 9/11 from many angles. Many of these studies are carefully researched. They are, however, invariably ignored by the mainstream media.

In my own research, I have not centered on what happened on that particular day from the point of view of the [WTC](#) and [Pentagon](#) buildings. That aspect has been the object of several investigations.

What I have focused on is the role which the 9/11 events have played in justifying the invasion of Afghanistan almost a few weeks later after 9/11, and of course the invasion of Iraq, not to mention the police State legislation adopted in a number of Western countries.

I've focussed on 9/11 from a broad geopolitical perspective, because essentially 9/11 is still the core event which justifies the so-called "war on terrorism". Without 9/11, there is no war pretext. And that is why 9/11 is a very important landmark. It is used extensively by the Bush administration to attempt to demonstrate that America is under attack, that the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq are acts of self-defense. And consequently, the US must carry out a humanitarian mandate which consists in waging a global war against the terrorists, as well as against the so-called state sponsors of terrorism, including Iraq and Afghanistan.

And so I think that has been my focus, I've looked more at the geopolitics of 9/11, the role of intelligence agencies. And I've also centered on the fact that these terrorist cells, namely al-Qaeda, are invariably linked to the CIA. They have been consistently supported by U.S. intelligence. What we are dealing with is a process, which consists in fabricating an enemy. The creation of Al-Qaeda is an intelligence operation used as a pretext to justify a war of conquest.

So it begs the question: if al-Qaeda were, according to the Bush administration, to have played a role in 9/11, then we would have to investigate the relationship between al-Qaeda and the U.S. intelligence apparatus.

The evidence confirms that al-Qaeda did not play a role in 9/11. But in fact, that in itself is a red herring, because al-Qaeda is a U.S.-sponsored intelligence asset.

JPG: Is it accurate to say that your research points to 9/11 looking more like an inside job?

MC: Well, I haven't made that statement. I never made a statement that it's "an inside job".

What I've done in my writings is to show that the official narrative or explanation regarding 9/11 can be refuted, namely that the official narrative is a lie.

What the 9/11 Commission Report has submitted is an extensive narrative of what happened on that day and what happened on the planes. And the evidence suggests that

the 9/11 report is a lie. It's fabricated.

But I can't say unequivocally that this was an inside job. What I can say with certainty, backed by evidence, is that the U.S. administration is involved in a cover-up pertaining to the investigation of who's behind the 9/11 terrorist attacks. And what they have presented in the 911 Report, as well as in numerous national security statements is to my mind totally fabricated.

JPG: Your research goes against the thesis of some thinkers like Noam Chomsky that 9/11 is principally a blowback operation. How would you look at these views?

MC: Those views are totally incorrect. [The blowback thesis](#) assumes that the relationship between al-Qaeda and the U.S. government (including its intelligence apparatus) ceased in the wake of the Cold War. Because that's what they say and acknowledge.

They say "yes we created al-Qaeda during the Soviet-Afghan war. We trained the mujahideen, we helped them in fighting the Soviet Union. And in the wake of the Cold War, al-Qaeda has gone against us." And that's what's called the blowback. Blowback is when an intelligence asset goes against its sponsors.

That viewpoint is incorrect because in the course of the 1990s there's ample evidence of links between al-Qaeda and the U.S. administration, during the Clinton administration as well as the Bush administration, leading up in fact to 2001. There's evidence of active collaboration between al-Qaeda paramilitary groups in the Balkans and senior U.S. military advisers.

I think that the blowback thesis, whether it emanates from supporters of the Bush administration or from the Left is mistaken and misleading. Why? Because it really provides legitimacy to the war on terrorism. It essentially says "yes, the war on terrorism is a legitimate objective of U.S. foreign policy." I would say that people who support the blowback are either mistaken and unaware of the facts, or alternatively they are tacitly involved in media disinformation.

9/11 and U.S. client states

JPG: You've cited the role of countries like Pakistan through its Inter-Services Intelligence agency or ISI. How would you reckon the role of other countries like Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and even Israel in the perpetration of 9/11?

MC: Well, we're talking about intelligence agencies. Pakistan has played a very key role historically in supporting al-Qaeda right from the onset of the Soviet Afghan war under the helm of Gen. Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, the military commander who was president of Pakistan in the early '80s. And it was under the auspices of [Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence \(ISI\)](#) that the training camps, the madrassahs were established.

In turn, Saudi Arabia played a role because they provided funding through Islamic charities. So there is a connection between Saudi Arabia and al-Qaeda. And according to several reports, Saudi intelligence also played a role.

Israel, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan have certainly played a role but I think that Pakistan's role was far more central in the institutional support provided to al-Qaeda, always on behalf, of Pakistan's ISI's counterpart, the CIA.

My research has centered much more on the role of Pakistan's ISI. Because Pakistan's ISI also appeared to be involved in the conspiracy in the wake of 9/11, to wage the war on Afghanistan using 9/11 as the pretext.

Israel influence

JPG: There was a recent furor over the article by Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer entitled "[The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy](#)" that saw print in the *London Review of Books* last March. It's ruffled some U.S. circles about how the Israeli government exercises much influence over the U.S. government, specifically the Bush administration where many personalities identified with the Bush ruling clique are considered neoconservatives. How would you account the influence of the right-wing circles in Israel over the Bush administration and the conduct of the U.S. war on terrorism?

MC: I think that this relationship is far more complex than that. I don't believe that Israel overshadows U.S. foreign policy. I think that there's in fact a coincidence between Tel Aviv and Washington.

And this is something that is not recent. It goes way back in fact to the creation of Israel.

But on the other hand, to say that Israel overshadows U.S. foreign policy is incorrect. Because I think that Israel is an instrument of U.S. foreign policy. And it is being used in this particular context in the pursuit of U.S. hegemony. Now, Israel has an agenda. So I would identify (the U.S. and Israel) as involved in a longstanding military alliance. The U.S. has extensive military aid to Israel for a long time.

But I don't share the viewpoint that somehow Israel is now hijacking U.S. foreign policy and manipulating it. That position is simply incorrect.

However, we also have to understand another dimension of this question. The "Jewish Lobby" in the U.S. may in fact play a role (through) their U.S.-based organizations. These are not Israeli-based organizations. And they certainly play a role in shaping U.S. foreign policy and in sustaining a pro-Israeli position. That is probably true.

But that is an entirely different mechanism to that of a foreign country actually hijacking America's foreign policy. To the extent that American foreign policy would be different had it not been for Israel, I don't share that statement. Because U.S. foreign policy in fact is quite consistent in its stance from the [Truman Doctrine](#) -which was formulated by George Kennan in the mid- to late '40s and early '50s- to the present neoconservative agenda.

The other aspect, and it's very popular both among leftist as well as libertarian right-wing analysts is to say somehow the neoconservatives are really different from their predecessors. And they are putting forth the Democrats as a possible alternative to the neoconservatives when in fact, if you really look at what's happening in the last ten to fifteen years, you see a continuum.

I mean, you had the First Gulf war, you had the war on Yugoslavia, you had the invasion of Afghanistan, then you had Gulf War II. And if you go back further in history, the wars in Afghanistan during the Cold War era to the present, there's been a very consistent thread and it has been pursued both by the Republicans and the Democrats.

On the 9/11 truth movement

JPG: You have emerged as a leading resource speaker of what has been called the international 9/11 truth movement. Unfortunately, Filipinos are not yet familiar with that; there isn't much of an active 9/11 truth movement locally. Could you familiarize us with this movement?

MC: I'm not an active member of the 9/11 truth movement. I have participated in some of their activities and I support their endeavors.

I have, however, some reservations regarding the group because it has very contradictory elements within it. And there are various internal disputes also within the group.

Moreover, I do not believe that the analysis of 9/11 should be strictly limited to looking at what happened to the WTC and the Pentagon buildings. A much broader focus is required. It's the use of what General Tommy Franks calls ["mass casualty-producing events" -implying civilian deaths- with a view to justifying war.](#)

Moreover, when addressing the issue of mass casualty producing events, we should not limit our understanding solely to 9/11. We should be looking at 9/11, but we should also examine the [7/7 London bombings](#), the Madrid as well as [the 2002 Bali bombings](#), and so on.

We should also address the various suicide attacks which have taken place in the Iraqi war theater. And we know, as in the case of the [Basra terrorists \(British Special Forces disguised in traditional Arab clothing arrested by the Iraqi police\)](#) that many of those suicide attacks were instigated by the occupation forces.

So I think it's also important at least from my perspective to broaden this understanding of 9/11.

And the 9/11 truth movement has done lots of good work, focussing on Building 7 and the World Trade Center, and what happened to the planes going into the Pentagon, whether it was a plane or a missile. And all those things I think are very important.

While I've been following that literature very carefully, I have not been involved in research into that particular aspect of 9/11. I have, however, undertaken one piece of analysis which is in line with that literature.

It's the issue of what happened on the planes. And I have [a chapter in my book](#) which focuses on what happened on the planes as outlined in the 9/11 Commission Report, because it struck me that there was a very important relationship which had not been well-analyzed. The 9/11 Commission's narrative is based on cell phone conversations. The telecom industry is unequivocal. Those cellphone conversations could not have taken place from cellphones at altitudes above 8,000 feet.

And so I wanted to review the narrative in the 9/11 Commission Report, and demonstrate concretely that it is simply fabricated. It is impossible to make a telephone call from high altitude onboard a plane. And most of their descriptions rest on that. Not all of it, but most of it rests on telephone conversations between alleged passengers on the one hand and family members on the other. And the telecom industry is absolutely unequivocal. They say that you could not (in 2001) make a telephone conversation at 31,000 feet. You might be able to do it at 8,000 feet but the planes were flying at high altitude during a good part of

the time when they were in the air.

The U.S. and fascism

JPG: How do you view claims that the U.S. government especially under the Bush administration has become a full-fledged fascist empire a la Nazi Germany?

MC: There's certainly evidence to suggest that the Bush administration is moving towards a police state. There's repeal of the rule of law because people can be arrested arbitrarily.

There's a military agenda to conquer foreign lands, and the pretext to wage war is fabricated.

So, yes, there are certain features reminiscent of Nazi Germany. But on the other hand one has to be very careful in making those comparisons.

Because one of the features of Nazi Germany was that Nazism was also a means for creating employment in the military-industrial complex, so that they were building up their military and they had expanded defense expenditures, infrastructure, and so on, which created a lot of jobs in the course of the 1930s. And what characterizes the present regime in America is yes, movement towards martial law and the police state, militarization of civilian institutions, and also big contracts for the military and lots of military spending. However, the type of weapons systems which currently prevails is such that military spending actually creates very few jobs.

And so we're today in a neoliberal context. Nazi Germany was not characterized by neoliberal reforms. And that was one of the reasons why there was more support for the Nazi programme in the middle to late '30s. Because there was a promise of jobs which ultimately was reached in the late '30s when the German military machine was in full swing.

Rifts in the U.S. establishment

JPG: There had been revelations in the U.S. media that point to the Pentagon under Rumsfeld getting more control over the covert operations than the CIA. and the U.S. State Department. How do you regard these revelations? Do they indicate anything of value in terms of the changes being undergone by the U.S. state?

MC: There's always sort of a rivalry between competing agencies of the U.S. government. I think that the Pentagon has been vying for some time to implement its own intelligence operations. In this particular case, they have implemented disinformation campaigns which consist in planting news stories in the media. So yes, they are involved in intelligence.

But on the other hand, I don't view this necessarily as a crucial issue. It's a rivalry between bodies of the state apparatus, between the military and intelligence agencies. There can be very significant discrepancies, but they also work together..

Look at the person now who's in charge of intelligence. It's John Negroponte, who was involved in the dirty war in Central America, particularly in promoting the para-military death squads in Honduras and Nicaragua.

I think in effect that these organizations are rivals but they also involved in active

collaboration. . They always have joint committees, the Pentagon, the CIA., the NSA., and so on. I really don't think that any change in direction would occur as a result of these discrepancies. They're normal within the US military-intelligence community.

JPG: There have been a string of prominent Americans coming out against the Bush administration and its handling of the war in Iraq, of the U.S. war on terror. They include active and retired generals, some previous Cabinet secretaries and even some current members of the U.S. Congress. There seems to be emerging rifts within the U.S. ruling class. What do you think are the prospects of the anti-imperialist movement being able to make use of these rifts within the U.S. ruling class?

MC: I think there are people in the U.S., both Republicans and Democrats, who recognize that the Bush administration, particularly in Iraq, but also in relation to Iran, spells disaster.

And it's not necessarily that they are against U.S. foreign policy as decided by the Bush administration. They believe that it should be conducted differently, perhaps with a less militarist perspective.

So you have people like Zbigniew Brzezinski, who firmly support the extension of America's sphere of influence in the Middle East and Central Asia, to gain control over the Eurasian corridor, and the oil and gas reserves of that region. These people would, however, favor a somewhat more negotiated foreign policy, rather than all-out military conquest and war.

So people like that are now more or less presenting themselves as voices of moderation. But it doesn't mean necessarily that they are in disagreement with the broader objectives of U.S. imperialism, which is really to colonize regions.

I see dissent from within the establishment but I don't see necessarily articulate dissent against the project of global domination and militarization which the Bush administration has been putting forth.

JPG: So these emerging rifts within the U.S. ruling elite do not really indicate a departure from the imperial project that the U.S. has been conducting?

MC: I think that these differences in the current context could still play a very important role. It's not to say that things don't change.

What I'm saying is that these differences of viewpoint do not constitute some kind of big revolution in U.S. politics. It's simply the fact that within the ruling elite, people think the Bush administration has taken on a course which is untenable and which ultimately will lead to disaster. Moreover, this course is not furthering the U.S. corporate agenda in the most effective way.

So these moderating views do not mean that the U.S. all of a sudden has become a peaceful nation. It simply means that they want to give a slightly more humane face to imperialism. That's really the whole issue.

There's a global military agenda, there's a plan to conquer, there is a plan to dominate and impoverish. And some people in America within the establishment think that there are better ways of doing it. That's the way I see this critique. Because the people who were undertaking that critique are themselves the architects of this military agenda, including

Brzezinski.

And the Democrats don't really have an alternative viewpoint to that of the Republicans. They probably would be a little bit less radical in pushing certain policies but I don't think that fundamentally they would do things that differently if they were to form the next administration.

You must remember that there are certain institutions which will be there all the time—the CIA, the Pentagon, and so on – irrespective of the team of people who are in power. And ultimately, to what extent do these people call the shots. The people who ultimately decide are Lockheed Martin, the defense contractors, and the oil companies.

JPG: But what if it's possible that the war crimes committed by the Bush administration and those in the U.S. ruling elite are held to account? Don't you think the people's movement in the U.S. and the antiwar movement worldwide can benefit from holding to account the Bush administration and even the Democrats who approved of this war on terrorism?

MC: I think that at one level, there's certainly an opportunity to push forward in terms of the antiwar movement, focussing on the criminal nature of the Bush administration, let's say with regard to Iraq, with regard to torture, the police state, etc.

But we must not fall into the trap of thinking that if Bush is impeached or if there's change in direction leading let's say to a new president who is a Democrat, that there will be fundamental change in America.

You see, the U.S. is also involved in what we call regime change or regime rotation. Regime rotation in America doesn't necessarily mean that there's going to be real and meaningful changes in the way in which the country is moving nationally and internationally.

And that's where the confusion emerges, because there's a movement in the U.S. that says "anything else but Bush". And they say yes, we must get rid of Bush.

Now that assumes first of all that Bush is actually making the decisions. The evidence suggests that he's not making the decisions. He himself is a puppet. He has a limited understanding of U.S. foreign policy and essentially he is acting on behalf of powerful corporate interests. This is a war driven by profit.

Clearly yes, the advisory team is important but I would say we have to look at the role of U.S. intelligence, the military, the links between the military intelligence establishment and the oil companies and the defense contractors, and so on. And of course Wall Street which ultimately is really the basic pinnacle of financial power in America.

If Bush were to be impeached, which at this juncture seems unlikely, or if there's a change in regime, this does not mean that there's going to be fundamental change in America.

Impeachment could contribute to demobilizing people who would otherwise be more aware of the fact that you don't change a New World Order by simply changing a president.

You need much more carefully thought out ways of waging the struggle against the New World Order. You have to target the defense contractors, the oil companies, their insidious role in pushing a military agenda, not to mention the use of 9/11 as a pretext for

waging war.

That's the way I see it. I do not think that once you get rid of Bush you solve the problem. But I should say that an impeachment of Bush would be a very important achievement if it can be used as a stepping stone towards a broader struggle.

It's ironic to say the least that there was an impeachment move against Clinton for his involvement with Monica Lewinsky but when extensive war crimes are revealed and when the U.S. president blatantly violates all the domestic and international norms of justice, and engages the US in a criminal war with no justification whatsoever, his legitimacy as Head of State remains unscathed. His administration continues in a routine fashion.

So yes the impeachment of President Bush is something that I would support. But I don't believe necessarily that it will resolve matters in the longer run.

JPG: Given the unprecedented belligerence of the U.S. under the aegis of the war on terror, what are the prospects of a schism developing within the imperialist camp similar to what developed during World War II where there were Allied Powers vis-à-vis the Axis Powers?

MC: You mean, between the U.S. and UK on one hand, and France, Germany on the other?

JPG: Or say, Russia and China?

MC: China and Russia are part of that imperialist design. They're not countries which have an imperial agenda as such. I'm not saying necessarily that they couldn't in the future. But historically the Soviet Union didn't really have an imperial agenda. And China has never had an imperial agenda. Throughout its history, it has remained within its borders.

I think what we're looking at is the relationship which exists within the Western military alliance. That is really the crucial thing. And the fact that you have very significant divisions between the U.S. and Britain, on one hand, and France and Germany on the other. I think that's very important.

And you have splits in the military-industrial complex. Britain's military industrial complex is integrated into that of the United States. British Aerospace Systems Corporation (BAE) is actually producing for the U.S. Department of Defense. It has exactly the same privileges as the U.S. defense contractors, under an agreement signed in 1999 under the Clinton administration entitled the Transatlantic Bridge.

And then you have the European defense industry (i.e continental Europe) which is based on an alliance between France and Germany. The dominant company of the European military industrial complex is EADS, which is a joint venture between Aerospatiale Matra and Deutsche Aerospace.

And so you have a split or division between what I would call the Anglo-American axis, which now includes Australia, Canada as full fledged partners and, perhaps Israel, and maybe a few other countries, who are part of this agenda. And then you have the Franco-German alliance.

But I should also mention that NATO is still an organization which is firmly under U.S. control. And that's why in the buildup of a possible war with Iran, NATO is firmly behind the

US and Israel.

In this context, both President Jacques Chirac and Chancellor Angela Merkel are firmly behind the US military agenda in relation to Iran.

And so you don't have a situation in any way comparable to that prior to the war on Iraq, where France and Germany were opposed to the Anglo-American axis.

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