Conquest and Censorship

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After the Battle of Hastings in 1066, William the Conqueror's army buried its fallen comrades, but left the corpses of the English defenders to rot in the fields where they lay.

Such is the brutal nature of war: the victor inflicts all manner of suffering and humiliation on the vanquished.

What the United States is doing in Iraq and Afghanistan is only marginally different.

William the Conqueror made no pretense about his brutal subjugation of the English. They hated him and resisted his occupation for twenty years, during which time he took all their property and gave it to the Norman upper class. Over 300,000 English people were murdered and starved (one fifth of the population) and some 300,000 French and Normans were planted in England in positions of authority.

An English nobleman was likely blinded, castrated, and thrown in a dungeon in one of the hundreds of prison William built across the countryside to terrorize the population into submission.

England ceased being England, and William repented his sins on his deathbed.

While the U.S. subjugation of Iraq and Afghanistan is following much the same pattern, it is different in one respect. Unlike William, whose oppression was done in the light of day, the U.S. conceals its crimes to preserve the pretense of moral superiority that defines American "exceptionalism."

Covert operations, cover-ups, and deception are essential because, without the belief in its inherent moral superiority, the American public might not support its government's plundering of foreign nations on behalf of America's ruling class.

The U.S. policy of not identifying or accurately counting foreigner killed in recent American conquests is a good example of why this Big Lie is employed.

The U.S. has an official policy of not counting the number of people it has killed and crippled, rendered homeless, starved, condemned to sickness, disease and insanity. Thus it is impossible to quantitatively measure the amount of misery America has visited upon Iraq, which of course makes it easier for the U.S. Government to pretend that all this death and suffering was for Iraqi benefit.

There are reports of five million orphans in Iraq. That's three times the number of Englishmen William conquered.

In the face of such immense numbers, it is easy to forget that each person matters, as much as you matter.   Someone knows who these people are.

More to the point, in many if not most cases the U.S. Government – the hired killers in the military and the CIA – know perfectly well the names and identities of each and every person they murder, maim, or render an orphan.

They don't tell you, but they know.

In Afghanistan, for example, the CIA and military have been conducting, through Provincial Reconstruction Teams, other "civic action" programs, and a secret army of informants, a census of every village, town and city in the country – much like William's Doomsday Book.

As commander of the U.S. occupation army, General Stanley McChrystal wants to know every Afghan by name, so he can decide who is Taliban and who is not. McChrystal wants to know where each man lives, how many people are in his family, who his wife and children and relatives are, where he works and where his house is.

In places like Marjah, McChrystal is at a bit of a loss, but he still wants to know, and tries to know, largely through spies and all manner of electronic surveillance, including satellites.

All this biographical information on Afghans is entered into a computer in McChrystal's office. The CIA carefully monitors that computer, and with its military special operations counterparts, keeps a separate folder for the Taliban alone.

Within that Taliban folder, every man is identified by the same biographical criteria as very other Afghan. In addition, each Taliban is categorized by his rank and position within the organization. Low level fighters are left to the Marines. High Value Targets have their own folder, and belong to the CIA and military special operations.

High Value Targets are given the same special attention that William the Conqueror afforded to English noblemen. High Value Targets have the property (intellectual as well as, say, opium fields) that McChrystal wants, and thus more biographical information is gathered about them. Their movements are tracked 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Through spies and sophisticated electronic surveillance, McChrystal even has a very good idea when they are leaving one safe house and traveling to another.

The jets are fueled, and the drones are in the sky, waiting.

And this is how and why 27 Afghan civilians were summarily murdered on 21 February 2010 while traveling between remote provinces in a caravan of minibuses. The CIA and military special operations forces were alerted that such and such a High Value Target was traveling with his family, and McChrystal seized the opportunity to kill them all.

In a dirty war like the one in Afghanistan, killing High Value Targets almost always involves killing them while they are home or traveling with their families; otherwise they are underground and inaccessible.

Because this psychological warfare tactic of killing important enemy leaders along with their entire families is policy (albeit secret policy), it is called "black propaganda."

It is psychological warfare because it has a sobering effect on low level Taliban who wish to

rise in the ranks. It is propaganda because every Afghan citizen is aware of this policy. And it is black because Americans can't believe it is true.

They can't believe it is true for two reasons. First, because General McChrystal looks like an American nobleman and, like William, he expresses remorse.

And they believe because the mainstream media goes along with the Big Lie.

And yet, despite the PR work of correspondents at Newsweek, General McChrystal is no less savage than William the Conqueror. His job is fighting battles, killing enemies, and dismembering their bodies. Every man woman and child.

The only difference is that William did his killing personally, up close, with a battle axe and a sword for everyone to see, while McChrystal stands far away from the carnage, without witnesses, and allows other to do his dirty work for him, with 2000 pound bombs, missiles fired from drones, shotguns, and censorship.

Most of all it works because no one ever knows the names and biographies of the innocent victims.

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