

Obama's Disastrous Afghan Plan

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [AFGHANISTAN](#)

Last month President Barack Obama announced the deployment of 17,000 additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan, raising the total there to 53,000, only to add an additional 4,000 training troops this past week. Questions of a possible quagmire have begun to sprout faster than opium poppies.

In an attempt to disarm his critics, Obama has defined his policy as pointed, specific, and winnable:

So let me be clear: Al Qaeda and its allies — the terrorists who planned and supported the 9/11 attacks — are in Pakistan and Afghanistan. We have a clear and focused goal to disrupt, dismantle and defeat Al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future.

Moreover, he has framed the Afghanistan war as entirely just:

The United States of America did not choose to fight a war in Afghanistan. Nearly 3,000 of our people were killed on Sept. 11, 2001, for doing nothing more than going about their daily lives.

Tragically, however, like Bush's war on Iraq, Obama's war on Afghanistan, instead of protecting us from terrorist attacks, will only succeed in increasing the chances of our victimization.

Of course, one could point to the usual problems that wars spawn. Many people deeply resent the presence of foreign troops in their country, thereby intensifying feelings of bitterness. And desires for revenge are inflamed when attacks that are advertised as surgically targeting the enemy often produce more civilian deaths – and sometimes only civilian deaths – in the process. Moreover, thanks to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, the production of opium poppies, which was virtually eliminated under the Taliban, now constitutes about 40 percent of the economy, which contributes to a profound destabilization of the country.

But in order to understand the deeper reason the Obama campaign is doomed to further endanger us, one must carefully consider the conclusions drawn by a 22-year veteran senior C.I.A. analyst who headed the agency's task force on Osama bin Laden and anonymously wrote a book, *Imperial Hubris*, criticizing the so-called war on terror. Here is what The New York Times reported about the book's conclusions (June 9, 2004):

Anonymous contests the argument put out by members of the Bush administration that Mr. bin Laden wants to destroy America because he hates our values, freedoms and ideas. In Anonymous's view, the Qaeda leader hates us "because of our policies and actions in the

Muslim world” and Al Qaeda’s attacks are meant to advance a set of clear, focused and limited foreign policy goals: namely, an end to American aid to Israel; the removal of American forces from the Arabian Peninsula; an end to the American occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq; an end to American support for repressive, apostate Muslim regimes like Saudi Arabia; an end to American support for Russia, India and China against their Muslim militants; and an end to American pressure on Arab energy producers to keep oil prices low.

In other words, terrorist attacks on the U.S. are triggered by U.S. policies of domination in the Middle East and beyond, especially the propping up of brutal and unpopular dictators, such as the “royal” family in Saudi Arabia, and the support of Israel in its virulent campaign to take more and more Palestinian land while depriving the Palestinian people of the most basic, fundamental human rights in the process. The review continues:

“U.S. forces and policies are completing the radicalization of the Islamic world, something Osama bin Laden has been trying to do with substantial but incomplete success since the early 1990’s,” he writes. “As a result, I think it fair to conclude that the United States of America remains bin Laden’s only indispensable ally.”

By escalating the war on Afghanistan, Obama has accepted George Bush’s Manichean outlook that defines those who hate us as evil while the U.S. represents only truth and goodness – a framework that conveniently eliminates any consideration of the role of U.S. policies in provoking terrorist attacks and automatically dismisses the credibility of any criticisms.

What goals might be pressing the Obama administration deeper into Afghanistan, despite the heightened danger to U.S. citizens? To answer this question we need only return to the analysis of the C.I.A. analyst.

He describes the invasion of Iraq as “an avaricious, premeditated, unprovoked war against a foe who posed no immediate threat but whose defeat did offer economic advantages.” He compared it to the 1846 U.S. war against Mexico.

Oil, the author contends, is at the core of U.S. interests in Muslim countries, leading the United States to support “the Muslim tyrannies bin Laden and other Islamists seek to destroy.” (The San Francisco Chronicle June 27, 2004)

This same theme appeared in a Frontline program aired in November 2003, where James Baker, former Secretary of State, declared to the interviewer: “As I told you, I worked for four administrations under three presidents. And in every one of those, our policy was that we would go to war to protect the energy reserves in the Persian Gulf. That is a major and very significant national interest that we have.”

As long as the U.S. government pursues its imperial interests in the Middle East and Central Asia, turning civilian populations into “collateral damage” so that the U.S. can cling to oil, and as long as it props up Israel so that Israel can function as a surrogate attack dog, the U.S. population will be subjected to terrorist attacks.

In his book, *Turning the Tide*, Noam Chomsky quotes from a 1948 internal State Department document written by George Kennan, one of the chief architects of U.S. foreign policy, where an unusually candid glimpse into this imperial mindset appears:

... we have about 50 % of the world's wealth but only 6.3% of its population... In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security... We should cease to talk about vague and ... unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better.

As long as corporate America is allowed to pursue this campaign of world domination for the purpose of monopolizing the world's wealth - as opposed to reaching out to other countries in order to help them raise their standard of living - our safety will be jeopardized.

In order to win genuine security, working people here in the U.S. will have to come to the realization that the same impulse exhibited by corporations in their quest to raise profits by dominating other countries for their resources is expressed here at home when corporations attempt to raise profits by preventing workers from unionizing, reducing our wages, stripping us of traditional pensions, and so on.

In the final analysis, true security will only be achieved, not by deploying more troops, but by bringing all U.S. troops home from all over the world. But this will only happen when working people choose to redefine the fundamental principles of this society and insist, through a democratic process, that we begin to produce in order to raise everyone's standard of living, not for corporate profits where the aim is to make the rich even richer.

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