

9/9 and 9/11, 20 Years Later

We may never know the full contours of the whole riddle inside an enigma when it comes to 9/11 and related issues

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It's impossible not to start with the latest tremor in a series of stunning geopolitical earthquakes.

Exactly 20 years after 9/11 and the subsequent onset of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), the Taliban will hold a ceremony in Kabul to celebrate their victory in that misguided Forever War.

Four key exponents of Eurasia integration – China, Russia, Iran and Pakistan – as well as Turkey and Qatar, will be officially represented, witnessing the official return of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. As blowbacks go, this one is nothing short of intergalactic.

The plot thickens when we have Taliban spokesman **Zabihullah Mujahid** firmly stressing [“there is no proof”](#) **Osama bin Laden** was involved in 9/11. So “there was no justification for war, it was an excuse for war,” he claimed.

Only a few days after 9/11, Osama bin Laden, never publicity-shy, [released a statement](#) to Al Jazeera:

“I would like to assure the world that I did not plan the recent attacks, which seems to have been planned by people for personal reasons (...) I have been living in the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and following its leaders’ rules. The current leader does not allow me to exercise such operations.”

On September 28, Osama bin Laden was interviewed by the Urdu newspaper Karachi Ummat. I remember it well, as I was commuting non-stop between Islamabad and Peshawar, and my colleague Saleem Shahzad, in Karachi, called it to my attention.

This is an approximate translation by the CIA-linked Foreign Broadcast Information Service:

“I have already said that I am not involved in the 11 September attacks in the United States. As a Muslim, I try my best to avoid telling a lie. Neither I had any knowledge of these attacks nor I consider the killing of innocent women, children and other humans as an appreciable act. Islam strictly forbids causing harm to innocent women, children and other people.

“I have already said that we are against the American system, not against its people, whereas in these attacks, the common American people have been killed. The United States should try to trace the perpetrators of these attacks within itself; the people who are a part of the US system, but are dissenting against it.

“Or those who are working for some other system; persons who want to make the present century as a century of conflict between Islam and Christianity so that their own civilization, nation, country or ideology could survive. Then there are intelligence agencies in the US, which require billions of dollars worth of funds from the Congress and the government every year (...) They need an enemy.”

This was the last time Osama bin Laden went public, substantially, about his alleged role in 9/11. Afterward, he vanished, and seemingly forever by early December 2001 in Tora Bora: I was there, and revisited [the full context](#) years later.

And yet, like an Islamic James Bond, Osama kept performing the miracle of dying another day, over and over again, starting in - where else - Tora Bora in mid-December, as reported by the Pakistani Observer and then Fox News.

So 9/11 remained a riddle inside an enigma. And what about 9/9, which might have been the prologue to 9/11?



Arriving in the Panjshir valley in one of Massoud's Soviet helicopters in August 2001. Photo: Pepe

A Green Light from a Blind Sheikh

“The commander has been shot.”

The terse email, on 9/9, offered no details. Contacting the Panjshir was impossible – sat-phone reception is spotty. Only the next day it was possible to establish **Ahmad Shah Massoud**, the legendary Lion of the Panjshir, had been assassinated – by two al-Qaeda jihadis posing as a camera crew.

In our Asia Times [interview with Massoud](#), by August 20, he had told me he was fighting a triad: al-Qaeda, the Taliban and the Pakistani ISI. After the interview, he left in a Land Cruiser and then went by helicopter to Kwaja-Bahauddin, where he would finish the details of a counter-offensive against the Taliban.

This was his second-to-last interview before the assassination and arguably the last images – shot by photographer Jason Florio and with my mini-DV camera – of Massoud alive.

One year after the assassination, I was back in the Panjshir for an on-site investigation, relying only on local sources and confirmation on some details from Peshawar. The investigation is featured in the first part of my Asia Times e-book [Forever Wars](#).

The conclusion was that the green light for the fake camera crew to meet Massoud came via a letter sponsored by CIA crypto-asset warlord Abdul Rasul Sayyaf – as a “gift” to al-Qaeda.

In December 2020, inestimable Canadian diplomat Peter Dale Scott, author among others of the seminal *The Road to 9/11* (2007), and Aaron Good, editor at CovertAction magazine, published a [remarkable investigation](#) about the killing of Massoud, following a different trail and relying mostly on American sources.

They established that arguably more than Sayyaf, the mastermind of the killing was notorious Egyptian blind sheik **Omar Abdel Rahman**, then serving a life sentence in a US federal prison for his involvement in the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993.

Among other nuggets, Dale Scott and Good also confirmed what former Pakistani foreign minister **Niaz Naik** had told Pakistani media already in 2001: the Americans had everything in place to attack Afghanistan way before 9/11.

In Naik’s words:

“We asked them [the American delegates], when do you think you will attack Afghanistan? ... And they said, before the snow falls in Kabul. That means September, October, something like that.”

As many of us established over the years after 9/11, everything was about the US imposing itself as the undisputed ruler of the New Great Game in Central Asia. Peter Dale Scott now notes,

“the two US invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 were both grounded in pretexts that were doubtful to begin with and more discredited as years go by.

“Underlying both wars was America’s perceived need to control the fossil fuel economic system that was the underpinning for the US petrodollar.”

Massoud versus Mullah Omar

Image on the right: Deceased Taliban founder Mullah Mohammed Omar in a file photo. Photo: Wikimedia



Mullah Omar did welcome Jihad Inc to Afghanistan in the late 1990s: not only the al-Qaeda Arabs but also Uzbeks, Chechens, Indonesians, Yemenis – some of them I met in Massoud’s riverside prison in the Panjshir in August 2001.

The Taliban at the time did provide them with bases – and some encouraging rhetoric – but deeply ethnocentric as they were, never manifested any interest in global jihad, in the mold of the “Declaration of Jihad” issued by Osama in 1996.

The official Taliban position was that jihad was their guests’ business, and that had nothing to do with the Taliban and Afghanistan. There were virtually no Afghans in Jihad Inc. Very few Afghans speak Arabic. They were not seduced by the spin on martyrdom and a paradise full of virgins: they preferred to be a *ghazi* – a living victor in a jihad.

Mullah Omar could not possibly send Osama bin Laden packing because of Pashtunwali – the Pashtun code of honor – where the notion of hospitality is sacred. When 9/11 happened, Mullah Omar once again refused American threats as well as Pakistani pleas. He then called a tribal *jirga* of 300 top mullahs to ratify his position.

Their verdict was quite nuanced: he had to protect his guest, of course, but a guest should not cause him problems. Thus Osama would have to leave, voluntarily.

The Taliban also pursued a parallel track, asking the Americans for evidence of Osama’s culpability. None was provided. The decision to bomb and invade had already been taken.

That would have never been possible with Massoud alive. A classic intellectual warrior, he was a certified Afghan nationalist and pop hero – because of his spectacular military feats in the anti-USSR jihad and his non-stop fight against the Taliban.



Jihadis captured by Massoud's forces in a riverside prison in the Panjshir in August 2001. Photo: Pepe Escobar

When the PDPA socialist government in Afghanistan collapsed three years after the end of the jihad, in 1992, Massoud could easily have become a prime minister or an absolute ruler in the old Turco-Persian style.

But then he made a terrible mistake: afraid of an ethnic conflagration, he let the mujahideen gang based in Peshawar have too much power, and that led to the civil war of 1992-1995 – complete with the merciless bombing of Kabul by virtually every faction – that paved the way for the emergence of the “law and order” Taliban.

So in the end he was a much more effective military commander than politician. An example is what happened in 1996, when the Taliban made their move to conquer Kabul, attacking from eastern Afghanistan.

Massoud was caught completely unprepared, but he still managed to retreat to the Panjshir without a major battle and without losing his troops – quite a feat – while severely smashing the Taliban that went after him.

He established a line of defense in the Shomali plain north of Kabul. That was the frontline I visited a few weeks before 9/11, on the way to Bagram, which was a – virtually empty and degraded – Northern Alliance airbase at the time.

All of the above is a sorry contrast to the role of Masoud Jr, who's in theory the leader of the “resistance” against Taliban 2.0 in the Panjshir, now completely smashed.

Masoud Jr has zero experience either as a military commander or politician, and although praised in Paris by President Macron or publishing an op-ed in Western mainstream media, made the terrible mistake of being led by CIA asset Amrullah Saleh, who as the former head of the National Directory of Security (NDS), supervised the de facto Afghan death squads.

Masoud Jr could have easily carved a role for himself in a Taliban 2.0 government. But he blew it, refusing serious negotiations with a delegation of 40 Islamic clerics sent to the Panjshir, and demanding at least 30% of posts in the government.

In the end, Saleh fled by helicopter – he may be now in Tashkent – and Masoud Jr as it stands is holed up somewhere in the northern Panjshir.

The 9/11 propaganda machine is about to reach fever pitch this Saturday – now profiting from the narrative twist of the “terrorist” Taliban back in power, something perfect to snuff out the utter humiliation of the Empire of Chaos.

The Deep State is going no holds barred to protect the official narrative – which exhibits more holes than the dark side of the moon.

This is a geopolitical Ouroboros for the ages. 9/11 used to be the foundation myth of the 21st century – but not anymore. It has been displaced by blowback: the imperial debacle allowing for the return of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to the exact position it was 20 years ago.

We may now know that the Taliban had nothing to do with 9/11. We may now know that Osama bin Laden, in an Afghan cave, may not have been the master perpetrator of 9/11. We may now know that the assassination of Massoud was a prelude to 9/11, but in a twisted way: to facilitate a pre-planned invasion of Afghanistan.

And yet, like with the assassination of JFK, we may never know the full contours of the whole riddle inside an enigma. As Fitzgerald immortalized, “so we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past,” probing like mad this philosophical and existential Ground Zero, never ceasing from asking the ultimate question: *Cui Bono?*

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He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

Featured image: Massoud leaving Bazarak in the Panjshir after our interview in August 2001, roughly three weeks before his assassination. Photo: Pepe Escobar

[America's "War on Terrorism"](#)

 by Michel Chossudovsky

ISBN Number: 9780973714715

List Price: \$24.95

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In this new and expanded edition of Michel Chossudovsky's 2002 best seller, the author blows away the smokescreen put up by the mainstream media, that 9/11 was an attack on America by "Islamic terrorists". Through meticulous research, the author uncovers a military-intelligence ploy behind the September 11 attacks, and the cover-up and complicity of key members of the Bush Administration.

The expanded edition, which includes twelve new chapters focuses on the use of 9/11 as a pretext for the invasion and illegal occupation of Iraq, the militarisation of justice and law enforcement and the repeal of democracy.

According to Chossudovsky, the "war on terrorism" is a complete fabrication based on the illusion that one man, Osama bin Laden, outwitted the \$40 billion-a-year American intelligence apparatus. The "war on terrorism" is a war of conquest. Globalisation is the final march to the "New World Order", dominated by Wall Street and the U.S. military-industrial complex.

September 11, 2001 provides a justification for waging a war without borders. Washington's agenda consists in extending the frontiers of the American Empire to facilitate complete U.S. corporate control, while installing within America the institutions of the Homeland Security State.

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