

# Canada in Afghanistan: We Stand on Guard for Empire

Global Research News Hour Episode 32, featuring professors Michael Skinner, John Ryan and social justice and peace campaigner Derrick O'keefe

By [Michael Welch](#)

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Region: [Canada](#)

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In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, there was relatively little opposition to a military intervention in Afghanistan.

The motivation for the war initially was retaliation for the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre. Operation Enduring Freedom, as it was called, was sold to the public as necessary to rout out the Al Qaeda terrorist networks active in Afghanistan which were fostered by the Taliban government.

Aided and abetted by the Northern Alliance, essentially a faction of warlords and opium gangsters with no particular commitment to democracy and human rights, NATO successfully overthrew the Taliban government and installed a new government in Kabul.

The motivation for the dispatch of foreign troops to this region was soon sold to the public as an "errand of mercy," an effort to liberate women and institute democracy and safeguard freedom.

Rarely, if ever, did mainstream media or Canada's political representatives ever question the aim of the mission.

The spectrum of the debate about Canada's contribution to the war and occupation was restricted to questions about whether or not a military intervention was the best way to bring about change in the land-locked Central Asian country.

Jack Layton of the NDP, for example, speaking in debate in April of 2007 on the resolution to withdraw combat troops from Afghanistan framed his argument in terms of the mission being "a George Bush style combat mission" which was failing to secure peace and security for the people of Afghanistan. He said, "It is unbalanced and overwhelmingly focused on

aggressive counter-insurgency. The humanitarian situation is simply not improving and the effort cannot be won militarily.”[1]

A recent anthology of essays put out by the University of Toronto Press endeavours to challenge the dominant meme around the Afghanistan war and occupation. AS the title suggests, [Empire’s Ally: Canada and the War in Afghanistan](#), edited by Jerome Klassen and Greg Albo, portrays the war as principally one of imperial conquest.

Utilizing recent research derived from media, government, and NGO reports, along with interviews from within the country, the book takes a critical look at the war effort with a particular emphasis on Canada’s role and how motives around capitalizing on Afghanistan’s resource wealth and the so-called “Silk Road Starategy” may better explain Canada’s involvement.

In this week’s programme, Researcher **Michael Skinner** of York University, author of the essay *The Empire of Capital and the Latest Inning of the Great Game* outlines his analysis of the imperial aims of the occupation. Invoking the writings of former US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, he eloquently explains the geo-strategic significance of the war effort. Importantly, he explores how Canada’s corporate sector, particularly the infamous mining sector, stands to profit from this heavily propagandized Western intervention.

Retired University of Winnipeg Geography [Professor John Ryan](#) was one of the few Western academics to visit and report on his experiences in Afghanistan in a unique period in the late 1970s. AT this time, the short-lived Taraki government put in place social reforms that boosted rights for women and prospects for farmers. Ryan believes it was the involvement of the CIA that ultimately led to the collapse of Afghan social standards which is now being invoked as the leading reason for Canada’s continued involvement in the country. Ryan speaks to us in the second half hour.

Finishing off the programme, social justice and peace campaigner **Derrick O’keefe**, talks about the main obstacles for the peace movement in Canada, and how he thinks those obstacles can be overcome. He too contributed an essay to *Empire’s Ally*, entitled, *Bringing Ottawa’s Warmakers to Heel: The Anti-War Movement in Canada*.

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## Reference

1) Business of Supply, [Opposition Motion- Afghanistan, Parliament of Canada](#), EDITED HANSARD,

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