

Malalai Joya: “Afghans Are Fed Up With the U.S. Occupation and the Corrupt, Mafia-state of Hamid Karzai “

Book Review

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It's too bad Barack Obama didn't consult with Malalai Joya before giving his Nobel acceptance speech on Thursday. The ex-Afghan Parliamentarian could have helped the president to see that the ongoing US occupation is damaging to both American and Afghan interests. Afghanistan is not the "just war" that Obama defends so passionately in his speech. It's part of a larger US geopolitical strategy which Joya outlines in her new book "A Woman Among the Warlords: The extraordinary story of an Afghan who dared to raise her voice". US policymakers have decided to establish a beachhead in Central Asia to monitor the growth of China, surround Russia, control vital resources from the Caspian Basin, and provide security for US mega-corporations who see Asia as the "market of the future." It is the Great Game all over again. "Victory" in Afghanistan means that a handful of weapons manufacturers, oil magnates, and military contractors will get very rich. That's it. It has nothing to do with al-Qaida, "democracy promotion" or US national security. That's all just public relations pablum.

"A Woman Among the Warlords" is an explosive book that takes a scalpel to many of the illusions surrounding the US invasion of Afghanistan. For example, most Americans have never heard about the "Warlord Strategy", a term that is commonplace among Afghans. That's because it doesn't mesh with the western media's narrative about Afghan "liberation". The truth is, US war-planners, led by Sec Def Donald Rumsfeld, settled on a plan to hand over entire regions of Afghanistan to the warlords before the first shot was fired. The whole "liberation"-meme was just a ruse to elicit support for the war. How many Americans would support sending more troops if they knew that the original justification of the war was a bunch of baloney?

Here's how Joya sums it up in her own words:

"The people of Afghanistan are fed up with the occupation of their country and with the corrupt, Mafia-state of Hamid Karzai and the warlords and drug lords backed by NATO.... It is clear now that the real motive of the U.S. and its allies, hidden behind the so-called "war on terror," was to convert Afghanistan into a military base in Central Asia and the capital of the world's opium drug trade. Ordinary Afghan people are being used in this chess game, and western taxpayers' money and the blood of soldiers is being wasted on this agenda that will only further destabilize the region....

I offer my condolences to the families here who have lost their loved ones. (They) are the

victims of the wrong policy of your government. The families of Afghan civilians killed in this war share your feelings of loss. If we turn these sorrows into strength, we can end this war. Bringing the troops home at the end of 2011 is too late; the troops should be withdrawn as soon as possible, before more Afghan and American lives are needlessly lost.”

Joya is focused and uncompromising; a one-woman wrecking crew. She’s also an electrifying speaker who can bring an audience to their feet when she rails against the war. People can sense her intensity, her honesty, and her unwavering commitment to justice. Unlike Obama, she isn’t disposed to lofty-sounding platitudes that only serve to perpetuate war and suffering. (Obama Nobel speech: “We must begin by acknowledging the hard truth that we will not eradicate violent conflict in our lifetimes.”) Joya’s goal is peace; an end to 30 years of war, an end to US occupation and religious fanaticism. Regrettably, Obama’s military escalation ensures that the conflict will drag on for years to come bringing misery to even more people.

Malalai Joya: “As I write these words, Afghanistan is getting progressively worse. We are caught between two enemies: the Taliban on one side and US/NATO forces and their warlord hirelings on the other.... Obama’s military build up will only bring more suffering and death to innocent civilians.... I hope that the lessons in this book will reach President Obama and his policymakers in Washington, and warn them that the people of Afghanistan reject their brutal occupation and their support of the warlords and druglords.” (“A Woman Among the Warlords”, p5)

“A Woman Among the Warlords” gives readers a glimpse of the vast destruction brought on by the US invasion. Joya repeatedly denounces Rumsfeld’s strategy which restored warlords to power, thus, condemning 32 million Afghans to a life of fear under war criminals and human rights abusers. She also takes aim at the media which provided cover for the warlords by referring to them as the “Northern Alliance”-or the equally misleading-“United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan”. As Joya points out, attitudes about the conflict are largely shaped by disinformation, omissions and propaganda. Obama’s Noble speech proves that those same lies will now be delivered by a more competent spokesman.

Malalai Joya: “While the United States bombed from the sky, the CIA and special forces had already arrived in the northern provinces of Afghanistan to hand out millions of dollars in cash and weapons to Northern Alliance commanders. They were the same extremists whose militias had pillaged Afghanistan during the civil war: Dostum, Sayyaf, Khalili, Rhabbani, Fahim, General Arif, Dr. Abdullah, Haji Qadir, Ustad Atta, Mohammad, Daoud, and Hazrat Ali among others. ...Fahim, another ruthless man with a dark past. The western media tried at the time to portray these warlords as “anti-Taliban resistance forces and liberators of Afghanistan,” but in fact Afghan people believed they were no better than the Taliban.” (Ibid, pg 52)

As the Taliban fled across the Pakistan border amid heavy aerial bombardment, the warlords seized entire provinces reestablishing their iron-fisted rule over the local people. The Bush administration succeeded in replacing one repressive regime with another. No attempt was ever made to establish democracy.

From the New York Times November 19, 2001: “The galaxy of warlords who tore Afghanistan apart in the early 1990s and who were vanquished by the Taliban because of their corruption and perfidy are back on their thrones, poised to exercise power in the ways

they always have.”

Joya provides biographical sketches of many of the warlords, including Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, a rabid fundamentalist “who massacred thousands in Kabul during the 1990s.” In one Kabul purge he ordered his soldiers, “Don’t leave anyone alive—Kill them all.” Sayyaf was “the person who invited international terrorist Osama bin Laden to Afghanistan during the 1980s. He also trained and mentored Khalid Sheikh Mohammed , the man who the US claims was the mastermind of the 9-11 attacks.” (p 67)

How many Americans would continue to support the war if they knew they were protecting the friends of bin Laden and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed?

Malalai Joya again: “Most people in the west have been led to believe that intolerance, brutality, and severe oppression of women in Afghanistan began with the Taliban regime. But this is a lie, more dust in the eyes of the world from the warlords who dominate the American-backed, so-called democratic government of Hamid Karzai. In truth, some of the worst atrocities in our recent past were committed during the civil war by the men who are now in power.”

During the blackest days of the Afghan civil war in 1992, a group of warlords seized Kabul razing much of it to the ground. “The militias of Dostum, Sayyaf, Massoud, Mazari, and Hekmatyar pillaged the city, robbing families and slaughtering and raping women. Eventually, anywhere from 65,000 to 80,000 innocent people were killed in Kabul alone, though there are no official figures for the staggering death toll. According to the United Nations, more than 90 percent of the city was destroyed. (Eventually) “the country was split up into fiefdoms, ruled by the whims of rival thugs and warlords.” (Ibid p26)

Joya’s Solution: “Withdraw All Foreign Troops”

Malalai Joya: “Some people say that when the troops withdraw, a civil war will break out. Often this prospect is raised by people who ignore the vicious conflict and humanitarian disaster that is already occurring in Afghanistan. The longer the foreign troops stay in Afghanistan, the worse the eventual civil war will be for the Afghan people. The terrible civil war that followed the Soviet withdrawal certainly could never justify... the destruction and death caused by that decade-long occupation.” (p 217)...Today we live under the shadow of the gun with the most corrupt and unpopular government in the world. (p 211)

The war that one reads about in the western media, is not the real war. Obama supporters should get a copy of “A Woman Among the Warlords” and compare the reality of occupation to the propaganda in the newspapers. The fact is, the United States has handed Afghanistan over to a group of genocidal maniacs and religious zealots. Even now, the warlords could not continue their brutal repression of the Afghan people without the continued support of the United States. Many of the warlords are still on the US payroll, which Obama somehow failed to mention in his “Peace Prize” speech.

“A Woman Among the Warlords” is a great-read and the perfect antidote for the incessant barrage of war propaganda. It’s definitely worth a look.

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