

Was it a “Just War”, Was Afghanistan Behind the 9/11 Attacks? 12 Years of Illegal Occupation

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Global Research, October 08, 2013

[GRTV](#)

Region: [Asia](#)

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This GRTV video was initially published on October 7, 2011, commemorating ten years of illegal occupation

October 7th marks the 12th year anniversary of the commencement of NATO operations in Afghanistan. Although the impending illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003 was enough to drive millions of people worldwide into the streets in protest, there has never been the same widespread resistance to the Afghan war.

This war has been deemed the “right war” and given a broad measure of support from across the political spectrum because it is still linked in the popular imagination with the events of 9/11. Even a cursory interrogation of these assumptions, however, reveals the absurd nature of this pretext for what has been all along an illegal invasion and occupation of a sovereign nation.

On the evening of 9/11, the North Atlantic Council issued a statement offering the assistance of all 18 NATO member states to the United States, calling the attacks “without precedent in the modern era.”

The next day the Council met again, making the extraordinary decision to invoke Article 5 of the Washington Treaty for the first time in NATO’s history. The carefully worded statement contained the important stipulation that Article 5 would only apply if it could be determined that the attacks were directed from abroad, something that NATO Secretary General Robertson noted had not been determined.

On October 2nd, the Council met again to announce that they had dropped the word “if” from their previous declaration on the basis of a report issued by a US State Department official named Frank Taylor. To this day, the evidence presented in Frank Taylor’s briefing is still classified, and the information that Secretary General Robertson called “clear and compelling” information pointing “conclusively” to an al-Qaida role in 9/11 has never been made public. Nor was this evidence ever presented to the FBI, who told investigative journalist Ed Haas in 2006 that there was “no hard evidence” linking Osama to 9/11.

As the documentary record shows, the lip service paid to “finding Osama” was never more than a convenient excuse for the Afghan invasion.

In February of 2001, the Taliban offered to turn bin Laden over to the United States, but the US refused. The offer was repeated in October of 2001, shortly after the bombing started, but again the US rejected it. Bin Laden himself was not even in Afghanistan at the time of the 9/11 attacks, a point later confirmed by CBS News.

Eventually, all pretence was dropped that the invasion of Afghanistan had anything to do with finding Osama bin Laden.

The mystery of this non-pretext for the Afghan invasion, however, makes perfect sense, not if one sees the invasion as retaliation for 9/11, but, exactly the opposite, if one understands 9/11 as in fact the pretext for a previously planned military operation to fulfill previously acknowledged Western geostrategic imperatives.

As National Security Advisor to Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski oversaw "Operation Cyclone," a covert US plan for luring the Soviet Union into an unwinnable war in Afghanistan by first fomenting and then actively supporting Islamic fundamentalists in the country. This became the basis for the eventual takeover of the country by the Taliban with active CIA support through their front in the Pakistani Intelligence Services.

In 1997, just four years before the NATO invasion, Brzezinski wrote that "For America, the chief geopolitical prize is Eurasia[...]Now a non-Eurasian power is preeminent in Eurasia — and America's global primacy is directly dependent on how long and how effectively its preponderance on the Eurasian continent is sustained."

He pinpointed what he called the "Eurasian balkans," an area encompassing Afghanistan and its neighbours, as the most geopolitically significant region to control for its gas and oil reserves and mineral deposits. He argued that some form of extended American military intervention in the region would be necessary, warning that a global consensus on its foreign policy imperatives would be impossible "...except in the circumstance of a truly massive and widely perceived direct external threat."

Later that year, a senior delegation from the Taliban came to the United States for meetings with Unocal about securing the rights to secure a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan across Afghanistan. In 2002, it was revealed that the United States had been negotiating with the Taliban to secure those oil interests, and that American negotiators had told the Taliban that they had a choice: "You have a carpet of gold, meaning an oil deal, or a carpet of bombs." Shortly after the 9/11 attacks, a former Pakistani foreign secretary revealed to the BBC that a senior American official had told him in mid-July of 2001 that military action against Afghanistan would go ahead by the middle of October.

When the Bush administration came into office, its first substantive national security decision directive, NSPD-9, called for "military options against Taliban targets in Afghanistan, including leadership, command-control, air and air defense, ground forces, and logistics" and was presented to the president on September 4, 2001, seven days before 9/11.

What makes the nightmare of this invasion all the more disturbing is that in allowing this invasion to go forward and in offering no significant resistance to the operation itself, the public has effectively allowed the war criminals to set a series of disturbing precedents which future political leaders have used and in the future will no doubt continue to use in justifying their own wars of conquest.

Earlier this week, I talked to **Rick Rozoff**, director of Stop NATO International, about this very problem.

As worrying as all of these precedents are in the wake of continued NATO aggression and domination in theaters like Libya, the Afghan people themselves continue to be the forgotten victims of this war.

Punished for living within the borders of a country that was accused at one time of harbouring someone who was alleged without proof to have been responsible for an act of terrorism which the majority of the people don't even know happened, the Afghans have watched as their cities, their towns, their infrastructure, and of course, their lives have been destroyed by the NATO war machine.

As **Michel Chossudovsky** of the Centre for Research on Globalization told me earlier this week, the commencement of the NATO-led invasion of Afghanistan ten years ago was by no means the commencement of the destruction of that country in the name of Western geopolitical strategy. In fact, as he argues, there has been a continuous interference in Afghan affairs since the commencement of Operation Cyclone under the Carter Administration in 1979, a 32-year long campaign against Afghanistan that amounts, in effect, to a coordinated policy of genocide against the Afghan people.

Ultimately, this genocidal campaign unmasks in the starkest terms the complete hubris of the Western imperialist enterprise. As Afghans continue to die, and attacks in the country continue to escalate, as an administration that gave lip service to ending the wars as a cynical campaign strategy then escalates its involvement in that war and expands it into Pakistan, as a co-opted, establishment supporting "anti-war" movement continues to tacitly support the massacre taking place in that country because it can't bring itself to question the pretext which was never even given for the slaughter, those with the rationality to see this war for what it is are left to wonder what lessons can be learned from this thirty-two year long deception, and whether, once tricked into going along with it, the public will ever wake up from the nightmare of this illegal occupation, and bring itself to hold those criminal heads of state who brought it about responsible for their actions.

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