

Welcome to Orwell's World 2010

Inverted lies that "passed into history and became truth"

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In Nineteen Eighty-Four, George Orwell described a superstate called Oceania, whose language of war inverted lies that "passed into history and became truth. 'Who controls the past', ran the Party slogan, 'controls the future: who controls the present controls the past'."

Barack Obama is the leader of a contemporary Oceania. In two speeches at the close of the decade, the Nobel Peace Prize winner affirmed that peace was no longer peace, but rather a permanent war that "extends well beyond Afghanistan and Pakistan" to "disorderly regions and diffuse enemies". He called this "global security" and invited our gratitude. To the people of Afghanistan, which America has invaded and occupied, he said wittily: "We have no interest in occupying your country."

In Oceania, truth and lies are indivisible. According to Obama, the American attack on Afghanistan in 2001 was authorised by the United Nations Security Council. There was no UN authority. He said the "the world" supported the invasion in the wake of 9/11 when, in truth, all but three of 37 countries surveyed by Gallup expressed overwhelming opposition. He said that America invaded Afghanistan "only after the Taliban refused to turn over [Osama] bin Laden". In 2001, the Taliban tried three times to hand over bin Laden for trial, reported Pakistan's military regime, and were ignored. Even Obama's mystification of 9/11 as justification for his war is false. More than two months before the Twin Towers were attacked, the Pakistani foreign minister, Niaz Naik, was told by the Bush administration that an American military assault would take place by mid-October. The Taliban regime in Kabul, which the Clinton administration had secretly supported, was no longer regarded as "stable" enough to ensure America's control over oil and gas pipelines to the Caspian Sea. It had to go.

Obama's most audacious lie is that Afghanistan today is a "safe haven" for al-Qaeda's attacks on the West. His own national security adviser, General James Jones, said in October that there were "fewer than 100" al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. According to US intelligence, 90 per cent of the Taliban are hardly Taliban at all, but "a tribal localised insurgency [who] see themselves as opposing the US because it is an occupying power". The war is a fraud. Only the terminally gormless remain true to the Obama brand of "world peace".

Beneath the surface, however, there is serious purpose. Under the disturbing General Stanley McCrystal, who gained distinction for his assassination squads in Iraq, the occupation of one of the most impoverished countries is a model for those "disorderly regions" of the world still beyond Oceania's reach. This is known as COIN, or counter-insurgency network, which draws together the military, aid organisations, psychologists, anthropologists, the media and public relations hirelings. Covered in jargon about winning

hearts and minds, its aim is to pit one ethnic group against another and incite civil war: Tajiks and Uzbeks against Pashtuns.

The Americans did this in Iraq and destroyed a multi-ethnic society. They bribed and built walls between communities who had once inter-married, ethnically cleansing the Sunni and driving millions out of the country. The embedded media reported this as “peace”, and American academics bought by Washington and “security experts” briefed by the Pentagon appeared on the BBC to spread the good news. As in Nineteen Eighty-Four, the opposite was true.

Something similar is planned for Afghanistan. People are to be forced into “target areas” controlled by warlords bankrolled by the Americans and the opium trade. That these warlords are infamous for their barbarism is irrelevant. “We can live with that,” a Clinton-era diplomat said of the persecution of women in a “stable” Taliban-run Afghanistan. Favoured western relief agencies, engineers and agricultural specialists will attend to the “humanitarian crisis” and so “secure” the subjugated tribal lands.

That is the theory. It worked after a fashion in Yugoslavia where the ethnic-sectarian partition wiped out a once peaceful society, but it failed in Vietnam where the CIA’s “strategic hamlet program” was designed to corral and divide the southern population and so defeat the Viet Cong — the Americans’ catch-all term for the resistance, similar to “Taliban”.

Behind much of this are the Israelis, who have long advised the Americans in both the Iraq and Afghanistan adventures. Ethnic-cleansing, wall-building, checkpoints, collective punishment and constant surveillance - these are claimed as Israeli innovations that have succeeded in stealing most of Palestine from its native people. And yet for all their suffering, the Palestinians have not been divided irrevocably and they endure as a nation against all odds.

The most telling forerunners of the Obama Plan, which the Nobel Peace Prize winner and his strange general and his PR men prefer we forget, are those that failed in Afghanistan itself. The British in the 19th century and the Soviets in the 20th century attempted to conquer that wild country by ethnic cleansing and were seen off, though after terrible bloodshed. Imperial cemeteries are their memorials. People power, sometimes baffling, often heroic, remains the seed beneath the snow, and invaders fear it.

“It was curious,” wrote Orwell in Nineteen Eighty-Four, “to think that the sky was the same for everybody, in Eurasia or Eastasia as well as here. And the people under the sky were also very much the same, everywhere, all over the world ... people ignorant of one another’s existence, held apart by walls of hatred and lies, and yet almost exactly the same people who ... were storing up in their hearts and bellies and muscles the power that would one day overturn the world.”

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