

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/19613-americas-most-beloved-war-criminals?tmpl=component&print=1>

America's Most Beloved War Criminals

By Justin Doolittle

10/27/2013



Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice arrives at a campaign event for Republican vice presidential candidate Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) at Baldwin Wallace University in Berea, Ohio, Oct. 17, 2012.

Truthout doesn't take corporate funding - that's how we're able to confront the forces of greed and regression, with no strings attached. Instead, we need your support: make a donation today by clicking here.

Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is set to be named officially next month as a member of the College Football Playoff selection committee, charged with selecting the four teams that will compete in the first playoffs following the 2014 season. Rice's appointment, which, according to ESPN, brings some "star power" to the committee, was made possible by the generally favorable impression of her among the public and in the media. Rice has never been a particularly polarizing figure, unlike Dick Cheney and Don Rumsfeld, two other high-profile players in the Bush administration, who, even if they were equally serious and informed about college football, would never be considered for an appointment. Despite being at the center of some of the most intensely political dramas of the Bush presidency, Rice has managed to escape from the wreckage of those years virtually unscathed. Her reputation is soundly intact and she has not been scorned like many of her colleagues, even those who had far less influence over Bush administration policy, such as John Bolton. Rice is able to go on "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" and have a pleasant conversation with the host. She penned a lovely memoir and has a very warm smile. Many sympathetic stories have been written about her difficult upbringing and touching personal story.

Following Rice's appointment to the committee, some criticism did bubble up to the surface, but it was not centered on Rice's active participation in war crimes. A cartoonish jerk by the name of Pat Dye, who used to coach football at Auburn, attacked the choice on the grounds that Rice was a woman and, therefore, "all she knows about football is what somebody told her or what she read in a book or what she saw on television." For media outlets like ESPN, this established the proper parameters for the "debate" over Rice's appointment. Unenlightened sexists such as Dye were reflexively opposed, while all right-thinking people obviously considered the presence of a woman - and this particular woman - on the committee to be a welcome development. Andrea Adelson, in a piece for ESPN, praised the appointment as "real progress." North Carolina State Athletic Director Debbie Yow called Rice a "a skilled and analytical thinker."

It's simply extraordinary that the kind of chauvinistic idiocy exemplified by Dye, which is obviously beneath commentary, has become the most visible criticism of Rice's appointment. This is someone who was the highest-ranked security official in the United States at the time of the 9/11 attacks. She later became a vociferous defender of the Bush administration's aggressive war against Iraq. She was responsible one of the most radically dishonest statements ever made to the American people, when she warned that, unless Iraq were attacked, Saddam Hussein might very well launch a nuclear war against the United States, leaving a "mushroom cloud" in some unspecified American city. This was preposterous; Rice could not possibly have believed that this was a realistic possibility. If Dick Cheney, or one of the other less genial goons from the Bush administration, had made exactly the same comment - "We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud" - it would have stuck forever and cemented his reputation as a fanatical warmonger. Rice, though, somehow has preserved her essential statesmanship and above-the-fray elegance.

This is a recurring pattern in American political life. Those who serve as secretary of state, the supreme Cabinet position in American government, are almost wholly exonerated for their roles in the foreign policy disasters of the administrations in which they served, despite having almost unrivaled influence over decision making.

Examples are abundant. Consider the case of Madeleine Albright, secretary of state under President Bill Clinton and the first woman to serve in that capacity. Albright, as does Rice, commands intense transpartisan respect and admiration in the political and media classes, as well as among the general public. She is seen as a foreign policy sage and a beacon of wisdom. President Obama awarded Albright the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2012.

This same Madeleine Albright, in what is surely one of the most flagrant illustrations of unhinged genocidal fervor in the past half-century, was once asked by Lesley Stahl of "60 Minutes" if U.S.-led sanctions against Iraq, which reportedly caused the deaths of around 500,000 children, were nonetheless "worth it" (the question itself is terrifying). Albright answered in the affirmative. "Yes, we think the price is worth it," said this beloved staple of the Beltway cocktail party circuit. Naturally, Albright, later went on to co-chair a "Genocide Prevention Task Force." No one in Washington, or anywhere else for that matter, seemed to find anything problematic about any of this. Andrea Mitchell won't be asking Albright about those 500,000 dead Iraqi children in their next amicable chat. It would be so awkward and unpleasant.

It is not by virtue of their gender that Rice and Albright have acquired this inexplicable immunization from criticism - at least in the realm of the mainstream - over their manifestly insane public pronouncements and active participation in war crimes. This is a phenomenon that applies to virtually anyone who leads the State Department and possesses enough charm and charisma to seduce the vapid, substance-free people who control media and shape public perception. And no one has mastered the art of cultivating an honorable and high-minded public reputation despite having an appalling record quite like Henry Kissinger.

Kissinger, who served two presidents as secretary of state, possesses one of the most coldly chilling minds of anyone who has ever wielded political power in a developed country. In audiotapes released by the Nixon Library in 2010, here is Kissinger, speaking to his boss on the question of pressuring the Kremlin to allow Soviet Jews to safely emigrate from the country:

The emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union is not an objective of American foreign policy. And if they put Jews into gas chambers in the Soviet Union, it is not an American concern. Maybe a humanitarian concern.

After these revelations in 2010, Christopher Hitchens wondered if this concrete evidence of psychopathy would mean that the Nobel Peace Prize laureate would, finally, "have the door shut in his face by every decent person" and be "shamed, ostracized and excluded." More than three years later, far from having doors shut in his face, Kissinger can be found hamming it up in comedy bits with Stephen Colbert, or wining and dining with his many powerful friends at his lavish 90th birthday party. At the aforementioned party, in June 2013, the current secretary of state, feeling himself in the presence of true greatness, declared Kissinger the "indispensable statesman."

While Kissinger is clearly second to none in his ability to get a credulous media and amoral political class to disregard his stunning lack of humanity, respect on this front also must be paid to Colin Powell. Powell is wily enough to have refrained from ever making the kind of outrageous and sadistic pronouncements that some of his peers have. But he did participate, to an even more pronounced degree than Rice, in the international campaign of deception and subsequent attack on Iraq in 2003.

Nevertheless, Powell's popularity has been "undimmed by time," and, these days, liberals can be counted on reliably to cheer every time Powell mildly criticizes the most rabidly racist elements in his party. Indeed, American liberals are hardly blameless in the seemingly indestructible popularity and mainstream acceptance of these allegedly charismatic secretaries of state. All Powell has to do is endorse a centrist Democratic candidate for president or go on television and gently go after the lowest-hanging fruit on the ultra-right-wing, and liberals will swoon, spread his eloquence all over social media, and happily forget his integral role in the supreme international crime of the 21st century.

Even worse, liberals often will describe Powell's role in the selling of the Iraq War as "tragic" or "unfortunate" - a Good Man who tarnished his legacy by getting caught up with the wrong crowd. As if this four-star general and then-secretary of state, someone who has spent his entire life in the military and in politics, were merely an innocent and naive background player, pushed around and "misled" by nefarious forces within the administration and forced to go to the U.N. to put on that shameful performance. Rice and Powell are almost never thrown in with Cheney and Rumsfeld, mostly because the former care about their public perception and know how to shape it effectively, while the latter simply don't give a damn.

It is not particularly clear how, or why, secretaries of state acquired this enduring immunization from the kind of polarization and criticism to which defense secretaries and other Cabinet officials are subject. While there is undeniably something about the office that lends itself to unjustified acclaim - ask an enthusiastic Hillary Clinton supporter to name a few of her substantive accomplishments in her four years as America's chief diplomat - Rice, Powell, Albright and Kissinger are all exceptionally skilled at playing the media and the public at large. The blame ultimately rests with anyone who tacitly supports or contributes to this culture of valuing personality over substance. This includes the likes of Stephen Colbert, who apparently sees nothing wrong in having a good time with someone who literally expressed indifference over the prospect of millions of people being put in gas chambers. Consider how we would react to a foreign tyrant saying what Kissinger said about Russian Jews or what Albright said about a half a million dead children. For now, though, it seems that only those of us on the "fringe" of the left are unwilling to forget Condi Rice's fanatical fearmongering that helped sell a war that ended the lives of hundreds of thousands of people for no reason at all. Far be it for us to try to ruin the "real progress" of having her on the playoffs committee.