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Interventionism, Empire, and the Taliban

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9/15/2009

The U.S. government's primary justification for continuing the occupation of Afghanistan is to prevent the Taliban from regaining power and providing a sanctuary for al-Qaeda. Ironically, however, this is another example of the disastrous consequences of imperialism and interventionism, for it was the U.S. invasion itself that created the problem that now serves as the main justification for the indefinite occupation of the country.

Interventionists often delude themselves with respect to why the U.S. government attacked both al-Qaeda and the Taliban after 9/11. They say that the Taliban had provided a "sanctuary" for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda.

Yet, what exactly is a "sanctuary"? Does it mean simply that terrorists are living in a country when they are planning a terrorist attack on another country?

If so, then what about the 9/11 terrorists who were living here in the United States prior to the attacks, especially those who were living here by permission of the U.S. government? Would that mean that the U.S. government provided a "sanctuary" for the 9/11 terrorists?

Or how about Germany, where some of the 9/11 terrorists had some of their planning sessions? Was Germany providing a "sanctuary" to them?

Of course not. Simply because terrorists are residing in a country when they're conspiring to commit a terrorist act is insufficient to hold the particular regime of that country responsible for the criminal act. Obviously, more is needed to justify an attack against a nation state. Complicity in the attack has to be a necessary prerequisite to justify going to war against a foreign regime.

Did the Taliban regime actually conspire with Osama bin Laden to commit the 9/11 attacks? Did the Taliban even know that bin Laden was planning the attacks and fail to do anything to prevent it?

If the U.S. government had any evidence whatsoever that established Taliban complicity in the attacks, don't you think it would have released such evidence by now? Yet, 8 years after the attacks it still hasn't done so, and the only possible reason for that is that no such evidence exists.

After 9/11, Bush requested the Taliban to voluntarily turn bin Laden over to the U.S. Does anyone think that Bush would have made such a request if he actually possessed evidence that the Taliban had participated in the attacks? Not a chance. If Bush had had such evidence, he wouldn't have asked the Taliban to turn bin Laden over to the U.S. He would have simply attacked both Afghanistan and al-Qaeda, perhaps even with the constitutionally required congressional declaration of war.

In fact, if the Taliban had complied with Bush's request to deliver bin Laden to U.S. forces, it is a virtual certainty that the U.S. would never have attacked the Taliban regime and ousted it from power.

Why didn't Bush limit his military attacks in Afghanistan to going after bin Laden and al-Qaeda? Why did he use his military forces to also oust the Taliban from power? Simply because the Taliban had refused to grant his request to turn bin Laden over to the U.S. In a world in which the U.S. government is the sole remaining empire, third-world regimes either comply with the Empire's requests or suffer the consequences.

(Although there was no extradition agreement between Afghanistan and the U.S., the Taliban did indicate a willingness to turn bin Laden over to an independent tribunal if Bush could provide evidence to justify his extradition request.)

We should also keep in mind that in 2001 prior to the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. government had already provided \$125 million in foreign aid to Afghanistan. In [an article](#) dated November 5, 2001, Ron Paul observed that as late as May 2001, "the U.S announced that we would reward the Taliban with an additional \$43 million in aid for its actions in banning the cultivation of poppy used to produce heroin and opium."

We also shouldn't forget the Taliban was nothing more than the outgrowth of the very group that the CIA had funded and supported to oppose the Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan.

So, after having previously supported the Taliban, by choosing to oust it from power when it invaded Afghanistan the U.S. government converted the Taliban into a force that U.S. officials now feel must be prevented from regaining power at all costs, even if that means a permanent U.S. military occupation of the country. It's just one more interventionist "success" story in the life of the U.S. Empire.