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The Murderous U.S. Government Explained

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There is one aspect of this *Washington Post* article that I fear will be appreciated by very few people. Before I get to that, let's set out the basic facts:

The U.S. military is sending a contingent of heavily armored battle tanks to Afghanistan for the first time in the nine-year war, defense officials said, **a shift that signals a further escalation in the aggressive tactics** that have been employed by American forces this fall to attack the Taliban.

The deployment of a company of M1 Abrams tanks, which will be fielded by the Marines in the country's southwest, **will allow ground forces to target insurgents from a greater distance - and with more of a lethal punch - than is possible from any other U.S. military vehicle.** The 68-ton tanks are propelled by a jet engine and equipped with a 120mm main gun that can destroy a house more than a mile away.

Despite an overall counterinsurgency strategy that emphasizes the use of troops to protect Afghan civilians from insurgents, statistics released by the NATO military command in Kabul and interviews with several senior commanders indicate that U.S. troop operations over the past two months have been more intense and **have had a harder edge** than at any point since the initial 2001 drive to oust the Taliban government. I give Rajiv Chandrasekaran, the author of this article, tremendous credit for a masterful job of reporting. That is not intended to be in the least sarcastic; I genuinely mean it. You can already see how skillfully he conveys the monstrosity of the U.S. government's actions simply by reporting the facts and, of critical importance, *describing them accurately.*

Even in these opening paragraphs, note the descriptive phrases that economically convey the extraordinary bloodthirstiness of what the U.S. is doing: "more of a lethal punch," "destroy a house more than a mile away" (marvel at the wonder of it!), "have had a harder edge." The horrifying, sickening irony of the beginning of the third paragraph hits the attentive reader very hard: it's all very well to have an "overall counterinsurgency strategy" designed "to protect Afghan civilians *from insurgents*" -- but who is going to protect them *from the U.S.*?

Chandrasekaran carefully plants the seeds of doubt: "In the districts around the southern city of Kandahar, soldiers from the Army's 101st Airborne Division have **demolished dozens of homes that were thought to be booby-trapped...**" Formulations of that kind will pay off later.

Chandrasekaran reports the claims of conveniently anonymous U.S. military officials concerning the strategy's "success": that it has "dealt a staggering blow to the insurgency," and so on. And he then identifies the two major benefits of this "success" to the Obama Administration:

[This "success"], in turn, appears to have put U.S. Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top coalition commander, in a much stronger position heading into a Friday meeting of NATO heads of state in Lisbon, where Afghanistan will be a key topic of discussion. It also will help the general make his case that the military's strategy is working when President Obama and his advisers conduct a review of the war next month.

On the importance of the Afghanistan developments to NATO and the Lisbon meeting, you should read Diana Johnstone's recent article: "**NATO's True Role in U.S. Grand Strategy.**" Johnstone's piece cries out for lengthier consideration, but this excerpt will have to suffice for the moment:

NATO as such has no strategy, and cannot have its own strategy. **NATO is in reality an instrument of United States strategy. Its only operative Strategic Concept is the one put into practice by the United States.** But even that is an elusive phantom. American leaders seem to prefer striking postures, "showing resolve", to defining strategies.

One who does presume to define strategy is Zbigniew Brzezinski, godfather of the Afghan Mujahidin back when they could be used to destroy the Soviet Union. **Brzezinski was not shy about bluntly stating the strategic objective of U.S. policy in his 1993 book *The Grand Chessboard*: "American primacy". As for NATO, he described it as one of the institutions serving to perpetuate American hegemony, "making the United States a key participant even in intra-European affairs." In its "global web of specialized institutions", which of course includes NATO, the United States exercises power through "continuous bargaining, dialogue, diffusion, and quest for formal consensus, even though that power originates ultimately from a single source, namely, Washington, D.C."**

The description perfectly fits the Lisbon "Strategic Concept" conference.

Now the U.S. will claim that its strategy in Afghanistan is a great success, and it will be that much easier for the U.S. to make NATO do exactly what it wants.

Similarly, when Obama conducts his review of the war in Afghanistan, it will be that much easier for him to argue that the U.S. should continue and perhaps even intensify its current strategy. After all, nothing succeeds like "success." And Americans adore success, or anything they choose to describe as success. Why, the surge in Iraq was "an extraordinary success"; **so saith Obama**. That is why he chose to duplicate that strategy in Afghanistan, and that is precisely why he chose Petraeus to carry it out.

One of the best passages in Chandrasekaran's article is his description of how the selection of Petraeus made possible this latest exercise in murderous barbarism:

Although Petraeus is widely regarded as the father of the military's modern counterinsurgency doctrine, which emphasizes the role of governance, development and other forms of soft power in stabilization missions, **he also believes in the use of intense force, at times, to wipe out opponents and create conditions for population-centric operations. A less-recognized aspect of the troop surge he commanded in Iraq in 2007 involved a significant increase in raids and airstrikes.**

"Petraeus believes counterinsurgency does not mean just handing out sacks of wheat seed," said a senior officer in Afghanistan. Counterinsurgency "doesn't mean you don't blow up stuff or kill people who need to be killed."

Since his arrival in Kabul, Petraeus has permitted - and in some cases encouraged - the use of tougher measures than his predecessors, the officials said. Soon after taking charge, he revised a tactical directive issued by the commander he replaced, Army Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, to prohibit subordinate officers from placing additional restrictions on the use of air and artillery strikes.

"There is more top-cover support for appropriate aggression," said a civilian adviser to the NATO command in Kabul.

"Because Petraeus is the author of the COIN [counterinsurgency] manual, he can do whatever he wants. He can manage the optics better than McChrystal could," the adviser said. "If he wants to turn it up to 11, he feels he has the moral authority to do it."

The reader who actively thinks as he reads this article (as he should actively think when he reads anything at all) will realize that he is not likely to come across a better description of the operation of evil in a news article. Keep that in mind: this isn't an opinion piece. But Chandrasekaran provides all the facts you need to reach certain conclusions.

It is precisely Petraeus's reputation and status, together with the fact that he is "the author of the COIN manual," that make it possible for Petraeus to **"do whatever he wants."** What he wants includes bringing what he views as the required degree of "awe, shock and firepower" to Afghanistan. I repeat: *that is why Obama chose him.*

Brzezinski identifies "American primacy" and the perpetuation of American hegemony as the primary goals of American foreign policy. As I have discussed in detail, American

global hegemony has been the purpose of American policy for over a hundred years (see my series "**Dominion Over the World**" for the details; all the installments are listed at the conclusion of that article). And Obama has long made clear beyond all question that this is the goal he fully shares.

I (exasperatedly) note that I analyzed this overwhelmingly significant aspect of Obama's belief system in **May 2007**, in "**Songs of Death**." As I said about Obama's paean to American exceptionalism and America's "right" to rule the world: "The ahistorical arrogance of this is breathtaking (or nauseating, take your pick). Obama's hegemonic ambitions are noteworthy in their scale: 'the American moment' is to extend for 'this new century.'" I said a lot more in the full essay. Anyone who followed politics to any measurable degree and who did not understand this about Obama long before the 2008 election did not *want* to understand it. Obama is the horrifyingly eager embodiment of American Empire. By definition, Empire is a bloody, barbaric, murderous, endlessly cruel business. That is the business Obama *wanted* to run, and now he does.

The final payoff of Chandrasekaran's extraordinary reporting comes in his concluding section. Chandrasekaran first offers further details of the military's claims about their recent "success," and follows this with sickeningly contradictory facts. And I draw your attention to the final, devastating paragraph in particular:

Despite Karzai's recent criticism of the raids and the overall posture of coalition forces - he said he wants military operations reduced - there have been relatively few reports of civilian casualties associated with the recent uptick in raids, airstrikes and explosive demolitions. Military officials said that is because of better intelligence, increased precautions to minimize collateral damage and the support of local leaders who might otherwise be complaining about the tactics. In Kandahar, local commanders have sought the support of the provincial governor and district leaders for the destruction of homes and fields to remove bombs and mines.

"The difference is that the Afghans are underwriting this," said the senior officer in Afghanistan.

But many residents near Kandahar do not share the view. They have lodged repeated complaints about the scope of the destruction with U.S. and Afghan officials. In one October operation near the city, U.S. aircraft dropped about two dozen 2,000-pound bombs.

In another recent operation in the Zhari district, U.S. soldiers fired more than a dozen mine-clearing line charges in a day. Each one creates a clear path that is 100 yards long and wide enough for a truck. Anything that is in the way - trees, crops, huts - is demolished.

"Why do you have to blow up so many of our fields and homes?" a farmer from the Arghandab district asked a top NATO general at a recent community meeting.

Although military officials are apologetic in public, they maintain privately that the

tactic has a benefit beyond the elimination of insurgent bombs. By making people travel to the district governor's office to submit a claim for damaged property, "in effect, you're connecting the government to the people," the senior officer said.

In that last paragraph, Chandrasekaran manages to surpass his own earlier description of how evil operates. (I also note that it is just possible that "making people travel to the district governor's office" might have some bearing on the purported "relatively few reports of civilian casualties." And at this date in history, it should hardly be news that almost anything *any* military says about civilian casualties will be a lie.) Increasingly widespread destruction, including the ongoing murder of civilians, is merely a means of "connecting the government to the people."

Here is the additional connection I fear most readers will miss. I've described the nature and operation of U.S. foreign policy for over a hundred years as follows:

The fundamental lesson is unmistakable, and unmistakably evil in intent and execution (a word made horribly appropriate in more than one sense by our government's actions): you will do exactly as we say -- *or else*.

This is the lesson now being so hideously reenacted in Afghanistan.

That particular description comes from "**Terrorist State, Abroad and At Home**." In that essay, this passage immediately follows:

It is now critical to note a further implication of this murderous method of dealing with others. Just as it is not possible for an individual to restrict what constitutes a fundamental psychological methodology to only one area of his life, so a ruling class will not employ one approach in foreign policy while dealing with matters of domestic politics in a radically different manner. In any case, the U.S. ruling class never had such a desire: in one way or another, other nations would be made to submit to the demands of the U.S. government -- and the same is true *for U.S. citizens*. The citizens of America will do exactly as the ruling class demands -- *or else*. As far as the ruling class is concerned, you have as little reason to complain as the murdered Iraqis do: the ruling class only wishes to improve your life. The ruling class acts only on your behalf, and "for your own good."

You now witness these tactics of intimidation and of the most transparently, viciously manipulative fear-mongering deployed by almost every member of the ruling class in connection with the bailout bill. ...

The words speak for themselves, but the purpose of these pronouncements should be emphasized: our rulers do not want to scare you to death, although your death would hardly approach a matter of any serious concern for them. While your death is not (necessarily) required, your *obedience* is. You *will* obey them -- *or else*.

I wrote that over two years ago. The dynamics I described concerning the bailout bill have been repeated a number of times since, as they are repeated again today.

You *will* obey them -- *or else*. It is true for the brutalized inhabitants of Afghanistan, of Pakistan, of Iraq, of Yemen, of Somalia -- and now it is increasingly true for the

inhabitants of the United States itself. If you read only one installment of my "**Dominion Over the World**" series, I would recommend the article concerning the **abominable episode in the Philippines** (you might also consider the preview of the coming horrors in the Philippines and in U.S. foreign policy generally, provided in the article about **the annexation of Hawaii**). What the U.S. now does in Afghanistan it has done repeatedly around the world for over a hundred years.

But not to worry. It's only "those" people over there. Nothing like that could ever happen in the United States, certainly not in the same manner or to the same degree. Could it? Of course not.

And hell, even if it did, having to beg your government not to destroy you -- and the methods of destruction at the State's disposal are so wonderfully varied! -- is a superlatively effective way of "connecting the government to the people." Surely, that is a goal toward which we can all happily work.