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The Nation

All Too Familiar on Afghanistan

Laura Flanders

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The President talked about America's enduring values again at West Point Tuesday night, and then he laid them out, a whole lot of values one can only wish would endure a little less.

The President began his address to the nation on Afghanistan in the traditional style of his predecessor, setting the tone for troop deployments by recalling 9-11 and terror and fright. Then came the retelling of the traditional Al Qaeda story, the one that omits any mention of Saudi Arabia or Israeli occupation or post-Gulf War US bases -- in fact any mention of politics.

Sadly, our new president seemed to share George W. Bush's appreciation for the value of a simple villain and not asking questions. So much for those who seek a new narrative, one that might include the debate that exists around the world about the merits and real demerits of war as a response to a criminal terrorist act.

Having declared legitimacy, the president then claimed responsibility, a special *American* responsibility and authority to invade, police, and act in ways that other countries may not.

Amazingly, the nation's first Black president retold the simplest national founding story: "Our union was founded in resistance to oppression." (For his wife's ancestors it was not.) And he made the classic claim of innocence "We do not seek to occupy other nations. We will not claim another nation's resources." (The US has a long history, of course, of helping our corporations do just that, from Chevron to United Fruit.)

As tradition requires, Obama claimed progress is being made. Maybe so, but it'd be more convincing in Afghanistan were it not for all those US-backed Afghan warlords gearing up to

fight each other with US weapons, fueled by a heroin trade that the CIA stands accused of letting rip. Obama's words were too familiar -- so too his silences.

Finally and worst, for those who'd thought they'd voted for the death of the Bush Doctrine. Sorry. Bush/Cheney live on in the new president's embrace of the idea that the US has a right, not only to respond to attacks, but also to deploy men and women in anticipation of them.

"New attacks are being plotted as I speak," said Obama.

Do I hear an echo? So much for those who had the audacity to