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The geopolitics behind the phoney US war in Afghanistan

by F. William Engdahl

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Obama Presidential agenda is how little anyone has questioned in the media or elsewhere why at all the United States Pentagon is committed to a military occupation of Afghanistan. There are two basic reasons, neither one of which can be admitted openly to the public at large.

Behind all the deceptive official debate over how many troops are needed to “win” the war in Afghanistan, whether another 30,000 is sufficient, or whether at least 200,000 are needed, the real purpose of US military presence in that pivotal Central Asian country is obscured.

Even during the 2008 Presidential campaign candidate Obama argued that Afghanistan not Iraq was where the US must wage war. His reason? Because he claimed, that was where the Al Qaeda organization was holed up and that was the “real” threat to US national security. The reasons behind US involvement in Afghanistan is quite another one.

The US military is in Afghanistan for two reasons. First to restore and control the world’s largest supply of opium for the world heroin markets and to use the drugs as a geopolitical weapon against opponents, especially Russia. That control of the Afghan drug market is essential for the liquidity of the bankrupt and corrupt Wall Street financial mafia.

Geopolitics of Afghan Opium

According even to an official UN report, opium production in Afghanistan has risen dramatically since the downfall of the Taliban in 2001. UNODC data shows more opium

poppy cultivation in each of the past four growing seasons (2004-2007), than in any one year during Taliban rule. More land is now used for opium in Afghanistan, than for coca cultivation in Latin America. In 2007, 93% of the opiates on the world market originated in Afghanistan. This is no accident.

It has been documented that Washington hand-picked the controversial Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun warlord from the Popalzai tribe, long in the CIA's service, brought him back from exile in the USA, created a Hollywood mythology around his "courageous leadership of his people." According to Afghan sources, Karzai is the Opium "Godfather" of Afghanistan today. There is apparently no accident that he was and is today still Washington's preferred man in Kabul. Yet even with massive vote buying and fraud and intimidation, Karzai's days could be ending as President.

The second reason the US military remains in Afghanistan long after the world has forgotten even who the mysterious Osama bin Laden and his alleged Al Qaeda terrorist organization is or even if they exist, is as a pretext to build a permanent US military strike force with a series of permanent US airbases across Afghanistan. The aim of those bases is not to eradicate any Al Qaeda cells that may have survived in the caves of Tora Bora, or to eradicate a mythical "Taliban" which at this point according to eyewitness reports is made up overwhelmingly of local ordinary Afghans fighting to rid their land once more of occupier armies as they did in the 1980's against the Russians.

The aim of the US bases in Afghanistan is to target and be able to strike at the two nations which today represent the only combined threat in the world today to an American global imperium, to America's Full Spectrum Dominance as the Pentagon terms it.

The lost 'Mandate of Heaven'

The problem for the US power elites around Wall Street and in Washington is the fact that they are now in the deepest financial crisis in their history. That crisis is clear to the entire world and the world is acting on a basis of self-survival. The US elites have lost what in Chinese imperial history is known as the Mandate of Heaven. That mandate is given a ruler or ruling elite provided they rule their people justly and fairly. When they rule tyrannically and as despots, oppressing and abusing their people, they lose that Mandate of Heaven.

If the powerful private wealthy elites that have controlled essential US financial and foreign policy for most of the past century or more ever had a "mandate of Heaven" they clearly have lost it. The domestic developments towards creation of an abusive police state with deprivation of Constitutional rights to its citizens, the arbitrary exercise of power by

non elected officials such as Treasury Secretaries Henry Paulson and now Tim Geithner, stealing trillion dollar sums from taxpayers without their consent in order to bailout the bankrupt biggest Wall Street banks, banks deemed “Too Big To Fail,” this all demonstrates to the world they have lost the mandate

In this situation, the US power elites are increasingly desperate to maintain their control of a global parasitical empire, called deceptively by their media machine, “globalization.” To hold that dominance it is essential that they be able to break up any emerging cooperation in the economic, energy or military realm between the two major powers of Eurasia that conceivably could pose a challenge to future US sole Superpower control—China in combination with Russia.

Each Eurasian power brings to the table essential contributions. China has the world’s most robust economy, a huge young and dynamic workforce, an educated middle class. Russia, whose economy has not recovered from the destructive end of the Soviet era and of the primitive looting during the Yeltsin era, still holds essential assets for the combination. Russia’s nuclear strike force and its military pose the only threat in the world today to US military dominance, even if it is largely a residue of the Cold War. The Russian military elites never gave up that potential.

As well Russia holds the world’s largest treasure of natural gas and vast reserves of oil urgently needed by China. The two powers are increasingly converging via a new organization they created in 2001 known as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). That includes as well as China and Russia, the largest Central Asia states Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

The purpose of the alleged US war against both Taliban and Al Qaeda is in reality to place its military strike force directly in the middle of the geographical space of this emerging SCO in Central Asia. Iran is a diversion. The main goal or target is Russia and China.

Officially, of course, Washington claims it has built its military presence inside Afghanistan since 2002 in order to protect a “fragile” Afghan democracy. It’s a curious argument given the reality of US military presence there.

In December 2004, during a visit to Kabul, US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld finalized plans to build nine new bases in Afghanistan in the provinces of Helmand, Herat, Nimrouz, Balkh, Khost and Paktia. The nine are in addition to the three major US military bases already installed in the wake of its occupation of Afghanistan in winter of 2001-2002, ostensibly to isolate and eliminate the terror threat of Osama bin Laden.

The Pentagon built its first three bases at Bagram Air Field north of Kabul, the US' main military logistics center; Kandahar Air Field, in southern Afghanistan; and Shindand Air Field in the western province of Herat. Shindand, the largest US base in Afghanistan, was constructed a mere 100 kilometers from the border of Iran, and within striking distance of Russia as well as China.

Afghanistan has historically been the heartland for the British-Russia Great Game, the struggle for control of Central Asia during the 19th and early 20th Centuries. British strategy then was to prevent Russia at all costs from controlling Afghanistan and thereby threatening Britain's imperial crown jewel, India.

Afghanistan is similarly regarded by Pentagon planners as highly strategic. It is a platform from which US military power could directly threaten Russia and China, as well as Iran and other oil-rich Middle East lands. Little has changed geopolitically over more than a century of wars.

Afghanistan is in an extremely vital location, straddling South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Afghanistan also lies along a proposed oil pipeline route from the Caspian Sea oil fields to the Indian Ocean, where the US oil company, Unocal, along with Enron and Cheney's Halliburton, had been in negotiations for exclusive pipeline rights to bring natural gas from Turkmenistan across Afghanistan and Pakistan to Enron's huge natural gas power plant at Dabhol near Mumbai. Karzai, before becoming puppet US president, had been a Unocal lobbyist.

Al Qaeda doesn't exist as a threat

The truth of all this deception around the real purpose in Afghanistan becomes clear on a closer look at the alleged "Al Qaeda" threat in Afghanistan. According to author Erik Margolis, prior to the September 11, 2001 attacks, US intelligence was giving aid and support both to the Taliban and to Al Qaeda. Margolis claims that "The CIA was planning to use Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda to stir up Muslim Uighurs against Chinese rule, and Taliban against Russia's Central Asian allies." The US clearly found other means of stirring up Muslim Uighurs against Beijing last July via its support for the World Uighur Congress. But the Al Qaeda "threat" remains the lynchpin of Obama US justification for his Afghan war buildup.

Now, however, the National Security Adviser to President Obama, former Marine Gen. James Jones has made a statement, conveniently buried by the friendly US media, about the estimated size of the present Al Qaeda danger in Afghanistan. Jones told Congress,

“The al-Qaeda presence is very diminished. The maximum estimate is less than 100 operating in the country, no bases, no ability to launch attacks on either us or our allies”.

That means that Al-Qaeda, for all practical purposes, does not exist in Afghanistan. Oops...

Even in neighboring Pakistan, the remnants of Al-Qaeda are scarcely to be found. The Wall Street Journal reports, “Hunted by US drones, beset by money problems and finding it tougher to lure young Arabs to the bleak mountains of Pakistan, al Qaeda is seeing its role shrink there and in Afghanistan, according to intelligence reports and Pakistan and U.S. officials. For Arab youths who are al Qaeda’s primary recruits, ‘it’s not romantic to be cold and hungry and hiding,’ said a senior U.S. official in South Asia”.

If we follow the statement to its logical consequence we must conclude then that the reason German soldiers are dying along with other NATO youth in the mountains of Afghanistan has nothing to do with “winning a war against terrorism.” Conveniently most media chooses to forget the fact that Al Qaeda to the extent it ever existed, was a creation in the 1980’s of the CIA, who recruited and trained radical muslims from across the Islamic world to wage war against Russian troops in Afghanistan as part of a strategy developed by Reagan’s CIA head Bill Casey and others to create a “new Vietnam” for the Soviet Union which would lead to a humiliating defeat for the Red Army and the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union.

Now US NSC head Jones admits there is essentially no Al Qaeda anymore in Afghanistan. Perhaps it is time for a more honest debate from our political leaders about the true purpose of sending more young to die protecting the opium harvests of Afghanistan.

William Engdahl, Author of Seeds of Destruction: The Hidden Agenda of Genetic Manipulation.. He also authored A Century of War: Anglo-American Oil Politics and the New World Order (Pluto Press). His latest book is Full Spectrum Dominance: Totalitarian Democracy in the New World Order (Third Millennium Press).