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Barack Obama's Doublespeak "Peace" Speech

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In accepting the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize, Barack Obama recited the tried and true sophism parroted by U.S. presidents since 1945 in defending their wars: The Third Reich had to be defeated. As though Afghanistan bore any more resemblance to Germany than did North Vietnam. As though sending ever more U.S. troops to kill ever more innocent Afghan citizens might have any more tangible effect than to incite the ire of the very people alleged to be quietly conspiring to attack the United States again.

The notion of "just war" invoked by Obama in defending his belligerent plans is invoked with equal sincerity by both "insurgents" and members of al Qaeda, who have repeatedly claimed to be seeking just retribution for the United States' nearly continuous slaughter of civilians, either directly, as in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, or indirectly, in U.S.-funded conflicts such as those in Central America and, ongoing today, Colombia. But this is supposed to be perfectly fine, because "We are good, and they are evil," and good nations kill for peace. No matter that the consequences are the same: scores of corpses, most of whom were entirely innocent people who happened to be located in the wrong place.

Notwithstanding the Nobel Committee's wishful thinking that Obama might represent a break from the past, there is no obvious reason for believing that he should have the critical capacity to think more clearly about war than did any U.S. president before. But there are few more risible pieces of so-called reasoning than this vicious spiral: "We defeated the Nazis, so we fight just wars. Therefore, we should fight more wars." Tragically, the conclusion of this absurd argument is not merely a *non sequitur*; it is a weapon of mass destruction, not only because it leads directly to mass killing by the U.S. military, but also because it reinforces the very same pattern of thinking in "the enemy" as well. They, too, devise violent means by which to retaliate against the slaughter of innocent people, a practice in which the United States regularly engages. Those

killed by U.S. bombs, however, are perfunctorily dismissed by U.S. authorities as morally innocuous “collateral damage,” not victims of homicide.

As though troops on the ground weren't bad enough, the United States also deploys unmanned Predator Drones to dispatch groups of people, some of whom, some analyst in some undisclosed place somewhere claims, are guilty of crimes that warrant summary execution without trial. This is a policy of the Nazi-defeater nation that champions freedom and democracy? Sounds more like the KGB to me. The rule of law did not govern those who, in a targeted assassination campaign, attacked the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Nor does the rule of law govern those who order executions of non-nationals by Predator Drone in lands far away. In fact, these two actions would seem to be morally and legally the same.

To claim that evil exists is to emit a platitude, not to justify the escalation of an already failed campaign of intentional homicide. Such a remedy is rather like treating a cut on one's hand by slicing it again—only this time with a thicker knife. But rather than learn from the Russian experience in Afghanistan, a land pummeled to dust by bombs during the Cold War, Obama has determined that the best course ahead is not to bring the troops home, but to send yet more to a place where military action has proven futile over and over again, as was also the case in Vietnam, which the President of Peace conveniently omitted from his speech. Both Vietnam and Afghanistan remain today littered with landmines planted by none other than those who defeated the Nazis. Despite the vast documentation of the many innocent people that landmines continue to terrorize, maim and destroy, the United States refuses still to ban their production, distribution, and use. Such policies can no longer be blamed on George W. Bush. Now they belong to the 2009 recipient of the Nobel Prize for Peace.

More than eight years after the strategically dubious decision to punish Afghans for the crimes of Osama bin Laden, the president of Afghanistan remains a U.S.-installed puppet who barely governs Kabul, while across the rest of that land tribal warlords rule, and opium production has exploded to levels never seen before. But the grandest irony of all is that the monsters that both Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein became were created by the United States through the provision of, yes, military aid, rationalized, again, by “just war”-speak conjoined with the tired refrain, “We defeated the Nazis, didn't we?”