

Why this War is *not* about stopping Terrorism
By Levi Kilcher

Even though I should not be, based on historical precedence, I am amazed at the ease with which our government and the forces behind it have been able to hoodwink America. So easily in fact that it is almost as if Americans think that no one would ever try to deceive them in the wake of such horrific events. However, this is simply not true. We are being deceived. From the beginning, senior officials of government have been claiming that this is going to be a long war, and not to expect “a silver bullet” that will end the war quickly. Just yesterday Vice President Dick Cheney said, “There is no reason to believe this operation is about to end. The way to look at it is that it's a very good beginning to a long campaign.”ⁱ Campaign huh? The dictionary says a campaign is “An organized operation to accomplish a purpose.”ⁱⁱ So what is the purpose of this campaign? Well, of course the implication has been that the purpose of this campaign is to move towards a better, safer world by reducing the risk of terrorism. This has been the rhetoric fed to us through major media since just hours after the initial attack when President Bush stated that “Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward, and freedom will be defended.”ⁱⁱⁱ

However, the threat of terrorism is not being reduced. Quite the opposite. The threat of terrorism grows steadily with every bomb that lands on Afghan soil. When I voice my opinion that we should not be attacking those poor people in Afghanistan, I am often confronted with, “What the hell do you think we should do? Nothing? That would just send a signal to those people that they can do whatever they want to us, and we will not respond.” However, these rhetorical arguments miss the point entirely. The first thing we should ask is not, “how should we respond?” but rather “what do we want to

accomplish with a response?" It seems fairly universal in this nation that what we want to accomplish is an end (or at least a reduction) to the threat of terrorism. Keeping this in mind, we ask ourselves what will accomplish this goal. Bombing the hell out of Afghanistan and hoping Bin Laden shows his turban-topped head? No. First of all, Bin Laden is only one person in a large, multi-celled terrorist organization. Secondly, there are many other terrorist organizations capable of causing similar damage. Finally, by destroying people's lives in Afghanistan we are only creating more people with more suffering, more hatred, and nothing to lose. It seems to me that these are the fundamental pre-requisites to becoming a terrorist. Keeping the supposed objective in mind, rather than getting caught in the political rhetoric, we see the absurdity of our actions.

As for what we should do instead, there are many excellent ideas out there, including: reducing our dependence on oil by working toward becoming an energy independent state so that we feel secure removing our troops from Saudi Arabia, Jerusalem and other places considered sacred by people around the world. Another option is to launch a massive humanitarian effort for the people of Afghanistan alongside an effort to establish a democratic government. These are just a couple of the options that not only reduce the risk of terrorism, but also improve the lives of millions of people in the world.

So now the question becomes, why are we doing what we are doing? As shortsighted and military oriented as our leaders may be we can't possibly assume they think they are reducing the threat of terrorism. These ideas are too straightforward for us to think that they haven't thought of them. An argument might even be made that the

effectiveness of the propaganda machine in discouraging these types of ideas indicates a prior awareness of them.

A good question to ask in finding motive is “Qui Bono?” Who benefits? In asking this question and doing a little research, we find ourselves overwhelmed with potential answers: 1) The oil companies who want desperately to get their hands on the newly discovered oil wells in central Asia that could be accessed with a pipeline through Afghanistan and Pakistan. 2) The military industrial complex that obviously profits from wars by selling arms to opposing sides. Less obviously are the long-term profits that the MIC makes from the missile defense system which will no doubt get a political shot in the arm due to the recent discovery of Bin Laden’s supposed possession of nuclear weapons. 3) The Multi National Corporations that use this crisis to draw sympathy from and distract the American people while they push legislation through to raid the Treasury, lower environmental safeguards, and eliminate the AMT (alternative minimum tax).^{iv} (The alternative minimum tax was enacted in order to make sure that large corporations which were able to avoid any taxation by jumping through various loopholes were at least taxed this minimum amount.) However, not only do they want to repeal the AMT, but they want a retroactive refund of all AMT taxes paid since the bill was enacted in 1986, approximately 6.3 billion dollars.^{iv} Furthermore, the Bush administration is pushing for “fast-track” authority under NAFTA. Which would only accelerate the already climbing unemployment. “No bailout for laid off workers, just a hard crack across the knees.”^{iv} 4) On top of all this, we find that perhaps the US is doing this in part for what has been called “Imperial Credibility”, which is the idea of doing so much damage to a country that others would think twice about crossing us (the US).^v

While Americans are caught struggling to understand the enormity of the events that have been forced upon us, the powers that be would use these events to distract us, wage war in our name, and distract us again while they push legislation through that further divides classes, foreign *and* domestic, while simultaneously strengthening their ability to do this all over again. This war is not about stopping terrorism, or even reducing it. It has far more to do with money and power just like so many if not all the wars before it.

Perhaps the scariest thing is the idea that this is all exactly what Bin Laden wanted, that we are playing right into his hands. As much as I wish the US would not attack, it is foolish to believe that Bin Laden thought the US would not respond militarily. “Suffering and poverty are the soil in which terrorism grows. Bin Laden and his cohorts want to bait us into creating more such soil, so they and their kind can flourish.”^{vi}

In the end I have presented this mostly logical viewpoint in order to show those who would look at these matters from this point of view only that even in their own purely logical terms this war is not about what they would be led to believe it is about. However, in coming from this logical viewpoint, we must not forget our humanity. Every life is precious. This is not a new war. Like every war before this, people die. Mothers, fathers, firemen, waitresses, daughters, sons, sisters, brothers, janitors, and lovers are dying. For what?

ⁱ CNN.com; <http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/11/14/ret.us.reax/index.html>: “We Don’t Believe We’ve Won the War”; November 15, 2001.

ⁱⁱ American Heritage Dictionary, Third Edition; Houghton Mifflin, 1994.

ⁱⁱⁱ CNN.com; <http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/09/11/white.house/index.html>: “Bush: U.S. feels 'quiet, unyielding anger'”; September 12, 2001.

^{iv} Nader, Ralph: “Corporate Patriotism”; [commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org), <http://www.commondreams.org/views01/1110-07.htm>; November 10, 2001.

^v Rahul Mahajan and Robert Jensen: “A war of Lies”; [commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org), <http://www.commondreams.org/views01/1008-08.htm>; October 8, 2001.

^{vi} Ansaray, Tamim: “Bomb Afghanistan to Stone Age? It’s Been Done”; [commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org), <http://www.commondreams.org/views01/0919-02.htm>; September 19, 2001.