

**A talk by Dr Hannah Middleton**

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# **THE US WAR ON TERRORISM – WHAT IS THE REAL AGENDA?**

Let's begin with what the US said after the September 11 tragedy:

*“Every nation in every region now has a decision to make. Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.”*

*“This is the world's fight, this is civilisation's fight.”*

The US was deeply shaken because the guns were directed the other way. This was the first time since the British burned down Washington in 1814 that the territory of the US has been under attack.

Let's be clear about two things:

Firstly, September 11 was an act of terrorism against civilians. It did not harm military-industrial-corporate America. It gave them a pretext to wage war for US oil interests, to establish new US bases, to launch a massive attack on civil rights.

*“Marxists have always maintained that capitalism needs war .... The competition for resources, markets and labour is periodically solved, for the capitalist class, by resorting to war. This war is no different in essence”.*

September 11 only hurt innocent civilians – and that is no way to fight for change.

Secondly, there is no war on terrorism. Bush’s “civilisation’s fight” is actually a continuation of America’s efforts, by military means, to extend its grip on the wealth of the world.

There is a continuing war of the powerful against the powerless.

But this reality is never made public. Instead, truths are stood on their head, new excuses are invented, lies and disinformation are deliberately peddled as a matter of course, double standards are hidden behind doublespeak.

Acts of resistance and anger are labelled unspeakable terrorist atrocities and deliberately receive enormous attention.

Capitalism’s atrocities, perpetrated with all the force of the most heavily armed states in the world, are called counter terrorism, Counter Insurgency or Low Intensity Conflict, and receive little and/or distorted political and press attention.

As a result, American historian Howard Zinn pointed out, when it is over, and the corpses are piled high:

*“Only Saddam Hussein is outlawed, not Bush Senior. Only Bin Laden has a \$50m price on his head, not Bush Junior and his predecessors.”*

It is, says Zinn:

*“a tribute to the humanity of ordinary people that horrible acts must be camouflaged [with words] like security, peace, freedom, democracy.....”*

Behind the lies and propaganda is the real terrorism:

A U.S. Army manual defines terrorism as *“the calculated use of violence or threat of violence to attain goals that are political, religious, or ideological in nature. This is done through intimidation, coercion, or instilling fear.”*

A Pentagon document defines low intensity conflict (LIC) as the threat or use of force *“to achieve political objectives without the full-scale commitment of resources.”* LIC – by the definition clearly a form of international terrorism — is a long standing US official policy, used to undermine independence and development in countries including the Philippines, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

Looking at the example of Nicaragua is instructive.

During the Reagan years, tens of thousands of the Nicaraguan people lost their lives as Washington’s proxy army, the Contras, raped, bombed, tortured and murdered.

Nicaragua didn’t respond by bombing America. They took the case to the International Court of Justice (the World Court) which in 1984 ruled in their favour. The US was condemned for the “unlawful use of force” and ordered to pay massive reparations.

The United States rejected judgment and announced that it would no longer accept the jurisdiction of the court.

Then Nicaragua went to the UN Security Council which considered a resolution calling on all states to observe international law. The United States vetoed this.

The US also escalated the war against Nicaragua. This included official orders to attack “soft targets,” — undefended civilian targets like agricultural collectives, health clinics, and so on.

**The US is the only state which has ever been condemned by the World Court for international terrorism.**

**It is the only state which has vetoed a UN Security Council resolution calling on states to observe international law.**

When Nicaragua finally succumbed to US terrorism, Time Magazine applauded the methods adopted: “to wreck the economy and prosecute a long and deadly proxy war until the exhausted natives overthrow the unwanted government themselves,” with a cost to us that is “minimal”.

John Pilger has asked: If the reason for the bombing of Afghanistan is to eliminate terrorists, why isn't America bombing itself?

More dictators, death squad commanders and torturers are given refuge in the USA than anywhere else in the world.

The US remains a training ground for terrorists who learn their “craft” at the US Army's centre at Fort Benning, Georgia, formerly notorious as the School of the Americas.

The British Government has the same double standards. Tony Blair rails against the “new evil of mass terrorism”. His Government and its predecessors supplied arms to Indonesia for use in East Timor, sells lethal weapons to Israel, and has used cluster bombs and depleted uranium in Iraq and Yugoslavia.

There are many examples of the real terrorism:

The US supports Israel, in open defiance of UN resolutions. The US has prime responsibility, through its diplomatic, military, and economic support, for the 35 year long military occupation, the killings and assassinations, the expanding settlements designed to break up the occupied territories and to control resources, the gross violation of the Geneva Conventions.

In 1985 in Lebanon the CIA planted a truck bomb outside a mosque in Beirut. The blast killed 80 and wounded 250, mostly women and children. None of the victims was compensated.

In 1989 the US bombed working class areas of Panama City, killing an estimated 4,000 civilians. The Panama Canal was about to revert to Panama and the US wanted a more compliant thug than Noriega to look after its interests. American news networks did not broadcast the UN's condemnation of the attack.

The US demanded that the Taliban hand over Osama bin Laden. When they did not, the US bombed their country and destroyed the regime.

The Taliban subjugated women, mutilated criminals, persecuted ethnic minorities and denied free speech. But the same description applies to the US ally, the regime of **Saudi Arabia**.

**Haiti** has asked the US to extradite Emmanuel Constant, responsible for over 4,000 murders in the mid 1990s, under a military junta supported by the Bush and the Clinton administrations. The US has not complied.

For about 15 years **Costa Rica** has been trying to get the United States to hand over John Hull, a US land owner who used his land as a base for the US war against Nicaragua. The US has not complied. When the land of another American landholder, John Hamilton, was confiscated for the

same crime and turned into a national park, the US punished Costa Rica by withholding aid.

Between October 7 and December 10 last year, estimates of deaths from US bombing of Afghanistan are from 3,700 to 5,000. This is greater than the number killed in the Twin Towers.

Then there is “**rendering**”, an unspeakable phrase:

People suspected – not convicted – of al-Qaeda links have been “rendered” — secretly sent to lands, including Egypt and Jordan, where torture is legal. This has been documented, including in a *Sydney Morning Herald* report.

An American diplomat said: “*It allows us to get information from terrorists in a way we can’t do on US soil.*”

We remember the horrific images of the twin towers’ collapse. They have been replayed many times. But how many replays have there been of the thousands of charred bodies on the road to Basra after the US “turkey shoot” of the retreating Iraqi army? Or the 500 women and children burnt alive by a US bomb directed at an air raid shelter in Baghdad?

200,000 Iraqis died during and immediately after the slaughter known as the Gulf war.

The genocidal US blockade of Iraq has caused the deaths of half a million children under the age of five. **That’s more deaths of infants every month than the number killed in the World Trade Centre.**

In addition, almost every day RAF and American aircraft bomb Iraq. This terrorism is the longest-running Anglo-American bombing campaign since World War Two. The great majority of the victims of these terrorist bombs are civilians.

September 11 is being used as a pretext for a massive attack on civil liberties in the US, Britain and other states, including Australia.

The position here is instructive.

We face anti-terrorism laws that threaten to criminalise social dissent. The attacks on September 11 have given greater impetus to arguments by police and intelligence agencies that terrorism and activism are the same problem and need to be approached in the same manner. Terrorism replaces communism or subversion as the justification for shutting down political dissent.

Widespread public resistance has not eliminated but has forced some amendments to proposals which create new offences of terrorism, give the government the power to ban organisations and give ASIO draconic new powers.

Under these laws law Nelson Mandela's ANC or East Timor's Fretilin could have been banned.

ASIO will move from spy agency to secret police. It will be able to arrest and hold people for questioning for 48 hours. People could be held incommunicado with no right to a lawyer and no contact with family or the outside world. People could face up to five years in jail for refusing to answer questions, removing their right to silence.

Globalisation requires the "free" circulation of people as well as capital and commodities. People, reduced to mere commodities, are subject to the market. We call them migrants and refugees.

These victims of globalisation constitute a reservoir of cheap labour. At times – as now — when they are not needed, reactionary nationalism is whipped up to justify draconic measures against them.

Such measures also contribute to the continuing process of destroying democratic rights.

### ***Who has the most to gain from the “war on terrorism?”***

*“An interlocking network of powerbrokers in oil, arms, politics and media, for whom the world is a goldmine and this war their windfall.”*

It is no coincidence that the main so-called rogue nations – Iran, Libya, Iraq – are countries with **nationalised** oil.

The real reason for attacking Iraq in 1991 was that the US had no intention of allowing Saddam Hussein to get in the way of their plans for a vast oil protectorate stretching from Turkey to the Caucasus and their military-political control of this region of the world.

A primary reason for the attack on Afghanistan is to install a client regime that will allow the US to exploit the oil and gas reserves in the Caspian basin, the greatest source of untapped fossil fuel on earth and enough to meet America’s needs for 30 years. With less than five per cent of the world’s population, the US consumes over a quarter of the world’s oil.

Only if the pipeline runs through Afghanistan can the Americans hope to control it.

John Maresca, from the Unocal Oil Corporation, told a House of Representatives hearing in 1998:

*“From the outset, we have made it clear that construction of the pipeline we have proposed across Afghanistan could not begin until a recognized government is in place that has the confidence of governments, lenders, and our company.”*

The “war against terrorism” is a strategy to consolidate American power. It includes bribing and controlling governments in former Soviet central Asia, establishing US bases in the region to control resources and to

“contain” China, the expansion of the American arms industry; and the speeding up of trade liberalisation.

This is a war of the rich against the poor. The toll is 12 million children under the age of five every year, according to United Nations estimates.

The “war on terrorism” gives a pretext for the capitalist countries, dominated by the US, to increase their dominance over world affairs. America intends to eliminate challenges to its efforts to control and manage the “global economy”.

Today international trade is worth more than £11.5bn a day. A tiny fraction of this, 0.4 %, is shared with the poorest countries. American and G8 capital controls 70 % of world markets. Because of the rules demanding the end of tariff barriers and subsidies in poor countries while ignoring protectionism in the west, the poor countries lose £1.3bn a day in trade.

In 1948, George Kennan from the US State Department, wrote:

*“We have 50 per cent of the world’s wealth, but only 6.3 per cent of its population. In this situation, our real job in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which permit us to maintain this position of disparity. To do so, we have to dispense with all sentimentality . . . we should cease thinking about human rights, the raising of living standards and democratisation.”*

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were invented to implement this strategy. Now we also have the WTO, a secretive, undemocratic body, an embryo world government which is the most rapacious predator devised by the capitalist powers.

US plans for National Missile Defence or Star Wars are a key element in the strategy which includes the so-called “war on terrorism”.

The US is planning to militarise, commercially exploit and to control space, taking corporate globalisation to a new and more terrifying level.

The US Space Command proclaims that its mission is “*dominating the space dimension of military operations to protect US interests and investment.*”

A century ago, “*Nations built navies to protect and enhance their commercial interests*” by ruling the seas”. Now it is time to rule space.

The Space Command’s *Long Range Plan* underlines the globalisation aspect of US space war plans, saying, “*The gap between ‘have’ and ‘have-not’ nations will widen, creating regional unrest*”. By controlling space, the US intends to keep those “have-nots” in line.

The US should be able to “*project power through and from space in response to events anywhere in the world. Unlike weapons from aircraft, land forces or ships, space missions initiated from earth or space could be carried out with little transit, information or weather delay.*”

The US military base at Pine Gap near Alice Springs is in the frontline of the NMD program. The satellites it controls monitor the most important area of US strategic interest – China, southern Russia and the Middle East oil fields.

I would like to end with two quotations:

The first is from Fidel Castro, 11 days after the September 11 attacks:

*“No one can deny that terrorism is today a dangerous and ethically indefensible phenomenon, which should be eradicated regardless of its deep origins, the economic and political factors that brought it to life and those responsible for it.*”

*“But who have profited? The extreme right, the most backward and right-wing forces, those in favour of crushing the growing world rebellion and sweeping away everything progressive that is still left on the planet.*

*“Those who after the so-called end of the cold war continued a military build-up and the development of the most sophisticated means to kill and exterminate human beings were aware that the large military investments would give them the privilege to impose an absolute and complete dominance over the other peoples of the world....”*

I do not know the author of this second quotation which sums up much of what I have been saying here tonight:

*“If you are still shaken by the horrifying scenes of September 11, please observe a moment of silence for the 5,000 civilian lives lost in the New York, Washington, DC and Pennsylvania attacks.*

*“While we’re at it, let’s have 13 minutes of silence for the 130,000 Iraqi civilians killed in 1991 by order of President Bush Sr.*

*“Take another moment to remember how Americans celebrated and cheered in the streets.*

*“Now another 20 minutes of silence for the 200,000 Iranians killed by Iraqi soldiers using weapons and money provided to Saddam Hussein by the American government.*

*“Another 15 minutes of silence for the Russians and 150,000 Afghans killed by the Taliban troops who were supported and trained by the CIA.*

*“Plus 10 minutes of silence for 100,000 Japanese killed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the Atomic bombs dropped by the USA.*

*“We’ve just kept quiet for one hour: one minute for the Americans killed in NY, DC, and Pennsylvania, 59 minutes for their victims throughout the world.*

*“If you are still in awe, let’s have another hour of silence for all those killed in Vietnam, which is not something Americans like to admit.*

*“Or for the massacre in Panama in 1989, where Americans troops attacked poor villagers, leaving 20,000 Panamanians homeless and thousands dead.*

*“Or for the millions of children who have died because of the USA embargoes on Iraq and Cuba.*

*“Or the hundreds of thousands brutally murdered throughout the world by USA-sponsored civil wars and coups d’etats in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Guatemala, El Salvador to name a few).”*

***Now, let’s talk about terrorism, shall we?”***

