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Deeper in the Afghan Quagmire

by Sheldon Richman

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Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has designated the Haqqani network a terrorist organization. What is the Haqqani network?

Wikipedia says that it

is an insurgent group using asymmetric warfare to fight against US-led NATO forces and the government of Afghanistan. Originating in Afghanistan during the mid-1970s, it was nurtured by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) during the 1980s Soviet war in Afghanistan.

So it was a U.S. ally when the Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan, and it is fighting U.S. and NATO forces now that they are occupying Afghanistan.

See a pattern? The Haqqani network dislikes foreign occupation of their country and is willing to use violence to rid their country of the occupiers.

The designation as a terrorist group, "which will go into effect within 10 days," the Associated Press reported, "completes an odyssey of sorts for the Haqqanis from the days they partnered with the CIA during the Cold War and were hailed as freedom fighters."

It's said that one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter. The U.S. government has been on both sides of that equation.

Eighteenth-century Americans saw the British as occupiers, and were willing to use violence to throw them out. If Secretary of State Clinton had been a British official in the 1770s, would she have designated the Sons of Liberty a “foreign terrorist organization”? Apparently so.

Do Americans who mind their own business have anything to fear from the Haqqani network?

“U.S. defense officials said the administration doesn't believe the Haqqanis have designs to attack the United States,” the AP reported.

The AP continued, “But they said the group shelters al-Qaida and other militant groups, allowing them to plan and train for possible operations targeting the U.S.”

Does that make the Haqqanis a threat? If so, it is a threat that could be easily ended. As former Republican presidential contender Ron Paul repeatedly points out, the original al-Qaeda threat to Americans at home was a direct result of U.S. intervention in the Middle East: specifically, the stationing of troops near Islamic holy places in Saudi Arabia, the 1990s killer embargo on Iraq, and the United States' enabling of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. If the U.S. government dismantled its imperial foreign policy, which has brutalized Arabs and Muslims for decades, the small threat that exists today would subside. As Rep. Paul says, they don't hate us because we're free. They hate us because we're over there.

The U.S. government has occupied Afghanistan for 11 years, through two administrations, Republican and Democrat. It has installed and supported a corrupt and authoritarian Islamic puppet government under Hamid Karzai. In enforcing the occupation, U.S. and NATO troops have killed thousands of innocent people, and the Obama administration has spread the war to Pakistan, where innocents are killed by remote-control drones — with Obama personally selecting the targets. The kills are always said to be of “suspected militants,” and the administration denies Pakistan's claims that many civilians have been killed, though independent reports of such deaths abound. How can Obama be so sure? It's all in the definition.

According to the *New York Times*,

Mr. Obama embraced a disputed method for counting civilian casualties that did little to box him in. It in effect counts *all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants*, according to several administration officials, unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent. (emphasis added)

The mothers, fathers, wives, and children of these young men will be gratified, of course, to learn that the U.S. government exonerated their loved ones — posthumously.

Naturally, Americans are in the dark about this.

“Virtually every time the U.S. fires a missile from a drone and ends the lives of Muslims,” commentator Glenn Greenwald writes,

American media outlets dutifully trumpet in headlines that the dead were “militants” — even though those media outlets literally do not have the slightest idea of who was actually killed. They simply cite always-unnamed “officials” claiming that the dead were “militants.” It’s the most obvious and inexcusable form of rank propaganda: media outlets continuously propagating a vital claim without having the slightest idea if it’s true.

It is depressing to think that this will go on no matter who wins in November.