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Commentary, analysis and investigations
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June 4, 2009 - Issue 327

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A Foreign Policy Guided by "Houses" and "Daughters"
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During last year's presidential campaign, democratic candidate Barack Obama made a statement that should be a fundamental principle guiding any nation's foreign policy: "If somebody was sending rockets into my house, where my two daughters sleep at night, I'm going to do everything in my power to stop that." ("Obama Defers to Bush, for Now, on Gaza Crisis," By Steven Lee Myers and Helene Cooper, *The New York Times*, Dec. 28, 2008). At last a US political leader who dared to put a human face on foreign policy.

Obama made that statement last July in Israel, in Sderot, the very town that was the repeated target of Hamas rockets. He was seeking American Jewish votes in his run for the presidency. Tragically, his courting words help to justify Israel's deadly end-of-the-year three-week criminal war against the defenseless people of Gaza. Had Obama been more than a political opportunist, he would have recognized that, in firing those largely ineffectual homemade rockets, democratically-elected Hamas was doing "everything in" its "power" to end Israel's illegal, life-strangling, brutal blockade that continues to deny Palestinian "house[s]" and "daughters" *the right to exist*.

Then democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama willfully blurred cause and effect. But his personalizing of foreign policy, by putting it in terms of "houses" and "daughters," provides an unintended critical prophetic lesson and warning.

The airplanes causing the horrible deaths in America on 9/11 *did not come from out of the blue*. Former president George W. Bush wanted everyone to believe that: he immediately discouraged any national soul-searching about America's foreign policy in our name, and whether it contributed to such violent aggression. "And make no mistake about it," Bush declared about 9/11, ". . . *They have no justification for their actions* [italics added]. There's no religious justification, there's no political justification. The only justification is evil. . . . These are evil doers." ("International Campaign Against Terror Grows, Remarks by President Bush and Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan in Photo Opportunity," *The White House*, Sept. 25, 2001)

The Bush administration used the terrible 9/11 assaults on America as a pretext to justify launching unnecessary wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The wars have served our government's imperialistic aim to control the oil-rich Middle East, the profiteering of the US military industrial complex, and to keep "war president" George Bush and other Republicans in power.

What would happen if a majority of Americans realize they have been betrayed by former President Bush's propagandistic "love of God and country," and that 9/11 was not about "evil doers" but about what our political leaders' decisions have done to the "houses" and "daughters" of so many faceless people and families in our name? What would happen if enough citizens in the "houses" of America become convinced that their sons and daughters are being sacrificed to line pockets not liberate people, to maintain those in power not lift up the powerless?

Could it be that the devastating 9/11 attacks against America were a reaction to a longstanding foreign policy oblivious to "houses" and "daughters?" What about all those "daughters," among more than one million Iraqis, "sleep[ing] at night," mostly children under the age of 5, killed between 1990 and 2003, as a result of US-controlled UN sanctions?" By 1996, an estimated 500,000 Iraqi children had died. Which evidently did not concern then US Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright. CBS 60 Minutes anchor Leslie Stahl said to her, "We have heard half a million children have died. I mean that is more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?" And Albright answered, "I think that is a very hard choice, but the price, we think, the price is worth it. . . . He [Saddam Hussein] is not going to invade another country" (May 12, 1996). All those "daughters" and sons of all those mothers and fathers in all those Iraqi "houses."

What about all those Palestinian "daughters" and their families in "houses" on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip? The decades of occupation and refugees and deaths and misery and segregation and confinement at the hands of Israel, armed and its war crimes politically insulated in the UN by America?

Shall we remain unaware of the longstanding US support for Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes, like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Pakistan and Morocco, that oppress the "daughters" and their loved ones in the "houses" of those countries?

What about the negative impact of some 737 US military bases in the world, surrounding all those "houses" and "daughters" and their fathers and mothers in all those countries? ("737 U.S. Military Bases = Global Empire," by Chalmers Johnson, *Pak Alert Press*, Mar. 22, 2009) How would we feel and react if foreign military boots were on American streets and their fighter planes overhead controlling our movements?

A 2004 report of the Pentagon's own advisory panel, the Defense Science Board on Strategic Communications, emphasizes the importance of "houses" and "daughters" to foreign policy: "Muslims do not 'hate our freedom,' but rather they hate our policies," including America's "one-sided support in favor of Israel and against Palestinian rights, and the longstanding, ever-increasing support for what Muslim's collectively see as tyrannies, most notably Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Pakistan and the Gulf States." Thus "when American public diplomacy talks about bringing democracy to Islamic societies, this is seen as no more than self-serving hypocrisy. . . . In the eyes of the Muslim world," the report continues, "American occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq has not led to democracy there, but only more chaos and suffering." ("*The New York Times*," Nov. 24, 2004; "They hate our policies, not our freedom," *Canadian Content*, Aug. 19, 2006).

The Obama administration has yet to demonstrate a foreign policy guided by “houses” and “daughters.” In the face of America’s UN-condemned “illegal” invasion and occupation of non-threatening Iraq, and the resulting deaths of over one million Iraqi civilians, and the deadly civil war between the Shiites and the Sunnis the invasion provoked, and the uprooting of some four million citizens, and the destruction of the country’s life-sustaining infrastructure, President Obama spoke the following words to the Marines at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina:

You fought against tyranny and disorder. You have bled for your best friends and for unknown Iraqis. And you have borne an enormous burden for your fellow citizens, while extending a precious opportunity to the people of Iraq.

I intend to remove all U.S. troops from Iraq by the end of 2011. We will complete this transition to Iraqi responsibility, *and we will bring our troops home with the honor that they have earned* [italics added]. (“Text: Obama’s Speech at Camp Lejeune, N.C.,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 27, 2009; “With Pledges to Troops and Iraqis, Obama Details Pullout,” By Peter Baker, *The New York Times*, Feb. 27, 2009).

Barack Obama, whose opposition to the Iraqi war helped elect him president, later made an “unannounced trip” to Iraq to visit US troops. A *New York Times* story reported that “Mr. Obama arrived here aboard Air Force One at 4:42 p.m. after a *flight carried out in secrecy and with heightened security, which included the closing of the main road to Baghdad International Airport* [italics added]. The story continued, “Mr. Obama arrived only hours after a car bomb exploded in Kadhimiya, a predominantly Shiite neighborhood in Baghdad. . . . At least eight people were killed and nearly two dozen were wounded. That attack,” the story went on, “was carried out a day after a series of six car bombings killed at least 33 people and wounded scores in and around Baghdad, one of the bloodiest days in Iraq this year.” President Obama reportedly referred to the attack as “this senseless violence,” and said, “I remain convinced that our shared resolve and commitment to progress is greater than the obstacles that stand in our way.” The story then quoted Obama as “prais[ing] the troops for their accomplishments in a war he did not, as a candidate and a senator, support. ‘You have give Iraq the opportunity to stand on its own as a democratic country. . . . That is an extraordinary achievement, and for that you have the thanks of the American people.’” (“Obama, in a Visit to Iraq, Repeats His Pledge to End the War,” by Steven Lee Myers and Helene Cooper, Apr. 8, 2009). “The *obstacles* [italics added] that stand in our way” have human faces: they are “daughters” and families who live in “houses.”

While a secretive President Obama was avoiding the “houses” and “daughters” of the country now “given . . . the opportunity to stand on its own as a democratic society,” Vice President Biden was “welcom[ing] home from Iraq soldiers at Fort Bragg with the same denial of reality:

You did more than I suspect you even know . . . You went in the midst of what was an uncertain future for Iraq and you left a country where violence is replaced by progress. . . . You have given the Iraqis for the first time in their memory the opportunity to live in peace, but it’s up to them to keep it. (“Praising gains in Iraq, Biden welcomes home soldiers at Fort Bragg,” Political Notebook, *The Boston Globe*, Apr. 9, 2009).

“If somebody was sending rockets into my house where my two daughters sleep at night, I am going to do everything in my power to stop that.” What about the “daughters” and other family members in all those “houses” in Pakistan being killed by

US drone missile air strikes, the use of which the Obama administration “plan[s] to intensify.” (“More Drone Attacks in Pakistan Planned,” by Eric Schmitt and Christopher Drew, *The New York Times*, Apr. 6, 2009) A Pakistani newspaper put human faces on the impersonal drone attacks, reporting,

Of the 60 cross-border predator strikes carried out by the Afghanistan-based American drones in Pakistan between January 14, 2006 and April 8, 2009, only 10 were able to hit their actual targets, killing 14 wanted al-Qaeda leaders, besides perishing 689 innocent Pakistani civilians. The success percentage of the US predator strikes thus comes to not more than six per cent.” (“60 drone hits kill 14 al-Qaeda men, 687 civilians,” *The News*, Apr. 10, 2009).

Far more “houses” and “daughters” are being harmed by American drones firing missiles into Pakistan. *The Sunday Times* reports that the “American drone attacks on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan are causing a massive humanitarian emergency.” The report continues:

As many as 1 million people have fled their homes in the Tribal Areas to escape attacks by the unmanned spy planes as well as bombings by the Pakistani army. In Bajaur agency entire villages have been flattened by Pakistani troops under growing American pressure to act against Al-Qaeda militants, who have made the area their base. . . .

Pakistani officials say drone attacks have been stepped up since President Barack Obama took office in Washington, killing at least 81 people. (“Thousands Flee Bomb Attacks by US Drones,” by David Khattakin and Christina Lamb, Apr. 5, 2009).

There is the same US disregard for “houses” and “daughters” in Afghanistan. A *New York Times* piece called, “Civilians Died in Airstrike by NATO, Afghan says,” contains a graphic account:

An air-strike by NATO forces early Monday in mountainous eastern Afghanistan killed six civilians, including two children, a local Afghan official said, the latest accusation of civilian casualties leveled against NATO and American forces. . . .

A reporter for Agence France-Presse said the wounded . . . included . . . a 14 year-old boy who said. . . “We were asleep, and all of a sudden the roof collapsed. . . I don’t remember anything. I get to know here [in a nearby hospital] that my father, my mother, my brother and my younger sister have all been killed, and I am wounded. (By Richard A Oppel, Jr. and Abdul Waheed Wafa, Apr. 14, 2009).

An Associated Press story by Nahal Toosi goes to the heart of a foreign policy indifferent to “houses” and “daughters.” Toosi writes, “The Pakistani government has demanded an end to the [drone-fired missile] strikes, saying that although they have killed several militant leaders, they also fan anti-American sentiment and violate the country’s sovereignty.” (“Suspected US missiles kill three, wound five, Pakistan Says,” *The Boston Globe*, Apr. 20, 2009). A *McClatchy Newspapers* story on “Do U.S. drones kill Pakistani extremists or recruit them?” reflects President Obama’s own personal feelings about the security of his daughters: “US intelligence and military officials . . . said. . . the strikes by missile-firing drones are a recruiting boon for extremists because of the unintended civilian casualties that have prompted widespread anger against the

U.S.” (By Jonathan S. Landay, Apr. 7, 2009).

Are they extremists? Or people just like President Obama, who are “going to do *everything in” their “power* to stop” the United States from “sending” missiles into more “houses” where their “daughters” and other loved ones “sleep at night”?

The Bush administration hid behind its president’s belief in “God” and “prayer” and “freedom” and “democracy” to destroy countless “houses” and “daughters” in our name. America cannot afford another administration using the shared multicultural values of its president as a front for continuing the same criminal policies. Whether President Obama can identify with the “houses” and “daughters” of people in other countries remains to be seen.

The United States desperately needs a foreign policy guided by the Golden Rule—for the sake of “houses” and “daughters” everywhere, including our own.

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