

UK Indymedia Interview with UCLA Professor Doug Kellner about his new book that examines Bush Administration's post-9/11 foreign policy.

From 9/11 To Terror War Author Doug Kellner: An Interview

September 11, 2003 marked the second anniversary of the collapse of the World Trade Center buildings that killed thousands of New Yorkers. Like anti-war Movement writer Don Paul and MIT Professor Noam Chomsky, you've written a book about what happened on 9/11/01. Would the New Yorkers who read Don Paul or MIT Professor Chomsky's books on 9/11 learn anything new about why 9/11 happened, by reading your book?

Kellner: My book *From 9/11 to Terror War* provides a detailed examination of the Bush administration response to the terror attacks and subsequent US interventions in Afghanistan and build-up to the war against Iraq. In a sustained critical analysis of Bush administration policy, I argue that global terrorism requires a multilateral and global solution rather than the Bush administration unilateralism and militarist solution that I argue has largely failed in Afghanistan (and that appears to be failing in Iraq as well).

The book shows how September 11 provided an opportunity for the Bush administration to push through hard-right domestic and foreign policies, many of which were being contested and blocked in Congress pre-September 11. I systematically critique the Bush legacy of unilateralism in foreign policy that greatly undermines national security while isolating the U.S. and creating new enemies, as well as its failed economic policy that enriched its supporters and corporate allies while turning economic surpluses into deficits. In addition, I carry out a sustained critique of the Bush administration policy of attacks on democracy, civil liberties, justice, and the U.S. constitutional system of checks and balances.

My book provides the most detailed account of the Afghanistan and critique of Bush/Pentagon militarism, drawing on a wide-range of sources to critically dissect the U.S. Afghanistan campaign, its lies and propaganda, and its failures. *From 9/11 to Terror War* documents several important factors largely overlooked by the media, including:

The ways that the U.S. government supported Islamic radical groups in the Cold War, the tangled web of relations between the Bush family, the bin Ladens, and the Saudis;

The connections between the Bush family, Cheney and the matrix of oil, money, and political connections behind the Enron, Halliburton and other corporate scandals that preceded the September 11 terror attacks, but that were also imbricated in the aftermath;

The ways that the Bush deprioritized terrorism pre-September 11 and put aside Clinton administration plans to deal with bin Laden and terrorism;

How Bush administration and Republican Party economic policies helped enable corporate corruption and have led to severe economic crisis, with sky-rocketing unemployment, a massive deficit, decline of stock and bond markets, and generalized economic crisis;

How Bush administration unilateralism is intensifying war and repression throughout the world and how his new doctrine of "preemptive strikes" threatens to unleash an era of war. I trace the build-up to the war against Iraq and show how it was planned right after September 11 and was deeply rooted in long-time neo-conservative policies.

2. On the morning of September 11, 2001, regular U.S. daytime TV programming was suddenly suspended and corporate media network TV anchors like Dan Rather and Peter Jennings were put on the TV screens for many consecutive hours. Yet no U.S. Congressional investigation into what actually happened on September 11, 2001 in New York City was immediately begun. How would you characterize the political and propaganda role that the U.S. corporate media conglomerates played on September 11, 2001--both prior to the collapse of the World Trade Center buildings and after their collapse? Why do you think no U.S. Congressional investigation into what happened on September 11, 2001 in New York City was begun immediately?

Kellner: The September 11 terror attacks were one of the great media spectacles in history, but the U.S. corporate media refused to delve into the history of U.S. support for precisely the Islamic fundamentalists in the Al Qaeda network who were alleged to have carried out the attack; there was little critical analysis of why the Bush administration had not paid more attention to dangers of terrorist attacks, or the failures of U.S. intelligence services and the Pentagon to protect the country against such attacks. Both parties were terrorized into submission to Bush administration policy and only much later, after months of delay, has there finally begun an investigation of how the attacks could happen. Obviously, the Bush administration did everything possible to prevent such an examination and Congress, the media, and the public went along, with exception of some critical voices, largely found on the Internet.

3. Most anti-war activists and journalists in Europe assume that the collapse of the World Trade Center buildings resulted from a conspiracy which likely involved Bush Administration officials--in order to provide a pretext for the subsequent U.S. military attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq. In the U.S., however, 9/11 conspiracy researchers have often been ridiculed by various U.S. corporate and alternative media gatekeepers or pundits, in the same way that Oliver Stone was ridiculed following the release of the JFK movie. Why do you think most U.S. left media editors are less willing than their European counterparts to publish articles that provide their anti-war readers with evidence of possible Bush Administration involvement in a conspiracy which resulted in the September 11, 2001 collapse of the World Trade Center buildings?

Kellner: In my book, I explore the case for conspiracy and conclude that either the Bush administration knew the attacks were coming and exploited them to push through their rightwing domestic and foreign policy or they were utterly incompetent, failing to see all of the obvious signs of the coming Al Qaeda attack. Whether there will ever be a thorough investigation that gets to the bottom of the 9/11 attacks, or whether like the Kennedy assassination, it continues to be a source of speculation and theorizing, remains to be seen.

4. In early October 2001, the London-based Guardian newspaper web site let its readers know on what date the Pentagon was going to begin to bomb Afghanistan, while all the U.S. corporate media news departments apparently agreed to withhold this significant information from U.S. TV viewers and U.S. newspaper readers. Why do you think U.S. mediapeople were less willing than British journalists to let their TV viewers and newspaper readers know when the Pentagon was going to begin its attack on Afghanistan?

Kellner: Obviously, the U.S. media was totally complicit with the Bush administration and Pentagon in both the Afghanistan and war against Iraq, as they were in the early Gulf War. U.S. corporate media can be seen as part of a military-industrial-entertainment complex that provides propaganda and legitimation for U.S. military intervention. As long as uncritical prowar coverage gets good ratings and viewer response they will continue; however, if the Iraq occupation continues to be a disaster, questions will be raised about Bush administration military policy and there may be critique raised in the media.

5. Under the Nuremberg Accords, government and media officials who conspire to commit crimes against peace are supposed to be indicted for war crimes. Do you think that any Bush Administration officials or U.S. media executives should now be indicted by an international tribunal for violating the Nuremberg Accords between September 11, 2001 and September 11, 2003?

Kellner: A group in Belgium instituted war crimes proceedings against the Bush administration for their military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq but under intense pressure it was dropped. One of the crimes of Bush administration unilateralism is failure to participate in the International Criminal Court and other institutions that would make possible prosecution of war criminals such as are found in the Bush administration.

6. Since September 11, 2001 the U.S. government has continued to align itself politically in the Middle East with the governments of Israel, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Egypt. Why do you think the U.S. government continues to provide military aid to the existing regimes in Israel, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Egypt, although these regimes are regarded as brutal ones by most anti-war activists around the globe?

Kellner: Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld et al have long been allied with Middle East oil interests connected to rightwing regimes and the U.S. has also of course been the major supporter of Israel, thus creating many enemies in the region. Eventually, there is going to have to be a systematic evaluation and change of U.S. Middle East policy but this won't happen until there is a regime change in the U.S.

7. Do you think the Bush Administration is conspiring to establish new regimes in Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia and North Korea? Do you think the Bush Administration will be ordering the Pentagon to start launching missiles against either Iran, North Korea or Cuba before the November 2004 election?

Kellner: There is no doubt but that the "cabal" of neoconservatives around Cheney and Rumsfeld would like to reorder the Middle East but given that they cannot even control Afghanistan and Iraq it is not clear to me that this is remotely possible and one hopes that the public and the Pentagon (who has to do the fighting!) too will see the folly of Bush administration hegemonic policy.

8. Have you been invited on many PBS shows or on C-Span to discuss your From 9/11 to Terror War book?

Kellner: Only the Internet site Buzzflash has promoted it so far. I also have a daily weblog that updates the book where there is discussion of my positions. It is emerging as one of the major progressive blogs at

<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/courses/ed253a/blogger.php>

This project follows my 18 years of doing a public access TV show in Austin, Texas, using the Internet to circulate critical stories and voices excluded in the mainstream media.

9. How can readers obtain a copy of From 9/11 to Terror War?

It can be ordered directly from the publisher or from Internet or local bookstores; the Internet address is

<http://www.rowmanlittlefield.com/Catalog/SingleBook.shtml?command=Search&db=%5EDB/CATALOG.db&eqSKUdata=0742526380>