

Taxi to the Darkside, No End in Sight and the Mistakes of the U.S. Government

1. *Taxi to the Darkside*. Undermining the Essence of the Rule of Law

In different situations people tend to rely on the rule of law which they recognize and respect above all. It is a common belief that the law is fair to every citizen of the country, especially such a powerful one as the United States of America, and that the citizens are all safe under its protection. However, the cases wherein the powers granted by a certain law are abused are, unfortunately, quite widespread these days. The movie *Taxi to the Darkside* directed by Alex Gibney and released in 2008 depicts the events which undermine the essence of the rule of law and shows how the U.S. government abuses its power in the “war on terror”.

At large, the movie traces the story of Dilawar, a taxi driver from Afghanistan, who died in the jail at Bagram airbase in Afghanistan. Dilawar was wrongfully accused of terrorism and beaten to death by the common American soldiers, the real pride of the United States of America. The movie depicts illegal interrogation and detention policies that are practiced by the U.S. government ready to take any measures to end the “war on terror”. Dilawar’s story is not the only one presented in the film; there are also a number of other people who are tortured by American soldiers in the *Taxi to the Darkside*.

The movie under consideration shows that the government opts to ignore its own laws and to abuse its powers when it comes to national security. The fact that terrible tortures take place to protect the citizens of the United States makes it hard to condemn the actions of U.S. government. After the events of September 11, 2001, when thousands of American citizens lost their lives during the Al Qaida’s attack on the New York twin towers, such a behavior of the government seems to be totally

justified. The main purpose of any government is to guarantee safety and welfare to all the citizens of the country. It risks to be overthrown if this mission is failed.

On the other hand, American rule of law is unfair to the innocent people who are tortured for the welfare of the United States. If American citizens knew how many innocent lives their safety takes, probably they would have thought of other means to protect themselves. *Taxi to the Darkside* features how American soldiers at military prisons in Iraq and Afghanistan abuse the rule of law when interrogating the detainees; the abusive techniques they use include sleep deprivation, ceiling handcuffing, isolation, and even the one called “waterboarding,” a form of torture which is considered to be illegal under the international law and the U.S. law correspondingly (*Taxi to the Darkside*).

The movie *Taxi to the Darkside* is the winner of the 2008 Academy Award in the nomination for the *Best Documentary Feature*, as well as of the 2008 *Peabody Award*. It features illegal practices used by American soldiers at detention facilities in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay. Most of the scenes in the movie are appalling; they strike with extreme sadism and evoke resentment in viewers. This movie undermines the essence of the rule of law, because it shows that the law is applied only when it is beneficial for the government and is often abused in the pursuit of governmental purposes. Though this is done for national security, it is hardly worse the lives of innocent people who suffer just because of their ethnic origin.

2. *No End in Sight* and the Mistakes of the U.S. Government

No End in Sight directed by Charles Ferguson features the events different from those which are presented in the *Taxi to the Darkside* even though the movies

share the same military subject. They both depict strivings of the U.S. government to ensure the country with proper security but *No End in Sight* depicts the events which take place directly during the war which America tried to avoid so diligently. This movie is a collection of interviews given by people who were involved in the ORHA (the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance) and the Iraqi occupation authority, as well as by soldiers who were stationed in Iraq, Iraqi civilians, and several journalists. This movie addresses the mistakes made by the U.S. government during the Iraq occupation and reveals the real cause of the insurgency which engulfs Iraq today.

The first issue the movie addresses is the set of mistakes made by the U.S. government in face of George W. Bush. To be more exact, these mistakes were made by Paul Bremer, the head of Coalition Provisional Authority. According to the movie, three mistakes were especially grave. Firstly, not enough troops (police force or national army) were provided to maintain the order. This led to the insufficiency of the martial law after conquering the country. Numerous buildings and cultural sites in Baghdad remained unprotected, which, as *No End in Sight* states, convinced Iraqis that no order and law were maintained by American forces. This all resulted in destruction of Baghdad and made the ORHA staff rebuild the infrastructure of the Iraqi government (*No End in Sight*).

Two other mistakes were Bremer's orders, the first one implementing "De-Ba'athification" and the second one disbanding Iraqi military entities. Bremer's order of "De-Ba'athification" banned apolitical Iraqi individuals to hold any positions in the new government. This was an awful mistake, because Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party consisted mostly of teachers and educated employees, who did not have a chance of holding these positions unless they were members of the party. Bremer's

another mistake only aggravated the situation by adding another 500,000 unemployed people. Joining the militia force was the only way out for the unemployed who got the access to weapons, which were later used against the new government and Americans (*No End in Sight*).

These fatal mistakes led to chaos in the country. “De-Ba'athification” and disbanding of Iraqi army resulted in insurgency in Iraq, obviously people who lost their jobs needed means for living. All stated above led to much more serious problems, namely penetration of Iraqi citizens into the military; at this, most of them did not have much military experience, as well as certain knowledge of the Arab world. The decisions taken by them were debilitating and it ended up in what the American forces have today.

Thus, *No End in Sight* shows how arrogance, on the part of Bush Administration, turned an ordinary military victory into an endless war. The main themes of the movie *No End in Sight* are the mistakes made by the U.S. government and the causes of the insurgency in Iraq after its occupation by American forces. These two themes are interrelated; they are greatly connected with such issues as arrogance and ignorance of Bush Administration which resulted in a nightmare of war which seems to be endless.

Works Cited

No End in Sight. Dir. Charles Ferguson. Perf. Campbell Scott, Gerald Burke, Ali Fadhil, Omar Fekeiki, and Robert Hutchings. Magnolia Pictures, 2007. Film.

Taxi to the Darkside. Dir. Alex Gibney. Perf. Brian Keith Allen, Moazzam Begg, Christopher Beiring, and Willie Brand. THINKFilm, 2007. Film.