

SIGNPOST
ISSUES THAT MATTER

VIJAY PRASHAD

WAR AGAINST THE PLANET

THE FIFTH AFGHAN WAR,
IMPERIALISM, AND
OTHER ASSORTED FUNDAMENTALISMS

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TOLERANCE OF ARABIA

Arab oil has corrupted the Arab condition not only in the oil lands, but in the Arab world as a whole.

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I. AMNESIA AND INNOCENT AMERICA

We live in times of great amnesia. The Taliban forgets that it alone did not make the Soviet Army retreat, the leftist government collapse, and then the warlords leave Kabul for exile. Amnesia about its allies, the CIA, the Saudis and the ISI makes it overestimate its own rather impoverished capacity to stand up to the immense might of the US-UK military. The technological superiority of the US forces and its smooth capacity to get the natives to do the ground war themselves (the Northern Alliance here, the Iraqi National Congress and the southern Shi'a in Iraq) cannot be matched by scattershot armaments and the depleted ordinance of the Taliban army. The rather pathetic maps on the military command centres of the Taliban in Kabul and its reliance on the internet for data on bombs and on US movements shows that the Taliban was severely outclassed on

the battlefield by the technology and the diplomacy of the US.²

But the US too suffers from acute amnesia.³ Washington is eager to deny its role both in the facilitation of the Taliban to power and of the entry of such people as Osama bin Laden to the centre of world politics. I have a fantasy about being given access to the archives of the CIA at Langley, Virginia. Somewhere in the vault I'd find the first edition (perhaps from the late 1940s) of a manual that has been copied many times, since the thoroughly effective CIA would have used it almost every few years. Like other manuals it would probably be bound in a bold colour with large black letters that say something like, 'Manual for Counter-Insurgency: How to Manufacture an Enemy Who Once Was an Asset'. In the files that go with the manual, we'd find one on President Manuel Noriega, a valuable CIA asset inside the Panamanian military right up to the invasion of the country in December 1989 when the marines arrested the sovereign, but corrupt leader and incarcerated him in the US. In 1983 Noriega met with Vice President G.H. Bush to discuss allegations of drug dealing and money-laundering, but for the next six years the US did little to disrupt the lucrative business of its ally. When populist forces arose in Panama to contest the US hold on the crucial canal and the US bases, Washington and then President Bush discarded their ally, charged him with crimes that it tacitly supported and sent in the marines. The invasion of Panama was a preview of the Gulf War.

But imperialism is supple, seeking new tactics in new moments, finding ways to intervene to undermine the political dynamic of genuine democracy in the name of 'democracy' and 'human rights'. Few interventions are identical to others, since these are worked out carefully, often with the connivance of local elites, eager to hold onto power at all costs, at any cost. Since the end of the Second World War, when the US became the buyer of last resort and the principle pole for US-European imperialism, it has feared three foes – the Soviet Union, radical nationalisms of all sorts, and national communist parties in the Third World.⁴ The US joined hands with any outrageous villain,

whether Mobuto in the Congo or Marcos in the Philippines as long as this alliance crushed any aspiration for the nationalization of a country's wealth and produce, checked the growth of Soviet power, and destroyed the workers and peasants movements, themselves frequently led by national communist parties. There is a game plan at work, but it works differently in different settings; the context for this book is Afghanistan, and the fulcrum of its destiny lies in the distant peninsula of Saudi Arabia. Yes, Afghanistan is related to Arabia since the seventh century, when the people of Ghor sent a holy man by the name of Kais to greet the prophet Muhammad only nine years after he had announced his mission; Kais returned with Islam, the first gift from Arabia. The link that this book traces does not immediately start with Kais, for it is more inclined to spend time on Afghanistan's place as the hub of the anti-Soviet mission of the US, the Saudis and their junior partner, the Pakistanis (from 1979 to 1989), as an outpost of dissent against the rule of the Saudi royal family (since 1991, at least), and as the terrain for a potentially lucrative oil and natural gas pipeline from Central Asia.

None of this is to indulge the conspiracy theories that the Saudis or the CIA or Mossad orchestrated 9/11. This is quite far-fetched. Indeed, the Saudis grand mufti, Sheikh Abd al-Aziz bin Abdallah al-Shaykh, prohibited suicide attacks in the name of Islam as recently as 21 April 2001.⁵ The point is that the tolerance of Arabia encouraged by the US and facilitated by Pakistani action (whether at Black September in 1970 or else in the harbouring of the *mehmeen* mujahideen) produced the social conditions that spawned the terror of 9/11. If those social conditions are not addressed and redressed, it is likely that there will be more, tragic 9/11s in the future.

II. THE ASSASSINATION OF NASSERISM

In 1965, the ex-President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah wrote a book that was fated to be a classic, but has since been forgotten, *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. Nkrumah

recognized that the period of colonial racism was over, the time when European rulers captured lands and peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America to make them work for the profit of Northwestern Europe and the United States. With the freedom of the erstwhile colonies, the corporations and corporate states had to find a new means to dominate the world. Formerly colonized people had the right to rule over themselves politically, but economic sovereignty over them was still to be dictated by Europe. 'The essence of neocolonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.'⁶ If Europe and the US held that bourgeois democracy was the hallmark of modernity, they simultaneously held that those whom they deemed to be (either racially or culturally) inferior should have other ways to rule themselves. This form of multi-racist treatment enabled the US to justify their alliances with ruthless dictators *in the name of cultural relativism*, just as long as these dictators submitted the destiny of their own states to that of the corporatized state of the US. European and US support for the ruthless emirates in the Gulf, of which Saudi Arabia is the leader, must be seen as part of the multi-racist foreign policy of US-Europe in neocolonial times. Arabs, we are told, are unable to create a democracy because of their cultural heritage of tribalism, so that the US-Europe can only encourage the emirs, and slowly shepherd them to something constitutional. For now, however, the US-Europe will offer military and economic aid to prop up unscrupulous kings (for the Arabs and the Persians) and ruthless dictators (for the Africans). US support of the Shah of Iran, of the Emirs of the Gulf States and of Jordan, of Mobutu in the Congo and of other such figures illustrates the racist practice of neocolonialism.

Furthermore, on the track of race again, the best way for the US-UK to indict the Arabs (and Islam) in general is not to have establishment-inducted scholars talk about imperialism's possessive investment in tribalism but to talk about a 'clash of

civilizations' (Samuel Huntington) or else about 'the revolt of Islam' (Bernard Lewis). Islam, like any other faith practice, has its problems, but in our contemporary world it has come to represent the antithesis of modernity. The stereotypes about Islam feed our belief that there are those who live in feudal times, and the US-UK governments must be given the freedom to deal with them as if it ruled as medieval lords. There is no conflict between Jihad and McWorld, because Jihad is as modern as our current globalization — emblazoned on the banners of the Islamicists are not only slogans of the past, but (in invisible ink) the words Oil, Natural Gas and Frustrated Dreams of Freedom. And an end to the petro-dynasties that rule over a tenth of the Arabs and refuse to share the spoils of oil.

Ibn Saud, the founder of Saudi Arabia, was a brigand before he was encouraged by the English to take leadership against the Ottoman Empire. Long before he became King (1932), the English monarch knighted him (1915) and just after his accession to the newly fabricated emirate of Arabia, the monarch of England bestowed upon him the Order of the Bath (1935). English advisors sat beside him, people such as Henry St. John Philby (father of the Soviet spy, Kim Philby) and Sir John Baggot Glubb (known as Glubb Pasha). In the 1920s, the English helped arm Ibn Saud as his Ikhwan ('brothers') took inspiration from the fanatical Wahhabism (a branch of Sunni Islam developed in the eighteenth century by the Ibn Saud family's patron saint Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab) and executed not less than four hundred thousand people to give Ibn Saud dominance over the Arabian Peninsula. Glubb Pasha said of this that 'Ibn Saud used the massacre to subdue his enemies', this in a land of only four million.⁷ North of Arabia, the British installed Faisal (son of Sharif Husain of Hijaz) to rule over Iraq, a Sunni leader over a predominantly Shi'a land. In 1932, as Iraq became an independent state, the Anglo-Iraq treaty took effect by which the British held onto the airfields of Habbaniyya and Shu'ayba so that they might better control their puppet king.⁸

Oil, the liquid gold, was only discovered in large quantities

once Ibn Sa'ud named the country after himself and took sole title to it. Afraid of a rebellion from below and eager for funds to lavish pleasure on his seven thousand-member royal family, Ibn Sa'ud signed treaties with US-British oil firms and began a relationship that continues to this day – the Saudis act as rentiers of a reservoir that holds a quarter of the world's oil; they control production so that the price of oil does not rise to Britain-US's disadvantage; they use any means to thwart a challenge to their domination, this in order to protect the passage of oil. The sovereignty of the masses is curtailed by the mendacious arrangement made by imperialism and its franchise, here the Ibn Sa'ud family.

The challenge to the oil kings came from Nasserism and communism. Communism had an early start in the oil lands, with the main parties being formed in Palestine (1919), Iran (1920), Egypt (1922), and Iraq (1932). The Iranians came to communism from two sources, the migrant workers in the Baku oil fields who met Bolsheviks there and translated the *Communist Manifesto's* line, 'workers of the world, unite' into Farsi, *kargaran-e-jahan mottahad shaweed*, and people such as Ahmed Sultanzadeh, an important presence at the Congress of the Toilers of the East at Baku in 1920. The Palestinian, Egyptian and Iraqi parties were well served by the intellectual Jewish community, by the presence of rational military officers, and by workers in sectors of the economy that came under pressure from imperialism.⁹ The tenacity and bravery of the communists in the face of imperialist aggression won them many adherents. In early 1948, for example, when the Iraqis and the British almost signed the Portsmouth treaty which made the relationship between the powers more equal, but still allowed the British access to airfields, the Iraqi Communist Party emerged not only as the main force against the treaty, but as the main opposition to the regime. When the state cracked down on the ICP, the dead bodies of the ICP members that hung around the capital 'surrounded [Iraqi communism] with the halo of martyrdom'.¹⁰ The ICP was not only the oldest party in Iraq, but by the 1940s its doctrines had 'spread so widely in the big towns', said chief

of police Bahjat 'Atiyyah, that 'nearly fifty per cent of the youthful elements of all classes had been carried away by them'.¹¹ And when Dr. Muhammed Mossadegh (*Time* magazine's man of the year in 1951) won the elections in Iran to become Prime Minister in 1951, he welcomed the Iranian Communist Party to his side mainly to give him ballast as he nationalized the oil fields and enraged the British and their elves. Even as the CIA exaggerated Mossadegh's own relationship with the Iranian Communist Party, a secret history of the CIA's role in Iran written by Dr. Donald Wilber in 1954 reported that Allen Dulles (director of the CIA) authorized \$1 million to overthrow Mossadegh and 'bring to power a government which would reach an equitable oil settlement, enabling Iran to become economically sound and financially solvent, and which would vigorously prosecute the dangerously strong Communist Party'.¹² Eventually only a tenth of the \$1 million was actually spent – a very cheap coup. It should also be pointed out that the Shah's army acted against the Communists prior to the coup, mainly because of the royalists' fears at the strength of the Iranian Communist Party by 1953.

Mossadegh's victory in 1951 and the subsequent nationalization of the oil fields (as well as his astute use of the new media, particularly the radio, to reach the masses) impressed a generation of leaders in neighbouring Arab lands, notably in Egypt. There, on 23 July 1952, a group of twelve military officers staged a *coup d'état* against the monarchy, called themselves the Free Officers, and took power under the leadership of Gamel Abdul Nasser. The Free Officers, like the FLN in Algeria, came to power without a coherent political programme, even as they drew from the popular notion of pan-Arabism (*al-qawmiyya al-'arabiyyai*). Pan-Arabism developed from such important intellectuals as the Syrian Satia al-Husri (1880–1968), who produced a nationalist ethos through a close reading of Arab history and of German Romanticism. The combination of the two allowed al-Husri to argue that the Arab nation was not to be produced, but that it was organic and needed simply to be brought to life. An utter secularist, al-Husri believed that the

language of Arabic and an Arab culture predated Islam, and it is this that should be the basis for the Arab nation (whatever political shape this nation might take).¹³ Nasser, two decades afterwards, was to be the heroic individual destined to awaken the nation.

Indeed, Nasser created a flurry in the Arab world, and in the Third World in general. On 14 August 1958, Prime Minister Nehru assessed the rise of Arab nationalism before the Lok Sabha. 'In a very powerful, resurgent way', he told the house, 'Egypt took the lead in this matter and, under the wise leadership of President Nasser, has played a very important part. Nasser, in fact, became the most prominent symbol of Arab nationalism. This fact, which was patent, was neither liked nor appreciated by many powers, and an attempt was made to split the Arab countries, in fact, Arab nationalism'. Always alert to the contradictions of international relations, Nehru pointed out that *before* Nasser nationalized the Suez canal (1956) the US and the United Kingdom created the Baghdad Pact (1954), nominally to check the USSR, but really to undermine Arab nationalism. 'In the countries associated with the Baghdad Pact', Nehru continued, 'there was a hiatus between the Governments and the people, the people looking more and more towards Arab nationalism and the Governments looking in another direction and rather ranged against this spirit of Arab nationalism. How big the hiatus was can be seen from the *coup d'état* in Baghdad which surprised everyone.' On 14 July 1958, two hundred Free Officers (as they fashioned themselves) overthrew the monarchy and Brigadier Abd al-Karim Qasim, a Nasserite, became Prime Minister – Arab nationalism of a Nasserite stamp was still on the rise.

Nasserism found a close ally in most Arab lands among the vibrant communist parties, mainly because most Nasserite governments came to power as the military overthrew a corrupt monarchy, and these military officers needed civilian organizations to execute their programmes in society. The organization of the communist parties became essential in the early years of progressive Nasserism, whether in Egypt, Iraq, Syria or even

later in Sudan. But while Nasserism took advantage of the communist organization, the programme of Nasserism was far too ambiguous to allow full communist participation. In Egypt, for example, the Free Officers' coup was led by people of vastly different political outlooks, from those who remained close to the Muslim Brotherhood (the Ikhwan) to those who found fellowship in the Egyptian Communist Party (known as the Hadeto in those years, an Arabic acronym for the Democratic Movement for National Liberation).¹⁴ The Ba'ath Party of Syria and then Iraq fought the communists for ideological control of the nascent Pan-Arabism. The 24 July 1943 programme of the Ba'ath movement (the first to be released), and written by the Syrian founder of the party, Michel 'Aflaq, frankly stated, 'We represent the Arab spirit against materialist communism'. Furthermore, he wrote, 'communism is Western, and alien to everything Arab'.¹⁵ Ten days after the Free Officers' coup in Baghdad, 'Aflaq arrived there to try and draw Qasim toward the Ba'ath and against the Iraqi Communist Party. After the coup, the Iraqi Communist Party cadres numbered 25,000 and the members in mass organizations totalled half a million. The Ba'ath of Iraq at that time was only three hundred in 1956, and then about three thousand after the coup. All the unions, the Popular Resistance Front (a civilian militia) and most youth organizations pledged their fealty to the Iraqi Communist Party, and when it was under threat, an enormous demonstration of at least half a million people took place on 1 May 1959 to demand communist representation in the government. The Qasim government, under pressure from the Ba'ath began to repress the Communist party (and the Kurds in the north, who formed a communist bastion) only to fall himself to a Ba'athist coup on 8 February 1963.

The rise of both Nasserism and communism terrified the oil royals and the states of imperialism. In January 1957, Ibn Saud, son of the founder of Saudi Arabia, travelled to Washington, DC, to meet with US President Eisenhower and they produced a declaration known as the Eisenhower Doctrine (to

protect Saudi Arabia as if it were part of the USA). Even as Eisenhower found Ibn Saud personally unfit for leadership, he accepted that this substandard leader was the stuff that allowed the oil to travel untrammelled by nationalists like Nasser. The meeting took place after Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal in 1956, thereby putting all ship traffic between Asia and Europe at the mercy of the Egyptian state; in response the British and French invaded the Suez. That year Nasser traveled to Riyadh (Saudi Arabia), where the people received him as a hero. 'Arab Oil For the Arab People', said Nasser, and he not only scared the US government (who invaded Lebanon in 1958), but also local potentates (such as the heads of Iraq and Lebanon) who, in the words of the Fouad Ajami 'reign, but do not rule'. The animus against Nasser was so great that in March 1958 the Saudi royal family, it is said, attempted to assassinate him by having his plane shot down as it approached a landing at Damascus.

The CIA went into action, alongside Saudi intelligence and money. In 1957, the CIA helped the Jordanian King Hussein overthrow the popularly elected Nasserite cabinet; Saudi troops went to Jordan to help maintain Hussein's kingdom just as the US Sixth Fleet entered the eastern Mediterranean to send a signal to Nasserism. The United States provided \$10 million as the first installment to boost the economy and military of Jordan, the latter mainly staffed by a ruthless Bedouin army (who became useful in September 1970 alongside a Pakistani detachment commanded by General Zia-ul Haq that murdered a vast section of the Palestinian Liberation Organization who then took refuge in Lebanon). In January 1958, Egypt, Syria and Yemen joined to form the United Arab Republic, a formation that put immense political pressure on the governments of the Arab lands since now the people began to demand that their states join in this pan-Arab union. The Jordanian and Iraqi monarchies, in haste, created the Hashemite Union to counter the UAR, but this was short-lived due to the Qasim coup some months later. Under pressure in Lebanon, the right wing murdered a left-wing newspaper reporter on 8 May 1958, an act that called out the people

in a general strike the next day. Under pressure President Chamille Chamoun ran to the United Nations and on 15 July, the US Sixth Fleet sent marines to Beirut and put in place Operation Bluebat (planned long before the Suez crisis of 1956, but the representatives of the US Army, Navy and Air force of Mediterranean met in London during September 1957 to refine the plans, including a marine assault on Lebanon rather than an airdrop into Jordan, among other things).

The military intervention sent an overt message that the US interests must not be trampled, but meanwhile the CIA conducted covert activities to bolster the opposition to Nasserism. The CIA was not alone in this, being partnered at each step by Saudi intelligence, the famous al-Istakhbara al-'Ama. Many of the tactical moves of the CIA had been worked out during the 1953 coup against Mossadegh in Iran. In early August, the CIA's Iranian operatives pretended to be members of the Communist Party as they threatened senior Muslim leaders with 'savage punishment if they opposed Mossadegh', so as to rally the Muslim clerics against the communists; CIA operatives bombed at least at least one house of a well-regarded Muslim cleric, again posing as communists. Kermit Roosevelt, Teddy Roosevelt's grandson, was dispatched to oversee the coup and he spent as little as \$100,000 to marshal a demonstration against the regime that marched to Mossadegh's office and attacked him.¹⁶ In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood (ancestor of Osama bin Laden's current collaborator, the Islamic Jihad) received CIA funds to undermine Nasser; in eastern Saudi Arabia, journalist Saïd Aburish claims, CIA agent James Russell Barracks confirmed the existence of 'an extensive programme' to fund small religious cells (these are the direct ancestors of bin Laden's Advice and Reformation Committee or Hayat Annaseyha Wa'ahisla)¹⁷; finally, in Iraq, the Secretary General of the Ba'ath Party noted that 'we came to power on an American train' in 1963, both through direct funds (alongside Kuwaiti money) and through the use of CIA-run radio stations in Kuwait that broadcasted

anti-communist messages from an Islamic fundamentalist standpoint into a secular and socialist Iraq (among these anti-communist Ba'ath leaders stood Saddam Hussein).

In 1965, the Saudi monarch Faisal convened an International Islamic Conference in Mecca where the Saudis unveiled their World Muslim League (Rabita al-Alam al-Islami). The Muslim Brotherhood told the gathering, 'Those who distort Islam's call under the guise of nationalism are the most bitter enemies of the Arabs, whose glories are entwined with the glories of Islam'. The Brotherhood invoked the idea of *shu'ubi* (anti-Arab) to cast aspersions specifically at Nasserism (or pan-Arabism) and communism. There are direct echoes here of the anti-communist arguments of the Ba'athist 'Alfaq and of the intellectual guide to the Sudanese National Islamic Front, Dr. Hasan al-Turabi ('Today if you want to assert indigenous values, originality and independence against the West, then Islam is the only doctrine'¹⁸). The combination of anti-communism and pro-Islam developed by the Saudis and their Islamicist allies appealed greatly to the United States government, so much that the head of the Brotherhood, Sayed Kuttub wryly called Islamism 'American made Islam'. In 1970, Faisal's activities culminated in the Organization of Islamic Conference with its current headquarters in Jeddah, and a strong alternative to any pan-Arabist tendencies. The road was open to the most virulent forms of Sunni Islam to take precedence over all that is beautiful in both heterodox Islam and in the democratic urges of the Arab people. The Saudis used a right-wing form of Sunni populism to quell the resentment among a population that suffers the indignity of poverty. Even as oil bathed the Ibn Saud family with wealth, the people of the peninsula suffered from neglect: there was neither the development of the physical plant of the country, nor of the intellectual capacity of the people (the literacy rate is about 55 per cent). When King Faisal was asked about women's education, which is almost non-existent for the majority, he said that women would get equal rights and

opportunities 'when we grant them to men'.¹⁹ The Ibn Saud clan posed as chiefs of Islam at home, as they became famously mischief men abroad (the activities of the Saudi family, whether in the casinos or in the up-scale brothels is the stuff of legend): the Saudi royals 'should have more fear of God', said one of the Islamists. 'On the one hand they pray but in the other they pick up the bottle'.²⁰

If much of the decimation of pan-Arabism came from the production of an Islamism wedded to anti-American themes, in Iraq the demise of the left was from the deformations within pan-Arabism itself. 'Alfaq's anti-communism enabled the transformation of the Iraqi Ba'ath agenda during the decade of the 1960s (from the coup of 1963 to the coup of 1968). After the second coup, when Saddam Hussein took power, he intervened in the split within the communist movement – the pro-Soviet party joined the regime, as the Ba'ath's militia (the *Jihaz Haneen*) took out the militant Iraqi Communist Party (Central Leadership). Incidentally, Saddam Hussein turned on the pro-Soviet party in 1978–79 after its usefulness had come to an end. Saddam Hussein's first chief of Internal Security, Nadhim Kzar, enthusiastically arrested, tortured and killed cadre from the ICP and from among the left-wing Kurdish liberation movements. For decades the communist movement grew amongst the Kurds, both in Turkey and in northern Iraq.²¹ But by the early 1970s, the CIA entered the battlefield to cut down the left and bolster the right. Between 1972 and 1975 the CIA paid \$16 million to the eccentric and untrustworthy Mullah Mustafa Barzani as a 'moral guarantee' of US support for his activities. In 1959, Barzani had expelled the communists from his mainly Iraqi party and he had sent Iranian Kurds to their death in the camps of the Shah. The spillover from the growth of Islamism bothered the Ba'ath, who remain quite secular, and in 1979 Saddam Hussein made an alliance with the Shah of Iran to quell the Islamists (in February 1963 the Shah had also helped the Ba'ath, mainly by turning over Iraqi democrats who fled the Ba'athist onslaught).

Barzani was an asset that the US cultivated, and is now a close ally of Saddam Hussein. In 1975, Marxist-Leninists within the Kurdish resistance formed the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which pushed many Kurds to the left, including those in the Iraqi Kurdish Front formed in 1988. Saddam Hussein was given the green light by Washington to take out the PUK, and he conducted chemical bombing on them in 1983 (at Arbil) and most spectacularly in 1988 (at Halabja, where five thousand died, and many thousand continue to suffer). This relationship entranced the US and the CIA, who saw Saddam Hussein as a factor of stability against both the Iranian revolution of 1979 and against Soviet influence in the region.

The growth of the Islamist elements certainly contributed to the demise of Nasserism, but the pan-Arabist dream also died from internal maladies.²² Marie Christie Aulas showed us that the Nasserite project in Egypt, for example, was bereft of a programme. The regime's main intellectual was Mohammed Heikal, the editor of *Al-Ahram*, a man who was enamoured of W.W. Rostow's 'stages of economic growth', and who developed the theory of a 'non-capitalist road to development' that was essentially state capitalism.²³ Land reforms by the Nasser regime led to the transfer of land from the aristocratic landowners to rich peasants whose development was funded by the regime, just as the bulk of the peasantry remained landless. Not only did Nasserism fail the peasantry, it also did not aid in the creation of industry and an industrial work force. While less than twenty per cent of the increase in the workforce came from the manufacturing sector, the number of bureaucrats increased by over sixty per cent in the 1960s (their incomes rose by over two hundred per cent).²⁴ Pan-Arabism ruled from above, with a concentration on the creation of a strong state that regulated the lives of the people, rather than by awakening the aspirations of the people into democratic socialist organizations that would command the economic life of the country. Nasserism, then, not only lacked a programme to deal with the basic needs of the

population, but it also lacked the will to devolve power to the people, to break the Pharonic structures bequeathed to it from the monarchy and from the military.

When Israel defeated the Arab armies in 1967, this put the nail in the coffin of Nasserism.

III. MCJIHAD VS. THE WORLD

Benjamin Barber's *Jihad Versus McWorld* intimates that the jihads are the antithesis of globalization, that the soulless corporation meets its antinomy in the fanatical fundamentalist.²⁵ Barber retools the modern-traditional dichotomy of modernization theory, so that while tradition used to be seen as a holdover into the modern period, Barber allows for the modernity of Jihad. Nevertheless, he suggests that globalization is set against 'Lebanonization', that the forces of transnational capital meet their bulwark in a defensive and cruel cultural nationalism. On the contrary, sectarian or cruel nationalism in the formerly colonized world is not only an adequate form of globalization, especially with the collapse of the socialist bloc, but that it seems to be the form that globalization takes in its current period. The BJP in India, Fox in Mexico, among others, show us that as the import-substitution type regimes lost their legitimacy as nationalist forces, then the cultural nationalist could reinvent themselves as patriotic forces even as they facilitated the entry of transnational capital and IMFundamentalism. Jihad is the Trojan Horse of globalization, which is why it might be better to collapse the dialectic couple Jihad and McWorld into the category of McJihad.

Egypt, like India, offers a test case for McJihad. Anwar al-Sadat took power of the Egyptian state at the death of Nasser in 1970. Sadat was a seasoned hand at the Janus-faced line of McJihad. From the late 1930s, the Egyptian army deputed Sadat to be its liaison with the right-wing Muslim Brotherhood (Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimoun, founded in 1928). The Ikhwan's leader Hasan al-Bana forged strong ties with the royal family through Sadat, and Sadat facilitated the Ikhwan's access

to political resources such as cheap printers for propaganda materials, cheap land for mosques, and access to army camps to train the uniformed activists of the Ikhwan (*jawalla*) who formed its military battalions (*kata'ib*). The royal family used the Ikhwan to check the growth of the nationalist Wafd party, but in the long run the Ikhwan would become a far more important force than the Wafd.²⁶ Sadat kept up these links even as he became a central part of the Nasserite apparatus, and when he took power in 1970 he unleashed the Ikhwan into civil society to stifle any criticism of his actions.²⁷ The Ikhwan operated openly, took charge of the college campuses, began to dominate the mosques.²⁸ Sadat, meanwhile, fashioned himself as the Believer-President (*al-ra'is al-mou'min*) and ensured that the 1971 constitution declared that *Shari'a* is the 'principal source of legislation'.²⁹

The other face of Sadat, meanwhile, unleashed IMFundamentalism on Egypt. Sadat's policy of *infatah* ('open door') liberalized the import-substitution type economic arrangements and welcomed transnational capital into the country. In 1974, after the Egyptian victory over Israel in the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, Sadat welcomed the creation of free trade zones along the Suez Canal (an affront to its 1956 nationalization) and he pushed through an investment law that opened the commanding areas of the economy (finance, industry, metallurgy and insurance) to foreign investment. This was the 'blood transfusion' that Sadat said Egypt needed.³⁰ The Egyptian economy went into a tailspin, mainly because the import bill now included mainly luxury goods (it increased from just under \$4 billion in 1973 to almost \$6 billion in 1976) and because an end to the subsidy of basic goods and a devaluation of the Egyptian pound created rampant inflation for the working class. In the decades after *infatah*, the educated youth found themselves in the category of the unemployed, as almost a quarter of Cairo's unemployed held university degrees.³¹ The only way to balance the books was to take IMF assistance and to transform Egypt's relationship with the US – the Camp David accords of 1978 and Egypt's new role

as the defender of the oil monarchies earned it the eternal gratitude from Washington which continues to maintain the Sadatian regime (now in Mubarak's hands) with billions of dollars in direct aid.

Across the Red Sea, the Saudi regime is another example of McJihad. When oil was discovered in the peninsula during the 1930s, the Arab American Oil Company (ARAMCO) dominated the oil reserves; US-based transnational energy firms played the main role in the consortium, and they reaped enormous revenues for decades. The Saudi regime remains beholden to the oil companies and to the US military, both of whom ensure the stability of the region for the traffic in oil. Like the Venezuelans³² and the other oil lands, the Saudis reaped the windfall, but did little to develop the region for the betterment of their fellows. Profligate expenditure on personal consumption by the bloated royal family and for an increasingly showpiece military led to a collapse of the Saudi economy, with reserves falling from \$121 billion (1984) to just under \$51 billion (1993), and with a continued decline since then.³³ To maintain its legitimacy in the Arab world and among its increasingly disgruntled population, the Saudis pushed the notion of Islamic unity in opposition to pan-Arabism, it also funded right-wing Islamic groups across the Arabic speaking world (from the Algerian Islamic Front to undercut the FLN to Hamas to put pressure on the PLO), and in addition, the Saudi regime developed a religious police (*Mutawwa'in*) that resembled the Taliban's morality patrols. The *Mutawwa'in* detained anyone they suspected, conducted routine torture of those who did not follow the Wahhabi style of life, harassed unmarried women in public (who did not travel outdoors with a *mahram*, a male relative to whom marriage is prohibited), among other social atrocities. The state repression in Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, dispatched the Saudi left, groups such as the Arabian Peninsula People's Union and the Voice of the Vanguard.

In October 1973 the Saudi government joined with OPEC to help raise the price of oil, an event that gained the Saudi regime

legitimacy among the Arab masses. But the 1973 event, again, illustrates the Janus-face of McJihad. In 1971, when the dollar was delinked from the gold standard, the Nixon administration puzzled over strategies to exert power over the global economy. One of these strategies was a rise in the oil price which would, the Nixon administration surmised, do at least two things: put an immense squeeze on the US's two main economic competitors, Western Europe and Japan, and earn profits for the Gulf states which would, in all probability, be recycled into US financial institutions because the Gulf states did not have adequate productive capacity to absorb the petro-dollars. The elimination of capital controls in the US economy by 1974 facilitated the recycling of these petro-dollars and therefore the global enhancement of the status of the dollar as the instrument of 'hard currency'.³⁴ The 1973 price rise was seen in the Arab world, however, as the Saudi's independence from the US, a situation not borne out by the facts. When the US State Department announced on 13 September 1980 that the US would protect Saudi Arabia against 'all internal and external attempts to destabilize it', there should have been nothing untoward about it.

McJihad, then, is along the grain of neoliberalism: weak regulation of certain sectors of the economy, coupled with a strong repressive apparatus and with cultural nationalism intended to draw upon popular legitimacy just as the regime sells its national interests to transnational corporations. During the days of Nasser or indeed the Indian Congress Party from 1947 to 1975, the cloak of nationalism (whether pan-Arabism or Indian nationalism) enabled the regime to be the legitimate leader even as the economy did not welcome the masses into a national nirvana. With the collapse of the import-substitution agenda and with the 'there is no alternative' push to globalization, the political form that emerged to maintain the quiescence of a further impoverished citizenry was to be McJihad, the Hindu Right in India, the Muslim Right in Egypt.³⁵

The gambit changed in 1979 with the revolution in Iran. Now the gendarme of the US vanished, indeed it was converted

into a foe of US imperialism. Given that the regime inculcated its Shi'a roots, it appealed to the generally oppressed Shi'a across the Arab lands, from Lebanon to the eastern part of Saudi Arabia. To join in the fervor of the revolution, Hizbollah ('Army of God') groups emerged across the Arab world as the party of the Shi'a to liberate Islam from its, and working-people from their, bondage. Shi'a in Lebanon, long oppressed and disenfranchised, took to Hizbollah with enthusiasm, particularly in West Beirut that was then ruined even more. The US entry into Beirut in 1982 intensified the struggle, and Beirut was trapped between two forces impatient to shoot first and talk later, one the armed imam, the other the armed marine, both equally unwilling to understand the social interests that set them on each other's throats. In Saudi Arabia, the growth of the Shi'a rebellion was not among the wretched of the earth, but among those who lived beside the oil. Although the Saudi Shi'a comprise less than a tenth of the population of the peninsula, the Shi'a congregate in the eastern side of the province, where they number as much as forty per cent. An interest in technical and secondary education led the Shi'a to good jobs with ARAMCO in the oil bureaucracy that developed from the 1940s onwards, and between thirty and forty per cent of those who worked for ARAMCO came from the Shi'a community. This economic power led the Shi'a to demand some political power, but their attempts bore little fruit (the uprising in Qatif led by Muhammad ibn Hussein al-Harraj in 1948 was crushed). Another rising in Qatif in 1970 closed off the town for a month, and another rising in 1978 led to arrests and executions. But the real explosion took place between 3 and 5 December 1979 when the Shi'a responded to Ayatollah Khomeini's victory in Iran; the Saudi repression was severe and in its aftermath was born Saudi Hizbollah, a group that was never very large but matched the Saudi police brutality for brutality.

From the dream of pan-Arabism emerged the nightmare of Iraq as the bulwark for the Saudi cause against the revolutionary zeal of Iran and of the Shi'a minority in the Arab lands. Iraq

became the forward position to exert pain on Iran to show its allies in the Hizbollah movement that their politics would not go without answer. In August 1980 the Saudis and the Iraqis concluded an agreement so that the Saudis promised the Ba'ath regime 'all the financial aid required to undertake all the necessary moves to protect its national honour'. The Iran-Iraq War (1980-89) was fought by Iraq on behalf of its US, Kuwaiti and Saudi paymasters, at a great loss of life on both sides and a great gain for the Saudis and the emirs of the oil lands. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990, he did so in the belief that the US would back him because Kuwait both refused to forgo Iraq's debts incurred due to the war, and because Kuwait had begun to pump oil out of the disputed Rumaila oilfields (in Jeddah, in July 1990, the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Iraq and Saudi Arabia agreed to reduce oil production and raise prices, but an hour after the meeting, the Kuwaitis announced that the agreement would only last for three months - an act that created a run on the Iraqi dinar). On 25 July 1990 Saddam Hussein met with US Ambassador April Glaspie. Hussein and his foreign minister Tariq Aziz pointed out the importance of raising the price of oil. Glaspie said in response, 'We have many Americans who would like the price to rise above \$25 because they are from oil-producing states'.³⁶ This was Saddam Hussein's green light. He moved on Kuwait the day after the US approved of the sale of \$695 million worth of advanced transmission devices to Iraq.

But the opportunity posed by the situation was too great. Sami Yousif calls this analysis a 'conspiracy theory', but it is borne out by the facts: that the US set up Saddam Hussein, watched him take Kuwait and then entered a war that has allowed it to maintain a position of unmatched dominance over its allies (who require US presence) and against Japan and Germany who rely on Gulf oil for their productive capacity.³⁷ The US presence in the Gulf, notably in Saudi Arabia, produced much unrest in the peninsula so that in 1992 over a hundred leading clerics signed a petition to the king entitled 'Memorandum of Advice' that called for a Talibanization of Saudi Arabia

and a break of ties with the US, *and for the democratization of the country*. King Fahd, in December 1992, said that 'the pulpit was only made for certain limited things', and proceeded to take away the legitimacy of many of these clerics. It was this struggle that emboldened bin Laden in his crusade against the Saudi regime, from Sudan and now from Afghanistan.

And Afghanistan poses for us another site of McJihad, a place that received in large numbers the 'lost generation' of Arab men, disheartened and unemployed in their native lands, but eager for a quest for justice - so their regimes paid for this energy to be shipped off to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan instead of at home, to destabilize the tolerance of Arabia.³⁸ In 1964, King Zahir Shah responded to popular pressure from his subjects with a constitution and initiated a process known as 'New Democracy'. Three main forces grew after this phase: (1) the communists (who split into two factions in 1967, Khalq [the masses] and Parcham [the flag]); (2) the Islamic populists, among whom Burhanuddin Rabbani's Jamiat-i-Islami from 1973 was the main organization (whose youth leader was the engineering student, Gulbuddin Hikmatyar); (3) constitutional reformers (such as Muhammad Daoud, cousin of Zahir Shah, whose coup of July 1973 abolished the monarchy). Daoud's consequent repression against the theocratic elements pushed them into exile from where they began, along with the Pakistani Jamaat-i-Islami and the Saudi Rabitat al-Alam al-Islami, to plot against the secular regime in Afghanistan. In 1975, for instance, the theocratic elements, led by Hikmatyar in Paktia, attempted an uprising with Pakistani assistance, but the 'Panjsher Valley incident' was promptly squashed. The first split amongst the theocratic elements occurred in the aftermath of this incident. Instability in Afghanistan, an inability of the regime to undertake genuine land reform and a capitulation to corruption led to the communist coup in 1978 (the conjunctural movement was the police's move to act against a huge demonstration; the left-wing officers in the military stopped the police with a single shot and turned over the government to Noor Mohammed Taraki, a communist

professor who became the President of the Revolutionary Council of Afghanistan).

The Afghan regime was a breath of fresh air in South Central Asia. It encouraged the formation of labour unions, established a minimum wage and a progressive income tax, began to lay the ground for land reforms (it abolished rural debt), and it promulgated equal rights for men and women. In late 1978, the Taraki regime announced Decree no. 7 which aimed at a transformation of the marriage institution by attacking its monetary basis and which promoted equality between men and women. Women took leadership positions in the regime and fought social conservatives and theological fascists on various issues. Anahita Ratebzad was a major Marxist leader who sat on the Revolutionary Council; other notable leaders included Sultana Umayd, Suraya, Ruhafza Kamyar, Firouza, Dilara Mark, Professor R. S. Siddiqui, Fawjiyah Shahsawari, Dr. Aziza, Shirin Afzal and Alamat Tolqun. Ratebzad wrote the famous *Kabul Times* editorial (28 May 1978) which declared that 'Privileges which women, by right, must have are equal education, job security, health services, and free time to rear a healthy generation for building the future of the country... Educating and enlightening women is now the subject of close government attention'. The hope of 1978 is now lost and the pessimism must not be laid at the feet of the Taliban alone, but also of those who funded and supported the Taliban-like theocratic fascists, states such as the US, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Infighting within the left drew the Soviet military into Afghanistan in 1979: the valiant attempt to create a democratic state failed as a result of the inability of hegemonic states to allow the nation to come into its own.

From 1979, Afghanistan became home to violence and heroin production. Money from the most unlikely sources poured into the band of mujahideen forces located in Pakistan: the US, the Saudis (notably their general intelligence service, al-Istakhbara al-'Ama), the Kuwaitis, the Iraqis, the Libyans and the Iranians paid the theocratic elements over \$1 billion per year during the 1980s (much of this money passed through the Pakistani-owned

bank, the BCCI). The US-Saudi dominance in funding enabled them to choose amongst the various exiled forces — they, along with the Pakistanis, chose seven parties in 1981 that leaned more towards theocratic fascism than toward secular nationalism. One of the main financiers was the Saudi businessman, Osama bin Laden. Five years later, these seven parties joined the Union of Mujahideen of Afghanistan. Its monopoly over access to the US-Saudi link emboldened it to assassinate Professor Sayd Bahauddin Majrooh in Peshawar in 1988 when he reported that 70 per cent of the Afghan refugees wanted a return to the monarchism of Zahir Shah. Further, the Interim Islamic Government of Afghanistan called a *shura* (council) in 1989; the seven parties nominated all the representatives to the body. All liberal and left wing elements came under systematic attack from the *shura* and its armed representatives. The US-Saudi axis anointed the theocratic fascists as the heirs to Afghanistan.

With over \$1 billion per year, the mujahideen and its Army of Sacrifice (Lashkar-i Isar) led by Hikmatyar (who was considered the main 'factor of stability' until 1988) built up ferocious arsenals. In 1986, they received shoulder-fired Stinger missiles that they began to fire indiscriminately into civilian areas of Afghanistan. *Asia Watch*, in 1991, reported that Hikmatyar paid his commanders for each rocket fired into Kabul. Claymore mines and other US-made anti-personnel directional fragmentation mines became a staple of the countryside. Today, about 10 million mines still litter the vales of Afghanistan (placed there by the Soviets and by the US-Saudi backed mujahideen). In 1993, the US State Department noted that landmines 'may be the most toxic and widespread pollution facing mankind'. Nevertheless, the US continues to sell mines at \$3/mine (mines cost about \$300-\$1000/mine to detect and dismantle). Motorola manufactures many of the plastic components inside the mines, which makes the device undetectable by metal-detectors.

The CIA learnt to extend its resources during the Southeast Asian campaigns in the 1970s by the sale of heroin from the Golden Triangle. In Afghanistan, the Inter-Service Intelligence

(ISI) [Pakistan's CIA], the Pakistani military and civilian authorities (notably Governor Fazle Huq) and the mujahideen became active cultivators, processors and sellers of heroin (a commodity which made its Southern Asian appearance in large numbers only after 1975, and whose devastation can be gleaned in Mohsin Hamid's wonderful novel, *Moth Smoke*). The opium harvest at the Pakistan-Afghan border doubled between 1982 and 1983 (575 tons), but by the end of the decade it would grow to 800 tons. On 18 June 1986, the *New York Times* reported that the mujahideen 'have been involved in narcotics activities as a matter of policy to finance their operations'. The opium warlords worked under cover of the US-Saudi-Pakistani axis that funded their arms sales and aided the conveyance of the drugs into the European and North American markets where they account for 50 per cent of heroin sales. In 1995, CIA director of the Afghan operation, Charles Cogan said candidly: 'Our main mission was to do as much damage as possible to the Soviets. We didn't really have the resources or the time to devote to an investigation of the drug trade. . . . I don't think that we need to apologize for this. Every situation has its fallout. . . . There was fallout in terms of drugs, yes. But the main objective was accomplished. The Soviets left Afghanistan.'³⁹

For corporations and for corporatized states (such as the US), an unprincipled peace allows them to extract their needs without the bother of political dissent. The Taliban briefly offered the possibility of such a peace. Formed in 1994 under the tutelage of the ISI and General Naseerullah Khan (Pakistan's Interior Minister), the Taliban comprises southern Pashtun tribes who are united by a vision of a society under Wahhabism which extols a form of Islam (*Tariqa Muhammadiya*) based on its interpretation of the Quran without the benefit of the centuries of elaboration of the complexities of the Islamic tradition. In late September 1996, Radio Kabul broadcast a statement from Mullah Agha Gulabi: 'God says that those committing adultery should be stoned to death. Anybody who drinks and says that that is not against the Quran, you have to kill him and hang his

body for three days until people say this is the body of the drinker who did not obey the Quran and Allah's order.' The Taliban announced that women must be veiled and that education would cease to be available for women. Najmussahar Bangash, editor of *Tole Pashtun*, pointed out shortly thereafter that there are 40,000 war widows in Kabul alone and their children will have a hard time with their subsistence. Further, she wrote, 'if girls are not allowed to study, this will affect a whole generation'. For the US-Saudi-Unocal-Pakistan axis, geo-politics and economics made the Taliban a worthy regime for Afghanistan. Drugs, weapons and social brutalities will continue, but Washington extended a warm hand towards Mullah Mohammed Omar and the Taliban. In 1996, a US State Department 'expert' on Afghanistan offered an assessment which forms the backbone of US social attitudes and state policy towards the region: 'Afghanistan is doubtless the most fanatic hostile country in the world today'. US foreign policy continues to be driven by the dual modalities of containment (of rebellion inspired by egalitarianism) and concession (of goods which will bring profit to corporate entities). Constrained by these parameters, the US government was able to state, in 1996, 'there's on the face of it nothing objectionable at this stage'. Given this, the US sees Afghanistan simply as a *tool* in foreign policy terms and as a *mine* in economic terms. In thirty years, Afghanistan has been reduced to a 'concession' in which corporations and states vie for control over commodities and markets without concern for the dignity and destiny of the people of the region. Oil, guns, landmines and heroin are the coordinates for policy-makers, not the shadowy bodies that hang from the scaffolds like paper-flags of a nation without sovereignty.

A crucial part of this puzzle is the presence of the 'Afghan Arabs', thirty-five thousand in total from forty countries, to be part of the McJihad in Afghanistan from 1982 to 1992, and over a hundred thousand influenced and trained by it.⁴⁰ In the early 1980s, Arabs eager to join one jihad or another found themselves in Afghanistan, but the numbers did not amount to much. In

1986 the CIA Director William Casey authorized the recruitment and encouragement of *mehmeen* mujahideen for the Afghan jihad against the Soviets. Bin Laden's Offices of Service (*Mahtab al Khidmat*) was one of the major avenues for recruitment of these fighters, many of whom trained in ISI-run camps while some went to remote locations in Scotland to train with the SAS.⁴¹ According to ABC journalist John Cooley, the CIA recruited members from 'New York's Arab district in Brooklyn along Atlantic Avenue' and at 'a private rifle club in an affluent community in Connecticut' (both places from where the radical Islamists continue to recruit) and they trained them at the CIA's Farm in Virginia.⁴² Bin Laden was one of those who made his way to Afghanistan, used his considerable funds to build the Khost tunnel complex in 1986 (the major CIA arms storage dump and training facility) and welcomed the Arab Afghans. 'To counter these atheist Russians, the Saudis chose me as their representative in Afghanistan', bin Laden recounted. 'I settled in Pakistan in the Afghan border region. There I received volunteers who came from the Saudi Kingdom and from all over the Arab and Muslim countries. I set up my first camp where these volunteers were trained by Pakistani and American officers. The weapons were supplied by the Americans, the money by the Saudis. I discovered that it was not enough to fight in Afghanistan, but that we had to fight on all fronts, communist or Western oppression.'⁴³ In 1987, units of the Arab Afghans fought some engagements in northern Afghanistan, an event that so pleased William Casey that during his next visit to Pakistan he crossed the border to personally visit the Arab Afghan camps.

When the Afghan war ended in 1992, the Arab Afghans went back home to foment jihad against their own regimes, whether in Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, Philippines, Algeria, India or else Saudi Arabia. Arab Afghans (Tayyeb el Afghani, Jaffar el Afghani and Sharif al Gusmi) founded the Algerian GIA (Armed Islamic Group); Abu Hamza, an Egyptian wounded in Afghanistan, runs the London-based al-Ansar group, linked to GIA. Another

Arab Afghan (Sheikh Tariq al Fadil) formed the Yemeni Jihad, while the head of the group that conducted the Luxor attacks in November 1997, Mehat Mohammed Abdel Rahman, is also an Afghan veteran. Abu Baker Jenjalani, the head of the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines, cut his teeth in the ravines of Afghanistan. The Bosnian Muslim Army, the Kosovo Liberation Army, the various factions in Chechnya, are all staffed and funded by the former Arab Afghan networks. Indeed, Michel Chossodovsky shows that the involvement of Pakistan is so deep that it 'goes far beyond supplying the Chechens with weapons and expertise; the ISI and its radical Islamic proxies are actually calling the shots in the war'.⁴⁴ And, in India, many of the *mehmeen* mujahideen in Kashmir are Arab Afghans, and many Kashmiris train among them in Pakistan and in Afghanistan. In 1996, when bin Laden returned to Afghanistan he did not know the Taliban, so the Pakistanis introduced him to them and persuaded them to turn over the Khost camps to him because, Ahmed Rashid notes, 'it wanted to retain the Khost training camps for Kashmiri militants'.⁴⁵

That the US continues to harbour such anti-people elements as the KLA and the Bosnian Muslim Army (now as freedom fighters again), and indeed since the US-ISI-Saudis continue to fund one hand of Islamism to tolerate the excesses of Arabia, shows us that the lessons of 9/11 have not been learnt. Those who died that day are indeed 'collateral damage' not just for the bombers, but also for this line of foreign policy, and much of it has to do with energy resources.

IV. THE CONTINENT OF SLEAZE

On the continent of sleaze, all buildings have revolving doors. Diplomats, gunrunners, intelligence chiefs and others sup at the state's table and then, as if by their pure merits, they join the high table with corporate chieftains, currency shifters, assorted brigands and others. On the continent of sleaze the pipelines to the Taliban pretend to be distinguished professors and royal dignitaries. Robert Oakley began his State Department

career in 1957 at the United Nations, and ends it at the National Defence University and at Unocal. Prince Turki bin Faysal didn't have to use the entrance because he was always in the big house. Destined by his birth into the British-installed Ibn Saud dynasty in Arabia, Prince Turki, like Prince Sultan, drew deep into his various talents to emerge as head of intelligence for the kingdom, and, on the side, agent for various transnational enterprises, such as the Argentinian firm Bidas. Two men of esteem, in the bogs on the continent of sleaze.

Oakley's real glory begins when the Reagan administration raised him to the post of Director of the State Department Office of Combating Terrorism in September 1984. Details of Oakley's work there are not altogether clear, but cables released through the Freedom of Information Act show us that he was involved in trying to paint Libya in as bad a light as possible regardless of the evidence, and, importantly, he was a pointman in the Iran-Contra scandal. Chapter 18 in Volume 1 of the Lawrence Walsh-authored *Report of the Independent Counsel for Iran Contra Matters* (released on 4 August 1993) notes one incident of Oakley's involvement: in November 1985, Oliver North had a hard time with clearances for the Israeli effort to ship US-made HAWK missiles to Iran. Retired Air Force Major General Richard Secord was unable to get North the clearances to act, so North went to Oakley, then director of counter-terrorism. North said that he was 'completely up front' with Oakley that the cargo for the plane was weapons and the transit was according to the October 1984 Boland Amendment passed by Congress (to cut off aid to the Contras of Nicaragua). According to Oakley's testimony to the FBI (302, 11/14/91) 'North said he needed to get a plane into the first European country in order to ship arms to Iran'. Oakley agreed with North and contacted CIA European chief Duane 'Dewey' Clarridge. Clarridge was informed that the State Department was 'aware of the operation and that Clarridge should contact the foreign minister of the first European country for assistance'.

In 1987 Clarridge was formally reprimanded for his role in

the Iran-Contra affair, and he was forced out of the CIA. North who was convicted in 1989, but then pardoned due to his immunity at the hearings, went on for a quixotic run to become the Senator from Virginia in 1994. He is now another right-wing talk show host.

Robert Oakley, currently Distinguished Fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defence University, went from strength to strength. He was named as Ambassador to Pakistan in August 1988 and served as a pointman in the mujahideen jihad against the People's Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and the Soviet army therein. In fact in the lead-up to a brutal two month-long battle in November 1988 (in which five thousand died), Oakley sat with senior Pakistani military officials to plan the battle.⁴⁶ This was an education in the front-lines: from illegal gun running to Iran, he moved to the promotion of jihad in Pakistan, where Oakley aided the hard line Hikmatyar and, in addition, cultivated links with those who would become the Taliban.⁴⁷

Perhaps most crucially, the Pakistani post allowed Oakley to work with Prince Turki bin Faysal, head of the Saudi Arabian intelligence from 1977 to 1 September 2001 and pointman for his government in the mujahideen jihad (indeed he knew Osama bin Laden then, since both these men of the Saudi elite had come to Afghanistan). Prince Turki Faysal is a very influential player in the Saudi ruling elite and a major shaper of policy. Like Oakley, Turki Faysal's major links appeared to have been with the more hardcore jihadis, people such as the Taliban and the Hikmatyar crew. But, after the war, in their new line of work, Oakley and Turki Faysal sit on different sides of the corporate table.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the vast oil and natural gas treasures of Central Asia came back into the focus of the vast transnational energy monopolies. The Gulf War of 1991 was about the problem of oil consumption by the US population (Energy Secretary James Watkins' February 1991 letter made this plain: 'as events in the Persian Gulf have demonstrated so

aptly, we must reduce our dependence on imported oil from unstable regions. This will require both reducing our overall dependence on oil, particularly in the transportation sector, and increasing domestic production in an environmentally sound manner'. The game for the 1.5 million acres of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge was already on by then). But the Fifth Afghan War is about something else; indeed it is not about US domestic consumption. It appears that the Afghan War is about the ability of US-based transnational corporate power, about its ability to leverage access to deals (here with the Afghans) to penetrate markets (the natural gas and oil crisis of South Asia). The Central Asian oil and natural gas fields are vast (with Kazakhstan now being the fifth largest oil reserve in the world).

Two weeks after 9/11, Chevron's subsidiary Tengizchevroil finished an oil pipeline from Tengiz oil field in western Kazakhstan to the Russian port of Novorossiysk on the Black Sea. This pipeline will feed Western Europe with oil from what might end up as the fifth largest oil state in the world (and, crucially, outside OPEC's ambit). The Tengiz pipeline is only one of many that sully the geopolitics of the region. Another one, pressing for the Afghan problem, is the 890-mile pipeline from Dauletabad gas fields in eastern Turkmenistan through Afghanistan into Pakistan. This multi-billion dollar project has two multinationals on the warpath, Unocal from the US, and Bidas from Argentina. Both hired Saudis and Americans to negotiate with the Taliban, who continuously played one off against the other to increase their own percentage of the margins. Unocal, recently denied Myanmar's oil market, is eager for the project and a US-friendly regime in Afghanistan may help it clinch the deal. Zahir Shah, former King of Afghanistan, has lived in Rome since 1973 as a pensioner of a gulf state whose name he will not reveal; perhaps the investment made in him by the unnamed state will eventually come to fruition if he comes to power alongside the notorious Northern Alliance (whose terror in Kabul in the mid-1990s offers a harbinger of what is to come).

Just as no one is interested in the Uzbek army regulars who

trained in the mid-west, no-one seems to care about Unocal's project to train Afghan workers and teachers at the University of Nebraska (in November 1997, Unocal paid close to a million dollars for the Afghan Studies Center at the University to train over four hundred Afghans in various pipeline construction skills). Or, finally, no one seems interested in the US tours organized by Unocal for the Taliban (and facilitated by Pakistan's ISI who held up the visas of the Taliban tour which was to have gone, courtesy of Bidas, to Argentina).

And few of us care that distinguished professors like Oakley joined with the notorious Henry Kissinger, and the Saudi Delta Oil Company (whose boss, Badr al Aiban, has the ear of King Faud) to lobby the Taliban on behalf of Unocal, just as Prince Turki Faysal was Bidas' pointman with the Taliban. When the Taliban took power in 1996, the head of Unocal was overjoyed, and he speculated that a stable central government may reduce the cost of the pipeline by half; indeed, Marty Miller of Unocal tried to convince the factions that the pipeline was a conflict resolution process. When this did not work, some speculated that Unocal gave covert support to the Taliban to push what is today the Northern Alliance away from the area where the pipeline is projected to run.⁴⁸

When Clinton bombed Afghanistan on 20 August 1998, the Unocal deal ended. But hope emerged on 29 April 1999 when the energy ministers from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkmenistan met to pledge their commitment to the tripartite gas pipeline project. It is around this time that King Zahir Shah comes under pressure to meet with the Northern Alliance and start talking about a Loya Jigra, an elder's council. The unnamed Gulf state that pensioned the poor old man for these three decades perhaps called in its debt. He was put on a fuel's errand. That Hamid Karzai is loyal to the ex-King and that he is close to the US establishment bespeaks the trend toward a capitulation to the oil barons.

Hastily, after 9/11, Unocal put the following note on their website: 'Unocal has received inquires about a previously

proposed pipeline that, if built, would have crossed a part of Afghanistan. We withdrew from that project in 1998, and do not have, nor plan to have, any projects in that country. We do not support the Taliban in any way whatsoever.'

Under pressure from 9/11, this has to be the official position. But we should not forget the testimony of John Maresca, International head of Unocal, on 12 February 1998. Certainly this is before the US bombed Afghanistan in August, but it allows us access to the way Unocal has framed the importance of Afghanistan. Here is Maresca:

'The Caspian region contains tremendous untapped hydrocarbon reserves, much of them located in the Caspian Sea basin itself. Proven natural gas reserves within Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan equal more than 236 trillion cubic feet. The region's total oil reserves may reach more than 60 billion barrels of oil – enough to service Europe's oil needs for 11 years. Some estimates are as high as 200 billion barrels. In 1995, the region was producing only 870,000 barrels per day (44 million tons per year [Mt/y]). By 2010, Western companies could increase production to about 4.5 million barrels a day (Mb/d) – an increase of more than 500 per cent in only 15 years. If this occurs, the region would represent about five per cent of the world's total oil production, and almost 20 per cent of oil produced among non-OPEC countries. One major problem has yet to be resolved: how to get the region's vast energy resources to the markets where they are needed. There are few, if any, other areas of the world where there can be such a dramatic increase in the supply of oil and gas to the world market. The solution seems simple: build a "new" Silk Road. Implementing this solution, however, is far from simple. The risks are high, but so are the rewards.'

The most logical path for the pipeline would be due south through Iran, but Maresca rejects this and settles on Afghanistan:

'The only other possible route option is across Afghanistan, which has its own unique challenges. The country has been involved in bitter warfare for almost two decades. The territory

across which the pipeline would extend is controlled by the Taliban, an Islamic movement that is not recognized as a government by most other nations. From the outset, we have made it clear that construction of our proposed pipeline cannot begin until a recognized government is in place that has the confidence of governments, lenders and our company. In spite of this, a route through Afghanistan appears to be the best option with the fewest technical obstacles. It is the shortest route to the sea and has relatively favourable terrain for a pipeline. The route through Afghanistan is the one that would bring Central Asian oil closest to Asian markets and thus would be the cheapest in terms of transporting the oil.'

Iran is not off the table as yet, because in early December 2001, after a meeting with US Secretary of State Colin Powell, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev said that Iran is the logical route for the pipeline and that the US 'bypassed the issue on purpose' not for economic reasons but because of their antipathy to Iran. Powell was diplomatic when he said that 'nothing in the post-September 11 [climate] suggests that we rethink [the pipeline projects that skirt Iran because they] seem to me to indicate that there will be stability with respect to the supply of fuel.' In other words, Afghanistan is the only route that the US will sanctify.

In December 2000 the US Government Energy Information Factsheet on Afghanistan reported: 'Afghanistan's significance from an energy standpoint stems from its geographical position as a potential transit route for oil and natural gas exports from Central Asia to the Arabia Sea. This potential includes proposed multi-billion dollar oil and gas export pipelines through Afghanistan.'⁴⁹ The region in question, we are told, bears oil and natural gas resources worth \$4 billion, a vast ransom. In 1998, Richard Cheney (then head of Halliburton, a major oil player, and now Vice President of the US) said, 'I cannot think of a time when we have had a region emerge as suddenly to become as strategically significant as the Caspian.' Since the US imports just over half its crude oil and since this figure seems unlikely to

decrease, and that the Saudi fields may not run forever, the possibility of more oil and natural gas is an immense incentive for a war against the planet.

On the continent of sleaze, the military men and the corporate men spill blood to put a 'recognized government in place that has the confidence of governments, lenders and our company'. Democracy is irrelevant. Distinguished professors and intelligence heads gather to help feed our addiction to oil. As the bombs fall in passive voice, the active voices of corporate greed and military macho have begun to ring. The bombs are not retaliation for 9/11; they are a 911 for the continuation of capitalist imperialism against the active will of most of us on the planet.