

# **The Foreign Policy of Mass Society: The Failure of Western Engagement in the Islamic World**

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## **Introduction**

The “war on terror” is a failure. From the events of 9-11 to Obama's pull out of Afghanistan, successes have been rare. The reasons for this failure are so deep-seated and complex that any essay, never mind one as brief as this, can do it justice. The literature on Afghanistan from the beginning of the Soviet war in 1978-1979 to the start of American intervention in the Fall of 2001 is immense and growing daily. As of the Spring of 2015, the reports coming out of the country are uniformly negative. Words like “failure” and “farce” are coming out of even the mainstream press.

The thesis of this present paper is that not only is the war a failure (which in 2012 is not controversial), but that the group of variables that led to the defeat of “coalition” forces are of immense complexity. The simple argument is this – peace is not coming to Afghanistan because of its strategic location. She is a major pipeline source for oil going to the East, to China, and to the West and North. It is now uncontroversial that these motives are dominant and possibly critical to the future of the indebted and weak US economy.<sup>1</sup>

This essay will argue that American failure in the Middle East comes from several areas. In terms of public ideology, there is no evidence that the Taliban were part of the “al-Qaeda network,” nor is there any proof that Saddam Hussein was anything but an enemy of Osama or any fundamentalist leader in the world. The existence of such a network itself is a problem. If anything, there is no good reason to hold that the Taliban were interested in nothing else than consolidating power in Kabul. Using this group as a foil to justify intervention is an odd choice, but might have been chosen due to its obscurity.

There was no final goal other than guarding the pipelines, which means keeping the Russians away from them. Success could be defined in any way the administration wanted. These more “ideological” reasons are important because they have everything to do with the political will of the Americans. Once the media-charged anger faded after 9-11, the war had ground down to a standstill between green American soldiers and a seasoned Afghan resistance. There was no will and no money: this phrase will come up repeatedly throughout this paper.

The war itself was over too broad an area as American troops, mercenaries and CIA operatives were spread all over Central Asia. There was no overarching military strategy or even a goal. Modern armies from the advanced nations are not used to guerrilla tactics. Enemies not wearing uniforms and not being constrained by the traditional rules of war are enemies that cannot be defeated. Many guerrillas of the Afghan resistance are combat trained, with some receiving both their training and equipment from the CIA.

The overall argument here is that the purely economic considerations rule, as they must in liberal democracies (using the western sense of the term). Capital takes the guise of the “public good” when it becomes the “state” but hides behind corporate law when the costs need to be paid. Apart from the occasional reference to gas prices or the official “opposition”

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<sup>1</sup> It is very important to note that “American” has nothing to do with the USA. “American” refers to the oligarchy that controls Washington DC, New York City and the political process. Hence, a phrase like “American goals” refers to the goals of the elite, and not the concept of “America” itself highly problematic.

condemning a “war for oil,” the media images are meant to create a debate existing only in that virtual realm. The powers making decisions have no relation to this media charade. More specifically, they are to place a political cast upon the purely economic motives of the energy firms. The US government is not independent and not separate from capital. It exists to do their bidding.

## **Literature Review**

### *Human Rights and US Interventions*

The literature on U.S. intervention, whether in the Middle East or elsewhere, is huge and growing. In many ways, the literature is hostile to the nature of intervention in general, arguing, as does Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and George Downs, that intervention in a stressful national or regional situation increases the chances that the system will not develop democratically. In other words, their research on several regions where the US has intervened militarily has served mostly to bring the best organized, rather than the most legitimate, faction to power.

In fact, one reason why military forces have taken over is because they are often the only real organization that is capable of exerting legitimate power. In both Syria and Iraq, the best organized force has been the army, and has sought to create a domestic life where all social and religious groups can live in peace. That the Ba'athist states largely succeeded in this should not be ignored. American intervention in Iraq or Libya has shown that the organized, well funded and violent Islamic movements have benefited the most. Secular military governments have often relied on their Christian minorities for trade, banking and access to the western world. As of 2012, this minority is fleeing the relevant countries— Syria, Libya, Egypt and Iraq—for western shores.

Intervention in these states has removed powerful secular coalitions from power and, since “democracy” has been the official justification, ensured that Islamic movements can take advantage of the new “representative” system. Since these are the best organized movements (as the army is purged and rendered toothless), they are doing well in the newly minted democratic systems in these nations (Mesquita and Downs, 2006).

A huge element in Mesquita's thinking is that intervention in the Islamic world or elsewhere, if it is to happen at all, must occur in those areas where “democratic” systems are most likely to develop. As of 2015, American policy seems to be devoted to a) supporting Israel at all costs, and b) trying to destroy powers that have the greatest chance of mounting a credible military threat to Israel, which were Syria and Iraq. Since this is the main rationale for intervention, the development of democratic institutions is far from a fait accompli, and in fact, might bring the most Islamic and “reactionary” parties to power.

Writers like Dona Stewart have stressed the Republicans' concern with the imperial control over internal politics as both a matter of culture and economics. The Republican foreign policy establishment under George Bush the First stressed, as a matter of course, the internal reform of the Arab states. In this article, Stewart shows how cultural concerns are not only of immense importance to foreign policy, but they are also economic. A “democratic society” in Syria, for example, according to Bush's basic approach, is also a society that is pliant enough for capitalism, foreign investment and the integration into the globalized market for credit, capital and specialization. In other words, it is ready to become a minor pawn in the New World Order.

One of the questions has been the endless attempt to link both the Taliban Muslims in Afghanistan and Ba'ath movement in Iraq to the Twin Tower bombings. More than anything, it was assumed that these two political movements were “behind” the bombing, even though they are enemies with agendas almost always at odds. Public and elite ignorance here permits such basic errors to go uncorrected or unnoticed for years.

Economically speaking, Dan Wood writes in the *American Journal of Political Science* (2009) that there is a negative relation between an aggressive foreign policy and domestic investor confidence. This is an important paper because it does damage to the claim that these adventures exist to help distract attention from a poor economy. The point is that saber-rattling (let alone open warfare) actually harms the local economy through the sending of negative and risky signals to the investment elite. Threats of war often hurt the economies of both aggressor and victim, not help them.

Jonathan Renshon in 2008 is concerned with Bush Jr and his basic ideological position throughout the early periods of the war in Afghanistan. He reports that Bush did maintain a coherent system of public utterance, but this is only using official pronouncements that deal with basic issues. There is a basic ideological consistency in the Bush Doctrine that holds that “rogue” states must be “rogue” from something. Rogue from what? The only rational answer is either a) that they are not democratic, or at least not liberally democratic, or b) that all states sponsoring terrorism against Americans are “rogue” from some broader liberal or democratic (elite) consensus. The problem with this article is that, since no one takes presidential press releases seriously, this ideological commitment has no bearing on policy. To believe that the public presentation of major foreign policy measures is even remotely connected to the truth is to exclude oneself from the world of scholarship.

Waleed Hazbun writes in 2008 that the US model of fighting in Afghanistan and the Middle East is flawed. He argues that popularity is more significant than actual military strategy. Hazbun stresses the building of alliances with states like Pakistan and China, rather than using military force to solve problems, is the key to victory. He admits that the US is unpopular in the region, and, even more, that locals do not see the “Taliban” as a terrorist group.

Nasreen Ghufuran, writing in 2008, stresses a similar argument in describing the complete failure of the US-sponsored political system in Afghanistan. First, that there is no local support for the US in the region (which even amateurs can see as uncontroversial). Second, that the “democratic” constitution of the new Afghan state is not legitimate, at least in that it was imposed by force (which seems strangely paradoxical). Finally, that the violence, even in the city of Kabul itself, has not abated and has increased since the US presence there became permanent. This was written before the Obama pullout, of course, but describes a world that might well be the main cause for the retreat.

Olivier Roy in 1996 writes on the Taliban phenomenon long before the events of 9-11. He takes a hostile view of the Taliban, but does admit that they have the best chance of creating stability in the country. This paper is important because the Clinton administration took the same view and assisted that movement in a limited and quiet way.

Ali A. Jalali in 2003 takes a more practical approach to American failures in the region. He says that, from a military point of view, the American adventure has been successful. He defines “success” as the forcible removal of any anti-American force from Kabul. This is a manipulative definition of “success” but he still admits that the peace that allegedly ensued is lost. This means that the amount of money needed to rebuild the country is so massive (with the population being so poor) that there is no global political will to finance reconstruction. The question as to the ethics of extracting more billions from the middle classes in the west for this goal is not mentioned.

#### *The Bush Doctrine and Distorted Perceptions*

Nick Cullather's 2002 paper deals with modernization in the Islamic world: a stated goal of the American intervention. The question could only be asked concerning the American empire: Do the Afghans seek to adopt American values? They do not. “American,”

in the way it is used in this paper and in the country itself, is really about the importation of feminism, capitalism, centralized governments and secular politics. The facts that have yet to dawn on the benighted republicans are that the US intervention is to spread liberalism. It is a revolutionary regime spreading a revolutionary ideology. This ideology is not popular in most of the world, and hence, the US should avoid pressing them. The fact is that this war is a “liberal” war in that it seeks to impose a liberal regime on the region so as to protect its financial interests. “Liberal,” especially when it modifies “democratic” is seen as a weak state easily manipulated by outside capital.

The concept of “democracy” as an ideological cover is very important. The term is not defined in most of these papers, but assumed. Even in essays dealing with the ideological nature of this crusade, there is no functional definition of “democratic” other than “pro-American.” In other words, if the Taliban were elected in a landslide in a free and fair election, the result would not be “democratic” in this sense. As it happens, the Taliban are banned from taking part in electoral politics under US control as are the Ba'ath party in Iraq.

The Bush administration made no secret about how it will use military force. There is also no secret, as of 2015, that the Iraq war ended in failure. Foreseeing this, in the influential mouthpiece of the elite, the journal *Foreign Policy*, Strauss (2002) argues that any hasty move from Afghanistan into Iraq will lead to disaster. The main argument of the time, according to Strauss, was that Saddam's arsenal of “weapons of mass destruction” will soon be used on the west if the US appears to be pulling out of the Middle East. He argues further that the dumbing down of the “debate” ensures irrational policies benefiting a tiny group only.

Violence is a tool to be used rather than something to be avoided. Saddam's Iraq was the one thing keeping so many of the Shi'ite groups on a tight leash, since his centralized authority and secular outlook ensures his stability. Finally, he argues that the coalition against terror, which at the time included Russia, will come apart as soon as this war reaches its inevitable anti-climax in a quagmire. Writing in 2001 and publishing in 2002, he was proven correct.

The National Security Strategy (or the Bush Doctrine) of that era claims the right to take any military action deemed appropriate against “rogue” states and any terror cells attached to them. This action is also unilateral, and hence does not require the sanction of any international body. Given that, the errors of the Bush administration in going to war can, in part, be traced to this doctrine. It gives the president immense power and a quick decision window to use military force that does not leave time for reasoned debate and the proper use of intelligence.<sup>2</sup>

The Bush Doctrine, as this view has been called, leads to negative consequences. Robert Jarvis writes:

The beliefs of Bush and his colleagues that Saddam's regime would have been an unacceptable menace to American interests if it had been allowed to obtain nuclear weapons not only tell us about their fears for the limits of United States influence that might have been imposed, but also speak volumes about the expansive definition of United States interests that they hold (Jarvis, 2003: 386).

The problem here, of course, is that reasoned debate, rather than a rush to war made possibly by 9-11, would have raised the issue of what “interests” specifically are being

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<sup>2</sup> In no way does this author hold that “reasoned debate” is possible in the US over obscure issues that few even in the Regime know anything about. Debate is not possible over such specialized areas known to a few. At the very least, debate can revolve around what interest is being served and who is to pay for it all. Hence, the use of crises is critical to avoid such problems.

menaced. It seems fantastic for a nuclear armed Saddam to attack the US, whose retaliation would be immense. That the communist Chinese have had the bomb since 1964 with a far more atrocious human rights record than Hussein should have dampened the utility of this argument. It did not.

One of the consequences has been that the Republicans, due to Bush's Iraq debacle, have lost their traditional hold of foreign policy. The population used to trust the Republicans more on these issues, but that too is gone. There is no question, according to Goble (2009) that the Iraq disaster has everything to do with this continual fall in credibility. It is also one of the main reasons for the victory of Democrats after his second term.

Part of the widespread initial support for this Iraq gambit came from a mass propaganda effort that essentially succeeded, at least at first. In the work of Altheide (2005), the Project for a New American Century (PNAC) is largely responsible for creating the argument that led to war, and that it also justified it afterwards. "War Programming" is that dubious discipline that provides both the affective and intellectual mechanism needed to convince the taxpayer that the war – Iraq in this case – was inevitable (if not just). Since Iraq was the most severe threat to Israel, the PNAC crafted a campaign of vilification of Saddam Hussein such that war fever was out of control by 9-11. Iraq had been a target of PNAC and Israel for decades. 9-11 was seized upon as a pretext, since the claim that "al-Qaeda" was somehow favored by the secular and social-nationalist Iraq required a tremendous shock in order to be believed. 9/11 was that shock that removed logic from its already precarious hold over the issue.

Speaking from a British point of view, Bluth (2004) says that the claim of Iraqi WMDs and the British preoccupation with the "oppression of the Kurds" in the north of the country tipped the scales in favor of following Bush into war. The real problem for him is that the creation of a no-fly zone near the Turkish border almost guaranteed war. Hussein could not exercise sovereignty in that part of Iraq when an imminent threat of NATO strikes on his infrastructure hung over his head. This was almost a provocation too great to be ignored. This maintained a permanent state of war with Iraq in such a way that only a single incident was needed to move forward with an invasion.

The same argument is made by Dunne (2004), where Bush's total rejection of multilateralism was one of his great errors. Not having the open support and commitments of many allies made it easy for this "coalition" to break apart with its inevitable failure. The speed upon which the decision was made and the clear and cynical utilization of 9-11 brought the EU on board, only to defect in substantial numbers as the war dragged on.

The research of Nyhan (2004) is an in-depth analysis about Bush's tainted perception up to the Iraq invasion. The point here is that over time, a certain lens filtered all information about Hussein and Iraqi politics such that war was nearly inevitable. Nothing positive or good ever seemed to penetrate the Republican establishment about Hussein's policy. Thus, all perceptions of Iraqi life were based around the stereotype "dictator" sort of oppression. Further, that this was a threat to the US and Britain was also a part of this.

Nyhan attempts several simple experiments about human perceptions of misleading news. As with so many other attempts like these, the results were all the same: facts do not matter. These experiments showed one disconcerting idea: even when the misinformation about a political or historical idea was corrected, the initial response of the person did not. In the Iraqi case, that Saddam was "responsible for 9-11" was asserted by the Republicans from the start. Once it became clear that Hussein had no part with al-Qaeda and that they were opponents, even this widespread correction did not penetrate that stereotype. It gets worse as Nyhan shows how the very existence of a corrective can increase, rather than decrease, the caricature the first misleading impression created. This mocks the very root of liberal democracy and parliamentarism in the most significant way. People are indeed irrational after

all.

This misperception idea is preceded in time by a similar article by Dunn (2003). His argument is that Bush sought to re-impose the Reagan foreign policy idea of regular intervention to protect American “values.” Realizing that high risk brings high rewards, his decision to invade Iraq had as much to do with domestic images than foreign priorities. As always, the shock of 9/11 was indispensable.

One of the concepts employed by Dunn is “Threat Inflation.” This is the idea that any potential enemy is to be depicted as being very powerful, but not too powerful to make war seem impossible (Dunn, 2003: 294-295). A “Threat Conflation” is important in this approach because it takes one threat and makes it so broad as to apply to numerous targets. In Iraq, the Administration and media saw all “terrorists” as alike. It mattered not that al-Qaeda was an opponent of Iraq, nor that destabilizing Hussein's nationalist government would unleash terror groups suppressed by Baghdad. Therefore, the error committed by Bush in invading Iraq comes partly from “Threat Conflation.” Iraq had nothing to do with 9-11 and could not benefit from it (as no one in the region could). Yet, attacking it in the name of 9-11 still works when conflated since Iraq, Islam, anti-Americanism and all the rest are thrown into one cognitive pot and mixed into a vague stew easily manipulated by the Regime.<sup>3</sup> The significance of public ignorance, the ease of their manipulation and the total mockery of “democracy” can not be made clearer.

#### *Political Manipulation*

Fisher's (2003) work deals with the institutional failures concerning the decision to invade Iraq. Congress authorized war against Iraq for political reasons, and the Democrats did not want to be seen as “soft on terror.” The shock of 9-11 made war seem perfectly justified to even die-hard liberals. The real problem was the failure to deal with the doctored intelligence reports and the constant caricaturing of Iraq and Saddam in general. Failing to establish a connection between Baghdad and al-Qaeda, the administration switched to the WMD issue. Congress refused to do its job in overseeing these major White House decisions. They feared a public backlash and ended up taking Bush's word for it against their better judgment.

Fisher writes: “Rather than proceed with deliberation and care, the two branches rushed to war on a claim of imminent threat that lacked credibility. The Bush administration never made a convincing case why the delay of a few months would injure or jeopardize national security” (Fisher, 2003: 410). Even when UN inspections revealed no such weapons, Bush then condemned the report (and that of others) and warned of the dire threat of a nuclear Iraq. Democrats should have forced the president to logically make a case that did not depend on emotion and poorly digested intelligence. The war was unnecessary and destructive to the US and most of all, to Bush himself.

In Naim's (2004) essay in the elite Foreign Policy journal, he argues that Bush was “enabled” by many institutions to make his rapid and ill-advised attack on Iraq. The real enabler, that which permitted all others to come together, was 9-11. The disorientation that the attack that day caused made it possible to easily justify the use of violent force. He writes, “In the United States, the attacks fed the widespread notion that 'business as usual' in U.S. foreign policy was no longer an option” (Naim, 2004: 95). Like Fisher above, Bush's enablers include especially the House and Senate Democrats who refused to criticize Bush's

<sup>3</sup> When the term “Regime” is used with a capital “R”, it is a specific reference to the New World Order. In brief, it is the increasingly consolidated rule of capital, taking in both “government” and “private” concentrations of power, to create a single ruling power with full control over the state, production, media, fashion, ideas, ethnics, religion and science. It is nothing less than the idea of totally recasting and remaking reality in their image. This postmodern liberalism is then the most thorough form of totalitarian mind control ever devised.

intelligence so as to appear tough on this war. They paid for it, but not as much as the Republicans did. The argument, especially for this paper, is that reckless foreign policy is abetted by shocks that force quick action. This disorientation produces suggestibility such that ill-advised actions can occur without criticism.

The powerful argument of Polsky (2010) is not unlike the Nyhan above. In this case, however, the issue is not so much the decision to engage in warfare, but the decision to maintain it even after it has failed. Because of the Bush Administration's inflated rhetoric over the issue, withdrawal was impossible. An increase of forces and general mobilization were likewise out of the question, since neither the public support nor the resources were available. Thus, the war just dragged on out of inertia, becoming a war of attrition that Bush could not escape. Support waned, resources became scarcer and costs soared because escape and escalation were already ruled out.

In a similar argument, Mintz (1993) is dealing with the first invasion of Iraq under George Bush Sr. Critical thought is deliberately blocked through a “cognitive shortcut” to circumvent the complexity of international politics (Mintz, 1993: 598). A President might “restructure” the definitions of policy options to avoid the appearance (or even the idea) of a compromise (Mintz, 1993: 606). Even in elite circles, ignorance and intellectual laziness is the norm. Profits and power are all the matter, facts are problematic and can be used selectively. Withdrawal was clearly eliminated while a war of attrition was only a second best option in that it might work militarily but become a domestic liability. A quick strike was the best option because it would minimize casualties, send a message to “the world” and avoid the mess of attrition. In short, it was a cheap option that ultimately meant nothing.

The very evocative article by Boettcher and Cobb (2009) uses the idea of “investment frames” to deal with both decisions and justifications of warfare. An “investment frame” is the idea that certain costs, especially sunken costs, that have already been made, justify a bit more sacrifice to compensate for the earlier losses and costs. In other words, since the US has already sacrificed so much, to stop now would be irrational. In the presidential rhetoric dealing with the second Iraq war of George Bush Jr., he argued that the sacrifices the US has made since his father's war justifies further sacrifices. It is because casualties were higher than expected that the war cannot end. If withdrawal was the option now, it would mean that a) defeat has been admitted, and b) those killed or maimed died for nothing.

While their results are not surprising, the use of “frames” increases the popularity for the war among hawks that are becoming disillusioned. It means even less support for the war from the earlier skeptics who were opposed it from the beginning. So hawks, whose support might be fading as the war drags on, will be buoyed by the “frame” of earlier sacrifice. Those who are opposed to the war from day one find the war even more repugnant when the “frame” method is used.

These articles and arguments have much in common. Knowledge is in short supply and can become a liability. Sloganeering and images are the preferred means of making decisions, even at elite levels. The economic goals of the Regime are constantly invested with a faux-moral or political content that is of no interest to decision makers. It comes down to the use of shocks like 9-11, tainted perceptions and a simplistic model of international politics. In other words, ignorance is far more useful than knowledge. 9-11 was critical in that it permitted this “short cut” to function as “intellectual debate.” Regardless of the interests of international capital in this war, the political problem is the fact that mindlessness seems to be a necessity in foreign policy. Public ignorance and mass-society are the norm in both elite and popular outlets as knowledge is just now synonymous with “trouble making.”

### **The Mass Mentality of Imperialism: Regime Change, 9-11 and the “Human Rights” Industry**

How was it that US intelligence did not predict 9-11? This question remains highly controversial. The “standard” answer is in the structure of the intelligence community prior to the rearrangement of their administration in 2004 was irrational and too fragmented. Prior to that, the CIA was an independent head of all intelligence gathering. This was a problem, since each branch of the service, the departments of State, Justice and Energy, as well as police bureaucracies such as the DEA or Customs, all had their own intelligence services. This does not include state police intelligence and the intelligence units of the major cities. Each element in intelligence world fought a multi-layered war with the others for budget money, recognition and credit, so these agencies worked against each other.

Now, Richard Clarke, head of the NSA's intelligence unit, accused the CIA of deliberately withholding intelligence concerning the possibility of a terrorist hit on the US as early as July of 2001. Whether or not this concerned “al Qaeda” is another matter, since this organization, to the extent it exists at all, is a Cold War creation of US intelligence. John Ashcroft was warned a month before 9-11 to avoid all commercial aircraft transportation, but that was never made public. While familiar territory in 2015, the early work of French journalist Thierry Meyssan has not been surpassed. He put forward the following arguments to the Arab League in the Spring of 2002, showing the intelligence confusion just prior to and just after the attacks.

First, he argued that a Boeing 747 could not merely invade US airspace over the Pentagon and white house without triggering numerous missile batteries that would have taken it out quickly. No one is entirely certain how these automated systems could have failed, all at the same time and on the same day.

Second, that there was no trace of the jet left that hit the Pentagon, and yet, the bodies left behind were not burnt beyond recognition. Some were identified by fingerprints. The air traffic controller who first saw the “jet” heading to the pentagon said it was traveling at “800 miles per hour” and was not a jet of any kind.

Third, that Secret Service testimony claimed that the “terrorists” used highly classified intelligence code words in their communications with the White House the morning of the attacks. These very exclusive codes are meant to give the president secure communication lines to various intelligence agencies. It was shocking that these people, whoever they were, had access to such codes.

Finally, Osama bin Laden denied involvement in the attacks. This is quite unlike any terrorist cell, dozens of whom claimed responsibility as soon as the explosions occurred. Osama was undergoing dialysis in a Pakistani hospital the morning of the attacks. Yet, within 10-15 minutes after the first plane hit the towers, bin Laden was blamed for the attacks (Meyssan, 2002).<sup>4</sup>

This claim, well known to all who followed the news on September 11, made little sense for several reasons. First, since the claim that it was “Osama's al-Qaeda” seemed awfully early to be true. At best, it was speculation that this organization, considered terrorist, put together this very complex terror operation in America. Second, that bin Laden had any substantial contacts in Afghanistan, let along with the Taliban, representing only one faction of the country's Muslims, was another speculative truth widely reported in the western press. Even if all of that was true, the media and US policymakers failed to link the attacks to al-Qaeda, Afghanistan or Iraq.

The assumptions were just too great. All of these attacks needed then to be connected to Saddam Hussein in Iraq, though his secular stance and distrust towards Islamic movements seemed to place him outside of the inner circle that may have planned the attacks. But

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<sup>4</sup> This author personally was listening to the radio when the first planes hit the Towers. He, and several colleagues, remarked about how strange it was to blame Osama just a few minutes after the first planes hit. How could they possibly know that, or even theorize about it?

whatever the motivation or whoever the culprits, the US war both Afghanistan and Iraq was dubbed “the war on terror.” After a time, the actual blame for the attacks was not significant, and the general blanket “Middle Eastern terrorist” label was used in the casting of this great net. At least in the major press, there was no attempt to be precise as to who a) had an interest in the bombings, b) who had the resources to plan these with such prevision or c) how secular nationalists and extreme Islamists would be working together on a project that, at best, would give the west the pretext it needed to invade the region.

It is not outrageous to make the claim that 9-11 was not all that significant to the decision to attack the region (again). It only provided a great degree of rhetorical and emotional cover for the imperial gambit. Initially, Osama bin Laden denied any involvement in the 9-11 attacks, and his organization seemed too weak to create such an immensely complex set of attacks all at the same time. The previous attack by bin Laden had been a raft-borne bomb sent out to explode near the *USS Cole* (PBN, 2001). The difference between these two attacks is immense, suggesting that 9-11 required far more intelligence than previous attacks from al-Qaeda.

It also makes little sense for terrorists to blow up the trade towers. It is fairly clear that, if anyone, 9-11 served the interests of Zionism, since it gave the US the leverage it needed to destroy Israel's worst enemy – Iraq (Wertheimer, 2012: 55ff). The twin towers attack did not seriously hurt American interests, but it served them, especially in justifying the escalation of the long-time US involvement in the Middle East and Central Asia (Lee, 2007: 4-5).

The fact remains that the US intelligence community has no idea which agency or foreign cells were responsible for 9-11. While bin Laden was always considered a suspicious character, no one in the major branches of US intelligence thought the evidence against him conclusive. The Clinton Administration was concerned that there was contradictory evidence against bin Laden concerning previous attacks, as well as the fact that he had vehement disagreements with the governments of Afghanistan and Iraq long before the events of 9-11.

Some of the facts that suddenly dropped out of consideration in the days immediately following 9-11 were that the Islamic movement in the Mideast is and was deeply divided and largely incapable of concerted action. The Taliban were weak, small in numbers and not in charge of all of Afghan territory. Nor were Taliban, Iran and/or Osama's movement allied at the time.

### *The Afghan Circus*

There can be no missing the point here – the military failures in Iraq can be traced, in part, to the fact that the entire political and ideological agenda in American, elite circles was always unclear, tightly bound to private interests and, worst of all, based on a set of poorly thought-out public assumptions that show, apart from other problems, that incompetence in these more obscure areas of the world is immense. Putting it in simpler terms, the war was based on no clear agenda and the term “success” was never defined for any length of time (Hayden, 2012).

Nasreen Ghufraan (2007) writes in *Asian Survey*:

The year 2006 in Afghanistan began with the functioning of a democratically elected parliament—a bold and positive step forward in institution-building. Development and reconstruction have continued at a slow pace. Security has sharply deteriorated, and the Taliban insurgency has become more violent in spite of the enlarged International Security Assistance Force. Opium production has increased to record levels, leading to a boom in the drug trade (Ghufraan, 2007: 87).

In 2015, nothing has changed. While the US as largely pulled out its forces from parts of Afghanistan in 2014, violence is a daily, endemic concern. The establishment of power in Kabul does not reach outside the city limits, and ethnic clans continue to vie for power, often seeking outside help from China, Russia or the US. Other than mere revenge for the attacks on the Towers, no definition of success can cover this disastrous consequence.

Few took the Afghan elections of 2010 seriously. Few believe that Karazi and his group are even remotely representative of the Afghan population. Further, probably no one believes that secular liberalism would ever be the natural choice for Afghans in general. It has been imposed by force. Concerning the military perspective, this mission has been damaging to US interests and has gone far beyond NATO's original mandate, a mandate that has long been obsolete. Regardless, NATO is largely a code for "American" anyway.

Making matters worse, even fewer hold that there has been any measurable success in training an Afghan security force. Unpopular and viewed as agents of a foreign and hostile power, Afghan police and soldiers trained by the infidels are targets for attack. Yet, on June 13 of 2011, the collective NATO defense ministers held that by 2014, the Afghan security units will be ready to take over, and the commitments from foreign powers will be much smaller than today. Of course, this was wildly optimistic.

Michael Meacher, Labor party MP, said on September 6, 2003:

Until July 2001 the U.S. government saw the Taliban regime as a source of stability in Central Asia that would enable the construction of hydrocarbon pipelines from the oil and gas fields in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, through Afghanistan and Pakistan, to the Indian Ocean. But confronted with the Taliban's refusal to accept U.S. conditions, the U.S. representatives told them 'either you accept our offer of a carpet of gold, or we bury you under a carpet of bombs' (*Guardian*, 2003).

Much of this history is outside the ken of the average American, even the average educated American. The life of Afghani Islam and tribal division are not exactly well known in the west, and therefore, the latitude that media has in reporting things is wide (Hayden, 2012).<sup>5</sup>

The destruction of the Soviet-led government in Afghanistan was led by Islamic soldiers being funded by the US through Pakistan. Given the eternally important pipeline issue, to have a Soviet government in this strategic country was out of the question. The Soviet defeat in that country should have given US policymakers a clue about the chances of a successful war there, yet, the oil money and its pipeline system was too much of a temptation. If the USSR was to lose a bloody war against a country bordering them, what sort of a chance did the US have? Whatever window of opportunity available during the emotional heights of September 11 of 2001 has long been squandered.

Writing in the *Middle East Report* in the Winter of 2001, Patricia Gossman states concerning the Taliban forces:

The Taliban also had extensive social links to the religious schools throughout the Northwest Frontier Province, and quickly attracted the support of local trucking cartels whose business had suffered as a result of the chaos in the

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<sup>5</sup> This writer considers himself the discoverer of a law of political life he modestly calls "Johnson's Law." A tad tongue in cheek (but only a tad), this law states that the obscurity of a country is proportionally related to the number of lies, myths and distortions stated as fact in the public arena. It refers to both the number of errors of fact and interpretation that are likely to occur in any statement, but also that those making them feel freer in inventing things when there are so few capable of correcting them.

country and saw in the Taliban a way to secure trade routes to the Middle East and Central Asia. After the Taliban defeated Hikmatyar in 1995, Pakistan threw its weight entirely behind the movement. The Taliban took control of Kabul in 1996, and much of the north in mid- 1998. Over the next five years, the ISI [Pakistani intelligence – MRJ] provided the Taliban with arms, ammunition, spare parts, fuel and most importantly, military advisers and assistance during key battlefield operations. The Taliban's opponents turned increasingly to Iran and Russia for military aid. In the meantime, Pakistan continues to play reluctant host to over 2 million Afghan refugees

This was written several months before the events of 9-11. As Meacher wrote above, the US was willing to deal with the Taliban because it was thought they were the only force with the power, popularity and organization to rebuild the country. After 9-11, with no hard evidence against them, Afghanistan became a target of US carpet bombing. It became clear that the Islamic movement was not moving quickly enough for Big Oil's taste, and that they showed signs of “independence” relative to the destination of those revenues.

What Gossman suggests is that the Taliban might not be all that unpopular in their own country. If they were involved heavily in education and the rebuilding of the shattered infrastructure of Afghanistan, the assumption of unpopularity may well have been a poor one. At the very least, it is well established that the US is seen as an occupying and not a liberating presence (Hayden, 2012).

What is clear is that the Taliban, after the final defeat of the USSR, were the only organized group with the ideology, strength and dedication to govern this war torn country. They engaged in one of the most successful drug eradication programs in global history. Since the fundamentalist movement rejects all forms of intoxicants, the burning of huge swaths of poppy crops was a major priority of the Taliban government. In 2006, Michel Chossudovsky wrote in *Global Research*:

The United Nations has announced that opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan has soared and is expected to increase by 59% in 2006. The production of opium is estimated to have increased by 49% in relation to 2005. The Western media in chorus blame the Taliban and the warlords. The Bush administration is said to be committed to curbing the Afghan drug trade: 'The US is the main backer of a huge drive to rid Afghanistan of opium. . . .' Yet in a bitter irony, US military presence has served to restore rather than eradicate the drug trade. What the reports fail to acknowledge is that the Taliban government was instrumental in implementing a successful drug eradication program, with the support and collaboration of the UN. Implemented in 2000-2001, the Taliban's drug eradication program led to a 94 percent decline in opium cultivation. In 2001, according to UN figures, opium production had fallen to 185 tons. Immediately following the October 2001 US led invasion, production increased dramatically, regaining its historical levels (Chossudovsky, 2006).

The Bush administration, in no uncertain terms, connected the poppy trade with the Taliban, without the smallest bit of evidence. That is an optimistic statement, since it might have also been to cover up the US involvement in that trade. The Taliban were the greatest enemy of the drug lords, and it is an unavoidable conclusion that either the US occupation or the allied tribes of the north have profited from the resumption of the heroin trade. Either way, the US is responsible for the resumption of this squalid trade and is part of what the

“men and women” of the US armed forces are “fighting for” in Central Asia.

Defending American intervention is usually based around some sort of vague, abstract and hackneyed “human rights” rhetoric. Both the American mind and the political elites realize that all intervention, especially in the cauldron of the Middle East, must have a “liberal” component to it – it must be about human suffering and ultimately, the protection of human rights.

The protection of human rights has, at least in official rhetoric, been the main goal of foreign policy. While the list of what “counts” as human rights may be perpetually controversial, the general cause remains easily defended by both voters and elites in America so long as the terms remain vague. One significant cultural element here is that domestic policies and foreign policies have merged. The distinction between domestic concerns such as the alleviation of poverty or the promotion of free trade and foreign issues such as overthrowing dictatorships are closely connected. In other words, American intervention in the Islamic world must always be centered around the political system of the target country in order to be accepted (Dietrich, 2006). That these abstract considerations have no relation to reality is not important in the postmodern world: image is everything.

Targeted countries are usually caricatured in the western press. One tell-tale sign of total Regime control is when all newspapers and TV news outlets are saying the same thing. When ostensible “enemies” agree on the need to “instigate change” in country x, this is the smoke that bespeaks of the fire of external control.<sup>6</sup>

The pattern is familiar. Riots suddenly emerge, often based on strangely obscure issues. The government is immediately painted as “authoritarian” or even “totalitarian” and any attempt to squash the violence is described as “heavy handed” or “oppressive.” Immediately, all news outlets are totally informed as to the reasons for the demonstrations and their agenda. They are able to, without much lapse of time, penetrate into both the government and the protester's purpose, agenda and end game. It is suspiciously simple and generalized. The government's view is never stated, but might occasionally be “interpreted” for the viewer or reader who – chances are – never heard of the place before.

Most obnoxiously, the media becomes replete with the sloganeering of a phenomenon known only to postmodern liberal mass-democracy, the “instant expert.” This is a group of startlingly conformist talking heads shuffled from network to network, saying the same thing over and over again with no opposition. Actual knowledge of the issue or region is not required, since vague catchwords and a fidelity to the official narrative is the new definition of “expert” or “critical scholar.”

Common names here are George Will, Frank Gaffney, Keith Olberman, Ted Cruz, Cathy Young, Charles Krauthammer, Ronald Beiner, David Brooks, Bret Baier and Tony Snow. There are also “types” that appear, making the same claims and arguments year after year. These seem almost ritualistic at this stage in the process. Some include the attractive neoconservative woman, the blaring feminist, the black professor (could be either radical or neoconservative), the “offbeat” Hispanic, the distinguished-sounding-guy-with-the-accent, the lofty university professor and the rest of the regular and not-so-regular “experts” and “scholars” ritually appearing on the talk circuit.

The above list can change depending on the issue or outlet, some being “experts” in Asia, others, on Israel. Some, like Gaffney or Snow, are everywhere no matter what the issue, having almost a pipeline to the guest slots on CNN or MSNBC. What matters most seriously, however, is that this is a deliberate means to destroy actual debate, subvert and marginalize

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<sup>6</sup> Again, Johnson's Law is operative here. When news outlets and other official and “mainstream” bodies know nothing about a country (such as Burma or Belarus), controlling their information is easy. They are just repeating the press releases of Soros or the White House as “fact.”

all opposition and completely recast the reality of the nation or leader concerned. Its purpose is solely to justify capital's desire to install or overthrow a party, leader or movement. Curiously, these "instant experts" never seem to deviate from the media's official line, the State Department or the press releases from the Open Society Foundation. This itself is to stamp the official opinion as that "of the experts" and stigmatizing all other views as "extreme" or "conspiracy theories."

While technically a democracy, Israel has been part of the repression of millions of Arabs since 1948. One can also point to Lebanon, where a strong democracy and a wealthy society was brought to the pit of destruction by religious, ethnic and ideological warfare. In the Mideast today, Turkey and Lebanon are democracies. While Saudi Arabia is not a democracy, the royal government there has no real record of domestic oppression relative to the values and expectations of the Islamic population. While uncomfortable to Americans, the basic moral goods of Islam remain popular throughout the Middle East.

The sheikhdoms are not democratic, but the citizen of Saudi Arabia or Qatar pay no taxes, receive free education and medical care, and can go to a local university for nothing. The oil pays for it all. This places the cultural concept of intervention on shaky ground, since there is no reason to hold that the political system (whether democratic or authoritarian) is non-representative.

Several conclusions can be drawn. First, that democratic political systems are procedural only. Authoritarian Syria and Saudi Arabia have two very different sets of domestic policies. While democratic, Lebanon, Israel and Turkey also have three very different sets of domestic priorities. Since, at least according to Dietrich (2006) U.S. policy is based largely around human rights justifications, the uncomfortable problem arises that these strictly procedural forms that make up a political system are not tightly connected with any specific outcome. At best, the human rights argument is weak, vague and transparent.

### **Money, Guns and Imperialism from Kabul to Damascus**

Few deny the base economic motives driving this and all wars in modernity. If oil is the most important single ingredient in the industrial economy, even to the point where fuel prices can send a country into a tailspin, then access to cheap oil becomes the main purpose of modern foreign policy.

Wherever there is money, the power of the western governments will be present to take advantage. Drugs mean money, weapons and a certain degree of prestige. Whether in Latin America or Central Asia, drug lords are well armed and capable of hiring mercenaries. Much of the dirty business of war can be done with both. Drug lords, if properly kept on a leash by the state, can perform acts less than heroic for the sake of building a credible threat to whomever the enemy happens to be at the time.

The economic interest in Afghanistan cannot be understated. Robert Blake, State Department official for Asian affairs, said "The region's wealth of natural resources, nascent trade agreements, and a burgeoning network of transport and energy connections underscore the great economic promise of a more integrated South and Central Asia." This is crucial to the American economy (Blake, 2012).

In addition, in March of 2013, Blake was far more explicit on the economic reasons for intervention. In his speech at the Turkic-American convention in Washington, he argues that the energy infrastructure must be integrated from the Islamic world to the US. This includes pipelines to both India and China. To assist Azerbaijan in its infrastructural development is critical, since, at least at the time, the Azeris were a key ally of the US while the Armenians are a key ally of Russia.

Blake skillfully brings the economic agenda into clear focus. He states that "Energy is

one of the most promising areas for increased trade and transit. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan energy corridor shows us that linking producers in the region with consumers in Europe is a win-win. We hope to see the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India, or TAPI, gas pipeline, as a similar boon for South and Central Asia.” Notice that this bypasses Russia, and links US allies in the area: Georgia, Azerbaijan and Turkey (a member of NATO).

Then, Blake says, “. . . the region is becoming more integrated through trade liberalization – which includes the reduction of non-tariff trade barriers, improved regulatory regimes, transparent and efficient border clearance procedures, and coordinated policies – to accelerate the flow of goods, services, and people throughout the region” (Blake, 2013). While this is simple, concise and factual, it does not fly in the hinterlands. The rubes require shocks, black masked men and the threat of Islamic “Sharia law.”

This the central issue in the US intervention in Afghanistan and the rest of the Islamic world. Minimizing Russian oil and gas competition is essential. Mobilizing the infrastructure of key US allies is the main way to do this. Since Russia already has heavy investments in the region (and allies such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan), the response of capital is to mobilize its own allies as it is clear that the free trade system and infrastructural integration will be under US control, since it will occur under US military protection.

In addition, a 2012 Commerce report on the neighboring state of Tajikistan confirms Blake's remarks. It suggests that oil and gas are the main concerns of US foreign policy in the area and, almost identically with that, defeating Russia is crucial to American security in the region. Challenging Russia in Central Asia is the essence of capital's global strategy. The Report states “Competition from Russian, Asian, and European producers is significant. Most consumers in Tajikistan are very price-sensitive and usually opt for lower prices over quality” and again “U.S. companies may see stiff competition from Russian, Iranian, Chinese, Turkish and Italian construction companies.” The most telling of all,

Through non-transparent practices and barriers to competition, the government burdens the private sector with unnecessary costs and creates substantial uncertainty and risk. Accordingly, the principal investors in recent years have been governments with geopolitical interests in the region, especially China, Russia, and Iran (Commerce, 2012).

Therefore, it is easy to conclude that the vital US interest concerns challenging Russia for control of the oil and gas pipelines to Central Asia, which of course, includes Afghanistan and Pakistan. The integration of this part of the world is an indispensable part of capital's outlook on foreign affairs as the pipeline infrastructure is aimed at feeding the growing (but oil-starved) economies of India and China. Chossudovsky (2011), in the preface of his most recent book on the Afghan war under the Bushes, writes:

In 2005, the Pentagon released a major document entitled “The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America” (NDS), which broadly sketches Washington’s agenda for global military domination. While the NDS follows in the footsteps of the Administration’s “preemptive” war doctrine as outlined in the Project for a New American Century (PNAC), it goes much further in setting the contours of Washington’s global military agenda. . . . Meanwhile, the Pentagon had unleashed a major propaganda and public relations campaign with a view to upholding the use of nuclear weapons for the “Defense of the American Homeland” against terrorists and rogue enemies. The fact that the nuclear bomb is categorized by the Pentagon as “safe for civilians” to be used in major counter-terrorist activities borders on the absurd. In 2005,

US Strategic Command (STRATCOM) drew up “a contingency plan to be used in response to another 9/11-type terrorist attack”. The plan includes air raids on Iran using both conventional as well as tactical nuclear weapons (Chossudovsky, 2011).

While there have been many analyses of the military situation in Central Asia, this one in particular deserves comment. The main thesis of this new book is that the war on “terror” was never meant to be well defined or possess a well focused strategy. Its goals were so broadly based that it could serve as a justification for any policy that could even indirectly be brought under the rubric of the “war on terror.”

Prof. Chossudovsky's point (and one he's been making daily since 9-11) is that the war on terror is not meant to be a quick, precision sort of affair. It is to justify a large and long-term American military presence abroad for the sake of protecting the critical transport of oil and, less ethically, skimming the drug profits. The military bureaucracy can continually justify high budgets, making the war can be a profitable enterprise, and, for the time being, many questions of domestic import can be temporarily sacrificed for the sake of this imminent threat.

### *The Syrian Circus*

What was yesterday called a “preposterous conspiracy theory” is today's headline. The CIA, the Saudi government and a shifting federation of affluent oligarchs are at the center of the “Syrian opposition” now long part of a Civil War engendered by the US and Israel. Washington and Riyadh have been involved in Syrian life since the Cold War pitted Israel and the US against the USSR.

Najmuddin Shaikh, a 38-year veteran of the Pakistani intelligence service, argues that Russia is slated to be marginalized by the US for strictly economic purposes. Any war (hot or cold) in the Islamic world is a war against Russia. In 2013, all Syrian factions were called to a meeting in New York by the Russian government to come to a compromise that would avoid violence. Russia had the temerity to include the Ba'ath Party, giving world Zionism the excuse to cancel the meeting. In Shaikh's estimation, the American program is to control any future Syrian government, ensuring that it serve the interests of western capital. This capricious rejection of the Ba'ath movement in a critical meeting to forestall bloodshed has forced the Syrian government, who before 2013 was in the midst of a revolutionary reform program, to approach Iran for economic assistance. Like Iraq in the early 1990s, Syria too was on the brink of first world status. Economic growth, gradual liberalization and a strong state were creating a powerful, rich and national-socialist identity in both cases. Violence means division, poverty and greater freedom for Israel and American capital.

Nikolai Bobkin, also a career intelligence operative in Russia, agrees with Shaikh's appraisal. The US, in broadening the war and ensuring that the ruling party in Syria has no incentive to seek compromise, has knowingly started a war that has, as of 2015, killed tens of thousands. While rejecting the Ba'ath party for no other reason than its success, the CIA has had no difficulty in promoting the Muslim Brotherhood soldier Ghassan Hitto. Not being a Syrian citizen, his importatio into Syria created a Sunni fundamentalist rebellion against him. Western patronage of the anti-Assad movement has provoked the Lebanon-based Hezbollah militia into the fray. This means that Iran has now been forced to act. And this is to say nothing about the Hollywood “ISIS” farce which is a direct result of these policies.

As Hezbollah and the Syrian army continue to defeat the mercenary forces ranged against it, the US lashes out at Iran. David Ignatius, quoted in Bobkin's piece, wrote in the Washington Post: “The US official's allegation [against Iran] was a tacit acknowledgment that the two-year Syrian conflict has become a regional war and a de facto US proxy fight

with Iran.” Bobkin adds sharply: “[The US] objective remains the same as that which underlay the eruption of American militarism 12 years ago: the assertion by military means of hegemonic control over strategic energy reserves coveted by its rivals, particularly in China and Russia” (Bobkin, 2013). The blood on capital's hands is beyond description.

Joshua Landis, long-time researcher for *Syria Comment*, points out that the dozens of factions against Damascus are largely business networks. Rebel leader Abu Fadi, who allegedly commands 20,000 men, made his millions in the tourist industry. Jamal Maroof, whose wealth comes from Saudi oil, was recently disavowed by the US for diverting CIA funds for his own personal use (Landis, 2013). Several of these factions recently fought a brief war over the distribution of plunder from conquered areas, but quickly regained their equanimity when threatened with a loss of American sponsorship. Worse, several of these faction leaders have threatened to join Damascus if their “interests” are not taken more seriously (Charara, 2013).

As if that is insufficient, the US has begun to promote Ahmad-al-Jarba, a long time drug kingpin as its armed “human rights leader.” According to the Lebanon-based journal *Al-Akhbar*, he is wanted in Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Qatar for trafficking in both narcotics and slaves. The Syrian war has permitted capital to reinvent Jarba as a fighter for “democracy.” Riyadh views him as useful to control the Muslim Brotherhood within the rebel armies. Jarba, who at one point worked for both Saudi and Qatari intelligence, is now mediating the transfer of advanced French weapons to an as yet unknown rebel faction (Charara, 2013).

It is all too clear that the “Syrian rebel” movement is foreign, profoundly corrupt, and concerned with less abstract issues than human rights. The American role in this has an obscure local battle into a regional war. Relying on foreign mercenaries, the west, the Saudis and local organized crime have created a monster that, for the time being, serves only their own interests.

The ISIS farce is just one of the absurdities to come out of the fetid soil of this abomination. Just a quick glance of video from this Hollywood outfit shows the absurdity: black pajamas in the desert, organizing and training in the open, threatening all Americans and having unlimited cash in an era where any even remotely anti-American political figure has all assets frozen are just the beginning of this fraud. After decades in this region, there is not a local campaign for meter maid that is not deeply penetrated by CIA, MI6 or Mossad.

The cynicism, covert agendas and the immeasurable ignorance of Syrian life are creating a cataclysmic war. The middle east is unstable in the best of times. To deliberately provoke further warfare, especially given the choice of “leaders” involved, guarantees a social and economic meltdown that will benefit nobody. In Iraq, Syria and Libya, the American encouragement of war derailed an impressive surge in economic development, a program of liberal reform and the slow inclusion of opposition groups into the ruling coalition. Instead, warfare destroyed what took decades to build, and, with it, the possibility for stability and peace. The use of “ISIS” (the perfect “bad guy” name straight out of James Bond) to threaten both the left (homosexuals and feminists) and the right (anti-Americanism and anti-Zionism) is so cynical that it shows how low the American population has fallen intellectually.

ISIS is so obviously a Hollywood production that the Regime simply does not need to try anymore. Why these Hollywood “terror cells” refuse to attack Jewish targets such as Hollywood parties or Goldman-Sachs is anyone's guess, but the only conclusion can be that these groups are created in the west. They are creations of private capital to keep the US involved in a war long lost. It is not merely that the war is lost, or that there is no money: it is also that the US is not a nation and has no will. It is a multicultural disaster with not the

slightest unity or purpose outside of acting as a breeding ground for monsters.

Recently, a leaked Department of State and Defense paper (Document 12-812, cf pp 287-293) shows what any cursory glance at the history of the area can reveal: that ISIS is the direct creation of the US to do battle against Syria and the Ba'ath party. Its not "Islam" that is being targeted (just as it was never "Marxism" targeted in the Cold War) but a strong, nationalist state striving for autonomous development.

While a paper on this topic can hardly avoid mentioning this non-existent creation of the Hollywood mass mind, it is so blatantly absurd – almost mocking – that it does not deserve any really detailed treatment. They are almost the result of psychological tension created by mass media imagery. They fill every mindless stereotype of the "bad guy" organization that one can see in the fictitious groups SPECTRE, SMERSH, Janus Syndicate, BAST, OCTOPUS or TAROT in the entertainment universe of the alienated, fragmented and paralyzed west. In Archer, the "bad guy" group is called I.S.I.S. GI Joe has COBRA, Spongebob has EVIL, Stingray had WASP and Robocop had DARC.

To believe that the huge amounts of cash needed to create, arm and deploy such a group was sitting around and now either frozen or in the hands of Mossad or CIA is laughable. Any large sum of money in the area is tightly watched and monitored, and anyone who might know someone who once washed the car of a suspected terrorist is constantly monitored from every conceivable sort of device once considered the creation of "science fiction." And posed pictures "Charlie's Angels" style? Really?

Regardless, Washington's policy of uninvited intervention has created a Syria-Russia-Iran-China axis that the US and Israel cannot hope to defeat. In the meantime, the body count increases and the chances for any stable democracy in the region has evaporated. The Syrian conflict need not have become a regional conflagration, but the combination of foreign mercenaries, western intervention, Saudi cynicism and the inherent instability of the region have ensured just that.

### **NATO as Ideology: Liberalism by the Barrel of a Gun**

In its (2008) Strategic Concept, the US Department of Defense says two things that show the ideological nature of US intervention:

Like communism and fascism before it, extremist ideology has transnational pretensions, and like its secular antecedents, it draws adherents from around the world. The vision it offers is in opposition to globalization and the expansion of freedom it brings.

And further, in terms of irregular warfare approaches,

This conflict is a prolonged irregular campaign, a violent struggle for legitimacy and influence over the population. The use of force plays a role, yet military efforts to capture or kill terrorists are likely to be subordinate to measures to promote local participation in government and economic programs to spur development, as well as efforts to understand and address the grievances that often lie at the heart of insurgencies (DoD, 2008).

These two quotations say quite a bit about the Department of Defense and its new approach to warfare. In fact, the second quote above strongly suggests that the entire definition of "warfare" is being revised and redefined. There is no "front" as in conventional warfare, and hence, the only real way to deal with anti-American groups is to work at the economic, infrastructural and political level in addition to the military one. Certainly, a cash

strapped empire requires this sort of approach.

Part of the strategy in dealing with “extremists” and irregulars is not to confront them directly, as was the case in previous wars, but in assisting countries to deal with internal instability. This, as it turns out, is as much a part of warfare as guns and tanks. The Report assumes that the main reason for the existence of terror groups and irregulars is economic deprivation. Therefore, if the economy improves, extremist groups will lose support (cf pg 8 esp). The fact that “globalization” needs to be explicitly defended suggests that free trade – one of the essential pillars of globalization – needs to be defended and is part of the new definition warfare offered here by Defense.

More specifically to NATO, Vanda Felbab-Brown's testimony to the Armed Services Committee in August of last year refuted many of the inflated claims of NATO and the Defense Department concerning Afghanistan. Her statements included:

Despite the substantial improvements of Afghan security forces, few Afghans believe that a better future is on the horizon after 2014. Although NATO and U.S. officials remain optimistic about the success of the counterinsurgency and stabilization campaign, many fear there will be a renewed outbreak of civil war after 2014 when the NATO presence is much reduced. . . During that period of the initial post-Taliban hope and promise, governance in Afghanistan became defined by weakly functioning state institutions unable and unwilling to uniformly enforce laws and policies.

In addition, her testimony stated:

Local government officials have had only a limited capacity and motivation to redress the broader governance deficiencies. The level of inter-elite infighting, much of it along ethnic and regional lines, is at a peak. The result is pervasive hedging on the part of key powerbrokers, including their resurrection of semi-clandestine or officially-sanctioned militias. . . A disturbing big unknown is whether the ANA will be able to withstand the ethnic and patronage factionalization that is already to some extent fracturing the institution. . . The ANP has of course been notorious both for such intense ethnic factionalization, as well as for corruption. . . .Worse yet, the ANP remains notorious for being the perpetrator of many crimes. Among the most controversial aspects of the transition strategy in Afghanistan are various efforts to stand up self-defense forces around the country (Felab-Brown, 2012).

These pessimistic views are now mainstream. They seem to prove that the military approach in Afghanistan has not succeeded at any level, despite spending well over a trillion dollars. Further, that Afghan units trained by the US have little intention to maintain the American mandate when the foreign forces leave. It appears that US forces are viewed as little more than mercenaries of American capital, which of course, does not take any detailed political analysis to see. There is also no good reason to hold that the Taliban are unpopular. Given their early success against the drug trade, and its resumption once they were hurled from power is suspicious and only makes that group look all the better to locals.

One of the more important conclusions here is that the Taliban, while distasteful to western suburbanites, were an absolute requirement to rebuild the Afghan psyche. Such a group was needed to impose strict Islamic rule on a country scarred by decades of war, factional strife, extreme poverty, and several generations of brutalized and amoral men and boys. To hold that liberal democracy can “fix” these problems at the barrel of a gun is not

worthy of a response. Yet, the US and NATO are exporting revolutionary ideology on conservative parts of the world. The US is now the left-revolutionary Jacobin spreading the doctrine of Darwin, progress, capitalism and feminism to the cosmos.

NATO is an ideological organization. In its 2010 Strategic Concept, it states: “NATO member states form a unique community of values, committed to the principles of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law” (NATO, 2010). Unfortunately, these concepts are not as vague as they seem. When unpacked and reduced to their essentials, the ideological foundation of NATO is simply the imposition of the western model of corporate, liberal capitalism. The problem is that there is no tradition or interest in such ideologies in Afghanistan (or anywhere); liberalism has always been imposed by force.

The most obnoxious part of this pious doctrine is that “democracy” is identical with liberalism. This is yet another example of the manipulative use of language. This is why the Ba'ath party and Social Nationalist Party are banned in Iraq and Afghanistan. When Hamas swept the Palestinian elections in 2006, they were immediately condemned by NATO and the US as “undemocratic.” “Democracy” does not refer to a process, as most people will believe: it refers to an outcome and the domination of liberalism.

In the same document, one of NATO's essential missions is to “further develop NATO's capacity to defend against the threat of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons of mass destruction.” Yet, Israel used chemical weapons on the Gaza Strip (and earlier in Lebanon) which was admitted in 2006. Jacob Edery, a member of the Israeli cabinet at the time, said: “the Israeli army made use of phosphorous shells during the war against Hezbollah in attacks against military targets in open ground” (USA Today, 2012).

Unfortunately, both Hezbollah and Hamas are legitimately popular among Arabs in the occupied territory, partially due to Israeli irresponsibility and double standards (Wilson, 2011). Hence, NATO can no longer be seen as remotely neutral on these important issues, since her cheering of Israel's gas attack on Gaza was vociferous. Of course, Israel is not a member of NATO, but she remains a key ally of practically all NATO members. Hence, the ideology is the imposition of liberalism, feminism, individualism, secularism and capitalism throughout the world by any and all means necessary. That “conservatives” seeking the messianic rule of Protestant nominalism and Zionist fundamentalism are the most vocal promoters of this idea is a farce that would have had Moliere dizzy.

The US and NATO forced an alien ideology upon a people that are clearly hostile to it. The US holds that Afghanistan can be saved just so long as enough money is spent on it. Few take such a view seriously. The US assumes that the world is just waiting for liberal capitalism to be imposed from above. The US assumes, further, that the ideological and political preferences of the entire world (let alone the poverty-stricken Islamic world of Afghanistan) is the same.

The concern with energy resources may be a legitimate one, but even here, success eludes the US government. Russia, Belarus, China, Iran and Kazakhstan form an official trading bloc that has far better access (and knowledge) concerning the region and its economics. They will move in when the US is forced out and of course, the west has no resources or will for a global war. The Afghan government, security forces, and police are seen as incompetent and corrupt. The drug trade from northern Afghanistan to western Europe via Georgia has yet to be stopped.

The US and most NATO members are long past bankruptcy, facing high unemployment and show every sign of a major and deep depression. Most NATO members are largely opposed to continual involvement in the region as the Germans and French have made clear. The fact that Germany has already made a separate gas deal (without EU backing) with Russia shows just how short sighted these policies can be. The result is that

about two-thirds of Americans claim “the war in Afghanistan is not worth fighting.” (Washington Post, 2012).

Since there is no clear purpose, no international agreement, no local consensus and no money, the question remains moot. Finally, the creation of this enterprise, President Hamid Karzai, has himself condemned the American presence in Afghanistan, accused the US of endless forms of torture and other crimes, and, specifically, condemned the “night raids” that have destroyed what little legitimacy NATO had in the area. Karzai, the creation of the US, has no political choice but to condemn the US if he is to have a political future (Dreazen, 2013). This fact alone suggests that the only possible and rational US response is to disengage and permit Afghanistan to fight it out, as the US did in its own Civil War.

The US military is undermanned, overstretched, and increasingly reliant on poor equipment as budgets are cut. For humanitarian and military reasons alone, the US has little choice but to remove itself from the Middle East and Central Asia, develop a fully neutral policy concerning Israel and Saudi Arabia, and permit the political forces in the region to develop independently as occurred in Europe and the US over the last 400 years.

### **Conclusions and Consequences: What the Failure Means**

In 2011, journalist Frank Ledwidge (speaking about the British contingent) wrote in the *Daily Mail*:

Our troops have suffered more than 5,000 injuries, yet despite all the courage of our frontline soldiers, there was never any sense that the British Army has been in control. As one SAS major put it to me: ‘We hold these tiny areas of ground in Helmand and we are kidding ourselves if we think our influence goes beyond 500 metres of our security bases’. . . But this was just a distraction from the real problem: a lack of any coherent military strategy. A huge increase in the number of armoured vehicles and helicopters would have done little in Basra or Helmand against the anti-Coalition insurgents. (Ledwidge, 2011)

Neither the infantry, the will or the leadership was sufficient to engage in a war of attrition the Bush administration claimed would never happen. Even if the standard for “success” was the control of at least a few urban centers, the war has failed. The broader goal—laid out early on—is nowhere to be found. Afghanistan was promised a fully capitalist democracy under American tutelage, and the US would be welcomed with “open arms” in the streets of Kabul.<sup>7</sup>

In March of 2012, Seumas Milne wrote in the Australian daily *Canberra Times*:

Massacres are common in wars, but they flow from the very nature of foreign occupations. Brutalised soldiers, pumped up with racial and cultural superiority, sent on imperial missions to subdue people they don't understand, take revenge for resistance, real or imagined, with terror and savagery.

That has been the story of the Afghan campaign: a decade-long intervention supposedly launched to crush terrorism that has itself spawned and fuelled terror across the region and beyond. This is a war that has failed in every one of its ever-shifting kaleidoscope of aims: from destroying the Taliban and al-Qaida, to bringing democracy and women's rights, as well as eradicating opium production. . . Where is the 'good war' now? Foreign troops are a central cause of the conflict, not its solution - as is well understood in both the NATO countries and Afghanistan itself. In Britain, 55 per cent want troops withdrawn

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<sup>7</sup> This statement, as is well known, came from the famed neo-conservative warhawk Richard Perle.

immediately; in the US 60 per cent believe the war hasn't been worth fighting; in Afghanistan 87 per cent of men in the south say NATO operations are bad for Afghans, 76 per cent in the north (Milne, 2012).

Afghanistan is worse off now than in 2001, and the drug trade has recently exploded under the nose of American occupiers. The propaganda war was lost, even in the beginnings, where the 9-11 crashes were played over and over on western media stations. This was not sufficient to carry over for more than a decade of fruitless fighting. "Failure" is not a relative term. Democracy cannot exist where there is no political will or civic virtue. War does not create virtue, it creates brutality. Capitalism was merely a cover of the penetration of western oil firms that Putin forced out of their Russian negotiations, with the prize being the right to pump oil into the endlessly thirsty Chinese machine.

Slogans and mindless flag waving, even after the 9-11 disaster, is not the same thing as having a political will. Even war hawks are forced to admit that the money is simply not there. Hiring mercenaries has long been a tarnished tradition for post-draft, and post-Vietnam America, and no administration has the mandate or the interest in reinstating that practice.

The reality is that the resources are not present, nor is the political will for this mission to even hope for a status quo ante. Few westerners know the first thing about this part of the world, and therefore have little upon which to base their opinions. The average politician in the US legislature is no better off in that respect. The mission in Afghanistan has increased tensions between the US and Russia, and most certainly, the US and China. Any chance of an alliance with Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan are gone. The Chinese-Russian Shanghai Cooperation Organization have been the east's response to US intervention (among other things) that can only be considered a major defeat for NATO. In a mocking gesture, the first major petroleum contract was given to China in 2011 for \$700 million by the Afghan state that the US created.

### **Epilogue: May 27 2015**

Ian Hanchett's article (May 25 2015) for Breitbart confirms what this writer has been saying for about a decade: that China and Russia will be far superior to the US militarily within 3-5 years. The US Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Welsh said that "China and Russia are two good examples of countries who will be fielding capability in the next three to five years, if they stay on track, that is better than what we currently have in many areas." And "The fighter aircraft they're going to field in the next three to five years just have better capability than things we currently have sitting on the ramp." (Hanchett, 2015)

Add this to the laundry list of reasons why the US is not a great power and has never had this capability. Part of the reason is not merely in superior technology and numbers, but in greater resolve. As planned riots ruin what's left of America and the foreign policy of the oil firms comes apart, the people themselves have no more money to be extracted. Reading the comments from the Breitbart site, the Republicans still have no idea why these Hollywood groups like "ISIS" seem to dislike the US.

These words are being written the day after Memorial Day, 2015. The sections of this paper above were written some time ago. Never before has this writer seen such psychopathic and delusional worship of the martial life as this weekend. Even a decade ago this holiday was fairly muted. Yesterday, it was a frenzy. Flags everywhere, a constant obsession with all things military and the reference to all military personnel as "heroes" regardless of their actual position. Twenty years ago, this holiday saw protests against American foreign policy; today, nothing but the almost literal, liturgical worship of the "men and women" of the US

armed forces.

This long, lost war for Israel and Big Oil is the perfect example of the mass-mind: facts do not seem to matter, media images rule almost totally unopposed. Worse, the opposition is more illiterate than the hawks, refusing to deal with Israeli influence. Yet, this is exactly what makes 2015 different from 1968. Then, the US capitalist class was massively invested in the USSR and “building socialism.” The war in Vietnam was eating into profits. Today, the Russians and Chinese are the big losers economically in the failure of the Ba'ath Regimes in Iraq and Syria. Hence, Israel, oil power, the obscurity of Islam and the almost total ignorance of Arab secular nationalism form a perfect coalition to control all information. This is the Regime at its finest: Islamic anti-gay and anti-feminist ideas to mobilize the left; the “irrational hatred” for the west and the US mobilizes the right. It is a virtuoso performance.

There is no good reason to hold that a) the Iraqi Ba'athists were ever a military threat to the United States, and b) that the Afghan Taliban has interests outside their own country. The question of Israel's security comes up in the literature, though muted, no doubt from fear of accusations. Nevertheless, it has become quite clear that the only real winner of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is Israel, since the destruction of the militarized Ba'athist state takes a huge security load off Tel Aviv. At the same time, terror cells are violently anti-Zionist, and therefore, the use of American forces against these movements serves Israel's interest.<sup>8</sup>

Relative to the above, Israel cannot be ignored. Given US failures the US is overstretched. Its military is all over the world, and manpower is stretched to the limit. In addition, Defense is seeing its budget cut, and more cuts are planned in the future. Further, there is no reason to believe that Arabs see US intervention in Iraq and Syria, largely through Turkey, as legitimate. US policy has been to back Israel and her policies no matter what the cost. This should be reevaluated.

Russia is key. During the Cold War, the USSR was anti-Israel, seeing it as a US base. Russia is backing the Syrian government, and is generally allied with Iran. She is enemies with Turkey and the Gulf Monarchies. Russia has been revitalized and rebuilt under Putin. Her oil industry is the largest in the world, and her military and intelligence forces have been reformed and rebuilt. Her economy is back to superpower status, and Russia is respected throughout the third world. Russia is also allied with China, making her a dangerous enemy to have. The world, in short, is no longer unipolar.

Russia also owns billions of American dollars, as do the Chinese. Russia runs a trade surplus and a budget surplus. She is increasingly popular in Ukraine and Belarus, as the west shows itself as literally bankrupt. For the US to ignore these facts is insane. Russia is staying in the middle east. She has oil pipelines throughout the region, and has long standing deals with secular Arab governments and several states in Central Asia, including Kazakhstan, the regions largest power.

The rise of China is being assisted by US failures in Central Asia. As an Asian power with little oil, China is very interested in making sure that the US does not succeed in Central Asia, not for the least of reasons, that war with India might develop if China pushes too hard. The Chinese seem to be waiting for the US to simply spend itself out of existence. China seems to be a big winner as the Americans pull out.

The Russia-Iran nexus seems also to get a new lease on life. Russia is making regular deals with the Iranians, via Armenia, to bring the Russian pipelines to China and beyond. A loss in the Central Asian realm means a far weaker claim to dominate Caspian Sea oil, a long time and well known desire of American elites. In other words, China-Iran-Russia is a nexus

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<sup>8</sup> More than anyone else Chossudovsky has stressed Israel's role in justifying the wars in the Middle East. It is impossible to deny that Israel has benefited greatly from the war(s), and that her security has increased as a direct result.

that clearly benefits from the American humiliation.

The US is seen increasingly as a crusader for colonialism, not abstract democracy. The fact is that the Ba'ath party is banned by military decree in Iraqi elections, and the Taliban or associated groups are equally verboten in Afghan elections. There is no clear indicator of how these groups would poll in any election. The fact that there can be no free election under thousands of American soldiers and tanks is something not lost upon western observers. The parties and candidates, while not hand-picked by the Americans, must be vetted by them.

Both the domestic culture of the United States and the local cultures of middle eastern powers is connected to the unstable situation in that part of the world. On the one hand, the U.S. sees intervention as manifesting the best of American culture: the stress on rights, humanitarian intervention and the protection of life. On the other hand, local cultures are tightly bound to violence through the variables of centralization, military mobilization, resource dependency and religion.

The war on terror is a failure, even given the endlessly shifting definitions of the term. The quotations listed here are not fluff – they are proof that a) the war is lost, b) there is great public anger, and c) people are looking for answers. Elites might not like to hear what some of those answers might be.

Regardless of the truth behind American intervention, the official rhetoric can be taken as representative of the American culture of foreign affairs. Local cultures in the middle east are, at best, constantly ready for warfare and violence. Militarized states like Syria see their mission as to protection of Arabic interests in the region. On other hand, the U.S. And Israel (possibly turkey) see their mission as broader: the defense of human rights and the interest of small minorities. In all respects, selective blindness is operative, especially where Israeli colonialism and Turkish repression are connected with the institutions of political democracy.

The current situation is this: The western world is at war in both the Middle East and Central Asia for many reasons. Defense of Israel, protection of oil wealth, control over Russia and a general distrust of Islamic fundamentalism all seem to be reasons for this long term constant engagement. The events of 9-11 were just the proximate cause of this war. The US has been financing Israel's expansion against the Arab world since 1948, and the US has not even made a pretense of objectivity when dealing with the behavior of the Israeli occupying forces on the Gaza strip, for example.

9-11 was easy, since it gave the system what it required to step up its war activities in the region. Everything was on the table – from the alleged involvement of al-Queda to the secular government of Bashir al-Assad, the entire anti-Zionist network in the middle east came under American attack.

The historical evidence leads one to these conclusions: First, the conduct of the war has been entirely destructive – Afghanistan and Iraq were reduced to rubble, and the governments overthrown. There is no good reason to believe that the governments presently in power are popular, and there is some reason to hold that the local populations view these governments as puppets.

Second, 9-11 was a proximate cause only. The US had been involved on Israel's side in these wars for decades. Hence, making 9-11 the cause of the war is problematic, and possibly dishonest. The citizen must, to be both rational and honest, include oil and gas into the equation, as well as the protection of the Israeli state.

Third, there is no connection between the war in Central Asia and the purported claims. The claims ran the gamut from 9-11 to Saddam's tyranny in Baghdad. He was supposed to be developing “weapons of mass destruction,” a charged long considered invalid. Israel, in fact, is the only power in the region that has nuclear weapons.

The point of this is to call into question the honesty of Israeli and American policymakers in the war on terror. Do the Islamic populations have a case against the west? Has the US been objective in its dealings with the Arab world? These questions are not asked in the present constellation of power in American politics, and it does harm to the concept of the war on terror. If anything, the war will increase the opportunity and justification for terror.

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