

A Pipeline too far!

Oil and Oil Pipelines: Why the US invaded Afghanistan

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Global Research, April 29, 2005

16 June 2005

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Oil and Energy](#)

The following should be viewed against a background of many other like-projects – such as the Trans-Balkan Corridor 8, and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipelines – whose progress is so often spasmodic that the word ‘feasibility’ is beginning to be veiled in an aura of obscurity.

Situated astride ancient invasion routes, Afghanistan has, over the centuries, paid a price for its vulnerability – and India becoming a British colony in 1858 (after decades of dominance by the infamous East India Company) did not improve matters: the frequent forays by the British army into the Khyber Pass saw to that!

Today, America – another country with visions of global domination – is now on the Afghan scene, with that ex-colonial power, Britain, playing a subordinate role. Supreme irony!

For a clearer understanding of why America really invaded Afghanistan in the immediate aftermath of September 11th 2001, one need look no further than – oil – keeping in mind that, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, she (America) had wasted no time buying into Russian oil and gas fields, many of which closely bordered Afghanistan – a country which, itself, held significant oil and gas deposits.

In 1997, the Central Asia Gas Pipeline consortium (Centgas) was formed under the control of the California oil company, UNOCAL (who held a 46.5% stake in the consortium), with the intention of running a trans-Afghan gas pipeline to Pakistan and India. This project was aborted in December 1998 – but has now been resuscitated (about which, more later).

As evidence that oil played a crucial role in Afghanistan, it is pertinent to note a few facts:

(a) Condoleeza Rice had been a director on the oil company Chevron’s board from 1991 until appointed by Bush as his National Security Advisor in 2001 – a position she held when America attacked Afghanistan.

(b) 22 Dec. 2001: Hamid Karzai (who had been a paid consultant for Unocal , as well as being deputy foreign minister for the Taliban), was appointed Prime Minister of Afghanistan by the US.

(c) 1 Jan. 2002: Zalami Khalilzad, a former employee of Unocal – and special assistant to Pres. Bush, was appointed special envoy to Afghanistan.

(d) 9 Feb. 2002: Pres. Musharraf of Pakistan & Hamid Karzai agreed to “cooperate in all spheres of activity” including the the proposed Central Asian Pipeline.

(e) 14 Feb 2002: The Israeli newspaper Ma’ariv noted: “If one looks at the map

of the big American bases created (in Afghanistan), one is struck by the fact that they are completely identical to the route of the projected pipeline to the Indian ocean”.

(f) 27 Dec 2002: Afghanistan, Pakistan & Turkmenistan signed an agreement to build Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline – a \$3.2 billion project. (the ‘resuscitation’ – noted above).

With the above in mind, it should come as no surprise to learn that the US Trade Development Agency (USTDA) stated in their 2005 report that they had approved “funding (\$200,000) for the first phase of an oil and gas resource assessment in Afghanistan. The U.S. Geological Survey will be conducting the assessment.” After all, USTDA has played a very important role in this region since the fall of the Soviet Union, providing “funding for US companies to conduct feasibility studies on major projects in developing and middle income countries” – which it has done on a vast scale throughout Eurasia in particular. In their own words: “USTDA promotes economic development , while helping the U.S. private sector get involved in projects that offer significant U.S. export opportunities”. The American military occupation of Afghanistan will certainly ensure this – and if further confirmation of this were needed, then the recent takeover of Unocal by Chevron-Texaco should suffice. Chevron is, and has been for some time now, well-established in the gas and oilfields in the Caspian region. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will see to this latest venture!

In January 2005, it was reported by more than one source (one of which was AP) that Turkmenistan’s Oil & gas ministry had completed a feasibility study for the said trans-Afghan pipeline by the British company Penspen, & construction could begin in 2006. This 1680 km. pipeline is to run through Herat & Kandahar in Afghanistan, through the cities Quetta & Multan in Pakistan – thence on to the Indian border town of Fazilka. It was also noted that the feasibility study of the project had been funded and sponsored by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), “a multilateral development finance institution dedicated to reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific”.

ADB was established in 1966, and is owned by 63 member countries, 45 from the Asia-Pacific and 18 from outside the region...(two of which are the US and Britain). With headquarters in Manila, they have 27 other offices around the world and more than 2000 staff from 50 countries. That the British government is closely involved is attested by the fact that Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for International Development is the British member of the board of 63 governors of the ADB, and, in view of USTDA’s role in the matter (ref: the previous paragraphs), this is further evidence of Britain’s subordinate role.

In view of the fact that USTDA had for some years now ensured that American firms would be awarded such ‘feasibility study’ contracts, it would, on the face of it, seem surprising that in this instance they had not done so – and would be satisfied with handling the ‘assessment of the Afghan gas and oil resources’ – while handing over the feasibility study to the ADB. The only rational explanation for this apparent incongruity is that America has thus both bought the support of its subordinate ‘allies’, and at the same time lessened their own accountability – should the project prove not feasible!

A brief re-reading of above makes it self-evident that the funding of these projects is crucially important to their fulfillment – and therefore needs closer examination.

The entry of another ostensibly ‘international’ banking organisation on to the global scene is

somewhat puzzling, inasmuch as for the past sixty years two international banking organisations, with similar aims, have been struggling to deal with the worlds' economic problems: (a) the World Bank; and (b) The IMF.

That these last two organisations known as the Bretton Woods institutions have proven largely ineffective is due to the fact that, being statutorily-appointed multilateral bodies formally belonging to the UN, their hands were, to a large extent, politically tied. The solution?: with its low profile – due in no small measure to the ignoble role it had played in World War 2 (covered by both Charles Higham in his book “Trading With the Enemy”, and the BBC Timewatch film “Banking With Hitler”), [The Bank for International Settlements \(BIS\)](#), the world's oldest multi-national financial institution (whose board of directors includes the Governors of the banks of the richest developed countries) was, and still is, the most powerful and prestigious banking group in the world. In its own words: its “predominant tasks...are to promote the co-operation of central banks and to provide additional facilities for international financial operations”, using their headquarters in Basel (the Secretariat) to ensure such ‘co-operation’. The Asian Development Bank being one of the many so ‘co-operated’, it is therefore important to keep the role of the BIS in mind when considering such fundings noted above.

To return to the two projects in question: it is intriguing to note that the ‘British’ company, Penspen Ltd., is a subsidiary of Dar Al Handasah Nazih Taleb & Partners (DAH), a Beirut-based Lebanese Consulting Engineering firm originally established in 1956 and reorganized in 1959 and in 1970. It operates in many Arab Countries such as Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Kuwait, Iraq, Algeria, Jordan, Yemen, etc. It designed and supervised the execution of projects financed by the World Bank (BIRD), Kuwait Fund, Arab Fund, Saudi Fund, OPEC Fund, Islamic Bank, KFW (Kredit Bank Fur Wieder Bauen), the European Economic Community (EEC), and, of course, the ADB.

In conclusion: this eastward-and-onward march of militarised global capitalism – under the guidance of America – must be seen for what it is: a threat to global peace and stability.

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