

Empire, Energy and Al-Qaeda: The Anglo-American Terror Network

The Imperial Anatomy of al-Qaeda, Part II

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This is Part 2 of the series, "The Imperial Anatomy of Al-Qaeda."

[Part 1: The CIA's Drug-Running Terrorists and the "Arc of Crisis"](#)

The End of the Cold War and Strategy for the New World Order

With the end of the Cold War a new strategy had to be determined to manage the global system. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, declarations of a "New World Order" sprang forward, focusing on the United States as the single world superpower. This presented a great many challenges as well as opportunities for the world's most powerful hegemon.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, a number of new Central Asian and Eastern European nations were formed and became independent, and with that, their immense deposits of natural gas and energy became available for exploitation. Afghanistan itself was considered "a major strategic pivot," as it was "the primary gateway to Central Asia and the immense energy deposits therein." [1] Western oil companies such as ExxonMobil, Texaco, Unocal, BP Amoco, Shell, and Enron began pouring billions of dollars into the countries of Central Asia in the early 1990s. [2]

In 1992, a Pentagon document titled "Defense Planning Guidance" was leaked to the press, in which it described a strategy for the United States in the "new world order," and it was drafted by George H.W. Bush's Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney. It stated that, "America's political and military mission in the post-cold-war era will be to ensure that no rival superpower is allowed to emerge in Western Europe, Asia or the territories of the former Soviet Union," and that, "The classified document makes the case for a world dominated by one superpower whose position can be perpetuated by constructive behavior and sufficient military might to deter any nation or group of nations from challenging American primacy." [3]

Further, "the new draft sketches a world in which there is one dominant military power whose leaders 'must maintain the mechanisms for deterring potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role'." Among the necessary challenges to American supremacy, the document "postulated regional wars against Iraq and North Korea," and identified China and Russia as its major threats. It further "suggests that the United States could also consider extending to Eastern and Central European nations security commitments similar to those extended to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Arab states along the Persian Gulf." [4]

Similarly, in 1992, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, one of the most influential think tanks in the United States, had established a commission to determine a new foreign policy for the United States in the wake of the Cold War. Participants included Madeleine Albright, Henry Cisneros, John Deutch, Richard Holbrooke, Alice Rivlin, David Gergen and Admiral William Crowe. In the summer of 1992, the final report, "Changing Our Ways: America and the New World," was published. The report urged "a new principle of international relations: the destruction or displacement of groups of people within states can justify international intervention." It suggested that the US "realign NATO and OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] to deal with new security problems in Europe," and "urged military intervention under humanitarian guises." This report subsequently "planted the policy seedlings for the Kosovo war" as it "provided both the rationale for U.S. interventionism and a policy recommendation about the best means-NATO-for waging that war."[5]

Another Carnegie publication in the same year, "Self-Determination in the New World Order," furthered imperialist goals for America, as it "set criteria for officials to use in deciding when to support separatist ethnic groups seeking independence, and advocated military force for that purpose." It recommended that "international military coalitions, preferably U.N.-led, could send armed force not as peacekeepers but peacemakers-to prevent conflict from breaking out and stay in place indefinitely." It further stated that, "the use of military force to create a new state would require conduct by the parent government so egregious that it has forfeited any right to govern the minority claiming self-determination."[6]

The United States and its NATO allies soon undertook a new strategy, seeking to maintain dominance over the world, expand their hegemony over regions previously under the influence of the Soviet Union (such as in Eastern Europe and Central Asia), and prevent the rise of a resurgent Russia or China. One of the key facets of this strategy was the notion of "humanitarian intervention."

Yugoslavia Dismantled by Design

In the 1990s, the United States and its NATO allies, in particular Germany and the UK, undertook a strategy of destabilization in Yugoslavia, seeking to dismantle and ultimately fracture the country. To do this, the imperial strategy of divide and conquer was employed, manipulating various ethnic tensions and arming and training various militias and terrorist organizations. Throughout this strategy, the "database", or Al-Qaeda was used to promote the agenda of the destabilization and dismantling of Yugoslavia.

In 1989, Yugoslavia had to seek financial aid from the World Bank and IMF, which implemented a Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), which resulted in the dismantling of the public state, exacerbating social issues and fueling secessionist tendencies, leading to Croatia and Slovenia seceding from the republic in 1991.[7] In 1990, the US intelligence community had released a report predicting that Yugoslavia would break apart and erupt in civil war, and it blamed Milosevic for the impending disaster.[8]

As far back as 1988, the leader of Croatia met with the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to create "a joint policy to break up Yugoslavia," and bring Slovenia and Croatia into the "German economic zone." So, US Army officers were dispatched to Croatia, Bosnia, Albania, and Macedonia as "advisers" and brought in US Special Forces to help.[9]

Fighting broke out between Yugoslavia and Croatia when the latter declared independence in 1991. The fighting subsequently lasted until 1995, and merged in part with the Bosnian war. The US supported the operation and the CIA actively provided intelligence to Croat forces, leading to the displacement of between 150,000 and 200,000 Serbs, largely through means of murder, plundering, burning villages and ethnic cleansing.[10] The Croatian Army was trained by U.S. advisers and a general later put on trial at the Hague for war crimes was personally supported by the CIA.[11] So we see the double standard of ethnic cleansing and genocide: when the US does it or supports it, it's "humanitarian intervention," politically justified, or it is simply unacknowledged; when an enemy state does it, (or is accused of doing it), the "international community" demands action and any means is deemed necessary to "prevent genocide", including committing genocide.

The Clinton administration gave the "green light" to Iran to arm the Bosnian Muslims and "from 1992 to January 1996, there was an influx of Iranian weapons and advisers into Bosnia." Further, "Iran, and other Muslim states, helped to bring Mujahideen fighters into Bosnia to fight with the Muslims against the Serbs, 'holy warriors' from Afghanistan, Chechnya, Yemen and Algeria, some of whom had suspected links with Osama bin Laden's training camps in Afghanistan." [12]

During the war in Bosnia, there "was a vast secret conduit of weapons smuggling through Croatia. This was arranged by the clandestine agencies of the US, Turkey and Iran, together with a range of radical Islamist groups, including Afghan mujahedin and the pro-Iranian Hizbullah." Further, "the secret services of Ukraine, Greece and Israel were busy arming the Bosnian Serbs." [13] Germany's intelligence agency, the BND, also ran arms shipments to the Bosnian Muslims and Croatia to fight against the Serbs.[14] Thus, every side was being funded and armed by outside powers seeking to foment conflict and ultimately break up Yugoslavia to serve their own imperial objectives in the region.

In 1992, the al-Kifah Center in Brooklyn, the recruiting center for al-Qaeda, made Bosnia its chief target. By 1993, it opened a branch in Croatia. The recruitment operation for Bosnian Muslims "was a covert action project sponsored not only by Saudi Arabia but also in part by the US government." [15]

In 1996, the Albanian Mafia, in collaboration with the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a militant guerilla organization, took control over the enormous Balkan heroin trafficking routes. The KLA was linked to former Afghan Mujaheddin fighters in Afghanistan, including Osama bin Laden.[16]

In 1997, the KLA began fighting against Serbian forces,[17] and in 1998, the US State Department removed the KLA from its list of terrorist organizations.[18] Before and after 1998, the KLA was receiving arms, training and support from the US and NATO, and Clinton's Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, was close with KLA leader Hashim Thaci.[19]

Both the CIA and German intelligence, the BND, supported the KLA terrorists in Yugoslavia prior to and after the 1999 NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. The BND had KLA contacts since the early 1990s, the same period that the KLA was establishing its Al-Qaeda contacts.[20] KLA members were trained by Osama bin Laden at training camps in Afghanistan. Even the UN stated that much of the violence at the time came from KLA members, "especially those allied with Hashim Thaci." [21]

The March 1999 NATO bombing of Kosovo was justified on the pretense of putting an end to

Serbian oppression of Kosovo Albanians, which was termed genocide. The Clinton Administration made claims that at least 100,000 Kosovo Albanians were missing and “may have been killed” by the Serbs. Bill Clinton personally compared events in Kosovo to the Holocaust. The US State Department had stated that up to 500,000 Albanians were feared dead. Eventually, the official estimate was reduced to 10,000, however, after exhaustive investigations, it was revealed that the death of less than 2,500 Albanians could be attributed to the Serbs. During the NATO bombing campaign, between 400 and 1,500 Serb civilians were killed, and NATO committed war crimes, including the bombing of a Serb TV station and a hospital.[22]

Ultimately the strategy of the destabilization of Yugoslavia served various imperial objectives. The war in Yugoslavia was waged in order to enlarge NATO, Serbia was to be excluded permanently from European development to justify a US military presence in the region, and expansion was ultimately designed to contain Russia.[23]

An op-ed in the New York Times in 1996 stated that, “instead of seeing Bosnia as the eastern frontier of NATO, we should view the Balkans as the western frontier of America’s rapidly expanding sphere of influence in the Middle East.” Further:

The fact that the United States is more enthusiastic than its European allies about a Bosnian Muslim state reflects, among other things, the new American role as the leader of an informal collection of Muslim nations from the Persian Gulf to the Balkans. The regions once ruled by the Ottoman Turks show signs of becoming the heart of a third American empire.

[. . .] Now, in the years after the cold war, the United States is again establishing suzerainty over the empire of a former foe. The disintegration of the Soviet Union has prompted the United States to expand its zone of military hegemony into Eastern Europe (through NATO) and into formerly neutral Yugoslavia. And — most important of all — the end of the cold war has permitted America to deepen its involvement the Middle East.[24]

Further, with the dismantling of the former Yugoslavia, a passageway for the transport of oil and natural gas from the Caspian region was to be facilitated through the construction of the Trans-Balkan pipeline, which will “run from the Black sea port of Burgas to the Adriatic at Vlore, passing through Bulgaria, Macedonia and Albania. It is likely to become the main route to the west for the oil and gas now being extracted in central Asia. It will carry 750,000 barrels a day: a throughput, at current prices, of some \$600m a month.” As the Guardian reported:

The project is necessary, according to a paper published by the US Trade and Development Agency last May, because the oil coming from the Caspian Sea “will quickly surpass the safe capacity of the Bosphorus as a shipping lane”. The scheme, the agency notes, will “provide a consistent source of crude oil to American refineries”, “provide American companies with a key role in developing the vital east-west corridor”, “advance the privatisation aspirations of the US government in the region” and “facilitate rapid integration” of the Balkans “with western Europe”.

In November 1998, Bill Richardson, then US energy secretary, spelt out his policy on the extraction and transport of Caspian oil. “This is about America’s energy security,” he explained. “It’s also about preventing strategic inroads by those who don’t share our values. We’re trying to move these newly independent countries toward the west.

“We would like to see them reliant on western commercial and political interests rather than going another way. We’ve made a substantial political investment in the Caspian, and it’s very important to us that both the pipeline map and the politics come out right.”[25]

The pipeline project, supported since 1994, “featured prominently in Balkan war politics. On December 9 1998, the Albanian president attended a meeting about the scheme in Sofia, and linked it inextricably to Kosovo.” The message given at the meeting was that, “if you [the United States] want Albanian consent for the Trans-Balkan pipeline, you had better wrest Kosovo out of the hands of the Serbs.”[26]

And so, with the help of an international network of CIA-trained Islamic militants, American political and economic hegemony expanded into Central Asia and the Caspian region.

The Spread of Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda did not just spread to Bosnia and Albania/Kosovo, but rather a great many places around the world saw the spread of this vast “database” of Islamist fighters, and always aided by Western intelligence agencies or their regional conduits (such as the ISI and Saudi intelligence agencies). Following on the heels of the established American and NATO strategy following the Cold War, Islamic fundamentalism also came to play a part in this strategy.

Bernard Lewis was a former British intelligence officer and historian who is infamous for explaining Arab discontent towards the West as not being rooted in a reaction toward imperialism, but rather that it is rooted in Islam; in that Islam is incompatible with the West, and that they are destined to clash, using the term, “Clash of Civilizations.” For decades, “Lewis played a critical role as professor, mentor, and guru to two generations of Orientalists, academics, U.S. and British intelligence specialists, think tank denizens, and assorted neoconservatives.” In the 1980s, Lewis “was hobnobbing with top Department of Defense officials.”[27] He was also one of the originators, along with Brzezinski, of the “Arc of Crisis” strategy employed in the late 1970s.

Lewis wrote a 1992 article in *Foreign Affairs*, the journal of the Council on Foreign Relations, titled, “Rethinking the Middle East.” In this article, Lewis raised the prospect of another policy towards the Middle East in the wake of the end of the Cold War and beginnings of the New World Order, “which could even be precipitated by fundamentalism, is what has of late become fashionable to call ‘Lebanonization.’ Most of the states of the Middle East – Egypt is an obvious exception – are of recent and artificial construction and are vulnerable to such a process. If the central power is sufficiently weakened, there is no real civil society to hold the polity together, no real sense of common national identity or overriding allegiance to the nation-state. The state then disintegrates – as happened in Lebanon – into a chaos of squabbling, feuding, fighting sects, tribes, regions and parties.”[28]

Thus, the “database” of Al-Qaeda could be spread internationally so as to destabilize various regions, and thus provide the justification for intervention or even war. All that was needed was well-placed intelligence operatives to control key leadership positions within the terrorist organization. The great majority of both its higher-ups and nearly all al-Qaeda operatives would not have to be made aware of the organizations covert use as an arm of US geo-policy.

In the 1990s, Osama bin Laden “built a shadow air force to support his terrorist activities, using Afghanistan’s national airline, a surplus U.S. Air Force jet and clandestine charters.” Further, as the Los Angeles Times revealed:

With the Taliban’s blessing, Bin Laden effectively had hijacked Ariana, the national civilian airline of Afghanistan. For four years, according to former U.S. aides and exiled Afghan officials, Ariana’s passenger and charter flights ferried Islamic militants, arms, cash and opium through the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan. Members of Bin Laden’s Al Qaeda terrorist network were provided false Ariana identification that gave them free run of airports in the Middle East.

[. . .] Taliban authorities also opened the country’s airstrips to high-ranking Persian Gulf state officials who routinely flew in for lavish hunting parties. Sometimes joined by Bin Laden and Taliban leaders, the dignitaries, who included several high-ranking officials from Saudi Arabia and the Emirates—left behind money, vehicles and equipment with their hosts, according to U.S. and Afghan accounts.[29]

Bin Laden’s secret purchase of a US Air Force jet in 1992 “was used to ferry Al Qaeda commanders to East Africa, where they trained Somali tribesmen for attacks on U.S. peacekeeping forces,” and Americans had “unwittingly” helped bin Laden “disguise the plane as a civilian jet.” US security officials were well aware of Ariana airlines being used by al-Qaeda,[30]

Among the high-ranking Persian Gulf officials who flew to Afghanistan for “hunting trips” were Prince Turki al Faisal who ran Saudi intelligence until August 2001, “maintaining close ties with Bin Laden and the Taliban,” as well as “Sheik Mohammed ibn Rashid al Maktum, the Dubai crown prince and Emirates defense minister.” On occasions both Osama bin Laden and Omar, the head of the Taliban, mingled with the hunters. Upon their departure, “the wealthy visitors often left behind late-model jeeps, trucks and supplies,” which was “one way the Taliban got their equipment.”[31]

What the article does not mention, however, was that the ISI was the prime sponsor of the Taliban, with the complete backing and facilitation of the CIA. The connection to the Saudi intelligence chief further strengthens the thesis that the Safari Club, created in 1976 by the French intelligence chief, may have survived as a covert intelligence network encompassing western intelligence agencies working through regional agencies such as those of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

The German intelligence agency, the BND, revealed in 2004 that two Saudi companies that were linked with financing al-Qaeda throughout the 1990s were in fact front organizations for Saudi intelligence, with close connections to its chief, Prince Turki bin Faisal.[32]

Between 1989 and 2001, Billy Waugh, a CIA contractor, trained several al-Qaeda operatives around the world.[33] In 2002, it was revealed that, “British intelligence paid large sums of money to an al-Qaeda cell in Libya in a doomed attempt to assassinate Colonel Gadaffi in 1996 and thwarted early attempts to bring Osama bin Laden to justice.” In 1998, Libya had issued an arrest warrant for Osama bin Laden, yet:

British and US intelligence agencies buried the fact that the arrest warrant had come from Libya and played down the threat. Five months after the warrant was issued, al-Qaeda killed more than 200 people in the truck bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.[34]

However, “the resistance of Western intelligence agencies to the Libyan concerns can be explained by MI6’s involvement with the al-Qaeda coup plot.” Anas al-Liby, a Libyan al-Qaeda leader, “was given political asylum in Britain and lived in Manchester until May of 2000 when he eluded a police raid on his house and fled abroad.”[35]

Following the end of the Cold War, many mujahideen fighters were relocated to Russia’s unstable region of Chechnya, where the two main rebel leaders who came to power had previously been trained and funded by the CIA in Afghanistan. The war in Chechnya was planned in a secret meeting in 1996 attended by Osama bin Laden and high-ranking officials of the Pakistani ISI, whose involvement in Chechnya went “far beyond supplying the Chechens with weapons and expertise: the ISI and its radical Islamic proxies are actually calling the shots in this war.”[36] In other words, the CIA was directing the war through the ISI.

The US and U.K. have supported Chechen separatism as it, “weakens Russia, advances U.S. power in the vital Caspian Sea region, and cripples a potential future rival.”[37] Mikhail Gorbachev, former President of Russia, claimed that the British had been arming the Chechen rebels.[38] Oil also features prominently in the Chechen conflict, as Chechnya is home to large reserves of oil, as well as pipeline corridor routes being competed over by Russian and Anglo-American oil conglomerates. Thus, the Anglo-Americans support the Chechen separatists, while the Russians send in the military.[39] US intelligence helped fund and transport al-Qaeda into Chechnya in the early 1990s, American intelligence remained involved until the end of the decade, seeing the “sponsorship of ‘Islamist jihad in the Caucasus’ as a way to ‘deprive Russia of a viable pipeline route through spiraling violence and terrorism’.”[40]

The Global Domination Strategy for a New Century

Following upon the strategic objectives set out in the early 1990s for the United States and NATO to expand their hegemony across the world, in preventing the rise of rivals (China and Russia), and expanding the access of western economic interests to the Caspian region, new designs were being drawn in the powerful think-tank community in the United States as well as being outlined by highly influential strategic thinkers. The renewed strategy, hardly a break from the previously determined aim of encirclement and containment of China and Russia, simply expanded the scope of this strategy. From one faction, the neo-conservatives, came the initial aim at expanding militarily into the Middle East, starting with Iraq, while the more established hard-line realist hawks such as Zbigniew Brzezinski outlined a far more comprehensive and long-term strategy of world domination by controlling the entirety of Eurasia (Europe and Asia), and subsequently, Africa.

The neo-Conservative hawks in the US foreign policy establishment formed the think tank, the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) in the 1990s. In 2000, they published their report, *Rebuilding America’s Defenses*, in which they outlined a strategy for the United States in the “new century.” Following where the Defense Planning Guidance document left off (during the first Bush administration), the report stated that, “the United States must retain sufficient forces able to rapidly deploy and win multiple simultaneous large-scale wars,” and that there is a “need to retain sufficient combat forces to fight and win, multiple, nearly simultaneous major theatre wars,” as “the Pentagon needs to begin to calculate the force necessary to protect, independently, US interests in Europe, East Asia and the Gulf at all times.”[41]

It recommended the “regime change” of Saddam Hussein in Iraq as the “immediate justification” for a US military presence in the Gulf; however, “the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein.” In advocating for a massive increase in defense spending, and outlining military operations against Iraq, North Korea, and possibly Iran, the report stated that, “further, the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event – like a new Pearl Harbor.”[42]

Zbigniew Brzezinski outlined a long-term American imperial strategy to control Eurasia in his book, *The Grand Chessboard*. He stated bluntly that, “it is imperative that no Eurasian challenger emerges, capable of dominating Eurasia and thus of also challenging America,” and then made clear the imperial nature of his strategy:

To put it in a terminology that harkens back to the more brutal age of ancient empires, the three grand imperatives of imperial geostrategy are to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together.[43]

He further explained that the Central Asian nations (or “Eurasian Balkans” as he refers to them):

are of importance from the standpoint of security and historical ambitions to at least three of their most immediate and more powerful neighbors, namely Russia, Turkey and Iran, with China also signaling an increasing political interest in the region. But the Eurasian Balkans are infinitely more important as a potential economic prize: an enormous concentration of natural gas and oil reserves is located in the region, in addition to important minerals, including gold.[44]

Brzezinski emphasizes “that America’s primary interest is to help ensure that no single power comes to control this geopolitical space and that the global community has unhindered financial and economic access to it.”[45]

Preparing for War Against Afghanistan

In 1997, Taliban officials traveled to Texas to meet with Unocal Oil Company to discuss the possibility of a pipeline being built from Turkmenistan across Afghanistan and to Pakistan. Unocal had agreements with Turkmenistan to sell its gas and with Pakistan to buy it. The missing link was getting the gas to Pakistan through Afghanistan, which is where the Taliban came into the picture. Unocal’s main competitor in the pipeline bid was with Bidas, an Argentine firm. However, at this time, Afghanistan was still embroiled in civil war, making the prospect of a pipeline being built an unstable venture.[46]

A month before the Taliban visited Texas, Bidas, Unocal’s main competitor, merged its oil and gas assets with Amoco-Argentina Oil, a subsidiary of British Petroleum (BP), one of the world’s top three oil companies.[47] Shortly before this merger was finalized, Bidas had announced that it was close to signing a 2 billion dollar deal with the Taliban, saying “the talks were in their final stages.”[48]

After meeting with Unocal officials in Texas, the Taliban announced in January of 1998 that, “they’re close to reaching a final agreement on the building of a gas pipeline across Afghanistan,” however, they “didn’t indicate which of two competing companies the Taliban

favoured.”[49]

It is significant to note some of the important figures that were involved with the oil companies in relation to Central Asian gas reserves and pipeline projects. In 1997, Zbigniew Brzezinski, the (self-proclaimed) mastermind for the Afghan-Soviet War, Jimmy Carter’s National Security Adviser, and cofounder with David Rockefeller of the Trilateral Commission, was an adviser to BP-Amoco, specifically dealing with the Caspian region.[50] Unocal, in an effort to try to secure their pipeline contract with the Taliban, hired former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Afghan-born Zalmay Khalilzad, former Reagan State Department Advisor on Afghanistan during the Afghan-Soviet War, was also brought on as a consultant for a group hired by Unocal. He would later become US envoy to Afghanistan after the US invasion in 2001.[51]

The pipeline project then ran into significant problems when, in December of 1998, Unocal announced that it quit its Afghan pipeline project.[52] Between 1996 and 2001, Enron bosses had given millions of dollars in bribes to Taliban officials to secure contracts for building pipelines. After Unocal withdrew from the deal, Enron continued to pressure the Taliban to continue with a pipeline. In 1996, neighboring Uzbekistan signed a deal with Enron to develop Uzbek natural gas fields.[53] In 1997, Halliburton, with Dick Cheney as its CEO, secured a contract in Turkmenistan for exploration and drilling in the Caspian Sea basin.[54] However, in December of 2001, Enron filed for bankruptcy.

Eventually, Unocal pulled out of the deal as a result of Afghanistan’s Taliban government not being fully recognized internationally as the legitimate Afghan government, and therefore, the pipeline project could not receive funding from international financial institutions like the World Bank. Unocal also pulled out as a result of the continual conflict raging in Afghanistan between various groups.[55]

In 1999, the Pentagon issued a secret document confirmed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of Defense, which stated that, “Oil conflicts over production facilities and transport routes, particularly in the Persian Gulf and Caspian regions, are specifically envisaged” in the near future, stating that, “energy and resource issues will continue to shape international security.” The document “vividly highlights how the highest levels of the US Defence community accepted the waging of an oil war as a legitimate military option.”[56]

Before George W. Bush became President in January of 2001, there were plans at the highest levels of the United States government in beginning preparations for a war against Afghanistan, which included attempts to secure an alliance with the Russians in “calling for military action against Afghanistan.”[57]

In March of 2001 it was reported that India has joined the US, Russia and Iran in an effort to militarily replace the Afghan Taliban government, with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to be used as bases to launch incursions into Afghanistan against the Taliban.[58] In the Spring of 2001, the US military envisaged and war gamed the entire scenario of a US attack on Afghanistan, which subsequently became the operational plan for the war.[59]

In the summer of 2001, the Taliban were leaked information from top-secret meetings that the Bush regime was planning to launch a military operation against the Taliban in July to replace the government. A US military contingency plan existed on paper to attack Afghanistan from the north by the end of the summer of 2001, as in, prior to 9/11.[60]

A former Pakistani diplomat told the BBC that the US was planning military action against Osama bin Laden and the Taliban before the 9/11 attacks. Niaz Naik, former Pakistani Foreign Secretary, “was told by senior American officials in mid-July that military action against Afghanistan would go ahead by the middle of October.” The invasion subsequently took place on October 7, 2001. Naik was told of this information at a secretive UN-sponsored meeting which took place in Berlin in July 2001, with officials from the US, Russia, and many Central Asian countries. He also stated that the US would launch the operation from their bases in Tajikistan, “where American advisers were already in place.”[61]

As revealed by MSNBC, “President Bush was expected to sign detailed plans for a worldwide war against al-Qaida two days before Sept. 11,” and that, “The plan dealt with all aspects of a war against al-Qaida, ranging from diplomatic initiatives to military operations in Afghanistan.” It outlined “essentially the same” war plan as was put into action following the 9/11 attacks. The National Security document was also submitted to Condoleezza Rice prior to the attacks, and included plans to attack the Taliban and remove them from power in Afghanistan.[62] Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair stated that, “To be truthful about it, there was no way we could have got the public consent to have suddenly launched a campaign on Afghanistan but for what happened on September 11.”[63]

Following the start of the war on Afghanistan in October of 2001, the Guardian’s George Monbiot wrote that the war “may also be a late colonial adventure,” as “Afghanistan is as indispensable to the regional control and transport of oil in central Asia as Egypt was in the Middle East.” It is worth quoting Monbiot at some length:

Afghanistan has some oil and gas of its own, but not enough to qualify as a major strategic concern. Its northern neighbours, by contrast, contain reserves which could be critical to future global supply. In 1998, Dick Cheney, now US vice-president but then chief executive of a major oil services company, remarked: “I cannot think of a time when we have had a region emerge as suddenly to become as strategically significant as the Caspian.” But the oil and gas there is worthless until it is moved. The only route which makes both political and economic sense is through Afghanistan.

Transporting all the Caspian basin’s fossil fuel through Russia or Azerbaijan would greatly enhance Russia’s political and economic control over the central Asian republics, which is precisely what the west has spent 10 years trying to prevent. Piping it through Iran would enrich a regime which the US has been seeking to isolate. Sending it the long way round through China, quite aside from the strategic considerations, would be prohibitively expensive. But pipelines through Afghanistan would allow the US both to pursue its aim of “diversifying energy supply” and to penetrate the world’s most lucrative markets. Growth in European oil consumption is slow and competition is intense. In south Asia, by contrast, demand is booming and competitors are scarce. Pumping oil south and selling it in Pakistan and India, in other words, is far more profitable than pumping it west and selling it in Europe.

As the author Ahmed Rashid has documented, in 1995 the US oil company Unocal started negotiating to build oil and gas pipelines from Turkmenistan, through Afghanistan and into Pakistani ports on the Arabian sea. The company’s scheme required a single administration in Afghanistan, which would guarantee safe passage for its goods. Soon after the Taliban took Kabul in September 1996, the Telegraph reported that “oil industry insiders say the dream of securing a pipeline across Afghanistan is the main reason why Pakistan, a close political ally of America’s, has been so supportive of the Taliban, and why America has

quietly acquiesced in its conquest of Afghanistan". Unocal invited some of the leaders of the Taliban to Houston, where they were royally entertained. The company suggested paying these barbarians 15 cents for every thousand cubic feet of gas it pumped through the land they had conquered.

For the first year of Taliban rule, US policy towards the regime appears to have been determined principally by Unocal's interests. In 1997 a US diplomat told Rashid "the Taliban will probably develop like the Saudis did. There will be Aramco [the former US oil consortium in Saudi Arabia] pipelines, an emir, no parliament and lots of Sharia law. We can live with that."

[. . .] In February 1998, John Maresca, [Unocal's] head of international relations, told representatives that the growth in demand for energy in Asia and sanctions against Iran determined that Afghanistan remained "the only other possible route" for Caspian oil. The company, once the Afghan government was recognised by foreign diplomats and banks, still hoped to build a 1,000-mile pipeline, which would carry a million barrels a day. Only in December 1998, four months after the embassy bombings in east Africa, did Unocal drop its plans.

But Afghanistan's strategic importance has not changed. In September, a few days before the attack on New York, the US energy information administration reported that "Afghanistan's significance from an energy standpoint stems from its geographical position as a potential transit route for oil and natural gas exports from central Asia to the Arabian sea. This potential includes the possible construction of oil and natural gas export pipelines through Afghanistan". Given that the US government is dominated by former oil industry executives, we would be foolish to suppose that such plans no longer figure in its strategic thinking. As the researcher Keith Fisher has pointed out, the possible economic outcomes of the war in Afghanistan mirror the possible economic outcomes of the war in the Balkans, where the development of "Corridor 8", an economic zone built around a pipeline carrying oil and gas from the Caspian to Europe, is a critical allied concern.

American foreign policy is governed by the doctrine of "full-spectrum dominance", which means that the US should control military, economic and political development worldwide. China has responded by seeking to expand its interests in central Asia. The defence white paper Beijing published last year argued that "China's fundamental interests lie in ... the establishment and maintenance of a new regional security order". In June, China and Russia pulled four central Asian republics into a "Shanghai cooperation organisation". Its purpose, according to Jiang Zemin, is to "foster world multi-polarisation", by which he means contesting US full-spectrum dominance.

If the US succeeds in overthrowing the Taliban and replacing them with a stable and grateful pro-western government and if the US then binds the economies of central Asia to that of its ally Pakistan, it will have crushed not only terrorism, but also the growing ambitions of both Russia and China. Afghanistan, as ever, is the key to the western domination of Asia.[64]

As revealed by the San Francisco Chronicle in November of 2001, "the United States and Pakistan decided to install a stable regime in place in Afghanistan around 1994 — a regime that would end the country's civil war and thus ensure the safety of the Unocal pipeline project." And so:

the State Department and Pakistan's Inter- Services Intelligence agency agreed to funnel

arms and funding to the Taliban in their war against the ethnically Tajik Northern Alliance. As recently as 1999, U.S. taxpayers paid the entire annual salary of every single Taliban government official, all in the hopes of returning to the days of dollar-a-gallon gas. Pakistan, naturally, would pick up revenues from a Karachi oil port facility.[65]

Clearly, the plans and purposes for war on Afghanistan had been well established. What was needed was the public justification. The people will not readily support a war to dominate strategic energy reserves and pipeline routes halfway around the world. Besides the fact that this would be an admission of empire, something that still a great many in the American public have failed to reconcile and accept, it would be a difficult task to ask Americans to die for Unocal. What the American people needed to rouse their appetite for war was to have their collective consciousness reshaped by fear; what was needed was terror.

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