

# Road to Perdition:

9/11 and the Tip of American Debacle in Afghanistan

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**Process Publisher**

**October 2021**

## سخن ناشر:

افغانستان از ماه گذشته شاهد تحولات گسترده‌ای از سقوط شهرها و مناطق مختلف این کشور به دست طالبان و خروج نیروهای آمریکایی و ناتو پس از چند دهه بوده است. با روی کار آمدن مجدد امارت اسلامی طالبان در افغانستان، این روزها تحولات غیرمنتظره این کشور در رسانه‌های دولتی و غیردولتی ایران و جهان بازتاب گسترده یافته است. بخش قابل توجهی از تحلیل‌ها به چرایی عقب‌نشینی آمریکا و حول هژمونی آمریکا در منطقه پرداخته‌اند. در حالی که حتا برخی رسانه‌های دست‌راستی هم از افول هژمونی آمریکا سخن می‌گویند اما همچنان در جبهه‌ی «چپ‌گرایان» صدایی جدی و قوی از بررسی انتقادی وضعیت کنونی آمریکا و تحولات نوین سرمایه‌داری جهانی شنیده نمی‌شود. حجم غالب تحلیل‌ها بر خودهمان‌گویی‌های شرمسار و پریشان در تحلیل اوضاع کنونی جهان استوار است و در مورد مشخص وضعیت افغانستان، آمریکا را «قدرتی ضعیف‌شده اما همچنان آقای جهان» ارزیابی می‌کنند که به انتظار فرصتی تازه برای نمایش «قدرت واقعی» اش نشسته است. این رویکرد به طور کلی قائل به جهانی بدون سروری «آمریکا» نیست و درک از سرمایه‌داری جهانی را به پدیدارشناسی «امپریالیزم آمریکا» تقلیل داده است.

به تازگی مطلع شدیم که رفیق گرامی سیروس بینا در حال اتمام کتاب تازه‌ی خود هستند (که در ماه‌هایی آینده منتشر خواهد شد) و در فصلی از این کتاب به تحولات افغانستان پرداخته شده است. دکتر سیروس بینا در آثار خود به طور مفصل به شرح چرایی افول هژمونی آمریکا در متن تحولات سرمایه‌داری جهانی پرداخته است. در این نوشه ایشان با تحلیل وضعیت موجود افغانستان در همین چهارچوب نظری، تصویر واضحی از چرایی شکست آمریکا در افغانستان و عقب‌نشینی ارتش آمریکا ارائه می‌کند. با شرحی که از بحران نظری و سیاسی جبهه‌ی «چپ‌گرایان» داده شد، انتشار جداگانه‌ی این فصل از کتاب به نظر ما ضروری بود و خوب‌بختانه نویسنده‌ی محترم با درخواست ما موافقت کردند و اکنون این فصل را به طور جداگانه در اختیار خوانندگان گرامی قرار می‌دهیم. در حالی که رونویسی‌های بی‌مایه‌ای به سرعت در بازار کتاب ایران به فارسی ترجمه می‌شوند، متأسفانه ما مترجم معتبر و متعهدی برای ترجمه‌ی این نوشه پیدا نکردیم و مناسب دیدیم که فعالیه زبان اصلی منتشر بشود. از جناب دکتر سیروس بینا سپاسگزاریم که فصلی از کتاب تازه‌ی خودشان را پیشاپیش در اختیار ما و مخاطبان قرار دادند و امیدواریم که مورد توجه و استفاده‌ی علاقمندان قرار بگیرد.

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## 9/11 and the Tip of American Debacle in Afghanistan (2001-2021)

**Cyrus Bina**

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September 3, 2021

*We will get on our way to a new record of expansion ... that will carry us into the next American Century.*

– **George H.W. Bush**

State of the Union Message to the Nation  
(January 29, 1991)<sup>1</sup>

*Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.*

– **George W. Bush**

Address to Joint Session of the Congress  
(September 20, 2001)<sup>2</sup>

*I sometimes wonder what use there is in trying to protect the West against fancied external threats when the signs of disintegration within are so striking.*

– **George Kennan**<sup>3</sup>

The Architect of Cold War

### Abstract

The US anticipated fall in Afghanistan is the tip of the iceberg, exemplifying the manifold debacles of the post-9/11, among others. It is the opposite of what the US leadership attempts to brandish to the world as a “unipolar” hegemony. The American *hegemony* (and American era) eclipsed along with the breakdown of the *Pax American* (1945-1979), some four decades ago. That is why the war in

Afghanistan was lost on the drawing board. The American era resembles a “Black hole” that collapsed on itself by the intensity and force of globalization. The epoch *globalization* amounts to no less than a complete and comprehensive repudiation of the defunct institutions, paraphernalia, comportment, and the doctrine and policies of the postwar era. The Americans, however, fooled by their own ill-fated belief that the Soviet fall is an equivalent to another “American Century” (“unipolar” power). Hence, the *pretext* of Saddam Hussein in Kuwait provided the Bush (H.W.) administration a lifetime opportunity to send a massive (and permanent) military expedition to the Persian Gulf in the *first phase*. The corollary of the Reagan and (H.W.) Bush administrations’ back-to-back involvement in the Afghan war against the Soviets boomeranged in one hell of a payback on 9/11. The Bush-Cheney administration did not know what hit them and why. Cheney and his fellow neocons saw this as an opportunity. They welcomed and embraced 9/11; it was a godsend for doubling down on “unipolarity” and another “American Century.” Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld prepared to invade seven nations in the greater Middle East, in one shot, starting with Afghanistan (2001). As the cause of al-Qaeda was not adequate, they moved to concoct another motive (WMD?) in order to destroy key nations in both the west Asia and north-east Asia, thus the “Axis of Evil” was born just a few months after 9/11 in George W. Bush State of the Union Address (January 29, 2002). They invaded Iraq on WMD fabrication in 2003. It was the beginning of the post-9/11 *second phase*. One wonders why the United States lost on each of these wars and conflicts without exception, particularly in the last two decades. The answer to this riddle may have to do with the deeply rooted epochal change, the origin of which is *globalization*.

## Prologue

In the midst of forced and disorderly US (and NATO) evacuation from Afghanistan in dreadful and desperate conditions of multitudes of men, women, and children, wedged between barbed wire and the advancing Taliban at Kabul airport in agony and desperation, the flashbang of initial rampage by Neocons (and the multifarious Cold Warriors) – party to a twenty-year nightmare – is all-over mainstream media. At the head of this dog-and-pony show of resentment at

departure (and evacuation), is George W. Bush – the original sinner with an I.Q. of a cucumber – who deliberately confuses the *cause* of this ordeal with its *effect*.

George W. Bush rebukes the Biden administration, not for pitiable planning of this evacuation, but for the bringing this delinquent, depleting, and drifting war to an end.<sup>4</sup> He sheds crocodile tears for women of Afghanistan<sup>5</sup> vis-à-vis the Taliban, yet his imbecility does not allow him to comprehend that these monsters are the handiwork his own father (as vice president and president, 1981-1992)), made to deter the Russian “infidels” in Afghanistan some forty-year earlier, thus instigating the start of “perpetual war” long before 9/11.

The Biden administration followed the Trump administration concerning a complete withdrawal of remaining US military and civilian forces from Afghanistan by August 31, 2021, after two elongated decades of occupation. It is significant that the Trump team had completely written off the participation of the puppet regime in Afghanistan and opted to “negotiate” exclusively with the Taliban.<sup>6</sup> This would tell us two significant things, (1) that the Taliban held all the cards in these negotiations while the American side had naught; (2) that the US team was fully mindful of the fragility and feebleness of the puppet regime and knew all too well the susceptibility of the Afghan military to breakdown. These points were also translucent to the Biden administration that exhibits more experience on foreign policy the quagmire of Afghanistan than its predecessor does. All this is aside from the fraudulent and aimless American mission in this twenty-year occupation. Hence, an inevitability of unconditional surrender by Americans, just like Vietnam.<sup>7</sup>

As it turns out, the Taliban too were keenly aware of the rickety nucleus of the puppet regime and regime change in Afghanistan. This was a remarkable submission to a horde of long-bearded fanatics who seemed to have time-traveled via the wormholes of history and impulsively landed in this century. Incidentally, those of us who may have a long memory should be able to recall and identify the

very hand that had fed and shaped these monsters (the cohorts of Osama bin Laden) as the fighting force during the entire decade of the 1980s, against the Soviet “infidels,” in the ill-famed Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup>

### **‘Original Sin’ and the Lingering Aftermath**

Some of us who’re old enough to recall the fall of Saigon and remember the mortifying images on that faithful day, in April (1975), at the rooftop of the American Embassy in Saigon, the images at Kabul airport, and a desperate crowd of Afghans clinging to the exterior of the US Air Force C17 transport aircraft is a *déjà vu*. Forty-six years hence, the reverberation of that crushing defeat is so clearly in tandem with today’s images at Kabul airport where the transport planes full of human cargo flying out of Kabul every 45-minute or so, while a sea of people striving to get onboard. This illustrates an aftereffect of yet another lost war by the United States in the post-9/11 period. Yet, if American downfall in Vietnam overlapped with the beginning of the end of *Pax Americana* (1945-1979)<sup>9</sup> – a *tragedy*, this shattering defeat in Afghanistan is a *farce*. Since this time, the defeat is owing to America’s own incarnated monsters. At any rate, by sheer design (i.e., choreography of duplicity and disinformation), nostalgia for power is much more devious and addicting than the real power itself.<sup>10</sup>

Unlike the bleeding heart liberals and heartless conservatives, one do not think that American and NATO forces should stay in Afghanistan or for that matter anywhere else. Instead, a judicious mind questions the very morality, legality, and legitimacy of the “War on Terror” doctrine – chicanery of monumental proportion and a power-grab by a debased, disgraced, and defunct ex-hegemon. The doctrine of “War on Terror”<sup>11</sup> rather clumsily warrants, in disguise, the old colonial and semi-colonial decrees, and verdicts that once upon a time sanctioned by the likes of

Winston Churchill (the ill-famed white supremacist) in the colonial corrupt and long-demolished *Pax Britannica*. American invasion (and a 20-year occupation) of Afghanistan is the *firstborn* of this doctrine that long kept on a *military* respirator until recently.<sup>12</sup>

“War on Terror” also stands rather euphemistically for *another* “American century,” in neoconservatives’ lexicon. Neoconservatives (neocons) saw in their fantasy saw a “unipolar” polity in the making just after the breakdown of the Soviet Union. The neocon aphorism, “Mr. Gorbachev: bring down that wall,” by Ronald Reagan, a second-rate Hollywood actor, who played the US presidency (1981-1989), was a harbinger of the extreme euphoria; this led to the successful infiltration of this extremist worldview in the US foreign policy circles since the 1990s. The liberals and liberal hawks too within the US foreign policy establishment were not far behind.

Having been in the academy and visiting at Harvard at the time, this writer was privy to so many pertinent presentations, debates, and public and private nuances in the aftermath of the Soviet fall on the perception and attitude of American academics and its counterparts, particularly in NATO member countries. The present writer however was suspicious of the propaganda and euphoria and their consequence with respect to the newly emerging (global) polity. The collapse of the Soviet Union gave a false impression to the American leadership at the time, intimating that the sky is a limit and that a “unipolar order” should be at hand. This reflection and the echo of elation is particularly prominent in the address to the joint session of the Congress, declaring a “new order,” by President George H. W. Bush. This address justifiably choreographed along with the decimation of Iraq by the US forces and the speedy launch and spread of massive military and naval bases, including the HQ of the US Fifth Fleet, in the Persian Gulf.<sup>13</sup>

As we already know, the chickens of the anti-Soviet warfare and strategy in Afghanistan came to roost finally in the homeland on September 11, 2001<sup>14</sup>, and it finally turned out that the “unipolarity” is fanciful self-aggrandizement. Nevertheless, the neocon-infested Bush-Cheney administration missed this opportunity and doubled down on their groundless pipedream. The US leadership, neither understood that, by the late 1970s, American hegemony – along with the underlying postwar institutions – had come apart<sup>15</sup>, nor realized that 9/11<sup>16</sup> is but a tangible occurrence caused by: (1) collapse of the postwar American order; (2) the “new order,” concocted a decade earlier by George H. W. Bush, is but the pie in the sky. Incidentally, the Orwellian quality of American political class and the way in which it views the world and perceives order or the disorder is quite mindboggling.

The usual ideologues and cheerleaders of the orthodoxy (liberals and conservatives alike) in the academy too were either unconcerned or mute as to the meaning of hegemony, hegemonic power, and loss of hegemony in the absence of hegemonic institutions. The ruling authorities in the US and their dutiful followers here and abroad nevertheless mesmerized, if not completely stoned, by the fragility of the Soviet economy and the sudden implosion and disintegration of the Soviet Union. They also stopped think about the massive and permanent transfer and relocation of major sectors and industries from the US, via extensive outsourcing, known as the *plant closing* in the mid-1980s.<sup>17</sup> The US governing class was slow to realize that these changes would be essentially irreversible and that such gigantic displacements could extricate the US from the epicenter of world production for good. More importantly, the peculiar petty-bourgeois “can-do” attitude in America was not a match for the formidable global forces that virtually made a number of evitable matters, suddenly inevitable.<sup>18</sup>

These Pax-American ideologues failed to appreciate that *globalization*, as an epochal social relation, had by this time ascended from the wreckage of mummified

institutions of the Pax Americana, namely, World Bank, IMF, NATO, G7 – onetime paraphernalia of the defunct postwar order.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, they were blindsided by the universality of globalization that axed and abolished the status of American hegemony in short order. Meanwhile, the United States – between the “festive” fall of the Soviet Union and the stinging jolt of 9/11<sup>20</sup> – slumbered in the bubble of “unipolar” order.<sup>21</sup>

More amazing, however, is why the traditional Left had not been able to decode the epic vicissitudes that subtly foreshadowed the onset of the present epoch and stage, *globalization*.<sup>22</sup> It is also puzzling that radical scholars, even Marxists, routinely danced around issues and postulates, such as neoliberalism<sup>23</sup> (a doctrine mistook for stage), ‘new’ imperialism<sup>24</sup> (alluding to monopoly and bygone era), imperialist globalization<sup>25</sup> (an eclectic misnomer), American globalization<sup>26</sup> (first half of the story), geopolitics<sup>27</sup> (a skin-deep appraisal), monopoly-finance capital<sup>28</sup> (the usual story of *Monthly Review*) – or a flat-out mixture thereof. The majority of the Left (so-called heterodoxy in and out of the academy) essentially missed the deep *essence* of epochal change and decidedly engaged in petty-bourgeois habit of holding to the impressions and surfing on the *appearance*. This is in a nutshell the story of the intellectual weapon and ostentatious radicalism of those on the other side, who have long been barking, so to speak, without an actual bite.

Incidentally, a number of liberals and pseudo-leftists, oblivious to the collapse of oil monopoly and ignorant of the universality of competitive oil since the 1970s, took to the scavenger hunt to find a cause of the American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in oil. They absorbed by possible foreign contracts on oil pipelines that could go through Afghanistan, and focused on Iraqi oilfields, and then triumphantly deduced that the access to oil must be the motivation of these invasions. Sometimes in traditional leftist activist circles, this declaration unveils itself as “blood for oil.” Such diagnostician is a hoax; it is a distraction, which dangerously obfuscates the

cause; besides, in methodological terms it is no more than a vulgar tautology. This view is quite ignorant of the larger context of this collision course; it misreads the corollary of the US offensive as a cause, and obfuscates the manifold effects of worldwide globalization, revealed vividly in these invasions.<sup>29</sup>

### **Nostalgia is a Seductive Liar<sup>30</sup>**

In 1991, George H.W. Bush pontificated: “We will get on our way to a new record of expansion … that will carry us into the next American Century.” He was unaware of *small detail* that low and behold the first “American Century” (the *Pax Americana*, 1945-1979) too by this time had fallen apart, and that the breakdown of the Pax Americana dates a decade earlier than the downfall of the Soviet Union. This oversight is a reminder of Mark Twain’s delightful axiom: “You cannot depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus.” George Bush (H.W.) apparently has been suffering from a seductive ailment in straight thinking, known as the presumption of “vacuum,” according to which breakdowns in socioeconomic systems are essential without embedded reasons, thus they generate vacuum. To fill such “vacuums” without external forces is a welcome opportunity.

Hence, the worldview in Washington was to expedite the demolition of the Soviet Union after the implosion, on the one hand, and to occupy the international space (and familiar international polity) that was in spare of moment interrupted and disordered by the chaos of implosion, on the other.<sup>31</sup> The 1991 George H.W. Bush military expedition to the Persian Gulf, therefore, was a cunning and calculated move not so much for discord with Saddam Hussein (or solidarity with Kuwait) but essentially for the filling of presumed “vacuum” and unveiling of the purported *new order*.

Conjecture of vacuum, which has plentiful academic followers, particularly in orthodox circles of political science and international relations, is silent about the dynamics of collapse and the centrality of epochal context in the case of the Soviet Union. The dialectic of underlying cause in a larger context is an *academic* matter in the eyes of those who were waiting for 70 years to discard the content and to stuff it with something else. The off-the-cuff orientation of this view will become crystal clear in some twenty-year hence when on the face of it a defiant Russian Federation on the one hand, and a half-dozen lost wars in central and west Asia, not to mention North Africa, on the other, are at the doorsteps of beleaguered America. Hence, the story of US foreign policy and attitude toward “collapse,” “vacuum,” and the need for filling (nicknamed, American leadership), just like the filling of potholes on the street.

This perfunctory attitude and positivistic approach is also trendy among clueless leftists and pseudo-radicals who speak of the American power in such terms as if the absence of the Soviet Union has made the US more hegemonic. They tend to misidentify *rabidity* with *hegemony*, and worse, these pseudo-radicals are oblivious to the worldwide socioeconomic underpinning, value-theoretic undercurrents, and subtleties of our epoch. Incidentally, it is remarkable that in modern astrophysics (and astronomy), unlike its Newtonian counterpart, reference to *void* (vacuum) is neither accepted nor necessary for proof of what is keeping the universe together. Here, a vacuum, just as the collapse of the Soviet Union – irrespective of its critical cause – is but a mirage that tautologically grips the observer.

The illusion of power and US nostalgic vision, however, are inseparable from so many American misadventures in Afghanistan<sup>32</sup>, Iraq<sup>33</sup>, Syria<sup>34</sup>, Libya<sup>35</sup>, Yemen<sup>36</sup>, and other parts of the globe, since the fall of the Soviet Union. The analog of this is defeat after defeat, political suicide after political suicide, and humiliation

after humiliation unparalleled in recent memory. On the other hand, having had a habit of weaponizing anything and everything in the bombastic language of Cold War, the United States turned human rights, democracy, freedom, free world into a weapon, and disguised itself as the “leader of the free world” for life. Hence, a fraudulent 20-year-old invasion/occupation of Afghanistan, which is now officially ending.

Yet, such invasion/occupation bears an ironic signature of the pre-Pax Americana era when the specter of colonial *Pax Britannica* had been hovering above the bloody horizon. This explains in stark and clear-cut terms the nature of this retrograde enterprise and where the United States stands today. There was no legitimate reason for a full-scale invasion of Afghanistan. Yet, the search of Osama bin Laden – the presumed cause of this invasion – took the backseat reportedly for the purpose of invasion and occupation for unlimited time. However, the fundamental strategic decision upon which this particular invasion – other than the aimless deception of “war on terror” – was deliberately left ambiguous and for public imagination. This speaks volumes on not only *illegality* but also sheer *criminality* and *immorality* of American conduct in this invasion.<sup>37</sup>

As implied earlier, the collapse of the “American Century” (1945-1979) and the fall of the Soviet Union deep down are the epoch-making effects of globalization, which among others effectively clipped the wings of American hegemony and similarly disrupted the mess of Soviet bureaucracy – a force much greater than both combined – in short order. Therefore, the American worldview (and foreign policy associated with it) is guilty of double jeopardy, namely, (1) seductive nostalgia and (2) illusory vision of “unipolar” world. Thus, today’s American predicament is the cumulative outcome of the past conducts that unsurprisingly carries the mother lode of inevitability (and predictability) akin to Greek tragedy.

As has been argued in this essay, the invasion of Afghanistan, and subsequent invasion of Iraq by the Bush-Cheney administration was essentially at the service of power projection across the Soviet-less world, far beyond Afghanistan. This project however is but building upon the fortifications that were underwritten and established by George H.W. Bush early on toward another “American Century” by means of “unipolarity” via the bloody expedition and full-scale war of 1991 across the Persian Gulf. Yet, it had fallen to the Bush-Cheney administration to finalize this imaginary mission by embracing 9/11, in order to operationalize the doctrine of “War on Terror” and engage in an open-ended war against everyone and everywhere. Nevertheless, the universality of the blowback in this addictive and predictive stratagem is but translucent. The brunt of defeat after defeat, calamity after calamity, disgrace after disgrace, might not have yet caught up with a *defunct* and *bruised* hegemon that had lost its relevance markedly on the global stage.

The Bush-Cheney doctrine of “War on Terror”<sup>38</sup> (to date a tacit standard for US foreign policy) is an open-ended tiptoeing on the edge of the abyss<sup>39</sup>, as a flurry of disgrace upon disgrace, caused by all these intrusion and incursions, appears to have little ethical, legal, and logical repercussion on profound nostalgia and the runaway self-destruction of the United States.<sup>40</sup> Unless somehow US *deep state* (for the lack of better terms) convinces itself that America had not only been successively defeated in these wars (effect) but also lost its *age* and precisely cut down to size by epochal forces (cause) that are much more omnipresent and omnipotent than America, China, the EU, and Russia combined.

In this context, *globalization* is the very constitution of the whole – the fabric of epochal change; whereas *geopolitics* stands for the playground of conflicting constituent parts acting in concert within this fabric since, by definition, no *part* can be independent of the identity of the *whole*. In other words, geopolitics in its *genuine* definition has no universality of its own. Here, the hand of the epoch is a critical

arbiter. Therefore, resorting to geopolitics in this epoch change is neither methodologically sound (it smacks a tautology) nor historically accurate since *geopolitics* is but a skin-deep account of much deeper epoch-making changes that arose from shifts of the tectonic plates.<sup>41</sup>

### **Puppetry, Pretense, and Pandemic Terror**

While the chaotic American evacuation is in progress, Jens Stoltenberg (Secretary General of NATO – the paraphernalia of Cold War and “brain dead”<sup>42</sup>) surmises as to why the puppet regime in Kabul collapsed without any resistance and at no time. He quickly turns around rather triumphantly and puts the blame at the doorsteps of the Afghan army, victim of a 20-year-long American dog-and-pony show, and the quintessential corollary of puppetry, deception, and pandemic corruption in “American” Afghanistan. Stoltenberg wonders about the finale that has long been obvious to the multitudes of unschooled and semi-schooled around the world (including the Taliban themselves) who saw in advance cataclysmic and devastating signs all over the proverbial wall of Afghanistan.

These multitudes have been more judicious, much more adept, and a good deal more realistic than the likes of Mr. Stoltenberg in NATO (or for that matter, Dr. Faustus in Washington). Deciphering this quandary, for Stoltenberg and his NATO co-defendants, is both straightforward and complicated.<sup>43</sup>

An overwhelming majority of Afghans abhor both the American occupation and return of the Taliban; yet this resilient, self-conscious, and long interrupted nation has a long memory and impeccable experience certainly was able to validate which one is worse (and more dangerous, in the ballpark) than the two. They know that colonial occupation (euphemized rather unkindly, as “nation-building”) in this time and age is anachronistic and feel strongly that this cruel and open-ended

imposition had demolished the flesh and soul of their nation. They also recognize, by experience, the hands that fed and shaped the beginning and development of the Taliban some four decades ago, in the 1980s anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan.

The people of Afghanistan know very well who had thrown the secular nation of Afghanistan to the proverbial dogs of the Taliban. Therefore, they had no choice but the spare of the moment in this chaotic changeover, to defer to the *monster* rather than the *monster*-maker – for now. In another word, the groundswell of multitudes in Afghanistan has had no stomach for this monster-maker-cum-puppet-master, any longer. The tyranny of the Taliban (Washington's creation, aided by Pakistan ISA and Saudi<sup>44</sup> finance), in this *Sophie's choice*, seemed less of a hazard than 20-year cumulative devastation by the occupying puppet masters and perpetual terror-mongers by those in charge of Frankenstein's foreign policy – as “War on Terror” – in Washington. To sum up: the swift breakdown of the American house-of-cards in Afghanistan is not a surprise; but the culpability is squarely at the doorsteps of those in NATO (an outfit devoid of licit jurisdiction in Afghanistan) – like Jen Stoltenberg – who illicitly and eagerly played a critical part in it.

As for those who sidetrack the calamity of this cruel and rancorous occupation by allusion to “nation-building” – pro and con, I must say that the US foreign policy machine from the outset had not been interested in building anything in the emerging global polity, akin to the post-American era, since the 1990s. Indeed, in recent decades, Washington operated like a runaway train and wrecking crew toward self-destruction and destruction of other nations. The post-hegemonic America is not interested in *construction*, but *destruction* as long as the hand of Time fails to move back to the good old days of American pomp and hegemony.

As a result, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen are all remarkable examples of this prearranged and predestined deportment. The so-called *pivot to China*, Russophobia and an attempt to demolish the *buffer* of Ukraine, to encircle

the Russian Federation, by the United States, are all quintessential *variants* of this unpeaceable, nostalgic, and hysterical foreign policy, similar to a tantrum of a tough guy who had misplaced his favorite neighborhood for good. This style in foreign policy is a warning sign of a declining power in freefall which is a hell of a lot more dangerous than power on the rise. Thus, the tactics of American unilateralism, with or without the dog-and-pony show of NATO, only fitting the similes of the “unipolar” dream, despite the incontestable realities on the ground. Therefore, those who speak of the US intervention (and occupations), with a hint of “nation-building,” in Afghanistan or elsewhere, must educate themselves on the history of post-9/11 tumult, particularly the US terror mongering of “war on terror,” and think again. Given the insurrection of January 6, 2021, and the specter of wrecking crew at the heart of Washington, one may ask, is it not strange to expect nation-building in Afghanistan by a belligerent power, when the latter’s own nation is in need of refurbishing?

In retrospect, the parody of nation building is an afterthought conceived by those who choreographed the invasion of Afghanistan as a launching platform for perpetual “war on terror,” an agenda that demanded territory, proximity, and absolute authority to operate with impunity.<sup>45</sup> That is why the initial search for Osama ben Laden<sup>46</sup> suddenly took a backseat and Donald Rumsfeld (then Secretary of Defence) impatiently turned to *regime change* in Afghanistan.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, those in the media who casually allude to (American) “nation-building” in Afghanistan are either unfamiliar with the notion of open-ended war (i.e., “war on terror”) or frankly do the betting of Rumsfeld’s long-lasting concealment.<sup>48</sup> Incidentally, there is a common assertion, alleging that the 2003 invasion of Iraq had prevented the US from full attention to the quagmire of Afghanistan. Yet, given the aimless and perpetual nature of “war on terror” by the Bush-Cheney administration and, more importantly, the quagmire of Iraq – one more remarkable setback – such allegation

is claptrap. To be sure, the United States had no plan for nation building in Afghanistan or Iraq.

Now, the reverberations of this chaotic evacuation start to proliferate and then recycle in the next stage-managed US election by the demagogues, war profiteers, mercenaries<sup>49</sup>, Cold Warriors, and war criminals across the US domestic political landscape, that is to say, within oligarchic corporate anarchy that utterly failed to keep the *republic*. Yet Orwellian quality of the politics in the United States does not allow a smidgen of accountability, let alone the prosecution of planners and choreographers of this colossal calamity, just like years past in Vietnam where the pattern of deception is the word for word.

The American political class is neither able nor willing to strike at the heart of the “war on terror.” The governing elite prefer to avoid the rotten core and stick to the margin where the populist politics is rambling and raw. Exposing the original cause of all this needs fortitude in both domestic and foreign policy, which ultimately would expose the Achilles’ heel of the American decline and thus a lampoon of another “American Century,” which in turn requires an immediate foreign policy U-turn suitable to the tenor of our present epoch. In the aftermath of such catastrophes, therefore, there is foreign policy debates at the caricature of the problem between those who wish not to bog down in such misadventures (and yet blushing and susceptible to “leader-of-the-free-world” *virus*) and those who are longing for fearmongering and perpetual war anytime and anywhere on the planet.<sup>50</sup> The recent George W. Bush spectacle of shedding crocodile tears for Afghan women in this evacuation is a remarkable illustration of the latter.

## Epilogue

The United States lost the war in Afghanistan on the drawing board and at inception, prior to its commencement on Sunday, October 7, 2001.<sup>51</sup> The neocon architects were not interested in Afghanistan *per se*; they actually planned for the invasion of some seven countries in central and west Asia – known in the colonial lexicon as the greater Middle East. The code word, the “Access of Evil,” included two of them – Iran and Syria – plus North Korea.<sup>52</sup> Soon after the 9/11, Donald Rumsfeld was looking for al-Qaeda in the person of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.<sup>53</sup> “Rumsfeld was saying we needed to bomb Iraq,” according to Richard Clarke, the counterterrorism chief at the White House.<sup>54</sup> Dick Cheney and George W. Bush convinced him that he should wait a little longer for the invasion of Iraq, which requires a bit more incredible and grander deception, namely, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).<sup>55</sup>

The US war in Iraq was initiated and lost in a Jumble of jockeying for “unipolar” supremacy the second time around – the first time in 1991, under George H.W. Bush – just a few days after 9/11. The US war in Syria was lost too. The US war in Libya produced a wall-to-wall pile of rubble submerged in torrents of blood in the territory that is now a sanctuary and breeding ground for terrorists in North Africa. Incidentally, the post-Qadhafi Libya is a remarkable accomplishment of Hilary Clinton (Secretary of State in the Obama administration), aided by the artful touch of NATO.<sup>56</sup> Finally, the 2014 impulsive US coup in Ukraine against President Viktor Yanukovych – remember Victoria Nuland<sup>57</sup> in the mix – conceived and executed by the Obama administration caused a blowback that led to the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation for good.

These are just a handful of foreseeable blowbacks by a defunct hegemon whose self-destructive behavior allows no limit. The fall of Afghanistan is an incongruity since this fall is reflective of not only the dream of a “unipolar” America turned to a self-evident nightmare, but a head-on testament also to the collapse of

American hegemony based on the defunct *Pax Americana* (1945-1979). Given all this, one could only hope that the political class in Washington (and the coattails in NATO member countries) would turn around and seriously think about the newly emerging world and new polity, and newly emerging balance of power, amicably toward the world peace.

Finally, it would be crucial to look at the chaotic scenes of American evacuation in Kabul airport on August 15, 2021, with an eye upon the stormy and roaring American mob, on January 6, 2021, on the grounds of the US Capitol in Washington.<sup>58</sup> These two sets of events are organically related. These separate images in time and place are the two sides of the same coin. These images jointly speak on the dialectic of US foreign and domestic policy, and economically, politically, and strategically interwoven within an organic whole. These images emphatically point to a punishing passage, euphemized as a *road to perdition*. These images do not lie; they tell us something that any inquisitive mind can grasp. These images tell us plenty about the unsettled US (domestic) history<sup>59</sup>, the melancholy of American exceptionalism, implosive foreign policy, and a declining power that cannot walk the earth straight in its own shoes. These pictures are a synopsis of the in-and-out of America as we speak.

September 3, 2021  
Minnesota, USA

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The 41st president of the United States, George H. W. Bush, gave the 1991 State of the Union Address on Tuesday, January 29, 1991, at 9 p.m. EST, in the chamber of the United States House of Representatives to the 102nd United States Congress. The transcripts are available at The American Presidency Project – UC-Santa

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Barbara: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-the-congress-the-state-the-union-1>; retrieved August 20, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> President George W. Bush's address to a joint session of Congress following 9/11 - Sept. 20, 2001: The White House: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>; On YouTube: Sep 3, 2021 (PBS NewsHour): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZF7cPvaKFXM>. Retrieved: Sep 3, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> George Kennan (in *Friendly Fascism: The New Face of Power in America* [1980] by Bertram Gross).

<sup>4</sup> See Quint Forgey, "Bush slams Biden's Afghanistan withdrawal," *Politico*, July 14, 2021. Retrieved: August 20, 2021: <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/07/14/bush-bidens-afghanistan-withdrawal-499598>

Virginia Chamlee, "George W. Bush Says Afghanistan Withdrawal Is a Mistake: 'Breaks My Heart,'" *People*, July 14, 2021. Retrieved: August 20, 2021: <https://people.com/politics/george-w-bush-says-afghanistan-withdrawal-is-a-mistake-unbelievably-bad/>

<sup>5</sup> Heather Digby Parton, "No, George W. Bush doesn't deserve a pass on Afghanistan," *Salon*, August 18, 2021. Retrieved: August 20, 2021:

<https://www.salon.com/2021/08/18/no-george-w-bush-doesnt-deserve-a-pass-on-afghanistan/>

A serious treatment of this issue can be found in Kim Berry, "The Symbolic Use of Afghan Women in the War on Terror," *Hombolt Journal of Social Relations*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (2003), pp. 137-160.

<sup>6</sup> For a history of this group, see Ahmad Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*. Second Edition, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. The reader however should be cognizant of the author's view of oil (pipeline), a subject arbitrarily tossed in the hopper, as a purported motivation for American presence in Afghanistan. As for *access* (i.e., monopoly retrieval) to oil, it has been rendered pointless with *decartelization* and *globalization* of petroleum and energy since the oil crisis of the 1970s. See Cyrus Bina, "War Over Access to Chip Oil, or the Reassertion of U.S. Hegemony – Debunking a Popular Myth," *Mobilizing Democracy: Changing the U.S. Role in the Middle East*. Greg Bates (ed.), Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1991, pp. 71-81.

<sup>7</sup> See *The Pentagon Papers*. (as published by The New York Times) New York: Bantam Books, 1971; *The Pentagon Papers* at 50: A Special Report, *New York Times*: Retrieved: August 20, 2021:

<https://www.nytimes.com/spotlight/the-pentagon-papers>; National Archives, *Pentagon Papers*. Retrieved: August 20, 2021: <https://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers>; Floyd Abrams, "Daniel Ellsberg's 'Heroic Conduct' in Leaking the *Pentagon Papers*" – Opinion Letter, *The New York Times*, August 14, 2021. Retrieved: August 20, 2021: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/14/opinion/letters/pentagon-papers-daniel-ellsberg.html>.

<sup>8</sup> See Alan Taylor "The Soviet War in Afghanistan, 1979 – 1989," *The Atlantic*, August 4, 2014. Retrieved: August 20, 2021: <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2014/08/the-soviet-war-in-afghanistan-1979-1989/100786/>; New World Encyclopedia, *Soviet-Afghan War*, retrieved: August 20, 2021:

[https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Soviet-Afghan\\_War](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Soviet-Afghan_War).

<sup>9</sup> Ronal Steel, *Pax Americana*. New York: The Viking Press, 1967; Cyrus Bina, "Farewell to the Pax Americana," In *Islam, Iran, and World Stability*. H. Zangeneh (ed.), 41-74, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.

<sup>10</sup> See this very point in James Risen, "A War's Epitaph," *The Intercept*, August 28, 2021. Retrieved: August 30, 2021: <https://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/277-75/71214-a-wars-epitaph-for-two-decades-americans-told-one-lie-after-another-about-what-they-were-doing-in-afghanistan>.

<sup>11</sup> See White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, September 17, 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Hannah Bloch, "A Look At Afghanistan's 40 Years Of Crisis — From The Soviet War To Taliban Recapture," *NPR*, August 31, 2021. Retrieved: September 1, 2021: <https://www.npr.org/2021/08/19/1028472005/afghanistan-conflict-timeline>.

<sup>13</sup> See Cyrus Bina, *A Prelude to the Foundation of Political Economy: Oil, War, and Global Polity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, Chapter 7, for pertinent issues and the context.

<sup>14</sup> See FRONTLINE: America After 9/11. *PBS – A Two-Hour Documentary Special*. September 7, 2021, YouTube. Retrieved: September 7, 2021: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5iBxva\\_pm8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5iBxva_pm8).

<sup>15</sup> Cyrus Bina, "The American Tragedy: The Quagmire of War, Rhetoric of Oil, and the Conundrum of Hegemony," *Journal of Iranian Research and Analysis*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (November 2004), pp. 7-22.

<sup>16</sup> As I specified long ago:

[The] perpetrators of 9/11, aside from foreign policy considerations, have accomplished a more sinister mission .... In Gramsci's terms, they pitted "political society" against "civil society" in America, by

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promoting the former to outdo the latter by the agony of constant surveillance across the homeland. They tossed the Trojan horse of blanket suspicion right in the middle of America's civil society ... in an atmosphere of fear and intrigue unleashed and utilized by the state. Hence the birth of a full-blown *paranoiac state* ... (emphasis in original). Cyrus Bina, *A Prelude to the Foundation of Political Economy: Oil, War, and Global Polity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 3.

In light of this point, it is important to look at the dragnet pattern of surveillance and its utilization to conceal and cover up the US atrocities and war crimes from the public. In this regard, the remarkable story and courageous act of Edward Snowden – probably equivalent to Daniel Ellsberg's – is worth reading. See Luke Harding, *The Snowden Files*. New York: Vintage, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> See Cyrus Bina, Lauri M. Clement, and Chuck Davis (eds.), *Beyond Survival: Wage Labor and Capital in the Late Twentieth Century*. New York: Routledge eBook Edition, 2016, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315482415>; the first chapter is by Bina and Davis on 'wage labor and global capital' and the process of universalization. Here "outsourcing" eludes its original meaning as global competition displaced and dismantles the birthplace of world production. This has been a predicament, among many, of the United States since the mid-1980s.

<sup>18</sup> The attitude at the *Council on Foreign Relations* – a government think-tank – can be sampled in I. H. Daalder and J. M. Lindsay, "The Committee to Save the World," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2018, pp. 72-83.

<sup>19</sup> For a comprehensive assessment of epochal change and the loss of American hegemony, see Cyrus Bina, "Specter of Globalization: Marx, Gramsci and Disjointed Time," *World Review of Political Economy*, Vol. 10, No.4 (Winter 2019), pp. 484-518.

<sup>20</sup> See *The 9/11 Commission Report*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004.

<sup>21</sup> One should note that soon after the fall of the Soviet Union, Neocons in the academy were looking for a *new enemy* and new conflict in order to justify the US incursion into the foreign lands. Huntington (at the time at Harvard) was the first among them; see Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993.

<sup>22</sup> Cyrus Bina, "Globalization: The Epochal Imperatives and Developmental Tendencies," In *The Political Economy of Globalization*. S.D. Gupta (ed.), 41-58, Boston: Kluwer Press, 1997.

<sup>23</sup> A typical protagonist in this category is David Harvey, author of *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. He mingles *neoliberalism* with *globalization* and mangles Marx's synthetic competition with monopoly, among other things. Ben Fine and Alfredo Saad-Filho are also among the protagonists who tried to *periodize* contemporary capitalism by allusion to neoliberalism (a doctrine) rather than through the negation and overcoming of national boundaries by the three essential forms of capital, stage by stage. See Ben Fine and Alfredo Saad-Filho, "Thirteen Things You Need to Know About Neoliberalism," *Critical Sociology*, Vol. 43, No. 4-5 (2016), pp. 685-706. My critique can be found in "Specter of Globalization: Marx, Gramsci and Disjointed Time," *WRPE*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Winter 2019), pp. 484-518, and "'Corona's Bio-Economic Crisis and the Post-Corona World," *International Critical Thought*, Vol. 10, No.4 (January 2021), pp. 566-574.

<sup>24</sup> This is a point about David Harvey, *The 'New' Imperialism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. Here, Harvey is on the fishing expedition on the subject of oil and OPEC, and the touchy-feely semblance of "monopoly," which compelled him to write this book. He neither has adequate knowledge about oil and energy nor is equipped with a watertight theoretical analysis of Marx's competition and my own longstanding study of the globalization of oil and energy. For a critique, see Cyrus Bina, *A Prelude to the Foundation of Political Economy* (2013), Chapter 5: "Oil and Capital: 'Logic' of History and 'Logic' of Territory," pp. 129-158.

<sup>25</sup> This phrase is blending "imperialism" – an epoch surrounded by cartels and monopolies – and "globalization" – an expression purported as monopoly capitalism – in an eclectic mix. This extends Lenin's *Imperialism* to *globalization*, the contemporary phase of capitalism. For a critique of Lenin's *Imperialism* see Cyrus Bina, *A Prelude to the Foundation of Political Economy* (2013), Chapter 5: "Oil and Capital: 'Logic' of History and 'Logic' of Territory," pp. 129-158.

<sup>26</sup> See Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire*. New York: Verso, 2012. Despite the valuable efforts and painstaking research, which has gone through this important book, nevertheless, an imperative half of the story, i.e., *global capitalism* – an entity much grander than the US, the EU, China, and Russia combined – is left out. Global capitalism is not the same as "American capitalism"; global capitalism already contradicted and quashed the American hegemony and all the paraphernalia and power of the postwar *Pax Americana*. For a critique, see Cyrus Bina, "Specter of Globalization: Marx, Gramsci and Disjointed Time," *WRPE*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Winter 2019), pp. 484-518.

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<sup>27</sup> It is self-evident from this buzzword (i.e., geopolitics) that concern here has two aspects: (1) geography and (2) politics, which runs in the confines of international relations. Such a framework only registers the effects of deeper changes according to the stage-by-stage transformation of *capital* (i.e., the social relation), particularly in the contemporary epoch of *globalization*. Therefore: (1) *geopolitics* alone (e.g., rise of China vs. the United States) cannot explain the origin of the conflict that is embedded deep in the changing world and (2) every epoch necessitates its own geopolitics and thus the geopolitics under the Pax Americana should differ from the one applicable to the post-American world of *globalization*. A popular version of this position, in my view, is Radhika Desai, *Geopolitical Economy: After U.S Hegemony, Globalization and Empire*. London: Pluto Press, 2013. As the subtitle of this book reveals, it is an attempt to give credence to an alternative that is neither cohesive nor composed of a solid foundation – this is simply not the way to approach “the future of world capitalism.”

<sup>28</sup> This view, known as Monthly Review School, does substitute *monopoly capitalism* for Marx’s value-theoretic analysis and the thesis of “stagnation” for technological change and fast-paced accumulation of capital in late capitalism. For a glimpse of this “alternative” to Marx’s, see John Bellamy Foster and Robert W. McChesney, *The Endless Crisis: How Monopoly-Finance Capital Produces Stagnation and Upheaval from the USA to China*. New York: Monthly Review, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> I have spent some three decades to quash any claim to the effect that oil was the motivation in both the massive 1991 American military expedition by George H.W. Bush administration and post-9/11 invasions by the Bush-Cheney administration. See Cyrus Bina, “The Rhetoric of Oil and the Dilemma of War and American Hegemony,” *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 1-20. Yet this popular myth dies hard. See Michael T. Klare, *Blood and Oil: The Dangers and Consequences of America’s Growing Dependency on Imported Petroleum*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004, Michael T. Klare, “It’s the Oil, Stupid,” *The Nation*, April 24, 2003, and my retort: Cyrus Bina, “Is It the Oil, Stupid?” URPE Newsletter, Spring 2004. Retrieved: August 20, 2021: [https://www.academia.edu/33487296/BinaArticlePages\\_URPENewsletter\\_Spr2004\\_pdf](https://www.academia.edu/33487296/BinaArticlePages_URPENewsletter_Spr2004_pdf).

<sup>30</sup> An apt phrase by George W. Ball, Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs under both President Kennedy and President Johnson, and Under Secretary of State under President Johnson. He was probably one the most credible diplomats of his time. The context in which I present here couples with the two highly combustible features, namely, the *nostalgia* and the *defeat*, a product of which may lead to *fascism*. This phenomenon is an observable tendency in the United States today.

<sup>31</sup> There is an interesting prehistory to all this. It is worth remembering Brzezinski’s “doctrine” – a favorite US strategy by Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Adviser during the Carter administration – setting up the *green belt of Islam* across the southern borders of the Soviet Union in west and central Asia. This strategy took center stage in February 1979 *Revolution* in Iran and the United States supported the counterrevolution in Iran, headed by Ruhollah Khomeini; the authorization of this strategy officiated at the Guadeloupe conference (Jan 4, 1979 – Jan 7, 1979), thus the US literally obliterated a popular and progressive revolution that overthrew the Shah’s regime in Iran. Ironically, as I demonstrated fully elsewhere, this was also the historic end of the postwar Pax Americana and the collapse of American hegemony. On the issue of the US role in *counterrevolution* in Iran, see my interview: Cyrus Bina, “What’s at Stake for Iran in Syria?” *The Real New Network*, Oct 30, 2015. Retrieved: September 3, 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9g4sV8GXWCC>; Cyrus Bina, *The 1979 Revolution and Counterrevolution in Iran* (in Persian). Process Publisher, February 2021. Retrieved: Sep 3, 2021: <https://newprocess2010.files.wordpress.com/2021/05/cyrus-bina-57-new-1.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> See Craig Whitlock, *The Afghanistan Papers*. New York: Simon & Shuster, 2021.

<sup>33</sup> See Seymour M. Hersh, *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib*. New York: HarperCollins, 2004; Cyrus Bina, “America’s Bleeding ‘Cakewalk’,” *EPS Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 2007.

<sup>34</sup> See Seymour M. Hersh, “Whose Sarine?” *London Review of Books*, Vol. 35, No. 24 (December 19, 2013); Seymour M. Hersh, “The Red Line and the Rat Line: Erdogan and the Syrian Rebels,” *London Review of Books*, Vol. 36, No. 8 (April 17, 2014)

<sup>35</sup> See Dan Glazebrook, “The Lessons of Libya,” *CounterPunch*, November 12, 2014. Retrieved: August 20, 2021: <https://www.counterpunch.org/2014/11/12/the-lessons-of-libya/>.

<sup>36</sup> See Helen Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis: The Road to War*. London: Verso, 2019.

<sup>37</sup> It is disheartening to note that how the New York Times was conspiring with the Bush-Cheney administration’s dirty tricks on the invasion of Iraq on its various reporting and its *editorial* endorsed the war. For more information, see Howard Friel and Richard Falk, *The Record of the Paper: How the New York Times misreports US Foreign Policy*. New York: Verso, 2004.

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<sup>38</sup> The Cheney-Rumsfeld unruly method of dealing with alleged terrorism also described as 'a 1% doctrine'; for further information, see Ron Suskind, *The One Percent Doctrine*. New York: Simon & Shuster, 2006.

<sup>39</sup> See Jane Mayer, *The Dark Side*. New York: Doubleday, 2008.

<sup>40</sup> The Bush-Cheney administration abrogated the various Geneva conventions against torture and engaged in the torture of detainees across the board. See Philippe Sands, *Torture Team: Rumsfeld's Memo and the Betrayal of American Values*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

<sup>41</sup> A notable example in orthodox international relations theory and geopolitics is Henry Kissinger, *World Order*. New York: Penguin, 2015. This book is a compendium of positivism and a superficial view of change, particular to mainstream political science.

<sup>42</sup> *The Economist*, "Emmanuel Macron Warns Europe: NATO is becoming brain-dead," November 7, 2019.

Retrieved: September 3, 2021:

<https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead>.

<sup>43</sup> See Michael Skinner, "Twenty Years of the Afghanistan Occupation Ends: A New Phase of Struggle Begins," *The Bullet*, September 2, 2021. Retrieved: September 2, 2021: <https://socialistproject.ca/2021/09/twenty-year-afghanistan-occupation-ends/#more>.

<sup>44</sup> It is also critical to note in this arrangement that a peculiar sect of Islam, known as Wahhabism/Salafism – observed in Saudi Arabia – stood as a prime political ideology in religious schools (i.e., *madrasas*) under Pakistani ISA where the Taliban tutored and obtained their worldview.

<sup>45</sup> The following is a sample of a slipup on nation building by a progressive historian:

Alan Singer, "'Nation Building' Fails in Afghanistan," *Daily Kos*, August 22, 2021. Retrieved: August 24, 2021: [https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2021/8/22/2047578/--Nation-Building-Fails-in-Afghanistan?\\_=2021-08-22T17:06:20.000-07:00](https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2021/8/22/2047578/--Nation-Building-Fails-in-Afghanistan?_=2021-08-22T17:06:20.000-07:00). A difficulty with such an analysis is that it takes words of those at the helm, like Bush, Rumsfeld, or Cheney, at face value, rather than searching for what these people are up to.

<sup>46</sup> See Seymour M. Hirsh, "The Killing of Osama bin Laden," *London Review of Books*, Vol. 37, No. 10 (May 21, 2015).

<sup>47</sup> For a fascinating story of this character, see Andrew Cockburn, *Rumsfeld: His Rise, Fall, and Catastrophic Legacy*. New York: Scribner, 2007.

<sup>48</sup> Concerning the invasion of Iraq Donald Rumsfeld, a barefaced arch-neocon, notably stated, "I don't do quagmires." As it turned out, he *himself* was a *quagmire*.

<sup>49</sup> See Jeremy Scahill, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*. New York: Nation Books, 2007.

<sup>50</sup> See this recent piece: ["Preparations for the "Next Afghanistan" have already begun"](#), OP-ED by Thomas Palley, August 19, 2021. Retrieved: August 20, 2021.

<sup>51</sup> The CIA and Special Forces were on the ground in Afghanistan as early as September 26, 2001. The bombing of Afghanistan also started early on.

<sup>52</sup> For George W. Bush reference to "Axis of Evil," among others, see President George W. Bush *State of the Union Address*, January 29, 2002. Retrieved: August 20, 2021:

<https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>.

<sup>53</sup> See Ted Bridis, "Rumsfeld 'wanted to bomb Iraq' after 9/11," *Independent*, March 21, 2004. [Archived](#) from the original on July 11, 2020. Retrieved: August 20, 2021:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/rumsfeld-wanted-to-bomb-iraq-after-9-11-65340.html>. In this report, "Rumsfeld was saying we needed to bomb Iraq," according to Clarke. Clarke then stated, "We all said, 'No, no, al-Qa'ida is in Afghanistan.'" Clarke also revealed that Rumsfeld complained in the meeting, "there aren't any good targets in Afghanistan and there are lots of good targets in Iraq."

<sup>54</sup> See Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror*. New York: Free Press, 2004.

<sup>55</sup> See Hans Blix, *Disarming Iraq*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2004.

<sup>56</sup> See Andrew Quinn, "Clinton says Gaddafi must go," *Reuters*, February 27, 2011. Retrieved: August 20m 2021: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-usa-clinton/clinton-says-gaddafi-must-go-idUSTRE71Q1JA20110228>;

Democracy Now: *The Libya Gamble: Inside Hillary Clinton's Push for War & the Making of a Failed State*

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Guests: Scott Shane and Jo Becker (co-wrote a two-part recent exposé for the Times called "The Libya Gamble.") – ["Hillary Clinton, 'Smart Power' and a Dictators Fall" \(NYT\)](#) and ["A New Libya, With 'Very Little Time Left'" \(NYT\)](#), March 03, 2016. Retrieved: August 20, 2021:

[https://www.democracynow.org/2016/3/3/the\\_libya\\_gamble\\_inside\\_hillary\\_clinton](https://www.democracynow.org/2016/3/3/the_libya_gamble_inside_hillary_clinton).

<sup>57</sup> BBC diplomatic correspondent Jonathan Marcus, Ukraine crisis: Transcript of leaked Victoria Nuland-Geoffrey Pyatt call about the plot. Here is a transcript, February 7, 2014. Retrieved: August 20, 21:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26079957>.

<sup>58</sup> For the horrifying side effects of war on the home front see Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019.

<sup>59</sup> For an early and origin of history of the United States, see Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*. New York: HarperCollins, 2015.