

My warm greetings to you, dear reader,

*In this number of my free geopolitical newsletter I want to share with you a chapter from my most recent book in English, *The Lost Hegemon: Whom The Gods Would Destroy*. The book chronicles the extraordinary, almost unbelievable history of how the American CIA after the war became involved with a secret Egyptian Islamist society called the Muslim Brotherhood and how they decided along with the late Zbigniew Brzezinski in 1979 to create Islamic terror in Afghanistan to “give the Soviets their Vietnam” as Brzezinski put it in a top secret memorandum to President Carter. What you will find striking in reading the following chapter excerpt is the direct continuity between the CIA operations with the Mujahideen in Afghanistan almost four decades ago, together with a young Saudi psychopath named Osama bin Laden and the operations of their direct descendents today in ISIS and Al Qaeda—in fact in virtually every Jihadist terror organization. The elements that the CIA mixed in their deadly cocktail of Islamist terrorism back then—Saudi Wahhabite fundamentalist Islam, Saudi oil money, Muslim Brotherhood death cult and Afghan heroin remain today at the heart of the senseless terror attacks disturbing our civilization.*

If you find this excerpt interesting, of course I would hope you decide to buy the book either as book or as e-book via Amazon. This support also enables me to go further in my research and publishing.

I hope you enjoy your sample!

F. William Engdahl

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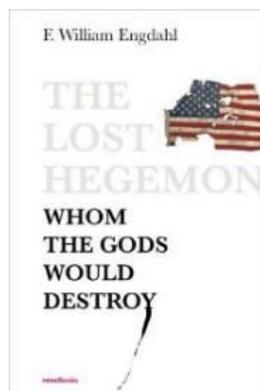
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The Lost Hegemon: Whom the gods would destroy

Chapter Seven:

The CIA's Afghan Crusade: Opium Wars, bin Laden, and Mujahideen

"When the operation started in 1979, this region grew opium only for regional markets and produced no heroin. Within two years, however, the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderlands became the world's top heroin producer. . . . CIA assets again controlled this heroin trade. As the Mujahideen guerrillas seized territory inside Afghanistan, they ordered peasants to plant opium as a revolutionary tax."

—Alfred McCoy, author, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*

A Soviet "Vietnam"

By far the most influential voice in the US Administration of President Jimmy Carter was his National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. Brzezinski's influence drew largely from the fact that he had one of the most influential patrons in the United States at the time. David Rockefeller, then chairman of the family's Chase Manhattan Bank, one of the most influential banks internationally, had taken Brzezinski under his wing.

In 1973, Rockefeller had founded an elite, secretive policy group called the Trilateral Commission. It was created to "coordinate" political and economic policy between Washington, Western Europe, and, for the first time, Japan, hence the "tri" in the name. Rockefeller selected his trusted friend Brzezinski to be the first Executive Director of the Trilateral Commission, charged with selecting the group's three hundred powerful international members. The "coordination" envisioned by Rockefeller and Brzezinski involved not an exchange of ideas among

equals but rather bringing the major areas of the industrial world under the control of a Rockefeller agenda.

Rockefeller's group of handpicked Trilateral members was so influential that it was decisive in making a previously unknown Georgia peanut farmer, Jimmy Carter, President of the world's most powerful nation in 1976. Carter had been chosen by Brzezinski to join Rockefeller's exclusive Trilateral Commission in 1973. It was Brzezinski, in fact, who first identified Carter as presidential potential and tutored him in economics, foreign policy, and world politics.¹

When Carter got elected President in 1976, with more than a little help from Rockefeller's significant influence, he chose Brzezinski as his National Security Adviser and, de facto, his main foreign policy adviser.² Brzezinski, an ardent anti-Soviet cold warrior from a Russo-phobic Polish nobility background, was a disciple of the British founder of Geopolitics, Sir Halford Mackinder, like Henry Kissinger was before him. Brzezinski had been trained to look at how to most effectively manipulate the global power nexus to Washington's advantage.

By 1979, Washington's geopolitical world was in a terrible flux. The Dollar, a pillar of US hegemony in global finance, was in steep decline against the strong currencies of Japan, Germany, and France. Severely high oil prices in the wake of the Iranian Khomeini revolution were driving the US economy deep into recession. Western Europe, notably Germany and France were increasingly opposed to what they felt was a unilateral de facto imperial arrogance on the part of Washington in world affairs.

In the oil-rich Middle East, Iran had undergone a theocratic revolution that ousted America's puppet dictator and Rockefeller crony, Shah Reza Pahlevi. The Ayatollah Khomeini was consolidating power and establishing a rigid Shi'ite Muslim theocratic state. Initially open to maintaining friendly relations with Washington, Iran under the Shi'ite rule soon distanced herself from her earlier US alliance. By 1980, Turkey, which had been torn between right and leftist parties for several years, underwent a CIA-backed General's Coup, but the growing distrust of the US among Turkish leading circles was always simmering in the background.

Against this background of global instability, Brzezinski initiated a far-reaching policy decision. He authorized and organized the recruitment of Islamic

Jihadists from all over the world and smuggled them into Soviet-controlled Afghanistan through US-friendly Pakistan. The aim of his little Jihad, as Brzezinski wrote in a classified internal memo to President Carter, would be to create “the Soviet Vietnam.” In other words, Washington and the CIA manipulated events inside Afghanistan to force a Soviet response—a military occupation. Afghanistan was far too strategic to Soviet security, Brzezinski reckoned, and his actions were a trap to bog them down in an endless war against US-trained and armed Jihadist guerillas.

The global consequences of Washington’s attempt to instrumentalize Muslim Jihadists, contemptuously referred to later by Brzezinski as “some stirred-up Muslims,” would come back to haunt and terrorize the world and the US in the decades after.³ Brzezinski was obsessed with giving the Soviets their Vietnam, and anti-communist Muslim Brotherhood “freedom fighters,” as Washington propaganda named them, seemed the perfect way.

Afghanistan: the New Great Game in an “Arc of Crisis”

In the 19th century, there was an ongoing struggle between Czarist Russia and the British Empire over who would control Afghanistan, a geo-strategically central land straddling Central, Southern, and Southwestern Asia. The stakes were huge. With control of Afghanistan, a major power could control or destabilize all Central Asia through Afghanistan. It was the Soviet Union’s “soft underbelly.” Rudyard Kipling popularized the struggle between Russia and the West over Afghanistan as “the Great Game,” a geopolitical rivalry for control of the Eurasian landmass by controlling the Afghan space.

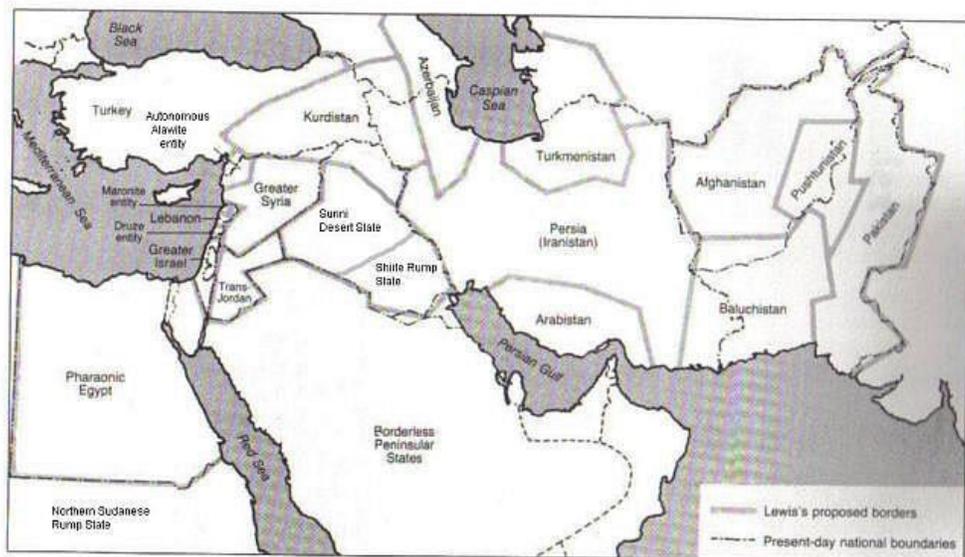
During the Cold War, that Great Game for control of Afghanistan underwent a changing cast of players. Initially the Soviet Union acted as protector of the non-aligned regime of socialist President Nor Mohammed Taraki. Taraki became President in 1978 by ousting Mohammed Daoud, the cousin of deposed King Mohammed Zahir Shah. Moscow was determined to prevent any possible Western attacks from her vulnerable Afghan underbelly.

This time around, however, the United States played the lead role that the British Empire had played a century before, using Afghanistan to drive a dagger into the heart of Soviet Central Asia in order to force Moscow into its own “Vietnam” quagmire and more.

In 1978, Carter's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, was already speaking of an "arc of crisis." The arc, he declared, went "along the shores of the Indian Ocean, with fragile and social and political structures in a region of vital importance to us, threatened with fragmentation. The resulting political chaos could well be filled by elements hostile to our values and sympathetic to our adversaries."⁴ His clear message was that the United States' "national security interests" dictated US intervention to stem that "chaos" from "adversaries," shorthand for the Soviets.

What Brzezinski deliberately did *not* say was that he and US intelligence networks were actively stirring up that chaotic Arc of Crisis in order to destabilize the Islamic perimeter of the Soviet Union.

Brzezinski's remarks were aimed at preparing the American public for a coming confrontation with the Soviet Union across its Islamic underbelly. Washington intelligence networks were quietly preparing the crisis that was to give the excuse to finance the most costly covert operation in US history, the Afghan Mujahideen war against Soviet-occupied Afghanistan, with the CIA discreetly directing all from behind the stage.



The Bernard Lewis plan for the Middle East

Brzezinski's "Arc of Crisis" was adapted from a proposal of British intelligence operative and Islam expert, Sir Bernard Lewis. Lewis, who was then at

Princeton University in the US, proposed new borders for the Middle East: the Bernard Lewis Plan. Brzezinski's Arc of Crisis was composed of the nations across the southern flank of the Soviet Union from the Indian subcontinent to Turkey, south through the Arabian Peninsula to the Horn of Africa, with Iran as its center of gravity.⁵

At a confidential April 1979 meeting of the US-European Bilderberg Group in Baden, Austria, Lewis elaborated his notion of using this Arc of Crisis to destabilize the Soviet Union. He called on NATO countries to "endorse the radical Muslim Brotherhood movement behind Khomeini, in order to promote balkanization of the entire Muslim Near East along tribal and religious lines."⁶ At that point, many in US intelligence circles, including even Brzezinski, believed they could control Khomeini's revolution as a weapon against the Soviets.⁷

Anglo-American strategy in the region made a radical shift based on the plans of Lewis and Brzezinski. State Department Middle East official Henry Precht later recalled, "There was this idea that the Islamic forces could be used against the Soviet Union. The theory was, there was an arc of crisis, and so an arc of Islam could be mobilized to contain the Soviets. It was a Brzezinski concept."⁸

Bernard Lewis argued that the West should encourage autonomous groups, such as Kurds, Armenians, Lebanese Maronites, Ethiopian Copts, Azerbaijani Turks, and so forth. The ensuing chaos would spread in what he termed "an 'Arc of Crisis,' which would inevitably spill over into the Muslim regions of the Soviet Union."⁹

Aside from a tiny handful of US Middle East experts, however, almost no one inside the Washington Administration really understood the internal dynamics of political Islam. They were like small children playing with an undetonated bomb they had unearthed from the war. The bomb was soon to explode.

Ramadan in Afghanistan

Said Ramadan was perhaps the most influential man in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the years just after the death of his father-in-law, Hassan al-Banna. Ramadan spent the 1960s and 1970s in exile in Geneva. From there, with overt and mostly covert political support from the CIA, he traveled regularly

between Munich, where the Munich Mosque had become one of the main bases of spreading the Muslim Brotherhood internationally, and Asia. He was very often in Pakistan and Afghanistan, where the CIA had a special Cold War interest in pressuring the Soviet Union as noted.¹⁰

Ramadan and the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem—the old anti-Semitic friend of Hassan al-Banna and of SS-leader Heinrich Himmler—had revitalized the moribund Muslim World Conference in Jerusalem. Mohammad Amin al-Husayni, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, was President of the Congress. It was tightly controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood. Ramadan turned the focus of the Muslim World Conference into a forum for condemning the plight of Muslims forced to live under communist rule, an agenda that fit nicely with the CIA's Cold War strategies.¹¹

In 1962, Said Ramadan had gone to Mecca to launch what was to become the most important international organization of political Islam and of the Muslim Brotherhood—the Muslim World League (MWL). Ramadan drafted the League's bylaws.

The Muslim World League became the de facto world center for spreading the Salafist Jihad ideology of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood of Hassan al-Banna through his son-in-law, Ramadan. Its founding members included the elite of global Jihadist Islam. It included Al-Banna's old friend from World War II, pro-Nazi Haj Amin al-Husseini, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, who, by then, was enjoying Saudi financial largesse instead of Hitler's. It included Abul-Ala Mawdudi, the founder of *Jamaat e-Islamiya*, Pakistan's de facto Muslim Brotherhood organization. Mawdudi orchestrated the Salafist dictatorship of Pakistan's President, Zia-ul-Haq.¹²

Ramadan's Muslim World League also included Muhammad Sadiq al-Mujaddidi of Afghanistan, who worked closely with the CIA and whose protégés would form the core of the CIA's Mujahideen. The Muslim World League founding board also included the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Shaikh, the senior religious spokesman for the ultra-fundamentalist Saudi Wahhabism, and a person who enjoyed enormous influence within the Saudi Royal House.¹³

In effect, the Muslim World League represented a marriage of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's political Salafism with the ultra-traditional Saudi Wahhabite ideology. A more deadly political cocktail would have been hard to imagine. By all indications, virtually no one at the senior levels of US intelligence bothered to look closely at the new organization of Said Ramadan and what its ultimate goals might be beyond the simple fact that Ramadan's Muslim World League was devoutly anti-communist.¹⁴

The League, by tradition always headed by a Saudi national—usually from the Royal family—was financed by Saudi oil dollars. It combined the feudal Islamic obedience of Saudi Wahhabite Sunni Islam with the Brotherhood's agile, politically opportunist Islamic Jihadism. The League basically took whatever public profile was useful in order to advance their global Caliphate agenda, much like the Catholic Church's Society of Jesus since their founding by Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier.¹⁵

The Muslim Brotherhood's development and expansion of the Muslim World Conference in Jerusalem and the Muslim World League in Mecca created the low-profile organizational infrastructure of what was soon to be called a "Global Jihad."

In the 1960s and up well into the 1970s, the CIA seemed content to give Ramadan and the Muslim Brotherhood a large degree of freedom so long as their focus was anti-communism and against troublesome Arab nationalism of the Nasserite brand. As a consequence Said Ramadan helped build up the Pakistani Muslim Brotherhood local organization, *Jamaat e-Islamiya*, and founded madrassas and other religious schools across Afghanistan.¹⁶ Those organizations of the Muslim Brotherhood in both Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan were soon to gain greater attention from the CIA and Western intelligence.

Afghanistan and the Soviets

In 1973, Afghan Prince Muhammad Daoud ousted his cousin, the Afghan king, with help from the Soviet Union. He then established an Afghan republic of sorts.

As President, Daoud embarked on a cautious land reform program to try to win poor Afghan sharecroppers. Washington was alarmed that they had not anticipated the Daoud coup and began to actively encourage the Muslim

Brotherhood networks they knew from Ramadan and other assets to make resistance to the Daoud presidency. Earlier, as Prime Minister to the King, Daoud had strongly opposed the Brotherhood, making the two bitter enemies from the start.¹⁷

However, soon after seizing power in 1974, Daoud began to distance himself from over-reliance on the Soviet Union for military and economic support. He opened stronger ties with non-aligned India and the pro-US Shah in Iran. Daoud also turned to other oil-rich Muslim nations, such as America's strongest Middle East Muslim allies, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait, for financial assistance, bringing him still closer to the US influence.

During a March 1978 visit to Islamabad, Pakistan, Daoud reached an agreement with Pakistan's US-backed Sunni military dictator, President Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq.

As Daoud turned closer to the West and Washington's Persian Gulf allies, he distanced his regime from the Soviets. He began to purge his government of communists, removed Soviet military advisers, and shifted military training from the Soviets to the pro-US Egypt of Anwar Sadat. His new cabinet contained several staunch anti-communists. By spring of 1978, he announced plans to fly to Washington for high level talks with the Carter Administration.¹⁸

Daoud had failed to improve Afghanistan's economy, and his increasingly dictatorial one-man rule alienated most of his earlier allies. When he arrested leaders of the communist PDPA (the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan), communist leaders Nor Mohammed Taraki and Tabizullah Amin, along with a group of anti-Daoud military officers, staged a coup that ended in the killing of Daoud and the installing of Mohammed Taraki as new President.

The PDPA military putsch brought major land reform intended to weaken powerful landlords who were closely tied to fundamentalist Sunni Islam. Taraki's goal was to win the peasants to the new Taraki regime by aiding poor Afghan sharecroppers traditionally forced to work land owned by the King and his cronies. Taraki also built schools for women who had been banned from education under the religiously strict Sunni monarchy. He opened Afghan universities to the poor and introduced free health care.¹⁹

The land reforms and the education of women represented a red flag for the Muslim Brotherhood and other reactionary fundamentalist Muslim organizations in Afghanistan, who had flourished among wealthy landowners and in the universities since the time of Ramadan. These fundamentalist Islamic networks began inciting riots and protests against the Taraki regime, charging them with violating fundamental precepts of Islam.

It was widely said within Afghanistan and in Moscow that well before the December 25, 1979, Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Washington had covertly encouraged the protests against Taraki's socialist government. It was a cruder, earlier version of the tactics later perfected in the 2011 "Arab Spring" revolts.

In March 1979, a CIA memorandum to Brzezinski stated that the fundamentalist attacks on the Kabul regime, burning of girls' schools, and other acts of violence had "achieved surprising successes."²⁰ In February 1979, against the wishes of Moscow and of the Taraki government, pro-Taraki militants kidnapped and assassinated CIA Kabul Station Chief and then US Ambassador Adolf "Spike" Dubs, conveniently enough, further justifying strong action from Washington.

The man named by Taraki to carry out his land reform, Tabizullah Amin, Cabinet Minister, was suspected by Soviet KGB Chief Yuri Andropov to be a CIA deep cover agent. Amin had launched a brutal campaign of terror against political opponents that turned world opinion against the Taraki government. Andropov believed the CIA had Amin infiltrate the Kabul government with the intent of discrediting the Taraki revolution.²¹

If that was so, he did a brilliant job for his Washington sponsors.

Taraki flew to Moscow to consult with Brezhnev on a strategy to get rid of Amin. The day he returned to Kabul, Amin had Taraki executed and immediately seized power himself. Weeks later, CIA-backed warlords massacred dozens of Afghan government officials in the western city of Herat. The combination of these two events finally convinced a reluctant Brezhnev to send troops into Afghanistan on December 25, 1979.

Falling into Brzezinski's Trap

With Moscow's friend Nor Mohammed Taraki murdered and Tabizullah Amin a suspected CIA agent in control in Kabul, Moscow realized they were in danger of losing the strategic Great Game for control of Afghanistan to the West, a devastating strategic catastrophe were it to come to pass. On December 25, 1979, after initially rejecting direct military intervention as too dangerous, Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev ordered Soviet tanks to roll into Afghanistan across the Panjshir Valley while KGB operatives and Soviet Special Forces troops stormed the Royal Palace in Kabul.

The Soviet forces assassinated Tabizullah Amin and installed Babrak Karmal as the new leader of Afghanistan. The original intent of Moscow was to stabilize the situation and leave within a few months. Instead, they would be caught in Afghani political and tribal quicksand, as would the US military itself in Afghanistan after 2001.²²

A Soviet-organized government led by Babrak Karmal was hastily organized in an effort to try to fill the power vacuum. Soviet troops were deployed in substantial numbers to stabilize Afghanistan under Karmal, although the Soviet government, naively, did not expect to do most of the fighting in Afghanistan. As a result of their intervention, however, the Soviets were directly involved for the first time in what had been a domestic war in Afghanistan.

Brzezinski now had the excuse he'd been looking for to begin overtly arming a USA-backed counter-revolution in Afghanistan. Moscow had taken the bait.²³

Birth of Mujahideen

In April 1979, eight months before the Soviet intervention, US officials had secretly begun meeting with Mujahideen guerrillas and as a result of the talks, asked a Pakistani military official to recommend that Mujahideen organizations receive US support. Brzezinski was laying his trap, and the Islamic fundamentalists were his bait.

Unbeknownst to the American public, on July 3, 1979, well before Soviet tanks and paratroopers rolled into Afghanistan, President Carter—at Brzezinski's recommendation—had signed the first national security directive authorizing secret US aid to Afghan warlords to fight the Afghan regime. Brzezinski said years

later he had convinced Carter that, in his “opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention.”²⁴

Brzezinski was right, and everything Washington covertly did was to make sure it happened that way.

Initially, the principle Islamic Jihad organization which the CIA used against Soviet Afghanistan was *Hezbi Islami*. It was a neo-feudal Islamic Jihad organization modelled on Ramadan’s Muslim Brotherhood. Like the Brotherhood in Egypt, it set out to create a pure Islamic State, deploying a highly disciplined organization built around a small cadre of educated elites.²⁵



CIA’s Mujahideen Islamic Jihadists defeated the Soviet Army in Afghanistan in 1980s.

Hezbi Islami had been founded in 1977 by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Hekmatyar was a psychopathic Sunni fundamentalist whose unrestrained acts of murder and terror won him the attention of the CIA and of Pakistan’s US-trained military dictator, General Zia-ul-Haq.

Hekmatyar’s *Hezbi Islami* had murdered hundreds of left-wing students in Afghanistan universities. Hekmatyar ordered his followers to throw acid into the faces of Afghan women who refused to wear their *burkas*. He was brutally serious about his Sharia fundamentalism.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar had come out of Kabul University in 1973 as leader of the CIA-financed Organization of Muslim Youth, the student organization of Said Ramadan's *Jamiat-e-Islami*, a Muslim Brotherhood affiliate.²⁶ Hekmatyar later became President Reagan's favorite Mujahideen "freedom fighter" in the CIA's secret war against the Soviets.

Even as a student at Kabul University, Hekmatyar was no mere academic intellectual or theoretical Jihadist. He joined the Brotherhood there and put his beliefs into practice. While a student in charge of the secret military wing of the Brotherhood's Kabul student organization, he was sentenced to prison for murdering his university rival, a Maoist student.²⁷ He and his *Hezbi Islami* followers then fled to Peshawar across the border in Pakistan, where he soon caught the attention of Pakistan's equally brutal Jihadist President, Zia-ul-Haq.²⁸

The so-called Mujahideen were a ragtag assortment of various tribal gangs from inside Pakistan, together with Islamist foreign Jihad volunteers. Hekmatyar's *Hezbi Islami* was the most powerful of seven such gangs which constituted the Peshawar Seven alliance of Sunni Mujahideen forces.

One such foreign Jihad volunteer to the Mujahideen Jihad was Osama bin Laden, the 22-year-old son of a Saudi construction billionaire whose family had made their fortune as the Saudi Royal constructor. Young Bin Laden arrived in Peshawar, Pakistan, from Saudi Arabia in 1979 with money and many Arab Jihad volunteers. Osama bin Laden had been sent to Afghanistan, with US approval, by then Saudi intelligence chief Prince Turki bin Faisal.²⁹

Osama Bin Laden became part of the CIA's *Operation Cyclone*, the code name for Brzezinski's project to use Islamist fighters against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan to give the Soviet Union their own "Vietnam." He proceeded to set up something innocuously called the Services Office, together with his teacher and mentor from the university in Jeddah, Muslim Brotherhood member Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, a Palestinian Sunni Muslim known as the "Father of Global Jihad."³⁰

Part of the Afghan Mujahideen financing was organized through Osama bin Laden. In 1984, bin Laden and Azzam established *Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK)*, which funneled money, arms, and fighters from around the Arab world into Afghanistan. The Saudi monarchy had agreed to match dollar-for-dollar every sum Washington put into the Afghan proxy war against the Soviet Union.³¹ Bin Laden,

the MAK, and the Afghan Mujahideen received in total about half a billion dollars a year from the CIA and roughly the same from the Saudis, funneled through Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).³²

Through Maktab al-Khidamat or MAK, bin Laden became one of the financiers of the Afghan Mujahideen Holy War against Moscow. His MAK paid for air tickets to bring thousands of Arab fighters for the Afghan Holy war against Communism.

Bin Laden also collaborated closely with Hekmatyar's *Hezbi Islami*. Bin Laden established camps across the Afghan border inside Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan near Peshawar. There, the ISI and allied intelligence services trained Jihadi volunteers from across the Muslim world, so-called "Afghan Arabs," to fight against the Soviet puppet regime: the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.³³ After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the key figures in Maktab al-Khidamat, including Osama bin Laden, went on to form what became known as Al Qaeda.³⁴

When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, bin Laden's Palestinian partner, the Muslim Brotherhood's Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, issued a fatwa titled, *Defence of the Muslim Lands, the First Obligation after Faith*. In it he declared that both the Afghan and Palestinian struggles were Jihads in which killing occupiers of their land, no matter what their faith, was a personal obligation for all Muslims. The edict was supported by Abdul al-Aziz bin Baz, Saudi Arabia's Grand Mufti, or highest religious scholar.³⁵

CIA Operation Cyclone Launched

Brzezinski's new Mujahideen Jihad project, *Operation Cyclone*, was taking formidable shape.

With US and Saudi money and training done by Zia-ul-Haq's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency and Pakistani military officers, the Afghan Mujahideen began to take on Soviet occupation troops inside Afghanistan in a terror campaign that lasted from 1979 until the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. Pakistan's Zia was the main intermediary for doling out the money from US intelligence and Saudi sources—including Osama bin Laden—handing out weapons, and giving military training and financial support to Afghan Mujahideen groups.



General Zia-ul-Haq, Pakistani President, introduced brutal Sharia law in Pakistan and trained the Mujahideen along with CIA and Saudi money.

Zia-ul-Haq was a suitable ideological patron for Hekmatyar and the Afghan Mujahideen. He was a fanatical devotee of the most severe Islamic Sharia. As President, Zia-ul-Haq put more than 15,000 female rape victims in jail because they could not comply with the Islamic condition requiring them to have numerous male witnesses of their victimization. They were charged with fornication, and their rapists were let go free. A Pakistani woman who made an allegation of rape was convicted for adultery, while the rapist was acquitted. Previous Pakistani legal provisions relating to adultery under Zia's Sharia were replaced so the guilty woman and man would be flogged, each with a hundred stripes if unmarried. And if they were married, they would be stoned to death.

Blaspheming Muhammad was punishable with "death, or imprisonment for life," while disrespecting the Quran was punishable by life imprisonment, and disrespecting the family of the Prophet or the Companions of the Prophet was punishable by up to three years in prison. This was the ideology of Washington's man in charge of training and recruiting Afghan Mujahideen "freedom fighters."³⁶

Washington's CIA, along with funding from Britain's MI-6 and SAS and significant money from Saudi Arabian intelligence, made it possible for the Pakistani ISI to arm and train over 100,000 insurgents between 1978 and 1992.³⁷ Washington alone spent as much as \$20 billion, by some estimates.

Heroin trafficking run by Mujahideen, as in Vietnam in the 1970s, played a major added financial role with more than a little help from their friends in the CIA.³⁸

CIA and “Poppy” Bush Take Over

One of the greatest political problems facing President Carter in his reelection bid was the Iranian government’s seizure of US embassy personnel as hostages. US news media broadcast the plight daily, making it an albatross around Carter’s neck for not finding a solution.

With the assist of a secret deal between the Republicans and Khomeini’s Iran, US embassy hostages held since November 1979 in the Teheran Embassy were not released until after the November 1980 US presidential elections. Carter’s people had secretly been negotiating such a release before US elections to boost Carter against the Republican team of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. But Bush, Reagan Campaign Manager and future CIA Director, Bill Casey, and a small circle around G.H.W. Bush secretly offered Iran a sweeter deal if the release took place *after* the US elections. It became known as the “October Surprise.”³⁹

On January 20, 1981, the same day Reagan and Bush were sworn into office, Iran released the 52 US Embassy hostages. At the same time, in violation of the US Arms Export Control Act—a law prohibiting a recipient country of US arms from transferring “United States-origin” munitions to a third country without written permission from the United States—Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon began to channel what became billions of dollars of US-made weapons to Iran to tilt the war between a US-backed Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq and Khomeini’s Iran.⁴⁰

With the Reagan-Bush Administration now in charge of US foreign policy, a dramatic shift took place in what was permitted in terms of covert operations in Afghanistan, as well as in the Iran-Iraq war then underway. The latter had begun as a US-covert encouragement to Iraq’s Saddam Hussein to neutralize the growing power of Iran under Khomeini’s strict Sharia Islamic rule.

One faction in the Reagan Administration, led by US Secretary of State George Shultz and defense Secretary Casper Weinberger, backed Iraq against Iran for reasons of Western oil supply security. Another faction, led by National

Security Adviser Robert C. McFarlane and two members of his national Security Council staff, Howard Teicher and Colonel Oliver North, argued in favor of arming Iran for two reasons: to enhance Israel's security and to facilitate better relations with a post-Khomeini Iran. At the time, Israel depended on Iranian oil and made a nice business selling Israeli arms to Iran.

Vice President and former CIA Director George H.W. Bush shrewdly straddled both camps with the effect of US policy zigzagging between backing for Iraq and then backing for Iran to ensure that the Iran-Iraq war raged for eight years until 1988, costing hundreds of thousands of dead and disabled in both countries. The Iran-Iraq US duplicity and arming of both sides to drag out the conflict was a huge boon to Bush's friends in the military-industrial complex, as well as giving billions in windfall profits for Bush's cronies in the US and British oil industries, who used the war to charge high oil prices.⁴¹

A key figure who was instrumental in a Reagan Administration shift from arming Iraq to covertly arming Khomeini's Iran in 1985 was Graham E. Fuller, the CIA's National Intelligence Officer for the Middle East. For the previous two years, the Reagan Administration had conducted a program known as *Operation Staunch* to stem the flow of weapons to Iran while it continued to supply Iraq with covert aid, including top-secret satellite photographs.

Fuller argued that it was now time to change course. "Our tilt to Iraq was timely when Iraq was against the ropes and the Islamic revolution was on a roll," Fuller wrote in a May 1985 memo to CIA director Casey. "The time may now have to come to tilt back." Fuller contended that the United States should once again authorize Israel to ship United States arms to Iran.⁴²

The Fuller memo initiated the first of what would become repeated US "tilt fro, tilt back" shifts between backing Sunni against Shi'ite or backing Shi'ite against Sunni interests in the Islamic geopolitical space. Fuller's memo laid the seeds for the illegal enterprise later known as the Reagan-Bush Iran-Contra Affair.

Graham E. Fuller was later to play an instrumental role in the CIA's cultivation of another Islamic asset, Fethullah Gülen in Turkey. Step by step, US intelligence was becoming immersed in trying to steer Islamic Jihadists on behalf of the Washington global strategic agenda. The Muslim Brotherhood and its later

offshoots, however, had their own global strategic agenda, and it was hardly one supportive of US national interest.

Bush, BCCI, Mujahideen, and Heroin “Fallout”

By the mid-1980s, under Vice president and ex-CIA Director George H.W. Bush and CIA Director Bill Casey, Washington’s geopolitical games with fundamentalist Jihad Islam went into high gear in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The operations were very dirty, involving heroin and opium trafficking and money laundering through a very dirty bank, BCCI. It involved the CIA, Saudi intelligence, and the Mujahideen.

It was perhaps more than ironic that, within the family, George Herbert Walker Bush, father of later president George W. Bush, was known as “Poppy” Bush, a moniker that could refer to opium poppies of Afghanistan just as well as to his being family father. The Bush family was deeply entangled in both Colombian cocaine and Afghan opium and heroin operations. As Reagan’s Vice President during the time of the Afghan Mujahideen war, Bush headed a Presidential Task Force on International Drug Smuggling. According to European anti-narcotics officials, Bush used his post to facilitate the inflow of Colombian cocaine via Florida, where his old CIA Cuban buddies controlled organized crime.⁴³

With the Republicans now in a second term, Vice President George Bush became bolder. As veteran Washington journalist Robert Parry described the mood then,

A real-politick Zeitgeist took hold in Washington. It tolerated drug smuggling by CIA-connected groups, including the Nicaraguan contras and the Afghan Mujahideen. It watched passively as CIA associates plundered the world’s banking system, most notably through the corrupt Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), which also had paid off a key Iranian in the October Surprise mystery.⁴⁴



The CIA and Saudis, through BCCI bank, financed Osama bin Laden's Mujahideen in Afghanistan and laundered their heroin profits.

The financial heart of the CIA's 1980s Mujahideen operation was the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), founded in 1972 by Agha Hasan Abedi, a Pakistani financier close to Zia-ul-Haq. The Bank was registered in Luxembourg, with head offices in Karachi and London. It became the bank of choice for laundering profits of Mujahideen heroin sales, financing CIA black operations, and countless other illegal transactions.⁴⁵

In fact, as a later US Senate investigation uncovered, BCCI was intimately tied to the CIA. BCCI head Abedi was on personal terms with former Director of the CIA Richard Helms, Colonel Oliver North, and the CIA operatives loyal to Vice President Bush in the Iran/Contra affair. And Reagan-Bush CIA Director Bill Casey met numerous times with Abedi.⁴⁶

BCCI, in short, was the financial glue linking Afghan Mujahideen, Saudi Arabian intelligence, the CIA, and Pakistani ISI. Its owners included Bank of America, then the largest US bank; Khalid bin Mahfouz, who headed the largest bank in Saudi Arabia, NCB, which handled funds of the Saudi Royal family; and Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi. Kamal Adham and Abdul Raouf Khalil, the past and the then Saudi intelligence liaisons to the United States, respectively, were shareholders as well.⁴⁷ According to Craig Unger's book *House of Bush, House of Saud*, bin Mahfouz donated over \$270,000 to Osama bin Laden's

Islamist organization to assist the US-sponsored resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

In addition to the CIA, the BCCI client list included Saddam Hussein, Manuel Noriega, the Medellin Cocaine Cartel, and mercenary terrorist-for-hire, Abu Nidal, along with Osama bin Laden. In 1987, BCCI's US bank subsidiary even helped a young Texas oilman, George W. Bush, with financing for his Harken Energy Co.⁴⁸

As the Mujahideen expanded operations in Pakistan across the border and into Afghanistan, opium cultivation and refined heroin traffic grew along with it, as did the global operations of BCCI. Veteran drug researcher Alfred McCoy described how it functioned during the CIA's covert Afghan Mujahideen war:

When the operation started in 1979, this region grew opium only for regional markets and produced no heroin. Within two years, however, the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderlands became the world's top heroin producer, supplying 60 percent of US demand. . . . CIA assets again controlled this heroin trade. As the Mujaheddin guerrillas seized territory inside Afghanistan, they ordered peasants to plant opium as a revolutionary tax. Across the border in Pakistan, Afghan leaders and local syndicates under the protection of Pakistan Intelligence operated hundreds of heroin laboratories. During this decade of wide-open drug-dealing, the US Drug Enforcement Agency in Islamabad failed to instigate major seizures or arrests.⁴⁹

McCoy further described the situation at the end of the Afghan Mujahideen war and the time of Soviet withdrawal:

In May 1990, as the CIA operation was winding down, *The Washington Post* published a front-page expose charging that Gulbudin Hekmatyar, the CIA's favored Afghan leader, was a major heroin manufacturer. The *Post* argued . . . that U.S. officials had refused to investigate charges of heroin dealing by its Afghan allies. . . . In 1995, the former CIA director of the Afghan operation, Charles Cogan, admitted the CIA had indeed sacrificed the drug war to fight the Cold War. "Our main mission was to do as much damage as possible to the Soviets. . . . I don't think that we need to apologize for this. Every situation has its fallout. . . . There was fallout in terms of drugs, yes."⁵⁰

McCoy continued his description of the CIA narcotics operations:

Once the heroin left Pakistan's laboratories, the Sicilian mafia managed its export to the United States, and a chain of syndicate-controlled pizza parlors distributed the drugs to street gangs in American cities, according to reports by the Drug Enforcement Agency. Most ordinary Americans did not see the links between the CIA's alliance with Afghan drug lords, the pizza parlors, and the heroin on US streets.⁵¹

Mujahideen “Freedom Fighters” into “Terrorists”

US support for the Mujahideen became the centerpiece of US foreign policy by 1985 and came to be called the Reagan Doctrine.⁵² Under the aggressive new proactive stance toward the Soviet Union, the US provided military and other support to anti-communist resistance movements in Afghanistan, Angola, Nicaragua, and Poland's *Solidarność* trade union.

From 1979, Afghanistan became home to violence and heroin production that was to become the norm over the following thirty-five years. The CIA and US State Department's USAID played a major role in fomenting Islamic hate toward communism that did not vanish when the Soviets left Afghanistan in 1989.

American universities produced books for Afghan children praising the virtues of Jihad and of killing communists. The books were financed by a USAID \$50 million grant to the University of Nebraska in the 1980s. USAID was often used as a covert conduit for CIA operations. The textbooks sought to create enthusiasm in Islamic militancy. They called on Afghan children to “pluck out the eyes of the Soviet enemy and cut off his legs.” Years later, the same US-produced books were approved by the Taliban for use in madrassas and were widely available in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.⁵³

Money from a bizarre coalition of forces poured into the Mujahideen being trained and based across the Afghan border in Pakistan. The USA, Saudi intelligence service or *al-Istakhbarat al-'Ama*, the Kuwaitis, Saddam Hussein's Iraq, Qaddafi's Libya, and Khomeini's Iranians all paid the Salafist Islamic “freedom fighters” of Mujahideen over \$1 billion per year during the 1980s.⁵⁴

The Afghanistan conflict from 1979 through the final Soviet troop pullout in February 1989 was the bloodiest and costliest conflict of the Cold War. More than 13,000 Soviet soldiers paid with their lives, and some 40,000 were wounded. Roughly two million Afghans lost their lives during the war, and an additional 500,000 to two million were wounded and maimed.⁵⁵

The ISI of Pakistan's Zia-ul-Haq, working with Osama bin Laden and other groups, had trained more than 100,000 Islamic radical jihadists in every art of modern warfare and terrorist techniques. They worked side by side together with the CIA, Britain's MI6, the Israeli intelligence services, and Saudi intelligence. Over the ensuing near quarter century, each of those "sponsors" would finance and deploy those Mujahideen veterans under the guise of one or another Islamic Jihad organization. One of the more infamous came to be named "Al Qaeda," or the Base, and its nominal head was the Saudi Osama bin Laden. Citing Western intelligence sources, *Jane's Defence Weekly* reported in 2001:

In 1988, with US knowledge, Bin Laden created Al Qaeda (The Base): a conglomerate of quasi-independent Islamic terrorist cells in countries spread across at least 26 countries, including Algeria, Morocco, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Burma, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Indonesia, Kenya, Tanzania, Azerbaijan, Dagestan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Syria, Tunisia, Bahrain, Yemen, Bosnia as well as the West Bank and Gaza. Western intelligence sources claim Al Qaeda even has a cell in Xinjiang in China.⁵⁶

For the Wahhabite Sunni Muslim world, the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan was greeted as a "victory" for Islam and the Global Caliphate. For Washington, it was seen as a major defeat of America's Cold War communist adversary. Each player in the Mujahideen Great Game—Washington and Jihadist Islamists—looked at the events through completely different lenses.

From their triumph in Afghanistan, the CIA helped bring key cadre of the Mujahideen into Chechnya, Bosnia, and other battles in the post-Soviet Central Asia theatre. For the Jihadists, that was yet another assist on the road to the Global Caliphate that they were quite happy to accept.

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