

SEPTEMBER 11 EVENTS AND THE RESULTING GLOBAL SITUATION

The complicated network and relationship between the Bush administration / family interests and the Saudi government / Bin Laden family leads one to believe that there is more to the September 11 incident than what meets the eye.

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In previous articles published in this and other journals, we analysed the evolution of American foreign policy and underlined the will of many of its authors to muster the country's vast military might in order to retain decisive superiority over emerging or potential rivals for global hegemony.

We also warned (in *World Affairs*, Vol 3, No 4, Oct-Dec 1999) that the USA might take advantage of an international or domestic disaster or crisis to accelerate its transition towards an increasingly authoritarian regime controlled by the defence and intelligence-related sectors of the establishment.

This prediction is now being fulfilled.

Immediately following the dreadful attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, the USA embarked on a 'global crusade' ostensibly directed 'against terrorism' but in fact threatening more than eighty countries, according to the top secret 'world-wide attack matrix' prepared by the CIA director George Tenet on September 15 at a Camp David meeting with the President and his national security team, as Bob Woodward and Don Batz reported in a series of articles for the *Washington Post* in January 2002.

At the same time, as was widely reported in the world media since February 2002, a clandestine war government was set up to operate in at least two secret underground facilities on the East Coast, officially designated to take over in case of a nuclear or large-scale conventional attack on the federal capital. In fact, it is possible that many emergency powers have already been assumed by that unelected, shadowy administration under the excuse of the indefinite, indeed permanent war on terror declared by the White House. Simultaneously, the Pentagon invoked the NATO treaty's clause on mutual defensive obligations to enrol, willy nilly the other members of the Western alliance in its global undertaking.

More specifically, apart from the three countries defined by George W Bush as 'the axis of evil': Iraq, Iran and North Korea, several, mostly Muslim states are targeted in the short or medium term by the Pentagon and the US security agencies including Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, Algeria, Indonesia and the Philippines. American forces may also intervene directly or intensify existing official or covert operations in a number of other nations such as Cuba, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, various former Soviet republics of Central Asia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and a few areas of Africa to combat entities held to be inimical to important US strategic and economic interests.

Washington also desires that all its servicemen and representatives abroad be granted immunity from the new International Court in the Hague and has launched a massive pressure campaign to secure extra-judicial privileges, clearly intended to help the White House enforce its policies without having to fear being charged with war crimes. In effect the USA seeks global juridical impunity while maintaining overwhelming military dominance.

AMERICAN STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

It must be noted that earlier in July 2001 many well-informed figures in America predicted an imminent international crisis and conflict involving their country. The *Executive Intelligence Review* reproduced a lecture in which the author stated, "We are in the midst of a financial crisis which, if war does not erupt before the end of the year or if there is no assassination of a key figure among world leaders ... will bring the financial system to collapse ... It cannot be stopped; we are at the end of the system ... and August is almost

here and the threat of a new war, this time perhaps a religious war, is about to break out.”

This seemingly prophetic statement leads to a reflection on the goals of the war foreseen by eminent policy-makers such as Zbigniew Brzezinski who called for a strategy to prevent ‘Russian imperial restoration’, seen as the

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possible prelude to the birth of a coalition that might come to include China, Iran or even France and Germany to challenge US dominance.

It is clearly imperative for the USA to prevent the rise of China to global power especially as the Western-controlled financial system

is gradually weakening. Beijing’s possible alliance with Russia, as outlined in the 2001 Shanghai Pact (SCO) and Moscow’s traditional bond with India would bring about a formidable coalition capable of decisively offsetting American influence.

For the ruling economic circles it is important as well to contain the fast-growing anti-globalisation and its occasionally violent derivatives which pose a major threat in the long run. Systematic anti-terrorist surveillance and repression provide the opportunity to control and suppress renascent revolutionary ideologies.

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In order to keep or gain a hold over fossil fuel resources, Washington has gradually built a strategy based on OOTW (“operations other than war”) combining secret — and often ‘wet’ — police raids with military strikes, subversion, disinformation and other kinds of manipulations, now orchestrated by the new Pentagon OSI (office of strategic information), all in the service of what Peter Dale Scott, an ex-investigator for the International Center for Policy Development calls ‘parapolitics’ in his book *Deep Politics*. Central Asia is now one of the main areas of interest for Washington’s strategic planners because of its vast energy and mineral deposits but also on account of its

geographic situation between Russia, China, the Indian subcontinent and the Persian Gulf.

The aftermath of the September 11 tragedy has predictably brought about a flurry of diplomatic and executive activity essentially tending to curtail civil liberties and unauthorised unprecedented monitoring of people's private lives in America and abroad, with the assistance of the sophisticated electronic systems developed by the National Security Agency and related organisations in the Anglo-Saxon alliance, including Echelon, Promis, Carnivore and others. On the legislative level, the US Patriot Act rushed through Congress under the pressure of the terrorist emergency grants the desired special powers to federal and other law enforcement authorities.

An even more ominous effect of the increasingly bellicose dispositions of the US government is the adoption of a CIA-prepared "memorandum of notification" procedure (within the 'world-wide attack matrix') which gives security agencies sweeping powers to conduct abductions and assassinations in any part of the world without the need of a specific authorisation in the form of a presidential finding and thus without 'civilian' verification of the target. The policy evolution in the US government indeed closely parallels the trends observed in the Israeli regime under the militaristic rule of Ariel Sharon and his Likud-led majority and possibly reflects the close cooperation between the two states.

Last but not the least in this list of motives for Washington's policy, the appetite of the armed forces for much larger financial allocations that they were denied by the two successive Clinton administrations with which the relations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) were tense to the verge of hostility had to be satisfied. As a presidential candidate, George W Bush promised to address the budgetary demands of the military commanders, as we noted in a previous article (*World Affairs*, Vol 5, No 2, April-June 2001) but found it hard to keep his commitment after carrying out large tax cuts and refunds in

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the context of the gathering recession until the September 11 crisis provided an imperative reason to expand the defence outlay by 50 per cent in five years, with an immediate emergency allocation of forty-three billion dollars and a total official budgetary increase of 15 per cent, to nearly four hundred billion dollars for 2002-2003.

In that thought-provoking context, one is led to study the background of the Al Qaida network which has almost single-handedly afforded a justification for this gigantic war effort.

THE ORIGINS OF OSAMA BIN LADEN

Many books and papers have been written on the close and complex relations that bind at least some of the highest circles in the American business and political establishment with the ruling aristocracy of the Gulf States and of Saudi Arabia in particular, through common interests in oil, the arms industry and other basic economic sectors. A detailed study is provided by the French journalist Richard Labevière in his book "Les Dollars de la Terreur" (1999).

There is hence no need to repeat the well-known story of America's close cooperation with the Saudi and Pakistani governments in the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan between 1980 and 1989. That collaboration, funded with over six billion dollars in military supplies and assistance from the federal budget, led from 1995 to 2001 to the creation and build-up of the Taliban regime whose conquest of the country was facilitated by Osama bin Laden, supported mainly by Saudi official and private funding, the ISI and the CIA. As Ex-Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto put it: "The idea of the Taliban was British, the management was American, the money was Saudi and the implementation carried out by Pakistan."

The question that arises therefore concerns the reasons why and the moment when the USA and their British ally decided to turn on their Arab-Afghan protégés. Another question is whether and why Osama bin Laden himself organised the terrorist strikes against America.

An informed analysis of those related issues implies a review of the history of the official and private relations between Saudi Arabia's ruling family, the Bin Laden clan and the American establishment.

The Bin Laden line hails from the Hadramaut region of Yemen and seems to descend from Jewish converts to Islam, numerous in those parts. The branch that concerns us emigrated to what is now Saudi Arabia in the beginning of the twentieth century. The builder of the family's fortune, Sheikh Mohammed became very close to King Abdul Aziz, the unifier of the country and was entrusted by him with the task of building the royal palace and subsequently with the restoration and maintenance of Mecca. He was then awarded for himself and his heirs the monopoly of public works on religious edifices in the three holy places of Islam, including Jerusalem until the 1967 conquest of that city by the Israelis.

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The Al Sauds and the Bin Ladens became further connected through marriage and business associations. The fifty-four sons of Sheikh Mohammed (who died in a plane crash), have maintained a close rapport with many of the royal princes, especially with the Sudairi ruling faction, and traditionally act as their private advisers in keeping with the highly regarded skills of the Yemeni elite in matters of trade, finance and diplomacy.

The "Bin Laden Brothers for Construction and Industry" flagship company has, since at least 1996, a yearly turnover exceeding one hundred and ten billion Saudi rials or thirty-five billion dollars. A number of affiliates extend all over the Muslim world (in Egypt for instance the local Bin Laden concern employs about forty thousand people) and in Europe where the SICO in Geneva (Saudi Investment Corp.) is headed by one of Osama's brothers Yaslem and controls several foreign and offshore banking and financial subsidiaries located in London, Paris, Luxemburg, Zurich and Curaçao among other locations.

The Bin Laden empire made up of private, diversified secretive companies remains little known and its resources are hard to evaluate, all the more since it is probably related with the Saudi royal holdings which are not clearly separated from the national wealth of the kingdom. Thus the assets accessible to the sons and heirs of the late Sheikh Mohamed bin Laden are huge by any standards. It is also worth noting that to this year at least military facilities in

the country (including the King Khaled military city and others leased by the US armed forces) are maintained and modernised by the Bin Laden companies.

Former President George H Bush visited the Bin Laden corporate headquarters twice in recent years in his capacity as a paid consultant for the

Those interwoven official and private involvements are to be seen within the context of the oil and gas network which pervades this administration. Many of the top officials came from the energy complex, beginning with the President himself and Vice-President Cheney, ex-CEO of Halliburton for which he helped secure large oil infrastructure contracts in Iraq.

Carlyle Group, a twelve billion dollar company in which the Bin Laden family had an investment until October 2001. Carlyle, chaired by Ex-Defence Secretary Frank Carlucci also has on its board James Baker III, Bush's confidant and Secretary of State, and can presumably rely on the personal support of US Ambassador to Riyadh, Robert Jordan, Baker's partner in the influential Houston law firm Baker Botts.

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In America, some of the Bin Laden brothers have been useful intermediaries between the Saudi monarchy and influential friends in America, especially the Texas oil and gas oligarchy including the Bush family.

For instance it is believed that Salem, then the head of the family, played an important role in the secret negotiations between the Reagan team and the Iranian ayatollahs in 1979, during the presidential campaign leading up to the Republican victory. Salem is also said to have contributed funding to help launch George W Bush's first company Harken Oil, as a gesture of friendship

to the current president's father. Like his own father before him, Salem died in a plane crash in Texas in 1988.

However actions of some of the other brothers have been less than beneficial to their royal protectors. For one, Mahrous bin Laden then in charge of the Mecca branch of the company played an unclear part in the famous attack on the holiest city of Islam in 1979 when the Uteiba rebels headed by Al Qahtani and backed by Iran took over the old town. It turned out that they used Bin Laden company trucks to smuggle in their weapons.

The Saudi regime, shaken to its foundations, secured the help of France which secretly sent the French GIGN (special forces of the gendarmerie) headed by Commander Paul Barril. The elite commandos staged an assault through the underground labyrinth of the holy city. The only existing maps of the tunnels and wells were in the possession of the Bin Laden Company which made them available to the foreign contingent to help them crush the uprising. Mahrous was held only guilty of negligence and his punishment was limited to a few months of captivity while the family never lost the trust of the dynasty, which gives another indication of its very privileged position.

To complete the summary review of Osama bin Laden's background, we may point out that he was entrusted, when still a young man in the eighties, with the coordination of the Arab-American assistance to the anti-Soviet Mujahideen resistance in Afghanistan, a high priority in the agenda of the Reagan administration to weaken and defeat the 'evil empire'. In that task, he reported, at least in theory, to Prince Turki bin Al Faisal, the head of the Kingdom's secret service until September 2001. The latter ensured the coordination with the ISI which, under the leadership of General Babar and General Gul had taken over from Pakistan's border constabulary the direction of Islamabad's operations against the Kabul Communist regime and the Soviet occupation troops.

It is well-known in expert circle that, since well before the days of General Zia-ul-Haq's military rule, the ISI is closely supervised by the CIA, the DIA (US Defence Intelligence Agency) and other American foreign policy instruments. On September 11, 2001 in fact General Mahmud Ahmad, the ISI head was in Washington DC since one week and he had met with top officials including Secretary of State Colin Powell, Deputy Secretary R Armitage, Under Secretary Marc Grossman and CIA Director George Tenet. The Times of India's report that General Ahmad had ordered the wiring of US\$ 100,000

to presumed terrorist ring-leader Mohammad Atta in New York a few days before has not been denied or disproved hitherto. Given those documented facts, it appears that the relations between American Intelligence, the ISA, Al Qaida and the alleged suicide-hijackers have not been officially clarified yet.

Nor is Osama bin Laden the ‘black sheep’ that turned against his American original backers and the government of his own country. Indeed, several other members of the Bin Laden family have been and are actively involved in the promotion of Islamic causes.

There are allegations that Pakistan’s present head of state, General Musharraf was recruited while he was an officer-trainee in the USA in the seventies. This would account for his resolutely pro-American attitude and for his clear intent to link even more closely Pakistan’s defence services with the US international security system. His special relationship with the Pentagon may explain that

Washington at least tacitly supported his rise to power at a critical time and place where a man of trust was needed.

Nor is Osama bin Laden the ‘black sheep’ that turned against his American original backers and the government of his own country. Indeed, several other members of the Bin Laden family have been and are actively involved in the promotion of Islamic causes, in line with the traditional commitments of the Saudi government which sponsors many fundamentalist religious-political actions through state and private institutions, prominent among them being the Dar al Mal al Islamiya and the Baraka Saudia.

Thus two of Osama’s brothers Abdullah and Omar who resided in Falls Church, Va, a suburb of the federal capital, are the top officers of the World Association of Islamic Youth (WAMY) which is accused by at least two countries, India and the Philippines, of sponsoring civil warfare and terrorist activities in Kashmir and Mindanao respectively.

The context of Osama’s career is thereby outlined; navigating like most of the Saudi elite between Wahabi fundamentalist activism and international business, between tradition and modernity he was, and may still be, a very useful intermediary between American strategic policy-makers and the rough realities of Middle Eastern conflicts. He and his Qaida volunteers were extensively used wherever Muslim causes called them and Washington’s and London’s shadowy diplomatic agents wanted them, particularly in the Balkans

where they fought the Serbian forces on the side of the Bosnian, Kosovo-Albanian and Macedonian-Albanian guerillas.

Another key figure behind Al Qaida, the Kuwaiti of Pakistani origin Khalid Sheikh Muhammed, still at large despite a world-wide man hunt, may be regarded as a product of US training. He studied in North Korea and is an expert of the 'Jehad Manual' drafted by an American Green Beret officer 'hired' by Bin Laden. Thus the elusive international Islamic terrorist seems to owe a lot to the Western Special forces. The recent coming to light of a paramilitary camp in Alabama, allegedly used by the September 11 suicide-hijackers and prophetically called 'Ground Zero USA' only confirms that impression.

Indeed the foundation of Al Qaida "to fight crusaders and Jews" in 1995 in Sudan (six years before President Bush declared a 'crusade') where Osama was living in exile since 1992 after being stripped of his Saudi citizenship may well have been part of a secret agenda sponsored by his country's intelligence directorate in order to infiltrate and take control of the many underground fundamentalist cells burgeoning all over the Muslim world. It is significant that Prince Turki, Osama's boss in Afghanistan was also staying in some sort of disgrace in Cairo in the early nineties though he kept his official responsibilities, including the 'Afghan department'. The activities of both Turki and Osama could thus be disowned by the monarchy even while confidential relations were being maintained all along.

This interpretation of an essentially ambivalent situation is confirmed by evidence that the US government was also aware of Bin Laden's terrorist training activities but chose to ignore or even covertly support them, adamantly refusing from 1994 to 1996 the various offers from the Sudanese state to share its information on the Saudi tycoon with the CIA and in the end to deliver him to the Americans. Even though the Clinton administration professed to be aware of the Qaida's anti-American designs, it decided instead to let that admittedly dangerous foe leave aboard a private jet with his family and part of his followers for Pakistan, from where they entered Afghanistan on visas issued by the government of then President Rabbani.

In 1998, a few days after the terrorist strike against the US Embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright again declined Khartoum's offer to extradite to the USA two confessed Pakistani members of the 'Bin Laden network' just entered from Kenya. The men were held for three more weeks in Sudan and then deported to Pakistan.

That sequence of documented events leads one to conclude that the US Government did not wish to get rid of Bin Laden or his associates at the time, preferring to let him play a part which some of the powers-that-be found useful. He seemed once again to justify that trust by lending his full support to Mullah Omar's Taliban faction, becoming a kinsman and a close ally of the reclusive cleric and helping his new allies to conquer almost all of Afghanistan.

The Taliban were indeed unsavoury but tolerable counterparts for Washington and as late as October 1999 when then Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif endorsed a seemingly US-backed plot to assassinate Bin Laden at his Kandahar headquarters, the coup staged by General Musharraf, a few days before the date set for that cross-border covert operation led to its cancellation. It is quite possible that the new ruler of Pakistan acted in keeping with the wishes of his colleagues at ISI but also of certain American entities by deciding to spare the Al Qaida chief's life.

SURPRISE OR DISINFORMATION ON SEPTEMBER 11?

Out of the torrent of information and disinformation that is flowing world-wide about the massive terrorist operations in Washington and New York on that date, several unexplained facts deserve to be highlighted if we wish to have a better grasp of the nature and possible causes of the attacks. Here are the major enigmas which surround those dramatic events.

1. There is still no valid justification or explanation for the extraordinary inertia of the national security and defence system from the moment when at least four planes were first known to be hijacked (before 8 AM on September 11) until the time, nearly two and a half hours later when the third target, the Pentagon was hit by one of those jets. The Russian Air Force Commander General Anatoly Korkulov among others expressed in *Pravda* on September 13 his astonishment at the lack of response of the armed forces and his inability to understand why the well-rehearsed FAA interception procedures, enforced whenever an aircraft gets out of its flight path were not implemented in this major emergency.

The mere suspicion of a hijacking or of a crisis situation warrants the dispatch of combat aircraft to check and escort the troubled plane and

understandably no major cities are more closely watched than New York and Washington DC.

Although the FAA warned the defence headquarters twelve minutes before impact that the Boeing 757 of AA Fl 77 was heading towards central Washington after leaving its flight path and reversing course over Pennsylvania one hour earlier, fighters on alert at the Andrews Air Force base, located ten miles from the federal capital and entrusted with the defence of its airspace did not stir nor were orders given to evacuate the Pentagon. Only afterwards were some air force aircraft scrambled from the distant bases of Otis and Langley. Though other possibly hijacked

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planes were still roaming the eastern seaboard skies, the military jets flew leisurely, at a quarter of their top speed to the two stricken cities. Yet to this day no higher responsible officer at the NORAD or at the JCS has been blamed, disciplined or removed for negligence or dereliction of duty and strangely enough, the Presidency was very reluctant to authorise any Congressional investigation, claiming that it might interfere with the war on terrorism.

2. The inertia of the air defence forces finds a parallel in the bizarre passivity of President Bush. He was probably informed as soon as it became known to the FAA that at least four liners had been hijacked but in any event at 8:50 AM five minutes after the first hit of the WTC, his Chief of Staff Andrew Card spoke to him as the President was addressing an elementary school in Sarasota, Florida. Showing no reaction George Bush spoke for another twenty-five minutes on the importance of reading skills before pausing to give a televised address. Yet he later said to the press that he had watched the first strike on television from the school before any network had aired the first images, prompting the *London Independent*, among other newspapers, to wonder what film the chief executive could indeed have been shown.

3. The remainder of his day was no less surprising. Air Force One zigzagged out of Florida and made an unscheduled landing at the high security Offutt

Air Force base in Nebraska before belatedly returning to Washington under the protection of a fighter squadron. The decision to disappear temporarily from public view was allegedly motivated by the reception at 4:15 am EST of a warning about the terrorist attacks alongwith specific threats against the President's life, proving that their authors had access to top-secret communication codes and must therefore have been well-connected in the government's high echelons.

4. The explanations provided to account for the security breakdown is implausible as they mostly invoke the demobilisation of the air defence system since the end of the cold war. However in that period federal agencies were on high alert in the wake of precise and repeated terrorist threats received from various foreign and domestic sources.

It has also been established that the Israeli company Odigo was able to send SMS messages warning of an imminent catastrophe to at least some people in the World Trade Centre more than one hour before the first plane hit. Let us recall as well that a number of unexplained trading operations in the stocks of companies, directly affected by the attacks, performed in the days and hours preceding 911 are under investigation by the SEC and the FBI, justifying the suspicion that their authors could have been forewarned.

5. The official accounts of the causes and mechanisms behind the terrorist attacks leave a number of unresolved issues and unanswered questions. It is far from clear that all nineteen Muslims said to be on board the planes (though their actual presence is not established beyond doubt since none was listed on the passenger rolls supplied by the airlines) were involved in the plot and it is even less certain that they knew what they were going to do. The government-supported theory seems to rely mostly on speculation and circumstantial evidence at best, on the basis of the religious and national identities of the suspects.

The subsequently and miraculously found videos in Afghanistan in which Osama bin Laden is (barely) heard to express satisfaction for the success of the attacks could be clumsy fabrication and his allegation that the terrorists did not know that they were going to die is inconsistent with the instruction papers supposedly left behind by the presumed leader of the commando, teaching the 'holy warriors' to prepare for the ultimate sacrifice. The case built

by the federal agencies seems flimsy so far and would not stand in a court of law.

Likewise all the purported Al Qaida fighters captured in Afghanistan and jailed on the US base of Guantanamo in Cuba are still held without charges in a juridical vacuum, leading many observers to conclude that the American regime is unable to document their alleged connection with either Al Qaida or with terrorism in America.

6. Though there are unconfirmed reports that at least some of the purported terrorists, such as Muhamed Atta, had undergone pilot training in US military academies and not merely in the private flying school for small aircraft in Florida described in most mainstream media, it is not easy to account for the aerobatics performed by the allegedly amateur hijackers steering the commercial planes, especially the difficult flight pattern which supposedly enabled the AA Fl 77 Boeing to spiral down at high speed around the Pentagon and hit barely above ground level on the Western facade, precisely opposite the JCS headquarters located on the eastern side. There are major problems in fact with the official version of the destruction, first announced to have been caused by the explosion of a truck bomb. No clear photographs or films of the approaching plane have been provided, from the four hundred cameras installed on the outside of the Pentagon and the gaping breach on the outer ring does not match the size of the aircraft of which hardly any remains were found in the ruins. The first fire-fighters to arrive wondered if the Boeing had 'melted' into the building, which obviously seems impossible.

The best known challenge to the government-sponsored account is to be found in the best-selling book by the French journalist Thierry Meyssan entitled *L'Effroyable Imposture* (Carnot, Paris, 2001)

Another legitimate question concerns the missile batteries installed on the Pentagon's roof. Why were they not used against the kamikaze plane even though the military command had been put on Defcon 2 in the preceding hour?

The aeronautical engineer J Vials has described at length the 'Home Run' automatic guidance system developed by the DARPA (Defence Advanced Research Programme Agency) and the British DERA, alleging that it was secretly installed on a number of American passenger planes as part of an anti-hijacking programme. The former German Secretary of Defence and Minister of Research Andreas von Bulow who sat on the Bundestag Commission

supervising the nation's secret services until 1994 quoted Vials in an interview with Tagesspiegel of January 13, 2002 to suggest that the rogue airliners of September 11 might have flown ... and crashed on their targets under remote control.

J Vials has also recalled that on an earlier September 11, in 1994, a single-engine Cessna 150 L piloted by amateur American pilot Frank Corder crashed on the White House just below the windows of the presidential bedroom. The private intelligence analyst regards this incident as a test or 'proof of concept' paving the way for a full-fledged attack on strategic targets with domestic hijacked or remote controlled aircraft. This fact could indicate that terrorist strikes on American power centres have been in preparation for several years and may indeed have been planned within what E Wuthebach, the former German Intelligence chief described, in an interview with the AFP agency as being probably 'the fixed frame' of a government structure.

It should be recalled that a major fire broke out in the Executive Office Annex of the White House on the morning of September 11, as reported and shown on CNN and other networks but that was totally 'forgotten' and never came up again in the news; yet it stands to reason that, if caused by arson, that fire may have been related to the other terrorist simultaneous actions.

7. The greatest enigma lies perhaps under the rubble piles left by the WTC towers and the surrounding highrises, included one which housed the CIA's Global Economic Intelligence Headquarters, destroyed though it had not been hit directly imploded in a way which none of the expert scenarii and computer simulations could predict, reproduce or explain. The impact of the jets and the amount of heat generated by the resulting fires seem materially insufficient to melt down the massive steel pillars that supported the structures.

The collapse of the buildings looks as if it had been caused by controlled explosions engineered by demolition professionals. These suspicions take us back to the first terrorist attack on the WTC in February 1993 which consisted in detonating a large quantity of explosives in the underground parking beneath the towers. Whether or not this happened again in September 2001 will probably never be known with certainty since the authorities lost no time in clearing the site without giving any opportunity for investigations on possible clues left in the rubble.

8. The anthrax-contaminated mail which began to circulate a few days after September 11 caused an international outburst of fear since it opened the era of bio-terrorism. The origin and goals of that insidious campaign have not been made clear but many suspicious indices highlighted by the official inquiry point to a domestic war research connection. The Ames strain of the anthrax virus disseminated by mail in the fall of 2001 was traced back to Fort Detrick, the US Army Biological Research Centre in Maryland and the exceptionally high concentration of a trillion spores per gram had been achieved only in that laboratory by Dr W C Patrick III.

There is no explanation as to how a top-secret research centre allowed some of its pathogen stocks to be stolen, though worrying security breaches (involving the disappearance of some twenty-seven lethal strains, such as Ebola and Hanta cultures and Ames anthrax spores) have been reported in previous years. Furthermore, to the date of this writing, the police investigation has moved at a glacial pace and no arrests have been made despite the very small number of possible suspects under consideration, suggesting that a cover up is taking place, possibly to protect a 'black op' sponsored by some federal agency, perhaps intended to test national reactions to that kind of threat.

That strategy is suggested by the 'dark winter' simulation enacted in the summer of 2001 by a high-level group of national security experts to study the possibility of an artificially provoked smallpox epidemics. As a result of that biological war game, according to a October 17, 2001 report on *USA Today*, the Federal Government ordered two hundred million doses of smallpox vaccines and the Department of Health and Human Services announced its plan to build a total stock of 286 million doses.

The anthrax-loaded letters received at the national capital brought about the temporary shutdown of Congress and the collateral paralysis of the legislature which the hawks in the executive branch may not have found inconvenient as Ian Mulgrew notes in the *Vancouver Sun* of February 21, 2002, one of the few major newspapers in North America that chose to publish a politically incorrect review of the unexplained and suspicious aspects of the events surrounding September 11.

The suggestions of foul play or connivance within the US government or at least in some of its affiliated agencies point to what Jared Israel in his site 'Emperors Clothes' has called the 'Northwoods strategy', that is the customary American procedure to lay the blame of aggression on the selected target in

order to justify massive retaliation, at least in the eyes of the domestic electorate without fraying the reputation of democratic peacefulness which the nation cultivates since her independence. It is possible to demonstrate the mechanisms of this method in the last century of American wars, whether with Mexico in the nineteenth century, with Spain (in 1898, it was triggered by the mysterious sinking of USS *Marine* in the Havana harbour), with Japan (in 1942 when Roosevelt did not try to prevent the secretly expected raid on Pearl Harbor in

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order to galvanise his reluctant countrymen to enter the Second World War), with Cuba in 1962 (the now declassified Northwoods plan, hatched by the Pentagon and the CIA but never implemented consisted in staging a series of assassinations and fake terrorist attacks that could have been traced back to Castro's regime and would have called for an invasion of the island) or with Vietnam (where the

1964 false 'Gulf of Tonkin' incident provoked the escalation desired by the White House).

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The Taliban and the Al Qaida seem to have played the familiar decoy role, meant to trigger a strong national response and thereby facilitate a large-scale advance into Central Asia. That observation confirms the widespread suspicions that Osama bin Laden was manipulated all along as suggested by persistent rumours that he met at length with CIA officials at least until July 2001 (as reported in the *Figaro* of October 31) and that he was allowed to escape Afghanistan and take refuge undisturbed in neighbouring areas of Pakistan's NW province at the start of the Anglo-American attack. One must recall here that he declared on September 28 to *UPI* that he had never regarded the USA as his enemy and that according to subsequent reporting by the *Wall Street Journal* among others, Washington rejected the Taliban's offer of negotiations

and even their discreet proposal to extradite Bin Laden, preferring instead to attack the country, showing what was the Administration's real objective.

THE AMERICAN WAR ON TERROR AND THE SILK ROAD

The September 11 attack took place in a context of conflict that was building up at least since the start of the year. According to various high-level witnesses, such as Niaz Naik, the former Pakistani Foreign Minister, American officials warned in the spring of 2001 of likely bombing strikes in Afghanistan in the fall. Even while giving the Taliban's regime more than one hundred twenty million dollars in that fiscal year, the US State Department multiplied warnings to Kabul as was reported since in the media. Indeed, large-scale military exercises began in the region when between September 1 and 10, twenty-five thousand British soldiers landed in Oman while two American aircraft carrier groups entered the Persian Gulf as part of a plan also involving joint manoeuvres between NATO and Egyptian troops.

Those moves were also a direct Anglo-American response to the SCO treaty signed on June 15 in Bishkek, Kirgystan, between that country, Russia, China, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan and planned to include later Mongolia, Iran, India and possibly even Pakistan on China's insistence. The Anglo-Saxon alliance, faced with that new formidable Asian pact potentially opposed to its hegemony, acted fast to position itself on the strategic borderline between Moscow's and Beijing's spheres of influence, thereby completing the encirclement of Russia and China while increasing the pressure on the Arab world and on India.

The benefits of setting up extensive military facilities in Asia's heartland, supported by a supply line stretched along the old silk road all the way to Turkey and the NATO bases in the Balkans and in Western Europe, were at least threefold:

- a) encircling Russia and replacing her in her strategic outposts to prevent her resurgence as a global power and facilitate the economic influence and penetration of Western interests.
- b) securing a hold over the vast fossil fuel reserves in Central Asia and edging closer to the Siberian mineral deposits while blocking the likely Chinese commercial and demographic advance towards the Turkestan oil and gas fields

(Putin's acceptance of Washington's moves must be understood in that context as well).

c) assuming greater control over the production and transportation of opium and its derivatives, upstream of global distribution, from Afghanistan, one of the foremost poppy producers.

There are reliable reports about the fast expanding opium cultivation in Uzbekistan and the contiguous republics which are attracting a number of shadowy US-controlled offshore companies traditionally used as facades by the American Intelligence community. The scenario staged during the Vietnam war when the Indochinese drug trade was developed and harnessed to finance covert operations is being re-enacted in Central Asia as also in Colombia and on other military theatres where the Pentagon's special forces are involved.

We should not ignore the influence of sectorial business interests in those military ventures. It has become apparent that Vice-President Cheney, for one, has helped Halliburton, the company he has headed for years and which paid him a twenty million dollars 'severance bonus' when he left to become Bush's Number two, to benefit substantially from the campaign in Afghanistan. It is one of the grounds on which he is being legally prosecuted. More substantial long-term windfalls can be expected by various well-connected corporations from the planned attack on Iraq, partly designed to stimulate the activities of defence contractors and energy intermediaries.

One interesting question arises with regard to Russia's position vis-à-vis 'Operation Enduring Freedom', whose very name hints of its 'cold war' character and goals. Most domestic and foreign Kremlin observers were surprised by President Vladimir Putin's quick acceptance of Washington's demands for uninhibited military access to his country's traditional backyard.

In fact, practically unable to prevent the American massive drive into Central Asia, prepared during the last several years by a series of 'joint combat team programmes' between the Pentagon (through the Stuttgart European Command) and a number of former Soviet republics — Tajikistan being the thirtieth country to enter the NATO-led Partnership for Peace on February 20, 2002 — Moscow decided to cooperate while bargaining hard for some valuable quid pro quos, chief among those being a recognition of Russia's sovereign right to repress separatist insurrections in her territory and a free hand to gradually restore her ancient unity with Ukraine.

In the longer term, Putin's government also intends to use Europe's growing dependence on Russian oil and gas to secure a *de facto* or *de jure* membership

in the EU as well as a seat at NATO's table. If the master of the Kremlin meets those ambitious goals, he will secure the restoration of his country as the old continent's greatest power while keeping options open in Central Asia where Anglo-American-led forces are being gradually sucked into bloody internecine conflicts both in Afghanistan and in the neighbouring republics, as Russia was in the past.

The prospects are ominous for Pakistan which is on the brink of chronic civil war and where General Musharraf may not be able to stay in charge. His position is becoming increasingly untenable as he is forced to manifest his allegiance to Washington by cracking down on his old allies and subordinates in the ISI and the armed forces. The international situation created by the events on September 11 have highlighted Pakistan's inherent fragility as an artificial nation torn between her professed vocation as Islam's imperial beacon on the subcontinent and her geopolitical fate on the fault-line that separates India from Central and Middle Asia.

Envisioned by Jinnah and the British as a pillar of the Western anti-communist alliance, Pakistan is pulled by theocratic temptations into the vortex of Islamic radicalism. Military or civilian leaders groomed by the American military Intelligence complex such as Hamid Karzai entirely dependent on American advisers and body guards, in line with the colonial traditions, are out of touch with the increasingly anti-Zionist, anti-Western environment of their countries. Thus Pakistan, influenced both by fundamentalist theologians and by turbulent tribal politics is becoming increasingly similar to Afghanistan and likewise susceptible to collapse into anarchy.

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Unfortunately for India, Kashmir is geographically a part of the strife-torn Central Asian region and is directly affected by the competition between the great powers. It is possible that the USA, whose forces are now close to the area, will exert mounting pressure to intervene directly in the Indo-Pakistan conflict, seeking to deploy troops in the Kashmir border region in order to enforce an Afghan-style or Kosovo-style settlement.

great powers. It is possible that the USA, whose forces are now close to the area, will exert mounting pressure to intervene directly in the Indo-Pakistan conflict, seeking to deploy troops in the Kashmir border region in order to enforce an Afghan-style or Kosovo-style settlement. The major consequence of the September 11 event is the return of direct Anglo-Saxon colonialism, which Robert Cooper, Prime Minister Tony Blair's Foreign Affairs Adviser has openly advocated through military occupation in Central and South Asia as in Africa and South America. The Western powers are thereby acknowledging the imperative to control energy sources which conditions their continued dominance of the global economy. Ominously the USA is now admitting its willingness to use nuclear weapons on any country that it regards as a threat to the world order of its making and its military planners have singled out seven: Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Libya, Syria, Russia and China as primary potential targets for atomic strikes. We may be edging everyday closer to the horror of thermonuclear war but it could well be triggered once again by the world's only current superpower if the American people and the rest of the world do not come together to try preventing that outcome.