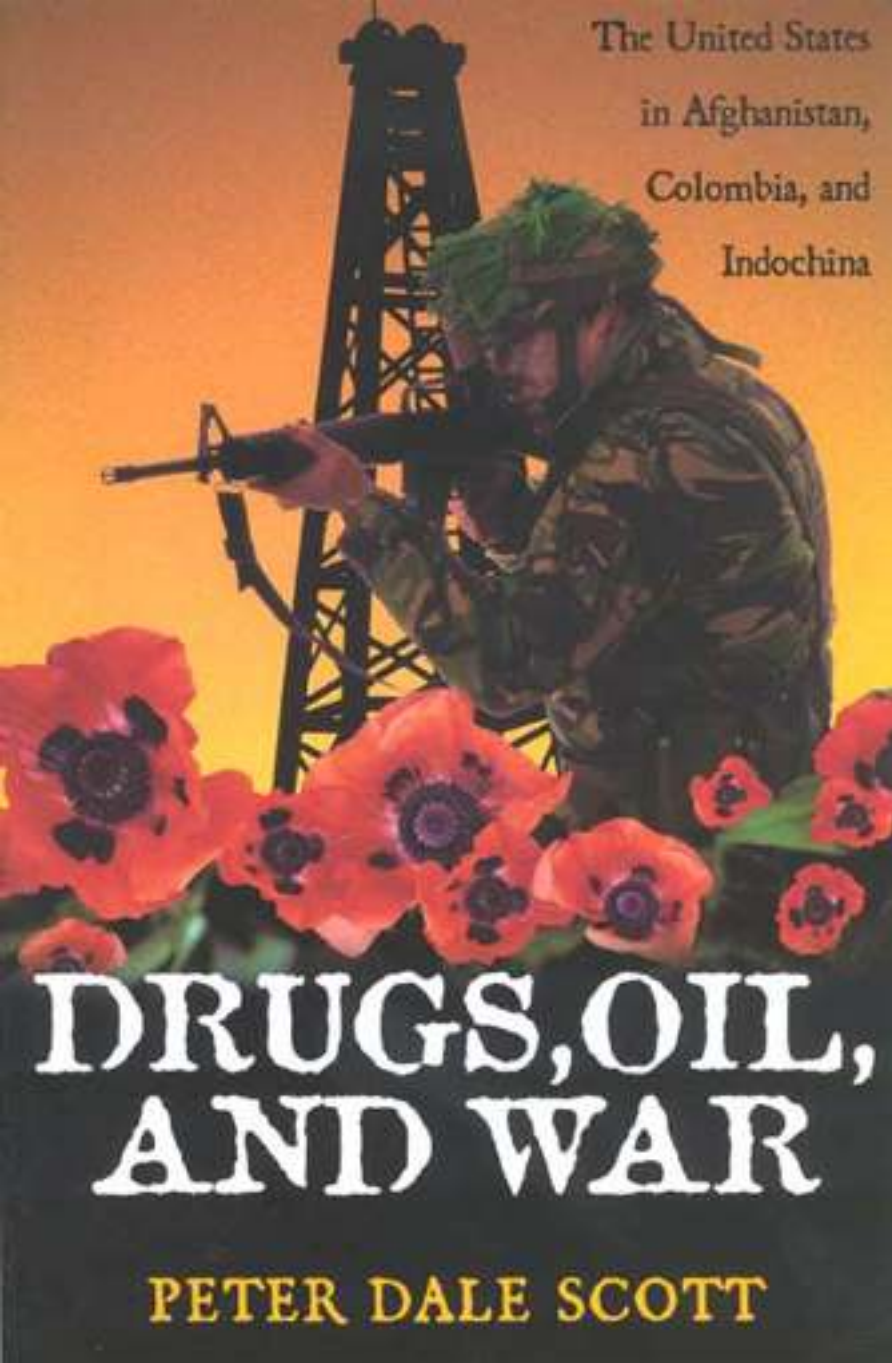


The United States  
in Afghanistan,  
Colombia, and  
Indochina



# DRUGS, OIL, AND WAR

PETER DALE SCOTT

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## Drugs, Oil, and War

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# Drugs, Oil, and War

*The United States in Afghanistan,  
Colombia, and Indochina*

Peter Dale Scott

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAA	Alianza Anticomunista Americana (American Anticomunist Alliance)
AID	Agency for International Development
AIPAC	American Israel Public Affairs Committee
AIUSA	Amnesty International USA
APACL	Asian People's Anti-Communist League
ASC	American Security Council
AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia)
AVG	American Volunteer Group
BCCI	Bank of Credit and Commerce International
BP	British Petroleum
CAMCO	Central Aircraft Manufacturing Company
CAT	Civil Air Transport [later Air Anxacia]
CATCL	Civil Air Transport Co., Ltd.
CDI	Center for Defense Information
CDNI	Committee for the Defense of National Interests
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CINCPAC	Commander in Chief Pacific
COSSV	Central Office for South Vietnam
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
EAST	Eagle Aviation Services and Technology Inc.
ECAFE	United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East
ELINT	electronics intelligence
ELN	National Liberation Army
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia

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FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service
FBN	Federal Bureau of Narcotics
FCRA	Free China Relief Agency
FPRI	Foreign Policy Research Institute
FRUS	<i>Foreign Relations of the United States</i> (publication)
ICA	International Cooperation Administration
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
KKK	Khmer Kampuchea Krom
KMT	Kuomintang
MAS	Muerte a SecuestRADinos (Death to Kidnappers)
MPRI	Military Professional Resources Inc.
NAVOCEANO	U.S. Naval Oceanographic Office
NLF	National Liberation Front [of Vietnam]
NSC	National Security Council
NSDD	National Security Decision Directive
NSIA	National Security Industrial Association
ODCCP	United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention
ONI	Office of Naval Intelligence
OPC	Office of Policy Coordination
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRG	Provisional Revolutionary Government [of Vietnamese NLF]
RAND	Research and Development Corporation
SALT II	Strategic Arms Limitations Talks II
SAT	Southern Air Transport
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SOG	Studies and Operations Group
TRW	Thompson-Ramo-Wooldridge
UNCND	United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs
Unocal	Union Oil of California
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
USAF	United States Air Force
WACL	World Anti-Communist League

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## Preface

This book, *Drugs, Oil, and War: The United States in Afghanistan, Colombia, and Indochina*, explores the underlying factors that have engendered a U.S. strategy of indirect intervention in Third World countries through alliances with drug-trafficking proxies. This strategy was originally developed in the late 1940s to contain (communist) China; it has since been used to secure control over foreign petroleum resources. The result has been a staggering increase in the global drug traffic and the mafias associated with it, a problem that will worsen until there is a change in policy.

The book also traces some of the processes by which covert interventions have escalated into war. Parts I and II include lengthy new chapters on Afghanistan and Colombia. Part III consists of five updated chapters from my 1972 book *The War Conspiracy: The Secret Road to the Second Indochina War*.

This book explores ongoing causal patterns that have helped shape U.S. foreign policy, sometimes at a deeper level than was recognized even by bureaucrats in high places. Under pressure from interested outsiders, decisions were made by the United States, after World War II in Burma and again in Laos in 1959–1965, to back armies and governments that were supporting themselves through the drug traffic. This has led to a linked succession of wars, from Vietnam to Afghanistan, which have suited the purposes of international oil corporations and U.S. drug proxy allies, far more than those of either the U.S. government or its people. These decisions were also major causes for the dramatic increase in drug trafficking over the last half century.

Today drug networks are important factors in the politics of every continent. The United States returns repeatedly to the posture of fighting wars in areas of petroleum reserves with the aid of drug-trafficking allies (or what I call drug proxies) with which it has a penchant to become involved. Surprisingly, this is true even in Colombia, where we are nominally fighting a war on drugs; yet the chief drug-trafficking faction, the paramilitaries, are allies of our allies, the

Colombian army. Worse, they are the descendants of yet another clever CIA action – to train terrorists to fight the left – which has once again come back to haunt us.

This is the situation that has recently engaged the United States in Afghanistan, a country through which until 1998 a U.S. oil company, Unocal, hoped to build oil and gas pipelines. The drug-trafficking network of al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, a former CIA ally operating out of caves designed and paid for by the CIA, has just been defeated with the help of another drug proxy, the Afghan Northern Alliance. In the pursuit of bin Laden, the United States defeated his allies, the Taliban (which in 2000 had enforced a total ban on opium cultivation in its area), with the aid of the Northern Alliance (which in the same period had overseen a tripling of opium cultivation in its area).

As this book goes to press, the new interim Afghan government has initiated a nominal ban on opium cultivation. But the United States has not given the Hamid Karzai regime enough financial support to make the ban work. Clearly the drug traffic itself is now a well-financed transnational power player in the region, and there are no serious current plans to reduce it. (There are only minimal plans to repair the devastation wrought by U.S. bombing on an Afghan economy that was already in ruins after decades of international and civil war.)

Even if there were an effective ban on opium production and trafficking in Afghanistan, one could still predict with some confidence that it would increase in a neighboring area, such as Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan. As the drug traffic grows in the new area, it will help destabilize the host states in the region, none of which is too secure to begin with. Without a change in policy, the United States, which has already sent troops into the region, will sooner or later be confronted with another crisis that calls for intervention.

These problems facing America are by no means entirely of its own making. But one recurring cause, commonly recognized, is U.S. dependence on foreign oil and its need to control international oil markets. Past U.S. support for drug proxies is another more covert and less recognized contributing factor, one that must be acknowledged if the root causes for these crises are to be addressed.

Conversely, the great resistance that still exists to acknowledging past U.S. involvement in and responsibility for covert intrigues contributes to our present inability to bring true peace and security to the rest of the world. The agencies responsible for past errors are too concerned to preserve not only their reputations but their alliances and, above all, the corrupt social systems in which such alliances have thrived. Consequently an international drug traffic, which the United States helped enlarge, continues to thrive.

I shall argue in this book that covert operations, when they generate or reinforce autonomous political power, almost always outlast the specific purpose for which they were designed. Instead they enlarge and become part of the hostile forces the United States has to contend with. To put it in terms I find more precise, *parapolitics*, the exercise of power by covert means, tends to metastasize

into *deep politics*, an interplay of unacknowledged forces over which the original parapolitical agent no longer has control. This is the heart of the analysis.

In my book *Deep Politics and the Death of JFK* (pp. 7–8), I give a seminal example of this process: U.S. *parapolitical* use of Mafia figures like Vito Genovese in postwar Italy. This was a conscious operation that soon led to the *deep political* dominance of Italian party politics by a Mafia out of control. That example will serve in miniature for the history of all U.S. interventions since then in Asia. In 1951 a decision was made to ship arms and supplies to the armies of the Kuomintang (KMT) drug network in Burma. This led to a fivefold increase in Burmese opium production in less than a decade, from eighty to four hundred tons. By 1999, the peak year before the ban imposed by the Taliban took effect, world opium production had reached 7,000 tons. Of this, 4,700 tons, or 70 percent, was being grown in Afghanistan and trafficked by heirs of the mujahedin who in the 1980s had been financed, armed, and supported by the CIA.

Again, the United States was not solely responsible for this growth. Some of it would have occurred anyway, possibly (as the U.S. government used to contend) under the guidance of a hostile power such as China or the Soviet Union. The point is that the drug problem cannot be understood, let alone properly addressed, until the parapolitical consequences of CIA involvement have been acknowledged and corrected.

## OIL

The presence of drug trafficking in the background of these interventions is paralleled by considerations about oil. Here too decisions made freely after World War II have helped to enmesh the United States in a problematical situation—the risks from terrorism are continuously increasing and extrication will not now be easy.

Right after World War II, building on the so-called Quincy Agreements with Saudi Arabia in 1945, the United States moved to dominate a global system for the production and distribution of oil. Starting with the Truman Doctrine in 1946, U.S. geostrategic thinking was oil based. What began as a strategy for containment of the Soviet Union has become more and more nakedly a determination to control the oil resources of the world. This pursuit has progressively deformed the domestic U.S. economy, rendering it more and more unbalanced and dependent on heavy military expenditures in remote and ungovernable areas—most recently Afghanistan. It has also made the United States an increasingly belligerent power, fighting wars, especially in Asia, where it turns time after time to allies and assets prominent in the global drug traffic.

From the outset U.S. strategy in Southeast Asia envisaged protecting what President Eisenhower once referred to as “the rich empire of Indonesia,” whose primary export was oil.<sup>1</sup> In the 1970s, as opium production in Asia shifted west

from the Golden Triangle to the Golden Crescent, so also U.S. interventions, first covert and then overt, shifted from Indochina to Afghanistan.

I do not mean to suggest that domination of oil resources was the sole consideration on the minds of U.S. policy planners. On the contrary, they believed in their own rhetoric of defending the so-called free world from communist domination, whether Soviet or Chinese. But inasmuch as what they feared above all was communist control of oil resources, the result of their planning was continuously to strengthen U.S. domination of an increasingly unified global oil system.

From Iran in 1953 to Indonesia in 1965 and Ghana in 1966 the CIA was involved in the covert overthrow of governments around the world that (as Michael Tanzer noted years ago) had threatened to nationalize their oil industries.<sup>2</sup> As U.S. interventions overseas increased in the 1960s, so did U.S. dependence on overseas oil to meet its growing demands. When this exposure led to the oil shocks of the 1970s, the United States was forced into a double policy of controlling the international flow of oil and petrodollars. As we shall see, it solved the latter problem by means of secret agreements that maintained the strength of the U.S. dollar at the expense of the Third World.

The resulting impoverishment of the Third World has been accompanied by a disastrous increase in global terrorism, which has now become a major focus of U.S. foreign policy. Yet, as Frank Viviano observed in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (September 26, 2001),

The hidden stakes in the war against terrorism can be summed up in a single word: oil. The map of terrorist sanctuaries and targets in the Middle East and Central Asia is also, to an extraordinary degree, a map of the world's principal energy sources in the 21st century. The debate of these energy resources—rather than a simple confrontation between Islam and the West—will be the primary flash point of global conflict for decades to come, say observers in the region.<sup>3</sup>

Although it was not part of his subject, Viviano's observations can be applied also to other regions of oil and terrorism, such as Indonesia, Colombia, Somalia, and (because of oil pipelines) Chechnya and even Kosovo.

In short, the etiology or origin of global terrorism is rooted partly in the historical context of previous U.S. policy decisions with respect to both drugs and oil. I say this not to cast blame but to suggest the proper direction to search for solutions. Decision makers of a half century ago cannot be faulted for lacking the foreknowledge that comes more easily in retrospect. It is, however, not too late to address the legacy they have left us—a suspect affluence grounded in part on the impoverishment of the rest of the world. As long as that legacy is not corrected, we can be sure that the problem of terrorism will remain with us.

## WHAT TO DO

The problem will not be solved by putting more and more U.S. troops abroad, from Colombia to Kyrgyzstan. (Both countries, as it happens, are in oil regions

and are experiencing a rapid increase in drug trafficking). The quintessential example of such a buildup of U.S. arms and personnel was Iran in the 1970s — a major cause, as is now obvious, for the Iranian revolution against the U.S. client shah. Hundreds of millions of U.S. dollars for the Somali dictator Siad Barre encouraged him to pursue increasingly oppressive policies, which led in 1991 to his overthrow.

With respect to drugs, I will only say that the United States must end those repressive policies whose result (and often intention) is to maintain the high drug prices that strengthen and enrich the international drug traffic. With respect to oil, we must intensify the search for technological ways to reduce consumption at home and move toward a more multilateral and equitable oil system abroad. Above all, the United States must return to the multilateral system of global regulation that it helped establish after World War II and renounce the fatal temptation to become a hegemon. We must not repeat the follies of Napoleon and Hitler in the heartlands of Eurasia.

This shift will require a different strategy to deal with the dollar and with petrodollars, particularly those from Saudi Arabia and its neighbors in the Persian Gulf. At present the United States balances its payments by secret agreements with Saudi Arabia to recycle petrodollars to the United States and to ensure that OPEC sales all over the world are denominated in U.S. dollars. These arrangements to ease pressure on the U.S. currency have helped, as an inevitable consequence, to create debt crises all over the Third World.

The same secret agreements, discussed in chapter 2 of this volume, are perhaps the prime example of how secret U.S. policies, barely documented, can give rise to global conditions of misery and unrest. People's strategies of public opposition to official policies, such as the rallies that activists like Noam Chomsky indefatigably address, are in my opinion unlikely to succeed until they expose the unjust secret arrangements and deals on which these official policies are based. The U.S. political establishment, seemingly unassailable on its surface, becomes more vulnerable when the private, covert, and sometimes conspiratorial origins of what passes for public policy are exposed. This book is dedicated to examining our policies at this deeper level.

Meanwhile, official strategies that enrich the United States by impoverishing the rest of the world diminish the possibilities of peace and progress for this country. And our security is put still more at risk by giving military aid to unpopular dictators. The United States tried this strategy in Vietnam in the 1960s, Iran in the 1970s, and Somalia in the 1980s, to name a few. We are still suffering from the anti-American reactions these policies produced. Yet today, as if we had learned nothing, we are establishing bases and giving military aid to the dictator of Uzbekistan — an ex-Soviet *apparatchik* with no program for dealing with his extensive Muslim opposition except to imprison them.

We cannot expect a reversal of these strategies from America's present leaders of either party, constrained as they are by an increasingly oppressive global sys-



tem that is in large part of those parties' own making. Recent revelations have shown the extent to which contributions from energy companies have constrained both parties in America as they have politicians abroad. What we hear instead from Washington, although not without opposition, are increasingly strident calls for unilateralist policies in an allegedly unipolar world. Triumphant unilateralism in the United States and terroristic Islamism abroad have become more and more similar to (and dependent on) each other, with each invoking its opposite to justify its excesses.

The future of American democracy rests on our ability to recognize and separate our nation from the causal factors that lie at the heart of U.S. global policies—policies that have produced such harmful results, not only for those who have been victimized on a world scale but also for Americans.

To these ends I offer, hopefully, the findings of this book. Part III of what follows is from my 1972 book *The War Conspiracy*, chapters long on detail but short on deep political analysis. At the front of the book are six chapters on the deep politics of U.S. engagements in Afghanistan, Colombia, and Indochina. The patterns in each case are, I believe, more easily discerned by a comparative analysis of the others. Above all, we see the recurring lobbying activities of groups like the American Security Council, in which oil companies are represented, as well as the lobbying activities of airlines with government contracts for arms shipments, and with alleged involvement also in drug trafficking and/or organized crime.

The point of these chapters, and of the book, is not to compete with what I describe as the archival histories of these events, which chronicle them from the documented perspective of the policy makers. It is to focus on deeper causal patterns arising from less documented sectors of society, which have tended to be overlooked in serious academic analysis. It is at this level, I submit, that we can isolate and expose factors more easily amenable to correction.

It would be folly to suggest that this book can bring peace to the world. But I do believe that it suggests new ways in which to search for peace. Above all I hope that it may help Americans understand how they may love their country and still come to accept its share of responsibility for an international order that cries out for amendment.

Just as some in the U.S. government denounce others as terrorists forming an "axis of evil," so others turn such epithets back on the U.S. government itself. I myself see little value in depicting either the United States or its enemies as an intractable other, to be opposed by means that may well prove counterproductive. Just as Islamism needs to be understood in its complexity, so does U.S. power, which is at least as complex. Above all we have to recognize that U.S. influence is grounded not just in military and economic superiority but also in so-called soft power (an "ability . . . that shapes the preferences of others," thus "tends to be associated with intangible power resources such as an attractive culture, ideology, and institutions").<sup>4</sup>

We need a "soft politics" of persuasion and nonviolence to address and modify

this country's soft power. Such a proposal is not utopian: the soft politics of the antiwar movement helped, despite many key errors of strategy, to hasten U.S. disengagement from Vietnam. As it becomes increasingly clear that that war "dealt a major blow to the United States' ability to remain the world's dominant economic power,"<sup>15</sup> even the exponents of America's hard power may come in time to express their gratitude to critics of the Vietnam War.

As this book goes to press, this country is facing the prospect of yet another needless and disastrous intervention in Iraq. For our sake as well as for the sake of the rest of the world, we must continue to develop alternative soft processes of change.

Notes: For the most part I have made only necessary corrections and amplifications to part III, "Indochina," first published in 1972 in *The War Conspiracy*. Though I have updated a few of the terms (e.g., "Huong" in place of "Mees"), I have generally avoided pinyin substitutions ("Guominjiaang" in place of "Kuomintang") except where the context is recent.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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My biggest debt by far is to my wife and inspiration, Ronna Kahatznick, not only for her help with the book but for her love and companionship, which have strengthened me in a difficult engagement with both poetry and this world.

### AUTHOR'S NOTE

*In 2001, having completed a book consisting of parts II and III in this volume, I wrote a preface about America's recurring alliances with drug traffickers to gain*

*control over oil resources. The preface was completed and dated August 31, 2001, eleven days before the events of 9/11. My first reaction to the 9/11 crisis was to consider my remarks passé; but on reflection I have decided my analysis was more relevant than ever, especially as the U.S. dependence on the drug trafficking Northern Alliance became more and more evident. Portions of that original preface are preserved in the following author's note.*

Writing this expanded version of my 1972 book has sharpened my sense of the deep politics of our country, especially of deep causes for our involvement in irrational conflicts, conflicts that do not serve the interests of either the invaded country or the American people. Plan Colombia in particular is another phase, hopefully but not necessarily the last, of Cold War practices inimical to democracy that have outlived any possible justification yet will prove hard to eradicate.

Central to these practices is the habit of intervening militarily in the Third World on the side (and with the assistance) of repressive forces organized around the drug traffic. Such covert arrangements with drug traffickers require systematic lying to the American people, a practice of lying that entraps not only U.S. government officials but their allies in the so-called responsible U.S. press.

I had a chance to observe the viciousness of this corrupt system in 1987, when I spent six months in Washington at a think tank, supplying documentation to the Kerry congressional subcommittee investigating the drug trafficking of Contras and their supporters. Less startling to me than the facts were their consequences for those who knew of or reported them. One conscientious witness, a Republican businessman and Reagan supporter, suffered credible death threats that appear to have been partly acted on. Another (for his pains was similarly menaced and directly targeted by Oliver North in the White House as a "terrorist threat.")

Even members of our think tank were intimidated by the FBI, which was perhaps the least bothersome inconvenience suffered by those promoting the truth. Others were placed under twenty-four hour surveillance by forces the Washington police could not identify, or deprived of their professional jobs. In an arrangement that was probably illegal, a CIA-type propaganda campaign was funded through the State Department against the American people, targeting for defeat those who had opposed the Contras in Congress.

Although there was no longer any Cold War pretext for this crude approach, the coercive forces had become stronger than ever. It is clear that, at a minimum, the lies are continuing today. The nation is being slowly dragged into a conflict with alleged Colombia "narco-guerrillas," whose share of coca production was officially estimated in 2001 to be 2.5 percent of the total. Our arms and assistance are going to the Colombian military, who work in coordination with drug-trafficking paramilitary death squads. In 2001 these death squads' share of the drug trade was estimated, officially by the Colombian government, at 40 percent.

This fundamental Orwellian absurdity of our misnamed "war on drugs" is (as far as I can determine) totally ignored by the U.S. press today. This is part of a

predictable pattern, just as in the past the U.S. press ignored the drug trafficking of our allies in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Central America, and most recently Kosovo. Also completely ignored by the U.S. press is the extent to which U.S. oil companies have lobbied for Plan Colombia, just as in the 1960s the press ignored the vigorous campaign of Socony Mobil for an escalated involvement in Vietnam.

I do not say these things out of despair, nor from a dislike of the United States. On the contrary, I have written this with the conviction that if the American people understand the truth about Plan Colombia, they will finally mobilize to end it, just as in the 1960s and 1970s they mobilized against Vietnam. But reaching this understanding will not be easy. The channels of information and communication in this country, though the most developed in the world, are also deeply flawed.

Only to this extent am I a pessimist: I believe that if U.S. Colombian policy is left in the hands of those now running and informing this country, it will lead to more and more killings of Colombians and Americans alike. Whether or not we have a new Vietnam War will depend on concerned people like the readers of this book.

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**PARAPOLITICS AND DEEP POLITICS:  
DEFINITIONS AND USAGE**

I. (From *The War Conspiracy*, p. 171, chapter epigraph)

**"par-a-pol-i-tics** (pár' ə pól' ə fiks), *n.* 1. a system or practice of politics in which accountability is consciously diminished. 2. generally, covert politics, the conduct of public affairs not by rational debate and responsible decision-making but by indirection, collusion, and deceit. Cf. *conspiracy*.<sup>1</sup> 3. the political exploitation of irresponsible agencies or parastructures, such as intelligence agencies.

Ex. 1, "The Nixon doctrine, viewed in retrospect, represented the application of parapolitics on a hitherto unprecedented scale." 2, "Democracy and parapolitics, even in foreign affairs, are ultimately incompatible."

1. Notes for an unwritten future dictionary.<sup>2</sup>

II. (From *Deep Politics and the Death of JFK*, pp. 6-7)

"the investigation of *parapolitics*, which I defined (with the CIA in mind) as a 'system or practice of politics in which accountability is consciously diminished.' . . . I still see value in this definition and mode of analysis. But *parapolitics* as thus defined is itself too narrowly conscious and intentional . . . it describes at best only an intervening layer of the irrationality under our political culture's rational surface. Thus I now refer to parapolitics as only one manifestation of *deep politics*; all those political practices and arrangements, deliberate or not, which are usually repressed rather than acknowledged."<sup>3</sup>

III. (From "America's Worst Enemy: The CIA's Secret Powers")

"Covert power is like nuclear power: it produces noisome and life-threatening by-products which cumulatively are more and more threatening to the environment supposedly served. The by-products of covert power include trained terrorists who in the end are likely to target their former employers, the incriminating relations in government which hinder these terrorists' prosecution, and the ensuing corruption of society at large. The result is deep politics: the immersion of public political life in an immobilizing substratum of unspeakable scandal and bad faith. The result in practice is 9/11."<sup>4</sup>

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# Introduction

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## The Deep Politics of U.S. Interventions

In 1969–1970, the year of Cambodia and Kent State, I wrote a book, *The War Conspiracy*. In it I described what I considered hidden, undiscussed forces that helped lead the United States into the Vietnam War. My book looked behind official U.S. policy statements to other more powerful factors not generally recognized, and some of my friends considered this approach pessimistic. It was not. It was optimistic, inspired by the old-fashioned hope that a better understanding of these factors might help contribute to bringing them under control.

As I explored instances of hidden manipulations, whether at the highest or at subordinate levels, I coined a term, “parapolitics,” to cover “the conduct of public affairs . . . by indirection, collusion, and deceit.” But “parapolitics” does not cover the full range of events in this book. “Parapolitics” describes intentional controlling behavior, mostly executive and bureaucratic. My later chapters looked more at societal factors outside government that did not fit the definition—notably the lobbying and other activities of oil companies and the aircraft industry, often in conjunction with the military. The last two chapters dealt with matters of relevance to U.S. interventions today: the impact on U.S. foreign policy of oil strategies and the drug traffic.

Today I would speak of “deep politics” or deep political processes rather than conspiratorial events, meaning a series of practices, at odds with the laws and mores of society, “which are usually repressed rather than acknowledged.”<sup>1</sup> Deep political processes include parapolitical ones but are more open-ended. Parapolitics is a means of control. Deep politics can refer to any form of sinister, unacknowledged influence.

The distinction, easy enough to make in theory, is much harder to make in practice. Some of the bureaucratic manipulations described in this book, such as those involving Air America in Laos, strike me as parapolitical intrigue. But underlying Southeast Asian history in those years was the politically significant narcotics traffic. The CIA was intimately connected to this traffic, chiefly through

its proprietary Air America. But it was not securely in control of this traffic and probably did not even seek to be. What it desired was "deniability," achieved by the legal ruse that Air America, which the CIA wholly owned, was a corporation that hired pilots and owned an aircraft maintenance facility on Taiwan. Most of its planes, which often carried drugs, were 60 percent owned and frequently operated by Kuomintang (KMT) Chinese.

The CIA was comfortable in this deniable relationship with people it knew were reorganizing the postwar drug traffic in Southeast Asia. The U.S. government was determined to ensure that drug-trafficking networks and trade in the region remained under KMT control, even if this meant logistic and air support to armies in postwar Burma whose chief activity was expanding the local supply of opium. The complex legal structure of the airline CAT—known earlier as Civil Air Transport and later as Air America—was the ideal vehicle for this support. (Some CAT pilots were involved in smuggling during World War II, before the CIA connection.)<sup>4</sup>

The acquisition of CAT was part of a larger strategy whose principal advocate was its original owner, Major General Claire L. Chennault. Chennault predicted in the late 1940s that the victory of Mao Tse-tung in mainland China would be followed by a massive expansion of communist influence: first in Indochina and then Thailand, Malaya, Burma, and possibly even India. Knowing that the commitment of U.S. troops in response to this threat was not politically possible, Chennault proposed an alternative: using his airline as logistical support for a KMT Chinese army, strengthened by American military advisers.<sup>5</sup> Chennault's project, unpopular at first inside the government, was eventually forced on a reluctant Truman administration with the support of Henry Luce's *Life* magazine and China lobby representatives in Congress.<sup>6</sup>

The Chennault plan deserves to be recognized as the prototype of the U.S. use of drug proxies, which has survived down to the 2001 U.S. intervention in Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup> This working alliance with a drug network, implemented in the 1950s in Burma, would have been dangerous enough if politically neutral. An even more dangerous milieu for conspiratorial intrigue emerged in the early 1960s, as President Kennedy gradually disengaged from the goals of the KMT and the powerful China lobby, still scheming for the recovery of the Chinese mainland.<sup>8</sup>

Urged on by the growing evidence of a Chinese-Soviet split, Chiang Kai-shek in 1962 talked openly of an imminent invasion of mainland China. As discussed below, his proposal to Washington for an expanded Bay of Pigs-type operation on the mainland was endorsed by Ray Cline, the former Taiwan CIA station chief (later CIA deputy director of intelligence). It was backed also by Admiral Harry D. Felt, commander in chief of the Pacific (CINCPAC). Many top U.S. military leaders and the CIA were also sympathetic.<sup>9</sup> One supporter who went even further was Air America board chairman and former CINCPAC Admiral Felix B.

Stump, who called publicly for the defeat of communism in the Far East, using tactical nuclear weapons if necessary.

As is often pointed out, Chiang's efforts in mainland China resulted only in the killing or capture of his agents. But KMT allies played a successful conspiratorial role with Air America (formerly Chennault's airline, CAT) in destabilizing Laos in 1960–1964. And even more conspicuously they succeeded, with the help of CAT, in building up the postwar drug traffic. Both of these roles were probably more significant in the Laotian crises than the role attributed by U.S. intelligence at the time to the Chinese People's Republic.<sup>8</sup> KMT political objectives, assets, and allies in Laos cannot be dissociated from their stake, by then considerable, in the international drug traffic.

The CIA fiascos in Laos should concern us again today, as the U.S. plays the drug card in Colombia and Afghanistan. The CIA's convenience or milieu of deniability, as opposed to secure control, gave rise to many episodes in the 1960s that are still imperfectly understood but had lasting and disastrous consequences. Those mistakes, which contributed enormously to the spread of the international drug traffic, are apparently being repeated today.

### **THE CHENNAULT/CAT LEGACY: DRUG PROXY ASSETS, INFRASTRUCTURES, AND LOBBIES**

The following chapters study, in reverse chronology, the evolution of the energies of the CIA–Air America–KMT complex into the current deep politics of oil and drugs in Afghanistan and Colombia. The overall picture is complex, but certain general propositions tend to prevail. One is that initially small, covert operations, lacking proper supervision, become budget opportunities to be exploited by a number of different lobbies, from oil to herbicides.

A second proposition is that off-the-book proprietaries, like Air America, survive through the war scares they help generate. In Air America's wake, there are now a number of outsourced, nominally private corporations, such as DynCorp, which serve as trainers and infrastructure for proxy U.S. assets abroad. All of these, lacking a regular standing budget, require continuity of U.S. intervention if they are to remain in business as adjuncts to the U.S. defense establishment. They not only need the business but can help ensure that it happens.

A third proposition is that where wisdom calls for moderation and excessive U.S. response will generate a larger budget, excess will tend to prevail. As I quote from former U.S. Ambassador Robert White in chapter 6 of this book, "If you put over 90 cents of your foreign policy dollar into the Pentagon and the CIA, then your policy is going to emphasize a military approach, a secretive, under the [table] approach, to the problems."<sup>9</sup> This 9 : 1 ratio becomes even greater when we compare lobbying by profit-motivated interests to that by public interest groups.



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