

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نپاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

BY ROB URIE

28.02.2021

## Capitalism and Political Violence at Home and Abroad



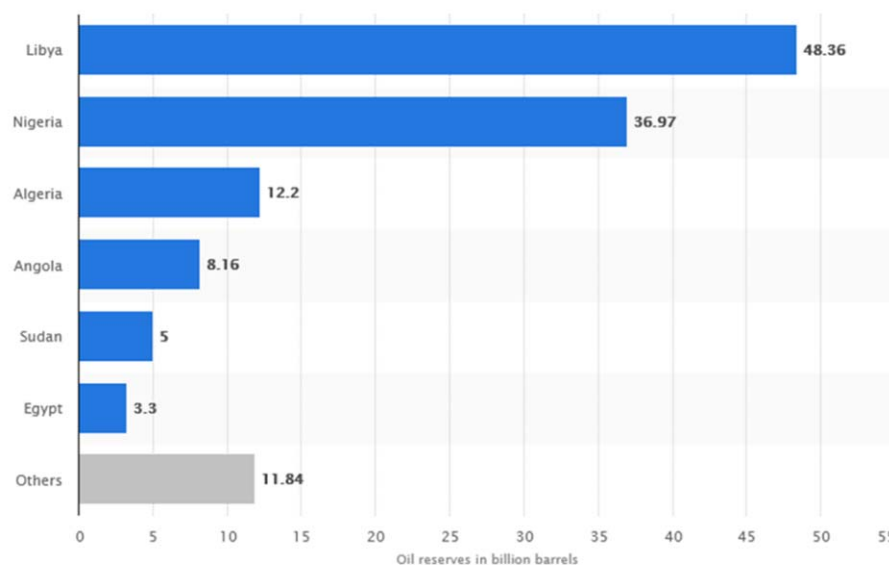
Photograph by Nathaniel St. Clair

Question: why do both conservative and liberal governments in the U.S. install right-wing governments abroad if 'the U.S.' opposes right-wing political violence? While right and left politics may seem to have limited descriptive value in many current conflicts, the interests of capital, broadly considered, represent an unwavering motive for them. Why then would military conflict in the interests of capital not be considered a left / right concern within the American political frame? Part of the answer is the Cold War

conceptual shift away from conflicts between nations to a battle of ideologies. Another is the way that these conflicts are sold.

To be clear, there are plenty of American nationalists who support militarism outside of their direct economic interests. The usual counter— that economic causality is implausibly reductive in a large and complicated world, proceeds from a narrow view of economic motives. Military production is a large part of the U.S. economy— money is made when bombs are dropped. And U.S. military operations have followed the resource needs of American businesses quite closely for well over a century. Finally, capitalism requires the creation of property rights, political stability and control over labor, to facilitate the production and expropriation of wealth.

### Libya has the Largest Proved Oil Reserves in Africa



Graph: the great mystery of why the U.S. / NATO chose regime change in Libya in 2011 has been solved. Libya has the largest proved oil reserves on the African continent. Through broader, and more plausible, consideration of economic motives, most U.S. foreign policy, irrespective of the political party in charge, has one or more economic motives that explain it. Source: Statista.

The U.S. assisted coup in Ukraine, which saw the ouster of a democratically elected President (Viktor Yanukovych) and his replacement with a U.S. puppet, has plausible explanation as oil pipeline politics. During the U.S. / NATO destruction of Libya the U.S. media barely mentioned that Libya has the largest proved reserves of oil in Africa. In addition to serving the political interests of out-of-power Democrats, Russiagate took

place as Russia was finishing the Nord Stream II pipeline to supply Europe with Russian natural gas. Current U.S. machinations in Haiti are tied to both colonial history and sweatshop production for the U.S.

Additionally, the current distinction between left, liberal and right-wing politics in the U.S. places the anti-war left as the outlier in opposing U.S. militarism. This opposition on the left is a function of an internationalist view that proceeds from the trans-national category of economic class. The left-liberal alliance of late can only persist with the left abandoning this internationalist view or liberals abandoning militarism. As is drawn out below, class allegiance keeps the PMC, the managerial class, in close proximity to military production.

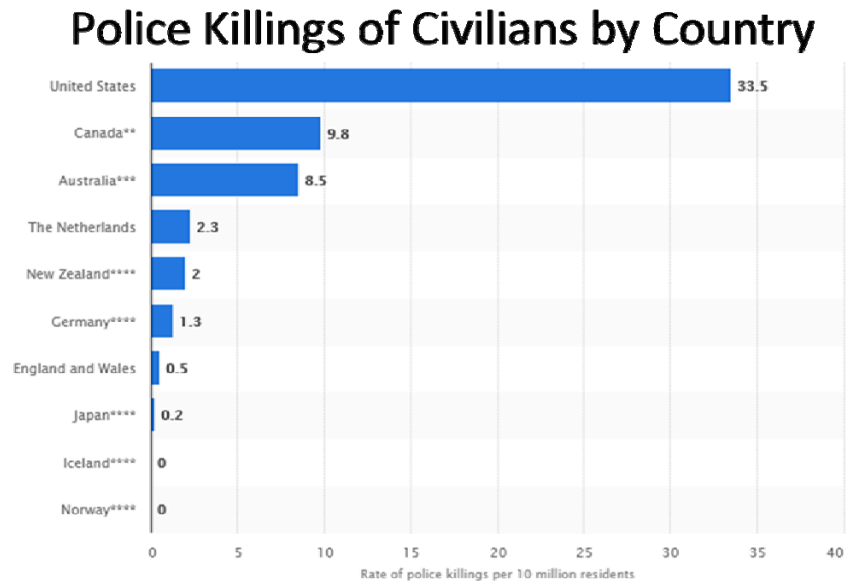
Right-wing political violence and U.S. geopolitics are intertwined clearly enough when viewed through a global lens. From the American side, the Cold War binary was communist / anti-communist. The history of the U.S. overthrowing democratically elected foreign leaders to install authoritarian dictators—who served American business interests, is so well known that it is not worth repeating here (see: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). All of these acts were portrayed as defensive by the political and military leaders who conceived and prosecuted them. And all had economic motives as subtexts.

Lest ‘realpolitik’ be raised to explain the American preference for right-wing political violence, following WWII, the CIA and the U.S. military employed thousands of former Nazis to help fight communism. At about the time that the FBI and NYPD were plotting the murder of Malcolm X, the U.S. Green Berets were filling their ranks with former Waffen SS. Too-hot-to-handle former Nazis like Klaus Barbie and Josef Mengele worked for the CIA and its affiliates in South America. The American preference for right-wing despots is unwavering.

The goal here isn’t to paint an irredeemably dark portrait of U.S. foreign policy, but to link right-wing state violence abroad back to domestic politics. Typical framing distinguishes between 1) state violence carried out by the police, 2) random and / or organized violence carried out for explicitly politic reasons like racist attacks, and 3) the ‘passive’ violence of capitalism. The latter includes mass economic dislocations, tenuous employment at starvation wages, insufficient public services like healthcare and education, and environmental degradation.

The question of the moment is why a large proportion of those who claim to be horrified by domestic right-wing political violence support it when it is perpetrated by the American state abroad. Part of the difference no doubt ties to the (classical) liberal theory of ‘the

state’ as the sole legitimate perpetrator of political violence. However, the Black Lives Matter protests of the Spring and Summer of 2020 (and 2014 and 2015) raised the issue of illegitimate state violence. The point: even within the (classical) liberal frame, not all state violence is legitimate.



Graph: far more civilians in the U.S. are killed by the police than in any other wealthy country. The U.S. also puts more of its citizens in prison than any other country. Given that it is overwhelmingly the poor who are killed and incarcerated, American liberals have little direct experience with police violence. Source: Statista.

Protecting property, or more precisely, property rights, is part of maintaining the public order that the police are charged with. As with the strategy of using the U.S. military to facilitate capitalist expropriation abroad, this is the role of the police domestically. The racial justice protesters of 2020 correctly concluded that not all state violence is legitimate. Given that cops could be prosecuted if police violence violated their mandate, the failure to prosecute them implies that this violence is part of their mandate. In this way, right-wing political violence abroad relates back to domestic right-wing political violence.

The current struggle over the minimum wage illustrates this relation of maintaining the public order to economic expropriation. At \$24 per hour, the inflation and productivity adjusted minimum wage in the U.S. from 1968, workers were still being added to employer payrolls. The point:  $\$24 - \$7.25 = \$16.75$  per hour plus a rate of profit is one measure of economic expropriation from low wage workers in the U.S. Maintaining an unjust public order is critical to the functioning of this exploitative political economy.

Most of the prison population in the U.S. comes from neighborhoods where the minimum wage affects livelihoods.

From within the liberal view 1) social justice matters, but 2) the cause of injustice is the personal failings of individuals, the charge that individual cops are racist or fascist imagines that the police determine their own purpose. Despite that the police are locally organized and funded, there exists a remarkable uniformity of purpose across the country. While race is a factor in police violence, once economic class is accounted for, the racial disparity in police killings is about 1:1.5 white to black versus 20:1 male to female for gender. Police violence in the U.S. most closely resembles right-wing military violence abroad in this regard.

The point is often made that poor people of color tend to support the police as a mediating force in poor communities. But this takes the background conditions of regularly occurring, unjust violence and economic expropriation as given. In addition to providing occasional protection from imminent violence, the police support the system of economic expropriation by slumlords, payday lenders, low-wage employers ( $\$24 - \$7.25 = \$16.75$  per hour minimum expropriation), for-profit schools, for-profit prisons and the largest absolute and relative carceral system in the world.

This system of economic expropriation is what the PMC (professional managerial class) manages. It is what small business owners are forced to contend with and feed off of. It is what the working class is on the wrong side of by definition. The liberal vision is that through social inclusion on the right side of power, this system will be made just. In other words, if the proportion of POC, women, name-your-identity, who are slumlords, payday lenders, for-profit educators, for-profit prisoners, cops and soldiers can be raised to be representative of the broader population, justice will have prevailed.

The distinction between 'working with' and 'working for' capital explains to a degree the PMC sense of inclusion in power versus the working-class sense of being on the wrong side of it. It is the PMC 'working with' capital who design and sell military materiel, produce the architecture of electronic surveillance and control, find and exploit natural resources, create and manage defective financial products, lobby to limit or end environmental regulations, find tax loopholes for corporations and the rich, and lobby politicians to assure that the interests of corporations and the rich are at the center of major legislation.

The great mystery of recent years is how so-many liberal hawks got rolled by the Bush administration with WMDs, which overlaps 1:1 with those who got rolled by the CIA and

FBI with Russiagate. The answer is that the CIA, NSA and the FBI are the PMC. The ‘blob’ of bourgeois reporters, military analysts, lobbyists and corporate functionaries, etc. support power because they are its operatives. Both WMDs and Russiagate were ubiquitous because the role of the PMC was to promote these stories, not to question or contradict them. The true believers are their victims, not their partners in a political alliance.

The purpose on identity politics is to bridge the contradiction between liberal ideals and the fact that right-wing political violence is what the U.S. state does both domestically and internationally. Page 7 (ii) of the intelligence assessment that laid out the initial Russiagate charges stated plainly that Russia’s crime was ‘to undermine the US-led liberal democratic order.’ The IC (intelligence community), which was John Brennan, James Clapper and a few select analysts, included the CIA, FBI and NSA in the ‘liberal democratic order’ even though by historical accounts these agencies have done everything in their power to undermine liberal democracy.

The classical liberal theory that poses clear distinctions between government and commerce 1) never heard of neoliberalism and 2) never considered the Marxist-Leninist theory of the capitalist state. The point: the neoliberal economic order that emerged following WWII, but rose to dominate American political economy in the 1990s, finds nominally private contractors (like Edward Snowden) now acting as the beating heart of the neoliberal state. Consider: the ‘Steele Dossier’ that was the apparent basis of Russiagate was cobbled together by a former MI6 agent hired by the law firm that represented the Clinton campaign.

To tie this together, along with the domestic police and the U.S. military acting abroad, the CIA, NSA and FBI don’t just support capital. In a functional sense, the *are* capital through the privatization and outsourcing of key government functions. In an operational sense this ties to the military production that emerged as a government supported business after WWII. However, the cost-plus contracts of yore have been replaced by market, and occasionally monopoly, rates of profit. But more to the point, the ethos of commerce has by 2021 fully consumed the logic of governance.

Anyone who was alive and kicking during the WMD fraud will recall 1) the ‘evidence’ always required trusting liberal institutions (meant descriptively) over reasonably well publicized reasons for not trusting them and 2) it remained outside of the Overton Window to question the intentions and veracity of those making WMD claims for years after it became evident that no WMDs would be forthcoming. The point: the Overton Window is

about power, not truth. Russiagate has followed a similar path. The powers that be have doubled, tripled and quadrupled down on the story, with the PMC remaining its core proponents— just as with WMDs.

Again, no one with even cursory knowledge of American history believes that John Brennan, James Clapper, or as institutions the CIA, FBI and NSA, support liberal democracy. The distinction they are depending on is domestic versus international policies and actions. However, the Cold War wasn't framed as U.S. interests versus communism. It wasn't even framed as capitalism versus communism. It was framed as freedom and democracy versus communism. The CIA has spent the time since its creation in 1948 crushing freedom and democracy abroad, much as the FBI has done domestically.

Through an episode that ties current history back a half-century or so for context, feminist icon and CIA asset Gloria Steinem, the epitome of the cosmopolitan liberalism of the 1960s and 1970s, described the CIA in bourgeois terms as “liberal, nonviolent and honorable.” This is the language of class-mates and co-workers. At the time the CIA employed as many former Nazi officers as it could find, led the U.S. ‘war of attrition’— a strategy of genocide, in Southeast Asia, had installed authoritarian right-wing governments around the globe, and was active against anti-war activists domestically in contradiction to its charter.

Why do U.S. representatives— say from the IMF, the World Bank and / or the CIA, install only violent, authoritarian, right-wing governments? This isn't an abstraction. Haiti, yes. Iran, yes. Iraq, yes, Honduras, yes. Panama, yes, Chile, yes. Philippines, yes. Guatemala, yes. Dominican Republic, yes. And on. And on. Part of the rationale is likely a theory of governance premised in political repression. The rationale provided by people who actually did the installing is that serving the interests of capital is what U.S. foreign policy is intended to accomplish. This ties to the explanation of the Cold War as a capitalist gift.



Bull Connor

Where this gets you and I, dear reader, is that liberalism is an aesthetic— with its attendant hermeneutic, rather than a politics, set of principles, or particular policies. What Gloria Steinem meant by “liberal, nonviolent and honorable” when describing the CIA was the same thing that Bull Connor likely meant by ‘good ol’ boys,’ they were people like her. What they do in life, be it gratuitously destroying entire nations, sending thousands to their deaths in Nazi extermination camps, or launching terror campaigns against innocent civilians the result in tens of thousands of deaths, has no bearing on whether or not they are ‘one of us’ in the liberal sense.

In the Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Present that defines American politics, right-wing Venezuelan grifter Juan Guaido was just recognized as the leader of Venezuela by the Biden administration, rather than the duly elected President of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro. Moise is being kept on in Haiti by his American sponsors. Both of these, plus much, much more, despite the shift from a conservative to a liberal government in the U.S. To paraphrase the song, ‘where there’s oil to steal and underwear to be sewn, I’ll be there.’ So goes it in the U.S. of A.

**Rob Urie** is an artist and political economist. His book *Zen Economics* is published by CounterPunch Books.

CounterPunch 26.02.2021