

THE WAR CONSPIRACY

Peter Dale Scott – GNN September, 2001 Interview Transcript

Stephen Marshall: *Hello Peter. I guess I wanted to start off by turning to some of the work you have done, some of the analysis of U.S. policy and what you have described as 'deep politics' and 'para-politics' in your books. One of the things that I feel many people, specifically young people, are lacking in their approach to understanding what is happening right now is a good historical context. So let's start with that.*

Peter Dale Scott: Alright.

On many of the forums and chat rooms around the web, people are referring to the current course of action (in the War on Terrorism) and what the "U.S. government" is going to do. And they think of the government as one singular, monolithic entity. But in your books [Cocaine Politics](#) and [Deep Politics](#) you describe a government that is not a unified organization. Rather, that it is one of factions and interests who don't always operate from the same agenda. Can you describe how we should be looking at the government right now? Is it a monolithic entity being run by the President or is it a group of factions working with different objectives and agendas?

Well, I think that particularly in a country like the United States, which has such diverse elements in it, you are going to see those diverse elements reflected inside the government. There are a lot of tensions. One is, for example, whether America should try to live as a partner in a world with many other, different cultures and states within it or whether America should assert its supremacy. And even in that second camp, there is tension between the people who believe the military and the use of force is the answer to problems versus the people who believe in political understanding of other cultures and states and who advocate a more political and diplomatic approach.

This is very much being debated at this moment in Washington.

Right. Now you are a person who finds the origins of their work as an [FOIA](#) activist and critical thinker back in the era of the Vietnam War. Maybe even before then... but, let me ask you, as a person who has witnessed the various stages of the post-WW II evolution of the U.S. as the dominant global military power, where would you place this recent event on that timeline? Is it even linked to that timeline? Where does it emanate from...

Well, I think that the best way to place what is happening right now in perspective is to see it as

fall-out from the Cold War. Back in the 1950's... first in 1950 and then, again, in 1954, America - rightly or wrongly, I think wrongly - decided they were dealing with an implacable and absolutely unscrupulous enemy and actually decreed on paper, in [internal documents](#), that the United States should be equally unscrupulous in fighting back. And that was the beginning of the (U.S.) cultivation of terrorism.

We trained the [Cuban exiles](#) against Castro, we trained the [Contras](#) in Nicaragua and most relevant to this new crisis, we trained a lot of [Afghans](#) in terrorism... taught them how to commit sabotage and to plant bombs and blow things up. And now some of those people are fighting back against us. Coordinating terrorist activities against the United States.

So, when you look at the people who make up Bush's cabinet and various military advisors, what can we expect to be the dominant or, maybe I should say, policy response to the attacks?

Well I think its not just the heads in the Cabinet that matter, it's the bureaucracy. And there will be a State Department faction that will say we need to understand the Middle East better and figure out why it is that we're so hated there. And there are some people who will say we have to do more of what we've done. And, you know, Congress has just passed a huge blank check, \$40 billion. Well, only \$10 billion of it is a completely blank check and the speculation is that a lot it will be used to build up the [CIA](#) in precisely the areas where the cultivation of terrorism has brought about the culture of terrorism that is now being used against us.

That's right on point. Now, since the attack on 9-11 there has been a lot of independent speculation about the origin and nature of the operation. One camp puts it all in the realm of a totally unforeseen and pre-meditated attack on the United States while some others see it as a quasi-covert intelligence operation that is being likened to the American foreknowledge about Pearl Harbor. What is your opinion?

Well, I'm somewhere in between. I think that they're both wrong. It's absolutely clear... it's a fact and not a speculation that the United States had some forewarning of this because they did send out an advisory to V.I.P.'s - one of them was [Mayor Willie Brown](#) of San Francisco - not to travel by airplane. So they had some degree of knowledge. But that doesn't mean that they foresaw the whole thing. One of the problems is - and it is a real problem, I don't totally blame the American government for this - that if you want to know about these things, then you have to plant informants. And then, once you have these informants, you don't want to blow their status because they'll get killed if you reveal that you know what is going on.

A very flagrant example of this was with the FBI in the South at the time of desegregation in the Sixties. The FBI got people [inside the Klan](#), but the amount of Klan violence increased quite

dramatically because these people who were the informants were also committing the violence. And they couldn't be rounded up. To this day, the FBI has never been able to admit, candidly, that so much the bombings and murders of that period were committed by FBI informants. I think - I'm only speculating here - that we have a bit of similar situation with the bin Laden organization. That we do have [informants](#) inside it, it's pretty clear, and some of this came out during the time of the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. It's really very instructive to look at that because two of the people who were convicted had actually been trained by the CIA in Afghanistan. And it was also clear that there was an informant in the group who was part of the conspiracy. Well, they don't like to blow their informants because that's the only way that they get any inkling at all of what is going on.

That's the problem.

*Excellent point. Now, one thing I was thinking about - and maybe it is still too early to make a proper analysis in this context - but I wanted to bring this back to your book, **The War Conspiracy**. You originally wrote that in 1970 and it was a startling look at the various interlocking political and business interests that drive nations to war. For people who don't know or who have never read that book, can you explain its premise and whether it has any practical application to what is unfolding in America right now?*

Well, first of all I do think it has an application and I am going to stress that part of the book which I feel is most relevant.

Cool.

I was saying that we didn't just get into the Vietnam war by accident, we got into it because certain people were pushing us very hard to get into it. And among these people were the oil companies (Mobil Oil, most significantly) who knew ahead of most people that there were considerable off-shore oil deposits in the South China Sea. But we were also involved by, and this is what I think is relevant, by our then-allies the [Kuomintang](#) (KMT), that had been pushed out of China but which still ruled Taiwan and which still had the dream of getting back into China. And the only way the KMT imagined they could get back into China would be if they somehow involved America in a war in that area. So that all kinds of events were provoked in a tiny little country, Laos, by the KMT and their allies in the world, a lot of them inside the CIA. And so the CIA and the military, both the Army and the Air Force, would say, "Oh, we must go in to stop communism in Laos."

And this is what I meant by 'The War Conspiracy.' Now the application of that is that the KMT resources were not restricted to the government of Taiwan. They had been a global Chinese organization uniting Chinese exiles everywhere, everyone who was anti-Communist... and the

glue of their organization was the drug traffic. One of the things that has not been mentioned by the United States press until just this morning is that the bin Laden organization, also, is glued together, to some extent, by the [drug traffic](#). And I think that the United States don't want to admit this because it's going to involve [assets of the CIA](#). I mean, the CIA has very close links, for example, to the Pakistani intelligence service, the [ISI](#), which, I think, is deeply financed by the drug traffic. And when we had our operation going in Afghanistan, the principal beneficiary was a man by the name of [Hekmatyar](#) and thanks, really, exclusively to CIA aid, he was able to build himself up to be the number one [heroin trafficker](#) in the world. I not sure that the CIA actually intended for this to happen but because of the way that they work with drug traffickers, this is the consequence. That we build up drug traffickers.

Right.

And [Le Monde](#) has charged that the Osama bin Laden organization is the principle heir to the Hekmatyar organization and is trafficking to the extent of billions of dollars. There was a calmer statement of this in the L.A. Times and one CIA official has said that some members of the bin Laden organization are involved with drug trafficking. But I think this comes back home, you know, that this is the CIA's way of asserting itself in the Third World. It was true in Southeast Asia. It was very conspicuously true in Laos and Vietnam. In Latin America. The CIA makes itself powerful by allying itself with people who are powerful locally and this includes drug traffickers.

*So let me try to encapsulate this in broader terms. If I were to say that the thesis of **The War Conspiracy** was: a confluence of interests agitate and push nations toward war or military action at certain times for their benefit and will even create political reasons for us to become involved in a war, would I be close?*

Yes. And among the forces pushing were the drug traffickers.

OK. So, in applying it to this 'New War' as the networks are labeling it, are you saying that there are some interests who might have had a hand in the pre-emptive strike against the United States? People who could benefit from the imminent military campaign?

No. I'm not saying that at all. There are some people who might want that, yes. But I'm not sure that this is a U.S. national objective at this time, although I'm a little shaken at the speed with which the Bush administration seized on this opportunity to get themselves, well... what amounts approximately to a \$50 - 60 billion increase in its budget.

I guess I am of two minds on this. I am now willing to entertain in my mind the possibility that

some people were willing to see something like this happen so that they could get the budgets that the Congress and, even the President, cause he's a low tax guy, wouldn't give them. This is a standard mode of operation in Europe. In the 1970's there were a lot of explosions, there were a lot [acts of terrorism](#) that were passed off as left wing, anti-government terrorism which actually had been secretly aided and, sometimes, even, the explosives provided by military intelligence services because they wanted initiate what was called a 'strategy of tension'. You build up an appearance of chaos which then makes everybody rush to increase the funding and strength that leads to a right wing government.

Which leads to my next question. We both know well the history of the FLQ in Canada and what became known as the [October Crisis](#). In response to the series of murders, kidnappings and random explosions, then Prime Minister of Canada, Pierre Trudeau, [invoked the War Measures Act](#), essentially limiting the civil liberties of the Canadian population. Now I am not sure if this has ever happened in the United States but today we are in a War Measures situation. And I read this this morning... some, I think, Congressmen were publicly lamenting the fact that they had so quickly signed over power to the Executive. What I am wondering is whether this attack and the immediate reaction to it has caused us to take a step back from the democracy we had before Tuesday. I mean, are U.S. citizens now less enfranchised politically than they were before the bombing?

Well I think that it's pretty clear that, at least in the short run, Congress gave away the store when they... they just passed another [Tonkin Gulf Resolution](#) with respect to this situation. At least there were two votes 'against' in the Senate against the (original) Tonkin Gulf Resolution, there were none against this one, one vote in the House. And that was Barbara Lee, our Representative right here in Berkeley.

But, clearly, now... the whole idea in the Constitution is that Congress has the right to declare war. Well, Congress has given away that right without actually declaring war, for the second time. You would have thought that, in the case of Vietnam, they 'd learned something. But the pressures on the Congress are extreme in a case like this and they, as far as I'm concerned... they've given up the store.

I hear you. Peter, let's jump now to your concept of 'deep politics.' Now, this is something that you have used to describe the events that surrounded the assassination of JFK. But maybe you can explain what are 'deep politics' and how they apply to our involvement in conflicts in countries like Vietnam and Colombia.

Well, the concept there is that things go on that you can't see on the surface. And, whenever the drug traffic gets involved - we're talking about a huge economy, the drug economy. Or what I call

the cryptonomy, which is competitive, almost, with the regular economy. I did calculations from the year 1981 and total world trade in that year was about a trillion dollars and the CIA's total estimate of the total illicit drug trade for the same year was half that much: \$500 billion. So whatever the exact numbers are, and I don't think anyone knows, we are talking about a force that is comparable in strength to the economy that you can see. But nobody, not even the drug traffickers themselves, know what is really going on in the whole of the drug traffic.

And that's the dangerous situation that we got into in Vietnam. We engaged in the process with a force that was very powerful, that could not be seen and clearly understood by government. And that force, the KMT drug traffic, was able to steer the ship for a while and get us more involved than we wanted to and it was very difficult for us to recede.

The same thing, I think, is happening in Colombia today which even I, myself, don't fully understand. Because we're talking about 'deep forces' that are not visible. But, by golly, it's so similar to Vietnam. We have a big drug traffic going on again - a significant factor in the economy of the country as a whole... making Colombia the only country in the whole of Latin America that never had to default on or postpone a debt payment to the United States. Because of the drug traffic. And, in addition, Colombia is the number 8 supplier of oil to this country. And not just oil but also coal. It's a major energy supplier.

I don't understand the relationship between oil companies and the drug traffic but I know there is something going on there because in the late '60s some of the world's biggest heroin refineries were built in places like the Persian Gulf where there was nothing else going on but oil refining. You had the heroin refineries and the oil refineries side by side. And a lot of the drugs were being shipped out on tankers from the Persian Gulf. Whether the oil companies knew of it, I don't really know. But I do know that there was an extreme confluence of interests in the Far East between the drug traffic and the oil companies and there is visibly, again the same confluence of interests in Colombia. And one of the things Americans don't know is that the oil companies created a special lobby to lobby for an increased U.S. presence in Colombia. Which they've now got with [Plan Colombia](#).

Now, can we take a leap with that reasoning and the whole approach of deep politics to what is happening in Afghanistan with bin Laden?

Well... I think it's too early for me to make that leap. We should all think about it - it certainly appears to me that the bin Laden organization, it comprises, not uniquely, but elements who were once CIA trained but I don't perceive, my self, much CIA control over this bin Laden thing. At this point.

Right.

But this is the thing that tends to happen. We train people and then, after all, we don't need them anymore, but they're still there... You've taken a lot of kids at age 15 and for ten years they've been a terrorist, they can't settle down and open a bookstore or a restaurant. I mean, they go on being terrorists. And so we have what is technically known as a 'disposal problem'.

We had a huge disposal problem with the Cuban exiles we had trained as terrorists. A lot of them ended up working for the drug traffickers. And the same thing with the bin Laden people, they've ended up working for the drug traffickers.

Let me ask you the same question but in different way. Assuming that this conflict does pan out into a full-scale, prolonged military operation, are there people or interests who will directly benefit from that?

Well, first of all I think that it is in the interest of everyone to minimize the extent to which this is a war effort. That is a very high priority, I think, for activists. We have to fight terrorism, yes. But if we try to fight it by turning this into a war and allowing our traditional bureaucracies to do what they know best which is bombing and invading and so on, we will make this problem worse. And there will be even longer lists of people lining up to be martyrs to die against the United States. So the primary issue is that we mustn't think of this as a conventional war at all. I think that the alternative path, the necessary one, is to understand the Middle East better and to understand what their grievances are and to open up lines which can deal with them. Can I give a practical example?

Sure.

The Taliban should not be identified with bin Laden. But the press is tending to do that. It's a colossal misunderstanding. And there are elements in the Taliban, just as there are elements in Pakistan who want to get rid of bin Laden. One of the Taliban leaders said that Afghanistan should give over bin Laden to be tried in an Islamic court in another country. They don't want to give him up to U.S. justice which, I think, in the Middle East context, is understandable. But they would give him up to an Islamic court. And we should be leaping at that opportunity. It's being suppressed because it runs against the agenda of having a bigger CIA and bigger U.S. military operation in the Middle East.

That's interesting. One last point Peter, I was thinking last night, as I watched the parade of heavy-hitters from the Bush Sr. administration on the news, about this whole theory of the New World Order. And while I know it sounds pretty ridiculous now, after being adopted by conspiracy theorists and the WWF, this was something that the elder Bush first pronounced [publicly](#) in 1990, during the Gulf War. My point is that this whole concept originated way back in

the 20's with the founding of the [Council on Foreign Relations](#) and their stated goal of a world government. Is it not true that, as of right now, and as a reaction to the attack, the Earth now stands closer than ever in its history to a globally unified, lateral coalition of world governments? And in that sense, does this not represent a paradigm shift for the world, at least geo-politically?

Well I'd like to approach this on two levels. In one way, the role of nation states is going to wither in the next century, that's inevitable. I do know that there are a lot of people in this country, especially on the right, who fear that the New World Order is a kind of conspiracy being imposed from above by, well, [George Bush Sr.](#) and the Council on Foreign Relations and so on. I think this is, in fact, a really complicated sort of thing. Because if anything is pushing us toward a New World Order, it's impersonal forces like trade, you know, as the amount of international trade and international banking goes up and up and up, inevitably the independence and, in a sense, traditional sovereignty of single states is diminished. Whether - I don't know whether if, implicit in your question, is the idea that certain people are using these events consciously to manipulate us out of our sovereignty and into a larger thing -

That is the broad implication of the standard N.W.O. conspiracy theory.

I think it might be more the result but not, I think, the overall intention. I see it more as a pluralistic thing where different parts of the U.S. economy and different parts of the U.S. bureaucracy are all fighting for their own bit of the pie and the result is that 'the way that things used to be' disappears. But I don't think there is a single intelligence that is driving us -

Right. Well it's like, that's why I was referring to it as a paradigm shift. Paradigms, themselves, are not things that man has the power to create or control. They are more like currents in the ocean and I think -

That's a very good point. A lot people misunderstand what [Kuhn](#) was saying when he talked about 'paradigm shift'. He wasn't saying we should go out and shift the paradigm, he was saying the paradigm shifts us.

Exactly. And so as a final statement, do you think that we might look back in a decade and say that this event was a catalyzing factor for the last stage of a terminal paradigm? For the shift away from, as you describe them, nation states?

Well, I'd like to put it in slightly different terms and say this is a very critical juncture. But to me the big issue is whether people will just sit back and let bureaucrats determine the future of this country or whether, as in the time of Vietnam, we will scrutinize very closely what the bureaucrats do and, if it's moving us in a disastrous war direction, rise up to stop that.