Chapter – Five

Checkbook and Cruise Missile: American Neo-Imperialism
The stratification of power and powerlessness is a hard reality in the international play field of markets. The world is passing through a very critical phase in human history. The British colonialism is replaced by American imperialism. America created the ‘New World Order’ with other capitalist countries to exploit the ‘Old World Order’ spanning across the developing and underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Arundhati Roy’s writings dealing with the international issues mainly focus on how US imperialism devours the weak nations, and how US imperialism with intrigue, assassinations, aggressions, blockades, sanctions and invasions maintains and expands its market in countries of its operations for exploitation of resources, cheap labour and market by its finance capital, undermining and mashing by whatever means all opposition to its machinations. She also shows how the strategy of globalization is launched with a purpose to overcome its unprecedented and ever-deepening economic crisis. Militarization of economy is a brutal recourse that works for the US strategy of globalization.

Arundhati Roy’s critique reveals that the US imperialist clique has been carrying out machinations, aggressions and invasions of countries of its economic and political target in order to control resources, to exploit market, to secure foothold in one country for geopolitical-strategic control of other countries, to subdue people who refuse to succumb under bullying and prolonged pressure, to exercise control over other imperialist powers, to test and display dexterity of its military machinery. The USA, playing the role of architect of wars of aggression in different corners of the world, has openly declared its right to intervene in the affairs of any country. Roy presents the record of the massacre
in different countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America carried out by the USA with the help of the CIA:

Since the Second World War, the United States has been at war with or has attacked, among other countries, Korea, Guatemala, Cuba, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Grenada, Libya, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Yugoslavia, and Afghanistan. This list should include the U.S. government’s covert operations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the coups it has engineered, and the dictators it has armed and supported. It should include Israel’s U.S.-backed war on Lebanon, in which thousands were killed. It should include the key role America has played in conflict in the Middle East, in which thousands have died fighting Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestinian territory. It should include America’s role in the civil war in Afghanistan in the 1980s, in which more than one million people were killed. It should include the embargos and sanctions that have led directly and indirectly to the death of hundreds of thousands of people, most visibly in Iraq. Put it all together, and it sounds very much as though there has been a World War III, and that the U.S. government was (or is) one of its chief protagonists. (War Talk 89-90)

US atrocities in South Vietnam, North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia left a shameful blot on the human history. “It was a war that lasted more than twelve years. Fifty-eight thousand Americans and approximately two million Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians lost their lives. The U.S. deployed half a million ground troops, dropped more
than six million tons of bombs” (90). The destruction was on such a massive scale that the restoration of its ecological balance might take several decades.

Roy thinks that the true objective of globalization, privatization and liberalization is to squeeze the last drop of blood from impoverished workers and to ascertain all-round domination of the western imperialist powers over the underdeveloped world. The USA and its allies Britain and Israel use World Trade Organization (WTO), World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to pressurize weaker nations to open up their markets for unrestricted loot and pillage, and snatch rights to have free access to their resources. In the name of ‘reforms’ and ‘free market’, they are forcing weaker countries to remove subsidies and lift all barriers against import of foreign goods and capital, but at the same time they themselves are resisting external penetration into their own market. In March, 2000, just before the India visit of the US President Bill Clinton, the Government of India lifted import restrictions on fourteen hundred commodities, including milk, grain, sugar, and cotton (even though there was a glut of sugar and cotton in the market, even though forty-two million tons of grain were rotting in government storehouses). During The Visit, contracts worth about three (some say four) billion U.S. dollars were signed. (Power Politics 38)

The economy of poor countries depends a lot on agriculture, but their agricultural products cannot compete with the heavily subsidized products from advanced countries. Further, imperialism is wielding its control over agriculture of these countries by making them dependent on imported seeds, genetically engineered products, fertilizers and so forth. Roy points out the plight of Indian farmers:
As abused farmland, saturated with chemicals, gradually becomes exhausted and infertile, agricultural input costs rise, ensnaring small farmers in a debt trap. Over the last few years, more than 1, 80,000 Indian farmers have committed suicide. While state granaries are bursting with food that eventually rots, starvation and malnutrition approaching the same levels as in sub-Saharan Africa stalk the land. (Democracy’s Failing Light 19)

Opening up of the market, privatization and structural reforms dictated by the World Bank and IMF are impoverishing the people and are leading to an austere polarization between the rich and the poor. Not only is the difference between the rich and the poor increasing within each country, but the gap between rich and poor nations is also widening.

The USA today has the largest state debt, amounting to hundreds of billions of euros, and it is neither capable of returning, nor servicing its debt in near future. At the base of the US economic crisis lies not simply a parasitic, but a drug addicted economy and society. The only form of survival is by ensuring credit without any backup or guarantees. Once the USA was the unquestioned leader in the imperialist clique because of its economic and military strength, but now economic domination of the USA is being challenged by European Union and Japan. During the George Bush term, the economic condition deteriorated steeply:

In the three years of George Bush’s term, the American economy has lost more than two million jobs. Outlandish military expenses, corporate welfare and tax giveaways to the rich have created a financial crisis for the
US educational system. According to a survey by the National Council of State Legislatures, US states cut $49 billion in public services, health, welfare benefits and education in 2002. They plan to cut another $25.7 billion this year. That makes a total of $75 billion. Bush’s initial budget request to Congress to finance the war in Iraq was $80 billion. (An Ordinary Person’s Guide 158-59)

America’s poor, students, unemployed citizens, single mothers, hospital and home-care patients, teachers and health workers are paying for this war.

Now America is desperate to come out from the economic morass, and to achieve this end, it takes aggressively to the policy of globalization, neoliberalization, privatization, ‘free market’ and the rest of it. But the militarization of economy by the US imperial clique is the most perilous policy which leaves a permanent fester wound in human history. V.I. Lenin’s remark that it is the crisis in capitalism that poses the greatest danger to world peace and is the basic cause that leads to wars is true for the present situation when American imperialism, being hard-pressed on all sides and rent with mounting crises, is turning more and more to militarized economy.

Buying and selling of arms have become a major international trade. The US economy is based mainly on such industries. More and more military hardware and armaments are produced, and if these products are not released, the war industries will be shut down, and the US economy will crumble. So the USA creates favourable circumstances. For release of stockpile of arms and ammunitions, it engineers local and partial wars, foments army-based coups, props up military dictatorships and performs heinous crimes. American policy is to instigate one country against another and then sit
as a judge over them. The USA is committing war crimes by encroaching on other nations and pushing them to war against one another, or by supplying information to one about another to drag them into conflicts and warfare.

The United States of America, the progenitor of wars and aggressions, compels other capitalist countries towards war, for instance, Britain, France, Australia, Germany, Italy, Israel and so on. America and its allies, in the name of ‘defense of freedom’ are actually subjugating and robbing weaker nations and colonizing them. Actually America is striving to strangle freedom wherever it can and to implant fascism. In stark contradiction to what it professes, the USA exercises “freedom to dominate, humiliate, and subjugate – usually in the service of America’s real religion, the ‘free market’” (Power Politics 128-129)

American imperialism strives for the monopoly of capitalism. To achieve this aim, America does not have any issues with conscience in violating national and international laws. In its ‘National Security Strategy of the United States of America’, the Bush administration openly decreed that the USA has rights to use military force anywhere in the world, at any time, against any country that it thinks to be a threat to American interests. American imperialism rebuffs to represent the sovereignty of any other country, and exercises rights to get rid of any regime which presently becomes or in future may appear to be hostile to it. It is determined to act alone if it fails to gain the support of the international community and it cannot be stopped by any convention of international laws. This affirmation in words was matched with action in the savage military attack on Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq and in the continuous economic
sanctions and threat of military action against Iran, Syria, Libya, North Korea, Cuba and many more.

Roy finely outlines the America’s new technique of corporate globalization and neo-liberalization. It is like injecting slow poison into the veins of the economy of underdeveloped countries covertly. When one realizes that all-devouring octopus sucks one’s blood to the last dreg, and that nothing is left to save one, the picture appears really grim.

First, stock your board with senior government servants. Next, stock the government with members of your board. Add oil and stir. When no one can tell where the government ends and your company begins, collude with your government to equip and arm a cold-blooded dictator in an oil-rich country. Look away while he kills his own people. Simmer gently. Use the time to collect a few billion dollars in government contracts. Then collude with your government once again while it topples the dictator and bombs his subjects, taking time to specifically target essential infrastructure, killing 100,000 people on the side. Pick up another billion dollar or so worth of contracts to ‘reconstruct’ the infrastructure. To cover travel and incidentals, sue for reparations for lost profits from the devastated country. Finally, diversify. Buy a TV station, so that next war around you can showcase your hardware and weapons technology masquerading as coverage of the war. And finally, institute a Human Rights Prize in your company’s name. You could give the first one posthumously to Mother Teresa. She won’t be able to turn it down or argue back. (An Ordinary Person’s Guide 345-46)
America’s greedy eyes are always on the Middle-East because of its oil-rich fields. In its monopoly of capitalism, America needs to control the oil reserves of the Middle-East, because it knows very well that whoever controls the oil of the world can have the privilege of power to dominate the world. Oil is of strategic significance in shaping the international balance of power. The weapon of oil supply could be utilized to thwart the aspiration of any nation that challenges US supremacy. Afghanistan war was waged with an eye to open a corridor of access to and control the oil reserves of Central Asia, and war on Iraq had the designs to establish control over the vast oil resources of Iraq and the neighbouring regions.

America’s mission in the Middle-East serves purposes more than one. It is eager to capture the countries of the Middle-East for exercising its global hegemony, for revamping its sagging economy by selling and clearing the stocks of arms and ammunitions and through contract of reconstruction works after the war, for capturing the rich oil reserves, and finally for diverting people’s (Americans) attention from domestic economic problems by fanning up war jingoism. America was waiting for the opportunity. The 9/11, as Roy thinks, gave USA the pretext to launch its ‘War on Terror’ and unleash vicious military offensive in Afghanistan and then in Iraq. The real culprit behind 9/11 is still unknown. But America took, without any evidence, Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden as the mastermind behind the outrage and held him responsible for killing of three thousand American civilians.

Roy thinks that 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre was not a coincidence of events, but it’s an upshot of accumulated rages of many decades against American barbarism and atrocities all over the world. She reveals a painful history behind this
attack of 9/11 in her essay ‘Come September’. This is the sudden eruption of anger of the victims of America’s continuous wars.

On 11th September, 1973, in a CIA-backed coup, General Pinochet ousted the democratically elected government of Allende. During the coup, in addition to President Allende’s death,

thousands of people were killed. Many more simply “disappeared.” Firing squads conducted public executions. Concentration camps and torture chambers were opened across the country. The dead were buried in mine shafts and unmarked graves. For more than sixteen years the people of Chile lived in dread of the midnight knock, of routine disappearances, of sudden arrest and torture. (War Talk 54)

The 11th September of 1922 was the genesis of Israeli state, a ‘national home for Jewish people’, as the British Government, following the Balfour Declaration of 1917, had promised the Jewish people without consulting the wishes of the Palestinians, the original inhabitants of the country. On the 14th of May, 1948, the Zionist leaders announced the formation of Israel and grabbed much more territory than that allotted to Israel under UN Partition Plan. Instantly the USA recognized Israel. In the summer of 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank previously annexed by Jordan and the Gaza Strip previously controlled by Egypt. Israel’s brutal treatment of Palestinians is “the perfect excuse for old-fashioned, nineteenth-century colonialism, dressed up as a new-fashioned, twenty-first century war” (61). The barbaric and aggressive policies of Israel have driven practically a whole people out of their homeland and forced millions to a life of untold misery in grubby refugee camps, depriving them of all political, economic, social and
cultural rights. Their right to return to their homelands has been mulishly denied. In the occupied territories, the Palestinians are living as second-class citizens, in abject poverty, deprived of education and proper medical care, subjected to wanton killing or injuries by the Israeli soldiers and security guards. Israel routinely detains Palestinians without charge or any prospect of judicial process. They are remanded in custody for years without trial. Israel violates every kind of basic human right concerning prisoners of war by torturing the prisoners in ways too inhuman to be detailed. Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir and Levi Eshkol did not believe in the existence of Palestinians. Prime Minister Menachem Begin’s rhetoric about Palestinians that they are ‘two-legged beasts’ and that of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir’s that they are “grasshoppers”, fall way short of any civilized standard of language.

The USA and Israel are two old friends. Roy remarks:

Israel’s staunchest political and military ally is and always has been the U.S. government. The U.S. government has blocked, along with Israel, almost every UN resolution that sought a peaceful, equitable solution to the conflict. It has supported almost every war that Israel has fought. When Israel attacks Palestine, it is American missiles that smash through Palestinian homes. And every year Israel receives several billion dollars from the United States. (61)

The USA needs Israel not only as a faithful dog to crush the Arab national liberation movements with an anti-imperialist content, but the USA needs Israel also for camouflaging its own criminal policy, covering itself up, presumably with obligations
about protection of the interests of Israel. Israel is also a place of cover from law and criminal responsibility for bankers and businessmen of Jewish origin.

Palestinian resistance struggle grew against the back-drop of a historic wrong and persecution of an entire people. Roy thinks that the individual despair received from the inhuman torture by the Israeli military force produces a number of suicide bombers. The intense hatred of the Palestinian people against the state of Israel found expression in the successive Intifadas, mass uprisings, which have been ringing the death knell of the state of Israel.

The 11th September is associated with many painful events and incidents in the history of American imperialism and fascism. On the 11th September of 1990, George Bush (Senior), the then President of America, announced his government’s decision to go to war against Iraq to dethrone President Saddam Hussein alleged of being a war criminal and cruel military despot who had butchered thousands of Kurdish people in 1988, using chemical weapons and machine-guns. But the fact, as Roy points out, is that the genocide was supported by the US government by providing him “with five hundred million dollars in subsidies to buy American agricultural products” (63). After the completion of the genocide, the next year the subsidy was doubled to “one billion dollars” (63-64). In addition, Saddam Hussein was helped by providing him with “high quality germ seed for anthrax, as well as helicopters and dual-use material that could be used to manufacture chemical and biological weapons” (64). The reason behind the attack on Iraq was not the concern of George Bush Sr. for the Kurdish people, but it runs much deeper. It was the violation of the law of distribution of power, or, more clearly, the insult or challenge to the supremacy of the World’s only Superpower, America, that provoked the USA to
teach a lesson to Saddam Hussein and any other who might be tempted to follow his example, on the pretext that he invaded Kuwait “without orders from his masters” (64).

To teach a man, what atrocities and barbaric acts George Bush Sr. had committed against the people of Iraq!

Tens of thousands of people were killed in a month of devastating bombing. What many do not know is that the war did not end then. The initial fury simmered down into the longest sustained air attack on a country since the Vietnam War. Over the last decade, American and British forces have fired thousands of missiles and bombs on Iraq. Iraq’s fields and farmlands have been shelled with three hundred tons of depleted uranium. In their bombing sorties, the Allies targeted and destroyed water treatment plants, aware of the fact that they could not be repaired without foreign assistance. In southern Iraq, there has been a fourfold increase in cancer among children. In the decade of economic sanctions that followed the war, Iraqi civilians have been denied food, medicine, hospital equipment, ambulances, clean water—the basic essentials.

About half a million Iraqi children have died as a result of the sanctions. Of them, Madeleine Albright, then U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, famously said, “I think this is a very hard choice, but the price—we think the price is worth it.” “Moral equivalence” was the term that was used to denounce those who criticized the war on Afghanistan. Madeleine Albright cannot be accused of moral equivalence. What she said was just straightforward algebra. (65-66)
Therefore, decades of America and other imperial countries’ atrocities on the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America resulted in 9/11. The most painful thing is that America did not take it as a loss, but an opportunity to open up its ‘free market’ around the world. In the aftermath of 9/11, the ruling class in the USA and its obedient intelligentsia started a most heinous campaign to equate global terrorism with Islamic movement and stepped up this calumnious campaign to earn domestic support for its naked aggression against the Muslim countries of Afghanistan and Middle East. But it is known to all the thinking minds that imperialist powers, particularly the USA, have in many countries actively sponsored fundamentalist forces like the Taliban in order to terrorize the masses and crush the genuine, progressive, democratic and revolutionary forces, and finally the fundamentalists have become a threat to imperialism.

To launch a mission of Operation Infinite Justice or Operation Enduring Freedom, the USA formed an International Coalition against Terror with the world’s richest countries that manufacture and possess the weapons of mass destruction — chemical, biological and nuclear— and that carried out most of the genocides, subjections, ethnic cleansings and human rights violations in modern history, and that have sponsored, armed and funded a large number of dictators and oppressors.

Roy remarks that when America decides to wage a war, it manufactures an enemy, if there is none, and develops a momentum, logic and a justification for the war. It is yet to know who were responsible behind the incident of 9/11; even FBI had doubt about the identities of some of the hijackers, but George Bush Jr., without any evidence became sure that Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda stationed in Afghanistan were the culprits. American public were persuaded that America’s commitment to freedom and
democracy and the American Way of Life were under threat. Roy tries to convince the people of the world that it is not American freedom and democracy, or the American way of life, but their government’s policies that are hated by the victims the world over. In the name of protecting freedom and democracy, America executed military and economic terrorism, insurgency, military dictatorship, religious bigotry, and undeniable genocides outside America.

Attack on Afghanistan amounts to waking up dead bodies from the graves. Soviet Russia’s occupation and exploitation for ten long years converted Afghanistan into a skeleton. America is desperate to wipe out Taliban who are supposed to be the enemies of freedom or enemies of America. Neo-colonialism’s wheel of progress rolled on the decayed soil of Afghanistan, and bulldozed a dying civilization into dust. The Operation Enduring Freedom forced one million citizens to flee from their homes to the border with Pakistan. “The United Nations estimates that there are 7.5 million Afghan citizens who will need emergency aid. As supplies run out — food and aid agencies have been evacuated — the BBC reports that one of the worst humanitarian disasters of recent times has begun to unfold” (Power Politics 112-113). To show the world that America’s Operation Enduring Freedom was meant to liberate the people of Afghanistan from the Taliban’s dictatorial and oppressive rule, and the loss of properties and lives of the people due to that offensive were unintentional and coincidental, America took recourse to humanitarian aid. The level of brutality in the pseudo-humanitarian support, as Roy describes, touches every human heart. There was a fine arrangement of media-coverage and photo-coverage of that humanitarian assistance. The US government
airdropped thirty-seven thousand packets of emergency rations into Afghanistan. It says it plans to drop more than five hundred thousand packets. That will still only add up to a single meal for half a million people out of the several million in dire need of food. Aid workers have condemned this as a cynical, dangerous, public relations exercise. They say that airdropping food packets is worse than futile. First, because the food will never get to those who really need it. More dangerously, those who run out to retrieve the packets risk being blown up by land mines. A tragic alms race. (134)

It is obvious that the true motive of Operation Infinite Justice or Operation Enduring Freedom was to control the corridor to the oil reserves of Central Asia, and for smooth functioning of America’s global hegemony. Roy says that America’s “military presence in the Gulf has little to do with its concern for human rights and almost entirely to do with its strategic interest in oil” (142). America’s greedy eyes were on Turkmenistan located in the north-west of Afghanistan that possesses “the world’s third-largest gas reserves and an estimated six billion barrels of oil reserves. Enough, experts say, to meet American energy needs for the next thirty years (or a developing country’s energy requirements for a couple of centuries.)” (142). American oil company Unocal negotiated with the Taliban to seek permission for constructing an oil pipeline through Afghanistan to Pakistan and out to Arabian Sea with a purpose to capture the profitable “emerging market” in South and South-east Asia.

Russian communism was the main impediment to America in practising its global hegemony. It designed many plans and policies to destroy Russian communism. It armed,
funded and trained a number of dictators and despots and terrorists to wage war against Russian communism. After the fall of Russian communism America shifted its policy to wage war against Islamic Terrorism. Afghanistan was the old friend of America in their effort to drive out the Russian force from Afghanistan with the purpose of fulfilling its design to expand its hegemonic control all over the world. Roy wonderfully shows how Pakistan’s ISI (Inter Services Intelligence) and America’s CIA armed, trained and financed Taliban to increase Afghan resistance against Soviet militancy. America was successful in persuading the Taliban that Communism does not uphold the belief in the existence of God, and, therefore, their war against Soviet communism was a holy war or Islamic Jihad. Roy points out: “Over the years, through the ISI, the CIA funded and recruited tens of thousands of radical mujahideen from forty Islamic countries as soldiers for America’s proxy war” (113-114).

After ten years of ruthless reign, when in 1989, Russians were forced to crawfish out from Afghanistan, a civil war in Afghanistan was waged and it spread to Chechnya, Kosovo, and eventually Kashmir with the tag of Islamic Jihad. The expenses of these wars increased in an unimaginable way. To continue these wars, the mujahedeen with the support of the CIA and the ISI forced farmers to cultivate opium as “revolutionary tax” for Islamic Jihad.

Under the protection of the ISI, hundreds of heroin processing laboratories were set up across Afghanistan. Within two years of the CIA’s arrival, the Pakistan Afghanistan borderland had become the biggest producer of heroin in the world, and the single biggest source on American streets. The
annual profits, said to be between one hundred and two hundred billion dollars, were ploughed back into training and arming militants. (114)

Irony lies in the fact that once America supported the Taliban in unleashing the despotism and totalitarianism over Afghan women. America was not only an onlooker, but an admirer and sponsor of the Taliban when they deprived girls, women and widows of education, human rights, social dignity and equity and reduced them to mere puppets.

Roy reveals a basic truth about the emergence of new dictatorial power:

The desolate landscape of Afghanistan was the burial ground of Soviet Communism and the springboard of a unipolar world dominated by America. It made the space for neo-capitalism and corporate globalization, again dominated by America. And now Afghanistan is poised to become the graveyard for the unlikely soldiers who fought and won this war for America. (115-16)

Roy’s remark on Osama bin Laden goes against American policy of creating warmongers and despots. She comments that bin Laden, the man being held responsible for the September 11 attack, “has the distinction of being created by the CIA and wanted by the FBI” (121). America attacked Afghanistan, because the Taliban refused to hand over Osama bin Laden to America without any evidence against him. Osama bin Laden was a “savage twin” of President George Bush in executing all sorts of hidden and open crimes, exploitation, barbaric acts, bloodshed, genocide and so on—“its gunboat diplomacy, its nuclear arsenal, its vulgarly stated policy of ‘full spectrum dominance,’ its chilling disregard for non-American lives, its barbarous military interventions, its support for despotic and dictatorial regimes, its merciless economic agenda that has munched
through the economies of poor countries like a cloud of locusts. Its marauding multinationals, which are taking over the air we breathe, the ground we stand on, the water we drink, the thoughts we think” (122-23). So both Bush and bin Laden are beasts in human shape. Roy says that this kind of war has nothing to do with religion or removal of terror, or emancipation of women, but it’s a means to the end of exercising hegemonic control over the world.

After the withdrawal of Soviets from Afghanistan, when America turned against the Taliban, the International Coalition against Terror made an alliance with the Northern Alliance, the old enemy of the Taliban that is “a brittle confederation of brutal warlords, ex-Communists, and unbending clerics” (132). With the help of International Coalition it has got the impetus to overthrow the Taliban. Taliban had to fight two-forces – Northern Alliance and International Coalition against Terror. This is the diplomatic foreign policy of American imperialism – to create conflict among the enemies. America put in a puppet government in Afghanistan to serve its own purpose.

Roy apprehends the danger of corporate globalization, the main objective of which is to control the world’s resources, and to do it the US imperialism brings back the economic colonialism through formal military aggression. She cites the example of Iraq that is the “logical culmination of the process of corporate globalization, in which neocolonialism and neoliberalism have fused” (An Ordinary Person’s Guide 334). She talks about American aggression in Iraq in her essays ‘An Ordinary person’s Guide to Empire’, ‘Instant-Mix Imperial Democracy (buy one, get one free)’, ‘Peace and the New Corporate Liberation Theology’ and others. In these essays, she shows how neoliberalization and neocolonialisation grasp a country through illegal means and turn it
into a skeleton. When humanity, justice, morality and peace end, the neocolonialism and neoliberalism flourish to a greater extent. Iraq is the epitome of social, economic and political hegemony of American imperialism. Neoliberalism’s wheel of progress bulldozed an ancient civilization, or more truly the first human civilization.

Invasion of Iraq was “one of the most cowardly wars ever fought” (333) by the clique of rich nations equipped with weapons of mass destruction. George Bush Sr. invaded Iraq with an excuse to liberate the Iraqi people from the dictator and despot Saddam Hussein who was a killer of thousands of Kurds and Shias. As discussed earlier, Saddam Hussein as a dictator and despot was a hand-made product of the United States. He was armed, trained and financed by the US Government during his worst excesses. The cost of the Operation Desert Storm, the first invasion of Iraq under the presidency of George Bush Sr. in 1991 was too heavy to bear for the Iraqi people:

Tens of thousands of Iraqis were killed in the war. Iraq’s fields were bombed with more than 300 tonnes of depleted uranium, causing a fourfold increase in cancer among children. For more than thirteen years, 24 million Iraqi people have lived in a war zone and been denied access to medicine and clean water. (334)

Despite the fact of inhuman brutality in Iraq, George Bush Sr. failed to dethrone Saddam Hussein. After almost a decade in 2003, his son George Bush Jr. took the responsibility to fulfill his father’s incomplete mission to ‘liberate’ Iraqi people from the dictatorial rule of Saddam Hussein. This time the mission was called Operation Iraqi Freedom. The degree of treatment was more dangerous and bestial. It is a shameful chapter in human history.
The logic and excuse to invade Iraq, that Iraq possessed weapons of mass
destruction and posed a threat to the world, was based on fabricated evidence. The irony
of the argument used by the US machinery is too stark to be ignored. America is the
leader of manufacturing weapons of mass destruction – biological and chemical. America
did not care about the report submitted by UN’s former Chief Weapons Inspector after
carrying out detailed and thorough inspection in Iraq. Roy talks about how the USA used
United Nations as its tool to attack Iraq:

After using the ‘good offices’ of UN diplomacy (economic sanctions and
weapons inspections) to ensure that Iraq was brought to its knees, its
people starved, half a million children dead, its infrastructure severely
damaged, after making sure that most of its weapons had been destroyed,
in an act of cowardice that must surely be unrivalled in history, the
‘Coalition of the Willing’ (better known as the Coalition of the Bullied
and Bought) — sent in an invading army! (150)

The Coalition of the Willing that included France, Germany, Russia, Britain and so on
launched Operation Iraqi Freedom. In Roy’s words, it should be called “Operation Let’s
Run a Race, but First Let Me Break Your Knees” (150-51).

The most painful fact is that democracy in the corporatized world has lost its
meaning and authenticity. It is nothing but “a hollow word, a pretty shell, emptied of all
content or meaning. It can be whatever you want it to be” (153). Roy further calls it “the
Free World’s whore, willing to dress up, dress down, willing to satisfy a whole range of
taste, available to be used and abused at will” (153). This type of democracy never
respects the views of the majority of the people of a country. Disregarding the opposition
of the majority of the people, the Governments of England, Italy, Spain, Hungary and other European countries became partners in the illegal invasion of Iraq. When the Turkish Government was forced to withdraw support by the pressure of 90 percent of its population, it was “accused of lacking ‘democratic credentials’” (152). Even the ‘Coalition of the Willing’ closed their eyes to the protest by more than ten million people over five continents against the war on Iraq just weeks before the invasion. In the new American Empire there is hardly any line of demarcation between democracy and autocracy. Roy says “Democracy no longer offers voters real choice. Only a specious choice” (338).

That neocolonialism is more pernicious and perilous form of colonialism becomes evident in Iraq where American neocolonialism’s octopus-like tentacles strangulated an ancient civilization. The motives of neocolonialism in Iraq were achieved by a nexus between politicians, bankers, generals, and the CEOs of rich companies who have a shady history of exploiting the masses. The world’s richest, best-equipped, most powerful armed forces fought against the hungry, ill-equipped soldiers with old guns and ageing tanks. Iraqi soldiers were referred by the British and American TV and BBC as ‘militia’ and ‘quasi-terrorists’, and ‘deceitful’.

The brutalities and atrocities of the troops of the Coalition of the Willing are drawn vividly by Roy:

Half a million Iraqi children died because of the regime of economic sanctions in the run-up to Operation Shock & Awe. Until recently, while there was a careful record of how many US soldiers had lost their lives, we had no idea of how many Iraqis had been killed. US General Tommy
Franks said, ‘We don’t do body counts’ (meaning Iraqi body counts). He could have added, ‘We don’t do the Geneva Convention, ether.’ A new detailed study by *The Lancet* medical journal, which was extensively peer reviewed, estimates that there have been as many as 100,000 ‘excess’ Iraqi deaths since the 2003 invasion. (334-335)

The imperial forces have destroyed “Iraq’s infrastructure, fired depleted uranium into Iraq’s farmlands, blocked vaccines and hospital equipment, contributing to hundreds of thousands of deaths of children under five. Denis Halliday, the former UN humanitarian coordinator in Iraq, has called the sanctions a form of genocide” (*The Shape* 161). In Basra the situation was much worse: “About a million and a half people, 40 per cent of them children. Without clean water, and with very little food” (*An Ordinary Person’s Guide* 122). The most painful matter is that the destruction of an ancient civilization was shown through live telecast on American and British TV. “[T]he awed, breathless footage of aircraft carriers, stealth bombers and cruise missiles arcing across the desert sky on American and British TV is described as the ‘terrible beauty’ of war” (119-120). The American media celebrated the bombing of Iraqi Television station by the coalition force. The independent journalists were undermined deliberately.

Like America’s usage of democracy, the UN and Geneva Convention were also used at its will. It is America that will decide which act is in accordance with the Geneva Convention and which is not:

When invading American soldiers (from the army ‘that’s only here to help’) are taken prisoner and shown on Iraqi TV, George Bush says it violates the Geneva convention and ‘exposes the evil at the heart of the
regime’. But it is entirely acceptable for US television stations to show the hundreds of prisoners being held by the US government in Guantanamo Bay, kneeling on the ground with their hands tied behind their backs, blinded with opaque goggles and with earphones clamped on their ears, to ensure complete visual and aural deprivation. When questioned about the treatment of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, US government officials don’t deny that they’re being ill-treated. They deny that they’re ‘prisoners of war’! They call them ‘unlawful combatants’, implying that their ill-treatment is legitimate! (120)

The US left no stone unturned to show the world that it marched into Iraq as messiahs ready to help the Iraqi people, and not as an imperial and colonial force. The live TV in America and Britain assisted in that act of hypocrisy wonderfully. The helpless and hapless people of Basra rushed to the trucks carrying little food and water and fought each other for food. Roy says:

As of July last year the delivery of $5.4 billion worth of supplies to Iraq was blocked by the Bush/Blair pair. It didn’t really make the news. But now under the loving caress of live TV, 450 tonnes of humanitarian aid – a miniscule fraction of what’s actually needed (call it a script prop) – arrived on a British ship, the ‘Sir Galahad’. Its arrival in the port of Umm Qasr merited a whole day of live TV broadcasts. (123)

The actual humanitarian needs amounted to the thirty-two Sir Galahads full of food per day.
The wheel of American neoliberalization marched triumphantly over Iraq’s soil. America imposed total political and economic hegemony over Iraq, disrespecting international laws. It has “privatized and sold off key sectors of Iraq’s economy. Economic policies and tax laws have been rewritten. Foreign companies can now buy 100 per cent of Iraqi firms outside of the oil industry, and expatriate the profits” (339). America delivered reverse swing to continue with its own style of capitalist economy. It creates wars in order to sell weapons. J.V. Stalin pointed out in the ‘Report to the 19th Party Congress’ that the United States and other capitalist countries have been able for a time to raise their industrial production by converting their economies to war purpose, and the bourgeois economists are trying to advance this as proof that big war contracts are capable of maintaining “business activity” at a higher level forever.

Stalin’s statement is true to the scenario of Iraq. The imperialist war in Iraq not only killed and maimed hundreds of thousands, shattered the economic-social fabric and destroyed industries, roads, bridges, dams and what not, but also it made some people richer. Roy gives an account of who these fortunate are that feed upon corpses of the innocent and thrive on the rubbles of devastation of a country. While the America’s poor, students, unemployed citizens, hospital-patients, teachers, health workers and others are paying for the war, the American oil companies, armament companies, arms dealers and corporations involved in reconstructions work in Iraq are getting the benefits. Bechtel and Halliburton that have a shady past in exploiting not only Iraq but the entire world were the main beneficiaries in getting the contracts for reconstruction work in Iraq. There was a deep reason behind obtaining contracts by the Bechtel for reconstruction work. Bechtel is the main sponsor in financing George Bush’s Republican Party for election campaign;
it also funded Democrats for campaigning in election. Roy points out: “Between 1990 and 2002, the Bechtel Group has contributed $3.3 million to campaign funds, both Republican and Democrat. Since 1990, it has won more than 2000 government contracts worth more than $11 billion. That’s an incredible return on investment, wouldn’t you say?” (342). The former and present high-ranked members of the US Government once or presently served/serve Bechtel. US Vice-President Dick Cheney once headed Bechtel. Former Secretary of Defence Caspar Weinberger served Bechtel as general counsel and director. Former Deputy Energy Secretary W. Kenneth Davis held the office of Bechtel’s Vice-President. The chairman of Bechtel, Riley P. Bechtel also worked as the President’s Export Council. The retired Marine Corps General Jack Sheehan worked as a Senior Vice-President at Bechtel and a member of the US Defence Policy Board. George Shultz was the chairman of the advisory board of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Bechtel Group. This Bechtel Group once signed huge contracts with Saddam Hussein for making a dual-use chemical plant in Baghdad when he killed thousands of Kurds by gassing.

So Bechtel was a part of the US Government. That is why Bechtel “has been awarded reconstruction contracts in Iraq worth over $2 billion, which include contracts to re-build power generation plants, electrical grids, water supply, sewage systems, and airport facilities” (341). Roy further asserts: “Between 2001 and 2002, nine out of thirty members of the US Defence Policy Group were connected to companies that were awarded military contracts worth $76 billion” (342).

George Bush Junior gave the contract of agricultural reconstruction to Dam Amstutz who was former senior executive of Cargill, the biggest grain exporter in the
world. To manage Iraqi oil, the responsibilities had been given to two men working with the companies Shell, BP and Fuller that have blood-sucking history. On 28th March, Bush administration resumed Oil for Food programme with the approval of the United Nations. According to this programme, Iraqi oil should be used “to feed Iraqi people who are starving because of US-led sanctions and the illegal US-led war” (126). Iraq has been turned into an economically and politically paralyzed country. The reparations of war since invasion of Kuwait ($18.8 billion) and its sovereign debt worth $125 billion dollar forced it to enter into the trap of International Monetary Fund (IMF).
Works Cited


