

The Power of Nightmares

Written and produced by Adam Curtis

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Episode 1, "Baby It's Cold Outside"

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VO: In the past, politicians promised to create a better world. They had different ways of achieving this. But their power and authority came from the optimistic visions they offered to their people. Those dreams failed. And today, people have lost faith in ideologies. Increasingly, politicians are seen simply as managers of public life. But now, they have discovered a new role that restores their power and authority. Instead of delivering dreams, politicians now promise to protect us from nightmares. They say that they will rescue us from dreadful dangers that we cannot see and do not understand. And the greatest danger of all is international terrorism. A powerful and sinister network, with sleeper cells in countries across the world. A threat that needs to be fought by a war on terror. But much of this threat is a fantasy, which has been exaggerated and distorted by politicians. It's a dark illusion that has spread unquestioned through governments around the world, the security services, and the international media.

VO: This is a series of films about how and why that fantasy was created, and who it benefits. At the heart of the story are two groups: the American neoconservatives, and the radical Islamists. Both were idealists who were born out of the failure of the liberal dream to build a better world. And both had a very similar explanation for what caused that failure. These two groups have changed the world, but not in the way that either intended. Together, they created today's nightmare vision of a secret, organized evil that threatens the world. A fantasy that politicians then found restored their power and authority in a disillusioned age. And those with the darkest fears became the most powerful.

[OPENING TITLES: THE POWER OF NIGHTMARES / THE RISE OF THE POLITICS OF FEAR

Part One: BABY IT'S COLD OUTSIDE]

VO: The story begins in the summer of 1949...

[TITLE: COLORADO 1949]

VO: ...when a middle-aged school inspector from Egypt arrived at the small town of Greeley, in Colorado. His name was Sayyed Qutb. Qutb had been sent to the U.S. to study its educational system, and he enrolled in the local state college. His photographs appear in the college yearbook. But Qutb was destined to become much more than a school inspector. Out of his experiences of America that summer, Qutb was going to develop a powerful set of ideas that would directly inspire those who flew the planes on the attack of September the 11th. As he had traveled across the country, Qutb had become increasingly disenchanted with America. The very things that, on the surface, made the country look prosperous and happy, Qutb saw as signs of an inner corruption and decay.

JOHN CALVERT, Islamist historian: This was Truman's America, and many Americans today regard it as a golden age of their civilization. But for Qutb, he saw a sinister side in this. All around him was crassness, corruption, vulgarity—talk centered on movie stars and automobile prices. He was also very concerned that the inhabitants of Greeley spent a lot of time in lawn care. Pruning their hedges, cutting their lawns. This, for Qutb, was

indicative of the selfish and materialistic aspect of American life. Americans lived these isolated lives surrounded by their lawns. They lusted after material goods. And this, says Qutb quite succinctly, is the taste of America.

VO: What Qutb believed he was seeing was a hidden and dangerous reality underneath the surface of ordinary American life. One summer night, he went to a dance at a local church hall. He later wrote that what he saw that night crystallized his vision.

CALVERT: He talks about how the pastor played on the gramophone one of the big-band hits of the day, "Baby, It's Cold Outside." He dimmed the lights so as to create a dreamy, romantic effect. And then, Qutb says that "chests met chests, arms circled waists, and the hall was full of lust and love."

VO: To most people watching this dance, it would have been an innocent picture of youthful happiness. But Qutb saw something else: the dancers in front of him were tragic lost souls. They believed that they were free. But in reality, they were trapped by their own selfish and greedy desires. American society was not going forwards; it was taking people backwards. They were becoming isolated beings, driven by primitive animal forces. Such creatures, Qutb believed, could corrode the very bonds that held society together. And he became determined that night to prevent this culture of selfish individualism taking over his own country.

[TITLE: CHICAGO]

VO: But Qutb was not alone. At the same time, in Chicago, there was another man who shared the same fears about the destructive force of individualism in America. He was an obscure political philosopher at the University of Chicago. But his ideas would also have far-reaching consequences, because they would become the shaping force behind the neoconservative movement, which now dominates the American administration. He was called Leo Strauss. Strauss is a mysterious figure. He refused to be filmed or interviewed. He devoted his time to creating a loyal band of students. And what he taught them was that the prosperous liberal society they were living in contained the seeds of its own destruction.

Professor HARVEY MANSFIELD, Straussian Philosopher, Harvard University: He didn't give interviews, or write political essays, or appear on the radio—there wasn't TV yet—or things like that. But he did want to get a school of students to see what he had seen: that Western liberalism led to nihilism, and had undergone a development at the end of which it could no longer define itself or defend itself. A development which took everything praiseworthy and admirable out of human beings, and made us into dwarf animals. Made us into herd animals—sick little dwarves, satisfied with a dangerous life in which nothing is true and everything is permitted.

VO: Strauss believed that the liberal idea of individual freedom led people to question everything—all values, all moral truths. Instead, people were led by their own selfish desires. And this threatened to tear apart the shared values which held society together. But there was a way to stop this, Strauss believed. It was for politicians to assert powerful and inspiring myths that everyone could believe in. They might not be true, but they were necessary illusions. One of these was religion; the other was the myth of the nation. And in America, that was the idea that the country had a unique destiny to battle the forces of evil throughout the world. This myth was epitomized, Strauss told his students, in his favorite television program: *Gunsmoke*.

Professor STANLEY ROSEN, Pupil of Leo Strauss 1949: Strauss was a great fan of American television. *Gunsmoke* was his great favorite, and he would hurry home from the seminar, which would end at, you know, 5:30 or so, and have a quick dinner so he

could be at his seat before the television set when *Gunsmoke* came on. And he felt that this was good, this show. This had a salutary effect on the American public, because it showed the conflict between good and evil in a way that would be immediately intelligible to everyone.

BAD MAN on *Gunsmoke*: Let's see what happens!

JAMES ARNESS: No! [SHOOTs bad man; bad man DROPS to the ground]

ROSEN: The hero has a white hat; he's faster on the draw than the bad man; the good guy wins. And it's not just that the good guy wins, but that values are clear. That's America! We're gonna triumph over the evils of... of... that are trying to destroy us and the virtues of the Western frontier. Good and evil.

VO: Leo Strauss' other favorite program was *Perry Mason*. And this, he told his students, epitomized the role that they, the élite, had to play. In public, they should promote the myths necessary to rescue America from decay. But in private, they didn't have to believe in them.

ROSEN: *Perry Mason* was different from *Gunsmoke*. The extremely cunning man who, as far as we can see, is very virtuous and uses his great intelligence and quickness of mind to rescue his clients from dangers, but who could be fooling us—because he's cleverer than we are. Is he really telling the truth? Maybe his client is guilty!

VO: In 1950, Sayyed Qutb traveled back to Egypt from America. He too was determined to find some way of controlling the forces of selfish individualism. And as he traveled, he began to envisage a new type of society. It would have all the modern benefits of Western science and technology, but a more political Islam would have a central role to play, keeping individualism in check. It would provide a moral framework that would stop people's selfish desires from overwhelming them. But Qutb realized that American culture was already spreading to Egypt, trapping the masses in its seductive dream. What was needed, he believed, was an élite, a vanguard who could see through these illusions of freedom, just as he had in America, and who would then lead the masses to realize the higher truth.

Dr AZZAM TAMIMI, Institute of Islamic Political Thought: The masses need to be led. And it is this vanguard group that will be responsible for the task of leading the people out of the darkness and into the light of Islam. Because the masses had succumbed to their own selfish desires, and he wanted the vanguard to be different, to be pure, to be standing together outside all of this corrupt situation, bringing people back to the truth.

VO: On his return, Qutb became politically active in Egypt. He joined a group called the Muslim Brotherhood, who wanted Islam to play a major role in governing Egyptian society. And in 1952, the Brotherhood supported the revolution led by General Nasser that overthrew the last remnants of British rule. But Nasser very quickly made it clear that the new Egypt was going to be a secular society that emulated Western morals. He quickly forged an alliance with America. And the CIA came to Egypt to organize security agencies for the new régime. Faced with this, the Muslim Brotherhood began to organize against Nasser, and in 1954 Qutb and other leading members of the Brotherhood were arrested by the security services. What then happened to Qutb was going to have consequences for the whole world.

[ARABIC-SPEAKING VOICE FROM PRISON CAMP FILM]

VO: In the 1970s, this film was made, that showed what happened in Nasser's main prison in the '50s and '60s. It was based on the testimony of survivors. Torturers who had

been trained by the CIA unleashed an orgy of violence against Muslim Brotherhood members accused of plotting to overthrow Nasser. At one point, Qutb was covered with animal fat and locked in a cell with dogs trained to attack humans. Inside the cell, he had a heart attack.

General FOUAD ALLAM, Interrogator Interior Ministry 1958-87 (speaking in Arabic; subtitled): Sayyed Qutb thought of himself as a superior sort of person. He saw himself as an important Islamist thinker and a strong character. And so on and so on. But at the end of the day, when he was in the military prison he gave us the exact details about his secret group and the orders he had given. The most dangerous was the order to flood the whole of the Nile delta and drown this corrupt land of infidels.

VO: Qutb survived, but the torture had a powerful radicalizing effect on his ideas. Up to this point, he had believed that the Western secular ideas simply created the selfishness and the isolation he had seen in the United States. But the torture, he believed, showed that this culture also unleashed the most brutal and barbarous aspects of human beings. Qutb began to have an apocalyptic vision of a disease that was spreading from the West throughout the world. He called it *jahilliyah*—a state of barbarous ignorance. What made it so terrifying and insidious was that people didn't realize that they were infected. They believed that they were free, and that their politicians were taking them forward to a new world. But in fact, they were regressing to a barbarous age.

ROXANNE EUBEN, Political Scientist: The sense is that *jahilliyah* is so dangerous now, because not only is it advanced by Western powers, but Muslims—this is like a charge of false consciousness—Muslims have become infected with this *jahilliyah*, so now the threat to Islam is also from within. It's from without, and within. It's a state of emergency, because *jahilliyah* is a condition that pervades everything and everybody. It's even infected our powers of imagination—we don't even know that we're sick! That we now worship materialism, and the self, and individual truths over the real truths. Um, so it's an incredible sense of epic confrontation, where Islam is being insulted on all fronts—from within, from without, culturally, militarily, economically, politically. And under those circumstances, any way of fighting it becomes justified and legitimate, and in fact has a kind of existential weight, because somehow it's doing God's will on earth.

VO: To Qutb, this force of *jahilliyah* had now gone so deep into the minds of Muslims that a dramatic way had to be found to free them. In a series of books he wrote secretly in prison, which were then smuggled out, Qutb called upon a revolutionary vanguard to rise up and overthrow the leaders who had allowed *jahilliyah* to infect their countries. The implication was that these leaders could justifiably be killed, because they had become so corrupted, they were no longer Muslims, even though they said they were. Faced with this, Nasser decided to crush Qutb and his ideas, and in 1966 Qutb was put on trial for treason. This is the only known film of Qutb as he awaits sentence. The verdict was a foregone conclusion, and on August 29, 1966, Qutb was executed. But his ideas lived on. The day after his execution, a young schoolboy set up a secret group. He hoped that it would one day become the vanguard that Qutb had hoped for. His name was Ayman Zawahiri, and Zawahiri was to become the mentor to Osama bin-Laden.

[TITLE: AMERICA 1967]

VO: But at the very moment when Sayyed Qutb's ideas seemed dead and buried, Leo Strauss' ideas about how to transform America were about to become powerful and influential, because the liberal political order that had dominated America since the war started to collapse.

[TITLE: 11pm, JULY 25th 1967]

PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON: Law and order have broken down in Detroit, Michigan. Pillage, looting, murder...

VO: Only a few years before, President Johnson had promised policies that would create a new and a better world in America. He had called it “the Great Society.”

[TITLE: President LYNDON JOHNSON, 1964]

JOHNSON: The Great Society is in place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind. It is a place where the City of Man...

VO: But now, in the wake of some of the worst riots ever seen in America, that dream seemed to have ended in violence and hatred. One prominent liberal journalist called Irving Kristol began to question whether it might actually be the policies themselves that were causing social breakdown.

IRVING KRISTOL: If you had asked any liberal in 1960, we are going to pass these laws, these laws, these laws, and these laws, mentioning all the laws that in fact were passed in the 1960s and '70s, would you say crime will go up, drug addiction will go up, illegitimacy will go up, or will they get down? Obviously, everyone would have said, they will get down. And everyone would have been wrong. Now, that's not something that the liberals have been able to face up to. They've had their reforms, and they have led to consequences that they did not expect and they don't know what to do about.

VO: In the early '70s, Irving Kristol became the focus of a group of disaffected intellectuals in Washington. They were determined to understand why the optimistic liberal policies had failed. And they found the answer in the theories of Leo Strauss. Strauss explained that it was the very basis of the liberal idea—the belief in individual freedom—that was causing the chaos, because it undermined the shared moral framework that held society together. Individuals pursued their own selfish interests, and this inevitably led to conflict. As the movement grew, many young students who had studied Strauss' ideas came to Washington to join this group. Some, like Paul Wolfowitz, had been taught Strauss' ideas at the University of Chicago, as had Francis Fukuyama. And others, like Irving Kristol's son William, had studied Strauss' theories at Harvard. This group became known as the neoconservatives.

WILLIAM KRISTOL: Well, many of them couldn't get academic jobs, and the political science and philosophy faculties were not terribly friendly to those of a conservative or moderately conservative disposition. And the truth is that a lot of people who ended up in Washington started out as academics. I did; Paul Wolfowitz did; and decided they probably didn't have very good prospects in the academy. What we all had in common, I think, was a certain doubt about what once seemed a kind of great certainty and confidence in liberal progress. The philosophic grounds for liberal democracy had been weakened. So I think Straussians who came to Washington, they didn't think of themselves as Churchill or Lincoln, let me assure you, but they did that, you know, there's something noble about public life, and about politics, and they tried to make a contribution in many different areas.

VO: The neoconservatives were idealists. Their aim was to try and stop the social disintegration they believed liberal freedoms had unleashed. They wanted to find a way of uniting the people, by giving them a shared purpose. One of their great influences in doing this would be the theories of Leo Strauss. They would set out to recreate the myth of America as a unique nation whose destiny was to battle against evil in the world. And in this project, the source of evil would be America's Cold War enemy: the Soviet Union. And by doing this, they believed that they would not only give new meaning and purpose to people's lives, but they would spread the good of democracy around the world.

Professor STEPHEN HOLMES, Political Philosopher: The United States would not only, according to these—the Straussians, be able to bring good to the world, but would be able to overcome the fundamental weaknesses of American society, a society that has been suffering, almost rotting, in their language, from relativism, liberalism, lack of self-confidence, lack of belief in itself. And one of the main political projects of the Straussians during the Cold War was to reinforce the self-confidence of Americans, and the belief that America was fundamentally the only force for good in the world, that had to be supported, otherwise evil would prevail.

VO: But to do this, the neoconservatives were going to have to defeat one of the most powerful men in the world. Henry Kissinger was the Secretary of State under President Nixon, and he didn't believe in a world of good and evil. What drove Kissinger was a ruthless, pragmatic vision of power in the world. With America's growing political and social chaos, Kissinger wanted the country to give up its ideological battles. Instead, it should come to terms with countries like the Soviet Union, to create a new kind of global interdependence. A world in which America would be safe.

HENRY KISSINGER, Interviewed 1975: I believe that with all the dislocations we know—now experience, there also exists an extraordinary opportunity to form, for the first time in history, a truly global society, carried by the principle of interdependence. And if we act wisely and with vision, I think we can look back to all this turmoil as the birth pangs of a more creative and better system.

VO: Kissinger had begun this process in 1972, when he persuaded the Soviet Union to sign a treaty with America limiting nuclear arms. It was the start of what was called "détente." And President Nixon returned to Washington to announce triumphantly that the age of fear was over.

PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON, June 1, 1972: Last Friday, in Moscow, we witnessed the beginning of the end of that era which began in 1945. With this step, we have enhanced the security of both nations. We have begun to reduce the level of fear, by reducing the causes of fear—for our two peoples, and for all peoples in the world.

VO: But a world without fear was not what the neoconservatives needed to pursue their project. They now set out to destroy Henry Kissinger's vision. What gave them their opportunity was the growing collapse of American political power, both abroad and at home. The defeat in Vietnam, and the resignation of President Nixon over Watergate, led to a crisis of confidence in America's political class. And the neoconservatives seized their moment. They allied themselves with two right-wingers in the new administration of Gerald Ford. One was Donald Rumsfeld, the new Secretary of Defense. The other was Dick Cheney, the President's Chief of Staff. Rumsfeld began to make speeches alleging that the Soviets were ignoring Kissinger's treaties and secretly building up their weapons, with the intention of attacking America.

DONALD RUMSFELD, US Secretary of Defense, Speaking in 1976: The Soviet Union has been busy. They've been busy in terms of their level of effort; they've been busy in terms of the actual weapons they've been producing; they've been busy in terms of expanding production rates; they've been busy in terms of expanding their institutional capability to produce additional weapons at additional rates; they've been busy in terms of expanding their capability to increasingly improve the sophistication of those weapons. Year after year after year, they've been demonstrating that they have steadiness of purpose. They're purposeful about what they're doing. Now, your question is, what ought one to be doing about that?

VO: The CIA, and other agencies who watched the Soviet Union continuously for any sign of threat, said that this was a complete fiction. There was no truth to Rumsfeld's

allegations. But Rumsfeld used his position to persuade President Ford to set up an independent inquiry. He said it would prove that there was a hidden threat to America. And the inquiry would be run by a group of neoconservatives, one of whom was Paul Wolfowitz. The aim was to change the way America saw the Soviet Union.

MELVIN GOODMAN, Head of Office of Soviet Affairs CIA, 1976-87: And Rumsfeld won that very intense, intense political battle that was waged in Washington in 1975 and 1976. Now, as part of that battle, Rumsfeld and others, people such as Paul Wolfowitz, wanted to get into the CIA. And their mission was to create a much more severe view of the Soviet Union, Soviet intentions, Soviet views about fighting and winning a nuclear war.

VO: The neoconservatives chose, as the inquiry chairman, a well-known critic and historian of the Soviet Union called Richard Pipes. Pipes was convinced that whatever the Soviets said publicly, secretly they still intended to attack and conquer America. This was their hidden mindset. The inquiry was called Team B, and the other leading member was Paul Wolfowitz.

Professor RICHARD PIPES: And the idea was then to appoint a group of outside experts who have access to the same evidence as the CIA used to arrive at these conclusions, and to see if they could come up with different conclusions. And I was asked to chair it, because I was not an expert on nuclear weapons. I was, if anything, an expert on the Soviet mindset, but not on the weapons. But that was the real key, was the question of the Soviet mindset, because the CIA looked only at—they were known as “bean counters,” always looking at weapons. But weapons can be used in various ways. They can be used for defensive purposes or offensive purposes. Well, all right, I collected this group of experts, and we began to sift through the evidence.

VO: Team B began examining all the CIA data on the Soviet Union. But however closely they looked, there was little evidence of the dangerous weapons or defense systems they claimed the Soviets were developing. Rather than accept that this meant that the systems didn't exist, Team B made an assumption that the Soviets had developed systems that were so sophisticated, they were undetectable. For example, they could find no evidence that the Soviet submarine fleet had an acoustic defense system. What this meant, Team B said, was that the Soviets had actually invented a new non-acoustic system, which was impossible to detect. And this meant that the whole of the American submarine fleet was at risk from an invisible threat that was there, even though there was no evidence for it.

Dr ANNE CAHN, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 1977-80: They couldn't say that the Soviets had acoustic means of picking up American submarines, because they couldn't find it. So they said, well maybe they have a non-acoustic means of making our submarine fleet vulnerable. But there was no evidence that they had a non-acoustic system. They're saying, “we can't find evidence that they're doing it the way that everyone thinks they're doing it, so they must be doing it a different way. We don't know what that different way is, but they must be doing it.”

INTERVIEWER (off-camera): Even though there was no evidence.

CAHN: Even though there was no evidence.

INTERVIEWER: So they're saying there, that the fact that the weapon doesn't exist...

CAHN: Doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. It just means that we haven't found it.

PIPES: Now, that's important, yes. If something is not there, that's significant.

INTERVIEWER: By its absence.

PIPES: By its absence. If you believe that they share your view of strategic weapons, and they don't talk about it, then there's something missing. Something is wrong. And the CIA wasn't aware of that.

VO: What Team B accused the CIA of missing was a hidden and sinister reality in the Soviet Union. Not only were there many secret weapons the CIA hadn't found, but they were wrong about many of those they could observe, such as the Soviet air defenses. The CIA were convinced that these were in a state of collapse, reflecting the growing economic chaos in the Soviet Union. Team B said that this was actually a cunning deception by the Soviet régime. The air-defense system worked perfectly. But the only evidence they produced to prove this was the official Soviet training manual, which proudly asserted that their air-defense system was fully integrated and functioned flawlessly. The CIA accused Team B of moving into a fantasy world.

PIPES: The CIA was very loath to deal with issues which could not be demonstrated in a kind of mathematical form. I said they could consider the soft evidence. They deal with realities, whereas this was a fantasy. That's how it was perceived. And there were battles all the time on this subject.

INTERVIEWER: Did you think it was a fantasy?

PIPES: No! I thought it was absolute reality.

CAHN: I would say that all of it was fantasy. I mean, they looked at radars out in Krasnoyarsk and said, "This is a laser beam weapon," when in fact it was nothing of the sort. They even took a Russian military manual, which the correct translation of it is "The Art of Winning." And when they translated it and put it into Team B, they called it "The Art of Conquest." Well, there's a difference between "conquest" and "winning." And if you go through most of Team B's specific allegations about weapons systems, and you just examine them one by one, they were all wrong.

INTERVIEWER: All of them?

CAHN: All of them.

INTERVIEWER: Nothing true?

CAHN: I don't believe anything in Team B was really true.

VO: The neoconservatives set up a lobby group to publicize the findings of Team B. It was called the Committee on the Present Danger, and a growing number of politicians joined, including a Presidential hopeful, Ronald Reagan.

[TITLE: The Price of Peace and Freedom / Committee on the Present Danger, propaganda film 1978]

VO: Through films and television, the Committee portrayed a world in which America was under threat from hidden forces that could strike at any time, forces that America must conquer to survive.

ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN, through interpreter: A concentration of world evil, of hatred for humanity, is taking place. And it is fully determined to destroy your society.

Must you wait until the young men of America have to fall defending the borders of their continent?!

VO: This dramatic battle between good and evil was precisely the kind of myth that Leo Strauss had taught his students would be necessary to rescue the country from moral decay. It might not be true, but it was necessary, to re-engage the public in a grand vision of America's destiny, that would give meaning and purpose to their lives. The neoconservatives were succeeding in creating a simplistic fiction—a vision of the Soviet Union as the center of all evil in the world, and America as the only country that could rescue the world. And this nightmarish vision was beginning to give the neoconservatives great power and influence.

HOLMES: The Straussians started to create a worldview which is a fiction. The world is not divided into good and evil. The battle in which we are engaged is not a battle between good and evil. The United States, as anyone who observes understands, has done some good and some bad things. It's like any great power. This is the way history is. But they wanted to create a world of moral certainties, so therefore they invent mythologies—fairytales—describing any force in the world that obstructs the United States as somehow Satanic, or associated with evil.

TITLE: EGYPT 1979

[CLIPS FROM WESTERN - STYLE EGYPTIAN TV COMMERCIALS]

VO: By the late 1970s, Egypt had been transformed. On the surface, it had become a modern, Westernized state with a prosperous middle class who were benefiting from a flood of Western capital that was being invested in the country. One member of this prosperous Egyptian élite was Ayman Zawahiri. He was now a young doctor, just starting his career.

OMAR AZZAM, Cousin of Ayman Zawahiri: Ayman, he was an ideal person, who was a doctor coming from a very good family. His father was a professor in the university, his grandfather was an ambassador, his other grandfather was Sheikh of al-Azhar; very well-respected family. He used to be the the sort of person that acted by the book. Not looking for prestige, not looking for money, not looking for propaganda. Ayman became a leader because of his attitudes.

VO: In reality, Zawahiri was the leader of an underground Islamist cell. The group that he had started as a schoolboy, which he had modeled on the ideas of Sayyed Qutb, had grown. Sayyed Qutb's ideas were now spreading rapidly in Egypt—above all, among students—because his predictions about the corruption from the West seemed to have come true. The government of President Sadat was controlled by a small group of millionaires, who were backed by Western banks. The banks had been let in by what Sadat called his open-door policy. To the Western media, Sadat denied any corruption. All Egyptians knew that this was a blatant lie.

PRESIDENT SADAT 1977: Who has benefited now from the open-door policy? Taxi drivers. The liberals. All of those have benefited from the open-door policy. It is not like they say, that there are millionaires here and so. No, not at all. This is pure, um, pure black propaganda from the side of the Soviet Union and agents here in the country.

VO: Zawahiri was convinced that the time was now approaching to fulfill Qutb's vision. The vanguard should rise up and overthrow this corrupt régime. And the man who would give the Islamists that opportunity would be Henry Kissinger. As part of his attempt to create a stable and balanced world, Kissinger had persuaded President Sadat to begin peace negotiations with the Israelis. To Kissinger, the ruthless pragmatist, religious

divisions and hatreds were irrelevant. The most important thing was to create a safer world. And in 1977, Sadat had flown to Jerusalem to start the peace process. To the West, it was a heroic act. But to the Islamists, it was a complete betrayal. It showed that Sadat's mind had become so corrupted by the West that he was now completely under their control. And under the theories of Sayyid Qutb, this meant that he was no longer a Muslim, and so could justifiably be killed. And then, in 1979, the Ayatollah Khomeini showed Zawahiri that his dream of creating an Islamist state was possible.

[SUBTITLE OVER RIOT SCENE : God is great!]

VO: Khomeini had inspired an uprising against the Shah of Iran. The Shah was another leader who had allowed Western banks to corrupt his country.

[SUBTITLE OVER RIOT SCENE : Armed struggle is the road to freedom!]

VO: Khomeini had put forth the idea of an Islamist state...

[SUBTITLE OVER RIOT SCENE : Death to the Shah's mercenary army!]

VO: ... that was remarkably similar to Qutb's ideas. He acknowledged this by placing Qutb's face on one of the postage stamps of the new Islamic republic. In his first sermon, Khomeini addressed the West. "Yes," he told them, "we are reactionaries, and you are enlightened intellectuals. You who want freedom for everything, the freedom that will corrupt our country, corrupt our youth, and freedom that will pave the way for the oppressor—freedom that would drag our country to the bottom."

REPORTER (off-camera): You sound very dissatisfied with what's happening in Iran now.

PRESIDENT SADAT 1979: Not... MORE than dissatisfied, this is disgraceful! Really! I was myself, I was the Secretary-General of the Muslim Congress at one time. This, putting the name "Islamic revolution," is a crime. A crime against Islam in the first hand.

REPORTER : President Sadat, do you expect that the Shah will accept the invitation? It seems like a good solution right now.

SADAT : Quote me: My aeroplane is ready to bring him here. Any moment.

VO: At the end of 1980, Ayman Zawahiri, with a number of other followers of Qutb who had formed cells, came together. They created an organization they called Islamic Jihad. Its leader was a man called Abdel Salam Faraj. And Faraj argued that they should kill Sadat in a spectacular way that would shock the masses. It would make them see the true reality of the corruption surrounding them, and they would rise up and overthrow the régime.

KAMAL HABIB , Founder member of Islamic Jihad (speaking in Arabic, subtitled): The jihadi movement – some of the leaders are still alive – I was one and so was Ayman Zawahiri. We spearheaded the jihadi state of mind rather than the earlier, more moderate ideas in the liberal era that simply accepted reality. Psychologically we thought we were superior to reality. We despised the everyday vision of the world, and we wanted to transform or change this reality. Therefore our dream was to get rid of Sadat.

[SCENES OF SADAT ' S ASSASSINATION]

VO: Those who carried out the assassination were a group of Army officers who were a part of Islamic Jihad. They were immediately arrested, and the régime launched a

massive manhunt for those behind the plot. But the effect of the assassination on the Egyptian people was not what Zawahiri had hoped for. That night, Cairo remained calm. The masses failed to rise up. And in the following weeks, Zawahiri and many other conspirators were arrested. The assassins were tried immediately and executed. But then, nearly 300 Islamists, including Zawahiri, were put on trial in a pavilion in Cairo's industrial exhibition park. It was agreed that Zawahiri would be their spokesman.

MAN IN CAGE , shouting: ... for [unintelligible], for the whole world, this is our world... Doctor Ayman Zawahiri!

AYMAN ZAWAHIRI , in cage, shouting: Now, we want to speak to the whole world! Who are we? Who are we? Why did they bring us here? And what we want to say? About the first question: we are Muslims! We are Muslims who believed in their religion, in their broad feelings, as both an ideology and practice. We believed in our religion, both as an ideology and practice. And hence, we tried our best to establish [unintelligible] Islamic state and Islamic society!

PRISONER , shouting: La illah la-illallah!

PRISONERS : La illah la-illallah! (etc.)

GILLES KEPEL , Historian of Islamist Movement: Zawahiri, the man is an aristocrat. He comes from a major Egyptian -Saudi family. And he thinks that, you know, he is a visionary, and the means do not matter, just as in Lenin—I mean, revolution in one country or revolution worldwide. He was convinced that this was a means to mobilize the masses, that they had tried something, that it had not worked, then he failed that—you know, the masses that were still under the spell of ideology, the ideology of America. And he is looking for a new strategy.

VO: At the trial, Zawahiri was sentenced to three years in prison, along with many others of Islamic Jihad. He was taken to cells behind the Police National Museum, where, like Sayyed Qutb, he was tortured. And under this torture, he began to interpret Qutb's theories in a far more radical way. The mystery, for Zawahiri, was why the Egyptian people had failed to see the truth and rise up. It must be because the infection of selfish individualism had gone so deep into people's minds that they were now as corrupted as their leaders. Zawahiri now seized on a terrible ambiguity in Qutb's argument. It wasn't just leaders like Sadat who were no longer real Muslims, it was the people themselves. And Zawahiri believed that this meant that they too could legitimately be killed. But such killing, Zawahiri believed, would have a noble purpose, because of the fear and the terror that it would create in the minds of ordinary Muslims. It would shock them into seeing reality in a different way. They would then see the truth.

Dr AZZAM TAMIMI , Institute of Islamic Political Thought: Ayman Zawahiri came to the conclusion that because you have what you believe to be a sublime objective, then the means can be as ugly as they can get. You can kill as many people as you wish, because the end means is noble. The logic is that "we are the vanguards, we are the correct Muslims, everybody else is wrong. Not only wrong, but everybody else is not a Muslim, and the only means available to us today is just to kill our way to perfection."

[TITLE : AMERICA 1981]

COUNTRY SINGER : I'm goin' to a city where the roses never fade...

VO: And at this very same moment, religion was being mobilized politically in America, but for a very different purpose. And those encouraging this were the neoconservatives. Many neoconservatives had become advisers to the Presidential campaign of Ronald

Reagan. And as they became more involved with the Republican Party, they had forged an alliance with the religious wing of the party, because it shared their aim of the moral regeneration of America.

IRVING KRISTOL , Founder of Neoconservative movement: The notion that a purely secular society can cope with all of the terrible pathologies that now affect our society, I think has turned out to be false. And that has made me culturally conservative. I mean, I really think religion has a role now to play in redeeming the country. And liberalism is not prepared to give religion a role. Conservatism is, but it doesn't know how to do it.

VO: By the late '70s, there were millions of fundamentalist Christians in America. But their preachers had always told them not to vote. It would mean compromising with a doomed and immoral society. But the neoconservatives and their new Republican allies made an alliance with a number of powerful preachers, who told their followers to become involved with politics for the first time.

JAMES ROBISON , Fundamentalist Preacher, 1980: I'm sick and tired of hearing about all of the radicals, and the perverts, and the liberals, and the leftists, and the Communists coming out of the closet! It's time for God's people to come out of the closet, out of the churches, and change America! We must do it!

PAUL WEYRICH , Religious activist – Republican Party: The conservative movement, up to that point, was essentially an intellectual movement. It had some very powerful thinkers, but it didn't have many troops. And as Stalin said of the Pope, "where are his divisions?". Well, we didn't have many divisions. When these folks became active, all of a sudden the conservative movement had lots of divisions. We were able to move literally millions of people. And this is something that we had literally no ability to do prior to that time.

INTERVIEWER (off-camera): Literally millions?

WEYRICH : Literally millions.

VO: And at the beginning of 1981, Ronald Reagan took power in America. The religious vote was crucial in his election, because many millions of fundamentalists voted for the first time. And as they had hoped, many neoconservatives were given power in the new administration. Paul Wolfowitz became head of the State Department policy staff, while his close friend Richard Perle became the Assistant Secretary of Defense. And the head of Team B, Richard Pipes, became one of Reagan's chief advisers. The neoconservatives believed that they now had the chance to implement their vision of America's revolutionary destiny—to use the country's power aggressively as a force for good in the world, in an epic battle to defeat the Soviet Union. It was a vision that they shared with millions of their new religious allies.

UNIDENTIFIED PREACHER : I take a personal and public stand as a minister, a stand against Communism. To destroy it, to wipe it from the face of the Earth, because believe you me, these people are dedicated to the destruction of the United States of America and freedom as we know it.

VO: But the neoconservatives faced immense opposition to this new policy. It came not just from the bureaucracies and Congress, but from the President himself. Reagan was convinced that the Soviet Union was an evil force, but he still believed that he could negotiate with them to end the Cold War.

Professor RICHARD PIPES , Adviser to President Reagan 1980-83: Reagan at first didn't quite understand that their aggressiveness is rooted in the system. He had a rather

benign view of human beings. He was a very kindly man, and he attributed kind motives to others. There was another form of mirror imaging. And he would say on more than one occasion, something like this: "If I could just sit down with the Soviet leaders and explain to them that they're following a wrong ideology, and if they adopt the right ideologies, they could make their people happy and prosperous." So [unintelligible] "Mr. President, that is not going to do it! You have to go after the system. Force them to reform the system." It took him a very long time to assimilate this view.

VO: To persuade the President, the neoconservatives set out to prove that the Soviet threat was far greater than anyone, even Team B, had previously shown. They would demonstrate that the majority of terrorism and revolutionary movements around the world were actually part of a secret network, coordinated by Moscow, to take over the world. The main proponent of this theory was a leading neoconservative who was the special adviser to the Secretary of State. His name was Michael Ledeen, and he had been influenced by a best-selling book called *The Terror Network*. It alleged that terrorism was not the fragmented phenomenon that it appeared to be. In reality, all terrorist groups, from the PLO to the Baader-Meinhof group in Germany, and the Provisional IRA, all of them were a part of a coordinated strategy of terror run by the Soviet Union. But the CIA completely disagreed. They said this was just another neoconservative fantasy.

MICHAEL LEDEEN , Special Adviser to the US Secretary of State 1981-1982: The CIA denied it. They tried to convince people that we were really crazy. I mean, they never believed that the Soviet Union was a driving force in the international terror network. They always wanted to believe that terrorist organizations were just what they said they were: local groups trying to avenge terrible evils done to them, or trying to rectify terrible social conditions, and things like that. And the CIA really did buy into the rhetoric. I don't know what their motive was. I mean, I don't know what people's motives are, hardly ever. And I don't much worry about motives.

VO: But the neoconservatives had a powerful ally. He was William Casey, and he was the new head of the CIA. Casey was sympathetic to the neoconservative view. And when he read the *Terror Network* book, he was convinced. He called a meeting of the CIA's Soviet analysts at their headquarters, and told them to produce a report for the President that proved this hidden network existed. But the analysts told him that this would be impossible, because much of the information in the book came from black propaganda the CIA themselves had invented to smear the Soviet Union. They knew that the terror network didn't exist, because they themselves had made it up.

MELVIN GOODMAN , Head of Soviet Affairs CIA, 1976-87: And when we looked through the book, we found very clear episodes where CIA black propaganda—clandestine information that was designed under a covert action plan to be planted in European newspapers—were picked up and put in this book. A lot of it was made up. It was made up out of whole cloth.

INTERVIEWER (off-camera): You told him this?

GOODMAN : We told him that, point blank. And we even had the operations people to tell Bill Casey this. I thought maybe this might have an impact, but all of us were dismissed. Casey had made up his mind. He knew the Soviets were involved in terrorism, so there was nothing we could tell him to disabuse him. Lies became reality.

VO: In the end, Casey found a university professor who described himself as a terror expert, and he produced a dossier that confirmed that the hidden terror network did, in fact, exist. Under such intense lobbying, Reagan agreed to give the neoconservatives what they wanted, and in 1983 he signed a secret document that fundamentally changed

American foreign policy. The country would now fund covert wars to push back the hidden Soviet threat around the world.

President RONALD REAGAN : The specter of Marxist-Leninist controlled governments with ideological and political loyalties to the Soviet Union proves that there's a direct challenge to which we must respond. They are the focus of evil in the modern world.

VO: It was a triumph for the neoconservatives. America was now setting out to do battle against the forces of evil in the world. But what had started out as the kind of myth that Leo Strauss had said was necessary for the American people increasingly came to be seen as the truth by the neoconservatives. They began to believe their own fiction. They had become what they called "democratic revolutionaries," who were going to use force to change the world.

LEDEEN : We were aiming for an expansion of the zone of freedom in the world. And in part that had to do with fighting Communism, and in part that had to do with fighting other kinds of tyrannies. But that's what we were about, and that's what we're still about.

INTERVIEWER (off-camera): When you say you were democratic revolutionaries, what do you mean?

LEDEEN : It meant that we wanted to support the people who wanted to carry out revolutions against tyrannical régimes in the name of democracy, in order to install a democratic system.

INTERVIEWER : As simple as that.

LEDEEN : Yeah. It's not nuclear physics, you know. I mean, freedom is a fairly simple thing to get.

JAMES ARNESS on *Gunsmoke* (VO): It's a chancy job—makes a man watchful and a little lonely. But somebody has to do it.

VO: The neoconservatives now set out to transform the world. In next week's episode, they find themselves joining forces with the Islamists in Afghanistan, and together they fight an epic battle against the Soviet Union. And both come to believe that they had defeated the Evil Empire. But this imagined victory would leave them without an enemy. And in a world disillusioned with grand political ideas, they would need to invent new fantasies and new nightmares, in order to maintain their power.

[END CREDITS - MUSIC : "Baby It's Cold Outside"]

The Power of Nightmares

Episode 2, "The Phantom Victory"

Originally aired on BBC 2, 27 October 2004, 9 pm

Written and produced by Adam Curtis

VO: In the past, politicians promised to create a better world. They had different ways of achieving this. But their power and authority came from the optimistic visions they offered their people. Those dreams failed. And today, people have lost faith in ideologies. Increasingly, politicians are seen simply as managers of public life. But now, they have discovered a new role that restores their power and authority. Instead of delivering dreams, politicians now promise to protect us from nightmares. They say that they will rescue us from dreadful dangers that we cannot see and do not understand. And the greatest danger of all is international terrorism. A powerful and sinister network, with sleeper cells in countries across the world. A threat that needs to be fought by a war on terror. But much of this threat is a fantasy, which has been exaggerated and distorted by politicians. It's a dark illusion that has spread unquestioned through governments around the world, the security services, and the international media.

VO: This is a series of films about how and why that fantasy was created, and who it benefits. At the heart of the story are two groups: the American neoconservatives, and the radical Islamists. In this week's episode, the two groups come together to fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. And both believe that they defeat the Evil Empire, and so had the power to transform the world.

[SUBTITLE OVER CROWD SCENE : We will fight for an Islamic State, we will die for it!]

VO: But both failed in their revolutions. In response, the neoconservatives invent a new fantasy enemy, Bill Clinton, to try and regain their power; while the Islamists descend into a desperate cycle of violence and terror to try and persuade the people to follow them. Out of all this come the seeds of the strange world of fantasy, deception, violence, and fear in which we now live.

[OPENING TITLES : THE POWER OF NIGHTMARES / THE RISE OF THE POLITICS OF FEAR

Part Two: THE PHANTOM VICTORY]

AFGHAN BOY (holding a gun and making gun noises): Ka-choo! Daga daga daga daga! Pum pum pum! (etc.)

VO: In 1982, Ronald Reagan dedicated the Space Shuttle *Columbia* to the resistance fighters in Afghanistan.

President RONALD REAGAN : Just as the *Columbia*, we think, represents man's finest aspirations in the field of science and technology, so too does the struggle of the Afghan people represent man's highest aspirations for freedom. I am dedicating, on behalf of the American people, the March 22nd launch of the *Columbia* to the people of Afghanistan.

VO: Since 1979, the *mujaheddin* resistance had been fighting a vicious war in Afghanistan against the Soviet invasion. But now, a small group in the Reagan White House saw in these fighters a way of achieving their vision of transforming the world. To them, they were not just nationalists; they were freedom fighters, who could bring down

the Soviet Union and help spread democracy around the world. It was called the Reagan Doctrine.

JACK WHEELER , Adviser to the Reagan White House, 1981-1984: It was a small group of people and—yes, we did have. Everyone thinks, “oh, the Reagan Doctrine, the Reagan Administration,” like everybody was for. No. It was a small little cabal within the Soviet—within the Reagan White House, that really pulled this off. What united this small group of ours was the vision of bringing more freedom to the world, more security to the world, to actually get rid of the Soviet Union itself. As a result, supporting the freedom fighters became the premier cause for the entire conservative movement during the Reagan years.

VO: But the Americans were setting out to defeat a mythological enemy. As last week’s episode showed, the neoconservatives, who were now in power in Reagan’s White House, had created an exaggerated and distorted vision of the Soviet Union as the source of all evil in the world. One of their main influences were the theories of the philosopher Leo Strauss. He believed that liberal societies needed simple, powerful myths to inspire and unite the people. And in the 1970s, the neoconservatives had done just this. Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and other neoconservatives had set out to reassert the myth of America as a unique country, whose destiny was to struggle against evil throughout the world. Now in power, they had come to believe this myth. They saw themselves as revolutionaries who were going to transform the world, starting with the defeat of the Evil Empire.

RICHARD PERLE , Assistant Secretary of Defense 1981-1987: We’re closer to being revolutionaries than conservatives, in the sense that we want to change some deeply entrenched notions about the proper role of American power in the world. We want to see that power used constructively, and to enlarge the opportunity for decent governance around the world. We’re not happy about the old, cozy relationships with dictators.

VO: And the man who was going to help the neoconservatives do this was the new head of the CIA, William Casey. He was convinced that Afghanistan was one of the keys to this aggressive new policy. America was already sending limited amounts of aid to the *mujaheddin*. But now, Casey ordered one of his agents to go and form an alliance with the freedom fighters, and give them as much money as they wanted and the most sophisticated weapons to defeat the Soviet military forces.

MILTON BEARDEN , CIA Field Officer, Afghanistan, 1985-89: For Casey, Afghanistan seemed to be possibly one of the keys. So he tapped me one day to go. He says, “I want you to go out to Afghanistan, I want you to go next month, and I will give you whatever you need to win.” Yeah. He said, “I want you go to there and win.” As opposed to, “let’s go there and bleed these guys,” make a [unintelligible] Vietnam, “I want you to go there and win. Whatever you need, you can have.” He gave me the Stinger missiles and a billion dollars.

[SUBTITLE OVER AFGHAN WAR SCENE : God is great!]

VO : American money and weapons now began to pour across the Pakistan border into Afghanistan. CIA agents trained the *mujaheddin* in the techniques of assassination and terror, including car bombing. And they gave them satellite images of Russian troops to help in their attacks.

[SUBTITLE OVER AFGHAN WAR SCENE : Move your fat arse and shoot the f...ing rocket!]

VO: At the very same time, another group began to arrive in Afghanistan to fight alongside the *mujaheddin*. They were Arabs from across the Middle East, who had been told by their religious leaders that their duty was to go and free Muslim lands from the Soviet invader.

ABDULLAH ANAS , General Commander Afghan Arabs, Northern Afghanistan, 1984-1989: I saw the *fatwa*, the order saying that every Muslim has a duty to help the Afghans to liberate their land. But I had no idea, where is this Afghanistan? How can I go there? I've never heard about Afghanistan, and I've never heard—in the map. Which airline goes there? From where can I take the visa? It—100 questions! But I did meet Abdullah Azzam.

VO: Abdullah Azzam was a charismatic religious leader who had begun to organize the Arab volunteers in Afghanistan. He had set up what he called the Services Bureau, in Peshawar on the Afghan border. It became the headquarters of an international brigade of Arab fighters. Azzam quickly became one of the most powerful figures in the battle against the Soviets. He was allowed to visit America on many occasions, both to raise funds and recruit volunteers for the *jihad*.

Dr. AZZAM TAMIMI , Institute of Islamic Political Thought: When, Abdullah Azzam became so instrumental in marketing the Afghan cause among the Arabs, he became very important. He became called “the emir of the Arab *mujaheddin*.” The leader of the Arab *mujaheddin*. And he set up an office in Peshawar which provided services to Arabs who came and wanted to participate in the *jihad*. There were no doors closed, so all doors were opened, because the Americans, the Saudis, the Pakistanis, and many other people wanted the Soviet Union to lose in Afghanistan, and to be humiliated. That brought about huge numbers of Arabs from different backgrounds in the *jihad* in Afghanistan. He went to America, he went to Saudi Arabia, he traveled wherever he wanted, because the Afghan cause was a cause that everybody was happy supporting.

VO: But like the neoconservatives, Azzam also saw the struggle against the Soviets as just the first step in a much wider revolution. He was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, who wanted Islam to play a political role in governing Muslim societies. And Abdullah Azzam believed that the Arabs in Afghanistan could be the nucleus of a new political force. They would return to their own countries and persuade the people to reject the corrupt, autocratic régimes that dominated the Middle East. But these régimes, Azzam insisted, must be overthrown by political means. He made every fighter pledge they would not use terrorism against civilians in the pursuit of their vision. One of Azzam's closest aides was a Saudi, Osama bin-Laden.

ANAS : Osama came to participate in '85. When he was—when he came, as you know, he is, he came from a rich family from Saudi, and he had much, much money to spend. Sheikh Abdullah Azzam was a scholar, he can organize the Afghans, but he is not a rich man. So when Osama came, he filled in this gap. So the main duty of Osama at that time was spending money. Beside his good personal qualities.

VO: But then, in 1985, a new force began to arrive in Afghanistan, who were going to challenge Azzam's approach. They were the extreme radical Islamists, who were being expelled from prisons across the Arab world.

BEARDEN : And then, very quietly, most of the governments in the Middle East, the Arab governments, began to empty their prisons of their bad guys and send them off to the *jihad* with the very fondest hope that they would become martyred. Many of them were the people in Egypt that had not been executed after the murder of Sadat, but were implicated in it and had been in prison. Off they go.

VO: One of the most powerful of these newcomers was Ayman Zawahiri. He was the leader of a radical faction from Egypt called Islamic Jihad. And he was convinced that they, not the moderates, were the true Islamists.

AYMAN ZAWAHIRI , in cage: We are here! We are here! The real Islamic front! We are here! The real Islamic front and the real Islamic opposition against Zionist. We are here! The real Islamic front against Zionism, Communism, and imperialism.

VO: Ayman Zawahiri was a follower of the Egyptian revolutionary Sayyed Qutb, who had been executed in 1966. As last week's program showed, Qutb believed that the liberal ideas of Western societies corrupted the minds of Muslims, because they unleashed the most selfish aspects of human nature. Zawahiri had interpreted Qutb's theories to mean that this corruption included the Western system of democracy. Democracy, Zawahiri believed, encouraged politicians to set themselves up as the source of all authority, and by doing this, they were rejecting the higher authority of the Koran. This meant they were no longer true Muslims, and so they, and those who supported them, could legitimately be killed. The terror this created, he said, would shock the masses into seeing the truth behind the corrupt façade of democracy.

ANAS : When the Egyptians, the *jihadi* group, came from Egypt with their own explanation, with their own ideas, that anybody participating in any parliament, or any political party, or going to elect, or call people for the election, and sort of these activities, is totally rejecting the Koran. So when you say that, it means when a Muslim is rejecting the Koran, simply must be killed. And should be killed, must be killed! And that's what happened.

VO: Zawahiri and his small group settled in Peshawar. They began to spread this new idea among the foreign fighters, radicalizing the Islamist movement. It was not only a direct challenge to the moderate ideas of Abdullah Azzam, but it also involved a militant rejection of all American influence over the *jihad*, because America was the source of this corruption.

BEARDEN : The only times that I ever ran into any real trouble in Afghanistan was when I ran into these guys. You know, there'd be kind of a moment or two, where it looked a little bit like the bar scene in *Star Wars*, each group kind of jockeying around, and finally somebody has to sort of defuse the situation.

[TITLE : MOSCOW 1987]

NEWS ANNOUNCER (speaking in Russian, subtitled): The indicator lights aren't on. Please adjust them. (pause) Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev has issued a decree...

VO: Then, in 1987, the new Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev decided he was going to withdraw Russian troops from Afghanistan. Gorbachev was convinced that the whole Soviet system was facing collapse. He was determined to try and save it through political reform, and this meant reversing the policies of his predecessors, including the occupation of Afghanistan.

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV , General Secretary, Soviet Communist Party (speaking in Russian, via interpreter) : The state of the Soviet Union and its society could be described very simply with a phrase used by people across the country: "We can't go on living like this any longer." And that applied to everything. The economy was stagnating. There were shortages. And the quality of goods was very poor. We had to finish this war, but in such a way that the Russian people would understand why tens of thousands had died. We couldn't just run away from there in shame, no. We needed to find a process.

VO: Gorbachev asked the Americans to help him negotiate a peace that would create a stable government in Afghanistan. But the hard-liners in Washington refused point-blank. They would continue to help the *mujaheddin* until the last Russians left, without any negotiation. The future of Afghanistan would then be decided, they said, by the freedom fighters.

VLADIMIR POZNER , Soviet Spokesman in the United States, 1987: I think that basically, we've asked the United States to help us get out, if you're really interested in stopping the bloodshed.

MODERATOR : But can you get out and leave a government in Afghanistan that supports, that is a friend of the Soviet Union?

POZNER : I believe that we can get out, provided that no more aid is given to what people here call freedom fighters, and we call counterrevolutionaries. I believe that's possible, provided that the United States is also interested in the same.

RICHARD PERLE , Assistant Secretary of Defense 1981-1987 : Well, it's not very complicated. They arrived in a matter of days, on Christmas Eve in 1979; they could be home by Christmas Eve, if they decided to leave Afghanistan and let the Afghans decide their own future. If you leave, the problem of support to the *mujaheddin* solves itself.

VO: Gorbachev was shocked by the intransigence of the U.S. Administration. He sent a private message through the KGB, warning the Americans that if they allowed the *mujaheddin* to take control in Afghanistan, it would not produce democracy. Instead, he predicted, the most extreme forms of Islamism would rise up and triumph. But Gorbachev's warning was ignored. As Soviet troops left Afghanistan, both the Americans and the Islamists came to believe that they had not only won the battle for Afghanistan, they had also begun the downfall of the entire Evil Empire.

BEARDEN : I felt we won, because I was part of it; I'm sure that the Afghan Arabs thought "we won," and then all summer long, the East Germans begin to gather—a hundred here, a thousand there, tens of thousands—until November 9th, when the wall was opened. And that's it. Start the clock running on the Soviet Union. And it was over. So the Soviet Union was all crapped up and broken. And that was done.

VO: For the neoconservatives, the collapse of the Soviet Union was a triumph. And out of that triumph was going to come the central myth that still inspires them today: that through the aggressive use of American power, they could transform the world and spread democracy. But in reality, their victory was an illusion. They had conquered a phantom enemy, an exaggerated and distorted fantasy they had created in their own minds. The real reason the Soviet Union collapsed was because it was a decrepit system, decaying from within.

MELVIN GOODMAN , Head of Office of Soviet Affairs CIA, 1976-1987: I think probably one of the greatest myths in America, in the political discourse now, right now, is that actions of the American government were responsible for the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union collapsed like a house of cards because it was a house of cards. It rotted away from within. The economy was rotten, the political process was rotten, they had developed a central government that was no longer believed by people outside of Moscow, there was total cynicism throughout the Soviet system of governance, there was no real civil society. But the Reagan Administration and their—the minions of the Reagan Administration, will tell you that Afghanistan led to the collapse of the Soviet Union itself—the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the collapse of the East European empire. We were saying that this was entirely fanciful. And the United States missed all

of this, because they believed their own myths and their own fanciful notions. They had become their own victims of their own lies.

VO: And for the Islamists too, a great myth was born out of the struggle in Afghanistan—that it was they who had conquered the Soviet Union.

[SUBTITLES OVER *MUJAHEDDIN* GATHERING : God is great! Death to Gorbachev! Long live Afghanistan!]

VO: The Islamists believed that this great victory would start a revolution that would sweep across the Arab world and topple the corrupt leaders. But as with the neoconservatives, this dream was built on an illusion.

GILLES KEPEL , Historian of the Islamist Movement: The Islamists were convinced that they were the key instrument in the demise of the Soviet Army in Afghanistan. They just would not like to remember that without U.S. military help and training, they couldn't have done anything. And also the Afghans were the ones who ousted the Soviets, not the Arab *ihadis*, who didn't really fight, who were trained, but they were not the fighters. But the myth has it that they were the ones who won. I mean, this was a *ihad* that had triumphed. This was something very powerful that was a mobilizing force for Islamists worldwide.

VO: But there was a deep rift within the Islamist fighters based in Peshawar—between the moderates, led by Abdullah Azzam, who believed this revolution could be accomplished politically; and the extremists, like Ayman Zawahiri, who saw violent revolution as the only way. And Zawahiri now set out to extend his influence over the movement, and to undermine Abdullah Azzam. To do this, he seduced Osama bin-Laden—and his money—away from Azzam. He promised bin-Laden that he could become the emir, the leader of Zawahiri's small extremist group, Islamic Jihad.

ANAS : Ayman Zawahiri and another group of Egyptians, they refused to pray behind Abdullah Azzam in Peshawar. They used to create rumors in Peshawar against Abdullah Azzam. That's why we became angry about Osama, why he became—he closed these people to him. They accepted him as an emir, and he accepted them as a group. Finally, I don't know who did use the other.

INTERVIEWER (off-camera): What do you think?

ANAS : I think the other used him.

INTERVIEWER : Because he had the money.

ANAS : Yes.

VO: Then, at the end of 1989, Abdullah Azzam was assassinated by a huge car bomb in Peshawar. It is still unknown who carried out the assassination. But despite his death, it seemed as if Azzam's vision of a political revolution might prevail. In the early '90s, in countries across the Arab world, Islamist parties began to gather mass support.

[SUBTITLE OVER POLITICAL RALLY : Islamic State!]

VO: In Algeria, the Islamic Salvation Front won overwhelming victories in local elections, and looked certain to win the coming general election. And at the same time in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood began to win mass support, and a growing number of seats in Parliament. Both parties were riding to power on an idealistic vision. They would use Islam in a political way to create a new type of model society through peaceful means.

SAIF AL BANNA , Senior member, Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt (speaking in Arabic, subtitled): We can change people through education and religious conviction. We want to build a popular base. This is the right way. We do not want a military coup; we do not want violence; we want our rights. If people believe in us, the government must comply with the people's wishes.

VO: But the governments in both Egypt and Algeria faced a terrible dilemma. At the heart of the Islamist vision was the idea that the Koran should be used as the political framework for the society. An absolute set of laws, beyond debate, that all politicians had to follow. The implication of this was that political parties would be irrelevant, because there could be no disagreement. The people were about to vote in parties that might use that power to end democracy.

ALI HAROUN , Algerian Minister for Human Rights (1991-1992) (speaking in French, subtitled): But what a dilemma! Do you find a way of stopping the electoral process and cancelling the second round? Or do you let power go to a party which claims: "One man, one vote, but only once! We won't have any elections after this, because democracy is non-religious. Once we're in power, we'll stay there forever, because we alone are the keepers of religious truth, and we alone shall apply the Koran."

VO: Faced by this dilemma, in Algeria the army decided to step in, and in June 1991 they staged a coup d'état and immediately canceled the elections. Mass protests by the Islamists were repressed violently, and their leaders arrested. At the same time, in Egypt, the government also clamped down. They arrested hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood members, and banned the organization from any political activity.

ESSAM EL ERIAN , Senior member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt: What happened is a wave of arresting Muslim brothers, a wave of military courts for Muslim brothers, going to kill some of Muslim brothers under torture. They stopped all the free elections in all of their society and institutions. And this wave, in this manner, you open the doors of hell for the violent groups who were hidden underground—and stopped the moderates, open the door for the violence.

VO: For Ayman Zawahiri, this was a dramatic confirmation of his belief that the Western system of democracy was a corrupt sham. Groups of radical Islamists who had developed his theories into even more extreme forms now set out to create violent revolutions in Algeria and Egypt. It would be the start of a *jihad* that would liberate the Muslim world from corruption.

OSAMA BIN-LADEN (speaking in Arabic, subtitled): The only way to eradicate the humiliation and Kufr that has overcome the land of Islam is *Jihad*, bullets, and martyrdom operations.

KEPEL : Bin-Laden and the others started, from now on, to wage their own *jihad*, i.e. not to compromise, not to try to compromise with more moderate groups, but thinking that an armed vanguard would be able to implement the seizing of power. They were convinced that they could duplicate the Afghan victory, quote-unquote victory, that they could establish an Islamist state in Algeria, in Egypt, and the like. They thought that would capture the hearts and minds of the Muslim masses, that people realize that the strength and victory were on the side of the *jihadis*.

[TITLE : AMERICA 1991]

VO: At this same time, in Washington, the other group who believed that they had brought down the Soviet Union—the neoconservatives—were also determined to push on with their revolutionary agenda. They were convinced that the Soviet Union was just

one of many evil régimes in the world led by tyrants that threatened America. Régimes they had to conquer to liberate the world and spread democracy.

MICHAEL LEDEEN , Neoconservative theorist: We want, you know, down with tyranny. We want free countries. We think that America is better off if we live in a world primarily populated with free countries, who have to appeal to their own people for the source of their power, and to ratify their decisions. And we think that if the whole world were like that, then we would be much more secure, and that typically we were attacked by tyrants. I think it's America's destiny, because I think that America's always going to come under attack from tyrants. So I think that our only choice is whether we're going to win or lose, and when we will fight, and under what circumstances, but that we're gonna have to fight. That's automatic, because they're gonna come after us.

VO: One of the most evil of these tyrants, the neoconservatives decided, was Saddam Hussein. In the 1980s, Saddam had been America's close ally. But in 1990, he invaded Kuwait. The neoconservatives now saw him as a key to pursuing the next stage of their transformation of the world. An American-led coalition had been created by President Bush senior, to liberate Kuwait. But the neoconservatives, like Paul Wolfowitz, who was Undersecretary of Defense, wanted to push on to Baghdad, and bring about a transformation of the Middle East. It would fulfill America's unique role to defeat evil in the world.

Professor STEPHEN HOLMES , Political Philosopher: You see already, in 1991, the hopes of Wolfowitz and others, that the battle against Saddam Hussein, or other petty tyrants, could take the place of the battle against the Soviet Union, and could bear this interpretation of a battle between good and evil. So, what you're seeing is the attempt to keep alive the idea that America is engaged in a battle of pure good against pure evil, and to preserve that framework for a world after the end of the Soviet Union.

VO: But President Reagan was no longer in charge. The neoconservatives now had a leader who did not share their vision.

President GEORGE HW BUSH : Kuwait is liberated. Iraq's army is defeated. Our military objectives are met. And I am pleased to announce that all United States and Coalition forces will suspend combat operations.

VO: Once Kuwait was freed, Bush ordered the fighting to stop. His view was that America's role was to create stability in the world, not to try and change it. Like Henry Kissinger, who had been the enemy of the neoconservatives in the 1970s, Bush saw questions of good and evil as irrelevant. The higher aim was to achieve a stable balance of power in the Middle East.

BRENT SCOWCROFT , National Security Adviser to President George Bush Snr., Interviewed in 1996: Saddam Hussein is not a threat to his neighbors. He's a nuisance; he's an annoyance; but he's not a threat. That we achieved. It was never our objective to get Saddam Hussein. Indeed, had we tried, we still might be occupying Baghdad. That would have turned a great success into a very messy probably defeat.

VO: In private, the neoconservatives like Paul Wolfowitz were furious. Not just because Saddam Hussein had been left in power, but because they saw this as a clear expression of the corrupt liberal values that dominated America—a moral relativism that was prepared to compromise with the forces of evil in the world.

HOLMES : Wolfowitz' anger is fundamentally an anger against the weakness of American liberalism: the compromising nature of a man like George Bush senior. His willingness to make concessions, to negotiate, not to drive to the bitter end. And his

anger is motivated, interestingly, less by hatred of Saddam Hussein, than by hatred of American liberals, who are a source of weakness, and a source of rot, and a source of relativism, that had been corroding American society for decades.

VO: Faced by this defeat, the neoconservative movement now turned inwards, to try and defeat the forces of liberalism that were holding it back. And to do this, they turned again to the theories of Leo Strauss. Strauss believed that good politicians should reassert the absolute moral values that would unite society, and this would overcome the moral relativism that liberalism created. One of the most influential Straussians was the new assistant to the Vice-President, William Kristol.

WILLIAM KRISTOL , Chief of Staff to the Vice President, 1988-92: For Strauss, liberalism produced a decent way of life, and one that he thought was worth defending, but a dead end where nothing could be said to be true; one had no guidance on how to live, everything was relative. Strauss suggests that maybe we didn't just have to sit there and accept that that was our fate. Politics could help shape the way people live, that politics could help shape the way that people live, teach them some good lessons about living decent and noble human lives. And can we think about what cultures, and what politics, what social orders produce more admirable human beings? I mean, that whole question was put back on the table by Strauss, I think.

VO: The neoconservatives set out to reform America. And at the heart of their project was the political use of religion. Together with their long-term allies, the religious right, they began a campaign to bring moral and religious issues back into the center of conservative politics. It became known as the "culture wars."

[TITLE : Christian Coalition commercial]

VO (on commercial) : Your tax dollars are being used to sponsor obscene and pornographic displays.

PAT ROBERTSON : I don't like Jesus Christ, who is my Lord and Savior, being dumped in a vat of urine by a homosexual, and then have my money to pay for it! I think that's obscene.

ROBERTSON : Satan, be gone! Out from this [unintelligible]! C'mon!

VO: For the religious right, this campaign was a genuine attempt to renew the religious basis of American society. But for the neoconservatives, religion was a myth, like the myth of America as a unique nation that they had promoted in the Cold War. Strauss had taught that these myths were necessary to give ordinary people meaning and purpose, and so ensure a stable society.

TV COMMERCIAL MOM : Do you ever worry that they're playing too much Nintendo?

MOM 2 : Oh, not anymore. See, Matt has *Bible Adventures*. They're actually learning Bible stories while they're playing Nintendo.

MICHAEL LIND , Journalist and former neoconservative: For the neoconservatives, religion is an instrument of promoting morality. Religion becomes what Plato called a "noble lie." It is a myth which is told to the majority of the society by the philosophical elite in order to ensure social order.

ANNOUNCER ON CHRISTIAN FITNESS COMMERCIAL : What better way to enjoy God's creation than a Praise Walk?

[TITLE : INTEGRITY MUSIC FITNESS]

LIND : In being a kind of secretive élitist approach, Straussianism does resemble Marxism. These ex-Marxists, or in some cases ex-liberal Straussians, could see themselves as a kind of Leninist group, you know, who have this covert vision which they want to use to effect change in history, while concealing parts of it from people incapable of understanding it.

VO: Out of this campaign, a new and powerful moral agenda began to take over the Republican Party. It reached a dramatic climax at the Republican Convention in 1992, when the religious right seized control of the party's policy-making machinery. George Bush became committed to running for President with policies that would ban abortion, gay rights, and multiculturalism. Speakers who tried to promote the traditional conservative values of individual freedom were booed off the stage.

WILLIAM WELD , Republican Governor of Massachusetts : I happen to think that individual freedom should extend to a woman's right to choose.

CONVENTION DELEGATES : (whistles and boos)

WELD : I want the government out of your pocketbook and your bedroom!

VO: For the neoconservatives, the aim of this new morality was to unite the nation. But in fact, it had completely the opposite effect. Mainstream Republican voters were frightened away by the harsh moralism that had taken over their party. They turned instead to Bill Clinton, a politician who connected with their real concerns and needs, like tax and the state of the economy.

DIANE BLAIR , Clinton Campaign : In the week after the Republican Convention, Republican moderates, young people, and particularly women saying, "I've been sort of torn between the two parties, but where do I sign up to help Clinton get elected? I am frightened by this ultraconservative agenda that I hear coming out of Houston."

BOB MATERA : I've been a lifelong Republican. I'm a registered Republican. I am voting for Bill Clinton this time. Enough is enough. It is time for a change.

VO: At the end of 1992, Bill Clinton won a dramatic victory. But the neoconservatives were determined to regain power. And to do this, they were going to do to Bill Clinton what they had done to the Soviet Union: they would transform the President of the United States into a fantasy enemy, an image of evil that would make people realize the truth of the liberal corruption of America.

[TITLE : ALGERIA 1992 / June 1992]

UNIDENTIFIED POLITICIAN (speaking in Arabic, subtitled): We realize that other nations have surpassed us. In what? In knowledge. And Islam—

[GUNSHOTS , CHAOS]

VO: In the early '90s, Algeria, Egypt, and other Arab countries were being torn apart by a horrific wave of Islamist terror. The jihadists who had returned from Afghanistan were trying to topple the régimes. At the heart of their strategy was the idea that Ayman Zawahiri and others had taught them: that those who were involved in politics could legitimately be killed, because they had become corrupted and thus were no longer

Muslims. This violence, they believed, would shock people into rising up, and the corrupt régimes would then be overthrown.

ABDULLAH ANAS , Member of the Political Council, Islamic Salvation Front, Algeria 1993: “They must die!” Not only “must die,” they DID kill. They did kill people. Not just any—it’s not just an idea from far, it became true. People were killed.

[TITLE : 4th June 1993]

ANAS : Many many rulers; many many holy men; many many scholars; many many politicians in Islamic world have been killed because of these ideas. Why? Because simply they are against the Koran. They rejected the Koran. Why they rejected the Koran? Because they did elect.

VO: Ayman Zawahiri was now based with bin-Laden on this farm in the Sudan. He used it as a base for his group, Islamic Jihad, to launch attacks on politicians in Egypt. But as one of the leading ideologues of the revolution, he also traveled throughout the Arab world, advising other groups on their strategy. But the revolutionaries soon found that the masses did not rise up and follow them. The régimes stayed in power, and the radical Islamists were hunted down. Faced by this, the Islamists widened their terror. Their logic was brutal: it was not just those who were involved with politics who should be killed, but the ordinary people who supported it. Their refusal to rise up showed that they, too, had become corrupted, and so had condemned themselves to death.

Dr. AZZAM TAMIMI , Institute of Islamic Political Thought: There was definitely a logic. The logic is that you assault the leaders, you assault those who are associated with them, and eventually you assault the people who have consented to the presence of such a despotic leader, even if they are passively supportive through their silence. And then you start attacking economic institutions, you start attacking the tourists, because the tourists bring money to the country, and that money goes into the pockets of the corrupt élite. So, it is an endless process.

VO: In Algeria, this logic went completely out of control. The Islamist revolutionary groups killed thousands of civilians, because they believed that all these people had become corrupted.

MAN (speaking in Arabic, subtitled): All these innocents, what did they ever do? Legs blown off! Such horror! Even the French extremists never did things like this. Why? What have we done? What have our children done? Leave me alone! I want to die!

VO: In turn, the generals running Algeria infiltrated the revolutionary groups. They told their agents to persuade the Islamists to push the logic even further, to kill even more people. This would create such horror that the groups would lose any remaining support, and the generals could use the fear and revulsion to increase their grip on power.

ANAS : The generals infiltrated the *jihad* ideas, the *jihad* groups, to put the society under fear. By creating terror and violence, [unintelligible] everything in the society, no politic, no economy, no everything, just to stay and saying to the West, “we are facing terror.”

INTERVIEWER (off-camera): Using fear.

ANAS : Using fear to stay on the power.

MAN WITH GUN (speaking in French, subtitled): Today they kill, they kill everybody: innocent people, children, old people. They have even cut up their victims. Who will trust them if tomorrow they take power?

DEMONSTRATORS (shouting in French, subtitled): Down with fundamentalism! Down with fundamentalism!

VO: By 1997, the Islamist revolution was failing. There were mass demonstrations against the Islamist groups by thousands of people horrified by the violence. And then, in June of that year, a group of Egyptian Islamists attacked Western tourists at the ruins of Luxor. 58 were killed in three hours of random violence. The massacre shocked the Egyptian people, and the leaders of the revolutionary groups agreed to call a cease-fire. In Algeria, a few groups held out. But they began to tear each other apart, as they followed the logic that had driven their revolution to its ultimate—and logical—end: they started to kill each other.

TAMIMI : It led to their own destruction. A group that believes in 100% pure Muslim will not see that purity in anybody else but themselves. So whoever disagrees with them becomes the enemy, becomes out of the House of Islam, and then if they happen to disagree with each other themselves, then they will start liquidating each other. And they keep fighting each other; there will be infighting. Eventually it ends in suicide.

VO: The main Islamist group in Algeria, the GIA, ended up being led by a Mr. Zouabri, a chicken farmer, who killed everyone who disagreed with him. He issued a final communiqué, declaring that the whole of Algerian society should be killed, with the exception of his tiny remaining band of Islamists. They were the only ones who understood the truth.

[TITLE : AMERICA 1996]

VO: By the mid-'90s, politics in Washington was dominated by one issue: the moral character of the President of the United States.

WOMAN IN TV COMMERCIAL : If you believe you've been a victim of sexual harassment by the President, we want to help.

VO: Behind this were an extraordinary barrage of allegations against Clinton that were obsessing the media. These included stories of sexual harassment; stories that Clinton and his wife were involved in Whitewater, a corrupt property deal; stories that they had murdered their close friend Vince Foster; and stories that Clinton was involved in smuggling drugs from a small airstrip in Arkansas. But none of these stories were true. All of them had been orchestrated by a young group of neoconservatives, who were determined to destroy Clinton. The campaign was centered on a small right-wing magazine called the *American Spectator*, which had set up what was called the "Arkansas Project" to investigate Clinton's past life. The journalist at the center of this project was called David Brock.

CROSSFIRE ANNOUNCER : Tonight, the Arkansas allegations. In the crossfire: David Brock, of the *American Spectator* magazine.

DAVID BROCK : She was dressed in a raincoat and a hat, and came in at 5:15 in the morning, and had a liaison with Clinton in the game room in the bottom floor of the Governor's mansion.

CROSSFIRE HOST : David, this is getting a little bizarre. Next thing, we're gonna see... Jane Fonda's gonna...

BROCK : It's bizarre! But hey, Bill Clinton is a bizarre guy.

HOST : Wait a sec.

VO: Since then, Brock has turned against the neoconservative movement. He now believes that the attacks on Clinton went too far, and corrupted conservative politics.

INTERVIEWER (off-camera): Was Whitewater true?

BROCK : No! I mean, there was no criminal wrongdoing in Whitewater. Absolutely not. It was a land deal that the Clintons lost money on. It was a complete inversion of what happened.

INTERVIEWER : Was Vince Foster killed?

BROCK : No. He killed himself.

INTERVIEWER : Did the Clintons smuggle drugs?

BROCK : Absolutely not.

INTERVIEWER : Did those promoting these stories know that this was not true, that none of these stories were true?

BROCK : They did not care.

INTERVIEWER : Why not?

BROCK : Because they were having a devastating effect. So why stop? It was terrorism. Political terrorism.

INTERVIEWER : But you were one of the agents.

BROCK : Absolutely. Absolutely.

VO: The stories began to grip America, and despite Clinton's denials, the Republicans in Congress seized on the scandals and began to press for investigations into this immorality at the heart of government.

President BILL CLINTON : Basically, the press has editorialized and pressured the politicians into saying, "Here's a guy that as far as we know hasn't done anything wrong, nobody's accused him of doing anything wrong, there's no evidence that he's done anything wrong, but we think the presumption of guilt almost should be on him. You should somehow prove his innocence."

VO: Out of this pressure, Clinton was forced to agree to an independent investigation into Whitewater. It was headed by a senior judge in Washington called Kenneth Starr. But what was not widely known was that Starr was a member of a right-wing group of lawyers called the Federalist Society, that had financial and ideological links to the neoconservatives. And like the neoconservatives, they saw Clinton as a danger to the country, and they were determined to prove this to the American people.

Judge ROBERT BORK , Senior member, Federalist Society: In the Merck manual—Merck is a pharmaceutical company—they have a manual listing various disorders, and

they listed “sociopath.” And if you look at “sociopath,” it describes Clinton exactly. Somebody who’s charming, who has no particular feeling at all for the people he’s charming, unable to resist instant gratification, and so on and so on. Goes right down the list. We had a very dysfunctional man in the Presidency. That was very dangerous, both as a model and as, if a crisis had arisen, I had no confidence that he would meet it.

VO: But despite all his efforts, Kenneth Starr could find no incriminating evidence in Whitewater. Nor could he find any evidence to support any of the sexual scandals that had come from the Arkansas Project. Until finally, his committee stumbled upon Clinton’s affair with Monica Lewinsky, which Clinton denied. And in that lie, the neoconservative movement believed they had found what they had been looking for: a way to make the American people see the truth about the liberal corruption of their country. A campaign now began to impeach the President. And in the hysteria, the whole conservative movement portrayed Clinton as a depraved monster who had to be removed from office. But yet again, the neoconservatives had created a fantasy enemy by exaggerating and distorting reality.

JOE CONASON , Author ‘The Hunting of the President’ : They were trapped by a mythological person that they had constructed, or persons—the Clintons, these scheming, terrible people who they, the noble pursuers, were going to vanquish. I think, in the leadership of conservatism, during the Clinton era there was an element of corruption. There was an element of a willingness to do anything to achieve the goal of bringing Clinton down. There was a way in which the people who perceived Clinton as immoral behaved immorally themselves. They ended up behaving worse than the people who they were attacking.

VO: But all the moral fury, and the deception, came to nothing. The impeachment failed because the polls consistently showed that Americans still did not care about these moral issues. One leading neoconservative, William Bennett, wrote a book called *The Death of Outrage*, which blamed the people. He accused the public of making a deal with the devil. Their failure, he said, to support the impeachment, was evidence of their moral corruption.

[TITLE : AFGHANISTAN 1997]

VO: By 1997, bin-Laden and Ayman Zawahiri had returned to Afghanistan, where they had first met ten years before. Back then, it had seemed as if Islamism might succeed as a popular revolutionary movement. But now, they were facing failure. All attempts to topple régimes in the Arab world had not succeeded. The people had turned against them because of the horrific violence, and Afghanistan was the only place they had left to go.

GILLES KEPEL , Historian of the Islamist Movement: Well, 1997 was their failure. Egypt, Algeria; it worked nowhere. It went wrong because populations would not back them. Because even people who were sympathetic to them in the beginning were frightened away by their violence, by their incapacity to communicate and to have access to the people, and this was very clear in Zawahiri’s book *Knights under the Prophet’s Banner*, where he sort of goes back from this experiment, and laments over their incapacity to raise the consciousness of the masses, and feels that, you know, as a vanguard they did not manage to communicate. They remained isolated, and this is why they failed. And this is when they started this new strategy.

VO: In May, 1998, bin-Laden and Zawahiri invited a group of journalists to this press conference, where they announced a new *jihad*. Zawahiri was convinced that it was not their theories that were to blame for the failure; it was the fault of the Muslim masses. Their minds had been corrupted by the liberal ideas from the West. But rather than give

up, they believed that the solution was to attack the source of the corruption directly. The new *jihad* would be against America itself.

MAN (reading from paper): As I mentioned before, we focus our efforts to fight against the Jews and Christians or Americans. We have no objection against any party or any person who fights Americans all over the world. And we want to carry it out within the war against Americans. America will be defeated. Americans know our power, and...

VO: This was a strategy of desperation, born out of failure by a small group whose revolution had failed. And the anger that came from that failure was about to be directed at the United States. What Zawahiri and bin-Laden were about to do would dramatically affect the future of the neoconservative movement. By 1998, all their attempts to transform America by creating a moral revolution had failed. Faced with the indifference of the people, the neoconservatives had become marginalized, in both domestic and foreign policy. But with the attacks that were about to hit America, the neoconservatives would at last find the evil enemy that they had been searching for ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union. And in their reaction to the attacks, the neoconservatives would transform the failing Islamist movement into what would appear to be the grand revolutionary force that Zawahiri had always dreamed of. But much of it would exist only in people's imaginations. It would be the next phantom enemy.

[END CREDITS]

The Power of Nightmares

Episode 3, "The Shadows in the Cave"

Originally aired on BBC 2, 3 November 2004, 9 pm

Written and produced by Adam Curtis

VO: In the past, politicians promised to create a better world. They had different ways of achieving this. But their power and authority came from the optimistic visions they offered to their people. Those dreams failed. And today, people have lost faith in ideologies. Increasingly, politicians are seen simply as managers of public life. But now, they have discovered a new role that restores their power and authority. Instead of delivering dreams, politicians now promise to protect us from nightmares. They say that they will rescue us from dreadful dangers that we cannot see and do not understand. And the greatest danger of all is international terrorism. A powerful and sinister network, with sleeper cells in countries across the world. A threat that needs to be fought by a war on terror. But much of this threat is a fantasy, which has been exaggerated and distorted by politicians. It's a dark illusion that has spread unquestioned through governments around the world, the security services, and the international media.

VO: This is a series of films about how and why that fantasy was created, and who it benefits. At the heart of the story are two groups: the American neoconservatives, and the radical Islamists. Last week's episode ended in the late '90s with both groups marginalized and out of power. But with the attacks of September 11th, the fates of both dramatically changed. The Islamists, after their moment of triumph, were virtually destroyed within months, while the neoconservatives took power in Washington. But then, the neoconservatives began to reconstruct the Islamists. They created a phantom enemy. And as this nightmare fantasy began to spread, politicians realized the newfound power it gave them in a deeply disillusioned age. Those with the darkest nightmares became the most powerful.

[OPENING TITLES : THE POWER OF NIGHTMARES / THE RISE OF THE POLITICS OF FEAR / THE SHADOWS IN THE CAVE]

[TITLE: AFGHANISTAN 1998]

VO: At the end of the 1990s, Osama bin Laden had returned to Afghanistan. He was accompanied by Ayman Zawahiri, the most influential ideologist of the Islamist movement. For 20 years, Zawahiri had struggled to create revolutions in the Arab world, but all attempt had ended in bloody failure.

[EXCERPT , CNN EXCLUSIVE VIDEO]

INTERVIEWER (in Arabic, English subtitles): We haven't had any information about your whereabouts for some time. Where were you?

AYMAN ZAWAHIRI: {?} I was just home and clubs.

INTERVIEWER: Not in Afghanistan? Somewhere else?

ZAWAHIRI: Everywhere, everywhere.

INTERVIEWER : Everywhere?

ZAWAHIRI: I am a Muslim. Being a Muslim, you are wanted everywhere. Because if you—just if you say no to the superpowers, this immediately in itself is a crime you are wanted for.

INTERVIEWER: {?} Yes, but isn't what you do not to do with arms?

ZAWAHIRI: {?} It's aggressive but ask Allah, and he is greater than superpower.

VO: Zawahiri was a follower of the Egyptian revolutionary, Sayyed Qutb, who had been executed in 1966. Qutb's vision had been of a new type of modern state. It would contain all of the benefits of Western science and technology, but it would use Islam as a moral framework to protect people from the culture of Western liberalism. Qutb believed that this culture infected the minds of Muslims, turning them into selfish creatures who threatened to destroy the shared values that held society together. Throughout the 80s and 90s, Zawahiri had tried to persuade the masses to rise up and topple the rulers who had allowed this corruption to infect their countries.

[EXCERPT , VIDEOTAPE OF SADAT ASSASSINATION]

[CUT TO AYMAN ZAWAHIRI IN EGYPTIAN COURTROOM CELL]

ZAWAHIRI [haranguing courtroom]: We want to speak to the whole world. Who are we?

VO: But the revolutionaries became trapped in a horrific escalation of violence, because the masses refused to follow them. Islamism failed as a mass movement, and Zawahiri now came to the conclusion that a new strategy was needed.

GILLES KEPEL , HISTORIAN OF ISLAMIST MOVEMENT: They had no revolution at all. I mean, they had failed in their takeover, they had failed to topple the powers that be, and, you know, they became more and more interested in this idea that only a small vanguard could be successful. I mean, they had lost confidence in the spontaneous capacity of the masses to be mobilised. Then they decided to change strategy completely, and instead of striking at what they called the "near enemy"—i.e., the local regimes—they decided that they could strike at the "far away enemy"—i.e., at the West, at America—and that would impress the masses, and the masses would be mobilised.

[TITLE : NAIROBI , AUGUST 1998]

VO: Zawahiri and bin Laden began implementing this new strategy in August, 1998. Two huge suicide bombs were detonated outside American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, killing more than 200 people. The bombings had a dramatic effect on the West. For the first time, the name "bin Laden" entered the public consciousness as a terrorist mastermind.

[CUT TO AFGHANISTAN]

VO: The suicide bombers had been recruited by bin Laden from the Islamist training camps in Afghanistan. But his and Zawahiri's operation was very much on the fringes of the Islamist movement. The overwhelming majority of the fighters in these camps had nothing at all to do with bin Laden or international terrorism. They were training to fight régimes in their own countries, such as Uzbekistan, Kashmir, and Chechnia. Their aim was to establish Islamist societies in the Western world, and they had no interest in attacking America. Bin Laden helped fund some of the camps, and in return was allowed to look for volunteers for his operations. But a number of senior Islamists were against his new strategy, including members of Zawahiri's own group, Islamic Jihad.

[EXCERPT , CNN EXCLUSIVE VIDEO : BIN LADEN, SURROUNDED BY ARMED , MASKED SOLDIERS]

VO: Even bin Laden's displays of strength to the Western media were faked. The fighters in this video had been hired for the day and told to bring their own weapons. For beyond this small group, bin Laden had no formal organisation—until the Americans invented one for him.

[CUT TO MANHATTAN CITYSCAPE]

[TITLE : MANHATTAN , JANUARY 2001]

VO: In January, 2001, a trial began in a Manhattan courtroom of four men accused of the embassy bombings in east Africa. But the Americans had also decided to prosecute bin Laden in his absence. But to do this under American law, the prosecutors needed evidence of a criminal organisation because, as with the Mafia, that would allow them to prosecute the head of the organisation even if he could not be linked directly to the crime. And the evidence for that organisation was provided for them by an ex-associate of bin Laden's called Jamal al-Fadl.

JASON BURKE , AUTHOR, "AL QAEDA" : During the investigation of the 1998 bombings, there is a walk-in source, Jamal al-Fadl, who is a Sudanese militant who was with bin Laden in the early 90s, who has been passed around a whole series of Middle East secret services, none of whom want much to do with him, and who ends up in America and is taken on by—uh—the American government, effectively, as a key prosecution witness and is given a huge amount of American taxpayers' money at the same time. And his account is used as raw material to build up a picture of Al Qaeda. The picture that the FBI want to build up is one that will fit the existing laws that they will have to use to prosecute those responsible for the bombing. Now, those laws were drawn up to counteract organised crime: the Mafia, drugs crime, crimes where people being a member of an organisation is extremely important. You have to have an organisation to get a prosecution. And you have al-Fadl and a number of other witness, a number of other sources, who are happy to feed into this. You've got material that, looked at in a certain way, can be seen to show this organisation's existence. You put the two together and you get what is the first bin Laden myth—the first Al Qaeda myth. And because it's one of the first, it's extremely influential.

VO: The picture al-Fadl drew for the Americans of bin Laden was of an all-powerful figure at the head of a large terrorist network that had an organised network of control. He also said that bin Laden had given this network a name: "Al Qaeda." It was a dramatic and powerful picture of bin Laden, but it bore little relationship to the truth.

[EXCERPT, CNN EXCLUSIVE VIDEO : BIN LADEN AND SOLDIERS]

VO: The reality was that bin Laden and Ayman Zawahiri had become the focus of a loose association of disillusioned Islamist militants who were attracted by the new strategy. But there was no organisation. These were militants who mostly planned their own operations and looked to bin Laden for funding and assistance. He was not their commander. There is also no evidence that bin Laden used the term "Al Qaeda" to refer to the name of a group until after September the 11th, when he realized that this was the term the Americans have given it.

[CUT TO MANHATTAN SKYLINE]

VO: In reality, Jamal al-Fadl was on the run from bin Laden, having stolen money from him. In return for his evidence, the Americans gave him witness protection in America

and hundreds of thousands of dollars. Many lawyers at the trial believed that al-Fadl exaggerated and lied to give the Americans the picture of a terrorist organisation that they needed to prosecute bin Laden.

SAM SCHMIDT , DEFENCE LAWYER EMBASSY BOMBINGS TRIAL: And there were selective portions of al-Fadl's testimony that I believe was false, to help support the picture that he helped the Americans join together. I think he lied in a number of specific testimony about a unified image of what this organisation was. It made Al Qaeda the new Mafia or the new Communists. It made them identifiable as a group and therefore made it easier to prosecute any person associated with Al Qaeda for any acts or statements made by bin Laden—who talked a lot.

BURKE : The idea—which is critical to the FBI's prosecution—that bin Laden ran a coherent organisation with operatives and cells all around the world of which you could be a member is a myth. There is no Al Qaeda organisation. There is no international network with a leader, with cadres who will unquestioningly obey orders, with tentacles that stretch out to sleeper cells in America, in Africa, in Europe. That idea of a coherent, structured terrorist network with an organised capability simply does not exist.

VO: What did exist was a powerful idea that was about to inspire a single, devastating act that would lead the whole world into believing the myth that had begun to be constructed in the Manhattan courtroom.

[CUT TO MANHATTAN SKYLINE : WORLD TRADE CENTER TOWERS . ONE TOWER HAS BEEN HIT , AND IS ON FIRE .]

MAN (off-camera) : What's this other jet doing? What's this other jet doing?

WOMAN (off-camera) : What the hell's that?

[AIRCRAFT ENTERS VIEW FROM LEFT , CRASHES INTO SECOND TOWER. FIREBALL ERUPTS .]

MAN : Holy—fuck!

WOMAN : Oh my God! Oh my God! Jesus fucking Christ!

[ARM PASSES BEFORE CAMERA LENS]

MAN #2 : Don't touch it!

WOMAN [SOBBING]: Oh my God! Oh my God!

[OTHER EXCLAMATIONS AND SOBBING IN BACKGROUND AS SMOKE BILLOWS FROM TOWERS]

VO: The attack on America by 19 hijackers shocked the world. It was Ayman Zawahiri's new strategy, implemented in a brutal and spectacular way. But neither he nor bin Laden were the originators of what was called the "Planes Operation." It was the brainchild of an Islamist militant called Khalid Sheik Mohammed, who came to bin Laden for funding and help in finding volunteers. But in the wake of panic created by the attacks, the politicians reached for the model which had been created by the trial earlier that year: the hijackers were just the tip of a vast, international terrorist network which was called, "Al Qaeda."

[CUT TO INTERIOR, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, UNITED STATES CONGRESS]

GEORGE W BUSH , PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES [ON SPEAKER'S PODIUM] : Al Qaeda is to terror what the Mafia is to crime. There are thousands of these terrorists in more than 60 countries. They are recruited from their own nations and neighborhoods, and brought to camps in places like Afghanistan, where they are trained in the tactics of terror.

[CUT TO PENTAGON BRIEFING ROOM]

DONALD RUMSFELD , SECRETARY OF DEFENSE: This one network, Al Qaeda, that's receiving so much discussion and publicity make have activities in 50 to 60 countries, including the United States.

[CUT TO OTHER INTERIOR, PODIUM]

BUSH: Our war is against networks and groups, people who coddle them, people who try to hide them, people who fund them. This is our calling.

VO: And the attacks had another dramatic effect: they brought the neoconservatives back to power in America. When George Bush first became president, he had appointed neoconservatives like Paul Wolfowitz, and their allies like Donald Rumsfeld, to his administration. But their grand vision of America's role in the world was largely ignored by this new régime.

[TITLE : SEPTEMBER 2000]

[CUT TO PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE]

BUSH : I just don't think it's the role of the United States to walk into another country and say, "We do it this way, so should you."

[TITLE: BUT NOW]

BUSH : We're going to find those who, uh, who, uh, those evil-doers.

VO: But now, the neoconservatives became all-powerful, because this terror network proved that what they had been predicting through the 1990s was correct: that America was at risk from terrifying new forces in a hostile world. A small group formed that began to shape America's response to the attacks. At its heart were Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, along with the vice-president, Dick Cheney, and Richard Perle, who was a senior advisor to the Pentagon. The last time these men had been in power together was 20 years before, under President Reagan. Back then, they had taken on and, as they saw it, defeated a source of evil that wanted to take over America: the Soviet Union. And now they saw this new war on terror in the same epic terms.

RICHARD PERLE , CHAIRMAN PENTAGON DEFENSE POLICY BOARD 2001-2003: The struggle against Soviet totalitarianism was a struggle between fundamental value questions. "Good" and "evil" is about as effective a shorthand as I can imagine in this regard, and there's something rather similar going on in the war on terror. It isn't a war on terror, it's a war on terrorists who want to impose an intolerant tyranny on all mankind, an Islamic universe in which we are all compelled to accept their beliefs and live by their lights, and in that sense this is a battle between good and evil.

VO: But, as previous episodes have shown, the neoconservatives distorted and exaggerated the Soviet threat. They created the image of a hidden, international web of evil run from Moscow that planned to dominate the world, when, in reality, the Soviet Union was on its last legs, collapsing from within. Now, they did the same with the Islamists. They took a failing movement which had lost mass support and began to reconstruct it into the image of a powerful network of evil, controlled from the center by bin Laden from his lair in Afghanistan. They did this because it fitted with their vision of America's unique destiny to fight an epic battle against the forces of evil throughout the world.

VINCENT CANNISTRARO , HEAD OF COUNTER - TERRORISM , CIA , 1988-90: What the neoconservatives are doing is taking a concept that they developed during the competition with the Soviet Union, i.e., Soviet Communism was evil, it wanted to take over our country, wanted to take over our people, our classrooms, our society. It was that kind of concept of evil that they took—an exaggerated one, to be sure—and then apply it to a new threat, where it didn't apply at all, and yet it was layered with the same kind of cultural baggage. The policy says there's a network, the policy says that network is evil, they want to infiltrate our classrooms, they want to take our society, they want all our women to wear, you know, veils, and this is what we have to deal with and therefore since we know it's evil let's just kill it, and that will make it go away.

[CUT TO TANKS AND VEHICLES ROLLING DOWN A ROAD IN AFGHANISTAN]

VO: And so the Americans set off to invade Afghanistan, to find and destroy the heart of this network.

[TITLE: AFGHANISTAN, NOVEMBER 2001]

[CUT TO DESOLATE TERRAIN , MOUNTAINS IN BACKGROUND , SHOOTING IN FOREGROUND]

VO: To do this, the Americans allied themselves with a group called the Northern Alliance. They were a loose collection of warlords, fighting a war of resistance against the Taliban, the Islamists who controlled Afghanistan. The Taliban's best troops were the thousands of foreign fighters from the training camps who the Northern Alliance hated.

[NORTHERN ALLIANCE TROOPS RETRIEVE IDENTITY PAPERS FROM DEAD TALIBAN FIGHTERS . ONE HOLDS AN IDENTITY CARD UP TO THE CAMERA]

NORTHERN ALLIANCE SOLDIER : Pakistan, eh! Pakistan! Pakistan!

VO: And now, they took their revenge on the foreign fighters. The Americans believed that these men were Al Qaeda terrorists, and the Northern Alliance did nothing to disabuse them of this, because they were paid by the Americans for each prisoner they delivered. But the majority of these fighters had never had anything to do with bin Laden or international terrorism. Both they and the Taliban were radical nationalists who wanted to create Islamist societies in their own countries. But now, they were either killed or taken off to Guantánamo Bay and Islamism, as an organised movement for changing the Muslim world, was obliterated in Afghanistan. But as it disappeared, it was replaced by ever more extravagant fantasies about the power and reach of the Al Qaeda network.

[TITLE : TORA BORA]

VO: In December, the Northern Alliance told the Americans that bin Laden was hiding in the mountains of Tora Bora. They were convinced they had found the heart of his organisation.

[EXCERPT , “MEET THE PRESS ,” NBC TV]

TIM RUSSERT : The search for Osama bin Laden: there was constant discussion about him hiding out in caves and I think many times the American people have a perception that it's a little hole dug out of the side of a mountain.

DONALD RUMSFELD [OFF CAMERA]: Oh, no.

[CUT TO DIAGRAM OF HIDDEN CAVE HEADQUARTERS MARKED “SOURCE: THE TIMES OF LONDON”, DEPICTING A MULTI-STORY UNDERGROUND COMMAND POST]

RUSSERT : This is it. This is a fortress.

RUMSFELD: Yes.

RUSSERT : A complex. Multi-tiered. [READING , AS LABELS ARE DISPLAYED ON DIAGRAM] “Bedrooms and Offices” on the top, as you can see. “Secret Exits” on the side, and on the bottom. “Cut Deep to Avoid Thermal Detection.” A ventilation system, to allow people to breathe and to carry on. The entrances, large enough to drive trucks and even tanks. Even computer systems and telephone systems. It's a very sophisticated operation.

[CUT TO STUDIO]

RUMSFELD : Oh, you bet. This—this is serious business. And—and there's not one of those; there are many of those.

[CUT TO TORA BORA , AFGHANISTAN : B-52S BOMBING MOUNTAINS]

VO: For days, the Americans bombed the mountains of Tora Bora with the most powerful weapons they had. The Northern Alliance had been paid more than a million dollars for their help and information, and now their fighters set off up the mountains to storm bin Laden's fortress and bring back the Al Qaeda terrorists and their leader.

[NORTHERN ALLIANCE SOLDIERS SEARCHING CAVE OPENINGS]

VO: But all they found were a few small caves, which were either empty or had been used to store ammunition. There was no underground bunker system, no secret tunnels: the fortress didn't exist. The Northern Alliance did produce some prisoners they claimed were Al Qaeda fighters, but there was no proof of this, and one rumor was that the Northern Alliance was simply kidnapping anyone who looked remotely like an Arab and selling them to the Americans for yet more money.

[FADE TO AMERICAN FORCES IN TORA BORA]

VO: The Americans now began to search all the caves in all the mountains in eastern Afghanistan for the hidden Al Qaeda network.

AMERICAN SOLDIER , SPEAKING INTO RADIO : We found a cave. The rest of it is open. Break.

[CUT TO INTERIOR , COMMAND POST]

AMERICAN ARMY SERGEANT : If nobody went up to look into that cave, people could've been hiding up there for days and watching everything that we did.

[CUT TO VIEW OF MISSILE STRIKING CAVE OPENING , SOLDIERS INSPECT DAMAGE]

VO: But wherever they looked, there was nothing there. Al Qaeda seemed to have completely disappeared.

[FADE TO VIEW OF HELICOPTERS FLYING OVER AFGHANISTAN MOUNTAIN RANGE]

VO: But then, the British arrived to help. They were convinced they could hunt down Al Qaeda because of what they said was their unique experience in fighting terrorism in Northern Ireland. They could succeed where others had failed.

[CLOSE UP ON BRIGADIER ROGER LANE , COMMANDER , BRITISH FORCES , ADDRESSING AN OFF-CAMERA AUDIENCE]

BRIGADIER LANE : The hunt for Al Qaeda Taliban goes on, and we stand shoulder to shoulder with the United States and our other coalition allies in the global war on terrorism.

[TITLE : FIVE WEEKS LATER]

INTERVIEWER : But how many Al Qaeda have you captured?

LANE : We haven't, uh, captured any Al Qaeda, but...

INTERVIEWER : And how many have you actually managed to kill here in south-east Afghanistan?

LANE : We haven't killed any.

[EXCERPT , *THE THIEF OF BAGHDAD* : MARKETPLACE SCENE , SCROLL IS UNROLLED READING :

Ten thousand pieces of gold for the body of Ali Baba and the destruction of the band of thieves. By order of Hulagu, Khan of the Mongols and Ruler of Baghdad]

[SCENES OF MEN ON HORSEBACK JUMPING CHASMS AND ESCAPING]

[CUT TO CNN EXCLUSIVE VIDEO OF BIN LADEN , WAVING .]

[FADE TO BLACK]

[FADE TO AFGHANISTAN EXTERIOR]

VO: The terrible truth was that there was nothing there because Al Qaeda as an organisation did not exist. The attacks on America had been planned by a small group that had come together around bin Laden in the late 90s. What united them was an idea: an extreme interpretation of Islamism developed by Ayman Zawahiri. With the American invasion, that group had been destroyed, killed or scattered. What was left was the idea, and the real danger was the way this idea could inspire groups and individuals around

the world who had no relationship to each other. In looking for an organisation, the Americans and the British were chasing a phantom enemy and missing the real threat.

JASON BURKE , AUTHOR, “AL QAEDA” : I was with the Royal Marines as they trooped around eastern Afghanistan, and every time they got a location for a supposed Al Qaeda or Taliban element or base, they’d turn up and there was no one there, or there’d be a few startled shepherds, and that struck me then as being a wonderful image to the war on terror, because people are looking for something that isn’t there. There is no organisation with its terrorist operatives, cells, sleeper cells, so on and so forth. What there is is an idea, prevalent among young, angry Muslim males throughout the Islamic world. That idea is what poses a threat.

[CUT TO WASHINGTON , D.C., MONUMENTS AND SKYLINE]

VO: But the neoconservatives were now increasingly locked into this fantasy, and next they set out to uncover the network in America itself.

PAUL WOLFOWITZ , US DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE : This is a network that has penetrated into some 60 countries, including very definitely our own, and it’s got to be rooted out. Our intelligence priority, in many ways, is getting after the network here in the United States first. We will do whatever we need to do to go after these networks and dismantle them.

[CUT TO FLYOVER OF NEW ENGLAND TOWN]

VO: The American government set out to search for the Al Qaeda organisation inside its own country. Thousands were detained as all branches of the law and the military were told to look for terrorists.

[CUT TO VIEW OF GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE , SAN FRANCISCO]

CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL OFFICER : You don’t really know what a terrorist looks like, what kind of car they drive, or anything else, so it’s just basically everything and everybody and anything out here.

[CUT TO NEWS TITLE : “AMERICA UNDER ATTACK”]

[CUT TO SCENES OF EMERGENCY RESPONSE VEHICLES]

VO: And, bit by bit, the government found the network: a series of hidden cells in cities around the country from Buffalo to Portland.

[CUT TO PRESIDENTIAL PODIUM]

GEORGE W BUSH : We’ve thwarted terrorists in Buffalo and Seattle, Portland, Detroit, North Carolina, and Tampa, Florida. We’re determined to stop the enemy before he can strike our people.

VO: The Americans called them “sleeper cells,” and decided that they had just been waiting to strike. But in reality there is very little evidence that any of those arrested had anything at all to do with terrorist plots. From Portland to the suburb of Buffalo called Lackawanna, yet again the Americans were chasing a phantom enemy.

DAVID COLE , PROFESSOR OF LAW , GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY : They say “terrorist sleeper cell.” That’s what—they—they call the Lackawanna people a terrorist

sleeper cell, the Detroit people a terrorist cell, the Portland people a terrorist cell. But when you look at the details, the facts just don't support that, and they have not proved that any group within the United States has plotted to engage in any terrorist—uh—activity within the United States in all of the cases that they've brought since 9/11.

[CUT TO HOME VIDEO OF YOUTHS AT DISNEYLAND, CALIFORNIA]

VO: The evidence behind all of the sleeper cell cases is flimsy and often bizarre. This tape was one of the central pieces of evidence in the first of the cases. It was found in a raid on this house...

[CUT TO EXTERIOR VIEW OF HOUSE]

VO ... in Detroit. Four Arab men were arrested on suspicion of being an Al Qaeda sleeper cell.

[VIEWS OF ARREST PHOTOGRAPHS OF SUSPECTS . TITLE : DETROIT ACCUSED]

VO: They had been accused by another immigrant called Mr Hmimssa. But Mr Hmimssa was, in reality, an international con man with 12 aliases and wanted for fraud across America.

[CUT TO PHOTOGRAPH ; TITLE : YOUSSEF HMIMSSA , US GOVERNMENT WITNESS]

VO: Despite this, the FBI offered to reduce his sentence for fraud if he testified against the men. And to back up Mr Hmimssa's allegations, the FBI turned to the videotape. On the surface it was the innocent record of a trip to Disneyland by a group of teenagers who had nothing to do with the accused, but the government had discovered a hidden and sinister purpose to the tape.

RON HANSEN , REPORTER - THE DETROIT NEWS : The government expert who has looked into surveillance tapes—"casing tapes," as he referred to them—said that one of the objectives of making these kinds of tapes is to disguise the nature, the real purpose, of the tape, and he explained it that the tape is made to look benign, made to look like a tourist tape to obscure its real purpose as a tape to case Disneyland, and that the very appearance of it as being just a tourist tape is actually evidence that it's not a tourist tape.

[CUT TO DISNEYLAND VIDEO ; YOUTH IS SPEAKING TO CAMERA]

YOUTH [HOLDING IMAGINARY MICROPHONE]: Al-Jazeera, Hollywood, Los Angeles, California. Hello?

[CUT TO DISNEYLAND VIDEO ; INTERIOR OF INDIANA JONES RIDE]

RON HANSEN : I could never get past the fact that the tape just looked like a tourist tape. The Disneyland ride, for example, was a lengthy queue, people just making their way to the ride. The camera occasionally pans to look at the rocks on the wall, made to look like an Indiana Jones movie, and after several minutes the camera pans across and shows a trash can momentarily, and then continues off to look into the crowd. The expert basically said that, by flashing on that trash can for a moment, the people who are part of this conspiracy to conduct these kinds of terrorist operations, they would understand what this is all about: how to locate a bomb in Disneyland in California.

[CUT TO VIEW OF YOUTHS IN RESTAURANT]

YOUTH , WAVING : Hello!

RON HANSEN : All the talking and bantering were intended to disguise the hidden message contained within the tape.

[CUT TO VIEW OF YOUTHS DANCING ON VIDEOTAPE]

VO: The government was convinced that the tape was full of hidden messages. A brief shot of a tree outside the group's hotel room was there, they said, to show where to place a sniper to attack the cars on the freeway.

[CUT TO SHAKY VIEW OF SHADOW ALONG SIDEWALK AS INDIVIDUAL CARRIES CAMERA]

VO: And what looked like a camera which had accidentally been left running was in reality a terrorist secretly counting out distances to show others where to place a bomb.

[CUT TO VIEW OF US AIR FORCE JET LANDING]

VO: And the government also said that the Detroit cell was planning to attack US military bases around the world. Yet again, they found hidden evidence of this in a day planner they discovered under the sofa in the house in Detroit. What looked like doodles were in reality, they said, a plan to attack a US base in Turkey.

WILLIAM SWOR , DEFENCE LAWYER , DETROIT SLEEPER CELL TRIAL , INDICATING COPY OF DRAWINGS FROM DAY PLANNER : The government brought in its security officer from the base to testify that she interpreted this as being the main runways. She identified these as being AWACS airplanes and these as being fighter jets. She said that these solid lines were lines of fire and she also said that this down here was a hardened bunker.

VO: But the drawings in the day planner were discovered to have actually been the work of a madman. They were the fantasies of a Yemeni who believed that he was the minister of defence for the whole of the Middle East. He had committed suicide a year before any of the accused had arrived in Detroit, leaving the day planner lying under the sofa in the house. Despite this, two of the accused were found guilty. But then, the government's only witness, Mr Hmimssa, told two of his cellmates that he had made the whole thing up to get his fraud charges reduced. The terrorism convictions have now been overturned by the judge in the case, but it was acclaimed by the President as the first success in the war on terror at home.

[INTERIOR , HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES , SPEAKER'S DAIS]

GEORGE W BUSH : We have the terrorists on the run. We're keeping them on the run. One by one the terrorists are learning the meaning of American justice.

[CUT TO VIDEOTAPE , YOUTHS HAVING A PILLOW FIGHT]

[CUT TO BUFFALO , NEW YORK , SKYLINE]

VO: Another case, in the city of Buffalo, New York, seemed on the surface to be more substantial. Six young Yemeni-Americans had gone to an Islamist training camp in Afghanistan.

[CUT TO AFGHANISTAN , TRAINING CAMP]

VO: They travelled there in early 2001 and spent between 2 and 6 weeks training and being taught Islamist revolutionary theory. Two of them even met bin Laden on one of his tours of the camp. They then returned to the Buffalo suburb of Lackawanna, where they lived, but they did nothing. The FBI heard about their trip and they watched the six men around the clock for nearly a year, but there was no suspicious behavior.

[CUT TO LACKAWANNA , SUBURBAN STREET]

VO: But then, one of the men, Mr al-Bakri, went to Bahrain and sent his friends an E-mail. It said he was going to get married and that he wouldn't be seeing them for awhile. The CIA, who had been monitoring their E-mails, understood this to be a coded message: the cell was about to launch a suicide attack on the US Fifth Fleet.

JOHN MOLLOY , DEFENCE LAWYER , LACKAWANNA TRIAL : The FBI, the government, took that phrase to mean something sinister. They believed that the word "wedding" was a code. They believed that the phrase "not seeing you anymore" indicated that Muktar al-Bakri was a suicide bomber. The reality is that Mr al-Bakri was in Bahrain to get married and the reality of him getting married was that he wouldn't be around his friends anymore.

[CUT TO NEWS FOOTAGE OF POLICE]

[CUT TO US JUSTICE DEPARTMENT PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT]

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Good afternoon. In the past 24 hours, United States law enforcement has identified and disrupted an Al Qaeda-trained terrorist cell on American soil.

VO: The arrests were announced proudly by Washington as another sleeper cell plotting an attack. But it soon became clear that there was no evidence for this at all, other than the E-mail.

COLE : And the best the government can point to as a sleeper cell are these, you know, young men in Lackawanna, in New York, who, yes, went to Afghanistan, trained in an Al Qaeda training camp, but to all appearances had no intention to ever take any action on the basis of that. One of them faked an injury to try to get out early. They came back to the United States. We had them under intensive surveillance and we found no evidence—not one shred of evidence—that they ever planned or intended to engage in any kind of criminal, much less terrorist, act. That's the best they can show for a sleeper cell.

VO: Faced with the fact that there was no evidence, the government quietly dropped any charges of their being a terrorist cell. Instead, they were prosecuted simply for having gone to the training camp, and for having bought uniforms there. And all the other cases were even flimsier: A group of students who supported the liberation of Kashmir were found paint-balling in the woods of Virginia. They were convicted of training to attack America. A group of African-Americans from Oregon tried to go to Afghanistan to support the Taliban but got lost in China. All these groups, the government said, were part of a hidden and terrifying Al Qaeda network.

SWOR : The government had a legitimate concern at the beginning, but they let that concern, and they took it, and they made it a panic. They had reasonable questions and took them and made a complete fantasy out of them. They started out with a conclusion and then filled in all the blanks to the questions. So this was totally driven by the need—or the desire—to have terrorists. You build this conclusion based on this assumption, and

this assumption, and this assumption, and, sure, if you go—if you build assumptions upon assumptions, you can go anywhere!

INTERVIEWER : It's a work of imagination.

SWOR : It is. It's a fantasy, and it's a fantasy that it was politically expedient to sell.

[CUT TO PRESIDENTIAL PRESS CONFERENCE]

GEORGE W BUSH : And make no mistake about it: we got a war here just like we got a war abroad.

[CUT TO BRITAIN : GOLF COURSES ; INTERIOR , DOWNING STREET : DAVID BLUNKETT]

VO: In Britain, too, the government and most of the media have created the overwhelming impression that there is a hidden network of Al Qaeda sleeper cells waiting to attack.

[CUT TO POLICE OFFICERS AT CRIME SCENE]

VO: But, yet again, there is very little evidence for this. Of the 664 people arrested under the Terrorism Act since September the 11th, none of them have been convicted of belonging to Al Qaeda. Only 3 people have so far been convicted of having any association with any Islamist groups, and none of those convictions were for being involved in a terror plot; they were for fundraising, or possessing Islamist literature. The majority of people convicted under the Terrorism Act since September the 11th have actually been members of Irish terrorist groups like the UVF or the Real IRA. And many of the arrests that were dramatically announced as being part of a hidden Al Qaeda network were, in reality, as absurd as the cases in America. For example, the London police swooped on a Mr Zain ul-Abedin who they said was running an international network for terrorist training. It turned out to be a self-defence course for bodyguards. He called it "Ultimate Jihad Challenge." His only client was a security guard from a supermarket, who wanted to learn how to defend himself against shoplifters. Mr Zain ul-Abedin was cleared of all charges. Then there was the Hogmanay terror cell who, it was alleged, were planning to attack Edinburgh. All charges against them were quietly dropped when it was revealed that a key part of the evidence, a map that showed the targets they were going to attack, turned out to have been left in their flat by an Australian backpacker who had ringed the tourist sites he wanted to see. And even the most frightening and high profile of the plots uncovered turned out to be without foundation. No one was ever arrested for planning gas attacks on the London tubes; it was a fantasy that swept through the media. Just as in America, there is no evidence yet of the terrifying and sinister network lurking under the surface of our society which both government and the media continually tell us is there.

[CUT TO MEETING ROOM]

INTERVIEWER : So there was no network.

BILL DURODIE , DIRECTOR , INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR SECURITY ANALYSIS , KINGS COLLEGE : No.

INTERVIEWER : Never.

DURODIE : Probably not.

INTERVIEWER : We invented it.

BILL DURODIE : “Invention” is too string a term. I think we projected it—um, we projected our own worst fears, and that what we see is a fantasy that’s been created.

[CUT TO BBC NEWS INTERVIEW]

GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN : Al Qaeda is a global network with global reach.

[CUT TO BBC NEWS READER]

READER : The target, a deadly web of terror.

[CUT TO BILL DURODIE IN MEETING ROOM]

DURODIE : I’m not saying that an atrocity might not happen on the British mainland. What I am saying is that we have an exaggerated perception of the possibility of terrorism that is quite disabling, and we only need to look at the evidence to understand that the figures simply don’t bear out the way that we have responded as a society.

[CUT TO LONDON SKYLINE , WESTMINSTER , ETC .]

VO: What the British and American governments have done is both distort and exaggerate the real nature of the threat. There are dangerous and fanatical groups around the world who’ve been inspired by the extreme Islamist theories, and they are prepared to use the techniques of mass terror on civilians. The bombings in Madrid showed this only too clearly. But this is not a new phenomenon. What is new is the way the American and other governments have transformed this complex and disparate threat into a simplistic fantasy of an organised web of uniquely powerful terrorists who may strike anywhere and at any moment. But no one questioned this fantasy because, increasingly, it was serving the interests of so many people. For the press, television, and hundreds of terrorism experts, the fact that it seemed so like fiction made it irresistible to their audiences. And the Islamists, too, began to realise that by feeding this media fantasy they could become a powerful organisation—if only in people’s imaginations.

The prime mover in this was one of bin Laden’s associates, who had been captured by the Americans. He was called Abu Zubaydah. He began to tell his interrogators of terrifying plots that Al Qaeda was preparing, some of which, he said, they had copied from Hollywood movies like *Godzilla*, which they had watched in Afghanistan.

[CUT TO INTERIOR, BRIEFING ROOM]

DR JOHN PRADOS , NATIONAL SECURITY ARCHIVE , WASHINGTON DC :
Zubaydah told the interrogators a set of stories based on what he thought would alarm us. He told us, for example—coming out of a movie that had been recent at that time, *Godzilla*, in which the Brooklyn Bridge was destroyed by the monster—he told us that Al Qaeda was interested in destroying the Brooklyn Bridge. He told us of attacks on mass transit sources like subway trains. He told us there were intentions of attacking apartment buildings and shopping centers, the Statue of Liberty, all manner of things.

[EXCERPT , *GODZILLA* : MONSTER RISING OVER BROOKLYN BRIDGE]

[CUT TO PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, WASHINGTON, D.C.]

JOHN ASHCROFT , ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES : Recent intelligence reports suggest that Al Qaeda leaders have emphasised planning for attacks on apartment buildings, hotels, and other soft or lightly-secured targets in the United States.

[CUT TO ANOTHER PRESS CONFERENCE]

ASHCROFT : Terrorists are considering physical attacks against US financial institutions.

[EXCERPT , *GODZILLA: MONSTER RAMPAGING THROUGH STREETS* , CRUSHING CARS]

VO: And Abu Zubaydah also told his interrogators of a terrifying new weapon the Islamists intended to use: an explosive device that could spray radiation through cities, the “dirty bomb.”

[EXCERPT , CBS EVENING NEWS]

DAN RATHER : First, a CBS News exclusive about a captured Al Qaeda leader who says his fellow terrorists have the know-how to build a very dangerous weapon and get it to the United States.

VO: And the media took the bait. They portrayed the dirty bomb as an extraordinary weapon that would kill thousands of people, and, in the process, they made the hidden enemy even more terrifying. But, in reality, the threat of a dirty bomb is yet another illusion. Its aim is to spread radioactive material through a conventional explosion, but almost all studies of such a possible weapon have concluded that the radiation spread in this way would not kill anybody because the radioactive material would be so dispersed, and, providing the area was cleaned promptly, the long-term effects would be negligible. In the past, both the American army and the Iraqi military tested such devices and both concluded that they were completely ineffectual weapons for this very reason.

[CUT TO INTERIOR , LIVING ROOM]

INTERVIEWER : How dangerous would a dirty bomb be?

DR THEODORE ROCKWELL , NUCLEAR SCIENTIST AND RADIATION RISK EXPERT : The deaths would be few, if any, and the answer is, probably none.

INTERVIEWER : Really?

ROCKWELL : Yes. And that’s been said over and over again, but then people immediately say after that, “But, you know, people won’t believe that, and they’ll panic.” And then all the people working on this project, you know, the defence and so forth, breathe a big sigh of relief because they got their problem back: you know, we’re gonna all panic. I don’t think it would kill anybody and I think you’ll have trouble finding a serious report that would claim otherwise. The Department of Energy actually set up such a test and they actually measured what happened. And they—they—the measurements were extremely low. They calculated that the most exposed individual would get a fairly high dose—not life-threatening, but fairly high—and I checked into how the calculation was done, and they assume that after the attack, no one moves for one year. One year. Now, that’s ridiculous.

[CUT TO ANOTHER INTERIOR , LIVING ROOM]

LEWIS Z KOCH , BULLETIN OF ATOMIC SCIENTISTS : The dirty bomb—the danger from radioactivity is basically next to nothing. The danger from panic, however, is horrendous. That’s where the irony comes. This—instead of the government saying, “Look, this is not a serious weapon; the serious danger of this is the panic that would ensue, and there is no reason for panic. Don’t panic.”

[CUT TO VIEW OF ATOMIC BOMB EXPLODING , DESTROYING TEST HOUSES AND OBJECTS]

BRITISH NARRATOR : Ladies and gentlemen, this is not the end of our show; however, something very much like this could happen at any moment. We just thought we ought to prepare you and more or less put you in the mood. Thank you. And now, back to our story.

[CUT , CITY SKYLINE]

VO: The scale of this fantasy just kept growing as more and more groups realised the power it gave them—above all, the group that had been instrumental in first spreading the idea: the neoconservatives. Because they now found that they could use it to help them realise their vision: that America had a special destiny to overcome evil in the world, and this epic mission would give meaning and purpose to the American people.

[CUT , INTERIOR , ROOM IN IRAQ , SADDAM HUSSEIN AND OFFICERS]

VO: To do this, they were going to start with Iraq, and, just as they had discovered a hidden reality of terror beneath the surface in America, they now found hidden links that previously no one had suspected between the Al Qaeda network and Saddam Hussein.

[CUT , SPEAKER’S DAIS, UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES]

GEORGE W BUSH : Evidence from intelligence sources, secret communications, and statements by people now in custody reveal that Saddam Hussein aids and protects terrorists, including members of Al Qaeda. Imagine those 19 hijackers with other weapons and other plans, this time armed by Saddam Hussein.

[CUT , OFFICE INTERIOR]

RICHARD PERLE , CHAIRMAN, PENTAGON DEFENSE POLICY BOARD, 2001-2003: I continue to be amazed at the people who say there are no links. It simply isn’t true. What hasn’t been established is a direct link between Saddam’s intelligence and the 9/11 plotters, although even there there is evidence that suggests, very possibly, facilitation and assistance to the 9/11 hijackers.

INTERVIEWER : There really is evidence?

PERLE : There really is evidence.

INTERVIEWER : So, when people say there is no association between Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, they’re wrong.

RICHARD PERLE : They’re flatly wrong.

INTERVIEWER : Really?

RICHARD PERLE : Absolutely wrong.

[CUT , INTERIOR, AL-JAZEERA STUDIOS ; ARABIC VOICES IN BACKGROUND]

[SUBTITLE : THE BOMBING HAS STARTED]

[VIEW OF TELEVISION MONITORS DISPLAYING ATTACK ON BAGHDAD ; CUT TO REACTION OF NEWSROOM STAFF]

VO: The driving force behind these new global policies in the war on terror was the power of a dark fantasy: a sinister web of hidden and interlinked threats that stretched around the world. And such was the power of that fantasy that it also began to transform the very nature of politics because, increasingly, politicians were discovering that their ability to imagine the future and the terrible dangers it held gave them a new and heroic role in the world.

[CUT TO SCENE OF FUTURISTIC ROADWAY AND COUPLE DRIVING IN FUTURE CAR]

VO: In the post-War years, politicians had also used their imaginations, but to project optimistic visions of a better future that they could create for their people, and it was these visions that gave them power and authority.

[CUT , INTERIOR , DOWNING STREET : ANGLE ON TONY BLAIR]

VO: But those dreams collapsed, and politicians like Tony Blair became more like managers of public life, their policies determined often by focus groups. But now, the war on terror allowed politicians like Blair to portray a new, grand vision of the future. But this vision was a dark one of imagined threats, and a new force began to drive politics: the fear of an imagined future.

[CUT , INTERIOR, TONY BLAIR ADDRESSING AUDIENCE]

TONY BLAIR : Not a conventional fear about a conventional threat, but the fear that one day these new threats of weapons of mass destruction, rogue states, and international terrorism combine to deliver a catastrophe to our world. And then the shame of knowing that I saw that threat, day after day, and did nothing to stop it.

[CUT , ANOTHER ADDRESS]

BLAIR : It may not erupt and engulf us this month or next, perhaps not even this year or next ...

[CUT , CLOSE-UP ON TONY BLAIR , SPEAKING TO INTERVIEWER BEFORE STUDIO AUDIENCE]

BLAIR : I just think these—these dangers are there, I think that it's difficult sometimes for people to see how they all come together—I think that it's my duty to tell it to you if I really believe it, and I do really believe it. I may be wrong in believing it, but I do believe it.

[CUT , EXTERIOR , MOONLIT , DARK CITY SKYLINE]

VO: What Blair argued was that faced by the new threat of a global terror network, the politician's role was now to look into the future and imagine the worst that might happen and then act ahead of time to prevent it. In doing this, Blair was embracing an idea that had actually been developed by the Green movement: it was called the "precautionary principle." Back in the 1980s, thinkers within the ecology movement believed the world

was being threatened by global warming, but at the time there was little scientific evidence to prove this. So they put forward the radical idea that governments had a higher duty: they couldn't wait for the evidence, because by then it would be too late; they had to act imaginatively, on intuition, in order to save the world from a looming catastrophe.

[CUT , INTERIOR , MEETING ROOM]

DURODIE : In essence, the precautionary principle says that not having the evidence that something might be a problem is not a reason for not taking action as if it were a problem. That's a very famous triple-negative phrase that effectively says that action without evidence is justified. It requires imagining what the worst might be and applying that imagination upon the worst evidence that currently exists.

[CUT , INTERIOR , HALL ; ANGLE ON TONY BLAIR ADDRESSING STATE FUNCTION]

BLAIR : Would Al Qaeda buy weapons of mass destruction if they could? Certainly. Does it have the financial resources? Probably. Would it use such weapons? Definitely.

[CUT , INTERIOR , MEETING ROOM]

DURODIE : But once you start imagining what could happen, then—then there's no limit. What if they had access to it? What if they could effectively deploy it? What if we weren't prepared? What it is is a shift from the scientific, "what is" evidence-based decision making to this speculative, imaginary, "what if"-based, worst case scenario.

[CUT , EXTERIOR , CAMP X-RAY , Guantánamo Bay, Cuba]

VO: And it was this principle that now began to shape government policy in the war on terror. In both America and Britain, individuals were detained in high-security prisons, not for any crimes they had committed, but because the politicians believed—or imagined—that they might commit an atrocity in the future, even though there was no evidence they intended to do this. The American attorney general explained this shift to what he called the "paradigm of prevention."

[CUT , INTERIOR , HEARING ROOM , UNITED STATES CONGRESS]

ASHCROFT : We had to make a shift in the way we thought about things, so being reactive, waiting for a crime to be committed, or waiting for there to be evidence of the commission of a crime didn't seem to us to be an appropriate way to protect the American people.

[CUT , INTERIOR , OFFICE]

DAVID COLE : Under the preventive paradigm, instead of holding people accountable for what you can prove that they have done in the past, you lock them up based on what you think or speculate they might do in the future. And how—how can a person who's locked up based on what you think they might do in the future disprove your speculation? It's impossible, and so what ends up happening is the government short-circuits all the processes that are designed to distinguish the innocent from the guilty because they simply don't fit this mode of locking people up for what they might do in the future.

VO: The supporters of the precautionary principle argue that this loss of rights is the price that society has to pay when faced by the unique and terrifying threat of the Al Qaeda

network. But, as this series has shown, the idea of a hidden, organised web of terror is largely a fantasy, and by embracing the precautionary principle, the politicians have become trapped in a vicious circle: they imagine the worst about an organisation that doesn't even exist. But no one questions this because the very basis of the precautionary principle is to imagine the worst without supporting evidence, and, instead, those with the darkest imaginations become the most influential.

[CUT , INTERIOR , RESTAURANT]

DAVID JOHNSTON , INTELLIGENCE SPECIALIST , NEW YORK TIMES : You'll hear about meetings where terrorist matters are discussed in the intelligence community, and always the person with the most dire assessment, the person with the—who has the, kind of, the strongest sense that something should be done will frequently carry the day at meetings. We thus believe the most dire estimate of what could happen here. The sense of disbelief has vanished.

INTERVIEWER : So the person with the most vivid imagination becomes the most powerful.

JOHNSTON : In a sense, that's correct.

[CUT , INTERIOR , FBI OFFICE]

FBI OFFICIAL : We knew that Al Qaeda's tentacles were beginning to become far-reaching.

[CUT , INTERIOR , BRITISH MEETING ROOM]

BRITISH OFFICIAL : There will be an attack. It is "when" within the United Kingdom; I think the "if" is academic.

[CUT , TONY BLAIR AT PODIUM , ADDRESSING AUDIENCE]

BLAIR : It is only a matter of time, and its potential is huge.

[EXCERPT , *GODZILLA*: WALL OF WATER SLAMS INTO CITY]

[CUT , INTERIOR , RESTAURANT]

JOHNSTON : How will we ever know when it's over? How will we ever know when the threat is gone? In the mindset we are now in, once we declare it to be over will be exactly the time that we believe that they will strike.

[CUT , BRITISH NEWSSTAND]

NEWS VENDOR : You know, uh, it's just—it's the way we live today. We're living on a knife edge.

[CUT , AERIAL VIEW OF LONDON , FOLLOWED BY SCENES OF DISASTERS , ETC]

VO: This story began over 30 years ago as the dream that politics could create a better world began to fall apart. Out of that collapse came two groups: the Islamists and the neoconservatives. Looking back, we can now see that these groups were the last political idealists who, in an age of growing disillusion, tried to reassert the inspirational power of political visions that would give meaning to people's lives.

[CUT, VIEW OF ARABIC CROWD]

[SUBTITLES OVER CROWD SCENES: We will fight for an Islamic state, we will die for it.]

[CUT , PAUL WOLFOWITZ ENTERING PRESS BRIEFING ROOM]

VO: But both have failed in their attempts to transform the world and, instead, together they have created today's strange fantasy of fear which politicians have seized on. Because in an age when all the grand ideas have lost credibility, fear of a phantom enemy is all the politicians have left to maintain their power.

[CUT , INTERIOR , HALL , REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION]

BUSH : And we have seen Americans in uniform storming mountain strongholds and charging through sandstorms. We have fought the terrorists across the earth because the lives of our citizens are at stake. And America and the world are safer.

[CUT , INTERIOR , HALL , DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION]

JOHN KERRY , UNITED STATES SENATOR AND PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: The stakes are high. We are a nation at war, a global war on terror against unlike we've ever known before....

[CUT , RNC]

BUSH : Faced with that choice I will defend America every time.

[CUT , ANGLE ON CHEERING CROWDS OF REPUBLICANS]

[CUT , INTERIOR , MEETING ROOM]

DURODIE : In a society that believes in nothing, fear becomes the only agenda. Whilst the 20th century was dominated between a conflict between a free-market Right and a socialist Left, even though both of those outlooks had their limitations and their problems, at least they believed in something, whereas what we are seeing now is a society that believes in nothing. And a society that believes in nothing is particularly frightened by people who believe in anything, and, therefore, we label those people as fundamentalists or fanatics, and they have much greater purchase in terms of the fear that they instill in society than they truly deserve. But that's a measure of how much we have become isolated and atomised rather than of their inherent strength.

[CUT , EXTERIOR DOWNING STREET , TONY BLAIR WALKING TOWARD DOOR]

VO: But the fear will not last, and just as the dreams that politicians once promised turned out to be illusions, so, too, will the nightmares, and then our politicians will have to face the fact that they have no visions, either good or bad, to offer us any longer.

[END CREDITS:

MUSIC: "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head"]

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PICTURES

CAMERA: LUCY KELSALL

SOUND: NIALL PODSON

RESEARCHERS: SATIYESH MANOHARAJAH , HOSSAM AL-HAMALAWY

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH: NEIL STEVENSON

PRODUCTION EXECUTIVE: EMMANUELE PASQUALE

PRODUCTION MANAGER: CLAIRE ASKEW

COLOURIST: COLIN PETERS

ONLINE EDITOR: TAMER OSMAN

DUBBING MIXER: BOB JACKSON

FILM RESEARCH: STUART ROBERTSON

ASSISTANT PRODUCER: LUCY KELSALL

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: STEPHEN LAMBERT , PETER HORROCKS

WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY: ADAM CURTIS

