

*Containing the Well*

مهار چاههای نفتی



*VACUUM*

*[ ... Every particle of the air surrounding us is infused with oil. We can neither see nor smell a thing except for the smoke.*

*The horizon is obscured by acrid black fog. Connections are lost and Navigation is almost impossible. ]*



It is 2018, a year before the moment that the economy as we know it was dismantled.

The situation is worsening each passing day. Continuing widespread protests against the status quo have remained ineffectual. Political activists, students and unions all seem to be incapable of holding any viable prospects. People are suffering from severe anxiety, distress and depression in equal measure. As if time stands still and nothing is what it appears to be. Paranoia has made it nearly impossible to hold on to something concrete, except for the common feeling of misery which binds and unites the people.

وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا

And hold fast to the bond of Allah, together and do not scatter.

Verse 3:103 Al-Imran

Perversely realised, all are at last uniting, meeting the promised unification, our emblem, in the thresholds of total collapse. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the complexities and counter-dynamics of ideas, ideologies and opinions in this land.

A brief account of the events that have transpired over the past few years could be illustrative for unfolding this manifold situation and tracing back this incident.

Geographically, the land is struggling with the water crisis and impending drought. Water conflicts have for long been a threat not only from a survival necessity but also as a threat to political stability and technological advances. At this point, groundwater aquifers have almost dried up and lost their capacity. Dams are obsolete as the reservoirs have been emptied. Now Zayandeh-Rood is dried up except when they open the dam for one month a year. As a solution to water shortage in many regions, the central government is running massive water transfer projects.

Contrary to popular belief, people have not yet lost all hope. They still elusively envisage an effaced change. During the past years, farmers have violently defended their rights on water against water displacement masterplans; chanting “No Water, No Taxes”. The newly installed state pipeline circulating these provinces have been pierced and damaged, disrupting the transfer. The hyper project of Persian Gulf water transfer to central provinces that was sketched and promised to be delivered by now has been left abandoned. It is apparent that the water crisis cannot be solved with the current technologies in possession.

Nonetheless, other uber-modern states and hyper economies in the region have access to the technological means of producing artificial water more efficiently. The technology has been offered on several occasions albeit in trade with certain rights in return. It goes without saying that people in this land are righteously and zealously ought to keep their independence as a constitutive virtue, whatever the consequences.

In response, we remind ourselves of this quote;

“if united and each Muslim person carries a bucket of water and threw that over the enemies lands, the enemy would be washed away.”

With a few adjustments, might it be that a new surreal technological bucket system could be the solution?

Techno-scientists have received massive funding to develop radical projects in partnership with the Centre for Contemporary Theological Studies to come up with genuine resolutions.

Current energy sources are not sustainable. Water and electricity are widely rationed due to continuous shortages and are mostly given to major cities where central banking, management and computational systems are located. Power cuts are now a routine, exasperated in hot summer days when the generators cannot meet the high demands. Environmental conditions and climate change have brought with them severe implications. Summers have become unbearable. The air becomes a thick smog that makes breathing hard. The putrid aroma of sweat and rotteness is sickening to behold. In Winters, while big cities now escape heavy snow, Spring commences with all through unprecedented flash flooding. Although the land is made more fertile, insects, pests and locusts thrive. The ecosystem is perpetually damaged and the land is at risk of becoming impotence. The population's immune system has been compromised by overuse of pesticides.

*Beautiful but frightening and apocalyptic, millions of butterflies have flocked to the urban and rural areas of the capital, boosting people's morale and psychological state.*

*Spinning your head, you see different species of butterflies everywhere.*

*Some are suspicious of an ongoing secret operation, causing butterflies and insects uncanny influx.*

Despite all, this place has become one of the domains of watermelons. The last time I checked, it is the world's third largest producer and exporter of watermelon standing below China. I cannot not recall The past gone days, compensating for harsh realities.



It is a hot summer day. Under the shades on the top of a grand palace, Ali Qapu.

One of those in which one can only do very limited things in a productive sense. The body loosens itself and lethargy sets in.

This music room/balcony has deep circular niches all around. One might take them as mere ornaments, but the niches form the structure of the acoustic technology. Magical music is playing, the sound echoes all through space when reaching the walls. The smell of opium is in the air with its soothing fragrance, a cool breeze blows, an ecstatic sensation.

A very pleasant picture only to be complete with a tray of sliced watermelons, goat cheese, freshly baked bread and noble tea.

Time passes rather slowly. It sometimes stops, or stretches indefinitely between concurrent naps.

Thinking of naps, one should recall Ashab-e Kahf or The Seven Sleepers, a group of pious youths who sought refuge from a tyrannical pagan king in a cave and in which Allah made them sleep for 300 years (or 309 years according to the lunar calendar), only to wake up to another currency, a totally different entity... having no idea of the 'time' past behind them.

Back to watermelon complex. Melons are thirsty fruits in need of rich, moist soil to be cultivated. They consume great quantities of water in comparison to other produce and yet their global net value is low. No wonder, No complaints; we need watermelons to endure hot days, and more than us the world needs watermelons. Here is the equation; some lands need to bear the burden. As they did somewhere in their past.



Time is not linear, it might have a circular formation. Opium was once, more than a hundred years ago, the highest produced agricultural product of this land. Most lands were under plantation of opium which had an international export economy, high revenue and prospective market in Europe. It was perhaps the mal-consumption of opium amongst other psychedelics that kept Arians entertained and prosperous, leading a carefree existence in their resourced and imaginal yet to be discovered wonderland. This might be the reason for them falling behind the technological shifts, industrialisation and medical discoveries. These capitalist developments were all rushing towards their dreamland for it had oil to offer in return. They were not aware of the value of this material and how it will liquidate their identity in the future.

*In a remote village near Persepolis in the land of roses and nightingales, one day surfaces a mysterious stranger: William Knox D'Arcy. To enact his plan for exploiting the wealth and the natural resources of this land, he sends after his cronies who descend upon the village in a big balloon. Among them is Cinderella a lady of electrifying beauty who is enlisted to keep the illiterate and lecherous villagers under her charm and bewitch them to follow D'Arcy's plans to exploit the oil field under their feet.*

*Okay Mister (Parviz Kimiavi, 1978), is a grotesque social satire of the short span of British intended colonialism in this land, founding oil and petrochemical industry at the beginning of the 20th century and gaining sixty-year D'arcy concession over oil and its byproducts before the legislation to nationalise the oil industry was passed in 1951.*



Petroleum became a defining entity of us within this land due to it being highly commodified and financialised. Oil and natural gas are the main industries of this vast territory. Despite being the third largest provider in the world, the industry is leading the land to its self-destruction.

Contrary to common belief, colonisation did happen but not exactly in the same manner as elsewhere. We colonised and regulated ourselves around this substance.

*The heat on oil rigs and refineries can reach a peak of 65 degrees intensified by 95% humidity. Heat, gas flares and air pollutants can take down 10 workers in a single day on petrochemical complexes while performing hard labour under dense air and burning sun. The sun that eventually turns them into fossils, fuel, economy and the concurrent vicious circle.*

Everlasting Gulf wars have caused great casualties, with many refugees and homeless left behind. A recent oil well explosion ended in the evacuation of small close by villages as the air was diagnosed toxic. The struggle to maintain the operating wells protected, is itself causing another crisis. High-security protective systems are applied not only to oil refinery sites but also to the villages and cities within a distance. These are the same cities that have once been demolished as a result of the eight-year war imposed by US-backed Iraqi war. It was in these exact locations that the war was won, leaving more than 200,000 martyrs and around 700,000 injured.

*A few months ago the flood took over cities to the west, where many of the wells are located. In order to protect the wells, the water was diverted into nearby villages. This led to a violent and bloody exchange between authorities and enraged villagers.*

Besides, economic war has caused high inflation. In the face of the continuous sanctions, the currency exchange rate has dropped considerably. However, the state is playing its few chances at hand. They repetitively inject the world's leading currency into the market, collect local money in exchange and re-buy the foreign token with a lower price, till emptying people's hands. This is to force the flow of local money and regulate the collapsing market. Basically, this is poker logic performed in a 'communist' theological state.

Future planning is a privilege only a very small percentage can afford. Without future prospects, surviving instinct is the driving force in preventing a full halt. In response to the fatal circumstances, people imagine a system other than that of the current global 'money' and for them independent from oil matter. The imaginative currency is to meet the demand for equality, keeping in mind the new technologies at hand.

On the verge of madness, when reality loses all power, hallucinating is comprehensible, and most probably the only gateway. Collective spirit in the face of dilapidated recent histories has been retroactively boosted. As said before, pain and disasters that people survive through make them more relatable after all.

**May this new economy lift the burden off our shoulders. Maybe we could once more revive our glorious land, passing days without doing a thing but lying down beside our mining computers, piling up digitally.**

Blueprints of exemplary cooperative economic systems have been visualised amongst radical thinkers, the opposition and even in confidential state reports. The tendency to launch an alternative model is of interest to the controversial parties.

How could it not become an isolated enclosed laboratory? (at best)

*Golshiri, in one of his short stories written back in the 60s, imagines the 'utopian' transformation of a small unsettling city.*

*In his account, the authorities enclose the city under a big dome, paint the inside resembling the clear blue sky, craft metal beards and plastic flowers and lastly deport animals to reduce biochemical waste.*

*Only that this city is condemned to fail. After a while, the system dysfunctions and insurgencies reappear. The whole ecology starts to rot, unlike what was imagined, an eternal, fully controlled city.*

*The system needs breaches. Very much like fire.*

*Breathing oxygen inflates fire and maintains its algorithm of burning.*

*Fire in order to sustain needs contact with its outer space.*

Derived from within this locality, the future economic model that they are suggesting cannot be limited to this geopolitics, not only because oil is a global commodity, but more that, scaling down and enclosing the model, will eventually outsource it.



*[ ... Every particle of the air surrounding us is infused with oil. We can neither see nor smell a thing except for the smoke.*

*The horizon is obscured by acrid black fog. Connections are lost and Navigation is almost impossible. ]*

{ I am at the location of an incident that has been unheard of in maritime transportation in the past twenty years.

Just a few hundred meters away from me, Sanchi oil tanker with all its crew members and manpower burst into flames and eventually sank deep in the ocean after drifting for eight days.

After the incident took place, local Chinese media claimed that the

collision between Sanchi tanker and the Chinese ship could have been intentional. The anti-state media attempted to promote these allegations.

But just here, a few minutes ago during my conversation with a representative of the World Trade Organisation and one of the officials of the International Maritime Organisation, both acknowledged: “ Associating the Sanchi incident with the riots and upheavals of the Iranian

people in recent years to protest against the economic situation and Western media calling it 'resistance movement' is still obscure."

The Chinese local newspapers claim that diversion from the intended route, disconnection from the navigation system and lack of communication with the cereal and grain carrier are indications confirming the premeditation of this incident. J.S, a source who wishes to remain unnamed and a specialist in contemporary navigation strategies, has claimed that the GPS and satellite navigator of Sanchi tanker were disturbed and eventually shut down approximately a few hours before the incident took place.

However, a well-informed government spokesman has called the news fictitious and delusional and emphasised, "Relating the liberal and anti-government incentives against the state policies, specifically by the martyrs of the ship in possession of the National Oil Company was not righteous and is below human dignity. Especially when the bodies of the crew members have not yet been recovered." He then insisted on the accidental nature of this incident.

The Western reporter, by emphasising the fact that the tanker was transiting in free-waters under Panama flag and intended to deliver 136 ton of crude oil to the South Korean Total Company in an unsolicited transaction, tried to add political dimensions to this incident. He also questioned the state's real motives in claiming this incident as being deliberate, "The political exploitation and manipulation within media coverage was intended to strengthen the national morale and unite the people in the face of a tragic event by holding commemorations for the martyrs of resistance."

The state spokesman suggested these rumours are all part of the long-running anti-state strategies of the West, carried out by foreign media. He pointed out that referring to these baseless accusations is western media's propaganda, and acknowledged that the sacrifice crew members made while performing their duty are self-evident and far beyond any hesitations to everyone.

Sanchi tanker and its oil cargo are now lying on the seabed, but a strong current of rumour would not allow it to rest... }

The footage has been widely distributed on television stations, entertaining avid spectators with an impressive landscape. Amongst various narratives, state media has highly appreciated their performance while on duty and called them martyrs of the state.

Suspiciously, the black box of the tanker was not found to this moment and therefore affirming the accounts is not possible. However counter investigations are in process. We now know that one of the crew members was a woman, the reason for her presence on the tanker is not yet known.

The militia responsible for this incident undertook the operation based on designed plans and internal intelligence. The high secured facilities on Kharg Island, former world's largest offshore crude oil terminal and current navy base in control of Hormuz strand and maritime traffic and navigation, was breached. Live GPS, tracking the tanker was suspended and instead, fake live coordination was signaled to the base. Simultaneously the navigation system of the Chinese ship was hacked. As the Chinese crew recall, the satellite system experienced frequent lags, until it suddenly shut down and left them incapable of specifying their coordinates. In the meantime, Sanchi went offline and slightly changed direction. Further details of the operation and full reports of their communication are not yet to our knowledge.

At this point, it is not apparent whether the operation was taken in total independence and autonomy or it was supported by other militias, perhaps including computational scientists and experts in the field. We can only say that the absence of a centralised control system has been verified. The attempt was recognised as part of a distributed movement.

*'Shot reverse shot'*

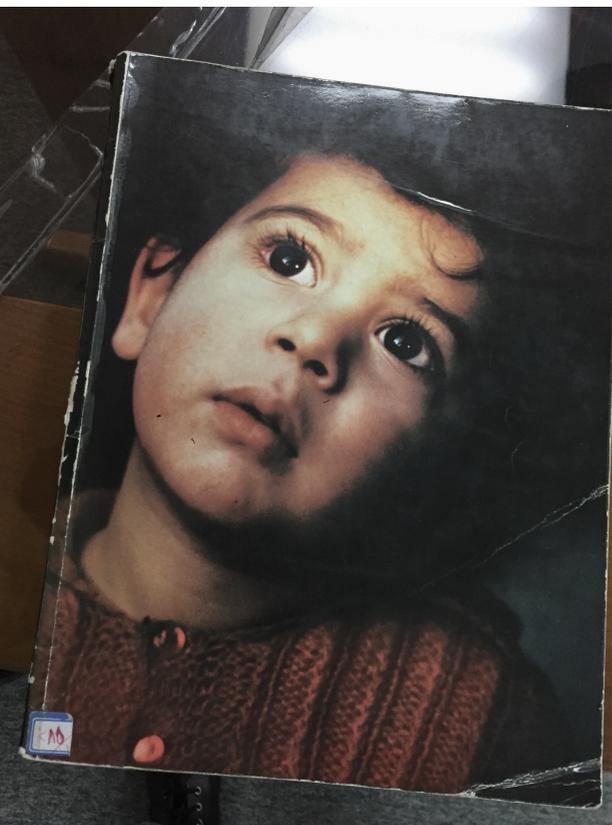


In analysing the incident, strategists have pointed out their symbolic gesture, falling in coherence with mythical, religious, cultural and political specifications of this locality that could not just be random. Women, protesters and political prisoners, have resisted for many years through self-immolation.

*The Battle of Karbala took place in the year 61 AH, between a small group of 72 supporters and relatives of Muhammad's grandson, Husayn ibn Ali, and a larger military detachment of around 30000 warriors from the forces of Yazid I, the Umayyad caliph.*

*The dead are widely regarded as martyrs by Shia Muslims. The battle played a central role in shaping the identity of the Shia and turned them into a sect with its own rituals and collective memory. For the Shia, Husayn's suffering and death became a symbol of sacrifice in the struggle for right against wrong, and for justice and truth against wrongdoing and falsehood. Hence, the battle more than a politically formative moment defines the theological origin of the Shia martyr ethos, and it provides members of the faith with a catalogue of heroic norms. Therefore the commemoration must be seen as a paradigm providing a self-contained cosmology applicable to all aspects of life, not only belonging to the past but the memory of the future.*

Since the eight-year war, leaving an unprecedented number of dead bodies, martyrdom, itself a Shia phenomenon and an abstract socio-political apparatus, was manipulated into the main ideological force of the state. This was through embedding martyrdom within common law. In this formation, dying on duty serving military renders the person a martyr automatically. So much so that now the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs holds a noticeable percentage of lands and incoming benefits.



>

شهيد shahid (Martyr) is the one who has witnessed with his eyes, and the one who is informed, a witness/evidence himself.

It is about sacrifice. For one to sacrifice his most valuable thing of all, his death, for the right and for that to die before dying physically. Or to become a post-human body who foresees his death with a piercing sight as Toufic would say.

In Karbala, their death was predetermined and evident to all. Nonetheless dying was their absolute and only choice, in the moment of total oppression.

لَقَدْ كُنْتَ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِنْ هَذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ

Thou wast in heedlessness of this. Now We have removed from thee thy covering, and piercing is thy sight this day.

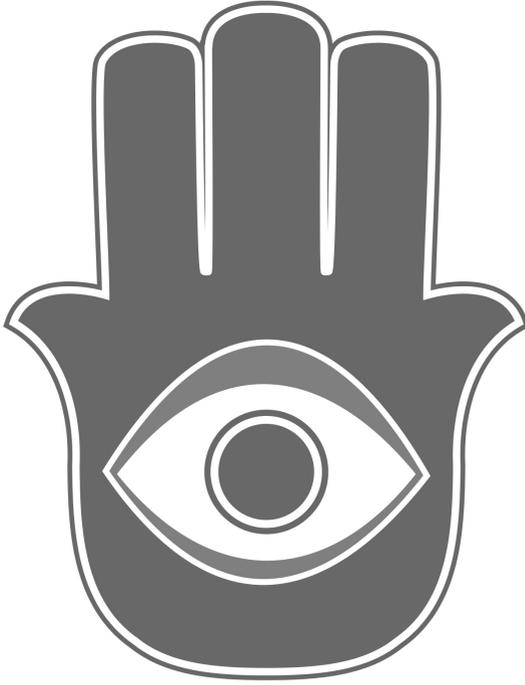
Verse 50:22 Qaf

Since to die without witnessing it with a piercing sight is to commit suicide, the majority of the operations, if not all, are actually suicidal ones. *'For one to become a martyr prior to his physical demise, we need to apply to the world of Quran.'*

Then, how can they be martyrs, if not witnessing their death rushing towards them?

And so how can this be an accident if they already knew what was to follow?

There only remains one way to comprehend collective Shahadat.



Are they martyrs,  
exactly because of  
witnessing the  
terms and  
conditions of their  
own death, before  
dying?

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ

And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead; nay, they are  
alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord.

Verse 3:169 Al-Imran

Most of all, they demonstrated a new future possibility for this land.  
Within their programme, the oil industry will be shot down and  
henceforth a new economy substitute.



فمنهم من قضى

نحبه و منهم من ينتظر

و ما بدلو تبديلا

How could it not become an isolated enclosed laboratory?

*They once imagined the new currency to function through counter-colonialism. Currently, the notions of homelessness, being a refugee or performing radical behaviours have all been fetishised, regulated and undergone bureaucratic procedures.*

For long, guerrillas modelled a land without oil. The idea has now reached a greater public and is circulating all around the cloud. Maybe the redundant oil wells could be repurposed into ambitious art pieces, attracting visiting tourists. Based on the small scale model, the Oil Pool, in the Museum of Contemporary Art, the well could be enclosed within a shiny sleek metal texture and a transparent lid. The original piece was done by a Japanese artist concerned with liquidity, surface, space and sculptural disciplines.

*Perhaps I am partially blind, but I cannot see a thing except for this pool being made in anticipation of a future, forming within it.*

- In the souvenir shops on these premises, postcard and images of former rigs, gas flares, workers on site and other fetishised pictures are sold. Besides, 3D models along with archives of the past industry are presented.

The sites are occasionally used as a filming location for period dramas. -



