

Chapter III

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Blood, Oil, Tears and Sweat

Oil exploration and exportation is like a chess game. In the game of chess, each move is deliberate in order to protect the king. Meanwhile, in the process of protecting one king, a lot of other coins of various designations like the queen, bishop, rook, knight and pawn are moved or sacrificed. The game of chess is a wonderful metaphor of the class division that exists in society and how a move to protect the interest of the superpower happens at the cost of others. Similarly, in the game of oil, each move is crucial in deciding the course of power, flow of wealth and fate of the civilisation. The oil has also brought in clear-cut class distinction through wealth and hegemony, which has opened up new forms of imperialism through monopoly. On the flip side of the riches of the oil wealth are the stories of blood, tears and sweat that are shed in the mechanism of oil imperialism. The oil resources and their geopolitical presence have proven to be adept in aiding a culture to thrive or annihilate.

On February 23, 1939, Winston Churchill wrote a column in the *Daily Telegraph* titled, “Can Franco Restore Unity and Strength to Spain?” It was his take on the Spanish Civil War where he used the phrase ‘Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat’ to describe how a new social and national order was constructed. The blood, tears, sweat and toil denotes the impending war and tears shed, lives lost and labourers exploited in the rise of a new social order, “But here are new structures of national life erected upon blood, sweat, and tears...” (Churchill). After the discovery of fossil fuels, the ways of the world, either be it the prosperous living or fleeing from war, have been shaped by the economic, political and cultural presence of oil.

The land, lives and culture that has been destroyed in the discovery and extraction of oil and the creation of a new world is a narrative that has always been side-lined in history and instead embellished with news of the new wealth that has greased the palms of the capitalist. Neocolonialism and its role in making the oil as the coloniser and the civilisation as the colonised is primal in understanding this new fossil fuel leveraged social order. Few oil producing nations saw the development of their oil sector while being under colonial control, but for other oil resource rich nations the development took place after independence and "...they were continually subjected to pressures from foreign governments and multinational oil companies." (Mazaheri 772)

The codes of colonialism were quite strongly etched into the political and cultural spaces during the European dominance of the world. The parameters of modernisation and progress were set up by the European countries. Based on these parameters, the non-European countries were usually evaluated as static and stagnant in terms of development. Colonialism advocated the idea that development of these non-European countries came only through European diffusionism in matters like government, education, religion, trade, commerce and language. This diffusionism is still believed to be the foundational theory for the traditional beliefs on the global dominance of Europe and the rise of Third World Nations. Europe maintains its progressive nature till date and remains ahead of other nations in terms of economic development. The significant reason for it is capitalism. Thus, colonialism instigated a system that the development of the non-European nations happened only through "...diffusion of European based multinational capitalism." (Blaut 261)

From the mid twentieth century onwards, the colonial emancipation and decolonisation became the main objective for all the colonised nations. Initially feudalism and later

colonialism along with capitalism was also responsible for dividing the society into factions and led to the rise of labour or the working class and their exploitation. These factions later united under the banner of nationalism in defending their country against the foreign invaders but by then colonialism was not just a military and political control but was already deep-rooted into ideology, beliefs, education, food, fashion and language as well. The result of a successful decolonisation must be the rise of an idealistic indigenous social order or utopia, but given the complex nature of colonialism and the other forms of it currently operating in the society, complete freedom still remains a myth.

The process of decolonisation was the beginning of the narratives under the label post-colonialism, which largely were the critique of the colonial empire and the aftermath of the encounter between the Western and the non-Western countries. The postcolonial narratives usually talked about hybridity, identity crisis, exclusion, cultural ramification, disparity and resistance under the hegemony of the coloniser. The postcolonial critique also opens up about the depth to which colonialist ideologies and power have infiltrated into the political, economic and cultural level and are hidden in plain sight. Capitalism is one of the powerful tools of colonialism that has survived till date and maintains the economy of many colonies long after their independence. On a global scale, the role of capitalism in creating the present societal structure cannot be overlooked. Privatisation became the new torchbearer of development and growth. In that way a new form of imperialism is prevalent today where the economies and the global demand-supply of resources are controlled and regulated by the powerful nations.

In modern times, the concept of freedom is a paradox and in the hands of neocolonialism, freedom has become a luxury. While freedom promises a sense of

independence and autonomy, the internal workings of it vary. Neocolonialism works in subtle ways like the promise of better and improved living conditions with money through foreign investments, extraction and export of natural resources and military deals, thereby creating an illusion of prosperity and security which is far from reality. In contemporary times, to view oil as the prime source of power deciding the social set up is a commendable entry point in understanding the coming of neocolonialism and the multifarious ways in which it has infiltrated into the society and culture.

Neocolonialism has become a vital decision-making body in everyday workings of the world economics and politics, thereby deciding the fate of many nations. In that context, postcolonialism began documenting this history of exploitation while critically representing and addressing the marginalisation of the cultural ideologies that are not from the West. Thus, postcolonialism, "... has arisen to account for neocolonialism, for continuing modes of imperialist thought and action across much of the contemporary world" (Huggan 22). It only denotes the idea that the colonial era never ceased to exist and rather extended its supremacy through passive yet powerful methods.

The economic imperialism and the continued control through the conditional aids have made a literary impact on the works of writers like Graham Greene, Ngũgĩwa Thiong'o, and John Stockwell. Neocolonialism was initially associated only with the African context, but over time the horizon has widened and today there are many nations governed by the presence or absence of fossil fuels. Neocolonialism has exploited the resources of the nation, initiated, prolonged or stopped wars that could benefit a shadow government and has empowered the elites and depleted the others, "It has enriched local and international elites and impoverished entire cities." (Collier)

The control over oil resources is the prime objective of the oil monopolies. Oil imperialism is an efficacious way to understand how oil perpetuates neocolonial dominance in present times. Petrofiction provides a literary medium for further enhancing this perception of the new world order. *Cities of Salt* (COS) by Abdelrahman Munif offers an inquisitive insight into the metamorphosis of the desert lands after the discovery of oil. A pristine oasis like Wadi al-Uyoun with its greenery, caravans, traders and bedouins leading a peaceful life is subjected to a great change that has a ripple effect on the politics, economy and culture when for the first time the Americans come in search of oil. The first sign of foreign intervention is noted in the bedouin lands when American geologists supported by the Sultan and the Emir arrived at Wadi to explore the lands.

The often-agreed starting point for understanding the neocolonial dominance in the Middle East is through the Sykes-Picot agreement. It was a secret treaty signed in May 1916 by Britain, Russia, France and Italy which gave them the power to divide the Ottoman Territory after the First World War. The agreement gave rise to borders that have survived till date. The neocolonial attributes of this agreement can be highlighted by the fact that the borders and the signing of the treaty by the western powers took place in secret without the knowledge of the Middle Eastern and Arab countries. Under this agreement, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia came under the control of Britain. It is a well-established fact that Britain played a prominent and influential role in the creation of Saudi Arabia in the year 1927 after the discovery of oil resources.

When oil was first discovered and extracted in the Arab provinces like Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, they were all economically fragile and depended on Western support for capital and military power. Initially, these kingdoms were

satisfied with their meagre payments through royalty. In 1950, the royalty system was disbanded and a 50-50 agreement in net profits was implemented. This hiked the oil revenues of the Middle East, yet the oil companies still remained dominant in the provinces because they were able to supply oil for rich industrial nations at cheap cost and the reality was that "... the foreign oil company was a 'state within a state', more powerful than the host government with whom it was sharing its profits" (Mansfield 522). Munif's fictional kingdom is largely modelled based on Saudi Arabia and other places like Kuwait and Bahrain that achieved phenomenal development after the exploration and extraction of oil resources. After the Second World War, the neocolonial control of the Middle East was further accelerated when America joined the ruling power system. Internally within the Middle Eastern provinces it gave rise to social inequality, cultural disparity, corrupt elites and sectarian violence.

Frantz Fanon in his canonical work *Wretched of the Earth* (1961) brings out the relationship between the settler and the native. They are two opposing forces and their initial confrontation is distinguished through violence wherein the settler exploits the natives using ammunition. In the hegemonic war involving violence, the settlers gain an upper hand and their narrative of the native is widely accepted because of the superiority of knowledge and that puts the natives in an inferior position. Arsenal complex is the term used by Fanon to describe this feeling of inferiority and social alienation or invisibility by the oppressed in a colonial system. Thus, the settler initiates and validates the existence of the natives by the power bestowed on them through the colonial apparatus, "For it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence. The settler owes the fact of his very existence, that is to say, his property, to the colonial system." (Fanon 36)

As the oil encounter perpetrated the foreign intervention into the fictional kingdom of Harran and Mooran as portrayed by Munif in *Cities of Salt* and *The Trench* (TT), the old identities that are deeply etched into the indigenous knowledge are replaced by ones that are decided by the Americans. The old Harran vanished and, in its place, blossomed a new characteristic for Harran which is defined by oil, arrival of Americans and the wealth which came after that. The presence of oil in redefining the identity of Harran expounds the power and consent it gives in transforming a place by violating the cultural sentiments attached to it. The hegemony vested by the oil provided the Americans with the capability to reconstruct Harran from a coastal town to an industrial sector with major oil rigs. The identity of Harran as expressed through indigenous people, natural vegetation and community living was soon wiped away, and its place was the destruction of houses, seizing of the lands and the dead are all forgotten.

The date of birth of Harran was determined by the arrival of Americans in huge ships. The arrival of Americans in ships is similar to the first arrival and colonisation by the American forefathers and the pilgrims in Mayflower from Britain to America which was once the land of Red Indians also called the Native Americans: “This day gave Harran a birthdate, recording and how it was built ... It was practically the only date they remembered” (Munif, *COS* 215). Thus, their original identity was wiped away by the arrival of oil and Americans. Instead a new social order initiated by the presence of fuel resources and American monopolies defined Harran that was knee-deep into industrialisation, accumulation of wealth, corruption, greed and frivolous living in the desert.

The frivolities, fashions and mannerisms of the Americans stunned the Arabs and made them feel diminished. Hence, the Arabs arriving in Harran for employment are

silent, fearful, anxious and sad, while the American workers arriving by ship are full of celebration and carry a sense of victory of the new wealth. The distinctive expressions are evocative of the fact that although the resources are found in the Arab lands, the ability to make wealth out of it lies with the Americans. They exercise the power and control that is bestowed on them by oil and the technology to extract it. The deputy Emir says that the government that has been formed has the controlling power and protects the rights of its people, but in reality, the Arab government in Harran is less concerned about protecting the natives and it is more bent on making sure that oil activities are uninterrupted, and the Americans are protected.

As the wings of neocolonialism and the rise in the status of oil seeped into the society that was once an indigenous ruled place, the old ways slowly went into rumbles and is replaced by a civilisation built on the discovery of oil and the power attained through it. The days before oil and the old Harran is portrayed through nostalgia because it ceases to exist physically and culturally. The leftovers of old Harran are the mosque and the cemetery but these architectural memorabilia might one day be replaced with cinema. This highlights the cultural imperialism exercised in the hands of oil by the West on the East, ““The old Harran you knew is gone. It has been obliterated.”” (Munif, *COS* 258)

Media plays an important role in shaping the identity of the particular geopolitical space, as it acts as the bridge between the local and the global audience. Hassan Rezaie who introduced the Emir to a variety of scientific inventions like radio, telescope and other modern accessories says that he had first heard about Harran through the British Broadcasting. They are the prime source of all news regarding Harran. Although Rezaie has heard from the media about the oil rigs, petroleum ports, refineries, and the supply

depots, what is not accounted for by the media is the indigenous life and sentiments that are lost in the political and capitalistic game. The media is an important tool used by the coloniser to inflict and exhibit their dominance over the colonised and reinstate the fact that dependency over the master is obligatory for the progress of the Third World nations.

Through oil resources, the American oil barons exerted power on Harran and Mooran in this fictional sheikhdom created by Munif which is also a representation of a slice of reality of the many countries that have become prosperous in the hands of resource wealth and also others who have lost their nation because of the same natural resources. In the novel, Ibn Naffeh refers to the Americans as strangers who have come to rule them, and it also implies that the sudden and strange appearance of oil in their desert was a bane because of all the disruption it has caused. The black gold and American oil company exercises supreme hold over the Arab government and its citizens through economic dominance and cultural invasion, as portrayed through the social setup of Harran: ““Those strangers rule us and make their plans, they say what will be and what not. By God, the depths of the Earth are better than its face”” (Munif, *COS* 568). Thus, the discovery of oil mandated the formation of a new identity for Harran and other cities that came into similar existence.

Harran transformed from a quaint coastal area to a major oil production unit and became unfit for living. People migrated and set up their livelihoods in the nearby city called Mooran which is the capital of the oil kingdom ruled by Sultan Khazael and the oil barons. Although the Sultan resides in Mooran, the importance of this place was rather governed by its geopolitical value. Mooran became very important for the West, especially the United States because of its location, oil wealth and regional value. Thus, the identity

and significance of Mooran is decided by the convenience of the colonisers and their choice alters the identity of the place and natives who are important in forming the cultural scene of the landscape. Rather than celebrating the native knowledge and the culture, Mooran's identity is formed based on the presence of oil and its benefits to the American oil companies. Thus, "...its fate was more likely to be decided outside of Mooran than within." (Munif, *TT* 478)

After the wealth and status of Mooran became an important topic in the global economy, Hammad, the director of the security agency, is invited to America. On his brief trip to America, he meets with various American professionals who speak Arabic, know the history of the Sultanate and have the greatest respect for the Sultan and talk to him about various security and defence technology available in America. This offers the first glimpse into America and its role in military aid of Mooran. After his return to Mooran, Hammad describes the advanced technologies available with the Americans, and it evidently puts the natives in an inferior position. He remarks that America fills him with fear that comes with inferiority, "They fill me with a different kind of fear—I feel that we are as small as ants before all this American greatness and American power" (Munif, *TT* 193- 4). Thus, the cultural, social and economic identity of Mooran is built based on the presence of oil, Americans, the inferiority and fear instigated by the economic dependency.

A nation was built on an oil economy, where the western ideologies greatly influenced the social setup. The settler gained power over the native, and it initiated the feeling of fear. The power and control that the Americans had over the Arabs mostly came from the superiority of knowledge and the formation of the inferior status:

"Suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for

dominant groups to rule because the seeming absence of dissent suggests that subordinate groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization” (Collins 3). The machines, technological advancements, ideas, cultural differences, raised living standards through the oil wealth were possible only through dependency on Americans. This dependency constructs a picture that the advancements and wealth for the natives will happen only through reliance on the coloniser, and it initiates the feeling of inferiority which is expressed through fear.

While Munif’s portrayal of settler and native in the Middle East mostly highlights the luxurious lifestyle in the Gulf and the increasing internal disparity between bourgeois and the proletarians, Habila’s *Oil on Water* chronicles the ecological destructions and the indigenous life affected in the hands of oil monopolies who govern the economic and political scenario of independent Nigeria. A country like Nigeria that is abundant with natural and human resources and promising potential for development is still poor because of greed, corruption and failed developmental plans. The challenges on development for Nigeria include the native mentality of being colonised, suppression, inferiority, social inequality, poverty, lack of employment, religious crisis and failed leadership.

The desire of the leadership is replaced by wealth and power rather than development and goodwill of the country. This initiates an economic and social disparity between the leaders who want wealth to live a life of luxury like the elites of the world, while the poor become the victim of the evils in society. Thus, these leaders surrender to the demands of globalisation and in this process, “...they become the new colonial masters and their ‘subjects’ strive to be like them” (Stanislaus 9). Habila’s novel portrays the result of oil exploration and the corruption through a harrowing reality of Niger Delta and the

indigenous life associated with it. When Rufus documents his journey to meet the Professor, who is the leader of the rebels also called as militia consisting of Nigerians protesting against the government and oil company, in order to secure audience and negotiate terms regarding the release of Isabel Floode, he gets acquainted with various people ranging from fleeing tribes to government military officers who provides him with different facets of the Nigerian oil exploration scenario and the civil war.

The encounter with different people from various strata of the society sums up the important truth that the misery and failed development plans in Nigeria are mainly due to corruption. If not for corruption, Nigeria holds the potential to be a forward nation in terms of economy and technological developments. On the roots of corruption lies the wealth offered by oil exploration and the desperate need to mimic the luxurious lifestyle of the elites of the foreign nations like the United States. Thus, indirectly the settlers enticingly shape the dreams of the natives, influence their lifestyle and alter their needs thereby paving way for corruption and exploitation, “You people could easily become the Japan of Africa, the USA of Africa, but the corruption is incredible.” (Habla 107)

In the neocolonial setup as presented in the novels of Munif and Habla, the settler validates the existence of the natives through new identity formation after the discovery of oil. This new social order must rise out of colonial control so that the natives attain the status of the oppressed in the hands of the settlers, also called the oppressors, so that the coloniser can maintain power over the colonised. Either be it the Sultan, Emir or the other pro-American characters in Munif’s novels or the corrupt Nigerian government as in the novel of Habla, the willingness of the people to inculcate the western ideologies and

ways of living over their indigenous identity in dreams of luxury and riches is the way in which coloniser indirectly exerts economic control over colonised in the neocolonial structure.

The hegemony exercised with consent from bourgeois natives allows the superpower nations like the United States and Britain to exert control over oil resource rich nations like the Middle East and Nigeria initially through economic dominance and conditional aids and results in social inequality. As the economic dominance proceeds to tightly grip the multiple levels of the society, the racism becomes an inevitable aftermath of this fiasco of differences between the powerful and the others, “In the colonies, the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich” (Fanon 39). Thus, the natives according to the settlers are people that are devoid of history and must be redeemed through colonial dependency that works in economic, social and psychological levels and in the novels chosen for study they are initiated by the presence of oil resources in their landscape.

Colonialism confines the oppressed to the state of poverty and ignorance. This state of being according to Karl Marx is the subhuman level. The natives’ way of life is not dismissed by the settlers as an entity that lacks value; instead the native identity is necessary for them in order to assert the fact that the natives are inert and negate the ethics and value system that makes them human. This state of ignorance on the part of the natives as fabricated by the settlers gives them the power to compartmentalise the society based on their interest and necessities. The ignorance granted the coloniser the dominance over the colonised and it is initially visible through the presence of oil. The people of Harran, Mooran, Wadi and Nigeria were not aware of the presence of oil in their lands

until the Americans arrived in their territories to explore the area for the resources. The magnitude of the discovery of oil was also understood by the natives only after the wealth started to flow in. Thus, the ignorance and lack of technology allowed the powerful oil monopolies to enter into various geopolitical territories and transform them into major industrial locations and facilitate the formation of new identity in the global economy.

In *Cities of Salt*, when the Americans arrive at Wadi, Ibn Rashed under the command of Emir accommodates these men in his encampment. This arouses the curiosity of Miteb al-Hathal and his entire tribe. Ignorant of the fact that these men have come to explore their lands for oil, Miteb and his tribe contemplate on the sudden appearance of these foreign men speaking funny Arabic and arrive at the conclusion that they are after water. The mention of Americans speaking Arabic is an indication of the gap in knowledge and ignorance that exists between the settler and the native. The Americans are able to speak Arabic, and it is the outcome of their research on the culture and language of the tribes even before arriving in the desert. Meanwhile, the tribes who inhabit Wadi were ignorant of the arrival of Americans and are confused by this sudden intervention to their slumber. Thus, the knowledge of the Americans about oil and the Arabic language keeps them at a powerful position while the natives who are unaware of the resources under their sand and the motives or language of these foreign men are put at a disadvantage that would later become the catalyst of colonial dependency for the development.

Knowledge is used to rule over the Arabs by the Americans in Harran. The ignorance of the natives is used as a powerful tool by the Americans along with support of the Arab government to destroy Wadi, transform Harran and build an industrial sector filled with vehement oil extraction and exportation. The people of Harran view books that were

carried around by Americans as some sort of evil. This ignorance in turn makes them the oppressed in the knowledge of the oppressor. When the Americans landed in the desert for the very first time, they went around the place and interacted with the natives to gather knowledge about dialect, religion, tribal factions, geography and the weather. The ethnic knowledge that they gathered was very important in establishing a neocolonial control over the natives because knowledge is one of the important weapons of neocolonialism. The knowledge and all the information put the colonialist at an advantage of getting to know the landscape and the people, thereby helping them identify ways and means in which suppression can be achieved, ““Those Americans are trying out book after book to gain control of Harran and its people!”” (Munif, *COS* 286)

Knowledge about the religion is also used as a major weapon to convince the coloniser that the colonised is superior to them. When the Americans quoted the holy text Quran, the people of Wadi viewed them as devils or *jinns* because they believed that people who spoke the language and quoted from the religious text yet, did not pray cannot be true Muslims or even human beings. The natives in Harran mistook the exercise done by Americans as prayer. Dress, architecture, loud parties, lifestyle, language and the food habits are other means through which cultural shock was felt by the native Arabs upon the encounter with Americans after the discovery of oil.

In *The Trench*, Munif, through his microscopic look into the social structure of life, presents how the identity of Mooran is unknown to the world before the discovery of oil. The Americans only showed interest in Harran and Mooran after the discovery of oil, and before that they have never been bothered by the existence of life in the desert. The global economy was ignorant of the presence of oil in this unnamed Middle Eastern kingdom

and life in places like Wadi, Mooran and Harran was peaceful. When the turn of tide happened and the natives were shifted to the side of ignorance, life in these oil cities changed, “No one ever mentioned us, no one ever visited us or told us, ‘Come,’ before this oil started to flow” (Munif, *TT* 197). Thus, when the availability of oil in Harran and Mooran is no longer ignorant to the oil barons, it changed the prospects of the desert and also brought with it subjugation, disparity and poverty.

The ignorance also exists in Mooran within the Arab government because the Sultan was purposefully ignorant of the sufferings of the labour class in his kingdom and rather was very much taken by his personal affairs, workings of the upper class and business proposals from the corporate. Mooran, according to the natives, is an important conspiracy hatched by the foreigners that will be fully functional until oil and money is present. After that, the “... fire will go out and no one will remember us” (Munif, *TT* 455). Thus, the knowledge of the existence of Mooran is instigated by the presence of oil resources. The people of Mooran are aware of the fact that the root cause of all their misery is the ignorant ruler, yet they lacked the power to represent the calamities that befall them because they were poor and do not hold any powerful and favourable position with their government or with the Americans.

John Hamilton, a British official who is appointed as the advisor to the Sultan, wins his favour through cultural assimilation. Hamilton becomes a Muslim, and that puts him in a more powerful and favourable position with the Sultan. Thus, the move of Hamilton is one of the ways in which religious sentiments are used by Americans and British to overpower the ignorance of the natives. Sultan says that besides the internal conflicts that exist in Harran and Mooran like the labour class rebelling against the

injustice and other extremist movements that destroy the peace and stability of the kingdom, there are also countries waiting to invade the Middle East and gain control over their territory and religion. A glimpse into the beginning of the oil wars as given by Munif shows how religion is also used as an important weapon in oppressing the colonised by the coloniser. It remains powerful in the neocolonial set-up as well.

The ignorance allows the coloniser to keep the colonised at the subhuman level. Albert Memmi in his work *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1957) as a response to the decolonisation in North Africa, labels the relation between the coloniser and the colonised as an experience where the powerful party imposes the cultural, social, economic and educational ideology over the other: “He is a privileged being and an illegitimately privileged one; that is, a usurper” (Memmi 53). Memmi points out two types of individuals in the society. There is one section of the society for whom privilege and humanity are similar things, and they achieve their humanity through independent exercising of their rights while the other section of the society believes that rights are absent and they are flung into poverty, hunger, ignorance, racism and viewed as subhumans.

Poverty and racism are widely visible in the works of Munif and Habila, and it depicts how the natives attain a barbarous status in the hands of oil. Initially, when the Americans came to the oil kingdom of Munif, they told the Arabs that they had come to help them find gold underneath the sand and make them rich. Once after the discovery, the reality of the broken promise looms over the fate of the native Arabs who have been made slaves in the hands of oil masters. Thus, they have become pawns in the capitalistic game between the Arab government and the American monopolies. Humanity is replaced by materialistic motives, and money becomes the main objective of life in Harran.

The people of Wadi are dependent on nature and felt truly alive in it. The first action after the discovery of oil in the desert land surrounding Wadi is the usage of tractors to destroy the trees. Their habitat is lost when all the trees and vegetation are destroyed, and the Bedouins are forced to flee the place. They are given the status of poor and homeless refugees who are compelled by the situation to take up jobs in the oil companies to earn their livelihoods. The squalid living conditions within the Arab Harran with leaking roofs, poor sanitation facility, improper ventilation, tents and barracks as living space and lack of clean water is also evident of the poverty that exists in Harran amidst the natives while contrasting situations presents itself in the bourgeois Arabs and American Harran where they are equipped with the facilities and technologies that are far cry from the reality of the natives.

In the commercial city of Mooran, a wide variety of native businesses like the Oriental Import and Export company co-founded by Dr. Subhi and Rateb Fattal, International Import Export Company owned by Abdelalziz al-Ghamdi and Said al-Usta, Hissan Construction Company owned by Muhammad al-Hissan and Honey Karkar, the Road Company and Mooran's first bookshop came into existence after the prospectus life since the oil discovery. Amidst all the commercial activities, in the same market of Mooran are the poor leading a wretched life because all they owned is one or two sacks of straw, few drops of camel medicine in a bucket or they sometimes wandered into the desert and were never seen again.

The wide gap that exists between the rich and poor in Mooran is visible through the two extremities of living conditions and the uneven distribution of wealth. The rich only got richer because in Mooran the rich people never felt sufficient and their

needs increased with each passing day and their greed is exhibited through their action because, "...they took but never gave, and how well they understood giving and taking." (Munif, *TT* 270)

The social reality portrayed by Munif through Harran and Mooran offers a glimpse into the rich and poor of the society, but in Habila's work the poverty and squalor is the general temper of the story. The oil wealth that must have granted a better living condition to the citizens of Nigeria instead bestowed them with misery as many were homeless, fleeing and living in constant fear because of the civil war and the corrupt government. There are students holding placards in front of the oil company building demanding justice for their devastated environment and dangerous living conditions because of the exploitation. There are also voice-overs along with the placards that talked about the poverty in Nigeria, which is persistent because of corruption. It also highlights that oil is the dominant source of income for the country and amidst the presence of abundant oil resources and active oil exportation the country is majorly poor because of corruption. Corruption only allowed few people to have access to wealth, while the others suffered the consequences of neocolonial dominance and exploitation: "...voiceover about poverty in Nigeria, and how corruption sustained that poverty, and how oil was the main source of revenue, and how because the country was so corrupt, only a few had access to that wealth." (Habila 107)

Neocolonialism also instigates and establishes racism, and this is visible in Harran through the gaze of the coloniser on the colonised and the vice versa. The Americans project themselves as the superiors who have all the ways and means to make these new cities in the desert progressed and civilised. Sinclair, a character in *Cities of Salt*, in one

of his opinions about the desert people calls them as “animals” (Munif, *COS* 267) and their lifestyle as “primitive way” (Munif, *COS* 267) thereby positioning them as inferior to him through his gaze. Hence, the coloniser views them as sad beings in the desert who needed their help in order to be saved and lead a meaningful life. Munif also gives insight into the colonised view of the oppressor. The reverse gaze is important in understanding how the indigenous people are not happy about the discovery and ruthless exploitation of oil resources in their region. They view the foreign intervention as a bane and a devilish phenomenon.

According to the people of Arab Harran, the Americans had ruined everything. In order to satiate their curiosity of the cultural encounter with the orient, they went around taking photographs instead of living at the moment or participating in community activities like dancing, feasting and the like. The scrutinising gaze by the Americans intimidates the Arabs and makes them feel inferior. The Arab Harran did not trust the Americans because it was they who destroyed and transformed their lands into unidentifiable commercial cities that had forgotten to preserve its ethnic knowledge. After the arrival of Dr. Subhi, a trained doctor in modern or western medicine, the place of Muffaldi, a traditional healer is violated, and he is labelled as a quack doctor. These are the small ways in which ethnic knowledge is belittled and slowly wiped out of Harran and replaced by western thoughts and ideologies.

The natives of Harran always viewed oil and the Americans as the devils and considered them the root cause for all their problems. “I told you, I told every one of you, the Americans are the disease, they’re the root of the problem and what’s happened now is nothing compared to what they have in store for us” (Munif, *COS* 578). The oppressed

picture the oppressor as the cause for all their miseries, yet they lack the power and a brave leader to rise against them. Neither the oil wealth nor the corporates allow the natives to rise against them and is evidential of how oil shapes itself as the coloniser in the particular territory. Hence, the Occident idea of the Orient that is initiated by the oil encounter shapes the identity of Harran.

The presence of racism in Mooran can be inferred through the unjust treatment that the labour classes receive in the hands of the government that is controlled by the oil companies. The presence of the gap between the natives and the foreign settlers is the main cause for racism in Mooran. When Shaddad was informed that Mooran is full of horses, and he must also bring his own for race, he taunted that those pretty pets had overtaken superior thoroughbreds thereby drawing an allusion between the presence of foreign settlers who have taken over the natives in Mooran. It also shows how the labour class natives are derogated in the gaze of the Americans and the bourgeois natives and thus, ““Thoroughbreds have no place beside those pretty pets!”” (Munif, *TT* 528). It must also be interpreted as horses have been replaced by automobiles for transportation after the hike in the supply of fossil fuels. This has made many horse breeders lose their livelihood and take up jobs elsewhere.

The Mooranis are also falsely accused of blowing up the pipelines, theft and other crimes and are punished without any trial. The innocent natives, who are wronged, cursed the Americans because their intervention led to the discovery of oil and building of these cities. This unfair treatment that existed throughout Harran and Mooran along with differences in living conditions and biased concepts of freedom and justice are the several ways in which racism is etched in the neocolonial apparatus. Sartre propounds that racism is

institutionalised in the colonial system, and it is practised through the production and exchange of discourses. The natives of Harran, Mooran and Niger Delta are reduced to the status of animalistic creatures and anointed as subhumans because of poverty, ignorance and racism and also because human rights did not apply to them in the colonial framework: “...for the others, the absence of rights sanctions their poverty, their chronic hunger, their ignorance, in short their subhumanity” (Sartre 59). Thus, they are the victims of the economic and political laws that work in such a way that the rich always benefitted from any social arrangement while the poor are always downtrodden.

According to Sartre, colonialism is a structured, consistent and calculated system of exploitation. The exploitation is mainly stimulated by the bestial status of the natives that makes them powerless to redeem themselves out of the situation. Exploitation in the petrofictions chosen for study is ruled by the presence or absence of oil in the specific landscape. The cultural and environmental exploitation initiated by oil began with the violation of the living space of the people of Wadi. The belt of trees that formed the border is first destroyed by the machines. Once the natural ecosystem was destroyed, the people of Wadi truly feel at loss and are later expelled from their own lands into the sandy expanse of the deserts. Wadi, which was once a serene oasis and hosted many caravans, later vanished in the hands of oil.

Wadi existed only in nostalgia of natives like Fawaz who returned from his travels only to see how the place had suddenly transformed into an industrial area. Wadi was truly lost and so were its people because of exploitative oil activities carried out by the expatriates. When Muhammad al-Seif and Abdullah al-Saad returned to Harran after a long time, they were shocked to see that their homeland was destroyed and instead of the

coastal town that they know in its place stood a new industrial Harran without any trees or lowland. It made them feel alienated because it was the, “Harran they did not know” (Munif, *COS* 312), and they were angry at the injustice inflicted upon them by their own government that has recently come under the enticing grips of oil and its wealth as advertised by the American oil barons. Thus, the oil resources due to their economic efficiency and undisputable domination contain with them the power to geographically alter a place and even ally in their disappearance over time.

The Arab Harran viewed the Americans as an evil that brought in all the destruction to them. Hence, the other side of the oil monopoly consists of the loss of ecosystem, migration, toxic living space and violation of the indigenous rights. Thereby, the power that the oil vested on capitalism initiated a series of dominance over the country whose resources are exploited in the name of progress and the indigenous community is always at the receiving end of disparity and injustice amidst all the wealth. The meager pay, toxic living conditions and dangerous working environment without any safety gears are evidence of labour profiteering in Harran.

The termination of Wadi and the rise of an industrial area in its place are a definitive example of colonisation and exploitation of certain environmental and social scapes after the discovery of oil. Similarly, Mooran as portrayed in *The Trench* by Munif is situated far away from the industries of Harran and qualifies as a decent residential hub. Mooran, caught up in the technological advancement, is flourishing with various businesses and soon transformed from once elegant city into a congested commercial place that is not fit for establishing a household. Thus, the Arab government announced that Mooran will be demolished and completely rebuilt. The new capital would be al-Mileiha because the

place has plentiful water and better air quality. Mooran, after being exploited to the maximum capacity in terms of land and other natural resources, is to be demolished without any thought about the native people who have established their livelihoods there with their cultural sentiments embedded in that landscape. Thus, the decision to demolish Mooran is an example of environmental and cultural exploitation in the hands of the coloniser either be it the oil or through the American or British oil companies.

Temporariness of the places like Wadi, Harran and Mooran can be inferred in analogy with the title *Cities of Salt*. When salt is added to the freshwater, it dissolves and turns the water salty, changes its characteristics and cannot be separated. This action cannot be reversed. Similarly, the natives of Wadi, Harran and Mooran are considered as freshwater. The oil resources, Americans and British are the foreign elements like the salt that are added into the freshwater or indigenous apparatus. They slowly get assimilated into the economic, political, cultural, environmental and psychological landscape of the natives and the ethnic knowledge disappears like the freshwater, the structure is altered or destroyed, and they are never the same. The old ways disappear and becomes an element of nostalgia. This is also one of the many ways in which the settler oppresses the natives. Correspondingly, just as the salt instantly disappears when it comes in contact with water, these cities also vanish quickly with the slightest touch of industrialisation and exploitation.

The natives are taken advantage and manipulated by the foreign interventions, and they are abused through hegemony and control. They are diminished to a low status and in worst cases ethnically cleansed in a motive to take complete control of the flow of energy resources in the fossil fuel dominated social framework as portrayed by Munif and Habila. When the oil barons discovered that there is liquid gold in the sands of the

desert, they swiftly came and conquered the harsh desert, milked wealth out of it and would continue to exploit until the last drop was sucked out of the cores of the earth, “They came to steal, to rule over others and to exploit them, and they were insatiable.” (Munif, *TT* 490-91)

Habila in his novel pictures the crude reality and the exploitation of the natural resources as the indigenous people are usually victims of the capitalistic and neocolonial game in Niger Delta. When Rufus, Zaq and other journalists in the crew make the downstream journey to meet with the militia, they briefly stop in a deserted village and are shocked to see it reduced to rubbles. The village looks like the setting of a science fiction film and the landscape is completely covered in pipelines and foul smell fills the air. The pipelines in the village are laid by the oil companies with the help of the government. These companies pay the military to keep the rebels out of the land in order to protect the pipelines, which otherwise would be destroyed.

As the land was being exploited for oil exploration, the place turned into a fighting ring for the military and the militia and the natives of the village fled in search of better living areas. The air is polluted because of the toxic fumes, “oil-fecund earth” (Habla 34), and the water is contaminated due to which the aquatic life is dead. Thus, the exploitation by the American and Britain oil companies and corruption in the government has left the landscape and indigenous culture of Niger Delta to lose their authenticity. The indigenous people have become refugees and are internally displaced in search of a peaceful place to call home, “So your question, are we happy here? I say how can we be happy when we are mere wanderers without a home?” (Habla 41) Thus the over-exploitation instigated by the presence of oil in the neocolonial system as portrayed in the fictions of Munif and

Habila happens in environmental, geographical, cultural, and economic level and it leads to colonial control, poverty, social inequality and violation of basic rights.

Sartre in the context of Algeria says that the neocolonialist problem progresses in three levels. Initially it begins with economic dominance followed by social and psychological conquest of the natives by the settlers. Similar patterns of progress of hegemony and control can be observed in Munif and Habila's portrayal of the oil exploration reality in the Middle East and Niger Delta. The vital role played by capitalism in effectuating economic dominance is important in identifying the various ways in which money can colonise a society. In Sartre's *Colonialism is a System* (1956), he sides with Karl Marx in asserting the fact that colonialism demonstrated capitalism in its full glory without any disguise, "...colonialism presented capitalism in naked form, stripped of the decorous clothing of European bourgeois society." (Preface, Young xx)

Jules Ferry, a French philosopher, states that capitalism is also a colonialist. According to him, economic dominance begins with the fight against resistance. The resistance that the rich countries face in persuading the subdued nations to accept their ideologies acted as the threshold of foreign intervention and economic imperialism. The oil monopolies had to face resistance at two levels. Initially, they had to convince the ruling class of the particular territory in order to acquire rights over the lands to extract oil. The luring of the ruling class is done through the projection of a wealthy future based on the execution of the oil plans, which even meant exploitation of the poor and the powerless. The flow of money was enough to convince the ruling class and allowed the oil companies to enter the territory and forcefully exploit the indigenous culture. This meeting of the foreign companies with the natives, who are mostly poor and powerless in comparison, initiated

the next level of resistance. The money saw the materialising of the division between rich and poor, ruling bourgeois and proletarians, coloniser and colonised and us and them.

Munif in *Cities of Salt* and *The Trench* portrays how the oil wealth has impacted the rich and the poor natives of Harran and Mooran by showing the shift in their attitudes, motives, lifestyle and geopolitics. Before the coming of oil, Harran, a coastal town in the desert, depended on fishing. People went to Manal on their boat for fishing and later boarded the big ships to faraway places and came back to Harran with riches and settled down. Oil resources initiated an encounter between the East and West. The fruitful exploration led to the discovery of oil in the sandy expanse in and around Wadi and fervent activities changed everything including its people, animals and nature. The discovery attracted attention, and soon a large fleet of people belonging to the oil companies started arriving in Wadi. Thus, oil was responsible for an economic coalition of the East and the West and the natives of Wadi and Harran including the Atoum tribe of Miteb and Bedouins responded to this sudden upheaval of activities on the once forgotten desert by predicting their future as slaves in the hands of wealth and power, “Aliens will rule trueborn sons and an outsider will rule the tribesmen.” (Munif, *COS* 165)

With the consent of the Sultan, the Americans soon destroyed Wadi and, in its place rose cities like Harran and Mooran that forms the architectural symbols of the coming of the oil wealth and the rise in the prospects of the Middle East. After the expulsion of the natives of Wadi, the oil rigs and settlements for workers employed in the oil company were erected. The workers are mostly the natives who have lost their land and livelihood in the hands of oil. Harran also saw the rise of division between American Harran and Arab Harran.

When the Americans come in search of oil to Wadi, Miteb tells his people that they cannot be treated as slaves or be suppressed. He tries to educate them on their rights and unite them against the Americans and stop the oil exploration, yet he is silenced by the superior power and later exiles into the wilderness. While the oil resources are considered as God's gift and a great boon by the Emir, Miteb in order to protect and preserve his land, tradition and people tells the truth about the ulterior motives of the Americans behind this exploration. His instincts regarding the exploration seemed insignificant because of his position in the social strata and prejudice. The fight put on by Miteb is easily dismissed because he and his tribe lack the power and wealth in their own land and considered insignificant in comparison to the wealth and power possessed by the Americans. This proves the economic and cultural domination Americans had on the Arabs after the coming of oil.

The subjugation exerted through power that oil wealth brought also perpetrated neocolonial control because in the hands of oil money that made the Americans powerful, the natural resources of the Arabian lands are exploited. Thus, money has become the master and the civilisation a mere slave in its hands, ““People of Harran, money has corrupted many before you. It has corrupted nations and kingdoms. Money enslaves, it subjugates, but it never brings happiness.”” (Munif, *COS* 553)

While Harran transforms into an important oil port because of the abundance of oil resources, its location near the sea allows for the construction of the harbour. Mooran develops into a commercial city with decent residential dwelling where other revenue generating trade and commerce happens. Due to its location, population and popularity, Mooran became the capital of the Sheikhdome and home of Sultan Khazael. Mooran's

treasury thrives with oil export and the riches are quite evident through the flamboyant lifestyle of the rich people and the impressive architecture assisted by western technologies. The presence of money greatly affected the attitude and mind of Mooran. The Sultan in order to keep away the potential suitors and threats to the throne drowned them with money and other riches that gave them unfathomable power and pleasure.

Said and Honsy are important businessmen in Mooran. The brothers set up a business that dealt with carpets, furniture, house-wares and food. Said is not favoured by Dr. Subhi who is an important figure in the political and economic situation of Mooran. He is a representative of the rich of the Mooran and a pro-American who exhibits a change in attitude after the oil wealth. According to Said, the money and rising status had made the doctor greedy, ruthless and corrupt, “*Money is his religion, his idol*” (Munif, *TT* 114). The distinctive change in the characteristics of the doctor is also representative of how natives of the desert are betrayed by their own rulers after the arrival of wealth. The doctor also started publishing a newspaper called ‘al-Badiya’ meaning ‘The Desert’ and a weekly magazine called ‘al-Waha’ meaning ‘The Oasis’ and it marks the arrival of print press in Mooran.

The press there had its own motives and was used to conjure a public opinion that can coexist with the interests of the Sultan, ““... clear direction of the Moorani press, which sets a firm, strong and influential pace in moulding public opinion with regard to the king, in supporting moderate ideas and traditional religious and moral values”” (Munif, *TT* 244). The press played an important role in identity formation of the coloniser and now, along with money, the print media run by a bourgeois became an important tool for painting a glossy and deceptive picture of Mooran to the world.

The oil centric life in Mooran is exuberant in the way the oil wealth makes people busy and ignorant to their own politics and rights as they are blindly rushing from one venture to another in spirits of making more money: "...the flow of oil had made the people less inclined to waste their energy talking politics around the coffeepots" (Munif, *TT* 213). They were not bothered about the political situation of their country and the plight of their kith and kin because of the unfettered flow of money through oil resources. The ignorance of this kind set in motion by the grand wealth act as an important link for the coloniser in maintaining his powerful status

Money has become an important indicator of happiness and prosperity. Even the natives, especially the indigenous ruling class like the Sultan and his associates changed with money and the presence of foreigners like Americans and British are governed by the availability of natural resources that could render wealth. The participation of Americans in the important decisions of Mooran like the matters of security is an indicator of the indirect control that oil monopolies have over resource rich nations. The power for the Americans is bestowed through their technology that can extract, export and sell oil to the global market and turn them to petrodollars.

Hammad, who is the heir to the Mutawa clan, was not interested in the family business or the money. Instead he took up the position as chief of the intelligence and security agency in Mooran. When the military and security forces are set in Mooran, Dr. Subhi and Hammad engage in conversations with resident Americans and others who visit on various missions and seek help in choosing the staff, deciding the aims and objectives of the agency and protocols for the working of it. Thus, the presence of Americans in the

major system formation and decision making of the Arab government discloses the economic dominance, presence of military aid and neocolonial control manifested through oil resources

The wealth decided the functioning of Mooran and the emotions of the civilisation associated with it because happiness, sadness and anger was controlled by money, “With the arrival of money and the contest over dividing it, the frustrated and hungry were occupied and the rulers heaved a deep sigh; the middlemen got rich, and the anger receded, losing its urgency” (Munif, *TT* 408). The money instead of being used equally in the welfare and development of the citizens is exploited in the hands of the rich and are architecturally exhibited through the sudden onset of desire to build palaces and buy automobiles. Thus the stability and contentment of life in Mooran is built on incentives and forces.

The industrialisation established by the oil resources and the foreign intervention promised wealth and prosperity. The effects of this prosperity on the culture, lifestyle and motives of the people are represented by Munif through Mooran, a city that has been birthed after the wealth and luxury of the oil resources. While Harran is the entry point of economic dominance of the coloniser because of the presence of resources, Mooran became an architectural validation of the power and control through wealth as the Americans had important say in matters of the indigenous government like national security, military and economic policies. Similarly, Habila’s portrayal of Niger Delta highlights how money and the oil imperialism have led to exploitation, and destruction because of corrupt government and military forces.

The ten indigenous families of a particular village close to Yellow Island left after their lands were confiscated by the oil company. Of the ten, one family was headed by

Chief Malabo, and the resistance put by him and his tribesmen against the oil company cost his life. Even before his body could be buried, the oil company backed up by the Nigerian government moved into the village to begin the extraction. They were armed, meant business and forced the natives to give up their lands in return for good money. They tell the natives who are resisting that the delay in giving up their lands would only cause the fall in their value. Thus, the presence of oil monopolies in determining the value of the indigenous lands and forcibly taking it from them with the help of the native government's military in exchange for promises of richness through oil exports marks the economic dominance of the neocolonialist in Niger Delta.

When Isabel Floode, wife of a British petrol engineer, is kidnapped by the militants, Zaq as a journalist becomes very much interested in the case because he had recently published an article titled 'Gangsters of Freedom Fighters?' based on the events of militia kidnapping a seventy-year-old woman and a three-year-old girl. In his article, Zaq questions the morality of the militia in their war against the government and the oil companies to protect their land and people from destruction. Similarly, when Mrs. Floode is kidnapped, he is roped in along with Rufus on a trip to negotiate with the militia and free her. They are drilled with the fact that nothing must happen to her because she is a British citizen. The same oil company and the government officials who are ignorant of the adversities of the indigenous people and the environment due to oil extraction are willing to negotiate with the militia to confirm her safe return because of her nationality. The presence of racism, the power of money in deciding the urgency of the situation and the neocolonial control of the natives by the foreign oil companies through capital in the Niger Delta are evident through such kind of priorities of one over the other and the disparity, "And

remember, make them understand that nothing must happen to her. She's a British citizen- Zaq interrupted him, not raising his gaze from the picture. — So, does that make her more important than if she were, say, Nepalese, or Guyanese, or Greek?" (Habla 32)

Role of the media in shaping the oil reality of Niger Delta is one of the important aspects of the novel. The truth, reality and media are debated to bring out the deceptiveness that exists in international media about the oil resources exportation and the countries that have succumbed to resource curse. Media plays an important role in shaping the identity of the coloniser and in the case of Niger Delta, the truth is constantly deferred. When the opportunity to negotiate with the militia comes for Rufus, the newspaper company that he works for sees this as a gateway to getting rich through the petrodollars. For the newspaper company this is a cue to increase their circulation rather than considering it as a powerful means to report the truth because, "How often does the oil company come knocking on your door, asking for a favour? We are taking petro-dollars here, and a major scoop! Come on" (Habla 32). Thus, even the print media is clouded by the excitement of the petrodollars rather than availing this as a chance to showcase the truth to the world about the ramification of their nation and environment and the existence of inequality.

The Niger Delta after the exploration of oil becomes a hopeless landscape with abandoned villages, natives fleeing from fighting and gas flares that always burn bright indicating the omnipresence of oil in the delta. Hence, in Nigeria, through oil resources the capitalist countries like the United States and Britain dominate the circumstances and decision-making of the native government and the rights of the civilians are violated and exploited for materialistic pursuits. Habla through the economic dominance in Nigeria shows the consequences of the corrupt government on the social, economic, cultural and

environmental levels. The powerless are mostly the indigenous tribes who have lost their livelihood and have taken up jobs in the oil company for better pay. The energy resources cleansed their ethnic knowledge and instead granted them a life dictated by oil money. Thus, the fuel resources not only influence the economic sector of the country but also instigates war, exiles natives out of their lands, ramifies the ecosystem, divides the society into rich and poor and disrupts the peace of the nation. Ferry states that where there is predominance in political circumstances of the country by a foreign country, the dominance of products also becomes inevitable. This paves way for economic domination and control of a sovereign state by a superpower nation or by the investors.

An economic and political scenario manipulated by capitalism shows the control exerted by private sectors like big oil companies and the barons who exploit the natural resources for their own profits rather than the welfare of the state. Capitalism plays a key role in the paraphernalia of economic dominance. It along with the motives of monopoly has led to exploration and exploitation of minerals and other materials that are necessary for industrial developments. According to Nkrumah, the foreign investments are important in a capitalistic framework. The export of commodities like fossil fuels allows the coloniser to capture the territory and inflict a monopolistic control over it, thereby consenting a gradual onset of non-economic dominance. Capitalism thus gives rise to social disparity, formation of the labour class and impacts a series of changes on the social and psychological domains of the cultural construct.

After establishing an economic control, the neocolonialists dominate the social order of the territory, and it is reflected through the changes or transformation that occurred in the Middle East and Nigeria after the discovery of oil. It also includes the

increase in the gap between the rich and the poor instigated by capitalism, the coming of military and other security forces, the formation of the labour class, degradation in the value of ethnic knowledge and violation of indigenous rights. The social framework powered by oilgarchy as portrayed in Munif's *Cities of Salt* and *The Trench* projects how the new identity for Harran and Mooran were formed after the coming of oil, Americans and wealth.

The oil that mediated the connections between the East and the rest of the world became the prime point for the western countries like America and Britain to enter into their landscape and take control of the supply and exportation of the resources. The rise of American Harran and Arab Harran and the due importance shown to the protection of the oil related activities and the security of the Americans even by the Sultan and Emir is the beginning of the neocolonial control on social aspects of the unnamed Middle Eastern oil kingdom by the American oil barons. The materialistic shift in the interests and attitude of the native government initiated by neocolonialism gradually penetrates into other levels of the society.

After establishing a dominant economic relationship, the control of the power slowly infiltrates into cultural and other ideological aspects of Harran. Wadi, which has never seen any touch of modern technologies and industrialisation, is shocked by the sudden arrival of huge machines brought by the oil company to explore and set up the oil rigs. The people of Wadi viewed the yellow machines as devils because their life was disrupted and slowly uprooted. The machines ushered in the first cultural shock for the people of Harran.

Money that promised developments, new technologies and rise in the standard of living for the people of Harran also brought with it greed, corruption and selfishness for

which the powerless were the victims. The disparity in Harran existed at two levels, between the Americans and the Arabs and internally within the Arabs as well. Within the Arabs there existed the group that supported the Americans and the others who did not. Opposition in thoughts was mostly from the tribal factions or bedouins who have lost their livelihood and now form the working class of Harran.

The first encounter of disparity can be seen in the different living conditions in Arab Harran and American Harran. The American Harran was built on the lands that were forcefully acquired from the natives and had better living conditions. It was built by the Arab workers and had houses equipped with all modern amenities while the Arab Harran had a poorly built tent which was sweltering and had dingy living conditions on the native land, the one that they call home. Thus, the privileged position of the Americans in the land that is governed by Arabs is evidential of the fact that through economic dominance, the American oil companies have slowly taken indirect control of the Sheikdom as the neocoloniser and initiated social altercations as well.

In Arab Harran, the workers lived in tents and barracks which lacked proper ventilation and sanitation in comparison to American Harran which was filled with luxury. When the new barracks were built for the workers, they were persuaded to believe that compared to the tents, it was a better place to stay. Much later, although their houses were upgraded, they did not match the American standards. Even the very basic facilities could be obtained by the Arabs only after a great struggle. These struggles are evident of the division that rooted itself in Harran at the premise of basic rights.

All the lands that belonged to the natives suddenly became the property of the government after the discovery of oil in Wadi and Harran. The indigenous people whose

livelihoods and identities were defined by these lands were reduced to the status of refugees in their own homelands. Capitalism and oil imperialism became the important power structures of Harran and the social disparity became an inevitable outcome of it. The drawing of boundaries is an important act of disparity in Harran. The once Bedouin lands without any particular boundaries transformed into cities with stringent borders that were drawn after the arrival of Americans and oil. The western concept of artificial borders dictated a new way of living and conditions like exile, refugee and citizens are defined by these lines that divided the desert into territories valued by the presence of oil. The building of walls that divides the Arab Harran from the American Harran is another architectural symbol of cultural dissimilitude that existed between the Orient and the Occident.

The work environment was also equally influenced by the existing social imbalance. Mizban is one of the few people in Harran who knew how to swim and was assigned the task of diving into the sea to rope the boat. Every day, he dives without any safety protections and unfortunately one day his foot gets stuck in the crevice of the boulder under the water, and he drowns. Despite the death of Mizban, the work in the oil company never stopped. Neither his family was paid any compensation for the sudden tragedy, nor did the oil company or the government decide to implement safety measures for workers. The death of Mizban becomes a turning point for the infuriated workers. The workers, enraged by the indifference of their own government in not protecting them against injustice, decide to rise in protest against the Americans and the government, “Why were they outcasts, pushed closer to death every minute? They had come to work but here they worked and were killed at the same time. The money they were given did not compensate for a single night under the roofs that dripped melted lead over their heads.” (Munif, *COS* 301)

The Harran government consisting of the Emir and his advisors know about the plight of the workers, yet no remedial measures towards their betterment is employed. Instead they are more interested in spending the oil money on building palaces, lavish parties, enriching technologies and in pleasing the Americans. When the telephone was introduced in Harran, a connection between Emirate building and American Harran became the talk of the hour instead of concentrating on the demonstration of the frustrated Arab workers. The Arab Harran feels neglected as they did not receive any protection or empathy from their Emir, and thus they seek their own means of protection from all the injustice that was inflicted upon them because of the oil exploration. Thus begins the seeds of resistance and revolution in Harran and the labour class decides to directly confront the upper class and the capitalists who were responsible for their wretched conditions and the inequality.

Dr. Subhi is one of the Arabs who supported the Americans and considered the pipeline as a sign of prosperity. The oil that flows through the pipeline brought in wealth and the world's attention turned towards the Middle East. After that, everyone was interested in migrating to the desert in search of their fortunes. Thus, it was the money and the materialistic dreams that formed the identity of the Arab lands after the oil discovery in the hands of the capitalist who governed the country along with the native government. Is oil really a blessing for the indigenous people of Arabia and other similar countries, some of which are experiencing the resource curse and whose people have lost their identity and home in the oil rush is an issue that needs to be pondered upon to understand the centrality and powerful position that oil politics holds in creating or destroying a culture in the sands of time.

The physical manifestation of fossil fuel domination in the modern times is the arrival of roads and automobiles that have made locomotion and global transportation of commodities easy, fast and viable. The coming of cars to Harran is a turning point in the oil narrative that has been shaping the social scene since the black gold discovery. The invention of the internal combustion engine along with the availability of fuel resources in commercial quantities in various places around the world resulted in the craze for cars. Cars became the symbol of wealth, pride and formed an inevitable part of life for transportation. When the cars, which were described as, “This strange, swift machine” (Munif, *COS 420*), first arrived at Harran, it invoked a sense of fear, wonder and curiosity among the Emir and the natives.

Americans invited the Emir to the American Harran to see the new projects and technologies that are available there. They also persuade him to start using automobiles by referring to the vehicle used by the oil company director and stating how it highlights his position, wealth, power and privilege. This manipulation by the Americans in persuading the Arab government to use automobiles is another means by which power and control over the social decisions are in turn controlled by the oil resources and the Americans.

The oil rigs opened up job opportunities in the desert. The migration for work began, and the roads became an important means of connection between Harran and other towns in the desert like Ujra. The roads were mainly built for the automobiles like cars and trucks to arrive at Harran. It also played a significant role in trade and commerce and businesses like travels and logistics. Thus, automobiles and roads are a pivotal part of the increase in the prospects of Harran and indicate the oil centric life of the people. The road has given and taken so much away from the people of Harran. It is also the sign of

industrialisation and change in the fate of Harran. Automobiles as an important part of life remain the same till date as they convene the global transportation of commodities that are necessary in the functioning of a nation and its economy.

In the novel *The Trench*, Munif highlights how the changes after the coming of oil has given rise to a new social order that has become a normalcy and the ethnic knowledge was ceasing to exist. Every stratum of social living is influenced by the western ideologies, including automobiles. The automobiles and the roads that were objects of wonder and curiosity in *Cities of Salt* have now become an integral part of life. The social dominance in Mooran was mainly accelerated by cars and other automobiles that operated on fossil fuels because Britain entered the economy of Mooran and through it, "...Mooran saw a sight it would not soon forget: twenty-five British made cars, packed with men and boys, cruising the streets and blasting their horns" (Munif, *TT* 152). Three English engineers arrived in Mooran and helped Muhammad Ali Rezaie set up the car company. Thus, through the sheikhdom of Munif, it can be inferred that while Americans largely used oil as an entry point into the East, the British made their impactful debut into the eastern social, economic and political apparatus through automobiles, technology and industrialisation along with oil exploration activities. The significant presence of John Hamilton in the narratives of Munif is an archetype of the role that Britain and America had in the building of the social structure of the Middle East after the discovery and exportation of oil.

The automobiles that were introduced in Harran have become a part of the everyday of Mooran. The automobiles and their ability to move powered by fossil fuels gained significance in projecting the economy of Mooran and other oil kingdoms in the global marketplace. Cars that were in vogue became a symbol of status in Mooran which

unlocked speed transportation and movement in the harsh desert. They also replaced animals like camels and horses for transportation in the desert, "... profusion of cars and trucks that had taken the place of animals for transport" (Munif, *TT* 348). Thus the social dominance of oil in Mooran can be understood by the changes in the lifestyle and attitude with the arrival of the automobiles. Also, the mud tents were destroyed and, in its place came houses with high concrete walls with gates that had locks.

As a gesture of creating a grand impression on the Sultan, Rezaie along with the invitation for the opening of his car showroom gifted him an almond brown coloured Rolls-Royce, and it stunned everyone in the vicinity including Dr. Subhi. Zaid al-Heraidi who accepted the car on the behalf of Sultan was thrilled by the speed and elegant stature of this luxurious automobile while the entire Mooran was startled by the coming of Orient Automobile Showroom. Thus, the automobiles became a tool for social dominance in Mooran and gave more opportunity for countries like Britain and America to influence the way of life in the East. "Cars became the great status symbols, and a person's importance and social position were defined by the type of car he rode in and the number of cars he owned" (Munif, *TT* 152).

According to the plebeians, the rich of Mooran were "corrupted by cars" (Munif, *TT* 336). The cars became a symbol of pride and wealth and even till date the automobiles are a luxury that is flaunted on the roads. The asphalt roads are the by-products of crude oil. Thus, the roadways of Mooran is a shaft that connects it with the global economy. The transition in the society after the economic dominance by the neocolonialist is primarily shown through the role of automobiles and the upgrading of the architecture. These are

the two important physical entities that highlight the richness that was exuberant in the social scene and evidential of the neocolonial dominance that has infiltrated into the oil kingdom.

Automobiles, industrialisation and trade defined the status of Mooran. The industrialisation and discovery of oil impacted the simple way of life adapted by the bedouins, who are its indigenous populace. The people of Mooran led a tight-knit community life, one that is similar to Wadi. It also took a lot of effort and endurance to stay in Mooran because of the harsh desert conditions and lack of technologies. Mooran that was devoid of any scientific and industrial advancements before the coming of oil later became an important commercial hub with Americans and British travelling in and out for business deals and military aids.

The trade of Mooran was not bound to the desert but went international when Rateb Fatal along with Dr. Subhi founded a company called Oriental Import, Export and Transport Company that was based in Beirut with branches in Harran, New York and Marseilles. Mooran also witnessed the inflow of labourers from other places like Syria. Dr. Subhi was given the title of Sheik and was promoted as the advisor to the Sultan on his second anniversary of the accession to the throne, and this had a great impact on its societal structure. Overwhelmed by the power and wealth, almost all the lands and trades happening there were under the control of the doctor.

When Dr. Subhi along with his family arrived in Mooran, they were not able to embrace the local customs. The doctor restricted the family from meeting their Arab natives, and all their invitations were declined with lame excuses but he allowed them to socialise with the foreign delegates. This created a rift between the doctor's family and the natives

of Mooran. This favouritism of the doctor is an example of internal disparity and class division that existed even among the natives of Mooran and it was initiated by the presence of the foreigners who brought in narratives of high and low culture and rise in the idea of people trying to adapt to the high culture in order to earn their favour and attention.

After a certain period of time, with the coming of new businessmen in Mooran, the power and position of the doctor is threatened, and he is deliberately left out of the major decision-making process. Thus, life in Mooran came along with ever shifting structures and instability. Malik al-Fraih could not endure the spectacular spending of the wealth instead of it being utilised efficiently in projects that could benefit its people. For a larger part, Sheikh Malik was always in opposition with the majority of the council of the Sultan, yet he fought his best for the betterment of Mooran and was mindful of spending the revenue. He considered the doctor as an enemy of Mooran because any despair or trouble to their city will only enter through him. As the tides turned, the doctor was sidelined from the political game, and he was depressed and became reclusive. When the Chamber of Commerce was established in Mooran, instead of the doctor, al-Ghamdi was elected as the chairman and Hassan Rezaie became the vice chairman, thereby altogether reducing the importance of the doctor.

The social dominance was also reflected in the way the layout of Mooran kept transforming without any regard to the cultural value it holds. Before the coming of oil, life there was much similar to Wadi and Harran where people depended on caravans, fishing and few crops that they could cultivate. They waited for Thursdays when the market called Souq al-Halal would be set up, "...which was virtually the lung by which Mooran breathed, the pole where things gathered and then dispersed" (Munif, *TT* 315).

Souq al-Halal convened the largest exchange of goods and livestock and important business deals were made. It was not at the centre of the city and was not organised or clean, yet it was one of the important landmark happenings of Mooran. It was not very far from Wadi Riha which was the entry point for the caravans.

The market has experienced the fear and joy of Mooran. It has seen the riches and poverty mingle there and has also been the place of bitter goodbyes and emotional reunions like the father returning from his journey, memories of few others who have not returned and tearful departures. Thus, the market has become an important part of the ethnic identity. Characters like Shamran al-Oteibi and Saleh al-Rushdan are known through this market, and they incarnate its uniqueness. Shamran is a Sultan's representative and respected for his wisdom. His opinions are sought out and accepted in matters of dispute or dilemma, and he is generally the life of the market. Saleh, also called 'Saleh the Warner,' is the source of clamour in the market. His primary job was shoeing horses, and he was called as "Mooran's village idiot." (Munif, *TT* 320)

During the month of Ramadan, Saleh did not enter the marketplace and instead went around Mooran rhythmically beating the drum and shifting between uttering words of prayer and calling out or cursing several people. Saleh is outspoken and hence was often provoked. On the last three days of Ramadan, Saleh was occupied in distributing wheat and barley to the needy. Thus, Souq al-Halal was an integral part of the indigenous life, and it also gave identity to people associated with it by transforming into a cultural hub. Abruptly the decision was taken to shift Souq al-Halal to Awali and this greatly affected Shamran, Saleh and others whose life depended on the market. The decision to move the market came swiftly and suddenly, without any consideration to the sentimental and cultural value attached to the landscape.

The shop owners of the Thursday market got this news from the police, who forced them to evacuate the place as soon as possible. When the news of the shift reached the ears of Saleh, he was overcome with resistance by this change because the market was much more than just a Thursday affair to him. Frustrated, Saleh blames the foreigners who have been very important to the Sultan because he was thoroughly manipulated by their ideologies. The decision to move the market is also the result of a decision by the foreigner rather than the native government. Saleh resisted all the taunts of the police until the market was destroyed using machines and everyone was forced to depart the place. Thus, the destruction of important places that once defined the way of life before oil soon became a thing of the past, “All this was a part of Mooran’s history fast vanishing from its people’s memory.” (Munif, *TT* 324-25)

The change in the social structure reaches an imperious point when Amin al-Wardani who is the director of the al-Ghazal Contracting Company arrives at Mooran. He came there in his private jet and incited curiosity among the people. He tours for three days from Rahba to al-Rehabia and finally meets with the Sultan in al-Mileiha for a banquet. During the banquet, he proposes that Mooran can be demolished and rebuilt with a different outlook while the capital of the sheikhdom can be shifted to al-Mileiha because the place has abundant water and better air quality.

The onset of sudden changes through foreign intervention without any consent from the natives of Mooran is the culmination of the social dominance in neocolonial structure where the presence of oil determines the life of people embedded into that terrain. Destruction of Wadi and restructuring of Harran and Mooran leads to the loss of ethnic knowledge that once formed their core identity, and is replaced by ideas assimilated after the economic dominance.

While Munif depicts the societal dominance in the Middle East amidst the polarity in living conditions by giving a picture of ludicrous luxury, advancements in technology and tremendous transformation in the lifestyle, Habila in his picturesque sketch of Niger Delta and oil exploration represents a collapsing ecosystem and society in the grips of neocolonialism. A party of journalists on their way to meet the leader of the particular militia group called the Professor makes their first stop in a deserted village. The village has been abandoned because of the fighting and pollution, and the oil wells were very close to the living quarters. The “Abandoned oil-drilling paraphernalia” (Habila 8), is the first insight into the condition of Niger Delta as offered by the author, and it sets the tone for the social picture that continues throughout the journey of Rufus and Zaq in the novel. Gas flares from oil rigs, polluted environment and the indigenous people fleeing their settlements to escape the oil wars dominate the social scene of Niger Delta.

When Rufus and Zaq arrive at Chief Ibiram’s village with the help of his brother Michael who owns a boat, they get first hand insight into life in these tribal villages that have become miserable after the oil wars. These indigenous communities led a life that was cordial with nature and have taken several steps to preserve their ecosystem, yet they are the ones severely affected by this oil extravaganza. Their villages are destroyed, lands confiscated, ecosystems polluted, livelihoods lost, and they are transformed into refugees as they skedaddle the war in search of peaceful life and healthy environment. They have experienced great cultural loss and their voices are not valued and accounted for because of their ignoble status and the lack of power, wealth and knowledge according to the neocolonialist. Thus, they chose to flee silently or pretend to be ignorant of the destruction and injustice inflicted upon them in order to escape death.

Chief Ibiram gives details about the initial coming of oil companies and how it has altered their life. This insightful account offers a glimpse into the ways in which the presence of oil broke the unity of community life and brought inequality. One day, Chief Malabo, uncle of Chief Ibiram, called the entire village for a meeting and informed them about the motives of the oil barons. The oil company along with the politicians made an offer to buy their village for a huge sum of money. The people of the village could use that money to relocate elsewhere and live a wealthy life. Chief Malabo refused the offer on behalf of everyone because it is their ancestral land, and although they are not rich, this land had been good to them and kept them happy. The villages that had accepted the oil money and allowed their lands to be taken custody by the oil companies had already experienced the loss of their ecosystem. The oil wealth was like the forbidden fruit that initiated a curiosity and desire for a luxurious life, “But the snake, the snake in the garden wouldn’t rest, it kept on hissing and the apple only grew larger and more alluring each day.” (Habla 39)

The oil company kept extending their offer to buy the village and Chief Malabo kept refusing it. They vigorously patrolled the village, and often company men would come and collect samples of soil and water. This continued for some time until one day soldiers came and arrested the Chief by falsely accusing him of treason to the federal government by supporting the motives of the militants and his involvement in sending threats to kidnap the foreign oil workers in Nigeria. A politician from Abuja arrived in the village along with two white oil company executives with false promises that their situation would be rectified but was chased away by the villagers. Unfortunately, the detained Chief died in custody and the leadership was passed on to Chief Ibiram. Even

before a proper burial could be given for the former chief, the oil company moved into their village and started setting up oil rigs and soon there were gas flares and the toxicity made the villagers flee the place. The presence of the White men along with native politicians in governing the social changes in Niger Delta for oil exploration without any consent from the native population to whom the land belongs shows the social dominance of neocolonialists in deciding the fate of the nation and its people.

Numerous indigenous families have lost their land and took up jobs in oil companies because of the money. The money initially gave them a good life, but as corruption and greed increased, it became scarce and many lost their jobs. Violence was also instigated by the presence of oil resources in their lands. The streets of cities like Port Harcourt are filled with families who are escaping the war, others returning to their hometown or villages and there are also people who arrive in big cities hoping to pick up jobs that would pay them well. Thus, the social milieu of Nigeria post the discovery of oil resources is completely defined by the extraction of the resources and oil politics in which the foreign nations would decide the destiny of the natives. Rufus' dad stored petrol in the barn and the entire household was filled with barrels of fuel that could be sold and this shows that oil has seeped into the domestic realm of life in the Niger Delta.

The oil narratives depict that the indigenous people have always been at the receiving end of the negative effects of unethical extraction of oil and the political game surrounding it. They have lost their kith and kin to the war and the land that they consider sacred has been snatched from them, thereby stripping them of their ethnic identity and reducing them into powerless people who have lost everything in the war. They are forced to take up jobs in the same oil companies for paltry sums to save their livelihoods. Thus, the

oil wars are also the narratives of the toil and hard life of these indigenous people and the blood and tears lost in the selfish motives of monopolists in a rush to gain wealth through the exploitation of these natural resources without thinking about the consequences.

Capitalism is fundamentally interested in commodity production and in that process; it gives rise to class divisions that are determined by the wealth and rate of exploitation, “The reality is that capitalism stops at nothing to maximize profits even if it means destroying our planet and exploiting its people” (Belkhir 142). Those inferred with uncultured status are primarily exploited in the process. Capitalism grew stronger with the help of neocolonialism and, according to Nkrumah; the two factors responsible for it are subjugation of the proletarians and private enterprises taking control of the capital ventures instead of the state.

Munif and Habila portray a vivid picture of how once the tight-knit community that prevailed in the oil kingdom and Niger Delta was disbanded after the discovery of oil. The private oil enterprises hold more power in the oil rich regions because they exert indirect control over the traditional government using economic, political and social dominance. The government, instead of being excluded completely from the decisions of private corporations can be seen supporting their decisions and schemes for oil exploration and exportation in hopes for increased revenue. This support has a large impact on society as capitalism has widened the space between the rich and poor internationally as well as internally. While Munif’s oil kingdom is rich in the international market in comparison to Habila’s Niger Delta, the presence of poverty, social inequality and exploitation of the ecosystem within the nation are common in both the geopolitical territories.

The neocolonialist conditions in the Middle East as shown by Munif through his novels vary because of the vast presence of oil and reasonable contracts by the oil companies that could benefit the majority. The oil rich nations like Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, and Kuwait are wealthy because of better management of resources and prevalence of less corruption in comparison to places like Nigeria, Sudan, Iran and Iraq who are poor because of corruption and mismanagement of the revenues. Thus, capitalism helps neocolonialism in securing an economic and social dominance of a geopolitical territory and this is evident in Wadi, Harran, Mooran and the Niger Delta where Americans and British took unanimous control through oil resources.

The outcome of this dominance largely depends on the relationship between government and the capital. The management and distribution of wealth ensures the social condition of the particular territory. Under any circumstances, the degradation of the environment and indigenous culture becomes inevitable when there is exploitation. Thus, exploitation is the prime outcome of neocolonialism and industrialisation. The economic and social dominance according to Sartre is followed by psychological dominance where the coloniser invades, persuades and controls the mindscape of the colonised.

The intrinsic ways in which oil has invaded into the cultural and psychological scape of Harran is visible when Munif displays the anger of man against injustice in relation with crude oil. His anger is mixed with a black viscous fluid like petroleum and old blood which has not yet dried. The injustice inflicted upon them is mainly because of the oil wells, and it will continue to be the same until all these wells dry up and the last drop of oil is drilled out: “The man was burning with anger, no, not only anger; it was mingled with something as black as pitch and oozy thick as old blood that had not dried yet.” (Munif, *COS* 351)

Emotions like fear and sense of danger are also invoked by the presence of oil. Miteb is gripped by anxiety when the foreign oil companies descend to destroy Wadi, and he becomes reclusive and disappears into the desert. When the pipelines are inaugurated in Harran, the city is under the grip of fear and insecurity, especially for the natives. The pipelines that open up job opportunities invoke a sense of fear for the natives because of the toxic working conditions and hard labour. Amidst the general fear felt by the people of Harran, the oil pipeline controlled by the Americans is inaugurated by the crown prince Khazael. The participation of the royalty in the oil ventures is representative of the relationship that exists between the Harran government and the American oil companies, which through economic dominance and promise of riches inflict indirect control. The native government ignored the plight of its own citizens, for whom the pipeline invokes fear rather than happiness and sense of security.

The accessible technology available in Harran like the radio is compared in relation to coal: “The third carried a square black object that look like coal” (Munif, *COS* 432). Habits of Hammad are completely altered after his three-month visit to America to learn more about security and intelligence. The western influence on Hammad is vigorous to an extent that his sleep pattern changes and if Americans would suggest any other alterations to his lifestyle and ideology, he would immediately accept it without defiance. Thus, the analogy between fossil fuels and the emotions, ideology of hell, devil, life and death, and everyday objects shows the oil rooted life in Harran, and it acts as the centre of the narratives based on which identities are formed. This emotional representation of oil also presents the unheard reality of the exploration activities in the Middle East where blood, tears and sweat of the slaves are shed in shaping the flourished reality of the masters that is often

portrayed in the media. The oil wars are the outburst of one of these suppressed voices and their fight for justice.

When the Americans come to Arab Harran to attend the marriage of Dabbasi, they are overwhelmed by the cultural festivities of Arabs. According to Arab Harran, the Americans with the cameras, their remarks and behaviour did not enliven the party but only debilitated it. This incident can be compared to the time when the Americans arrived in ships to Harran. They landed with loud music and party, and they were looked at with astonishment by the people of Arab Harran. The comparison helps infer that the gaze of Arab Harran does not disrupt the activities of the Americans, but the remarks of Americans have the power to tone down the cultural festivities surrounding a marriage in Arab culture. This is evident of the feeling of inferiority that arises among the people of Arab Harran because of the gaze of their oppressor who was given the centrality through oil.

The inferiority or arsenal complex that the coloniser implants in the minds of the colonised through religion, education and political policies make the colonised think that the colonial dependency is mandatory for their development or emancipation. Thus, the feeling of inferiority is also a main stratagem used by the powerful in order to manipulate the natives that they are weak, do not have a history of their own and need help from the coloniser to validate their existence. The subhuman position is also an important part of psychological dominance. Thus, the cultural shock, fear, curiosity, danger, sadness, happiness and the craze to assimilate the western ideologies into their everyday life including architecture, government functions and the military are the ways in which neocolonial presence of oil in the psyche of the society is depicted in *Cities of Salt* and *The Trench*.

Novel ways in which neocolonialism is imposed on a sovereign state is through the presence of aids. These aids are seen as a friendly collaboration in the educational, social and cultural sector. Under the deceitfulness of a partnership, Nkrumah states that the aids do not promote the welfare of the sovereign state, and instead they are invested in defiling the progress of the indigenous people in order to implement the imperialistic manifesto of the financial monopolies on the independent states.

Neocolonialists also incorporate old school methods of conquest like religious, cultural and educational infiltration in order to secure complete control of the sovereign state. The presence of conditional aids is an important part of the political and social altercations that are brought in by the neocolonial control, “Friendly co-operation is offered in the educational, cultural and social domains, aimed at subverting the desirable patterns of indigenous progress to the imperialist objectives of the financial monopolists” (Nkrumah 50). Often used aids are military and educational support. According to the United Nations, economic aid must only consist of grants that are strictly only for purposes that are not aligned with the military. The countries that extend the aid, also called as donor countries, have a separate fund called the private aid which extends military support. Aid is another means through which exploitation of the colonised is carried out by the coloniser, “...a modern method of capital export under a more cosmetic name” (Nkrumah 242). Thus, the aid, by actually pretending to help the particular country, intrudes into the social system and takes complete control of it.

Education is an important weapon against neocolonialism, and the educational aids are generally refused by the neocoloniser. In many countries, the students have been the main protestors against neocolonialism. The only aid that the neocolonialists feel is

very beneficial and supportive to them is the military aid because it vests them the power to control the politics and economics of the sovereign states. The foreign military bases in a country will only increase the hostility in the neocolonial system of control. The presence of military aid in Wadi, Harran, Mooran and Niger Delta are important in understanding the hostility among the labour class and the native bourgeois who supported the Americans and British. Along with the coming of the military aid, the unjust treatment of the labour class increased, and they rose in resistance against the neocoloniser and the native ruling class. Marx predicted that the increasing gap between the wealth of the bourgeois and the workers who are employed would lead to a conflict that would be threatening to capitalism, as the labour class would rise in resistance and confront their coloniser.

In *Cities of Salt*, the rise of the labour class against the injustice caused to them by the ruling class and the capitalists of Harran is the encounter of the colonised and the coloniser, the oil and the society. When oil is first discovered in Wadi, the bedouin police along with the armed forces funded by the Americans are used to forcibly evacuate the people out of their lands. Initially even the Emir is reluctant about allowing the Americans into his territory and when Ibn Rashed tries to explain to the Emir about the purpose of Americans and the riches they could bring to the Arabs, the Emir replies that, ““If we sing for them today, then tomorrow they’ll want us to dance for them, like monkeys; that’s all I am worried about, Ibn Rashed”” (Munif, *COS* 282). Later as the riches began flowing in, Americans assumed indirect control of Harran and the ruling class was very accommodative of it, including the military strategies.

Miteb exhibits the first form of resistance when his land and tribe are disturbed after oil was discovered in Wadi. At once he opposed the Sultan and the oil companies by

trying to make people understand and unite with him in the fight against the destruction of their ecosystem and value system instigated by oil. Although initially the people of Wadi are overtaken by the euphoria of new riches that is yet to land on them and did not pay heed to the words of Miteb, when the reality presented itself and the situations foreshadowed by him comes true, he became a godly figure amidst the natives for fighting against the injustice. The resistance put forth by Miteb made him a rebel and a threat in the eyes of the Emir and his supporters. Thus, immediate actions were taken to shun him in order for the oil activities to progress in Wadi. He became the symbol of resistance amidst the people of Harran in defending their rights against the colonisers.

After the oil company was set up, people like Hamilton established themselves very well within the ruling class of Harran for whom the oil wealth was a boon. The grips of neocolonialism heightened when military aids started flowing into Harran. After the working conditions in Harran got worse, the workers slowly started trying for ways to escape the place and go back to their homes. Amidst all the strict rules and surveillance, three workers who are recruited by Ibn Rashed escape the place along with the camels. Enraged Rashed and his men go in search of them, yet their attempts are in vain and after this incident he becomes a changed man. The change in demeanour of Rashed is due to his power being threatened for the very first time because the act of escaping along with the camels is a sign of silent resistance and commenced the slow rise of workers against the coloniser. Rashed who mediates between the Arab workers and the American oil companies is the first person of power against whom the workers revolt as a mark of their resistance in Arab Harran.

Although the Americans did not encourage violence, ironically the military was aided by them. The clash between the working class fighting for their rights and the military of Harran disrupted the peace, destroyed a lot of infrastructure and highlighted how the indigenous people of the desert are let down by their government in the fight for justice. The Americans exerted indirect influence in this political situation through military aids that are important in protecting their oil reserves and ensuring uninterrupted flow of oil to mint money out of the geopolitical territory despite the chaos.

When Arab Harran workers rebelled against the oil companies, the Arab government with the help of the military aid by the Americans set up contingency plans that involved firing, flogging and other brutalities under the command of Johar. As the talks of resistance reached the ears of the government, they immediately decided to lay off workers without any reasons as instructed by the Americans. The workers were infuriated by their sudden dismissal, low pay, poor living conditions, dangerous work environment and the death of Mizban and Muffadi. It made them protest against the coloniser through demonstration and destruction. The workers enraged by the decision to lay off, ““They just threw us out without giving a reason, as if we had no rights.”” (Munif, *COS* 586)

The act of laying off without any particular reason shows the power that the oil companies hold over the Arab government in making their own indigenous tribe suffer in the name of money through indirect control of the economy. The Arab military that was set up based on the aid from America was even ready to open fire on the workers protesting in order to protect the pipelines, oil wells, Arab royals and American Harran. The enraged workers in turn started showing their power by wrecking the compound that divides the American and Arab Harran.

The resistance witnesses the advent of the rebels and military, and they both cause damage through violence. In one of the demonstrations, the labour class chants that the pipelines that transport oil are, “built by beasts of prey” (Munif, *COS 592*), referring to Americans and their oil schemes. The workers also assert that the Americans do not own them or their lands, and they will protect their rights at all cost, “This land is our land” (Munif, *COS 592*). When the workers rise in resistance against the oil company and the government, they are threatened by the security force under the command of Johar and are told to trust in the divine entity for their rights to be protected because the government knew how to use military force in meeting the requirements for signing the business deals with American oil barons thereby reinstating their position in the social order.

The workers chant about how the pipelines were built by them from scratch and now that the construction is over, they have decided to fight for their rights. They say in unison that the land belongs to their indigenous tribe and was passed on to them by their ancestors, and God is their witness. They fight back for their land and rights by reinforcing their culture and faith in religion in the same space where they were annihilated, oppressed and ramified in the name of oil and hegemony even at the cost of blood and sweat, “Our rights are everlasting, they are ours. With our blood and sweat we will achieve them!” (Munif, *COS 597*). Thus, resistance furthers the role of the military, tightens security measures, divides the society into rebels and the pro-Americans and witnesses the showdown between proletariat and the rulers.

In Harran, the oil wealth is also equally used by the Arab government to increase their living situation, yet it only impacts the upper class which is mostly composed of Emirs, business people and others who are in favour of the Sultan and the Americans.

The first concern of Hamilton and the Emir when the workers began protesting against the government and the oil company was to protect the oil rigs and the pipeline rather than listening to the workers or serving their cause. Thus, oil has become more important than the rights of the people, and it is heightened when the Emir asks for a safe place to park his car so that the protesters don't burn it, "... The important thing now is that the strikers keep away from the oil installations" (Munif, *COS* 587). The power structure built on oil discovery is disturbed and this leads to chaos, and for the government, the pipelines are more important than the people. In *The Trench*, Munif portrays the novel ways in which seeds of resistance exist in the society through the social and political circumstances of Mooran.

Mooran has become an established city which is pertinent on security measures. The presence of military and educational aids controls the social, political and economic scene of Mooran. Dr. Subhi, who has been promoted as an advisor to the Sultan and a well-known pro-American, is one of the learned men in the kingdom. His mission is to bring order to the Sultanate by employing power and control through knowledge and money. According to the doctor, he is stronger than anyone else in the province and could win the favour of the Sultan easily in comparison to others. The doctor has gained this advantageous position mainly because of his knowledge and profession which must make him a threat to the neocolonialist, instead his social standing being in favour with the coloniser makes him an important and powerful asset to the kingdom in establishing order. He also insists on the importance of education to his son Ghazwan who later goes to America for his higher studies and gains a great deal of experience in business and management, "Without an education, without money, a man is worth nothing, no matter what his origins are or who his family may be." (Munif, *TT* 136)

Hammad gains more knowledge about the security and military forces after his visit to America. Literacy gives him a more significant position in the politics of Mooran and, similar to the doctor, he becomes consequential in maintaining the neocolonial apparatus. Hammad is an important character in materialising the presence of military aid in Mooran. During his trip to America, he makes an agreement with Mr. Andrews to have Americans come to Mooran and work closely with them to study the security and surveillance strategies and technologies that are available and methods to implement them. His alliance with Americans to strengthen the security forces is an example of military aid extended by America to the oil sheikhdom. As education becomes an important aspect of Mooran, the Sultan Khazael College for Sharia is established. Thus, education is accessible to its citizens and although there is no presence of educational aid, the idea of college can be inferred as western influence on the structure of education, one that did not exist before the advent of oil resources and foreign intervention.

The education system and literacy witnessed the advent of the first ever bookshop in Mooran called the Abu Zarr Bookstore run by Najm who is the youngest son of Shamran. Najm's bookshop is a result of his three-month visit to Cairo and Beirut. Shamran's first son Nimr, is a literate is and called as "Nimr the Newspaper!" (Munif, *TT* 333), because he has a great deal of knowledge on almost all the subjects discussed in Mooran. Politics interested him, and he always deliberated about people's concerns and sufferings. Through his education, he starts writing petitions and letters to the government officials on several issues concerning the citizens especially the labour class in order to find a solution or to get justice. Thus, Nimr is seen as a threat to the government as his literacy challenges the workings of the government and his accessibility to the working class gives them an opportunity to contest in the social and political scene.

The ties between Mooran and America are further strengthened when Ghazwan goes to America for studies and later takes up a job there. He sets up a personal meeting between the Americans and Mooranis for a major military alliance and ammunition deals. The American delegates along with Ghazwan visit Mooran and this is considered as a most important affair by the doctor and the Sultanate as it involves military alliance which could cement the relationship between America and Mooran apart from deals on oil exportation, ““The largest arms manufacturer in America is ready to supply the army of Mooran with the most modern and effective arms — and at low prices— as cheap as dirt!”” (Munif, *TT* 473) and through this deal, military aid entered Mooran and further tightened the neocolonial grip it had on the oil kingdom. The military alliance also sowed seeds for the oil wars that would later become the reality of many oil rich nations that have succumbed to poverty, violence and destruction because of political intervention with arms.

Similar to Harran, the people of Mooran also had the capability to rise in revolution when their poverty combined with dreams of emancipation from their sorrows in order to attain justice. One way to curb the revolution in Mooran was to prevent the people from reading manifestos written by others and instead make them read propagandas chosen by the government. Literacy and censorship are made to work together in order to avoid any resistance in Mooran, “...if we get them to read what we write and prevent them from reading what the other’s write, if we monitor everything and are careful to plug all the holes, we’ll have won half the battle.” (Munif, *TT* 211)

The neglect by the government and the urge to fight for their rights set forth a series of resistance in Mooran especially by Saleh and Shamran. Since the decision to shift Souq al-Halal and the detour of the place using machines severely affects these both

for who like many others the place is an important part of their cultural sentiment and holds many ethnic memories. The Mooranis are dissatisfied by the actions of the government and the powerful presence of Americans as visible through military aids. Other social changes only increase contempt and prompt minor acts of resistance.

When the American delegates visit Mooran, they are bestowed in the care of the doctor, who makes extravagant efforts to furnish them with the best hospitality. When the Americans are entertained with a banquet in Rabia hotel, anti-American leaflets find their way into the party and are placed under the plates. After the guests start reading the leaflets, it creates a commotion and later contingency measures are taken to remove them, but in vain. Once the situation is under control, Saleh curses the Americans and chants that the day Americans arrived in Mooran was a black day. Amidst the failure to contain this situation, Dr. Subhi is only worried about how Americans would react to this, thereby neglecting the natives yet again. This act of resistance becomes the talk of the city, and for many it also gives courage to resist and hope for a change in their situation.

Sultan Khazael is so occupied by money, business and luxury that he fails to predict that his brother Prince Fanar is a major threat to the throne. Prince Fanar who is sick and often travels to foreign countries for treatment is mostly absent from the political and social scene of Mooran but later returns and assumes his place in the palace of Khazael. He wins the favour of Hamilton due to their shared interest in international affairs, knowledge and travel, and is mentored by him. Fanar and Hamilton often travel to England. All the time that he spends travelling and his silent or passive observation in the court of Sultan Khazael allows him to find all the loopholes in the administration of his elder brother.

Sultan Khazael marries Dr. Subhi's daughter and Mooran is filled with festivities. After the wedding, Sultan along with his bride and the bodyguards took off on a plane for a holiday. Immediately after the departure, Mooran is engulfed in tension when the radio announces an important bulletin that tanks and army have surrounded the entire city. Shamran learns from his son that the market is full of tanks, and Badr arrives with the news that BBC and Voice of America are reporting about serious circumstances in Mooran and the news that Sultan Khazael's plane has met with an accident.

Everything is lost in the fire. This aggravates the situation in Mooran and Hammad telephones the doctor and informs that Crown Prince Fanar has ordered him to stay at home. Later, an announcement arrives that after reviewing the conditions that are governed by corruption, neglect and debauchery, it is unanimously decided that Sultan Khazael must be removed from the throne and Prince Fanar becomes the Sultan of Mooran. Hammad and Hamilton extended their support to him in this mission.

Along with the siege of the throne by Prince Fanar, strict rules and curfew is implemented. The draconian regime with stringent rules and powerful usage of military funds backed up by the Americans comes in place and the cabinet is reshuffled. In the new cabinet, Hammad becomes the Minister of Interior, Malik al-Fraih is appointed as the finance minister and Muti is promoted as the palace press secretary. On the day of the siege of the throne by Fanar, the three sons of Shamran are arrested. Exasperated by this arrest, Shamran and Saleh display resistance, but they are curbed down by the presence of an overpowering military, harsh curfew and other steadfast rules. The siren enforcement of the military power can also be noted as a measure to avoid defiance of the labour class as in Harran.

After three months, Badr is released from the prison and then Shamran decides to get help from Hammad in releasing Nimr and Najm, but the attempts are in vain because it is believed that Najm and his group are labelled as rebels whose motives are to kill the people in power. The people who threatened the power of the government in order to get their rights were detained without trial. The natives of Mooran felt imprisoned in their own land through the injustice that is perpetrated on them due to the presence of oil resources and the omnipresence of the financial monopolist like America. The replacement of one ruler by the another saw the incoming of a controlled regime, where the oppressed were furthermore annihilated. Mooran transforms into a narrative of violence and war under extreme suppression and the indigenous met their oppressor to reclaim their rights, culture and identity, ““Look, Hammad, boy, this is Mooran, and these are its people’— he indicated Shamran — ‘and blood doesn’t turn into water.’” (Munif, *TT* 553)

Similar to the conditions in the oil kingdom of Munif, the Niger Delta as seen through the lens of oil in Habila’s *Oil on Water* also shows the presence of various aids and the resistance. The civil war in Nigeria is between the government and the militants comprising the indigenous community who are against the oil exploration and devastation of their environment. The kidnapping of Mrs. Floode by the militants is a technique of resistance employed by them in order to negotiate with the oil company and the government to attain their rights and receive compensation for the damages caused. Violence dominates the strategy of both the military and the militants, and that disrupts the peace of the delta.

The Professor, who is the head of the militant group that has kidnapped Mrs. Floode, goes to Agbuki Island to meet with the media and talk about his war for preserving the environment. The media is used as an important tool by the militia to project their manifestos,

demands and to garner world attention about the destruction caused to their environment and culture in the political game of oil. When Rufus secures an audience with Professor, he tells him that destroying the oil instalments and kidnapping the foreign oil officials are their strategies of war. He wants Rufus to write the truth about their plight as indigenous people in the hands of the oil company and the corrupt government.

The gas flares, polluted environment, fleeing people, violence, presence of military and oil that has contaminated the waters of Niger Delta, are the various reasons for the civil war between the government and its citizens. The plight of the natives is ignored and it escalates the violence in these territories where the lives are lost, while peace and security is compromised. The Professor says to Rufus about the upcoming attacks on the oil plants and suggests that it must be recorded in the newspaper because it means war. Thus, one of the outcomes of such exploitative oil extraction is the wars that results in irreparable damages including high mortality rates, cultural and ecological endangerments.

The presence of the military aid in the Niger Delta is visible through the government enforcing control on the territory and maintaining law and order through forces. The constant surveillance and patrol of the military forces in the delta and perpetual raiding of the native villages in search of the rebels are few instances where the armed forces are ruthlessly employed in order for the oil activities to take place without any impediments. The militants usually camouflage their locations and often their primary point of attack is the pipelines, oil rigs and refineries. Thus this geopolitical territory because of the presence of oil and military power becomes a war zone.

The presence of men in uniforms within the premises of the oil company, patrolling with machine guns in their hands, indicates the protection and importance in terms of security given to the oil activities at the cost of the natives. The military aid is an important reason behind the oil wars because the ethnic knowledge and environment are ignored in the hands of oil wealth. The resistance by the militants consists of the natives who confront their oppressors in the civilian world in order to reclaim their identity, culture and justice for all the blood that is lost in these oil wars, “Tell them, we are going nowhere. This land belongs to us. That is the truth, remember that.” (Habila 210)

Sartre propounds that the natives in order to unchain themselves from the control that is inflicted upon them must take up violence as their mode of defence against the oppressor because according to them the violence can be countered only with violence. The malevolent and tense environment created by the presence of military and their involuntary control over the society especially the subjugation of the working class gives rise to nationalistic feelings where the natives stand in unison against the oppressor to claim back their justice after being victims of exploitation, discrimination and bigotry. The presence of the military aids in Wadi, Harran, Mooran and Niger Delta did not increase the sense of security among the people but only incites fear and feeling of imprisonment in their own homelands.

Nkrumah states that the involvement of armed struggle by the government as a response to the resistance grants the nationalist the status of rebels, or terrorists, although their causes are morally right and globally supported by various organisations and countries. This entitlement as a rebel or terrorist gives more reasons for neocolonialist to oppress using violence, detention or death sentences as in Nigeria where leaders like Ken Saro-

Wiwa who fought the Ogoni cause are detained, falsely accused and hanged to death. Similarly, in the novels of Munif and Habila also there are instances of natives who voiced their plight to the government and were termed as rebels and detained or laid off from work without any reasons.

The characters, Miteb in *Cities of Salt* and The Professor in *Oil on Water* are termed as rebels, and it becomes the prime agenda of the government to employ the armed forces and other security plans to arrest them. Thus, a decision by the government of a sovereign state in accordance with the financial monopolies like America and Britain to explore and export oil with minimal consideration to the collateral damages of their selfish and capitalist motives has led to counter revolution by the indigenous people who are majorly affected in this oil game.

Nkrumah asserts that neocolonialism activates self-destruction. The dominant presence of America and Britain in the Middle Eastern oil kingdom and Niger Delta benefits them in terms of profit, but this will only be a short-term gain and in the long run it sows seeds for destruction. In the narratives of Munif, the discovery of oil and the presence of Americans in their lands are perceived by the natives as a sign of doomsday. Although oil wealth is possible only because of Americans bringing in all the technology to extract oil which helps the sheikhdom dominate the global economy, the natives saw them as harbingers of evil and destruction. Often the natives of Harran and Mooran can be seen foreshadowing the death or destruction in relation with oil and the Americans, “a harsh black future awaited them” (Munif, *COS* 575). Their thoughts announce the coming of a societal collapse because of the ruthless exploitation of their sacred lands and the morality that has kept humanity united.

Neocolonial exploitation can be viewed as the root cause for the foreshadowing of doomsday by the natives wherein the oil resources are pictured as the demons that live beneath their feet and make their existence miserable. These demons have corrupted the mind of the man who has given up his nativity and culture in the materialistic pursuit of power. The changes brought in by oil were compared to the burning hell and the arrival of Judgement Day where, "...demons would soon fly around their feet like mice, and how the Hell that boiled beneath the earth would soon burst out and burn everything to cinders." (Munif, *COS* 387)

The presence of oil resources and the power it gives to America in initiating neocolonial control in the novels of Munif and Habila is the same country that becomes the terrain of war and destruction in Omar El Akkad's *American War*. The perilous outcome for America is already foreshadowed in Munif's *The Trench* when Abu Ghanem envisions the destruction by referring to the doomsday where no discrimination would prevail and "...at the end of time there will be no difference between white and black, between good and evil, and there will be a gathering up of the false prophets and those who carried rags and flags, and the blind and the quacks will be exposed." (552)

The America of Akkad expounds the events of the future between 2074 and 2095 and shows the speculated reality where fossil fuels are outlawed, and it has initiated the Second American Civil War. The Bouazizi Empire that consists of countries from Asia and Africa are shown as one of the powerful nations because of their calculated energy shift before the catastrophe could hit them. These nations clubbed to form an empire that aids America with food, clothes, medicines and other amenities in order to protect humanity. Thus the nations which were under the neocolonial control transform into a powerful

empire in the speculative narration, while America which was a powerful neocoloniser is exploited through war and epidemic.

As per the accounts of Albert Gaines and Joe, who had spent a good part of their life in the Arabian Peninsula, the energy shift took place because of the rising temperature due to global warming and the exhaustion of oil resources. These countries avoided a major societal collapse by shifting to greener sources of energy. Thus, the fossil fuels that once made America rich and powerful becomes the same reason for the torpedoing of it as a nation. Hence, the prime reason for the civil war and the ruinous condition of America as portrayed in the novel is credited to the energy shift that the other countries achieved which helped them survive while America was still held up on the fossil fuels that has become, “archaic and nearly worthless.” (Akkad 25)

When the American government decided to implement the energy shift, the fossil fuels were outlawed and the agenda was not welcomed by all. It led to division of the North and the South and resulted in civil war, which only worsened the already existing problems of climate crisis and epidemic. The war saw the disbanding of people and resulted in a refugee crisis. The refugee camps had toxic living conditions. The countries that shifted to greener ways of energy by depending on the sun and wind have now become superpower nations. They were united under the banner called Bouazizi Empire and have been aiding America.

The Southern Confederate states decided to wage a war against the Northern Unions because they were opposed to the idea of fossil fuels being felonious. They still viewed the automobiles that ran on fossil fuels as an image of wealth, status, connection and the link to the bygone days of peace, prosperity and domination. As a result, America

experiences a civil war because of this and the fossil fuels are labelled as illegal: "...illicit fuel responsible for so much of the country's misfortune" (Akkad 18). The unused railway tracks and soundless warring crafts named as 'birds' are the ruins of war that have destroyed the civilisation and the environment associated with it. Thus, the instability and societal collapse that America is experiencing in the speculative imagination of Akkad is the long-term effect of neocolonialism as the oppressor is also crushed by the power system through self-decimation as a result of exploitation.

The war initiated by the presence and the absence of fossil fuels as portrayed in the petrofiction chosen for study indicates the dogmatic presence of oil resources in contemporary society and how it holds within itself the power to control the fate of the present and the future. The war has divided America into fragments that are barely sticking together to fight their common enemy, the fossil fuels. As a result of war-torn America and the people moving out of their homes, refugee camps were set up in many places and one among them is Camp Patience. It is run by an aid group called Red Crescent, and it is the home of protagonist Sara T. Chestnut and her family. They moved here from Louisiana in an attempt to flee the war. The refugees from South Carolina also made this camp as their permanent home and were quarantined because of being infected by a deadly virus.

The deadly virus and the epidemic during the final days of war shows the presence of biological warfare that has also torn down America as a result of the violence and gore of military activities. The generator that ran on petroleum or diesel was kept hidden by the Chestnuts in a dark room, which stank of fuel. Karina Chowdhury, wife of Simon, is from the Bangladeshi Isles and for her the smell of fossil fuels triggers trauma as it

reminds her of war and destruction. The pre-war days also had disasters initiated by oil, like the explosion of oil trains in Williston in the year 2069 that killed Marcus Exum's grandfather. Thus, the fossil fuels mostly initiated violence and war, and also serves as an important element of nostalgia of the peaceful pre-war days, a trigger for anxiety caused by war trauma, tools of destruction that have ensued because of exploitation through neocolonial control and the memory of dear ones departed. Until a wiser decision regarding the availability and usage of fossil fuels are made, the war and violence will never cease to exist, "...not a bloody fight over their stubborn commitment to a ruinous fuel, the war will never be over." (Akkad 280)

As the South fiercely resisted the North and demanded freedom, the refugee camps also became the place for rebels to be born who would volunteer for resistance activities that are dangerous and fatal. Sarat and her brother Simon can be seen evolving into rebels in these camps with the assistance of powerful influencers like Albert Gaines. His idea of power structure deeply influences Sarat. He says that the Empire is a powerful entity and resembles the Sun in the solar system which is the reservoir of power and gravity and all the other entities like the nations are compared to the planets as they revolve around the Empire because of their weaker position in comparison to the Sun.

America, which can be seen as the centre of power that decides the fate of sovereign nations like the Middle East and Nigeria in the depictions of Munif and Habila becomes the weakest when the oil wells dry up and the last drop is extracted out of the earth's bowels. Now these Third World countries have united under the name of the Bouazizi Empire, and their powerful control decides what America gets to eat. The young empire has plans to become the most powerful in the world by taking control of every political and economic affair, including the war in America.

This speculated reality is a vice versa of the position of the United States and other powerful countries who exert colonial control over the Third World nations and burden them with exploitation for power, wealth and omnipotent dominance. Thus, Gaines' idea of hegemony is an example of the power that the centre holds and how it is always susceptible to change coupled with paramount impact. It can be inferred that the neocolonial power structure is not a rigid and one-way stream because the oppressor and the oppressed are variables and in the long run activates self-destruction, “‘That’s what an empire is,’ he said, ‘an orchestrator of gravity, a sun around which all the weaker things spin.’” (Akkad 118)

Various rebel groups, including Virginia Cavaliers and Texas Oil Drills are involved in violence against the North to reinstate their right to use the fossil fuels. Small signs of resistance include putting up posters of fossil fuel powered cars that are discontinued from production. Hence, anything that is symbolic of the fossil fuels like the cars, oil drums and posters are the objects of resistance that the Southerners assert in order to gain their freedom to use the fuel resources. The Twenty First Indiana is a militia group that carries out a massive attack on Camp Patience which causes the death of Sarat’s mother Martina Chestnut and deeply injures her brother Simon.

Later the three Chestnut siblings move to a charity house and the familial loss further fuels Sarat’s need for revenge over the Blue Country. As a result of this disunity in thought, the clash of two opposing moralities causes friction and war and states around the Red county including Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee and North Carolina form a safe cocoon because they are sympathetic to the cause of Free Southern States despite the controversial opinions with the Blue Country, the North but does not actively participate

in the war. The Free Southern State government has their headquarters in Atlanta, and although they are equipped with military, the forces did not do any fighting, and it is always the rebel groups that were involved in violence and disruption of the peace in their territory.

The resistance shown in the novels of Munif and Habila is contrastive from the rebel groups and their motives in that of Akkad's portrayal. There is a stark difference of morality in the resistance carried out in Harran, Mooran and Niger Delta and America. In America, the rebel groups rise in revolt with the motivation to fight for their freedom to the usage of fossil fuels amidst environmental degradation and climate change while in the Middle Eastern Kingdom and Niger Delta, the rebel groups resist the unethical extraction, violation of their rights and destruction of the environment to avoid catastrophic loss of their nature and culture.

America also experiences an economic crash and degradation of the environment because of the civil war. The economic crash has an adverse effect on the society and hence they depend on the aid sent by various countries including the Bouazizi Empire in order to get food, clothing, water, and sanitary products in the camps. The medicines are very costly and no longer easily affordable nor very effective against the disease causing pathogens. The war also initiates an existential crisis among the people especially for the refugees as they desperately wait in their camps hoping that the war would come to an end, and they could go back to their homes and lead a normal life. Yet, the thought of death, and the ensuing chaos is an important element of the psyche of the refugees patiently waiting and longing to see a new dawn, the one that is free of destruction and violence.

Similar to the Beat Generation, in the novel, there is Miraculous generation which refers to children born during the war period from the start of Second Civil War in the year 2074 which ended in 2095 and it was followed by a decade long plague, a virus that was released by Sarat during the end of the war conglomeration ceremony of the North and South as a final act of resistance. Biological weapon was used initially as a means to reduce the population of the country's first rebel state, South Carolina, and resulted in the state being permanently quarantined to contaminate the damages caused by the virus.

A scientist named Gerry Tusk, in an attempt to create a cure for the virus ends up creating something even more deadly called the 'The Quick'. It is more contagious and the Bouazizi Empire views the virus as a means to prolong the civil war and grants refuge to Tusk. Years into the war, through Joe whose real name is later revealed as Yousef bin Rashed and Gaines, Sarat is recruited to carry the virus to the Reunification Day Ceremony where the North and South will meet to mark the end of the civil war. She was ordered to release the virus into the air. It resulted in a plague that lasted for a decade. The plague did not affect a few places including New Anchorage in Alaska which is termed as the neutral state. Thus, bio-war is also one of the important threats that exist in the society. The biological destruction will also have a greater impact on the society as there will be no discrimination in death and the powerful and the powerless are the same in the hands of any virus or other disease-causing pathogens.

Akkad derives a comparison between oil and mosquitoes to show how the society is caught in the quagmire called fossil fuels. The Chestnuts keep a bowl of oil outside their house as a measure to trap all the mosquitoes. The mosquitoes that are lured by the shimmering liquid nears the bowl, gets trapped and drowns to death. Similarly, the society

attracted to the quicksand called oil wealth is gradually drowning without understanding its catastrophic results. Thus, the neocolonial apparatus in the fossil fuel controlled social order carries within itself the seeds of destruction that only gets volatile as the society marches towards the last drop of oil.

While *Cities of Salt* portray the coming of oil, initial encounter of East and West and the ripple effect it had on the society and culture, the second installment in the trilogy, *The Trench* paints in words the picture of another city in the desert named Mooran that has come into existence with the arrival of oil. The capitalist and industrial changes of Mooran is the main objective of Munif's evocation of the social, political, and economic scenario of life after oil and all the luxuries that blinded the society. The play of money in the new life after oil is very evident as the tight-knit community with minimalistic lifestyle as adapted by the bedouins is soon replaced by industries, business, cars and other technologies that rolled out and a westernised outlook of life slowly evolved amidst the oil euphoria. Oil and the American monopolies have taken complete control of the society, and the presence of military aid is an indicative factor of neocolonial control in Harran and Mooran.

The conditions in Nigeria as portrayed by Habila in *Oil on Water* are almost similar to Munif's satiric commentary of the Middle East. Habila invokes the landscape of Niger Delta which in the hands of rich oil barons has become a contaminated ecosystem with military and militia on one side waging war while the native tribes fled in search of peace and healthy environment to survive. The indigenous life that was bound by nature where the houses belonged more to the trees and forest than they did to the humans are wrecked when the sacred land is taken away for oil extraction by the giant corporations with the consent of the government. Destructions after the coming of oil and the poverty,

greed and corruption that governs the politics and economy of Nigeria as portrayed through the eyes of Rufus, a journalist in search of a British woman kidnapped by the militia in order to facilitate a negotiation with the oil company for justice provides a dual picture of the rich and poor in the delta after the coming of oil.

The new dawn for Nigeria after the oil resources now solely depends on the foreign companies and their investments. Nkrumah's elucidation of neocolonialism is emphasised through the economic and developmental scheme of Nigeria. European, American and few Asian countries are the significant stakeholders in the business scenario of Nigeria which includes crude oil, electronic and household goods. It is inferred that the country's total economic dependency on foreign nations and their investors is the reason for scarcity in industrial growth and extended dependency on foreign commodities and services. The Middle East of Munif and Niger Delta of Habila incorporates a power structure that is tantamount in terms of the fact that discovery of oil resources has changed their prospects and has resulted in social disparities in the hands of capitalists through economic dominance. Thus, oil that facilitates the encounter between the East and West has also become the overriding factor in the revival of colonialism.

The speculative genre offers a scope for imagination that encompasses a future which is a result of the exploitation of the present as in *American War* by Akkad. The civil war ridden America and its dependency on other countries for aid is a juxtaposition of the scenario portrayed by Munif and Habila. Mei Mei Evans in her work *Oil and Water* presents the Alaskan landscape slicked with oil and how the capitalist manifesto affects them despite being under the governance of a superpower. Akkad's portrayal carries forward the capitalist manifesto along with exhaustion of oil resources and civil war to present instability, chaos and shifting power structures.

The paradigm of energy shifts as the means of power shift although carries within itself the important message for an immediate action in the present, a note of caution also follows it and underscores the fact that exploitation of power will only activate societal and environmental collapse. Thus, the absence of oil resources will also have an effect that is as impactful as its presence in a geopolitical terrain even if immediate actions are taken to stop exploitation and propel the energy shift. The aftermath of the exploitation will be felt for years before the fruit of prudent change begins to show up. Thus, it involves determined unity in thoughts and actions in going against the neocolonial framework to stop colonialism and envision a more equitable society.

The neocolonial exposition of the select petrofiction delineates the coming of oil, its assimilation into the economic, political and cultural aspects of life and understands the ramification experienced by the indigenous community in the hands of the oil imperialist. The following chapter studies the ways in which oil exploration impacts the environment, the interconnection between ramification of the indigenous culture and exploitation of the environment and advocates the importance of intersectional environmentalism for achieving unity and sustainability.