

# Lecture

# Quartermasters of Capital

In this lecture, Laleh Khalili examines two different facets of the entanglements of war-making and capital accumulation in the making of the transport infrastructures of the Arabian Peninsula. The first facet focuses on the corporate structures engaged in commodity extraction and their overlap with domains of sovereign authority, including the exercise of coercive power. The author argues that among the companies that were from very early on involved in the making of maritime transport infrastructure, have been these extractive corporations (of oil and gas, but also other minerals) and among them there have been several distinct models of corporate ownership prevalent in the Arabian Peninsula in the twentieth century. The two most prevalent models have been those represented by the companies that eventually became ARAMCO and BP (or the latter's subsidiaries). The second facet of the entanglements of war and trade has been the centrality of the labour of workers whose enclosure/expropriation/expulsion from their countries of origin, because of war or shifts in global patterns of trade, has been crucial to the literal forging of these extractive/infrastructural industries. Here, war and geopolitics are not always the primary drivers for the provision of exploitable, deportable, precarious labour, but in certain periods are crucial factors (other decisive factors are global shifts in the patterns of capital accumulation and the mosaic of politico-economic shifts sometimes labelled as "neoliberalism").

**Laleh Khalili** is a professor of Gulf Studies at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom, and the author or editor of 6 volumes, including most recently *Sinews of War and Trade: Shipping and Capitalism in the Arabian Peninsula* (Verso 2020) and *Corporeal Life of Seafaring* (Mack Books, 2024). She has been, throughout her scholarly career, compelled with and curious about the workings of transnational movements: of colonial forms of power and violence, of resistance, of ideas and practices, of people, and now of capital and cargo. She has always woven through analyses of gender, racialisation, political violence and political economy in her research, and have been particularly fascinated by both the ongoing violence of empire and the afterlives of colonialism in contemporary politics.

**LALEH KHALILI**  
**13/06 \_ 3 - 5 p.m.**

**Presenter:**  
**Alberto Valz Gris** DIST Post-doc

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