



The Peace Issue . . .

The Newsletter of Just Peace Queensland Inc

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Just Peace holds bi-monthly public forums and monthly committee meetings. All are welcome.

Please feel free to contact one the co-convenors below for details of times and venues.

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Pompeo's Gulf of Tonkin Incident

by **Gareth Porter**

January 11th, 2020

Like the crucial steps toward public acceptance preceding the U.S. invasions of Vietnam and Iraq, the assassination of Qassem Soleimani was aimed at building popular support for war on Iran. Not only the justification, but the assassination itself were part of a broader strategy to grease the skids into war.

The Soleimani ploy has apparently failed, however, thanks to the carefully prepared Iranian response, which did not provoke Donald Trump to raise the stakes further. At least not yet.

The fingerprints of Pompeo are all over this provocation to war. In a striking parallel to the deception that accompanied the Gulf of Tonkin crisis in 1964—in which the American public was told about an attack on a U.S. ship that never happened, precipitating the Vietnam War—Pompeo and his allies carried out a complex deception in regard to the Soleimani hit. They claimed they had to kill the second most popular leader of Iran with no advance notice to Congress because the Iranian general was planning a massive attack that put the country in “imminent” danger. Trump officials have so far not provided any evidence publicly to back up this version of events. In fact, when briefed by DoD officials Wednesday, Democrats complained about the lack of hard evidence presented, leaving them unconvinced there was an imminent threat. Republican Sen. Rand Paul, R-KY., said the briefing was “less than satisfying.”

The deception accompanying Soleimani's killing was just the latest in a much longer string of efforts by Pompeo that began in September 2018. That's when Pompeo and then-National Security Advisor John Bolton

established the basic propaganda line that was used to sell the Soleimani assassination. They claimed that a few mortar rounds in the vicinity of the U.S. embassy and a consulate in Basra were evidence of an effort by Tehran to kill or injure U.S. diplomats. Bolton then demanded the Pentagon come up with retaliatory options if any Americans were harmed by any action of an Iranian “proxy,” Pompeo issued a public threat to attack Iran over the incidents.

But in fact those rockets landed a kilometer away from the U.S. Embassy in the Green Zone where all foreign embassies are located, and that the one that fell near the Basra airport's outer perimeter was nowhere near the U.S. consulate. And they were fired the same night that anti-Iran rioters were setting fire to the Iranian consulate in Basra and shutting down the country's only seaport, and at the same time Sadrist protesters were rallying against the Iraqi government at the entrance to the Green Zone in sympathy with the anti-Iran protests.

In May 2019, Bolton claimed new “escalatory indications and warnings” of a threat to U.S. personnel in the Middle East and vowed, “[A]ny attack on United States interests or on those of our allies will be met with unrelenting force.” He and Pompeo leaked to major news outlets that there was intelligence about Iran ordering militia allies in the region to “target” Americans. But other officials who had seen the intelligence told the *Wall Street Journal* that Tehran sent its allies a directive telling them to prepare for possible attack by the United States.

The Bolton-Pompeo effort to lure Trump into a war with Iran faltered when the president twice refused their advice to retaliate militarily over the shoot-down of a U.S. drone and the drone attack on a key Saudi oil

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facility. Bolton got fired in September, but Pompeo continued what they had begun. On December 13, he condemned two attacks on a Iraqi military base located near the Baghdad Airport on Dec. 7 and Dec. 9, in which two Iraqi anti-terrorist troops were injured, and then added, “We must also use this opportunity to remind Iran’s leaders that any attacks by them, or their proxies of any identity, that harm Americans, our allies, or our interests will be answered with a decisive U.S. response.”

But the circumstances surrounding those rocket attacks made it unclear who might have fired the two to four mortars or rockets at the Iraqi Security Forces headquarters near Baghdad Airport, wounding two Iraqi counter-terrorism personnel. Opponents of the government had just launched new protests against repression of demonstrations by lethal forces by Iraqi security forces, including anti-riot police, and Moqtada al Sadr, who had been supporting the Iraqi government, but had just started to support the demonstrators. It is entirely possible that Sadrist militiamen or other opponents of the government had fired the rockets at the base in protest.

Two weeks later, on December 27, a rocket attack on the K1 Iraqi base near Kirkuk killed an American contractor, as “Operation Inherent Resolve” command confirmed. The Trump administration immediately went into crisis mode, discussing both killing Soleimani and retaliatory strikes against Kataib Hezbollah. But the provenance of the event that triggered the fateful decisions that followed is shrouded in ambiguity. As *The New York Times* reported on Dec. 27, “It wasn’t clear who was responsible for the attack,” adding that the base had been threatened previously by both Iranian-backed militias and Islamic State forces.

The IS forces in the area of Kirkuk where the K1 base was located had become increasingly active in 2018 and 2019, with a rapidly growing pace of attacks, operating freely out of the rugged mountainous north and south of the city. In fact there had been more attacks by IS on government targets in Kirkuk in 2018 than anywhere else in Iraq, and it had the highest rate of growth as well.

To confirm the origins of the rockets might have taken some time, but Pompeo wasn’t interested in waiting. Instead of taking on the responsibility of investigating the incident thoroughly, the Pentagon and the command of Operation Inherent Resolve turned that responsibility over to the Iraqi Security Forces. If there was indeed an investigation that turned up information indicating that Kataib Hezbollah was responsible, it would certainly have been released publicly, but no further information on the incident has been forthcoming from either Iraqi or U.S. commands. The only specific information available has been a Reuters report from “security sources that Iraqi security forces had found a ‘launchpad’ for Katyusha rockets in ‘an abandoned vehicle near the base,’” which further deepened the mystery.

But it can be argued that Pompeo was eager for the United States to provoke a military confrontation with Iran, just as Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara was eager to begin airstrikes against North Vietnamese targets in August 1964. Even though he knew there were serious doubts on the part of the U.S. commander in the Gulf of Tonkin that an American ship had been attacked by North Vietnamese patrol boats on Aug. 4, McNamara did not inform President Lyndon Johnson, and went ahead with the order for retaliatory strikes that night, as I have documented in detail. Similarly, Pompeo apparently led Trump to believe that there was no doubt that pro-Iranian militia forces had killed an American in Kirkuk, despite the genuine uncertainty about the provenance of the attack.

In the initial meeting with Trump to discuss retaliation for the Dec. 27 attack, Pompeo, Defense Secretary Mark Esper, and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Mark A. Milley presented the option of assassinating Gen. Soleimani along with strikes against Kataib Hezbollah, which they were blaming for the attack. According to *The New York Times*, the principals suggested the “improbable” assassination option only to make the retaliatory airstrikes more palatable. But considering Pompeo’s record of pushing for a military confrontation with Iran, and everything he has said publicly

since, “taking Soleimani out” was probably Pompeo’s ultimate objective.

The U.S. retaliatory strikes against the militia’s weapons storage sites and other targets on Dec. 29 were nowhere near Kirkuk. One of the strikes was against al Qaim on the Syrian border 400 kilometers away from Kirkuk and two others were in Syria. It was obvious those retaliatory strikes would provoke a response by pro-Iranian militias in Baghdad that could be used to justify the assassination of Soleimani. And the response was not long in coming: thousands of angry pro-Iranian Shiite militants, many in militia uniforms, broke into the Embassy compound and set fire to three trailers near the outer wall a reception area before being ordered by militia leaders to disperse, because they had delivered the desired “message.”

That was enough to persuade Trump to support the Soleimani assassination option. Pompeo had achieved his objective of U.S. military aggression, while publicly making the obviously specious argument that it was aimed at “detering” Iran from further military actions. No one in the national security elite, which was universally convinced that Iran would have to retaliate against the assassination, took Pompeo’s argument seriously.

Iran is too clever, however, to allow Pompeo to so easily maneuver it into a confrontation that would serve the interests of American hawks and Israel. Iran has its own much more complex political-military strategy for managing the problem of the Trump administration’s policy of economic and military warfare. It now appears from the results of Iran’s military retaliation Tuesday night that it has foregone any mass casualty strike in revenge for the U.S. assassination of its second most prominent official. And Trump, as yet, will not retaliate in response. Now Pompeo will have to come up with a new deception to try to provoke U.S.-Iran war.

First published the *American Conservative*.

Gareth Porter is an investigative reporter and regular contributor to the *American Conservative*. He is also the author of [*Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare*](#).

**EDITORIAL**

EDITORIAL by Jonathan Pilbrow, Convener, Alice Springs Peace Action Think Tank (ASPATT) and a NT representative on the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN); and Policy Adviser, Alice Springs.

The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) which Just Peace is one of the 60 member organisations in Australia, addressed the matter of U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to conduct the illegal assassination of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani in Baghdad in early January this year with a media release. Subsequent to this, IPAN coordinated a number of rallies and events across the country on 25 January calling for 'No war on Iran', which were part of a global day of protest called for by the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), an antiwar and social justice coalition in the U.S.

Media reports at the time of the assassination stated that General Soleimani was due to meet the Iraqi Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi, on the morning the general was killed, in order to discuss a diplomatic rapprochement that Iraq was brokering between Iran and Saudi Arabia...Soleimani had arrived in Baghdad not to plan attacks on American targets, but to coordinate de-escalation with Saudi Arabia.

Condemnation of the assassination of General Soleimani is not an endorsement of the actions or policies of the Iranian Government or the military force it controls. However, it is a call for all countries to abide by the rules of international law. After the death of General Soleimani, President Trump was reported as saying that he served up "American justice" by ordering the drone strike that took him out.

In addition, it is critical to ask if Australia was implicated in this drone strike? Leaked documents from the US National Security Agency several years ago revealed that intelligence from Pine Gap is being used on US battlefields, with the locating of the source of signals crucial for targeting military action, including the lethal unmanned drone strikes. And the Australian public have a right to be informed if our

country is involved in such attacks as these.

We must resist a form of "justice" that strikes without charge, trial, or any legal process. This should not be justice by an Australian standard.

Let us also not forget that a version of so called "American Justice" started this whole thing 66 years ago when a democratically elected Iranian Government was ousted by a U.S. and U.K. coup at end of 1953 [1] (and these countries were our allies – and this occurred during peace time).

The 1979 Iranian revolution can be seen as response to the coup 26 years earlier. But the events of 1979 now seem to be used as an excuse for the anti-Iran sentiment from the U.S. I would suggest that it would be worth people doing a bit of reading on the 1953 Iranian Coup – there is plenty of info online written about it. What a different Middle East we might have today if this coup had never occurred.

The (UNAC have highlighted that "U.S. aggression against Iran threatens to begin yet another disastrous, bloody war." It was such concerns that led to global action to demonstrate clear opposition to any US-led war on Iran.

A war with Iran would have devastating impacts on the lives of people in the region and lives of Australian soldiers, should Australia be drawn yet again into another illegal US led war.

Australia should have learned lessons from the Iraq invasion. That futile action led to loss of hundreds of thousands of lives and ongoing human misery, an escalation of terrorism across the world, destruction of the environment in Iraq and huge wastage of money - and for what benefit? Given the capacity of the Iranian military, war with Iran has the potential to be far worse than the war in Iraq.

While it has been encouraging that the Prime Minister Scott Morrison has said he will pursue "restraint" and a "de-escalation" of tensions in the Middle East, there is more that he could do. IPAN believes the Prime Minister should have put a stop to its plans to send the HMAS Toowoomba to the Straits of Hormuz, as sending it could be seen as a 'provocative' move, which effectively provided a message of support for the USA's action -

where there should have been condemnation.

The Prime Minister justified sending the warship to Iran as 'guarding oil supplies but in fact, the greatest threat to trade in the region is the very real threat of war. Australia should be a good friend and ally by speak truth to the US and dissuade from another war that could draw Australia in.

The Australian Government should help diffuse the situation in the Middle East, starting with reversing its decision to send HMAS Toowoomba.

In addition, it should respond to the Iraqi Parliament's demand and bring our troops home – where currently around 2000 Australian personnel are still on the ground.

IPAN is also calling for No Sanctions (on Iran) – as these are a weapon of war, contributing to devastation and lives lost.

1. Democratically elected [Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh](#) overthrown in favour of strengthening the monarchical rule of [Mohammad Reza Pahlavi](#) on 19 August 1953. In August 2013, sixty years afterward, the U.S. government formally acknowledged the U.S. role in the coup by releasing a bulk of previously classified government documents that show it was in charge of both the planning and the execution of the coup, including the bribing of Iranian politicians, security and army high-ranking officials, as well as pro-coup propaganda.^{[29][30][31]} The CIA is quoted acknowledging the coup was carried out "under CIA direction" and "as an act of U.S. foreign policy, conceived and approved at the highest levels of government".

"Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings."

— Edward W. Said, [Culture and Imperialism](#)



ACTIVITIES REPORT

Actions and Activities

October 2019 to January 2020

We discussed the activities of your group over the period up till September 2019 in issue 58 of The Peace Issue, page 3. Here is what *Just Peace* has done since:

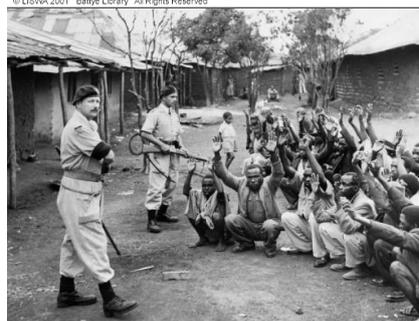
October 10th Anglican Peace Discussion Group at St John's College U of Q.

Maureen Todhunter and Mike Henry of *Just Peace* spoke to representatives of several peace and refugee groups on the work we all do.

October 13th Our big Public Forum was held on this day in our usual Red Brick Hotel. The title was: **We Are Not Monkeys. The struggle for Justice in West Papua**, with speakers **Amatus Douw and Peter Arndt**. The meeting was an exciting event with excellent speakers and up-to-the-minute video of the situation in West Papua. The issue of the brutal colonization of West Papua by Indonesia is one that *Just Peace* will continue to address from now on. Australia has a shameful history of supporting - and being - colonial masters over indigenous cultures.

November 11th Celebration of Armistice Day was held at the Quaker Meeting House, Hampson St, Kelvin Grove

November 24th Annual General Meeting. We keep formalities to a minimum and focus on issues of the day with eminent speakers. Dr. Margie Beavis (Secretary, Medical Association for the Prevention of War) was our invited speaker and discussed eloquently and in detail the Costs to the Australian community of a growing military culture and economy. The event was our most popular yet, with both standing and sitting room only! **Senator Claire Moore** was honoured (in absentia) with the presentation of a Life Membership of *Just Peace* in recognition of her significant contribution to the advancement of peace and social justice in the community and for her wonderful support of *Just Peace* over 17 years.



Western Australia, 1889
Kenya, 1953
West Papua, 2015

January 11th 2020 Members of *Just Peace*, as an organisation of IPAN, discussed strategy for 2020.

January 25th 2020 *Just Peace* was a major organiser of the NO WAR ON IRAN rally held in King George Square. The rally was primarily the result of the enormous work done by Annette Brownlie and Ross Gwyther. The Brisbane rally was one of hundreds held world-wide on this day and attracted nearly 100 people. Speakers included Robin Taubenfeld, Frederica Steen, Habib Jamal, Michael McNally, Jonathan Sri and Adele Goldie.

February 9th 2020 Public Forum: KEEP BAN ON NUKES, in anticipation of the possibility that the Federal Government will overturn the ban on nuclear power plants being built in Australia. Book a place at www.trybooking.com/BHRQT.

2020 Vision for Peace and Justice A wide range of actions and activities have been planned for this year.

Here is a selection:

Major School Student Workshop: *Climate Action, Care for the Land and a Peaceful World*, created by Lenora O'Connor.

Just Peace Rapid Response Team.

Funding support for *Frontline Films* (on West Papua) and Gil Scrine (*The Reluctant Saviour*, on East Timor)

Killer Robot Campaign

Archive Project for *Just Peace History* with the State Library of Queensland

Letters and Visits to Politicians as issues arise (for example Palestine, Lombok Treaty, Witness K, Julian Assange)

Assisting IPAN in their **Citizen's Enquiry into the Costs of War and the US/Australia Alliance**

ICAN Project to place Brisbane on the Mayors for Peace Map

Anti-Nuclear Group of *Just Peace* plans ongoing actions and activities.

UNAAQ *Just Peace* will offer financial support for the Peace and Security Group of UNAAQ since the National Board of Australia's UN group has ceased this activity.

We will be highlighting the 75th anniversary of the creation of the United Nations throughout 2020.

Vietnam Moratorium anniversary 50 years on 2020. A Forum or Exhibition or both. May 2020.

Hosting book launches for Clinton Fernandes and Brian Toohey. Avid Reader. Date to be announced.

September 21st. CRAIG FOSTER will give the 2020 Peace lecture for the International Day of Peace, Brisbane. More details later.

NOTE: Committee Meetings of Just Peace will now be held on the second Thursday of each month at 3 pm in a member's house. **Except** that meetings in April, July and October will be held in the TLC Building, Peel Street, South Brisbane at 3pm, preceded by IPAN General Meetings at 1 pm. More details to come.

Mike Henry and Ross Gwyther, Co-Convenors, Just Peace Queensland

**AUSTRALIA'S VIOLENT ALLY**

Our aggressive and violent ally is perpetually at war. An update from 9.8.2019

Posted on 16 January 2020

By **John Menadue**

There is growing concern about Chinese 'influence'. At the same time we seem unconcerned that we have ceded much of our defence and foreign policy autonomy to the United States. Chinese influence is minor compared with the control that we have ceded to the US and Donald Trump. That US control has led us to one disaster after another.

Many of our politicians and most of our media continually warn us about growing Chinese influence but avoid the fact that the US is the greatest threat to peace in the world. It is an aggressor across the globe. It is the most violent country both at home and abroad. And people know it. The Pew Research Centre found in 2018 that 45% of people surveyed around the world saw 'US power and influence as a major threat'

Apart from brief isolationist periods, the US has been almost perpetually at war; wars that we have been foolishly drawn into. The US has subverted and overthrown numerous governments over two centuries. It has a military and business complex, a 'hidden state', that depends on war for influence and enrichment. It believes in its 'manifest destiny' which brings with it an assumed moral superiority which it denies to others. The problems did not start with Trump. They are long-standing and deep rooted.

Unfortunately, many of our political, bureaucratic, business and media 'elites' have been so long on an American drip feed that they find it hard to think of a world without an American focus. We had a similar and dependent view of the UK in the past. That ended in tears in Singapore.

Conservatives rail about Chinese influence but they and we are immersed and dominated by all things American, including the Murdoch media. Our media do regard Australia as the 51st American state. Just look at the

saturation coverage of the Democrat primaries with the presidential election still 15 months away! Easy and lazy news. Its harder and nowhere near as interesting to cover much more important news in Indonesia and Malaysia.

In this blog ([Is war in the American DNA?](#)), I have drawn attention to the risks we run in being 'joined at the hip' to a country that is almost always at war. The facts are clear. The US has never had a decade without war. Since its founding in 1776 the US has been at war 93% of the time. These wars have extended from its own hemisphere, to the Pacific, to Europe and most recently to the Middle East. The US has launched 201 out of 248 armed conflicts since the end of WWII. In recent decades most of these wars have been unsuccessful. The US maintains 700 military bases or sites around the world including in Australia. In our own region it has massive deployment of hardware and troops in Japan, the ROK and Guam.

US fleets patrol in strength off the Chinese coast. The US would have mass hysteria if the Chinese fleet patrolled off the Californian coast or Florida Keys, as it is legally entitled to do!

The US led illegal invasion of Iraq encouraged by John Howard has resulted, directly and indirectly in the death of a million people and the displacement of millions of people. It has exposed historic religious, tribal and ethnic tensions. World wide terrorism and ISIS are the direct result of US aggression and our complicity. John Howard is never held responsible for the massive calamity that he helped facilitate. He remains a national hero at least in the Liberal Party.

The US has been meddling in other countries' affairs and elections for a century. It tried to change other countries' governments 72 times during the cold war. Many foreign leaders were assassinated. In the piece reproduced in this blog ([The fatal expense of US Imperialism](#)) Professor Jeffrey Sachs said

'The scale of US military operations is remarkable. ... The US has a long history of using covert and overt means to overthrow governments deemed to be unfriendly to the US. ... Historian John Coatsworth counts 41 cases of successful US-led regime change for an average of one government overthrow by the US every 28 months for centuries''.

The overthrow, assassination, or interference in foreign governments are diverse, including Honduras, Guatemala, Iran, Haiti, Congo, Indonesia, Japan, Vietnam, Chile, Iraq, Afghanistan and most recently, Syria.

And this interference continued with the undermining of the pro-Russian government in the Ukraine by the US-backed Maidan coup in 2014. Gorbachev and Bush agreed that in allowing the reunification of Germany, NATO would not extend eastwards. But with US encouragement, NATO has now provocatively extended right up to the borders of Russia. Not surprisingly Russia is resisting.

Despite all the evidence of wars and meddling in other countries' affairs, the American Imperium continues without serious check or query in America or Australia.

There are several reasons why the American record of war and interference has not been challenged.

The first is what is often described as America's "manifest destiny"; the God-given right to interfere in other countries' affairs. This right is not given to others because many Americans see themselves as more virtuous and their system of government better than others.

Despite their assumed world role, many Americans have a limited understanding of other countries' culture and life. Only 32% of Americans have passports. In the UK and Australia it is 70%. Before he became President, George Bush had only been overseas once. That was to visit Beijing where his father was the Ambassador.

Professor Tom Nichols reported in this blog ([How America lost its faith in expertise, and why that matters](#)) Public Policy Polling that revealed that 43% of Republicans and 55% of Democrats supported bombing a place called 'Agrabah' which turned out to be a fictional place in a cartoon. Only an ignorant people could presume that their country should bomb a city that did not exist!
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To this day 70% of registered Republicans doubt that Obama is an American citizen.

The US has invaded countries it knew about and in many cases, cultures and people it knew nothing about, who were assumed to be less virtuous and wise than the US. In examining the failure in Vietnam, General Walter T Kerwin Jr observed that ‘we never understood the Vietnamese. We think we know best. We tried to force on them what they should do...’ The ignorance of ordinary Americans and its politicians, of other countries is legendary but possibly just as important is their resistance to any relief of that ignorance. That may not seem unusual – but it is dangerous for a country with overwhelming military power employed around the globe.

The second reason why the American Imperium continues largely unchecked is the power of what President Eisenhower once called the “military and industrial complex” in the US. In 2019, I would add the intelligence community and politicians to that complex who depend heavily on funding from powerful arms manufacturers across the country and the military and civilian personnel in over 4,000 military facilities across the US. Democrats and Republicans both court these wealthy arms suppliers and their employees.

The intelligence community, universities and think-tanks also have a vested interest in the American Imperium.

This complex which co-opts institutions and individuals in Australia, is often called “the hidden state”. It has an enormous influence. No US president nor for that matter any Australian prime minister would likely challenge it.

Australia has locked itself into this complex. Our military and defence leaders are heavily dependent on the US Departments of Defence and State, the CIA and the FBI for advice. But it goes beyond advice. The ‘five eyes’ led by the CIA applied pressure to us on 5G as part of a broader campaign to attack almost all things Chinese. We willingly respond and join the US in disasters like Iraq and the Middle East. While the UN General Assembly votes with large majorities to curb nuclear proliferation, we remain

locked in to the position of the US and other nuclear powers.

Our autonomy and independence is also at great risk because our defence/security ‘elites’ in Canberra have as their holy grail the concept of “interoperability” with the US. This is mirrored in US official and think-tank commentary on the role they see for us in our region. So powerful is US influence and our willing cooperation with it that our foreign policies have been largely emasculated and sidelined by the defence and security views of both the US and their acolytes in Australia.

The concept of interoperability does not only mean equipment. It also means personnel where increasingly large numbers of Australian military personnel are embedded in the US military and defence establishments, especially in the Pacific Command in Hawaii. The last US Commander in Hawaii very nearly became the new US Ambassador in Australia. Instead, he was sent to Seoul to keep the ROK in line.

The US military and industrial complex and its associates have a vested interest in America being at war and our defence establishment, Department of Defence, ADF, Australian Strategic Policy Institute and the ‘Intelligence’ community are locked-in American loyalists.

As Geoff Raby in this blog has argued, our security and intelligence agencies like ASIO and ASIS have led and bullied the Australian Government into hysteria over China. The collectors of intelligence have become the propagandists and policymakers. Paul Keating calls them ‘nutters’. DFAT has been sidelined. With our intelligence agencies out of control it is not surprising to see the travesty of the prosecution of Bernard Collaery and Witness K. The wrong people are being charged.

The third reason for the continuing dominance of the American Imperium is the way the US expects others to abide by a “rules-based international order” which was largely determined at Bretton Woods after WWII and embedded in various UN agencies. That ‘order’ reflects the power and

views of the dominant countries in the 1940s. It does not recognize legitimate interests of newly-emerging countries like China who now insist on playing a part in an international rules-based order.

The US only follows an international rules-based order when it suits its own interests. It pushes for a rules-based system in the South China Sea while refusing to endorse UNCLOS (Law of the Sea) or accept ICJ decisions. The invasion of Iraq was a classic case of breaking the rules. It was illegal. The resultant death and destruction in Iraq met the criteria for war crimes. But the culprits have gone scot free.

It is a myth that democracies like America will behave internationally at a higher level of morality than other countries. Countries act in their own interests as they perceive them. We need to discount the noble ideas espoused by Americans on how they run their own country on the domestic front, and look instead at how they consistently treat other countries. Consider how the Kurds are being treated. They led the fight against ISIS but are now largely abandoned by the US and other ‘allies’. The Kurds are holding the Australian wives and children of ISIS fighters but we are so slow to decently help. The scrapping of the alliance with the Kurds is made the more dishonourable by the emergence of the new version of the US/Saudi alliance with its resulting tragedy in Yemen.

US claims about how well they run their own country are challenged on so many fronts. Forty three million US citizens live in poverty, they have a massive prison population with its indelible racist connotations, guns are ubiquitous and they refuse to address the issue. Violence is as American as cherry pie. It is embedded in US behaviour both at home and abroad.

The founding documents of the US inspire Americans and many people throughout the world. “The land of the free and the home of the brave” still has a clarion call. Unfortunately, those core values have often been denied to others. For example, when the Philippines sought US support it was invaded instead. Ho Chi Minh wanted US support for independence but Vietnam was invaded.

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Like many democracies, including our own, money and vested interests are corrupting public life. 'Democracy' in the US has been replaced by 'Donocracy', with practically no restrictions on funding of elections and political activity for decades. Vested interests are largely unchecked. House of Representatives electorates are gerrymandered and poor and minority group voters are often excluded from the rolls. The powerful Jewish lobby, supported by fundamentalist Christians, has run US policy off the rails on Israel and the Middle East.

The US has slipped to number 21 as a 'flawed democracy' in the Economist's Intelligence 2016 Democracy Index. (NZ was ranked 4 and Australia 10). It noted that 'public confidence in government has slumped to historic lows in the US.' That was before Trump!

Many democracies are in trouble. US democracy is in more trouble than most. There is a pervasive sickness.

Our risky dependence on the US cannot be avoided or excused by laying problems at the door of Donald Trump. Malcolm Fraser warned us about a dangerous ally long before Donald Trump came on the scene. US obsession with war and with overthrowing or undermining foreign governments goes back over a century. So does domestic gun violence.

Donald Trump excesses are not likely to significantly move American policies from what has become the norm over two centuries.

Hugh White has pointed out, the US has in effect now given up looking after anyone but itself – "America first". It could of course be argued that Trump is just being honest and saying what US presidents have always done, looking after their own interests even if they refused to admit it.

A major voice in articulating American extremism and the American Imperium is Fox News and Rupert Murdoch who exert their influence not just in America but in its subservient 'allies' like Australia. In the media, Fox News supported the invasion of Iraq and is mindless of the terrible consequences. Rupert Murdoch applauded the invasion of Iraq because it would reduce oil

prices. Fox and News Corp are leading sceptics on climate change which threatens our planet. In April last year the New York Times told us that outside the White House, Rupert Murdoch is Trump's chief adviser. Rupert Murdoch runs political parties as much as media organisations.

But it is not just the destructive role of News Corp in US, UK and Australia. Our media, including the ABC and even SBS, is so derivative. Our media seems to regard Australia as an island parked off New York. We are saturated with news, views, entertainment and sit-coms from the US. It is so pervasive and extensive, we don't recognize it for its very nature. The last thing a fish recognizes is water.

Mike Keating described (as Hugh White pointed out) that, based on Australian Treasury figures, by 2030 Chinese GDP is projected to be 70% larger than US GDP. It is already 15% larger. The US has record debt which the recent tax cuts, like those of Reagan and Bush, will only worsen.

One outcome of the declining comparative US economic power is that the US will ask its allies to do more. We saw the influence of US budgetary pressures in its launch of the pivot to the Pacific. We have seen the first step with Marines in Darwin. There are a lot more big steps to come.

The US may return, hopefully, to its brief periods of isolationism and leave its allies to their own devices. Maybe they will do us a favour!

Despite continual wars, often unsuccessful, the overthrow or subversion of foreign governments and declining US economic influence, US hegemony and domination of Australian thinking continues.

Despite all the evidence, why do we continue in denial?

One reason is that as a small, isolated and white community in Asia we have historically sought an outside protector, first the UK and when that failed, the US. We should not bury in Anzackery the enormous price we paid for British 'protection'. We have not shaken off that dependence and subservience to distant empires.

We continue to seek security from our region through a US protector rather than, as Paul Keating put it, security within our own region. Our long-term future depends on cooperation in our region and not reliance on a dangerous and distant ally.

Another reason why we are in denial about the American Imperium, is, as I have described, saturation of our media with US news, views and entertainment. We do not have an independent media. Whatever the US media says about tax cuts for the wealthy, defence or climate change it inevitably gets a good run in our media.

A further reason for the continuing US hegemony in Australian attitudes is the galaxy of Australian opinion leaders who have benefitted from American largesse and support – in the media, politics, bureaucracy, business, trade unions, universities and think-tanks. Thousands of influential Australians have been co-opted by US money and support in 'dialogues', study centres and think tanks. The US has nourished agents of influence in Australia for decades. China is a raw beginner in the use of soft power.

How long will Australian denial of US policies continue? When will some of us stand up? When will our humiliation end?

Are our political leaders right in their assessment that any questioning of the threats posed by our interpretation of the benefits and obligations of the US alliance will lose them an election?

In so far as China is any sort of distant threat it would be much less so if we were not so subservient to the US. The US is determined to make China its enemy. We are cooperating in that process.

The US is a very dangerous ally. It is more likely to get us into trouble than out of trouble.

We are joined at the hip to the most violent and dangerous country in the world.

This article was published on the 9th of August

**BATTLE OF THE AGES***Battle of the Ages to stop Eurasian integration*

The coming decade could see the US take on Russia, China and Iran over the New Silk Road connection

By **Pepe Escobar**

January 17, 2020

"[Information Clearing House](#)" -

The Raging Twenties started with a bang with the targeted assassination of Iran's General Qasem Soleimani.

Yet a bigger bang awaits us throughout the decade: the myriad declinations of the New Great Game in Eurasia, which pits the US against Russia, China and Iran, the three major nodes of Eurasia integration.

Every game-changing act in geopolitics and geoeconomics in the coming decade will have to be analyzed in connection to this epic clash.

The Deep State and crucial sectors of the US ruling class are absolutely terrified that China is already outpacing the "indispensable nation" economically and that Russia has outpaced it militarily. The Pentagon officially designates the three Eurasian nodes as "threats."

Hybrid War techniques – carrying inbuilt 24/7 demonization – will proliferate with the aim of containing China's "threat," Russian "aggression" and Iran's "sponsorship of terrorism." The myth of the "free market" will continue to drown under the imposition of a barrage of illegal sanctions, euphemistically defined as new trade "rules."

Yet that will be hardly enough to derail the Russia-China strategic partnership. To unlock the deeper meaning of this partnership, we need to understand that Beijing defines it as rolling towards a "new era." That implies strategic long-term planning – with the key date being 2049, the centennial of New China.

The horizon for the multiple projects of the Belt and Road Initiative – as in the China-driven New Silk Roads – is indeed the 2040s, when Beijing expects to have fully woven a new,

multipolar paradigm of sovereign nations/partners across Eurasia and beyond, all connected by an interlocking maze of belts and roads.

The Russian project – Greater Eurasia – somewhat mirrors Belt & Road and will be integrated with it. Belt & Road, the Eurasia Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank are all converging towards the same vision.

Realpolitik

So this "new era", as defined by the Chinese, relies heavily on close Russia-China coordination, in every sector. Made in China 2025 is encompassing a series of techno/scientific breakthroughs. At the same time, Russia has established itself as an unparalleled technological resource for weapons and systems that the Chinese still cannot match.

At the latest BRICS summit in Brasilia, President Xi Jinping told Vladimir Putin that "the current international situation with rising instability and uncertainty urge China and Russia to establish closer strategic coordination." Putin's response: "Under the current situation, the two sides should continue to maintain close strategic communication."

Russia is showing China how the West respects realpolitik power in any form, and Beijing is finally starting to use theirs. The result is that after five centuries of Western domination – which, incidentally, led to the decline of the Ancient Silk Roads – the Heartland is back, with a bang, asserting its preeminence.

On a personal note, my travels these past two years, from West Asia to Central Asia, and my conversations these past two months with analysts in Nur-Sultan, Moscow and Italy, have allowed me to get deeper into the intricacies of what sharp minds define as the Double Helix. We are all aware of the immense challenges ahead – while barely managing to track the stunning re-emergence of the Heartland in real-time.

In soft power terms, the sterling role of Russian diplomacy will become even more paramount – backed up by a Ministry of Defense led by Sergei Shoigu, a Tuvan from Siberia, and an intel arm that is capable of constructive dialogue with everybody: India/Pakistan,

North/South Korea, Iran/Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan.

This apparatus does smooth (complex) geopolitical issues over in a manner that still eludes Beijing.

In parallel, virtually the whole Asia-Pacific – from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean – now takes into full consideration Russia-China as a counter-force to US naval and financial overreach.

Stakes in Southwest Asia

The targeted assassination of Soleimani, for all its long-term fallout, is just one move in the Southwest Asia chessboard. What's ultimately at stake is a macro geoeconomic prize: a land bridge from the Persian Gulf to the Eastern Mediterranean.

Last summer, an Iran-Iraq-Syria trilateral established that "the goal of negotiations is to activate the Iranian-Iraqi-Syria load and transport corridor as part of a wider plan for reviving the Silk Road."

There could not be a more strategic connectivity corridor, capable of simultaneously interlinking with the International North-South Transportation Corridor; the Iran-Central Asia-China connection all the way to the Pacific; and projecting Latakia towards the Mediterranean and the Atlantic.

What's on the horizon is, in fact, a sub-sect of Belt & Road in Southwest Asia. Iran is a key node of Belt & Road; China will be heavily involved in the rebuilding of Syria; and Beijing-Baghdad signed multiple deals and set up an Iraqi-Chinese Reconstruction Fund (income from 300,000 barrels of oil a day in exchange for Chinese credit for Chinese companies rebuilding Iraqi infrastructure).

A quick look at the map reveals the "secret" of the US refusing to pack up and leave Iraq, as demanded by the Iraqi Parliament and Prime Minister: to prevent the emergence of this corridor by any means necessary. Especially when we see that all the roads that China is building across Central Asia – I navigated many of them in November and December – ultimately link China with Iran.

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The final objective: to unite Shanghai to the Eastern Mediterranean – overland, across the Heartland.

As much as Gwadar port in the Arabian Sea is an essential node of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and part of China's multi-pronged "escape from Malacca" strategy, India also courted Iran to match Gwadar via the port of Chabahar in the Gulf of Oman.

So as much as Beijing wants to connect the Arabian Sea with Xinjiang, via the economic corridor, India wants to connect with Afghanistan and Central Asia via Iran.

Yet India's investments in Chabahar may come to nothing, with New Delhi still mulling whether to become an active part of the US "Indo-Pacific" strategy, which would imply dropping Tehran.

The Russia-China-Iran joint naval exercise in late December, starting exactly from Chabahar, was a timely wake-up for New Delhi. India simply cannot afford to ignore Iran and end up losing its key connectivity node, Chabahar.

The immutable fact: everyone needs and wants Iran connectivity. For obvious reasons, since the Persian empire, this is the privileged hub for all Central Asian trade routes.

On top of it, Iran for China is a matter of national security. China is heavily invested in Iran's energy industry. All bilateral trade will be settled in yuan or in a basket of currencies bypassing the US dollar.

US neocons, meanwhile, still dream of what the Cheney regime was aiming at in the past decade: regime change in Iran leading to the US dominating the Caspian Sea as a springboard to Central Asia, only one step away from Xinjiang and weaponization of anti-China sentiment. It could be seen as a New Silk Road in reverse to disrupt the Chinese vision.

Battle of the Ages

A new book, *The Impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative*, by Jeremy Garlick of the University of Economics in Prague, carries the merit of admitting that, "making sense" of Belt & Road "is extremely difficult."

This is an extremely serious attempt to theorize Belt & Road's immense complexity – especially considering China's flexible, syncretic approach to policymaking, quite bewildering for Westerners. To reach his goal, Garlick gets into Tang Shiping's social evolution paradigm, delves into neo-Gramscian hegemony, and dissects the concept of "offensive mercantilism" – all that as part of an effort in "complex eclecticism."

The contrast with the pedestrian Belt & Road demonization narrative emanating from US "analysts" is glaring. The book tackles in detail the multifaceted nature of Belt & Road's trans-regionalism as an evolving, organic process.

Imperial policymakers won't bother to understand how and why Belt & Road is setting a new global paradigm. The NATO summit in London last month offered a few pointers. NATO uncritically adopted three US priorities: even more aggressive policy towards Russia; containment of China (including military surveillance); and militarization of space – a spin-off from the 2002 Full Spectrum Dominance doctrine.

So NATO will be drawn into the "Indo-Pacific" strategy – which means containment of China. And as NATO is the EU's weaponized arm, that implies the US interfering on how Europe does business with China – at every level.

Retired US Army Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, Colin Powell's chief of staff from 2001 to 2005, cuts to the chase: "America exists today to make war. How else do we interpret 19 straight years of war and no end in sight? It's part of who we are. It's part of what the American Empire is. We are going to lie, cheat and steal, as Pompeo is doing right now, as Trump is doing right now, as Esper is doing right now ... and a host of other members of my political party, the Republicans, are doing right now. We are going to lie, cheat and steal to do whatever it is we have to do to continue this war complex. That's the truth of it. And that's the agony of it."

Moscow, Beijing and Tehran are fully aware of the stakes. Diplomats and analysts are working on the trend, for the trio, to evolve a concerted effort to protect one another from all forms of

hybrid war – sanctions included – launched against each of them.

For the US, this is indeed an existential battle – against the whole Eurasia integration process, the New Silk Roads, the Russia-China strategic partnership, those Russian hypersonic weapons mixed with supple diplomacy, the profound disgust and revolt against US policies all across the Global South, the nearly inevitable collapse of the US dollar. What's certain is that the Empire won't go quietly into the night. We should all be ready for the battle of the ages.

This article was originally published by "Asia Times" -

END THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION

Published Tuesday, January 28, 2020

By **Jessica Corbett**, staff writer

After U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday unveiled his long-awaited "peace deal" for the Israel-Palestine conflict, Sen. Bernie Sanders condemned the proposal as "unacceptable" and called for an end to Israel's decades-long occupation of Palestinian territories.

Sanders (I-Vt.), a top candidate in the Democratic Party's 2020 presidential primary race, responded to Trump's plan in pair of tweets, envisioning a U.S. policy that promotes "a just and durable agreement."

The tweets aligned closely with a statement from the senator's office, in which Sanders said any acceptable deal "must end the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and enable Palestinian self-determination in an independent, democratic, economically viable state of their own alongside a secure and democratic state of Israel."

Sanders, who would be the first Jewish president, added that "Trump's so-called 'peace deal' doesn't come close, and will only perpetuate the conflict, and undermine the security interests of Americans, Israelis, and Palestinians."

The White House hopeful's comments Tuesday were not the first time Sanders has spoken out in recent months for the Palestinian people. In October 2019, the

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**LIBYAN PEACE TALKS***Libyan Peace Talks and Russian Diplomacy 101*By **Strategic Culture Foundation**

Global Research, January 21, 2020

Libya stands at a precarious watershed between a peaceful political settlement – or further civil war. But at least the two main warring factions this week entered into a process of dialogue when they attended a summit in Moscow hosted by Russia.

Turkey was the second party at the summit acting as a mediator, along with Russia. Ankara is a staunch supporter of the UN-recognized Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA) based in Tripoli. Moscow recognizes the GNA too, but it also has strong links with the Libyan National Army (LNA) led by Field Marshall Khalifa Haftar which is based in the eastern city of Tobruk.



Potentially, the diplomatic process that has got underway could bring an end to nearly nine years of conflict in Libya. The constructive involvement of Russia and Turkey is analogous to what these two nations have achieved in forging a political settlement for ending the war in Syria.

Arguably, Libya could represent an even more challenging task compared with Syria. At least in Syria there was a central, functioning national state with which to build peace on. By contrast in Libya, there is no unifying national state. The conflict there is more defined as an archetypal civil war, whereas in Syria the conflict was based on the defense of a state in the face of foreign-backed aggression. The task of procuring a comprehensive peace accord in Libya could therefore be more complicated and elusive.

As Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov pointed out this week:

"The Libyan statehood was bombed by NATO in 2011, and we are still facing the consequences of this illegal, criminal escapade, the Libyan people first of all."

We may recall that the US and its European NATO allies conducted a seven-month aerial bombing campaign from March-October 2011 in Libya under the false and derisory pretenses of organizing "a humanitarian intervention". That murderous NATO blitzkrieg resulted in the brutal lynching of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. The oil-rich country then became overrun by Islamist extremists and warlords, and has remained in a state of chaos ever since. Syria could have fallen by the same nefarious fate of NATO-backed regime change, only for Russia's military intervention at the end of 2015 to defend the state owing to their long-time alliance.

The NATO destruction of Libya has had disastrous geopolitical consequences. Extremists travelled from there to wage war against the state of Syria. This covert deployment of militants and weapons trafficking to Syria had the backing of the US and Turkey. That lethal conduit greatly exacerbated the war and death toll in Syria.

Libya, as a failed state, then became a gateway for millions of refugees from the Middle East and Africa attempting to enter Europe across the Mediterranean Sea. Hundreds of thousands of people have died from drowning in capsized shoddy boats. Crime and human trafficking have burgeoned. And Europe has borne sharp internal political divisions from the destabilizing inward migration.

For the past nine years, the NATO powers have washed their hands of their criminal destruction of Libya and the horrendous repercussions for the region.

Russia has shown commendable leadership in trying to piece Libya together through diplomatic engagement.

As an opinion article in the Washington Post observed:

"While President Trump spends his time tweeting insults and threatening to start Middle Eastern wars, Russia is filling the vacuum in international diplomacy. In the case of Libya, ending a bloody conflict at the doorstep of Europe in an oil-rich country is a major deal."

The conference in Moscow this week produced a shaky ceasefire. GNA leader Fayeaz Sarraj signed up to the truce, but the LNA's Khalifa Haftar left Moscow with-holding his signature, saying that he wanted more time to consider. A truce does seem to be holding, however.

A follow-up peace summit is taking place this weekend in Berlin, hosted by German Chancellor Angela Merkel. The two Libyan leaders are expected to attend, as are Russia and Turkey, the two main guarantors. Other nations invited to participate include the US, China, Britain, France and Italy. Arab states which back different factions in Libya are also slated to attend: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE (which support the LNA) and Qatar (which backs the GNA).

Turkey has reportedly sent militia under its control from Syria to back up the GNA. Relations between Ankara and LNA leader Haftar are volatile. Turkey's President Erdogan has threatened to deploy Turkish troops to Libya if Haftar's forces resume their offensive to take over Tripoli.

Libya's combustible conditions could yet explode into war, a war which may become another bloody proxy battlefield for international powers.

Nonetheless, Russia has created a diplomatic space for political progress towards stability and peace in the North African country. Can a government of national unity be formed by the warring sides? It's not clear if the GNA has the inherent political stability to make a partnership work.

But one thing is clear. Russia's diplomatic prowess has salvaged a chance for peace out of the unholy mess that NATO left behind.

Featured image is from New Eastern Outlook.

**THE NEW MIDDLE EAST***The New Middle East That's Coming*

As Saudi Arabia slowly backpedals, we could see an end to the Yemen war, an easing of Iran's isolation, and a reduced role for the U.S.

By **Conn Hallinan**,

November 5, 2019.

The fallout from the September attack on Saudi Arabia's Aramco oil facilities is continuing to reverberate throughout the Middle East, sidelining old enmities — sometimes for new ones — and re-drawing traditional alliances. While Turkey's recent invasion of northern Syria is grabbing the headlines, the bigger story may be that major regional players are contemplating some historic realignments.

After years of bitter rivalry, the Saudis and the Iranians are considering how they can dial down their mutual animosity. The formerly powerful Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) of Persian Gulf monarchs is atomizing because Saudi Arabia is losing its grip. And Washington's former domination of the region appears to be in decline.

Some of these developments are long-standing, pre-dating the cruise missile and drone assault that knocked out 50 percent of Saudi Arabia's oil production. But the double shock — Turkey's lunge into Syria and the September missile attack — is accelerating these changes.

Saudi Arabia's Slow Backpedal

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan recently flew to Iran and then on to Saudi Arabia to lobby for détente between Teheran and Riyadh and to head off any possibility of hostilities between the two countries. "What should never happen is a war," Khan said, "because this will not just affect the whole region... this will cause poverty in the world. Oil prices will go up."

According to Khan, both sides have agreed to talk, although the Yemen war is a stumbling block. But there are straws in the wind on that front, too. A partial ceasefire seems to be holding, and there are back channel talks going on between the Houthis and the Saudis.

The Saudi intervention in Yemen's civil war was supposed to last three

months, but it has dragged on for over four years. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) was to supply the ground troops and the Saudis the airpower. But the Saudi-UAE alliance has made little progress against the battle-hardened Houthis, who have been strengthened by defections from the regular Yemeni army.

Air wars without supporting ground troops are almost always a failure, and they are very expensive. The drain on the Saudi treasury is significant, and the country's wealth is not bottomless.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is trying to shift the Saudi economy from its overreliance on petroleum, but he needs outside money to do that and he is not getting it. The Yemen war — which, according to the United Nations is the worst humanitarian disaster on the planet — and the prince's involvement with the murder and dismemberment of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, has spooked many investors.

Without outside investment, the Saudis have to use their oil revenues, but the price per barrel is below what the kingdom needs to fulfill its budget goals, and world demand is falling off. The Chinese economy is slowing — the trade war with the U.S. has had an impact — and European growth is sluggish. There is a whiff of recession in the air, and that's bad news for oil producers.

Riyadh is also losing allies. The UAE is negotiating with the Houthis and withdrawing their troops, in part because Abu Dhabi has different goals in Yemen than Saudi Arabia, and because in any dustup with Iran, the UAE would be ground zero. U.S. generals are fond of calling the UAE "little Sparta" because of its well-trained army, but the operational word for Abu Dhabi is "little": the emirate's army can muster 20,000 troops. Iran can field more than 800,000.

Saudi Arabia's goals in Yemen are to support the government-in-exile of President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi control its southern border and challenge Iran's support of the Houthis. The UAE, on the other hand, is less concerned with the Houthis but quite focused on backing the anti-Hadi Southern Transitional Council, which is

trying to re-create South Yemen as a separate country. North and South Yemen were merged in 1990, largely as a result of Saudi pressure, and it has never been a comfortable marriage.

Turkey's Checked Ambitions in Syria

Riyadh has also lost its grip on the Gulf Cooperation Council. Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar continue to trade with Iran in spite of efforts by the Saudis to isolate Teheran,

The UAE and Saudi Arabia recently hosted Russian President Vladimir Putin, who pressed for the 22-member Arab League to re-admit Syria. GCC member Bahrain has already re-established diplomatic relations with Damascus. Putin is pushing for a multilateral security umbrella for the Middle East, which includes China.

"While Russia is a reliable ally, the U.S. is not," Middle East scholar Mark Katz told the South Asia Journal. And while many in the region have no love for Syria's Assad, "they respect Vladimir Putin for sticking by Russia's ally."

The Arab League — with the exception of Qatar — denounced the Turkish invasion and called for a withdrawal of Ankara's troops. Qatar is currently being blockaded by Saudi Arabia and the UAE for pursuing an independent foreign policy and backing a different horse in the Libyan civil war. Turkey is Qatar's main ally. Russia's 10-point agreement with Turkey on Syria has generally gone down well with Arab League members, largely because the Turks agreed to respect Damascus's sovereignty and eventually withdraw all troops. Of course, "eventually" is a shifty word, especially because Turkey's goals are hardly clear.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan wants to drive the Syrian Kurds away from the Turkish border and move millions of Syrian refugees into a strip of land some 19 miles deep and 275 miles wide. The Kurds may move out, but the Russian and Syrian military — filling in the vacuum left by President Trump's withdrawal of American forces — have blocked the Turks from holding more than the

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border and one deep enclave, certainly not one big enough to house millions of refugees.

Erdogan's invasion is popular at home — nationalism plays well with the Turkish population and most Turks are unhappy with the Syrian refugees — but for how long? The Turkish economy is in trouble and invasions cost a lot of money. Ankara is using proxies for much of the fighting, but without lots of Turkish support those proxies are no match for the Kurds — let alone the Syrian and Russian military.

That would mainly mean airpower, and Turkish airpower is restrained by the threat of Syrian anti-aircraft and Russian fighters, not to mention the fact that the Americans still control the airspace. The Russians have deployed their latest fifth-generation stealth fighter, the SU-57, and a number of MiG-29s and SU-27s, not planes the Turks would wish to tangle with. The Russians also have their new mobile S-400 anti-aircraft system, and the Syrians have the older, but still effective, S-300s.

In short, things could get really messy if Turkey decided to push their proxies or their army into areas occupied by Russian or Syrian troops. There are reports of clashes in Syria's northeast and casualties among the Kurds and Syrian Army, but a serious attempt to push the Russians and the Syrians out seems dubious.

The goal of relocating refugees from Turkey to Syria is unlikely to go anywhere. It will cost some \$53 billion to build an infrastructure and move 2 million refugees into Syria, money that Turkey doesn't have. The European Union has made it clear it won't offer a nickel, and the UN can't step in because the invasion is a violation of international law.

When those facts sink in, Erdogan might find that Turkish nationalism will not be enough to support his Syrian adventure if it turns into an occupation.

The Middle East That's Coming

The Middle East that is emerging from the current crisis may be very different than the one that existed before those cruise missiles and drones tipped over the chessboard.

The Yemen war might finally end. Iran may, at least partly, break out of the political and economic blockade that Saudi Arabia, the U.S., and Israel has imposed on it. Syria's civil war will recede.

And the Americans, who have dominated the Middle East since 1945, will become simply one of several international players in the region, along with China, Russia, India, and the European Union.

Foreign Policy In Focus columnist **Conn Hallinan** can be read at dispatchesfromtheedge.wordpress.com and middleempireseries.wordpress.com.

PENCE'S LIES

Vice President Pence Lies About Soleimani, 9/11 in Plain Sight Of Mother, Bible, Half-Eaten Apple Pie

By **Stephen Robinson**

January 05, 2020
"Information Clearing House" -

Have we mentioned lately that Mike Pence is a lying weasel? The vice president tried to plant the bloody glove of 9/11 on Iranian General Qasem Soleimani. Pence claimed in a tweet Friday that Soleimani, who the US killed good and dead, "assisted in the clandestine travel to Afghanistan of 10 of the 12 terrorists who carried out the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in the United States." These are all lies. But the *New York Times* reacted as if he just flubbed an answer on his early 21st century history midterm.

FACT CHECK

Pence Links Suleimani to 9/11. The Public Record Doesn't Back Him.



Sigh. New York Times

This Times headline reads as if "the Public Record" was Pence's band from

the 1990s before he went solo. He's on tour with some classic war tunes and the Public Record won't back him again. He'll have to settle for some random session musicians. The actual story here, for those of us who took a journalism class once, is that the vice president willingly spread falsehoods on Twitter about Soleimani. He even got the number of 9/11 hijackers wrong. There were 19 angry men not 12. It's unclear why he'd lie about that. Maybe Pence thought 19 was too close to 69. As Charlotte Clymer quickly pointed out, "Soleimani quite literally helped the U.S. with post-9/11 intelligence in Afghanistan because he hated the Taliban."

I can't get over the photo art the Times used for an article about how the vice president's a shameless liar. It's some mother and apple pie patriotic bullshit. I would've gone with a shot of him picking his nose not solemnly standing by the flag with his hand plugging the gaping hole where his soul escaped.

Pence's press secretary kept shoveling the manure.

This is probably news to the 2002-era United States that actively worked with Soleimani to take out their mutual enemy, the Taliban. Here's what should concern you: The American government has a bad habit of blaming countries for 9/11 before we invade them. Two years after 9/11, 7 out of 10 Americans believed Saddam Hussein

was involved in the terrorist attacks. He wasn't. Ellen Degeneres's buddy George W. Bush frequently *implied* a link. This was all pre-Twitter so Bush and Dick Cheney couldn't just lie in 280 characters or less like Trump and Pence do with apparent impunity.

Bush, in his speeches, did not say directly that Hussein was culpable in the Sept. 11 attacks. But he frequently juxtaposed Iraq and al Qaeda in ways that hinted at a

link. In a March speech about Iraq's

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**THE RIGHT TO SELF-DEFENSE***The Palestinians' Right to Self-Defense*

July 24, 2014

By **Chris Hedges**

[Editor: This is an old article but I felt it needed to be circulated because it directly addresses the issue of the right to resist foreign occupation (cf the resistance to Nazi occupations in WWII.)]

If Israel insists, as the Bosnian Serbs did in Sarajevo, on using the weapons of industrial warfare against a helpless civilian population then that population has an inherent right to self-defense under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. The international community will have to either act to immediately halt Israeli attacks and lift the blockade of Gaza or acknowledge the right of the Palestinians to use weapons to defend themselves.

No nation, including any in the Muslim world, appears willing to intervene to protect the Palestinians. No world body, including the United Nations, appears willing or able to pressure Israel through sanctions to conform to the norms of international law. And the longer we in the world community fail to act, the worse the spiral of violence will become.

Israel does not have the right to drop 1,000-pound iron fragmentation bombs on Gaza. It does not have the right to pound Gaza with heavy artillery and with shells lobbed from gunboats. It does not have the right to send in mechanized ground units or to target hospitals, schools and mosques, along with Gaza's water and electrical systems. It does not have the right to displace over 100,000 people from their homes. The entire occupation, under which Israel has nearly complete control of the sea, the air and the borders of Gaza, is illegal.

Violence, even when employed in self-defense, is a curse. It empowers the ruthless and punishes the innocent. It leaves in its aftermath horrific emotional and physical scars. But, as I learned in Sarajevo during the 1990s Bosnian War, when forces bent on your annihilation attack you relentlessly, and when no one comes to your aid, you must aid yourself. When Sarajevo was being hit with 2,000 shells a day and under heavy sniper fire in the summer of 1995 no one among the suffering Bosnians spoke to

me about wanting to mount nonviolent resistance. No one among them saw the U.N.-imposed arms embargo against the Bosnian government as rational, given the rain of sniper fire and the 90-millimeter tank rounds and 155-millimeter howitzer shells that were exploding day and night in the city. The Bosnians were reduced, like the Palestinians in Gaza, to smuggling in light weapons through clandestine tunnels. Their enemies, the Serbs — like the Israelis in the current conflict — were constantly trying to blow up tunnels. The Bosnian forces in Sarajevo, with their meager weapons, desperately attempted to hold the trench lines that circled the city. And it is much the same in Gaza. It was only repeated NATO airstrikes in the fall of 1995 that prevented the Bosnian-held areas from being overrun by advancing Serbian forces. The Palestinians cannot count on a similar intervention.

The number of dead in Gaza resulting from the Israeli assault has topped 650, and about 80 percent have been civilians. The number of wounded Palestinians is over 4,000 and a substantial fraction of these victims are children. At what point do the numbers of dead and wounded justify self-defense? 5,000? 10,000? 20,000? At what point do Palestinians have the elemental right to protect their families and their homes?

Article 51 does not answer these specific questions, but the International Court of Justice does in the case of *Nicaragua v. United States*. The court ruled in that case that a state must endure an armed attack before it can resort to self-defense. The definition of an armed attack, in addition to being "action by regular armed forces across an international border," includes sending or sponsoring armed bands, mercenaries or irregulars that commit acts of force against another state. The court held that any state under attack must first request outside assistance before undertaking armed self-defense. According to U.N. Charter Article 51, a state's right to self-defense ends when the Security Council meets the terms of the article by "tak[ing] the measures necessary to maintain international peace and security."

The failure of the international community to respond has left the Palestinians with no choice. The United States, since Israel's establishment in 1948, has vetoed in the U.N. Security Council more than 40 resolutions that sought to curb Israel's lust for occupation and violence against the Palestinians. And it has ignored the few successful resolutions aimed at safeguarding Palestinian rights, such as Security Council Resolution 465, passed in 1980.

Resolution 465 stated that the "Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 is applicable to the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem." The resolution went on to warn Israel that "all measures taken by Israel to change the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure or status of the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, or any part thereof, have no legal validity and that Israel's policy and practices of settling parts of its population and new immigrants in those territories constitute a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and also constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East." Israel, as an occupying power, is in direct violation of Article III of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. This convention lays out the minimum standards for the protection of civilians in a conflict that is not international in scope. Article 3(1) states that those who take no active role in hostilities must be treated humanely, without discrimination, regardless of racial, social, religious or economic distinctions. The article prohibits certain acts commonly carried out against noncombatants in regions of armed conflict, including murder, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture. It prohibits the taking of hostages as well as sentences given without adequate due process of law.

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Article 3(2) mandates care for the sick and wounded.

Israel has not only violated the tenets of Article III but has amply fulfilled the conditions of an aggressor state as defined by Article 51. But for Israel, as for the United States, international law holds little importance. The U.S. ignored the verdict of the international court in *Nicaragua v. United States* and, along with Israel, does not accept the jurisdiction of the tribunal. It does not matter how many Palestinians are killed or wounded, how many Palestinian homes are demolished, how dire the poverty becomes in Gaza or the West Bank, how many years Gaza is under a blockade or how many settlements go up on Palestinian territory. Israel, with our protection, can act with impunity.

The unanimous U.S. Senate vote in support of the Israeli attacks on Gaza, the media's slavish parroting of Israeli propaganda and the Obama administration's mindless repetition of pro-Israeli clichés have turned us into cheerleaders for Israeli war crimes. We fund and abet these crimes with \$3.1 billion a year in military aid to Israel. We are responsible for the slaughter. No one in the establishment, including our most liberal senator, Bernie Sanders, dares defy the Israel lobby. And since we refuse to act to make peace and justice possible we should not wonder why the Palestinians carry out armed resistance.

The Palestinians will reject, as long as possible, any cease-fire that does not include a lifting of the Israeli blockade of Gaza. They have lost hope that foreign governments will save them. They know their fate rests in their own hands. The revolt in Gaza is an act of solidarity with the world outside its walls. It is an attempt to assert in the face of overwhelming odds and barbaric conditions the humanity and agency of the Palestinian people. There is little in life that Palestinians can choose, but they can choose how to die. And many Palestinians, especially young men trapped in overcrowded hovels where they have no work and little dignity, will risk immediate death to defy the slow, humiliating death of occupation.

I cannot blame them.

Chris Hedges is a Truthdig columnist, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, a New York Times best-selling author, a professor in the college degree program offered to New Jersey state prisoners by Rutgers...

SUFFER IRAN

When Will the Winter Come to an End?

by Vijay Prashad / January 23rd, 2020



Hangameh Golestan, Witness 1979, 1979

On 17 January, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, led the Friday prayers for the first time in eight years. He mocked the 'American clowns' who threatened Iran and said that Iran's response to the US assassination of Major General Qassem Soleimani was a 'slap in the face' of US power. Tensions between Washington, DC, and Tehran seem to have gone from a boil to a simmer, but they nonetheless remain. There is reason to believe that US President Donald Trump – reckless by nature – will launch an attack on Iran in the next few months. He might do so to distract from the impeachment trial he faces in the US Senate or to hasten his chances of re-election in November 2020.

In 2015, Iran, China, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the nuclear deal that seemed to stop the imperialist rush to war against Iran. At that time, Iranians took to the streets and to twitter to say, 'winter is over'.

They quoted from an old protest song – *Sar Umad Zemestoon*, or 'Winter Has Come to An End'. The song is based on the Armenian love song *Sari Siroun Yar* and was then re-written in the early 1970s by Saeed Soltanpour, a Marxist radical of the *Cherikha-ye-Fadaee Khalq* (People's Devoted Guerrilla). When Iranians take to the streets in anticipation of a new period, this song seems to follow

them: it was sung on the streets during the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and it was sung at campaign rallies of the Green Movement in 2009. It became the catchphrase for a new beginning in 2015. But winter never really ended.

Why does the United States despise Iran so fiercely?

No such hatred marked US relations with Iran during the reign of the Shah (1941-1979). Only when an economic nationalist – Mohammed

Mosaddeq – came to power between 1951 and 1953 and only when he threatened to nationalize Iran's oil industry, did the CIA, the Shah, and the right-wing of the Iranian army – led by General Fazlollah Zahedi – move against him. But even then, they saw the communists as the threat and not the Iranian people. During that period, the Saudi kings and the Iranian Shah made common cause against popular movements and the communists; no Shia-Sunni divide bothered them.

What rankled the United States, the Saudis, and the Gulf Arabs was an upsurge in the region in the late 1970s that included a revolution in Afghanistan (1978) and a revolution in Iran (1979), as well as the takeover of the US embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan (1979) and the takeover of Saudi Arabia's main mosque (1979). It was the emergence of anti-monarchical – often communist – currents that bothered the US and the Saudis. These currents had to be destroyed.

That is why the West and the Gulf Arabs paid Saddam Hussein to launch an attack on Iran in September 1980. The Iraq-Iran War, which deeply impacted Iran, lasted till 1988. During the war, the Friday prayers in Tehran were often led by Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. At the Friday prayer on 17 January 2020, Khamenei referred to that war with great bitterness. He

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asked his fellow Iranians how they could possibly trust the West after it was these countries (Germany, France, the UK, and the US) that had provided Saddam Hussein with funds and supplies for his weapons of mass destruction.

During the war, Khamenei's senior, Ayatollah Khomeini, told his minister Mohsen Rafighdoost that it is forbidden for Iran to produce mustard gas and to even talk about nuclear weapons. 'If we produce chemical weapons', Khomeini asked Rafighdoost, 'what is the difference between me and Saddam?' In October 2003, Ali Khamenei repeated Khomeini's words as a *fatwa* (injunction) against weapons of mass destruction. Ali Khamenei has said many times that it was not the West that has stopped Iran from developing nuclear weapons, but it was Iran itself that declined to develop them on religious grounds.

The question of Iran's nuclear agenda was not the main point; the main point was to subordinate Iran, to defang it, and to make it irrelevant in West Asia.

How has Iran defended itself from the hybrid war?

Between 2001 and 2003, the US fought two wars against Iran's adversaries – the Taliban and Saddam Hussein. Their defeat allowed Iran to spread its wings across the region. Recognising the strategic error of these wars, the US then proceeded sharply to return Iran to its borders. It tried to weaken the link between Iran and Syria through the 2005 Syria Accountability Act (and the war on Syria from 2011), and it tried to destroy the Lebanese political force Hezbollah through the 2006 Israeli attack on Lebanon. Neither worked. In 2006, the US fabricated a crisis over Iran's nuclear energy programme; it engineered sanctions against Iran's economy by the UN, the European Union, and the US. This too did not work, and so in 2015 the US agreed to a nuclear deal (which Trump has now rejected). Is this the end of the winter, they sang in Iran? But it was not. The hybrid war continued.

In 1980, the Iranians had created the Quds Force – Quds being the Arabic name for Jerusalem. The point of this Force was to develop regional linkages for a beleaguered Iran. In its early years,

the Quds Force participated in operations both against Western interests and against the regional Left (including attacks on the Afghan communist government of Mohammad Najibullah). But in the past decade, under the leadership of Major General Qassem Soleimani and other veterans of the Iraq-Iran war, the Quds Force developed a more precise agenda.



Kaveh Golestan, Mullahs at the front near Abadan, Iraq-Iran War, 1983

Iran's leadership has known that it cannot withstand a full attack by the United States and its allies; the barrage of US cruise missiles and bombs poses an existential threat to Iran. This kind of war has to be avoided. Unlike North Korea, Iran has neither a nuclear shield nor the potential or desire to build one; however, the examples of Iraq and Libya, which gave up their weapons of mass destruction shield, show what can be done to countries that have no nuclear deterrent. Neither Iraq nor Libya threatened the West, and yet both countries were destroyed. It was the Quds Force that developed a partial deterrent against a Western attack on Iran. Soleimani's Quds Force went from Lebanon to Afghanistan to build relations with pro-Iranian groups and to encourage and support them in building up militia groups. The war on Syria was a testing ground for these groups. These groups are prepared to strike at US targets if Iran is attacked in any way. After the assassination of Soleimani, the Iranians said that if they were attacked further, they would destroy Dubai (United Arab Emirates) and Haifa (Israel). Iranian short-range missiles can hit Dubai; but it is Hezbollah that will strike Haifa. That means that the United States and its allies will face a full-scale *regional guerrilla war* if there is any bombing run on Iran. These militias are the deterrent for Iran. That is why Trump hesitated; but he might not hesitate for long.

Iran's politics are defined by the immense pressure put upon the country by the United States and its regional allies (Israel and Saudi Arabia). The width of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 carried within it an Iranian Left, which now no longer exists (Saeed Soltanpour, like so many of his generations on the Left, was executed in 1981). In Iraq, the Communists have re-emerged haltingly, and have participated in the revolts since 2011 against a government whose policies are utterly dictated by an IMF agenda. 'We want a homeland', cry Iraqis in their recent protests. So do people from Lebanon to Afghanistan. During the Iranian Revolution, a left group wrote on the walls of the Ministry of Justice: At freedom's dawn, freedom's place is empty (*dar tulu-e azadi, ja-ye azadi khali*). The revolt had happened, but the full promise of revolution had been suspended.

One of Iran's most brilliant poets, Forough Farrokhzad, who died in 1967 in a car accident, wrote in the circles of the anti-Shah resistance,

I must say something.
I must say something.

...

I want to surrender to some revolt.
I want to pour down out of that vast cloud.
I want to say no no no.

The constant theme from the West that it wishes to annihilate Iran has made the country retreat into patriotism. The West's suffocation has squashed social development, contracted the economy (by 10% last year), and deformed social life. A winter such as this cannot go on forever.

One day, at Nowruz (Persian New Year) in March, the cherry blossoms will not merely bloom in Tehran; their arrival will be a sign, as Saeed Soltanpour sang, of the end of the long siege against Iran that began in 1979. That siege can only end when imperialism is forced out of the Middle East.

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**UKRAINE AIRLINES**

Who Targeted Ukraine Airlines Flight 752? Iran Shot It Down But There May Be More to the Story

By Philip Giraldi

January 20, 2020

"Information Clearing House" –

The claim that Major General Qassem Soleimani was a “terrorist” on a mission to carry out an “imminent” attack that would kill hundreds of Americans turned out to be a lie, so why should one believe anything else relating to recent developments in Iran and Iraq? To be sure, Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 departing from Tehran’s Imam Khomeini International Airport on the morning of January 8th with 176 passengers and crew on board was shot down by Iranian air defenses, something which the government of the Islamic Republic has admitted, but there just might be considerably more to the story involving cyberwarfare carried out by the U.S. and possibly Israeli governments.

To be sure, the Iranian air defenses were on high alert fearing an American attack in the wake of the U.S. government’s assassination of Soleimani on January 3rd followed by a missile strike from Iran directed against two U.S. bases in Iraq. In spite of the tension and the escalation, the Iranian government did not shut down the country’s airspace. Civilian passenger flights were still departing and arriving in Tehran, almost certainly an error in judgment on the part of the airport authorities. Inexplicably, civilian aircraft continued to take off and land even after Flight 752 was shot down.

Fifty-seven of the passengers on the flight were Canadians of Iranian descent, leading Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to point the finger both at the Iranian government for its carelessness and also at Washington, observing angrily that the Trump Administration had deliberately and recklessly sought to “escalate tensions” with Iran through an attack near Baghdad Airport, heedless of the impact on travelers and other civilians in the region.

What seems to have been a case of bad judgements and human error does,

however, include some elements that have yet to be explained. The Iranian missile operator reportedly experienced considerable “jamming” and the planes transponder switched off and stopped transmitting several minutes before the missiles were launched. There were also problems with the communication network of the air defense command, which may have been related.

The electronic jamming coming from an unknown source meant that the air defense system was placed on manual operation, relying on human intervention to launch. The human role meant that an operator had to make a quick judgment in a pressure situation in which he had only moments to react. The shutdown of the transponder, which would have automatically signaled to the operator and Tor electronics that the plane was civilian, instead automatically indicated that it was hostile. The operator, having been particularly briefed on the possibility of incoming American cruise missiles, then fired.

The two missiles that brought the plane down came from a Russian-made system designated SA-15 by NATO and called Tor by the Russians. Its eight missiles are normally mounted on a tracked vehicle. The system includes both radar to detect and track targets as well as an independent launch system, which includes an Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) system functionality capable of reading call signs and transponder signals to prevent accidents. Given what happened on that morning in Tehran, it is plausible to assume that something or someone deliberately interfered with both the Iranian air defenses and with the transponder on the airplane, possibly as part of an attempt to create an aviation accident that would be attributed to the Iranian government.

The SA-15 Tor defense system used by Iran has one major vulnerability. It can be hacked or “spoofed,” permitting an intruder to impersonate a legitimate user and take control. The United States Navy and Air Force reportedly have developed technologies “that can fool enemy radar systems with false and deceptively moving targets.” Fooling the system also means fooling the operator. The Guardian has also reported independently how the United

States military has long been developing systems that can from a distance alter the electronics and targeting of Iran’s available missiles.

The same technology can, of course, be used to alter or even mask the transponder on a civilian airliner in such a fashion as to send false information about identity and location. The United States has the cyber and electronic warfare capability to both jam and alter signals relating to both airliner transponders and to the Iranian air defenses. Israel presumably has the same ability. Joe Quinn at *Sott.net* also notes an interested back story to those photos and video footage that have appeared in the *New York Times* and elsewhere showing the Iranian missile launch, the impact with the plane and the remains after the crash, to include the missile remains. They appeared on January 9th, in an Instagram account called ‘Rich Kids of Tehran’. Quinn asks how the Rich Kids happened to be in “a low-income housing estate on the city’s outskirts [near the airport] at 6 a.m. on the morning of January 8th with cameras pointed at the right part of the sky in time to capture a missile hitting a Ukrainian passenger plane...?”

Put together the Rich Kids and the possibility of electronic warfare and it all suggests a premeditated and carefully planned event of which the Soleimani assassination was only a part. There have been riots in Iran subsequent to the shooting down of the plane, blaming the government for its ineptitude. Some of the people in the street are clearly calling for the goal long sought by the United States and Israel, i.e. “regime change.” If nothing else, Iran, which was widely seen as the victim in the killing of Soleimani, is being depicted in much of the international media as little more than another unprincipled actor with blood on its hands. There is much still to explain about the downing of Ukrainian International Airlines Flight 752.

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“A country bent on conquest is necessarily a country internally enslaved.”
— Mikhail Bakunin

**THE GLOBAL WAR OF ERROR**

January 10, 2020

by Tom Engelhardt

Yes, our infrastructure stinks, our schools are failing, this country's a nightmare of inequality, and there's a self-promoting madman in the White House, so isn't it time to take pride in the rare institutional victories America has had in this century? Arguably, none has been more striking than the triumphal success of the American war system.

Oh, you're going to bring that up immediately? Okay, you're right. It's true enough that the U.S. military can't win a war anymore. In this century, it's never come out on top anywhere, not once, not definitively. And yes, just to get a step ahead of you, everywhere it's set foot across the Greater Middle East and Africa, it seems to have killed startling numbers of people and uprooted so many more, sending lots of them into exile and so unsettling other parts of the world as well. In the process, it's also had remarkable success spreading failed states and terror groups far and wide.

Al-Qaeda, whose 19 suicidal hijackers so devastatingly struck this country on September 11, 2001, was just a modest outfit then (even if its leader dreamt of drawing the U.S. into conflicts across the Islamic world that would promote his group big time). Nineteen years later, its branches have spread from Yemen to West Africa, while the original al-Qaeda still exists. And don't forget its horrific progeny, the Islamic State, or ISIS (originally al-Qaeda in Iraq). Though the U.S. military has declared it defeated in its "caliphate" (it isn't, not truly), its branches have multiplied from the Philippines deep into Africa.

And the Afghan War, that original American invasion of this century, remains hell on Earth more than 18 years later. In December, the *Washington Post* broke a story about interviews on that conflict conducted by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction with 400 key insiders, military and civilian, revealing that it was a war of (well-grasped) error. As that paper's reporter, Craig Whitlock, put it: "Senior U.S.

officials failed to tell the truth about the war in Afghanistan throughout the 18-year campaign, making rosy pronouncements they knew to be false and hiding unmistakable evidence the war had become unwinnable."

Many of those generals and other officials who had claimed, year after year, that there was "progress" in Afghanistan, that the U.S. had turned yet another "corner," admitted to the Inspector General's interviewers that they had been lying to the rest of us. In truth, so long after the invasion of 2001, this wasn't exactly news (not if you had been paying attention anyway). And it couldn't have been more historically familiar. After all, U.S. military commanders and other key officials had, in a similar fashion, regularly hailed "progress" in the Vietnam War years, too. As U.S. war commander General William Westmoreland put it in an address to the National Press Club in 1967, "We have reached an important point where the end begins to come into view," a sentiment later boiled down by American officialdom to seeing "the light at the end of the tunnel."

In fact, half a century later, these, too, have proved to be tunnel years for the U.S. military in its global war on terror, which might more accurately be called a global war of error. Take Iraq, the country that, in the spring of 2003, President George W. Bush and crew so triumphantly invaded, claiming a connection between its autocratic ruler, Saddam Hussein, and al-Qaeda, while citing the dangers of the weapons of mass destruction he supposedly possessed. Both claims were, of course, fantasies propagated by officials dreaming of using that invasion to establish a *Pax Americana* in the oil-rich Middle East forever and a day. ("Mission accomplished!")

So many years later, Americans are still dying there; American air and drone strikes are still ongoing; and American troops are still being sent in, as Iraqis continue to die in significant numbers in a country turned into a stew of displacement, poverty, protest, and chaos. Meanwhile, ISIS (formed in an American prison camp in Iraq) threatens to resurge amid the never-ending mess that invasion created — and war with Iran seems to be the order of the day.

And just to continue down a list that's little short of endless, don't forget Somalia. The U.S. military has been fighting there, on and off, with strikingly negative consequences since the infamous Blackhawk Down disaster of 1993. Last year, American air strikes rose again to record levels there, while — no surprise — the terror outfit Washington has been fighting in that country since 2006, al-Shabaab, an al-Qaeda offshoot, seems only to be gaining strength.

Hey, even the Russians got a (grim) win in Syria; the U.S., nowhere. Not in Libya, a failed state filled with warring militias and bad guys of every sort in the wake of a U.S.-led overthrow of the local autocrat. Not in Niger, where four American soldiers died at the hands of an ISIS terror group that still thrives; not in Yemen, yet another failed state where a Washington-backed Saudi war follows perfectly in the U.S. military's footsteps in the region. So, yes, you're right to challenge me with all of that.

How to Run a War of Error

Nonetheless, I stand by my initial statement. In these years, the American war system has proven to be a remarkable institutional success story. Think of it this way: in the military of the twenty-first century, failure is the new success. In order to grasp this, you have to stop looking at Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, and the rest of those embattled lands and start looking instead at Washington, D.C. While you're at it, you need to stop thinking that the gauge of success in war is victory. That's so mid-twentieth century of you! In fact, almost the opposite may be true when it comes to the American way of war today.

After more than 18 years of what, once upon a time, would have been considered failure, tell me this: Is the Pentagon receiving more money or less? In fact, it's now being fed record amounts of tax dollars (as is the whole national security state). Admittedly, Congress can't find money for the building or rebuilding of American infrastructure — China now has up to 30,000 kilometers of high-speed rail and the U.S. not one — and is riven by party animosities on issue after issue,

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but funding the Pentagon? No problem. When it comes to that, there's hardly a question, hardly a dispute at all. Agreement is nearly unanimous.

Failure, in other words, is the new success and that applies as well to the "industrial" part of the military-industrial complex. That reality was caught in a *Washington Post* headline the day after a CIA drone assassinated General Qassem Suleimani: "Defense stocks spike after airstrike against Iranian commander." Indeed, the good times clearly lay ahead. In the age of Trump, when the last secretary of defense was a former Boeing executive and the present one a former lobbyist for arms-maker Raytheon, it's been weapons galore all the way to the bank. Who cares if those weapons really work as advertised or if the wars in which they're used are winnable, as long as they're bought at staggering prices (and other countries buy them as well)? If you don't believe me, just check out Lockheed Martin's F-35 jet fighter, the most expensive weapons system ever (that doesn't really work). Hey, in 2019, that company got a \$2.43 billion contract just for spare parts for the plane!

And this version of a success story applies not just to funding and weaponry but to the military's leadership as well. Keep in mind that, after almost two decades without a victory in sight, if you check any poll, you'll find that the U.S. military remains the most admired institution around (or the one Americans have most "confidence" in). And under the circumstances, tell me that isn't an accomplishment of the first order.

For just about every key figure in the U.S. military, you can now safely say that failure continues to be the order of the day. Consider it the twenty-first-century version of a military insurance policy: keep on keeping on without ever thinking outside the box and you'll be pushed up the chain of command to ever more impressive positions (and, sooner or later, through Washington's infamous "revolving door" onto the corporate boards of weapons makers and other defense firms). You'll be hailed as a great and thoughtful commander, a genuine

historian of war, and a strategist beyond compare. You'll be admired by one and all.

Americans of another age would have found this strange indeed, but not today. Take, for instance, former Secretary of Defense and Marine General James "Mad Dog" Mattis who led troops into Afghanistan in 2001 and again in the invasion of Iraq in 2003. In 2004, as commander of the 1st Marine Division, he was asked about a report that his troops had taken out a wedding party in western Iraq, including the wedding singer and his musicians, killing 43 people, 14 of them children. He responded: "How many people go to the middle of the desert... to hold a wedding 80 miles from the nearest civilization?"

And then, of course, he only rose further, ending up as the head of U.S. Central Command, or CENTCOM, which oversees America's wars in the Greater Middle East (and you know how that went), until he retired in 2013 and joined the corporate board of General Dynamics, the nation's fifth largest defense contractor. Then, in 2016, a certain Donald J. Trump took a liking to the very idea of a general nicknamed "mad dog" and appointed him to run the Department of Defense (which should probably be renamed the Department of Offense). There, with full honors, the former four-star general oversaw the very same wars until, in December 2018, deeply admired by Washington journalists among others, he resigned in protest over a presidential decision to withdraw American troops from Syria (and rejoined the board of General Dynamics).

In terms of the system he was in, that may have been his only genuine "error," his only true "defeat." Fortunately for the Pentagon, another commander who had risen through the same dead-end wars, four-star Army General Mark Milley, having been appointed head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, knew just what to whisper in the president's ear — the magic word "oil," or rather some version of protect (i.e. take) Syrian oil fields — to get him to send American troops back into that country to continue the local version of our never-ending wars.

By now, Milley's rise to glory will seem familiar to you. In announcing his appointment as Army chief of staff in 2015, for instance, Secretary of Defense

Ashton Carter called him "a warrior and a statesman." He added, "He not only has plenty of operational and joint experience in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and on the Joint Staff, but he also has the intellect and vision to lead change throughout the Army." Exactly!

Milley had, in fact, fought in both the Afghan and Iraq wars, serving three tours of duty in Afghanistan alone. In other words, the more you don't win — the more you are, in a sense, in error — the more likely you are to advance. Or as retired General Gordon Sullivan, president of the Association of the United States Army and a former chief of staff himself, put it then, Milley's command experience in war and peace gave him "firsthand knowledge of what the Army can do and of the impact of resource constraints on its capabilities."

In other words, he was a man ready to command who knew just how to handle this country's losing wars and keep them (so to speak) on track. Once upon a time, such a crew of commanders would have been considered a military of losers, but no longer. They are now the eternal winners in America's war of error.

In September 2013, Milley, then an Army three-star general, typically offered this ludicrously rosy assessment of Afghanistan's American-trained and American-supplied security forces: "This army and this police force have been very, very effective in combat against the insurgents every single day."

As Tony Karon wrote recently, "Either Milley was dissembling or he was deluded and therefore grotesquely incompetent." One thing we know, though: when it comes to public military assessments of the Afghan War (and the global war on terror more generally), he was typical. For such commanders, it was invariably "progress" all the way.

Just in case you don't quite see the pattern yet, after the *Washington Post's* Afghanistan Papers came out last December, offering clear evidence that, whatever they said in public, America's commanders saw little in the way of "progress" in the Afghan War, Milley promptly stepped up to the plate. He

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labeled that report's conclusions "mischaracterizations." He insisted instead that the endlessly optimistic public comments of generals like him had been "honest assessments... never intended to deceive either the Congress or the American people."

Oh, and here's a final footnote (as reported in the *New York Times* last year) on how Milley (and top commanders like him) operated — and not just in Afghanistan either:

"As Army chief of staff, General Milley has come under criticism from some in the Special Operations community for his involvement in the investigation into the 2017 ambush in Niger that left four American soldiers dead. He persuaded Patrick M. Shanahan, who was acting defense secretary, to curtail a broader review, and also protected the career of an officer who some blamed for the ambush. General Milley's backers said he prevented the officer from leading another combat unit."

Whatever you do, in other words, don't give up the ghost (of error). Think of this as the formula for "success" in that most admired of institutions, the U.S. military. After all, Milley and Mattis are just typical of the commanders who rose (and are still rising) to ever more prestigious positions on the basis of losing (or at least not winning) an endless series of conflicts. Those failed wars were their tickets to success. Go figure.

Where Defeat Culture Leads

In other words, the men who fought the twenty-first-century equivalents of Vietnam — though against right-wing Islamists, not left-wing nationalists and communists — the men who never for a second figured out how to win "hearts and minds" any better than General William Westmorland had half a century earlier, are now triumphantly running the show in Washington. Add in the corporate types who endlessly arm them for battle and lobby for more of the same while raking in the dough and you have a system that no one involved would want to change. It's a formula for success that works like a dream (even if someday that dream is sure to end up looking like a nightmare).

Once upon a time, in the early 1990s, I wrote a book called *The End of Victory Culture*. In it, I traced how a deeply

embedded American culture of triumph evaporated in the Vietnam War years, "its graveyard for all to see," as "the answers of 1945 dissolved so quickly into the questions of 1965." Speaking of the impact of that war on American culture, I added: "There was no narrative form that could long have contained the story of a slow-motion defeat inflicted by a nonwhite people in a frontier war in which the statistics of American victory seemed everywhere evident."

Little did I know then how deeply a version of what might be called "defeat culture" would embed itself in American life. After all, Donald Trump couldn't have been elected to "make America great *again*" without it. From the evidence of these years, nowhere was that culture more deeply absorbed (however unconsciously) than in the military itself, which has, in our time, managed to turn it into a version of the ultimate success story.

Afghanistan has, of course, long been known as "the graveyard of empires." The Soviet Union fought Islamic militants (backed by the Saudis and the United States) for nine years there before, in 1989, the Red Army limped home in defeat to watch a drained empire implode two years later. That left the U.S. as the "sole superpower" on Planet Earth and its military as the uncontested greatest one of all.

And it took that military just a decade to head for that same graveyard. In this century, Americans have lost trillions of dollars in the never-ending wars Washington has conducted across the Greater Middle East and parts of Africa, wars that represent an eternal reign (rain?) of error. I've long suspected that the Soviet Union wasn't the only superpower with problems in 1991. Though it was anything but obvious at the time, I've since written: "It will undoubtedly be clear enough... that the U.S., seemingly at the height of any power's power in 1991 when the Soviet Union disappeared, began heading for the exits soon thereafter, still enwreathed in self-congratulation and triumphalism."

The question is: When will the far more powerful of the two superpowers

of the Cold War era finally leave that graveyard of empires (now spread across a significant swath of the planet)? Still commanded by the losers of those very wars, will it, like the Red Army, limp home one day to watch its country implode? Will it leave a world of war, of the dead, of countless refugees and rubblized cities, and finally return to see its own society disintegrate in some fashion?

Who knows? But keep your eyes peeled in 2020 and beyond. Someday, the U.S. military's war of error will come to an end and one thing seems certain: it won't be pretty.

This article first appeared on [TomDispatch](#).

Tom Engelhardt is a co-founder of the *American Empire Project* and the author of *The United States of Fear* as well as a history of the Cold War, *The End of Victory Culture*. He is a fellow of the *Nation Institute* and runs [TomDispatch.com](#). His latest book is *Shadow Government: Surveillance, Secret Wars, and a Global Security State in a Single-Superpower World*.

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"weapons of terror," Bush said: "If the world fails to confront the threat posed by the Iraqi regime, refusing to use force, even as a last resort, free nations would assume immense and unacceptable risks. The attacks of September the 11th, 2001, showed what the enemies of America did with four airplanes. We will not wait to see what terrorists or terrorist states could do with weapons of mass destruction."

Oh no! There are so many words! And 9/11 was one of them. Is 9/11 a word? We don't have time to discuss that! Hussein will kill us all unless we strike first!

This is why liberal spoilsports like myself warned against forgiving or worse forgetting what the architects of Iraq did not so long ago. We open ourselves up for a revival of a show we never liked in the first place, one that technically never ended.

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POPE'S AGAINST NUCLEAR WEAPONS

By **Binoy Kampmark**

Posted Monday, 2 December 2019

The Vatican comes with its ills, contradictions and blatant hypocrisies in the field of moral theology and human existence, but on the issue of atomic and nuclear weapons, the position has been fairly consistent, if marked by gradual evolution. On February 8, 1948, Pope Pius XII held an audience with members of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. "What misfortunes," he asked, "should humanity expect from a future conflict, if it should prove impossible to arrest or curb the use of ever newer and more surprising scientific inventions?"

The Second Vatican Council through its 1965 document *Gaudium et spes* deemed the arms race "one of the greatest curses on humanity and the harm it inflicts on the poor is more than can be endured". Using nuclear weapons exceeded "the limits of legitimate self-defence", and would constitute a "crime against God and against humanity itself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation." Pope Paul VI would subsequently give his approval to the Nuclear Arms Non-Proliferation Treaty, making nuclear disarmament a matter of highest moral urgency.

But attitudes to nuclear weapons were always chained to the Cold War orbit and the old dilemmas of self-defence. In November 1980, with the election of US President Ronald Reagan, Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit expressed genuine terror at the prospect of a pro-bomb enthusiast in the White House. "We've just elected a President who has stated his conviction that we can have superiority in nuclear weapons, an utter impossibility. We have a Vice-President who has clearly stated that one side could win a nuclear war and that we must be prepared to fight one and to win it." But the concern on the part of US bishops, expressed through *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, was influenced by an admixture of interference and moderation on the part of The Vatican.

Pope John Paul II was keen to keep things cordial with Reagan, preferring revisions to be made to the original

drafts of the pastoral. While the pontiff kept up public relations appearances by visiting Hiroshima and meeting with the *Hikabusha*, the mutilated and maimed survivors of the world's first atomic blast, he was also mindful of the big power game and Reagan's initial hard line against the Soviet Union.

The Catholic Church was also at odds in how best to reconcile dealing with nuclear weapons, given the Cold War language of evil so heartily promoted by Reagan, with its multi-barbed opposition to godless communism. The US-Soviet struggle, moralised Reagan at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida was nothing less than a fight "between right and wrong and good and evil." The final text of *The Challenge of Peace* affirmed the Catholic view that a sovereign state might well engage in self-defence, but that could only ever happen in accordance with the limits of just-war theory.

The current pontiff Pope Francis has layered his comments in line with a growing body of thought suggesting that the use of nuclear weapons in any circumstances, including their possession, would be illegal. Nuclear boffins see him as "unusually active compared to his predecessors in nuclear diplomacy."

To use such weapons, he reasoned in his November 2017 address to the symposium "Prospects for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons and for Integral Disarmament" would result in "catastrophic humanitarian and environmental effects". Having such weapons encouraged a fallacious, dangerous logic. They were tactically futile, wasteful and could be used by mistake.

Pope Francis also noted the moves by the United Nations to draft a binding instrument that would prohibit the use of nuclear weapons, resulting in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Through a conference in 2017, the General Assembly voted to adopt the Treaty by a vote of 122, with one abstention, and one against. (A truly "historic" vote, claimed the pontiff, one that "filled a significant judicial lacuna".)

The text considers "that any use of nuclear weapons would be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, in particular the principles and rules of international humanitarian law." Outlined prohibitions include undertakings never to, "Develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices".

Such views align with the long held view of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), though not those of the International Court of Justice, which maintains the position that the use of nuclear weapons may be permissible in "extreme circumstances of self-defence." In the aftermath of the group being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, ICAN Executive Director Beatrice Finn reiterated the position that, "Nuclear weapons are illegal. Threatening to use nuclear weapons is illegal. Having nuclear weapons, possessing nuclear weapons, developing nuclear weapons is illegal, and they need to stop."

As with John Paul II, Pope Francis made a trip to Japan to reiterate his position. In Nagasaki's Atomic Bomb Hypocentre Park, he dismissed nuclear deterrence as viable, claiming that peace was inconsistent with the "fear of mutual destruction or the threat of total annihilation." Nuclear weapon stockpiles were symbols of squandered wealth even as "millions of children and families live in inhumane conditions". Before a gathering at Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park, he spoke of the annihilation of "so many men and women, so many dreams and hopes" in the aftermath of the "incandescent burst of lightning and fire".

Whatever reservations critics and observers might have of The Vatican and its foreign policy, the current pontiff's concerns should be filed along those of other states agog before what looks like a spike of interest in military experimentation. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty has been canned by the Trump administration; the Russian response, after initial indignation, has been one of resigned

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IKE WAS RIGHT

By Eric Margolis

"In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist.

Now this conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every Statehouse, every office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet, we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources, and livelihood are all involved. So is the very structure of our society."

- General Dwight D Eisenhower - Farewell address 1961

January 20, 2020

"Information Clearing House" -

Congress just passed a near trillion dollar military budget at a time when the United States faces no evident state threats at home or abroad. Ike was right.

Illustrating Ike's prescient warning, Brown University's respected Watson Institute just released a major study which found that the so-called 'wars on terror' in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Pakistan have cost US taxpayers \$6.4 trillion since they began in 2001.

The extensive study found that over 800,000 people have died as a result of these military operations, a third of them civilians. An additional 21 million civilians have been displaced by US military operations. According to the Pentagon, these US wars have so far cost each American taxpayer \$7,623 – and that's a very conservative estimate.

Most of this money has been quietly added to the US national debt of over \$23 trillion. Wars on credit hide the true cost and pain from the public.

As General Eisenhower warned, military spending has engulfed the nation. A trillion annual military budget represents just about half the world's military expenditures. The Pentagon, which I've visited numerous times, is

bustling with activity as if the nation was on a permanent war footing.

The combined US intelligence budget of some \$80 billion is larger than Russia's total military budget of \$63 billion. US troops, warplanes and naval vessels are stationed around the globe, including, most lately, across Africa. And yet every day the media trumpets new 'threats' to the US. Trump is sending more troops to the Mideast while claiming he wants to reduce America's powerful military footprint there. Our military is always in search of new missions. These operations generate promotions and pay raises, new equipment and a reason for being.

Back in the day, the Republican Party of General Eisenhower was a centrist conservative's party with a broad world view, dedicated to lower taxes and somewhat smaller government. It was led by the Rockefellers and educated Easterners with a broad world view and respect for tradition.

Today's Republican Party is a collection of rural interests from flyover country, handmaidens of the military industrial complex and, most important, militant evangelical Christians who see the world through the spectrum of the Old Testament. Israel's far right has come to dominate American evangelists by selling them a bill of goods about the End of Days and the Messiah's return. Many of these rubes see Trump as a quasi-religious figure.

Mix the religious cultists – about 25% of the US population – with the farm and Israel lobbies and the mighty military industrial complex and no wonder the United States has veered off into the deep waters of irrationality and crusading ardor. The US can still afford such bizarre behavior thanks to its riches, magic green dollar, endless supply of credit and a poorly educated, apathetic public too besotted by sports and TV sitcoms to understand what's going on abroad.

All the war party needs is a steady supply of foreign villains (preferably Muslims) who can be occasionally bombed back to the early Islamic age. Americans have largely forgotten George W. Bush's lurid claims that Iraqi drones of death were poised to shower poisons on the sleeping nation. Even the

Soviets never ventured so deep into the sea of absurdity.

The military industrial complex does not care to endanger its gold-plated F-35 stealth aircraft and \$13 billion apiece aircraft carriers in a real war against real powers. Instead, the war party likes little wars against weak opponents who can barely shoot back. State-run TV networks thrill to such minor scraps with fancy headlines and martial music. Think of the glorious little wars against Panama, Grenada, Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Libya. Iran looks next.

The more I listen to his words, the more I like Ike.

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adaptation. The stalled denuclearisation issue over the Korean Peninsula is likewise something setting regional powers on edge. But the efforts to deem the very possession of such weapons of indiscriminate mass murder illegal continue their inexorable momentum.

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senator suggested using the billions of dollars in military aid that the United States supplies to Israel each year to pressure Netanyahu's government to end its horrific treatment of Palestinians.

The following month, Sanders was praised by progressives for saying during the Democratic presidential debate that "we must treat the Palestinian people with the respect and

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**U.S. LOSES ASIA-PACIFIC***U.S. Loses Asia-Pacific as Full Spectrum Dominance Continues to Fail*By **Matthew Ehret**

September 09, 2019

"Information Clearing House" -

Always working a little harder than most to stay a step below reality, US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper made especially candid remarks this week that America's INF pullout was timed for a targeting of forces against China.

Speaking to Fox on August 21st, Esper said: *"We want to make sure that we, as we need to, have the capability to deter Chinese bad behavior... China is the number one priority for this department. It's outlined in the national defense strategy, why we think it's a long term strategic competitor and one that is pursuing a maximization campaign, if you will, throughout the indo-Pacific theater, whether its politically, economically or militarily..."*

Echoing a little Dr. Strangelove, Esper stated that there is *"a coming shift"* from *"low intensity conflict that lasts 18 years to high intensity conflicts against competitors such as Russia and China."*

While American military exercises in the Pacific have played out on China's doorstep at an accelerating rate since the Pivot to Asia was announced in 2011 with the most recent US-Australia Talisman Sabre bi-annual exercise and US-South Korea Ulchi Freedom war games this month, China has not remained idle.

In response to America's vast array of military infrastructure built up on China's border, China has responded by the unveiling of cutting edge anti-ballistic missile technologies, including hypersonic weaponry to counteract the American threat. A large part of China's defensive response includes the Russian S400 anti-missile system which is also being adopted by India, Turkey, Syria and the United Arab Emirates as a unified system which renders the American THAAD and ABM systems impotent and obsolete. Although unconfirmed, American generals have freaked out that China is building a joint China-Cambodia naval base in Preah Sihanouk Province that gives China easy

access to coastal waters on the Gulf of Thailand and ready access to the South China Sea.

America's military impotence when faced with the new cutting edge technologies unveiled by Russia and China was outlined in a recent report released by the US Studies Center at the University of Sydney which stated that *"America no longer enjoys military primacy in the indo Pacific and its capacity to uphold a favorable balance of power is increasingly uncertain."* Referring to China's advanced anti-aircraft weapons, the report says *"Chinese counter-intervention systems have undermined America's ability to project power in the Indo-Pacific region"* which the authors say, could be rendered impotent within the first 8 hours of conflict.

Rather than use this information to propose a new security doctrine premised on cooperation and dialogue as China has offered on countless occasions, the report's authors join the fantasy world of Esper calling instead for a *"collective defense"* strategy akin to a Pacific NATO, whereby all of America's Pacific allies could join in an anti-Chinese military alliance together, and relieving America of the burden of carrying WWII on its own.

We know that this Pacific NATO has been discussed for some time and was at the heart of recent Pacific Vanguard naval drills conducted between the USA, Australia, Japan and South Korea in May 2019 which saw the participation of 3000 soldiers, two Japanese destroyers, a South Korean destroyer and two Australian frigates in their first joint war game. This outlook was also behind the August naval drill played out by Malaysia, USA, New Zealand and Australia in Guam. The USA has 54 000 troops in Japan and 28 000 in South Korea.

When China and Russia conducted their first long range joint air patrol in the Asia Pacific in July 2019, South Korea and Japan scrambled jets to intercept the Chinese and Russian aircraft, with South Korea firing hundreds of warning shots. Backed up by the USA, both Asian countries screamed loudly (and without evidence) that their air space had been violated.

In response to the belligerent comments by Esper and the Australian report, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said *"China is firmly on a path of peaceful development and our national defense policy is defensive in nature"*. China has gone further by providing a cooperative framework under the Belt and Road Initiative which is built around the brilliant political agenda of providing diplomatic solutions to geopolitical points of tension through economic development strategies that enrich all participants. This approach has provided China great payback through the defusing of tensions with other nations claiming territory within the South China Sea- especially under the pro-BRI orientation of Malaysia's Dr. Mahathir Mohammed and the Philippines' President Duterte.

Not feeling at ease being caught in the crossfire of a nuclear exchange, Japan and South Korea have also gone so far as to create a new trilateral cooperation agreement with China on August 21 premised on *"next generation exchange projects in three countries... We hope to discuss future-oriented partnerships and regional affairs, including North Korea."* The agreement also enables international joint investment in all countries operating under the BRI framework. Together the three countries account for over a quarter of the world's productivity and have everything to gain by working together.

Those American military officials promoting the obsolete doctrine of Full Spectrum dominance are dancing to the tune of a song that stopped playing some time ago. Both Russia and China have changed the rules of the game on a multitude of levels, and can respond with fatal force to any attack upon their soil with next generation weaponry beyond the scope of anything imagined by ivory tower game theorists in the west.

The ship of world history has changed course away from the rapids of war and economic collapse, as the *Belt and Road Initiative* has grown to proportions not imagined possible just a few years earlier and the coming months will be decisive as the west does some soul searching and decides which future it would like to have.

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TRUMP MAKES SPACE GREAT AGAIN

by John Feffer

January 21, 2020



Still from “Spaceballs.”

With a stroke of a pen, Donald Trump created an entirely new branch of the armed forces last year. It’s the first new branch of the U.S. military since 1947.

The Space Force is not exactly a new idea. It’s a revival of a Reagan-era initiative that had been set up to oversee missile defense, which the George W. Bush administration repurposed after 9/11 to focus on the war in Afghanistan.

Yet what Trump has put together is fundamentally different, and potentially more destabilizing, than the previous incarnation.

Unlike virtually everything else that Trump has touched, this boondoggle has generated almost no controversy. Congress approved Trump’s initiative, which was folded into the annual National Defense Authorization Act, by an overwhelming bipartisan vote at the end of 2019. Not only have very few voices of protest been raised against this extraordinary expansion of U.S. militarism, it has even generated some unexpected praise.

In *The Washington Post*, for instance, David Montgomery wrote a long encomium in the magazine section in early December entitled “Trump’s Excellent Space Force Adventure.”

Creating a Space Force is arguably an excellent idea, one for which Trump may deservedly go down in history, along with all the other things he will be remembered for. No, really. I’m tempted to laugh at myself as I type these

sentences because I, too, greeted news of the Space Force with incredulous guffaws... What I missed at the time, though — and what everyone else mocking Space Force doesn’t seem to

appreciate — is the sheer range of problems that could ensue if other countries are able to establish extraterrestrial military supremacy.

This would be an easy-to-dismiss article if David Montgomery were one of the right-wing crazies, like columnist Marc Thiessen, that the *Post* publishes on a regular basis. But no, Montgomery is a very good journalist who has dutifully covered labor issues and progressive activism even as the rest of the media universe has run screaming in the other direction.

That makes it incumbent to take his article and this topic very seriously. What exactly is this Space Force? And why has Trump’s latest contribution to ensuring America’s “full-spectrum dominance” been such an easy sell?

The Next Big Fight

The new Space Force nearly didn’t get off the ground.

Former Pentagon chief Jim Mattis was so cool to the idea that in July 2017 he wrote a letter to Congress declaring his opposition on the grounds that it would, among other things, create unnecessary military bureaucracy. But the proposal had bipartisan support in Congress — Mike Rogers (R-AL) and Jim Cooper (D-TN) of the House Armed Services Committee — and an enthusiastic booster in Donald Trump as well. So, it rocketed through Congress when so many other initiatives have stalled.

The Space Force will be cobbled together from various existing agencies. Its 400 staff are based temporarily at an

air force base. Its second in command comes out of the Army’s Space and Missile Defense Command. It will oversee more than 70 Army, Navy, and Air Force space units. It will soon employ 16,000 people, but all of them previously worked for the Air Force Space Command.

Its budget will be around \$40 million. That’s not a lot of money in Pentagon terms, given that the most recent budget provided the Air Force with \$3 billion for the B-21 bomber alone and the Navy with a whopping \$34 billion for shipbuilding. But expect significant increases in future allocations. After all, the military budget contains around \$14 billion for space operations distributed across the various services. When it comes to the Space Force, not even the sky’s the limit.

Like any proper government agency, the Space Force’s first priority is planning, according to its new head, Gen. Jay Raymond: “His command is building integrated planning elements to embed with other commands. Lead staffers have already been hired and the command is preparing to establish the first teams at U.S. European Command, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, and U.S. Strategic Command.”

That also entails coordination with allies. The Space Force is already liaising like crazy with European and Asian partners.

That all sounds benign: planning, liaising. But let’s not forget the purpose of this new branch of the military. It has taken over responsibility from the Strategic Command — in charge of the U.S. nuclear arsenal — for any war-fighting that takes place in space.

As Pentagon head Mark Esper has said, the Space Force will “allow us to develop a cadre of warriors who are appropriately organized, trained, and equipped to deter aggression and, if necessary, to fight and win in space... The next big fight may very well start in space, and the United States military must be ready.”

Space Race

When it comes to nuclear weapons and drones and cyberwarfare, it’s too late for the United States to turn an initial

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technological advantage into a global moratorium on production. Since it quite deliberately missed such opportunities for multilateral disarmament, Washington now feels obliged to spend scads of dollars to ensure that it maintains a significant lead over its various adversaries, ostensibly to deter the bad guys from using their weapons.

The same applies to space. “The ultimate goal is to deter a war in space,” David Montgomery writes. “In the Pentagon’s view, space must be considered a warfighting domain precisely to keep it peaceful.”

Well, that’s what the Pentagon always says. It’s why it calls itself a “Defense Department” to obscure what it really is: a bureau devoted to wage war, not simply deter it. As for space, the Pentagon sees a virtually limitless terrain for expansion.

According to the “deterrence” model, however, such expansion requires a clear and present danger. One major vulnerability the Pentagon has identified in space is the U.S. complex of commercial and military satellites.

The fear that other countries would take down U.S. assets in orbit around the earth has been around for some time. During the Carter administration, the United States and Soviet Union began negotiating a ban on anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons. The Reagan administration abandoned those talks, largely because it feared they would restrict the president’s cherished “Star Wars” plan of constructing a massive missile defense system.

Both sides then began building ASATs, and others joined the race. To date, no country has actually used this technology to take down the satellite of another country. Rather, they’ve only used it to take down their own satellites — as a test of capabilities. Four countries have done just that: the United States, Russia, India, and China.

However, it’s actually not so easy to take out a satellite. GPS and communications satellites orbit at altitudes above what an ICBM can reach. A space rocket could do the trick, but that would cost a lot of money and still require multiple hits to disrupt communications.

“Killer satellites,” orbiting weapons that can take out neighboring satellites, are another option. The United States has accused Russia of deploying four such potential weapons. Russia has responded that these small satellites serve an entirely different purpose: to repair other satellites that have suffered malfunctions. In truth, it’s hard to discern from the outside the ultimate purpose of such repair vehicles: remedy a friendly satellite or ram an unfriendly one. Such are the inherent dangers of dual-use systems.

Then there’s the threat of hypersonic vehicles that can deploy satellites, killer or otherwise, as well as potentially conduct operations in space. China is working on a hypersonic glider, as is Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin made a big splash at the end of 2019 when he announced a new Russian missile that can fly 27 times the speed of sound. Such systems make any missile defense systems, which already face major challenges in taking out conventional missiles, absolutely (as opposed to mostly) useless.

The United States has tested its own hypersonic missile. Lockheed Martin is developing a new hypersonic SR-72, which would be a combination drone and stealth bomber. DARPA has teamed up with Boeing to get a hypersonic plane into operation, which would fall somewhere between a traditional airplane and a rocket. The Pentagon has also developed its X-37b military space plane, which it insists is not designed for military purposes but only to test out new satellite technologies (a frankly dubious contention).

War over the Worlds

A third realm of space conflict — in addition to weapons that enter space on their way toward terrestrial targets and weapons that aim at each other in space — is over the territory and resources of nearby moons and planets.

That might seem far-fetched, since no country seems close to setting up anything like a base on the moon or on Mars. But militaries are voracious in their ambitions. And they’ll always have their visionary — read: kooky — boosters like Newt Gingrich, who wants to team up with Trump on his colonizing space idea, “occupying the

moon, developing the moon, and continuing to Mars.”

Just as powerful nations are scrambling to claim territory in the Arctic that has become accessible due to climate change, these space cadets are looking to stake claims to an even larger set of commons that lie beyond this planet.

Just listen to Maj. Gen. John Shaw, the leader of Space Force’s Space Operations Command: “I’ve been telling the team, ‘Don’t think about a warfighting service for the next decade. Create a warfighting service or the 22nd century. What is warfighting going to look like at the end of this century and into the next?’”

In other words, let’s ask Congress for a blank check to spend on any crazy idea we might have about the future of war.

In an Air Force report published in September, military personnel and academics considered various space scenarios for 2060. The “positive” scenarios — titled *Star Trek*, *Garden Earth*, and *Elysium* — all assume that the “U.S. coalition retains leadership over the space domain and has introduced free-world laws and processes that have led to significant global civil, commercial, and military expansion in space and resulted in large revenue streams.”

Sounds like extraterrestrial colonialism to me, though for the time being without the indigenous populations to exterminate first. Not surprisingly, in these scenarios the United States maintains its leadership through overwhelming military power deployed in the stratosphere and beyond.

The “negative” scenarios — titled *Zhang He* (sic), *Xi’s Dream*, and *Wild Frontier* — assume either an “alternate nation” leads in space or no clear winner emerges from a vigorous national competition.

It’s no mystery what this “alternative nation” is.

Zheng He was a great explorer of the fifteenth century who might have established China as the preeminent colonial power in the world if the

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emperor at the time hadn't decided to focus on affairs closer to home. Xi is, of course, Chinese leader Xi Jinping and his dream of a prosperous and powerful China.

The report makes no mention of arms control, international negotiations to preserve the commons of space, or even the dangers of a military space race. Instead, these blue-sky thinkers could only imagine a battle between the United States and the up-and-coming hegemon over all the marbles.

And that's where they intersect with Trump as well. At a meeting of the National Space Council in 2018, he said:

I want to also say that when it comes to space, too often, for too many years, our dreams of exploration and discovery were really squandered by politics and bureaucracy, and we knocked that out. So important for our psyche, what you're doing. It's going to be important monetarily and militarily. But so important for right up here — the psyche. We don't want China and Russia and other countries leading us. We've always led.

And so the United States has. We've always led the way in devising destructive technologies and, for a good many decades, using them to wage war across the planet.

The Alternative

The first attempts to extend arms control to space came in the 1960s. The Limited Test Ban Treaty banned nuclear tests in space. The Outer Space Treaty of 1967 banned weapons of mass destruction from space, but all attempts to ban conventional weapons have failed. China and Russia have proposed something along those lines. The biggest naysayer? The United States, which argues that the treaty only forbids technologies that China and Russia currently don't possess.

Perhaps — but that doesn't prevent the United States from starting negotiations on various mechanisms to demilitarize space. Restarting negotiations to ban anti-satellite weapons would be a good start, but that might be too ambitious for the current moment.

So, cooperation among the principal space powers could begin with a suitable

confidence-building mechanism, like a joint initiative for dealing with space junk.

The Europeans are out there trying to harmonize the various national initiatives for dealing with all the debris circling the earth. There are 14,000 pieces of garbage larger than 4 inches across (pieces of satellites, rocket stages), and even smaller items can do irreparable damage to a spacecraft. The United States could take a proactive approach to the commons by working with others to clean up space — and not just catalog the problem as it is doing now.

Alas, cleaning up trash is also probably a stretch for the Trump administration, given how blind it is to environmental problems, even if that trash is a national security hazard.

But what the United States is doing now with the new Space Force is the worst kind of response to the problem of the increased militarization of space. It is creating an imaginary "space gap" that the United States has to pour money into closing, just like the various missile and bomber gaps of the late twentieth century. It will increase the risk of conflict in space, not reduce it.

The Space Force is a huge white elephant, worse than the Reagan-era missile defense system dubbed Star Wars. In fact, it's Star Wars without end, sequel after sequel hitting military theaters near you. Even in the unlikely event that all is quiet on the terrestrial front, the new Space Force and its promise to keep the universe safe from bad guys will serve to justify astronomical Pentagon budgets for decades to come.

John Feffer is the director of [Foreign Policy In Focus](#), where this article originally appeared.

NUCLEAR HUBRIS

January 20, 2020

by **Robert Koehler**

One thing that becomes clear to me when I wander into the world, and the minds, of geopolitical professionals — government people — is how limited and linear their thinking seems to be.

When I do so, an internal distress signal starts beeping and won't stop,

especially when the issue under discussion is war and mass destruction, i.e., suicide by nukes, which has a freshly intense relevance these days as Team Trump plays war with Iran.

The question for me goes well beyond democracy — the right of the public to have a say in what "we" do as a nation — and penetrates the decision-making process itself and the prevailing definition of what matters . . . and what doesn't. What doesn't matter, apparently, is any awareness that we live in one world, connected at the core: that the problems confronting this planet transcend the fragmentary "interests" of single, sovereign entities, even if the primary interest is survival itself.

I fear that this country's geopolitical thinking and decision-making are incapable of stepping beyond the concept of violent (including thermonuclear) self-defense, or even, indeed, acknowledging that consequences emerge from such actions that go well beyond the strategic considerations that summon them.

Recently, for instance, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, keeper of the annually updated Doomsday Clock, which serves as an international warning signal on the state of global danger from nuclear war and climate change, published an essay by James N. Miller, former undersecretary of Defense for Policy in the Obama administration, defending the fact that the U.S. government maintains a policy that allows "first use" of nuclear weapons under certain circumstances.

The issue of the Bulletin itself, which contained an array of viewpoints, focused on the idea that nuclear decision-making should be a focus of the 2020 presidential race, which certainly makes sense, considering that we live in a country with a national media whose *raison d'être* is to simplify presidential elections down to the level of a horse race: complex matters not allowed!

But Miller's essay, titled "No to No First Use — for Now," set off, as I say, an internal distress signal that wouldn't shut up, beginning with the fact that the essay addressed simply this country's

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self-granted permission to use nuclear weapons first, before the other guy did, under “extreme circumstances,” if it so chose. What was missing from this essay was any suggestion that nuclear disarmament — no use ever — deserved consideration. This was not up for discussion.

This is thinking contained within artificial borders!

It’s not that Miller isn’t looking at real threats. The U.S. allows itself to consider nuclear first-use if its enemy uses biological or cyber weaponry to ravage America. He writes:

“A biological weapons attack by a nuclear-capable country (such as North Korea) that kills hundreds of thousands or even millions of Americans, while seemingly unlikely, is unfortunately a plausible threat in the coming years or decades. In this scenario, a responsible president could reasonably determine that a conventional attack was inadequate, and that it was appropriate to employ nuclear weapons in response.”

Anyone else feel the thought-squeeze? My amazement and despair begin thus: If an attack or any sort kills “hundreds of thousands or even millions” of . . . uh, people . . . their deaths are instantly belittled if the concern here is that they are Americans. If such an attack is in the realm of possibility — against human beings of any and every nationality — there’s a wider hole in the universe than this author is addressing. The first question put out there must be: Why?

Earlier in the essay, Miller discusses the fact that an attack on the country with chemical weapons probably would not merit a nuclear response, pointing out: “The US military has more than sufficient firepower to inflict proportionate damage (and if desired, more than proportionate damage) in response to any plausible chemical weapons use.”

Inflict proportionate damage? This is national security talk? I mean, this is a discussion at the highest level of government, and it’s reducing national security to a matter of killing them back if they try to kill us, and if we kill a sufficient number of them (but not too

many), we’re cool. Here’s where I felt my soul freeze.

So let me make an introduction. James Miller, meet Beatrice Fihn, executive director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, the organization that won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017.

“At dozens of locations around the world — in missile silos buried in our earth, on submarines navigating through our oceans, and aboard planes flying high in our sky — lie 15,000 objects of humankind’s destruction,” Fihn said during her acceptance speech. “Perhaps it is the enormity of this fact, perhaps it is the unimaginable scale of the consequences, that leads many to simply accept this grim reality. To go about our daily lives with no thought to the instruments of insanity all around us. . . .

“As fellow Nobel Peace Laureate, Martin Luther King Jr, called them from this very stage in 1964, these weapons are ‘both genocidal and suicidal.’ They are the madman’s gun held permanently to our temple. These weapons were supposed to keep us free, but they deny us our freedoms.

“It’s an affront to democracy to be ruled by these weapons. But they are just weapons. They are just tools. And just as they were created by geopolitical context, they can just as easily be destroyed by placing them in a humanitarian context.”

And I return to that question I posed earlier: Why?

Why is this level of thinking not present at the highest levels of our government? Power is an enormous paradox. We’re the greatest military superpower on the planet, and this fact is consuming our ability to think and act in a rational and humane manner. Power creates hubris; and the United States of America is one of nine nations inflicted with nuclear hubris. We can tell other nations (e.g., Iran) what to do, but we’re not about to do it ourselves.

Feel safe yet?

Robert Koehler is a Chicago award-winning journalist and editor.

THE DOOMSDAY CLOCK

Published on Thursday,
January 23, 2020

By **Jessica Corbett**, staff writer

The Doomsday Clock reads 100 seconds to midnight—a decision made by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists—during an announcement at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 23, 2020. (Photo: Eva Hambach/AFP via Getty Images)

“The Doomsday Clock now stands at 100 seconds to midnight, the most dangerous situation that humanity has ever faced. Now is the time to come together—to unite and to act.”

“Humanity continues to face two simultaneous existential dangers—nuclear war and climate change—that are compounded by a threat multiplier, cyber-enabled information warfare, that undercuts society’s ability to respond.”
—Bulletin of Atomic Scientist

So said Mary Robinson, chair of The Elders, in a statement from the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists on Thursday announcing a historic update to the clock, a decades-old symbol for potential global catastrophe.

Robinson, the former president of Ireland and United Nations high commissioner for human rights, urged world leaders “to join us in 2020 as we work to pull humanity back from the brink.”

After the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the Bulletin was founded by University of Chicago scientists who had been involved with the Manhattan Project. Two years later, the group introduced the Doomsday Clock, set at seven minutes to midnight. Midnight represented potential apocalypse based on global nuclear dangers—the closer the hands are to midnight, the higher the threat.

Since 1947, the clock’s hands have moved both closer to and further from midnight, reaching 17 minutes to midnight in 1991. In 2018, the hands hit two minutes to midnight for the

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first time since 1953, after the United States and the Soviet Union tested thermonuclear weapons. Last year, the clock stayed there, and Bulletin president and CEO Rachel Bronson welcomed the world to "the new abnormal."

For more than a decade, the Domsday Clock's setting has reflected the threat posed by nuclear weaponry as well as the human-caused climate crisis. The 2020 statement explained that "humanity continues to face two simultaneous existential dangers—nuclear war and climate change—that are compounded by a threat multiplier, cyber-enabled information warfare, that undercuts society's ability to respond."

"It is 100 seconds to midnight. We are now expressing how close the world is to catastrophe in seconds—not hours, or even minutes," Bronson said Thursday. "It is the closest to Domsday we have ever been in the history of the Domsday Clock. We now face a true emergency—an absolutely unacceptable state of world affairs that has eliminated any margin for error or further delay."

Along with highlighting growing concerns about how "sophisticated, technology-propelled propaganda" is undermining global efforts to address the two key existential threats, this year's statement slammed world leaders for "not responding appropriately to reduce this threat level and counteract the hollowing-out of international political institutions, negotiations, and agreements that aim to contain it."

As the Bulletin put it:

Faced with this daunting threat landscape and a new willingness of political leaders to reject the negotiations and institutions that can protect civilization over the long term, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists Science and Security Board today moves the Domsday Clock 20 seconds closer to midnight—closer to apocalypse than ever. In so doing, board members are explicitly warning leaders and citizens around the world that the international security situation is now more dangerous than it has ever been, even at the height of the Cold War.

Referencing "the new abnormal" introduced last year, the 2020 statement warned, "This dangerous situation

remains—and continues to deteriorate." The Bulletin declared that "the need for emergency action is urgent." On the nuclear front, global leaders were urged to reinstate treaties, cut countries' arsenals, limit modernization programs, and "start talks on cyber warfare, missile defenses, the militarization of space, hypersonic technology, and the elimination of battlefield nuclear weapons."

More generally, the Bulletin called for "multilateral discussions aimed at establishing norms of behavior, both domestic and international, that discourage and penalize the misuse of science," emphasizing that "focused attention is needed to prevent information technology from undermining public trust in political institutions, in the media, and in the existence of objective reality itself."

In terms of climate action, the Bulletin urged all countries remain committed to the landmark 2015 Paris agreement. The statement noted that meeting the goals of that accord will require industrialized countries "to curb emissions rapidly, going beyond their initial, inadequate pledges and supporting developing countries so they can leapfrog the entrenched, fossil fuel-intensive patterns."

While the Bulletin broadly encouraged citizens across the globe to pressure their governments to pursue bold policies to avert climate catastrophe, it drew specific attention to the United States, pointing out that in November 2019, President Donald Trump fulfilled his longtime promise to begin the lengthy process of withdrawing the U.S. from the Paris agreement.

During a press conference in Washington, D.C. to announce the Domsday Clock update Thursday, former U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed disappointment in global leaders for failing to address these two crises. Ban, now deputy chair of The Elders, warned of the dangers of isolationist policies but also framed the clock's shift as an opportunity for policymakers worldwide to recommit to multilateralism.

Jerry Brown, the current executive chair of the Bulletin, also spoke at the press conference Thursday. He criticized

Trump for delivering a speech—at the World Economic Forum's summit for the global elite in Davos, Switzerland—that called for rejecting "alarmists" and "perennial prophets of doom," along with their "predictions of the apocalypse."

Brown, a former Democratic governor of California, also said that U.S. politicians from both major parties have not adequately worked to combat the nuclear and climate threats, and decried "vast, deep, and pervasive complacency" on a societal level.

After summarizing the Bulletin's warnings in a statement Thursday, Brown concluded: "If there's ever a time to wake up, it's now."

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dignity they deserve."

Sanders was far from the only lawmaker to decry Trump's new plan, which was drafted under the direction of Jared Kushner—the president's son-in-law and senior adviser—and unveiled at the White House with Israeli Prime Benjamin Netanyahu.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), one of Sanders' rivals in the primary race, tweeted Tuesday that "Trump's 'peace plan' is a rubber stamp for annexation and offers no chance for a real Palestinian state."

"Releasing a plan without negotiating with Palestinians isn't diplomacy, it's a sham," Warren added. "I will oppose unilateral annexation in any form—and reverse any policy that supports it."

As Warren noted, Palestinian leaders have not been involved with crafting Trump's deal. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas said in a televised address Tuesday: "I say to Trump and Netanyahu: Jerusalem is not for sale, all our rights are not for sale and are not for bargain. And your deal, the conspiracy, will not pass."

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POETRY

I Can See Your Sky Exploding

I can see your sky exploding, falling overhead
Killing all your hopes and dreams, filling you with dread
Killing all your sons and daughters, babies in their beds
I can see your sky exploding, and I can see the dead

I can see your sky exploding, I can feel the fear
I can feel the pain and anguish, resistance drawing near
I can feel your endless sorrow, I can see the tears
I can see your sky exploding, all the way from here

I can see your sky exploding, I can tell you're lost
I can feel your righteous anger held at a great cost
As they destroy all your homes and schools, and burn up all
your mosques
I can see your sky exploding, I can see your loss

I can see your sky exploding, I know that you can too
Smoggy clouds of smoke and dust where it used to be so blue
I can see the people running, frightened and confused
I can see your sky exploding, and I don't know what to do

I can see your sky exploding, I can feel the fright
I can see the soldiers coming, trampling your rights
I can hear the dogs of war, barking as they bite
I can see your sky exploding, lighting up so bright

I can see your sky exploding, but no one else can see
Everyone surrounding me is blinded by TV
I can feel your raw emotion, for I have empathy
I can see your sky exploding, though it isn't me

Brian David Hazel

April 2016

This poem is dedicated to every war-torn country that has been ravaged
by imperialism.

War Never Changes

The sky is falling
The people are hiding
The jackboots are on their way
A mother is calling
A child is crying
Uncertain they'll live through the day
The tanks, they are treading
Across sovereign borders
Some soldiers are dreading
Their inhumane orders
Though they have an advantage
This war can't be won
And that "collateral damage"
Is somebody's son
The victims of war
Are the poor and the sick
Slaughtered like cattle
For the wealthy and rich

Brian David Hazel

January 2016

How Much Is It Worth

How much is a soldier's tears worth
Ten yards for a dead heart
A thousand dollar pay day
For a lost leg
College dreams
For nightmares and PTSD screams
A lost eyes
For capitalistic smoke stacked sky
One hundred down
For a million in profit
A billions to come
And all that is cost us
Was our humanity
The movies make it seem noble
While keeping the guts, the gore,
And the human horror
Down to the minimum
But for all the men
And women
We lose over and again
And again and again
Till the horrors without
Shade the horrors within
And even those
Friends who make it back
With unblemished skin
Never really come back again
How much do you think it's worth

Graff1980

April 2015

Untitled

If you say that a child should not go off to war
Then I say everyone I know is a child
Youth in wisdom and intelligence
Full of potential
Not made to waste in the ways of war
But blossom in the days of peace

Graff1980

March 2015

Call Me What You Will

If the worst you can call me is naive
Then I will accept it
If the worst you can call me is pacifist
Then I will live it
Because if I am these things
Then I have conquered my nature
For it is the violence within
That heaven will judge for it's favor

Mark Lecuona

February 2015

**TRUTH SETS YOU FREE**

Wahrheit Macht Frei... Truth Sets You Free

By **Finian Cunningham**

January 24, 2020

"Information Clearing House" –

This week sees the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi Auschwitz death camp by the Soviet Red Army. But the momentous event is being overshadowed by renewed attempts by the Polish authorities – aided by American and German officials – to shift the blame for the Second World War on to the Soviet Union.

The grimly deceptive German maxim "Arbeit Macht Frei" ("Works Sets You Free") adorning the iron-gate entrance to Auschwitz through which millions of prisoners passed on their way to death, could be subtitled today with the more honest phrase "Wahrheit Macht Frei" ("Truth Sets You Free").

Because what is going on in the Polish commemoration of Auschwitz and claims about the origins of the Second World War more generally is an appalling distortion of history to suit current geopolitical interests in the West of undermining Russia. Concealing or denying the causes of war only traps the world into repeating war.

Rather than being given a full place of honor for the liberation of the extermination camp in southern Poland on January 27, 1945, by the Soviet army, today Moscow is being sidelined despite its crucial role in crushing the Nazi regime and all its horrors.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has reportedly declined to attend the 75th anniversary in Poland. Russia will be represented by its ambassador to the country. Putin is attending an equivalent event in Israel, and at that alternative commemoration will be afforded due prominence to mark the liberating achievement of Russia's predecessor, the Soviet Union. It is understandable why the Russian president decided to give the event in Poland a miss because of the toxic claims made recently by Warsaw and other Western states concerning allegations that the Soviet Union colluded with Nazi Germany in instigating the war.

This distortion of history has even gained an official status when the European Parliament – after Polish and Baltic state lobbying – adopted a resolution last September in which the Soviet Union is cast as equally culpable along with the Nazi Third Reich for starting World War II.

When President Putin slammed that resolution as "nonsense" and went on to point out Poland's own documented collaboration with Nazi Germany, the current Polish government, along with German and American diplomats, doubled down on the accusations impugning Moscow for having partial responsibility for the worst conflagration in history.

Those Polish and Western accusations stem from the historical Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact which was signed on August 23, 1939, one week before the Nazis invaded Poland. Thus it is claimed that Stalin's detente with Hitler emboldened the latter to launch the war.

As Radio Free Europe reported: "German envoy Rolf Nikel and US Ambassador to Poland Georgette Mosbacher both said on December 30 that Germany and the Soviet Union colluded to start the war in 1939 that led to the death of tens of millions of people on continental Europe."

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki denounced Putin's version of history as "lying... trampling the memory of those events. Poland must stand up for the truth, not for its own interests but for the sake of what defines Europe."

That's quite an audacious feat of historical distortion.

The motives for such re-writing of history are obvious. Germany can unburden some of its war guilt for terrorizing Europe with its fascist genocide.

By implicating the Soviets in Nazi horror, the Americans and their rightwing surrogates in Poland and the Baltic states can breathe some air into the stale, breathless claims of "Russian aggression" towards modern-day Europe. That twist is especially odious given that the Soviet Union suffered the most out of any nation from Nazi barbarity, with up to 25 million dead and tens of millions more wounded.

Poland has perhaps the most to gain from falsifying history. Its own shameful past of colluding with the Nazi regime before and during the war is, it is anticipated, whitewashed and shoved down the memory hole.

The people lining up to disparage Russia over alleged Soviet complicity with Nazi Germany claim, ironically, that Putin is "rewriting history" by referring to Soviet records and propaganda.

One of the finest scholarly accounts of the period from the First World War until the late 1930s and the outbreak of war is the work by British historian AJP Taylor, entitled 'The Origins of the Second World War' (published 1961). Taylor is no "fellow-traveller" of the Soviet Union. His study is a consummate exercise in objective scholarship.

The Russian perspective is substantially corroborated by Taylor (and other Western historians, see for example this recent **essay** by Michael Jabara Carley). The Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact on the eve of the war's outbreak was a desperate attempt by Moscow to keep the Third Reich at bay. Because, as Taylor points out, the Western powers, in particular Britain and France and Poland, had consistently rebuffed Soviet appeals to form a collective European security pact against Nazi Germany.

Britain, France and Poland looked the other way when Hitler annexed Austria in 1936 and invaded Czechoslovakia in 1938. The Fuhrer's manifesto in 'Mein Kampf' and his various ranting speeches during the 1930s explicitly targeted the Soviet Union and European Jewry for annihilation in a Final Solution.

Polish ministers during this period shared the Nazi contempt for Soviet and Jewish people. The case of Polish Ambassador in Berlin Josef Lipski proposing to Hitler in 1938 a scheme to deport European Jews to Africa is indisputable.

What Polish authorities today are compelled to deny is the objective historical record which assigns complicity to their predecessors in

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**SONGS FOR THE REVOLUTION***Bernie Songs and Revolution-Making*by **Ted Glick**

December 30th, 2019



I've been writing these Future Hope columns for 20 years, and several times I've quoted James Connolly, Irish labor, socialist and independence leader over a hundred years ago, on the importance of singing:

No revolutionary movement is complete without its poetical expression. If such a movement has caught hold of the imagination of the masses they will seek a vent in song for the aspirations, the fears and the hopes, the loves and the hatreds engendered by the struggle. Until the movement is marked by the joyous, defiant, singing of revolutionary songs, it lacks one of the most distinctive marks of a popular revolutionary movement, it is the dogma of a few, and not the faith of the multitude.

This profoundly important insight of Connolly's was published in Dublin, Ireland in 1907 in an introduction to *Revolutionary Songs*.

I have no idea if Bernie Sanders has much of a singing voice. My guess is probably not. But his speaking voice, his words, his speeches, as well as his heart and soul and passion for justice, have inspired some creative, moving, powerful songs already, and I am sure there are more to come.¹

I remember the anti-war movement during the Vietnam war, and I've learned about the civil rights movement in the 50s and 60s, and I know that music and song were part of both of them. For the civil rights movement in particular, though, my understanding of history is that singing was an essential ingredient of the major victories won by the movement in 1964 and 1965 with the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, passed because of the irresistible force of a powerful, massive, singing, broadly-based, morally-driven movement.

Bruce Hartford, deeply involved as a young person in the civil rights movement in Mississippi and Alabama in 1965 and 1966, said this about the importance of singing in his valuable book, *Troublemaker*:

"Sometimes I'm asked, how did we endure? And what kept us going? My answer is — freedom songs and freedom singing. Freedom songs and freedom singing were our most effective nonviolent weapon, and the songs and the singing were the psychic threads that bound us into a tapestry of purpose, solidarity, courage, and hope. The songs spread our message. The songs bonded us together. The songs elevated our courage. The songs shielded us from hate. The songs forged our discipline. The songs protected us from danger. And it was the songs that kept us sane..."

Song was one of our most powerful and effective organizing tools. All human communities are riven with divisions — personal, social, religious, cultural, class, gender, age, sexual-orientation and of course race. Building unity across these many divides is hard. Really hard. Rich and poor, elite and 'no account,' don't mingle easily. Individuals might be at odds with other individuals. Someone from one race or culture may feel unwelcome or out of place in settings dominated by a different race or culture. Singing our songs helped break those barriers down.

Over the last year I've become part of the Solidarity Singers, a group sponsored by the NJ Industrial Union Council made up of grassroots people who sing all over New Jersey at rallies and demonstrations and events. The music of most of our songs comes from the civil rights movement, while the

words are updated to be relevant for the present. Without question, I have seen how this singing, these songs, have done some of the things which Bruce Hartford wrote of in *Troublemaker*.

I haven't really looked, but my guess is that there's no other Presidential campaign that has inspired what the Bernie campaign is inspiring song-wise. In addition to all of the many other reasons why this campaign is surging, this may end up being one of the most important. Let's sing, sisters and brothers, let's sing!

1. Here are links to five of them: <https://youtu.be/LyzSAHCE88I>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zD3xY4zCP7E>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BX216znrtP0>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5W3fbfHYgg>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOCz9ytXbwY>. [↵]

Ted Glick has been a progressive activist, organizer and writer since 1968.

This article was posted on Monday, December 30th, 2019

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unleashing the Nazi monster. The fact Auschwitz and other Nazi extermination camps are on Polish territory does not seem to give these virulent Russphobes any pause for thought. The fact that the Soviet Red Army saved millions of Poles from Nazi barbarity — a barbarity that their vain, deluded political leaders emboldened — is perhaps the clearest example of how "Lies Do Not Set You Free".

Finian Cunningham has written extensively on international affairs, with articles published in several languages. He is a Master's graduate in Agricultural Chemistry and worked as a scientific editor for the Royal Society of Chemistry, Cambridge, England, before pursuing a career in newspaper journalism. He is also a musician and songwriter. For nearly 20 years, he worked as an editor and writer in major news media organisations, including The Mirror, Irish Times and Independent.

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Philip M. Giraldi is a former CIA counter-terrorism specialist and military intelligence officer who served nineteen years overseas in Turkey, Italy, Germany, and Spain. Phil is Executive Director of the Council for the National Interest, a Washington-based advocacy group that seeks to encourage and promote a U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East that is consistent with American values and interests. Originally published by "American Herald Tribune"

Brisbane IPAN demonstration calling for Australia to withdraw from the Middle East and Say NO to War with Iran.

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Matthew J.L. Ehret is a journalist, lecturer and founder of the Canadian Patriot Review. He is also the co-founder of the Rising Tide Foundation.

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Editorial Thank you. Thank you also to all those Just Peace members who sent in articles, and other contributions and suggestions. We try to use as much of this material as we can. But we reserve the right to edit articles where necessary to fit the layout of the newsletter. Such editing will be done in a way that, hopefully, doesn't change the essence of the articles. The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the individual members of Just Peace.

First they came for the Communists
but I was not a Communist -
so I said nothing.
Then they came for the Social Democrats
but I was not a Social Democrat -
so I did nothing.
Then they came for the trade unionists
but I was not a trade unionist.
And then they came for the Jews
but I was not a Jew -
so I did little.
Then when they came for me
there was no one left
who could speak out for me.

Pastor Martin Neimoller, 1937