



The Peace Issue . . .

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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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The Militarisation of Australia

By Bruce Haigh

27 August 2020

The military in Australia has been played into a key role in the national narrative. Its achievements have been woven into myth. External threat has long been part of the political fabric.

The Australian Defence Force and para-military organisations are seen as protectors of the political class and enjoy protected status as a result. As security organisations proliferate, the military has moved toward the centre. Climate change and Covid-19 have consolidated their social and political importance.

The foundation of Australia was a military exercise. About 200 British Marines supervised 754 convict men, women and children in the colony of Sydney from 1788. Governor Captain Arthur Phillip was replaced by Major Francis Grose, who turned the colony into a military dictatorship. Officers traded in rum and were awarded large tracts of land.

From 1788 until 1870, 24 British regiments served in Australia under military governors. From 1870 the colonies took responsibility for their own defence until Federation. These forces established the tradition of going to the aid of England, even when we were not needed. Men from the colonies volunteered to fight in New Zealand, the Sudan, South Africa and China between 1861 and 1902.

Convinced war was coming, the British sent military reformer Lord Haldane to Australia in 1911. He recommended compulsory military training and the introduction of school

cadets. On the outbreak of war in 1914, 20,000 young Australians joined the army. Out of a population of five million, 416,000 signed up, of whom 330,000 served overseas. We did not need to be there.

The Australian war correspondent CEW Bean was appointed official historian. He wrote dispassionately of the horror and put order where there was none. His was a boy's own history, preparing the next generation for war. He advocated for a war memorial in Canberra which in design and display prepared the ground for the deification of Australian involvement in war. Bean was the father of the Anzac legend, which is fascist and racist in manifestation. Where you and I might have seen crude and foul-mouthed grafters, Bean saw beautiful boys. He loved them. I have been in the army; I have seen a different reality.

April 25, the day Australian troops went ashore at Gallipoli, was designated a national day of remembrance, attracting big crowds between the wars. By the end of WWII it was an even bigger event with dawn services and marches through cities and towns by ex-servicemen.

WWII saw the militarisation of Australia. Out of a population of 7.3 million in 1944 Australia had one million people in uniform. There were 730,000 in the army, of whom 400,000 served overseas. Australia made uniforms, small arms, artillery, tanks, planes, and naval and supply vessels.

All things military had sunk into the Australian psyche by 1945. But not all embraced Anzac Day. Some saw it as
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showy and shallow, having little to do with remembering friends.. Many knew all too well of the violence and nastiness that lay beneath the surface once alcohol had a grip, the wives better than most.

From 1950-1953, 17,000 Australian troops fought against the Chinese in an American-dominated UN force in Korea. Prime Minister Robert Menzies took the country to war in Vietnam. He believed that Chinese-backed Communism was on a southward march through Vietnam and gave secret undertakings to the Americans that Australia would support them.

Knowing this, he introduced legislation to conscript 20-yearold. Once the bill passed through parliament Menzies announced that conscripts would fight in Vietnam. It was an act of treachery. Vietnam led to a vocal and determined anti-war movement. Australia withdrew in 1972 following the election of Gough Whitlam. Anzac Day and the jingoistic response to war that went with it was discredited; it sank into disrepute until prime minister Bob Hawke visited Gallipoli in 1990 and thus revived Anzac Day.

Hawke and Kim Beazley, as defence minister, embarked on substantial spending linked to a new assertive forward defence policy.

However, it was John Howard who unashamedly used Anzac Day, the uniform and flag to underpin his prime ministership. After 9/11 Howard committed troops to Afghanistan and then illegally to war in Iraq. Howard maximised photo opportunities, attending dock-side departures, returns and funerals. He was fascinated and intimidated by uniforms and used them shamelessly.

His so-called war on terror enabled the militarisation of Australia to proceed apace and a framework was established to accommodate a future police state. From 2001, 82 terrorism laws were enacted. By contrast, the police state of apartheid South Africa had nine laws relating to terrorism.

In 2000 Howard had parliament pass the Defence Legislation Amendment (Aid to Civilian Authorities) Act, which gave the government the power to call out the armed forces on domestic soil

against perceived threats to 'Commonwealth interests'. If deemed necessary the ADF may shoot to kill. A first for Australia, it is a most dangerous piece of legislation. And Labor under Beazley did not oppose the bill.

The Act states that 'the Governor-General is to act with the advice of Executive Council or in an emergency, the authorising Minister.' Probably why military men are favoured as governors-general – they are more likely to comply with a request to turn out the troops.

Howard's reluctant but successful intervention in East Timor under General Cosgrove in 1999 enhanced his reputation as a war-time leader and furthered the militarisation of Australia. He twisted the narrative to ensure that any attack on him was an attack on ADF personnel.

Because the debate on national security centred around the war on terror, questions on policy were cast as disloyal. The Labor Party have been unwilling to challenge that narrative and cannot lay a glove on the Coalition in relation to security and defence issues.

Patriotism and loyalty have become bound into the outdated Anzac myth, the prosecution and celebration of it now often referred to as Anzacy. It celebrates a white Anglo narrative and has no relevance to or understanding among newer minority ethnic groups. It has been captured by the political right.

The ADF enjoys iconic status, woven into the Anzac myth and portrayed as a protector and nurturer of the Anzac spirit.

The four-year celebration from 2014 to 2018 of Australian participation in WWI cost \$600 million plus there was \$200 million for Abbott's museum at Villers Bretonneux, plus another \$500 million to 'upgrade' the themed War Memorial in Canberra.

Funds for militarisation and securitisation appear unlimited and beyond parliamentary scrutiny. In 2006 Howard authorised paramilitary training for the Australian Federal Police (AFP), training that presumably continues. It can be assumed elements of the Australian Border Force (ABF) also receive paramilitary training. The ABF

came into existence in 2015, and one-quarter of its members are armed.

The Department of Home Affairs was established in 2017. It has oversight of the AFP, ASIO, ABF, ACIC and Austrac. Other intelligence agencies include ONI, ASIS, DIO, ASD and AGO. Then there is the AIC, NIC, NSC, NICC, NICMC, NIOSC and ANZCTC. Yes, it is a cat's breakfast. The proliferation of agencies highlights the growth of the terrorism industry, reflected in this empire building. The industry has now shifted its focus to China, which offers prospects for growth in unearthing evil intent.

Peter Dutton, Minister for Home Affairs, has a powerful base for exercising control over fellow Australians. Left to his own devices he would tap our phones and monitor our devices. The ACTU's Sally McManus believes he already does. I now have the same attitude to my phone in Australia as I did in South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

Parliamentary scrutiny of this basket of cats is almost non-existent, due to a lack of will and an attitude that it would be disloyal to dig up dirt.

Patriotism is defined by the ruling LNP and supported by Labor. China has now been identified as the enemy. It is best to go along with that narrative lest your home is raided, travel restricted and phone tapped. The Anzac myth is deployed in these times as an appeal to a higher order of nationalism requiring sacrifice of some liberties and compliance with unpopular directives. It has reached its use-by date but nothing else is on offer.

Bruce Douglas Haigh is an Australian political commentator and former diplomat.

"I hate imperialism. I detest colonialism. And I fear the consequences of their last bitter struggle for life. We are determined, that our nation, and the world as a whole, shall not be the play thing of one small corner of the world"

— President Soekarno

**EDITORIAL : OBITUARIES****Ross Gwyther Testimonial to Anita Reed**

I met Anita in the winter of 2013, when I addressed a U3A current affairs group at Cleveland. I had talked about Just Peace, our Qld based organisation aiming to build broader community dialogue around peaceful rather than military resolutions of international conflicts. Anita came up to me at the end and said "I've been looking for a peace group for ages – I want to join!!"

We have an active committee of about a dozen people who meet each month, usually over food, , and we organise publications, events and public discussions – and Anita became almost straight away a close member of our group. She had so much energy that she started not only helping with projects we were organising, but arranging projects herself.

For the past two years she had organised an annual peace concert, to which she introduced her bush poetry friends. She ran a U3A peace studies course twice a year for the past three years.

With her background as a teacher she was an invaluable member of our subgroup organising in 2018 and 2019 an arts workshop – called "Youth Voice for Peace" for over 50 high school students to express their thoughts and aspirations about peace, nuclear war and climate change.

The overwhelming message she wanted to spread in the community is that not only is peace possible, but that we collectively have made great strides in building a more peaceful world over the past hundred or more years – so it was a message of great optimism, as well as hope for a better world.



entirely. Effortlessly persuasive. A fountain of musical creativity and poetry. A joy to be with. A woman of mystery and surprise in so many ways. She has left an indelible legacy. Such a lovely vibrant peace activist, Bush poet, mum and grandma torn from us so suddenly. Her 80th birthday party was packed ...she will be missed by so many. She was truly an inspiration to all of us in Just Peace – when people struggle for something that is difficult, and confronting, and in some ways contentious, it brings a closeness and camaraderie amongst people. For me, and I think for most of us, it feels like we have lost a close member of our family.

Thanks Anita for the times we spent together – we will miss you greatly.

Vale Richard Cowley

It is with sadness we in Just Peace Qld heard of the passing of Richard Cowley in September this year. Richard put the International Day of Peace on the map in Brisbane. After corresponding with Jeremy Gilly from Peace One Day who worked with world leaders to have the International Day of Peace recognised each year on the 21st September, he reached out to the Brisbane Peace

groups to work together on a project to support the resolution. Ironically the resolution came into effect on the very day that the World Trade buildings were attacked.

It was from an initial coffee meeting at Avid Reader with Richard that plans took off. Richard subsequently attended a Union of Australian Women International Women's Day dinner at which Margaret Reynolds was the guest speaker. Richard and I arranged to meet Margaret the next day at Ridges Hotel to talk to her about ways in which to bring the UN resolution on the International Day of Peace to the community's awareness and to take action. Margaret suggested 'how about a youth peace parliament'. Margaret had organised youth parliaments for Aboriginal students when she lived in Cairns. The Brisbane Youth Peace Parliaments were held annually for 5 years with a full house in the Green Chamber, students coming from many Brisbane and regional schools. As well as the youth peace parliaments there were many IDP festivals held in the city and at the Botanic Gardens. I do believe these events in Brisbane led the way to this day now being recognised and celebrated all over Australia. Richard had a remarkable ability to bring people together and to encourage those people to organise events themselves in whatever way they chose to. It worked!

Vale Richard he is missed.

Annette Brownlie

**ACTIVITIES REPORT**

Dear friends,

It has been a shocking and sad time for Just Peace, when we learned of the passing of Anita Reed, Richard Cowley and Noel Preston. We have devoted our Editorial to a description of a fragment of their productive and inspiring lives.

So, what we do for the usual activities report is go straight to the minutes of our meetings and try to create some sort of narrative. We usually get bogged down in explaining why we do this or support that group, but which we personally find very interesting. But this time we will try to move with a winch and snow chains.

BREAKING NEWS:

Our AGM is on November 22nd, 2 pm at the West End Garden Restaurant! Exciting guest speakers! Delicious food! See enclosed flyer.

JUST PEACE MEMBERSHIP: We recently passed a century of members – new ones and old. We are most gratified.

MEETINGS: June on Zoom; July, August, September, October and November – live, but distant!

SANDGATE BRANCH: This was organized by Dr. James Page, an active member of Just Peace.

SUB-GROUPS:

Just Peace for Palestine, Vikki Henry Convener

Palestine Film Institute (PFP,
palestinefilminstitute.org)

Attended Webinar on Anti-Semitism 22nd June 7pm. With 120 participants. Also available on Facebook on APAN site.

Support for *Big Ride for Palestine*, an Australia-wide, APHEDA-coordinated event, which raised over \$30,000 in support of Palestinian refugees (5 million):
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestinian_refugees.

Anti-Nuclear Group, Rosie Severin Convener

Focus currently on opposition to small modular nuclear reactors. Webinar 6th August on this and related topics. Jaw-dropping 30 minute documentary

narrated by Scott Ludlum: *CLIMATE OF HOPE* shown.

Hiroshima/Nagasaki Day. Film Screening of Japanese Film *Children of Hiroshima* for 75th Anniversary. Nudgee Beach event, August 9th.

EVENTS:

Two Deals of the Century Politics in the Pub cancelled for now.

Australia-China Dialogue Discussion Group.

ARCHIVES of JUST PEACE

Ross Gwyther arranged to submit archival material to the State Library of Queensland. *The Peace Issue* newsletter now has an official ISSN number (arranged by Dr James Page). We are in the process of arranging archival material from our Sub Groups (see above) and extensive photographic library to be submitted.

SUPPORT for:

Antidote Films - The Reluctant Savior, Gil Scrine Producer and Director. Due for release in May 2021.

Spirit of Eureka - Rally outside News Corp Australia Head office.

Anita Reed: Anita has run U3A Class on Peace, and has written songs and poems of peace, the last sung by various choirs. This class has had speakers Annette Brownlie, Ross Gwyther and Vikki Henry.

Lenora O'Connor: Creator of *Youth Voices for Peace* in 2018. Cancelled in 2020, but reinvented for 2021.

Glen Major: Singer, songwriter, architect. Writer of FUTURE EARTH PIE, an epic look at global society (<https://www.justpeaceqld.org.au/future-earth-pie>).

Pacific Peace Network: RIMPAC Webinars in June and August.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exercise_RIMPAC

Quakers Brisbane Just Peace is part of a group to highlight the weapons fair known as **LandForces 2021**

University of Queensland Peace Group organized by Pastor David Hale. Just Peace attended this group meeting on August 12th. Of note was a representative of *Religions for Peace* which is the largest international coalition of representatives

from the world's great religions dedicated to promoting peace.

Julian Assange – publisher of war crimes evidence. Rally at the British Consulate, September 7th. 100 Eagle Street, Brisbane.

COSOCK: A recently formed, Australia-wide group to bring attention of the plight of Witness K and Bernard Collaery to the attention of Australians. Rally planned for November 9th 7:30 am to 8:30 am, 636 Mogill Road, Brisbane.

MEMBERSHIP of RELATED ORGANISATIONS

Just Peace Queensland and many of our members belong to and/or actively and financially support the work of National and International organizations. Here are just a few:

IPAN

(Annette Brownlie, Ross Gwyther)

Newsletter: VOICE

Issued Press releases including **Black Lives Matter** and support for Indigenous community

Major Project: People's Enquiry into Costs and Consequences of Australia's involvement in US Led Wars (see <https://ipan.org.au/the-ipan-inquiry/>)

ICAN

Working with WILPF women to advocate for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Mayors for peace

50 nations have now ratified the UN Treaty to ban nuclear weapons. It enters into force on January 22nd 2021 (see article on this momentous event in this newsletter).

UNAAQ

(Annette Brownlie, Chair of Peace and Security Sub-Group) Meetings via Zoom.

Lenora O'Connor developed a project Video on SDG3 focusing on the Covid19 and health implications - hope it can be used widely in education system.

Peace Keepers Webinar May 30th instead of live commemoration.

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Dr. Donnell Davis has stepped down as president and Senator Claire Moore has taken over.

International Day of Peace Lecture. 21st September 2020. Professor Gillian Triggs appeared from Geneva via video link. The lecture screened at Saint John's Cathedral under covid-19 restrictions. YouTube live broadcast.

APAN

This is one of the most effective groups supporting the rights of Palestinians. Powerful fundraising group, regularly speaking to Federal and other politicians, with great success.

Keep safe and peaceful, all the while.

**Cheers, Mike Henry & Ross Gwyther,
Co-Conveners**



Libya with Gaddafi



Libya with "American democracy"

"Taking part in the Western mission to civilize the East is highly spiritually rewarding. And what is political destabilization and social unrest but a sweet revenge for China's disregard for Western hegemony."

— Thorsten J. Pattberg

OBITUARY: NOEL PRESTON

Noel Preston testimonial

Ross Gwyther and Annette Brownlie, Just Peace Qld. October 2020

We first worked closely with Noel in 1983. The world was facing a nuclear catastrophe, with a massive build-up of nuclear weapons by the superpowers, the US and the USSR. Together with Joan Shears, Noel convened a meeting at KG where he was teaching then, and maybe 20 people gathered together to establish a grass roots organisation to campaign against nuclear weapons build-up. People for Nuclear Disarmament (PND) came into being that night, and was to grow into an organisation of thousands of people with 20 local branches in Brisbane alone.

Noel's foresight was critical to that development. His wonderful ability to bring together people of very different political and religious beliefs was a critical factor in the success that PND along with organisations around Australia and worldwide had in forcing politicians to take account – and as a result the massive dismantling of that nuclear arms race by the end of that decade.

Much closer to home, Noel's energy and enthusiasm were also important in the struggles during the 1980s to change the corrupt and undemocratic nature of Qld politics under the Bjelke government. His strength of purpose and courage in the Concerned Christians group he formed with Dick Pascoe during the 1970s and 80s – particularly during the land rights struggles of the Aurukun people, and the



SEQEB dispute, will be remembered by many. During the final successful campaign to bring down the Petersen government in 1989, he helped to establish the Citizens against Corruption, a grass roots movement to elect Nigel Powell to parliament, which played its part along with many other organisations in bringing a change to a far more democratic Queensland after those dark years.

Noel's commitment to a more peaceful world was an inspiration to those former members of PND who established Just Peace in Brisbane in the early 2000s. His foresight in working for nuclear disarmament was critical in laying the groundwork for the current campaign through the UN to declare nuclear weapons illegal – a campaign that was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize last year, and as of 22nd October has been ratified by 50 countries, making it an international law. A fitting testament to Noel's work.

Noel was often available to support friends with marriages, births and funerals including officiating at Patricia Hovey's partner Bob's funeral.

Noel was a great role model and mentor encouraging young and old to believe in their ability to effect change through activism.



Noel addressing the Palm Sunday Peace Rally, Roma Street Forum, 1984

Photo courtesy of the State Library of Queensland



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

A Tale of Two Prosthetic Legs: Panel Beating History at the Australian War Memorial

By William De Maria

18 September 2020

Visitors to the Afghanistan: The Australian Story exhibition are offered a theme park experience. Symbols, slogans, and sensations. Hop on an emotional rollercoaster and spin round corners to vicariously witness an ambush.

When Australian soldiers lifted their boots off Afghani ground for the last time in December 2013 the Koh-e Paghman mountains outside Kabul moaned for a nation broken once again by invasion. Up to 87,000 non-combatant Afghans died in that most meaningless of wars, ground like mince between the wheels of geopolitical savagery. Forty-one Australian soldiers came home in body bags to heroes welcomes when all their families wanted was resurrection. Of the 26,000 soldiers who survived Afghanistan, a large minority carried this brokenness back to Australia. Their own hearts and minds were to be the sites of multiple personal wars, to be replayed and replayed.

Tragically, some succumbed to the relief of suicide. Between 2001-2017 there were 419 documented suicides in serving, reservist and ex-Defence personnel. The adjusted rate of suicide in ex-serving male personnel was 18% higher than in the general male Australian population and ten times higher than the soldier deaths in Afghanistan. Exposure to trauma during deployment was rated as a significant risk factor for suicide.

How should we, particularly our young, process all this? That is a hard one because to answer it we must reckon with a troubling ideological potpourri of beliefs in the Australian community about the nature and causes of war. This ranges from widespread indifference ("best we forget"), entrenched militarism ("leave our warrior-heroes alone") to genuine but "fluffy" Quaker type opposition to all wars. I will take the cowards route

away from this question because it is much too big for the article here.

But as I duck out of this question, I take a parting glance at that great warrior of militarism, the Australian War Memorial (AWM). It has a disproportionate role in shaping our meaning of the war.

Every new battle, every new skirmish that happened in Afghanistan throws wood on the fire of contested meanings. Battlefield conduct is vulnerable to diverse interpretations. We see what we want to see; Australian Special Forces as reincarnated Anzac warriors stealthily advancing towards Afghanistan hotspots or bands of morally unhinged rogue shooters out hunting, or both.

One thing for sure, the hallowed Anzac narrative has no patience whatsoever for any stories of misconduct. The Australian flag is regularly thrown over smouldering accounts of war atrocities like a fire blanket. There is only one flame allowed to burn, the one that flickers in war memorials. It is as if Australian flags, dipped in Asbestos, have been distributed to many people and organisations with an ideological interest in keeping the Anzac candle as the *only* flame worth protecting.

To be a bit sardonic, Australian armed services command has a shed full of these fire blanket flags for ready distribution. So too does the overly influential Returned Soldiers League. The ratbag right run screaming through the twitterverse to the next ideological hot spot with these "blankets" draped around their shoulders. This rag tagged keyboard cavalry are particularly busy now defending Ben Roberts-Smith, the soldier who won a Victoria Cross. War jockeys of the political right, such as former Prime Ministers, Tony Abbott, and John Howard, have their own monogrammed fire blankets.

Every time we think we are advancing our understandings of Australia's troubled military engagements we trip over this Anzac sacredness. It is always there. Always in the way. The obvious place to start a conversation as to how Anzac sacredness acts as a foil to battlefield truth is to visit one of the

largest accountability-free zones in the country, the Australian War Memorial.

As I write, the Australian War Memorial (AWM) is open for business after its Covid closure. War curious visitors will once again buzz around the exhibitions that have been carefully manicured to represent all that is supposed to be great in the Australian identity.

The AWM is the principal warden of the Anzac flame. Its job is to tell the story of war. With world class curation (and lots of dollars) it honours the valour of Australian men and women who have fought for our country. What it does not get right is to explain the nature of war and why we so readily take up arms against "threats" on the other side of the world. There is no critical examination of the pointlessness of so many aggressive engagements Australia has been involved in and how shameful things can be done by Australians soldiers on the battlefield. The Australian War Memorial unapologetically distorts history and insists that its visitor go away with only one version of war. A version bound to enshrine war as a permanent inevitability.

Distortion of war history was very much the spirit of the speeches at the opening of the permanent exhibition, *Afghanistan. The Australian Story*. Prime Minister Rudd, one month away from losing the election to Tony Abbott, said, "I am honoured to be present today at the opening of the [exhibition]. The core message...is the absolute importance of telling the story." Rudd, foolish Rudd, thought there was only one story. There are many stories, as I show in the following account of the "two prosthetic legs". Many, many stories, but only a selected few get through the Memorial's micron filters.

"Our" war in Afghanistan only finished seven years ago. Yet the War Memorial has already mounted two exhibitions about this failed engagement.

Afghanistan. The Australian Story started in 2013 (thank you Boeing Defence Australia) and *From the Shadows. Australian Special Forces*, which went from October 2017 to September 2018. The former exhibition started *before* the final pull out. Why do that? Why bring on exhibitions when memories are still (continued on Page 7...)



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raw and liable to imprecision and before the histories (pro and against) are written, and certainly before the Brereton Inquiry into alleged war crimes in Afghanistan has concluded? The answer is quite simple, and one straight from Joseph Goebbels's propaganda notebook.

The objective is to select a message of war, groom it, and broadcast it. At the same time isolating or ignoring contrary messages. The heavily militarised AWM Council and senior staff know it is all about achieving mastery over the *message* and then to repeat that message with all the curatorial firepower at the Memorial's disposal, and with a little help from their friends, the international arms makers. Achieving mastery over the message allows the War Memorial to drape that message over the battles and countless skirmishes in Afghanistan. The endurance of the mediated message is not to be underestimated. It lasts long after the smoke has left the battlefield. Long after the last dead soldier has been buried and long after the last widow has shed the last tear.

Even the title is a dead giveaway to the propaganda intent here. The Australian War Memorial could never mount an exhibition called *Afghanistan. An Australian Story*. Why? Because that broadcasts a strong inference that there is more than one way to tell the story of Afghanistan. While that is obviously correct. It is dangerous heresy to the Memorial's war culture.

This message manipulation was clearly at play in the other exhibition *From the Shadows. Australian Special Forces*. The 340,000 visitors to that display saw a lot of trigger pulling, a lot of people jumping out of helicopters into the stirred-up dust and lots of back shots of soldiers. No insights were offered to help a third of a million visitors understand why the soldiers were there in the first place. Certainly, no explanations about the war crimes committed.

And it is on that point that the Australian War Memorial should be held morally culpable. Because by the time this exhibition was mounted, stories about Special Forces behaving badly in Afghanistan had been circulating for eight years. By the opening of the

exhibition these stories had gone from rumours to credible evidence. Yet the AWM curated this propaganda showpiece wilfully oblivious to the evidence, so all the 340,000 visitors got was a classy Defence recruiting add. By panel beating *our* Afghanistan war into a preferred shape the Australian War Memorial pillages history and lets us all down.

In both exhibitions the reality of a disastrous Afghanistan mission has been replaced by a spectacular diorama of denial. The curators took the truth, a white sheet of paper, and folded, creased, and turned it into an origami piece with great propaganda value. In these exhibitions we win the war. Failure was never going to be a curation parameter. The exhibitions are more heroic than reverential. More dick swinging and shouting than silent contemplation. More testosterone than estrogen. More suited to entertainment than reflection. From expedition to exhibition. If the war cannot be won on the ground surely it can be won through film clips, sound recordings, video interviews and flashy story boards.

Visitors to the *Afghanistan: The Australian Story* exhibition are offered a theme park experience. Symbols, slogans, and sensations. Hop on an emotional rollercoaster and spin round corners to vicariously witness an ambush. Let the roller coaster take you to heights where you see smiling Afghani children taking lollies from soldiers. Let it whiz you past the awesome killing technologies. Block your ears to the rat, tat, tat of an F88 Austeyr assault rifle. Hold your breath as a Special Forces soldier takes position with his SR98 sniper rifle. Eyes wide open as a Special Forces soldier readies for a mission by strapping on a 9mm Heckler & Koch pistol. Just enough time before heading to the cafeteria to hop in a simulation ride in a U-60 Black Hawk helicopter. After lunch visit the Hall of Valour and see the Victoria Crosses awarded to Mark Donaldson, Daniel Keighan, Ben Roberts-Smith, and Cameron Baird (posthumous) and read accounts of their bravery in Afghanistan.

One quick visit to the AWM shop to pack your sample bag with a DVD box set *The Australian SAS. The Untold*

Story (\$89.99); a camouflage print cap (\$14.99), and finally, a cuddly Afghanistan Desert teddy bear, standing 42 cm in a presentation box. A war bear! Can you imagine? It one of a 100 limited edition bears. What a steal at \$225. The bear comes with a certificate that says:

Your limited-edition Desert Bear wears the Australian multicam pattern camouflage uniform developed for desert areas and is representative of the clothing worn by ADF personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan circa 2014-2018. The detailing of your bear has been authenticated by the Australian War Memorial.

Just before heading to the carpark we check out the prosthetic limb worn by Sapper Curtis "Kiwi" McGrath who lost both legs in an IED blast on 23 August 2012 in the terrifying Uruzgan Province. When he was wounded, McGrath joked with medics about becoming a Paralympian – four years later he won gold in the K3 canoe sprint event at the Rio Paralympic Games.

That is quite a story. But there is another story. There is another prosthetic limb from Afghanistan. We wonder where it is on display. AWM staff do not know what we are talking about. But it exists. Federal Court documents allege that an unarmed Afghani with a prosthetic leg was shot during an operation in the village of Kakarak, in Afghanistan's deadly Uruzgan Province, in April 2009. At least three former soldiers have reportedly agreed to testify that a Special Forces soldier executed the man by throwing him on the ground and shooting him 10-15 times.

It is further alleged that another soldier retrieved the dead Afghan's prosthetic leg and brought it back to the Tarin Kot base. As a gruesome war trophy, the prosthetic leg was brought back to SAS regimental headquarters, Campbell Barracks in Swanbourne Perth. There it was mounted and framed and used as a prop in photographs and used as a beer drinking vessel by members of the troop.

Two prosthetic legs. One a symbol of bravery, the other a symbol of a sub-human act. Only one prosthetic leg will (continued on Page 8...)



(continued from Page 7...)

ever be seen by the visitors to the Australian War Memorial. Only one story gets out. Alan Stephens, a former RAAF pilot, who visited this exhibition said:

Every year, hundreds of thousands of Australians gain their basic understanding of war from visiting the Australian War Memorial. Regrettably, by telling them only half the story, the Memorial is failing in its responsibility.

Music, literature, oral histories, poetry, and the sound of war machines are also offered for sale in the AWM as long as they complement the glorification of victory and do not write or sing the praises of failure. You can buy David Horners' *In Action with the SAS*, but you cannot purchase Coburn's *Losing Afghanistan: An Obituary for the Intervention*. Shoppers can purchase Ramage & McPhedran's saccharine *Afghanistan: Australia's war, a photographic story of the nation's longest war and those who served*, but they cannot get Jones's *In the Graveyard of Empires* or Anand Gopal Pulitzer Prize nomination *No Good Men among the Living. America, the Taliban, and War through Afghan Eyes*.

The same censorship applies to music. Visitors to the War Memorial can purchase *After the War*, a collection of war songs from Gallipoli to Afghanistan, but they cannot purchase the music from the bustling anti-war genre such as the recently released *The Outpost*. *The Outpost* joins a large group of anti-war movies such as *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Catch 22*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Hacksaw Ridge*, and *Platoon*, all exposing the hubris and incompetence of military leaders. Don't expect to see these DVDs in the AWM shop anytime soon.

Many veterans have shared their experiences with the Brereton Inquiry into atrocities in Afghanistan. The question is, will the curators hold to their promise to change the exhibition "as more veterans share their stories"? I think we know what would happen if a witness to the atrocities asked the Memorial to include his story in the exhibition. Or if a SAS soldier asked for the prosthetic leg from Kakarak to be added to the exhibition. So, what are we left with? A fragile cloth of history that has the wefts of bravery but not the warps of misconduct.

As we approach the 20th anniversary of our war in Afghanistan we must start talking.

William De Maria's latest book, *Australia's War of Shame. Afghanistan 2001-2013* will be published in 2021. His next book, *Australia's War of Shame. Afghanistan 2001-2013*, is due out in 2021, the 20th anniversary of the occupation of Afghanistan year.

AUSTRALIA IS ILL-EQUIPPED

Australia Ill-Equipped to Face the Challenges of the Emerging New World Order

by James O'Neill

September 23rd, 2020

The American writer Mark Twain once observed that there were three kinds of lies. Lies, damn lies and statistics. In the 21st century that list might usefully be added to and include lies of omission. The modern mainstream media do not so much write and broadcast actual lies, although it is not difficult to detect actual examples, as lie by omission.

There are multiple examples of this failing, but a few illustrations will suffice to make the point. The first is the charmed life that the State of Israel enjoys in the local media, in all its forms. There are multiple illustrations of this. In 1968 Israel fought a brief war with its neighbours, including Syria, in the course of which Israel seized Syrian territory in the Golan Heights.

They have been there ever since. This is in violation of multiple facets of international law, including the fundamental principle that foreign land seized in the course of conflict may not be retained when that conflict is concluded. In the case of the Syrian Golan Heights not only has that law been violated, but the United Nations has also passed multiple resolutions demanding that Israel return the occupied land to its rightful owners. The Israelis have simply ignored those resolutions.

The particular point of relevance to Australia, however, is that in the multiple United Nations General Assembly resolutions condemning various Israeli transgressions of international law, Australia is one of a literal handful of countries that voted against each and every such resolution. During the term of the last Labor government Australia abstained on

those votes, but the return of the Liberal-National coalition saw a return to the small group of those voting "No".

That is sufficient cause for concern. What compounds the issue, however, is that the Australian media is almost totally silent on this Australian isolation from the overwhelming majority of United Nations members. This silence extends to a similar almost complete absence of mainstream reports on the, again totally illegal, Israeli bombing of Syrian government targets.

The courtesy of silence is not confined to Israel in the Middle East. In January of this year the Iraqi government passed a resolution demanding the removal of all (unwanted) foreign troops. This was explicitly aimed at the United States and its allies, including Australia, who had occupied the country since the initial invasion in 2003. The Iraqi resolution was barely reported; the ignoring of it by the Australians even less reported.

It needs to be recalled that the original invasion was justified in terms of Iraq's alleged "weapons of mass destruction," which Saddam Hussein was going to unleash on the world, or more specifically, the United States' allies in the region. The allegation was a complete lie. The invasion was also based on a further series of lies long since refuted, but the United States and Australia are still there.

The Americans are still stealing Iraqi oil (as they are in Syria). Australia as a willing accomplice of the Americans is just as guilty as they are of this illegal occupation and theft. But again, where is the political opposition? Where is the critical mainstream media? In both cases, missing in action. Silence in this case does not just imply consent. Australia is a willing accomplice in a major violation of international law and the mainstream media are almost completely missing in action.
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I have written before about the multiple lies that accompanied the illegal invasion and continuing occupation of Afghanistan, now in its 20th year. The mainstream media have at least reported on that ongoing fiasco, although two elements of the invasion and occupation are totally absent from the mainstream discourse.

The first is that one of the principal reasons for the original invasion and continuing occupation is geography. Afghanistan shares borders with a number of countries, all of whom are of intensive geopolitical significance to the Americans. Those neighbours include Iran, long a foe of the Americans; Pakistan, closely aligned with China, not least through a major rail link that will provide China with an alternative outlet in the event of an American and Australian blockade of the Straits of Hormuz; and former members of the USSR are now the subject of fierce Russian-United States competition for influence; and China itself.

The inexorable rise to economic and political influence of China has led to an unprecedented campaign against that nation by the Americans, aided in all possible ways by Australia, despite the economic suicide that Australia will inevitably experience in its increasingly anti-China stance.

Again, one sees a willing complicity between pro-American ideologues in the ruling Australian coalition, from the Prime Minister downward, and their allies in the mainstream media such as Peter Hartcher, foreign editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, whose anti-China rhetoric scales ever more ridiculous heights. Were it not so pathetically tragic it would be almost funny to watch a nation commit suicide with such utter disregard for its true national interests.

The latest manifestation of the folly is the rather pathetic attempt to muster an alliance between Japan, India, Australia and the United States. This is also a manifestly anti-China alliance and is doomed to fail on multiple grounds.

India has an uneasy relationship with China and there have been several relatively small skirmishes over several decades, almost always involving

territorial disputes. But India has had historically close ties to Russia and these continue to the present day with a major economic development between the two countries via Iran currently being developed.

Japan is still treated as an occupied country by the Americans, but it also has growing economic links with China. The forced retirement of Prime Minister Abe presents an opportunity for Japan to reassert its independence. Japan also faces major demographic challenges with its population projected to decline from its current 127 million to below 100 million in 2053 and 88 million in 2065.

Japan is not unique among developed nations in facing the demographic challenge, but its historical aversion to immigration puts it in a unique category. Confronting those demographic challenges will be a major government policy issue in the coming decades. The last thing that Japan wants or needs is a militarily hostile relationship with China, also facing demographic challenges, but from a vastly higher initial base.

Because of historically high migration input Australia does not have the same demographic challenges as many other developed nations. Its challenges are more geopolitical in nature. The most significant of those geopolitical challenges arise from its current status as effectively an American colony as evidenced by multiple government foreign policy decisions since the 1975 overthrow of the Whitlam government.

It is now caught in the relentless fight between the United States and China. The former nation is not responding well to the irresistible decline in its military and economic position respectively *viz a viz* Russia and China and is engaging in a vicious battle to halt its relative decline. The danger for Australia is that it will be collateral damage in that battle between the superpowers.

It is not too late for Australia to assert its independence and take a variety of steps to ensure both its political independence and its prosperity. The history of the past 40 years would, however, suggest that is a vain hope.

James O'Neill is a retired Barrister at Law and geopolitical analyst. He can be contacted at joneill@qldbar.asn.au.

AUSTRALIA-US RELATIONSHIP

The Australian-United States Relationship is Overdue for a Radical Rethink

by James O'Neill

August 25th, 2020

When one looks at a map of the world, Australia is prominently displayed at the southern end of the great Asian land mass. Then one looks at other statistics and one sees that Asia and China in particular is of huge economic importance to Australia. China, for example, is Australia's largest source of foreign tourists, largest source of foreign students, and third largest source of foreign investment. This is in addition to taking more than one-third of total Australian exports, more than any other nation by a substantial margin.

Then one looks at Australia's actual conduct in respect of its Asian neighbours and immediately one is struck by what appears to be an attitude ranging from ambivalence to outright hostility. The clue to this schizophrenic behaviour lies in Australia's historical past.

Until the fall of Singapore to the Japanese in 1941 and the resulting eclipse of British power and influence in the Asian region, of which Australia is a distinctive part, Australia had looked to the United Kingdom as the mother country. The shock of the United Kingdom's speedy eclipse as a military power in the region forced an immediate reappraisal of where Australia's future security lay.

The choice was to switch allegiance to and maintain reliance upon the United States as the new Western hegemon. American troops almost immediately after the Japanese attack on Hawaii began to establish themselves in Australia. Although it remains a curiously undiscussed element of modern Australian reality, United States troops have been stationed in Australia ever since.

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There are currently at least eight United States military bases located on the Australian mainland, yet with the exception of the United States spy base at Pine Gap near Alice Springs, and the recent addition of a naval base in Darwin (in large part a reaction to the leasing of Darwin Harbour to a Chinese consortium) the remaining bases are notable for their absence from the political and media debate.

The profound importance of Pine Gap was revealed obliquely by the coup mounted against the then Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in November 1975, the day before he was to announce to the Australian parliament his government's intention to close Pine Gap. It is another feature of the Australian geopolitical and media landscape that the association between the two events is carefully avoided.

For the first 70 years of the United States military presence in Australia it remained a largely bipartisan endeavour. What was occurring in the Australian economy, however, was a significant shift away from its previous reliance upon the United Kingdom to one more accurately representative of its geographical position. Twelve of Australia's fifteen largest trading partners are Asian countries. (the others being New Zealand, the European Union and the United States).

Despite the multiple changes occurring to Australia's economic landscape (in the broadest sense) the mentality of its political leadership remained family oriented to the West in general and the United States in particular. One manifestation of that political commitment was Australia's eagerness to participate in the United States' wars of choice, first in Korea, then in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

It is simply laughable to suggest that any of these countries posed any kind of threat to Australia's vital interests. Australia's participation in these multiple wars of choice are best interpreted as down payments on the insurance policy that the United States alliance was said to represent.

The economic relationship with the United States has never matched the military and the reality of the past 20+

years is that Asia in general and China in particular has assumed a progressively greater role in Australia's economic and social life.

To say this has created a profound ambivalence in the Australian psyche would be an understatement. Australia is now in the uncomfortable position of trying to maintain its relationship with a rapidly declining United States without disrupting its economic ties to China. The latter country is growing increasingly tired of Australia's ambivalent wanting to have its cake and eat it too.

The United States never was what Australia fondly imagined it to be, but multiple trends over the past two decades have accelerated the United States' relative downward spiral. The details of this downward decline have recently been outlined in an article by Larry Romanoff entitled "American Exceptionalism" and published in the UNZ Review 22 August 2020.

Romanoff details a long list of indicators demonstrating that the United States' relative decline is both substantial and unlikely to be reversed in the foreseeable future. Romanoff concludes his long litany of areas where the United States has fallen behind a growing list of nations by noting that the United States has "for years been deservedly voted the world's most hated nation, is widely reviled as the world's greatest bully, and judged by all people—including Americans—as the greatest threat to world peace."

Which raises the final question: why in the face of this reality and contrary to its overwhelming economic interest, does Australia persist in this profoundly unequal relationship with such a dangerous and dysfunctional ally?

Although the United States will be the last to admit it, their period as the world's most important nation is well past its use by date. The world has moved on from the post-World War II era and among the many changes manifesting themselves is the reassertion of China as the world's most important nation.

China is highly unlikely to use that position in even the faintest duplication of the American era of 1945-2000, rabidly anti-China propaganda by the

United States notwithstanding. Australia needs to recognise these multiple realities and focus on building its relationship with China and its Asian neighbours and to start a radical rethink of where its true interests really lie.

James O'Neill is a retired Barrister at Law and geopolitical analyst. He can be contacted at joneill@qldbar.asn.au.

This article was posted on Tuesday, August 25th, 2020

NORTH KOREAN GAMES

North Korea plays the I dare you game

By Felix Imonti

28 August 2020

Kim Yo-Jong is daring President Moon Jae-In to use his new powers to achieve his forty-year dream of uniting the Koreas and she appears to be winning.

When the demolition charges brought down the Joint Liaison office on the North South Korean border on June 16, President Moon Jae-In's dream for unification crumbled with the structure. Signals from the North at the end of 2017 had prompted Moon Jae-In to send the message to Kim Jong-Un that he was ready to talk and only to talk, because it was the United States that controlled the sanctions. President Moon at best could only function as a marriage broker and encourage a face to face meeting between President Donald Trump and Chairman Kim Jong-Un.

Singapore that followed was a stage performance and love fest that produced headlines. The Hanoi Summit gave only sneers while the October one day Stockholm Conference ended with Kim Myong Gil's the head of the North Korean delegation, announcing that further discussions were useless.

Through the two years of disappointments, there remained a vague hope that something could be salvaged from what had begun with such promise. Donald Trump revealed that he was getting love letters from the alias Rocket Man, but the romance was going nowhere. In spite of the inertia, the North remained amiable with the South. Plans were discussed to link their railway networks only to have (continued on Page 11...)



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Washington veto them.

For Seoul, the linkage means that goods can be shipped overland to Central Asia and to Europe. If gas and oil pipelines from Russia could be included, it would reduce the energy cost for the South. South Korean businesses are looking at the untouched market of twenty-five million consumers and the possibility of infrastructure construction contracts to stimulate the stagnant Southern economy.

Suddenly on June 4, the tone from the North shifted to a barrage of threats and insults. Kim Yo-Jong, the younger sister of the Chairman and the head of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country showed no restraint in her vitriol that ended with the dramatic destruction of the Joint Liaison building and the hope that it symbolized.

On April 15, President Moon celebrated an unexpected political victory. His Democratic Party gained a majority of one hundred and eighty seats in the parliament of three hundred and gave Moon Jae-In the votes to pass long delayed favored legislation. Up North, a new strategy of threat and insult was applied. Underlying the strategy was a desperation as a result of the spread of the C-19 virus that forced the closure of the Chinese border through which North Korea must import a major part of its food.

Before the electoral victory, threatening and insulting the president would have been a waste of time. He did not have the political means to grant any of Pyongyang's demands. Now, that has changed and Kim Yo-Jong has been probing to see if President Moon has the will to exercise his new power and results favorable to the North are appearing.

On July 3, President Moon shuffled members of the cabinet. Lee In-young of the ruling Democratic Party was nominated as the new minister of unification and Im Jong-seok, former presidential chief of staff has been appointed as a special presidential advisor. Lee In-young is known as a facilitator and is expected to push through the parliament controversial legislation, such as ignoring the sanctions. Kim Jong-seok in 1989 was

charged with violation of the national security laws for promoting illegal meetings of South Korean activists with officials in Pyongyang. Like Moon Jae-In, many of his close advisors are strong supporters of unification with the North.

Moon Jae-In has two years of his single five-year term as president to implement his policies and no hope that any change is forthcoming from Washington. Instead, the atmosphere towards the formerly close alliance is turning hostile. Donald Trump is demanding a five hundred percent increase in payments by South Korea to maintain twenty-nine thousand troops in the country. As a warning of possible things to come, Donald Trump has expressed his intent to withdraw all U.S. forces. Already, the U.S. has dismissed two hundred thousand civilian employees whose salaries are being covered by Seoul until an arrangement with Washington is concluded. After the unexpected withdrawal of US support for the Kurds and the withdrawal of twelve thousand troops from Europe, the South Koreans no longer see the United States as a reliable ally.

One way for Moon Jae-In to use his new power is to bypass the American sanctions. With the Chinese and the Russians on the Supreme Council in the United Nations, there is little chance of retaliation. The only danger comes from the United States, but there isn't much interest in Washington with all of the domestic issues to bother with the Koreas. Kim Yo-Jong is daring President Moon to defy Donald Trump and to take a leading position while he has the opportunity. In two years, his political career and chance to change history will be gone. It's now or never; and he is showing signs of breaking. If he does, East Asia will be thrown into chaos with Taiwan's and Japan's security in doubt.

Felix Imonti is a retired director of a private equity firm and currently lives in Canada. He has recently published the book *Violent Justice*, and regularly writes articles in the fields of economics and international politics.

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PALESTINIAN DISCOURSE

Palestinians Are Not Numbers

On the Future of the Palestinian Discourse

by Ramzy Baroud

September 23rd, 2020

P alestine can never be truly understood through numbers, because numbers are dehumanizing, impersonal, and, when necessary, can also be contrived to mean something else entirely. Numbers are not meant to tell the story of the human condition, nor should they ever serve as a substitute for emotions.

Indeed, the stories of life, death — and everything in-between — cannot be truly and fully appreciated through charts, figures and numbers. The latter, although useful for many purposes, is a mere numerical depository of data. Anguish, joy, aspirations, defiance, courage, loss, collective struggle, and so on, however, can only be genuinely expressed through the people who lived through these experiences.

Numbers, for example, tell us that over 2,200 Palestinians were killed during the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip between July 8 and August 27, 2014, over 500 of them being children. Over 17,000 homes were completely destroyed, and thousands of other buildings, including hospitals, schools and factories were either destroyed or severely damaged during the Israeli strikes.

This is all true, the kind of truth that is summarized into a neat infographic, updated occasionally in case, inevitably, some of the critically wounded eventually lose their lives.

But a single chart, or a thousand, can never truly describe the actual terror felt by a million children who feared for their lives during those horrific days; or transport us to a bedroom where a family of ten huddled in the dark, praying for God's mercy as the earth shook, concrete collapsed and glass shattered all around them; or convey the anguish of a mother holding the lifeless body of her child.

It is easy — and justifiable — to hold the media accountable for the dehumanization of the Palestinians or, sometimes, ignoring them altogether.

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However, if blame must be apportioned, then others too, including those who consider themselves ‘pro-Palestine’, must reconsider their own position. We are all, to an extent, collectively guilty of seeing Palestinians as sheer victims, hapless, passive, intellectually stunted and ill-fated people, desperate to be ‘saved.’

When numbers monopolize the limelight in a people’s narrative, they do more damage than merely reduce complex human beings to data; they erase the living, too. Regarding Palestine, Palestinians are rarely engaged as equals; they persist at the receiving end of charity, political expectations and unsolicited instructions on what to say and how to resist. They are often the fodder for political bargains by factions or governments but, rarely, the initiative takers and the shapers of their own political discourse.

The Palestinian political discourse has, for years, vacillated between one constructed around the subject of victimhood — which is often satisfied by numbers of dead and wounded — and another pertaining to the elusive Fatah-Hamas unity. The former only surfaces whenever Israel decides to bomb Gaza under any convenient pretext at the time, and the latter was a response to western accusations that Palestinian political elites are too fractured to constitute a potential ‘peace partner’ for Israeli right-wing Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. Many around the world can only understand — or relate to — Palestinians through their victimization or factional affiliation — which, themselves, carry subsidiary meanings relevant to ‘terrorism’, ‘radicalism’, among others.

The reality is, however, often different from reductionist political and media discourses. Palestinians are not just numbers. They are not spectators either, in a political game that insists on marginalizing them. Soon after the 2014 war, a group of Palestinian youth, together with supporters from around the world, launched an important initiative that aimed to liberate the Palestinian discourse, at least in Gaza,

from the confines of numbers and other belittling interpretations.

‘We Are Not Numbers’ was launched in early 2015. The group’s ‘About Us’ page reads: “numbers don’t convey ... the daily personal struggles and triumphs, the tears and the laughter, the aspirations that are so universal that if it weren’t for the context, they would immediately resonate with virtually everyone.”

Recently, I spoke to several members of the group, including the Gaza Project Manager, Issam Adwan. It was, indeed, inspiring to hear young, articulate and profoundly resolute Palestinians speaking a language that transcends all the stereotypical discourses on Palestine. They were neither victims nor factional, and were hardly consumed by the pathological need to satisfy western demands and expectations.

“We have talents — we are writers, we are novelists, we are poets, and we have so much potential that the world knows little about,” Adwan told me.

Khalid Dader, one of the Organization’s nearly 60 active writers and bloggers in Gaza, contends with the designation that they are ‘storytellers.’ “We don’t tell stories, rather stories tell us ... stories make us,” he told me. For Dader, it is not about numbers or words, but the lives that are lived, and the legacies that often go untold.

Somaia Abu Nada wants the world to know her uncle, because “he was a person with a family and people who loved him.” He was killed in the 2008 Israeli war on Gaza, and his death has profoundly impacted his family and community. Over 1,300 people were also killed in that war. Each one of them was someone’s uncle, aunt, son, daughter, husband or wife. None of them was just a number.

“‘We Are Not Numbers’ made me realize how necessary our voices are,” Mohammed Rafik told me. This assertion cannot be overstated. So many speak on behalf of Palestinians but rarely do Palestinians speak for themselves. “These are unprecedented times of fear, when our land appears to be broken and sad,” Rafik said, “but we never abandon our sense of community.”

Adwan reminded us of Arundhati Roy’s famous quote, “There’s really no such thing as the ‘voiceless’. There are only the

deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard.”

It was refreshing to talk to Palestinians who are taking the decisive step of declaring that they are not numbers, because it is only through this realization and resolve that Palestinian youth can challenge all of us and assert their own collective identity as a people.

Indeed, Palestinians do have a voice, and a strong, resonating one at that.

Ramzy Baroud is a journalist and the editor of *The Palestine Chronicle*. He is the author of five books. His latest is *These Chains Will Be Broken: Palestinian Stories of Struggle and Defiance in Israeli Prisons* (Clarity Press). Baroud is a Non-resident Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Islam and Global Affairs, Istanbul Zaim University (IZU).

This article was posted on Wednesday, September 23rd, 2020

ISRAEL’S WAR ON THE DEAD

The ‘Desaparecidos’ of Palestine: Gantz Escalates Israel’s War on the Dead

by Ramzy Baroud

September 16th, 2020

On September 2, the Israeli government approved a proposal that allows the military to indefinitely withhold the bodies of Palestinians who have been killed by the Israeli army. The proposal was made by the country’s Defense Minister, Benny Gantz.

Gantz is the main political rival of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He also serves the role of the ‘alternate Prime Minister.’ If Netanyahu does not renege on the coalition government agreement he signed with Gantz’s Blue and White Party last April, Gantz will take the helm of Israel’s leadership, starting November 2021.

Since his official induction to the tumultuous world of Israeli politics, Gantz, supposedly a ‘centrist’, has adopted hawkish stances against Palestinians, especially those in Gaza. This way, he hopes to widen his appeal to Israeli voters, the majority of whom have migrated en-masse to the Right. But Gantz’s latest ‘achievement’, that

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of denying dead Palestinians a proper burial, is not entirely a novel idea. In fact, in Israel, bargaining with corpses has been the modus operandi for decades.

According to the Defense Minister's logic, the withholding of bodies will serve as a 'deterrent against terror attacks.' However, judging by the fact that the practice has been in use for many years, there is no proof that Palestinians were ever discouraged from resisting Israel's military occupation due to such strategies.

The new policy, according to Israeli officials, is different from the previous practices. While in the past, Israel has only kept the bodies of alleged 'Palestinian attackers' who belonged to 'terror groups', the latest decision by the Israeli government would extend the rule to apply to all Palestinians, even those who have no political affiliations.

Aside from Gantz's attempt at shoring up his hawkish credentials, the military man-turned politician wants to improve his chances in the on and off, indirect negotiations between Israel and Palestinian groups in Gaza. Israel believes that there are four soldiers who are currently being held in Gaza, including the bodies of two soldiers who were killed during the devastating Israeli war on the besieged Strip in July 2014. Hamas has maintained that two of the four soldiers – Hadar Goldin and Shaul Aaron – are, in fact, still alive and in custody.

For years, low-level talks between Hamas and Israel have aimed at securing a deal that would see an unspecified number of Palestinian prisoners freed in exchange for the detained Israelis. By withholding yet more Palestinian bodies, Tel Aviv hopes to strengthen its position in future talks.

The reality, however, is quite different. The Israeli army has not been returning the bodies of Palestinians who are accused of attacking Israeli soldiers for months, which includes all Palestinians, regardless of their purported political affiliations.

Undoubtedly, withholding corpses as a political strategy is illegal under international law. Article 130 of the Fourth Geneva Convention clearly states

that persons who are killed during armed conflicts should be "honorably buried ... according to the rites of the religion to which they belonged."

The Israeli Supreme Court, however, which quite often rules contrary to international law, resolved on September 9, 2019 – exactly one year before the Israeli cabinet's decision – that the army has the right to continue with the practice of withholding the bodies of dead Palestinians.

While Israel is not the first country to use the dead as a bargaining chip, the practice in Israel has lasted as long as the conflict itself, and has been utilized in myriad ways with the intention of humiliating, collectively punishing and bargaining with Palestinians.

During Argentina's 'Dirty War' (1976–1983), tens of thousands of Argentinians 'disappeared'. Students, intellectuals, trade unionists and thousands of other dissidents were killed by the country's regime in an unprecedented genocide. The bodies of most of these victims were never recovered. However, the practice largely ceased following the collapse of the military junta in 1983.

Similar ordeals have been inflicted by other countries in many parts of the world. In Israel however, the practice is not linked to a specific military regime or a particular leader. The '*desaparecidos*' of Palestine span several generations.

To this day, Israel maintains what is known as the 'cemeteries of numbers'. Salwa Hammad, a coordinator for the Palestinian National Campaign to Retrieve Martyrs, estimates that there are six such cemeteries in Israel, although Israeli authorities refuse to divulge more details regarding the nature of these cemeteries, or exactly how many Palestinian bodies are buried there.

The Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center estimates that 255 Palestinian bodies are buried in these cemeteries, 52 of them being 'detained' there by Israeli authorities since 2016.

In the 'cemeteries of numbers', Palestinians are known, not by name, but by a number, one that only Israel can cross-reference to the actual individual who is buried there. In 2011,

the body of Hafez Abu Zant was released after being held in one of these cemeteries for 35 years, Bernama news agency reported.

According to Hammad, "If the remains are in a 'cemetery of numbers', we get it back in a black bag – some bones, some soil and maybe their clothes."

Following the Israeli cabinet's approval of his proposal, Gantz bragged about his ability to apply "an extensive policy of deterrence since entering office". The truth is that Gantz is merely posturing and taking credit for a protracted Israeli policy that has been applied by all previous governments, regardless of their political orientations.

If Gantz is truly convinced that holding dead Palestinian bodies — while maintaining the Israeli military occupation — will bring about whatever skewed definition of peace and security he has in mind, he is sadly mistaken.

Such policies have proven a complete failure. While Palestinian families are absolutely devastated by this hideous practice, the detention of corpses has never quelled a rebellion, neither in Argentina nor in Palestine.

Ramzy Baroud [see previous article]

This article was posted on Wednesday, September 16th, 2020

"The concept of humanity is an especially useful ideological instrument of imperialist expansion, and in its ethical-humanitarian form it is a specific vehicle of economic imperialism. Here one is reminded of a somewhat modified expression of Proudhon's: whoever invokes humanity wants to cheat. To confiscate the word humanity, to invoke and monopolize such a term probably has certain incalculable effects, such as denying the enemy the quality of being human and declaring him to be an outlaw of humanity; and a war can thereby be driven to the most extreme inhumanity."

— Carl Schmitt



NATO V/S LEBANON

Will Lebanon be the Next US-NATO Humanitarian War? The Elimination of Hezbollah is Israel's Top Priority

By Steven Sahiounie

Global Research, October 04, 2020

The waters off Lebanon are the scene of a gathering Armada of French and American naval ships. What appeared at first to be a humanitarian response to the devastating Beirut Port explosion on August 4, is now feared to be the prelude of the next US-NATO humanitarian war.

French President Emmanuel Macron blamed Hezbollah and all of the Lebanese politicians Sunday and warned of a new civil war. “I’m ashamed of the Lebanese political leaders. Ashamed,” Macron repeated.

He accused them of “collective betrayal” while putting their parties and personal greed above the needs of the Lebanese people.

Some political observers now believe that Lebanon may well be going the way of Somalia, as evidenced by the characteristics of a failing state, such as lack of governance, corruption and incompetence, chronic humanitarian problems, and persistent social tensions.

Prime minister-designate Moustapha Adib stepped down September 26, and Lebanon’s Central Bank reserves may soon dry up and the government would no longer be able to subsidize basic goods such as fuel, medicine, and wheat.

Macron has been pressing Lebanese politicians to form a Cabinet made up of technocrats that can work on urgent reforms, and Macron has traveled twice to Beirut since August 4, while making it a personal mission to try to repair the devastated country, which some see as a neo-colonial farce.

Macron criticized the Lebanese system of sectarian politics, “as if competence was linked to religious confession.”

He lambasted Hezbollah demanding to know its characteristics and identity, and he criticized Lebanese political leaders from all parties and dynasties. Each Lebanese faction has found a foreign godfather and has ended up as a pawn in a regional and international chess game. Tens of billions of dollars have reportedly been looted by politicians and



deposited in European and American banks.

US-NATO Humanitarian wars

In 1999 NATO updated its ‘Strategic Concept’ to allow members to defend not only other members but also conduct ‘non-Article 5 Response Operations’. It would be under this mechanism that a US-NATO military operation, along with an Arab Gulf coalition, would be used to attack, invade and defeat Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Since 2002, it was agreed that NATO forces could be sent “wherever they are needed,” regardless of the location, and in 2006 the NATO Response Force (NRF) of 25,000 troops has been fully operational.

US President Bill Clinton and NATO waged the humanitarian war on the former Yugoslavia, which broke a larger nation into ‘bite-sized’ pieces.

Critics of the US-NATO bombing of Yugoslavia have argued that certain attacks forming part of the campaign violated international humanitarian law. Noam Chomsky argued that the main objective of the US-NATO war was to force Yugoslavia into the Western economic system since it was the only country in the region that stood alone in defiance of the US world domination.

Hezbollah targeted by US-NATO war machine

Hezbollah’s prominence in the Lebanese government caused foreign donors and investors to stay away, because of US sanctions targeted on anyone with ties to the group, based on their designation as a terrorist group.

Hezbollah’s leader, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, said on Tuesday,

“We welcomed President Macron when he visited Lebanon and we welcomed the French initiative, but not

for him to be judge, jury and executioner, and ruler of Lebanon.”

Nasrallah has headed the group since 1992 as Secretary-General; however, its military wing is considered as a terrorist organization in 21 countries, as well as by the Arab League and the European Union.

Hezbollah’s 1985 manifesto listed its objectives as the expulsion of “the Americans, the French and their allies definitely from Lebanon, putting an end to any colonialist entity on our land”.

In 2008, the Lebanese government unanimously recognized Hezbollah’s existence as an armed organization and guarantees its right to “liberate or recover occupied lands”.

Hezbollah is an armed resistance group, as well as a political party that has seats in Parliament through free and fair elections. Their ally in Parliament is the ‘Amal Movement’, and together they hold the majority of Parliamentary seats. In a democracy, the majority rules and this is why recently Hezbollah and Amal insisted on choosing the Finance minister, which became a conflict point in the view of Macron.

Hezbollah is resisting the Israeli occupation of Shebaa Farms, an area in the far south of Lebanon. Moreover, Hezbollah also is resisting the Israeli occupation of Palestine. At one time, all of the Arab world demanded the rights for the Palestinian people, who have lived under brutal military occupation since 1948, and the UN has ratified resolutions calling for a 2-state solution, where Palestine would be given the land of the 1967 borders, and both Israel and Palestine would live side by side in peace.

In 2017, Ron Prosor, former Israeli ambassador to the UN said Hezbollah was then “10 times as strong now as it was in 2006, and its military infrastructure permeates Lebanon.” He added that Lebanese President Michel Aoun has also “embraced” Hezbollah’s arsenal as “a principal element of Lebanon’s defense.”

Many critics tried to blame Hezbollah
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for the Beirut Port blast on August 4, but the Lebanese officials and locals admitted that Hezbollah had no access to the Port, or authority over it. Even officials known to be antagonistic of Hezbollah admitted that the blame would not plausibly stick on Hezbollah. The exact cause is not known, but it may have been an accident borne of corruption and ineptitude, or it could be sabotage, according to President Michel Aoun. MP Machnouck, member of the Sunni-led ‘Future Party’ stated he was convinced Israel was responsible.

The elimination of Hezbollah is Israel’s top priority

A former director of Israel’s Counter-Terrorism Bureau, Brig. Gen. Nitzan Nuriel, said that another war between Israel and Hezbollah was “only a question of time.”

Hezbollah is the only force that Israel has faced that has caused the Israeli Defense Forces to retreat without success. Defeating Hezbollah is a top Israeli priority.

Under the Obama Administration’s Middle Eastern policy, Iran became a negotiations partner, while pressuring Israel to conclude a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

Netanyahu recently gave a virtual speech to the UN Security Council, in which he displayed a detailed map of Beirut, and he predicted the location of where a future explosion would occur, and he blamed Hezbollah for having a weapons factory and warehouse at the location, which was a residential area. During the Netanyahu speech, Nasrallah was also giving a live televised speech in Lebanon and was told what Netanyahu had claimed. He immediately invited all media to go to the location that Netanyahu portrayed in his map, and inspect for themselves if there were any weapons or warehouse present. Later, the media arrived, and live local TV coverage showed that in fact, the location was a cooking gas canister factory. This confirmed the Israeli accusation was false and led experts to assume a direct connection between the Port blast, and the Israeli proposed blast in Netanyahu’s map.

The Israeli occupation of Lebanon

Israel occupied the south of Lebanon for 23 years, during which men, women, and children were imprisoned in Khiam Prison, where they were routinely tortured, abused and many died. Hezbollah aligned with many other Lebanese resistance groups, who resisted the occupation vociferously until Israel gave up and left in 2000. The south of Lebanon is populated by both Shiite Muslims and Christians. The steadfastness of Hezbollah is remembered by those Lebanese citizens. However, the North of Lebanon was never occupied and lived free of fear, oppression, and intimidation which may have influenced many Lebanese citizens either support or reject Hezbollah. As they say, “Your view depends on where your seat is.”

Using ISIS as ground troops by US-NATO

Recently, the Lebanese Army fought fierce battles against Radical Islamic terrorists near Tripoli in the north, in the area of Wadi Khalid.

In 2016, Efraim Inbar, an Israeli scholar, and the director of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies wrote, “The continuing existence of ISIS serves a strategic purpose,” and added that ISIS “can be a useful tool in undermining” Iran, Hezbollah, Syria, and Russia and should not be defeated. He wrote, “Stability is not a value in and of itself. It is desirable only if it serves our interests,” and stressed that the West’s “main enemy” is not ISIS; it is Iran.

Saudi Arabia part of the Coalition against Hezbollah

The King of Saudi Arabia rarely gives speeches; however, he made a televised speech in which he accused Hezbollah of the Beirut Port blast, apparently unaware that that accusation has been debunked. This is the same King who summoned [Prime Minister Saad Hariri](#) from Lebanon to be kidnapped and forced to resign in Saudi Arabia. It was President Macron who personally negotiated Hariri’s freedom.

It appears that Saudi Arabia will be among the first Arab countries to send support for a US-NATO attack on Lebanon to eliminate Hezbollah.

This article was originally published on [Mideast Discourse](#).

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Featured image is from MD

[War on Lebanon? The Geopolitical Battlefield. Mounting Tensions with Israel](#)

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COLUMBIA-US AXIS

Colombia-U.S. Axis: Hitting at Venezuela

By **W. T. Whitney Jr.**

September 28, 2020 ["Information Clearing House"](#) -

Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and Colombian President Ivan Duque, meeting in Bogota on Sept. 20, talked about “managing the COVID-19 response … narcotraffickers … and [President] Maduro’s illegitimate regime,” according to the State Department. A Cuban observer insists they explored “when to begin military actions and sabotage in Venezuela.” Elliott Abrams, the White House official responsible for Venezuelan affairs, dismissed the idea of U.S. military engagement as an “absurdity.”

As talks were taking place in Bogota, joint naval and air force exercises were underway along Colombia’s Caribbean coast. Supposedly, they were preparing to fight an illicit drug trade attributed to Venezuela. That’s why the U.S. Navy has been monitoring Venezuela’s northern coast since April. Colombia itself, of course, supplies most of the illegal drugs entering the United States.

The specter looms of an “October Surprise”, that staple of U.S. presidential electioneering. It’s widely assumed that to win in Florida, candidates must show off their anti-revolutionary zeal to voters of Cuban or Venezuelan origin. Decisive action against Venezuela now might do the trick.

Colombia acts as the local U.S. enforcer as regards Venezuela. That role grew out of the U.S.’ “Plan Colombia,” which after 2000 had the United States building up Colombia’s

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military, harassing leftist insurgents, and establishing a base for regional military operations—all under the pretext of combating illegal drugs.

Before arriving in Bogota, Pompeo had visited Venezuela's other neighbors—Surinam, Brazil, and Guyana. In Boa Vista, located 141 miles from the Venezuelan border, he met with Brazil's foreign minister and commiserated with Venezuelan refugees.

Pompeo backed Guyana's resistance to a Venezuelan claim on the Essequibo region, where ExxonMobil is extracting oil. He authorized U.S. participation in military patrols along that disputed border. China, investing in Guyana and Surinam, has invited both to join its Belt and Road initiative.

On Aug. 18 in Bogota, White House

National Security

advisor Robert

O'Brien had already

presented President

Duque with a new

version of Plan

Colombia called

"Colombia Grows."

By way of nurturing

the alliance, it offers

"rural development,

infrastructure

expansion, [and]

new opportunities

for investment."

The presence at the

meeting of Admiral

Craig Fuller, Chief

of the U.S. Southern

Command, and

Mauricio Claver-

Carone, head at the

time of the National

Security Council's

Western

Hemisphere Division, suggests

Venezuela was on the agenda.

Venezuela is in the spotlight now for good reason. National Assembly elections take place there on Dec. 6, and the right-wing opposition is fractured. Both the United States and Juan Guaidó, the former National Assembly president named as Venezuela's president by the United States, want an election boycott. Other opposition groups and leaders,

notably former presidential candidate Henrique Capriles, will be participating.

Signs of unity are cropping up—not good news in Washington. Says a government supporter: "on December 6, many of us will vote for the government, others will vote for the opposition, but all of us ... will be voting against the criminal blockade that has caused us so much damage."

For the U.S. government, any hint of election normalcy would be a reverse. Sympathetic world leaders, counting on a new government in Venezuela but detecting signs of durability, might adjust their thinking. Maybe the present show of hostility—the meetings, naval maneuvers, and new sanctions on diesel fuel—would keep them in line.

U.S. strategists may be fretting also because regime change hasn't happened,

cyber-attack causing a nationwide electrical blackout in March 2019, a military officers' coup attempt in April 2019 backed by Guaidó, and in May renegade Venezuelan troops led by former U.S. Green Berets invading from Colombia.

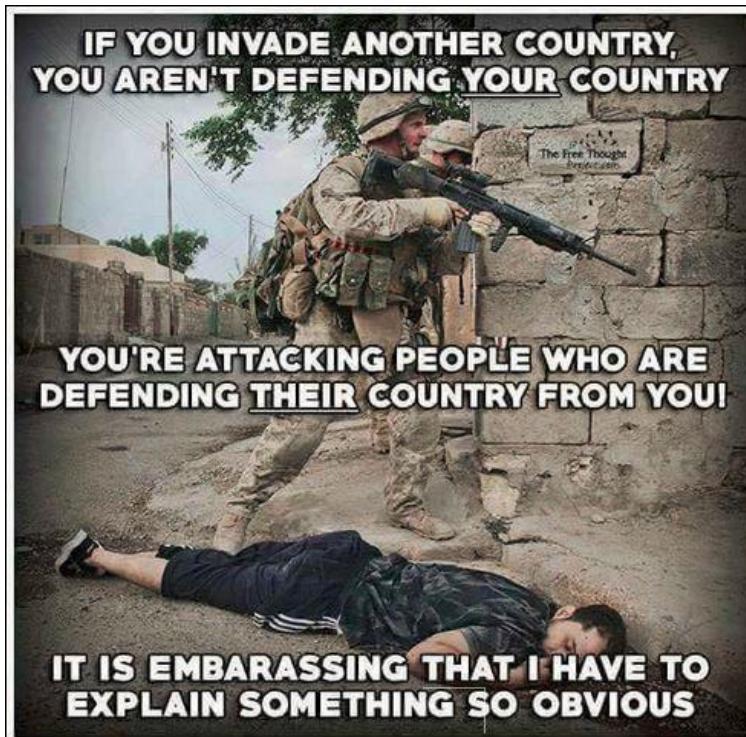
Plotters often plan and prepare in Colombia and find refuge there afterwards.

U.S. economic sanctions and U.S. plundering of Venezuela's economic assets abroad have led to devastating shortages of credit, food, medicines, and supplies for oil production, which has collapsed. Oil exports have accounted for more than 95% of the country's export income. There's no other money available to pay for imported food and medicines or for social services. Even so, Venezuela's government survives.

In Colombia presently, societal disruption and a newly energized protest movement may be deflecting the government's attention from regime change in Venezuela.

Unemployment is 20.2 percent; 19 million Colombians live in poverty, eight million in extreme poverty; 6.5 percent of the people are food-deprived; 2 million Colombians are illiterate; the health care system is a disaster. According to one report, 992 social leaders and 229 former FARC insurgents have been killed since late 2016, when the government's peace agreement with the FARC was signed.

A U.S. "Security Force Assistance Brigade" arrived in early June to prepare a "full spectrum offensive against Venezuela." But Colombia's Senate rejected its presence, a court decision validated the Senate's action, and then Defense Minister Carlos Holmes Trujillo welcomed the U.S. troops anyway. A U.S. military presence in Colombia is not new, but now popular opposition to more U.S. troops is growing.
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despite all the financial and logistical support that's been delivered to Venezuelan dissidents and plotters during the presidencies of both Presidents Maduro and Chavez.

The list of recent attacks is impressive: street protests in 2014 and 2017, a drone attack against Venezuela's top leaders in August 2018, humanitarian aid pushed across the Colombia-Venezuela border in January 2019 to incite a military uprising, a



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Police in Bogota killed law student Javier Ordoñez on Sept. 9. He had joined many thousands who were protesting the killings of social leaders, a flawed response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and neoliberalism. Later that day, the police killed 11 young people. Broadening their demands, demonstrators called for Pompeo's visit and the U.S.-Colombian military exercises to be canceled.

Former President Alvaro Uribe, meanwhile, is under house arrest. This recipient of the U.S. Medal of Freedom and collaborator with drug traffickers and murderous paramilitaries is accused of complicity in three paramilitary massacres, including the El Aro massacre of 1997. Former paramilitary chieftain Salvatore Mancuso, responsible for that massacre and recently released from a U.S. prison, is resisting repatriation to Colombia where he might have to testify against Uribe. An obliging U.S. government may let him stay. Colombian critics of Uribe and his protégé Duque are outraged.

In both countries, ramifications of the pandemic, serious economic problems, and political divisions serve, if for nothing else, to lessen the urgency of other concerns. It's a context in which, for many Colombians, plotting against Venezuela, especially in collaboration with the United States, may no longer be a priority. In Colombia, reports one observer, Duque has "all but lost legitimacy as president."

If indeed direct military intervention is unlikely, the option of undercover war remains. In fact, paramilitary detachments have been operating in Venezuela for many years. The U.S. government itself recently showed what war in the shadows will look like.

Venezuelan authorities are prosecuting a CIA-connected former U.S. Marine who, well-armed and with explosives, was arrested on Sept. 14 with Venezuelan accomplices near a large oil-refinery complex in Falcon State. Matthew John Heath is accused of preparing "acts of sabotage."

Question: How committed are anti-Venezuelan hawks in the United States to direct military intervention? Maybe they doubt the capabilities of their

Colombian ally. Maybe a mess of the kind visited upon Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya would be too close to home. Maybe, in the end, harassing the Maduro government, destabilization, and bluster will be enough, at least for keeping their foreign and domestic friends in line.

Masses of working people in Venezuela are mobilized for better lives and for peace. They are anti-imperialist. They are why their government survives. It would survive easier with a kindred movement in Colombia. A U.S. version would be icing on the cake.

W.T. Whitney Jr. grew up on a dairy farm in Vermont and now lives in rural Maine. He practiced and taught pediatrics for 35 years and long ago joined the Cuba solidarity movement, working with Let Cuba Live of Maine, Pastors for Peace, and the Venceremos Brigade. - *Source* -

THE DOUBLE DE-COUPING

By Alastair Crooke

October 07, 2020

The defining event of this post-Covid era (whomsoever wins in the U.S. elections), will likely be the U.S. de-coupling from China – Tech de-coupling of telecoms (from Huawei's 5G); de-coupling from Chinese media and chat platforms; the purging of all China tech from the U.S. microchip ecosystem; the disconnecting of China from internet, from app stores, from undersea cables; and from access to U.S. cloud-based data storage systems – under Pompeo's *Clean Network* programme. This represents the first heavy artillery barrage to a prolonged, and mud-laden, trench-warfare ahead.

This is not Cold War, but a reversion to an earlier era that then ended with hot war – when policy-makers (and markets) famously failed to appreciate the rising danger that was accreting during the sleepy-summer hiatus that elapsed between the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in late June 1914, and the outbreak of the First World War, five weeks later.

Diplomats of course understood that two heavily-armed alliances were on potential a collision course, but there had been episodes of sabre-rattling for several years before, whose failure to come to a head had induced a sense that the *status quo* would extend

indefinitely. Opinion then had been influenced by Norman Angell's 1909 best-seller, *The Great Illusion*, arguing that war had become impossible, because global trade and capital flows were too closely interlinked.

What they did not understand at that earlier moment was that the circumstances of mid-1914 (the Sarajevo moment) seemed so propitious both for Germany to aspire to empire, and for Britain to believe that it could quash it utterly. Just as circumstances are believed – by some in Washington – to be serendipitous today.

Trump *et al* seem convinced that the U.S. can use its financial and trade muscle – whilst America still predominates – to crush China's rise, contain Russia, and arm-twist Europe into tech vassalage. The Balkan war in the early 20th century locked Germany's fickle ally Austria-Hungary into Germany's greater fight against Russia. And today, Pompeo hopes to lock (fickle) Europe into America's containment of Russia. The Nordstream threats and the Navalny scam are just some of Pompeo's 'levers'.

Pompeo's *Clean Network* assault is today's 'Sarajevo moment'. Policy-makers, and markets, remain blasé (as in 1914, when markets awoke to the risks, only in August, on the outbreak of war). By late January next year, the U.S. is very likely to be paralysed in an intractable, possibly violent, constitutional crisis – and in all-out tech war with China. By then, Europe and America are likely to be in full recession, as Coronavirus fires up for the winter.

Tech de-coupling is not explicitly military, yet nor is it system-neutral: Who it is that sucks up our data, and then mines it via algorithms, to know what we think, what we feel, and do, precisely has the power to shape our society socially *and politically*. The point here is that our data – were we to remain in the U.S. digital sphere – is about to be used and shaped, in a polarized, adversarial manner. And with the drums of war beating, inevitably comes the call for public full commitment.

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It is obvious that, with the *Clean Fortress America* project, Pompeo is taking Antonio Gramsci's thesis that the cultural sphere is the most productive arena of political struggle – *and is inverting it*. Thus, instead of culture being the site of revolutionary action against an élite (*per Gramsci*), U.S. social net-platforms, cleansed of non-western rivals, become precisely the site where the system reasserts itself – neutering the possibility of political resistance *via* its most powerful weapons: big platform algorithmic and MSM demonisation of China (i.e. the 'China Plague') and Russia ('assassination of its dissidents'). These can be the means by which a largely war-adverse Europe can be turned against China and Russia, in the name of advancing its 'universal' liberal values.

There is however, another equally significant de-coupling edging its way ahead: "Russia has been watching with growing disquiet that Germany is in another historical transition", Ambassador Bhadrakumar writes, "that holds disturbing parallels with the transition from Bismarck in the pre-World War 1 European setting ... To illustrate the change sweeping over the German ideology, in an interview with the weekly magazine *Die Zeit* in July, the German Defence Minister (who is also the acting chairwoman of the ruling CDU) stressed that it is "high time" to discuss "how Germany must position itself in the world in the future".

She said, Bhadrakumar continues, that Germany is "expected to show leadership, not only as an economic power", but also in "collective defence ... it concerns a strategic view of the world, and ultimately it concerns the question of whether we want to actively shape the global order." "Plainly put, the German voice is no longer the voice of pacifism, the Ambassador concludes".

Kramp-Karrenbauer said "the claim of the current Russian leadership" to advocate their interests "very aggressively" must be "confronted with a clear position: We are well-fortified, and in case of doubt, ready to defend ourselves. We see what Russia is doing and we will not let the Russian leadership get away with it".

"Suffice to say", Bhadrakumar summarises, "seventy-five years after the end of World War 2, German imperialism is stirring — and, [its élites] once again, targeting Russia ... Berlin plays a leading role in the western offensive against Russia and leads the NATO battlegroup in Lithuania. Germany and the U.S. are also working closely together on NATO moves against Russia. Germany is the most important staging area for NATO units deployed at the Eastern European border with Russia. And the German media is awash with opinion demanding that the NATO commitment should now finally be fulfilled and military spending increased to 2 percent of GDP".

The well-connected, *Carnegie* Moscow bureau chief, Dmitri Trenin, writes in a similar vein: "Berlin is ending the era launched by Gorbachev of a trusting and friendly relationship with Moscow. Russia, for its part, no longer expects anything from Germany, and therefore does not feel obliged to take into account its opinion or interests ... One can only imagine how Putin reacted to Merkel's announcement that Navalny had been poisoned with the Novichok nerve agent. A stab in the back is the mildest reaction that comes to mind".

Trenin writes: "Thirty years ago, German reunification seemed to be not only a historic reconciliation, but also a guarantee of future friendly relations and close cooperation between two peoples and states. Now that, too, has become a thing of the past ... Russia is also embarking on a new chapter. The situation is accordingly becoming both simpler and more risky: The Kremlin is unlikely to take any drastic action immediately, but will from now on view Germany as being controlled by the United States. [And] as for the United States, Russia has long been engaged in a zero-sum hybrid war with it, in which there are fewer and fewer inhibitive factors left".

Merkel's generation of German politicians are staunchly 'Atlanticist', but only in the 'liberal way' – as she herself is. That is, they are committed to upholding the 'universal liberal value system'. This places her, of course, at loggerheads with Trump; yet paradoxically, that makes the German

leadership that much more susceptible to U.S. manipulation on China and Russia (which are now fully bi-partisan issues in Washington) – since, as Samuel Huntington noted, "universalism is the [useful] ideology of the West for confronting other cultures". Shades of 1914, when Austria-Hungary was locked into the greater fight with Russia, in a similar fashion!

It is not hard to see the German élites' bottom line: they are counting on a Biden win. Norbert Röttgen, chair of the Bundestag's foreign affairs committee, and a candidate for the leadership of the CDU, put it this way: "Should Joe Biden win, I would expect his government to return to a partnership based on rational thinking and cooperation" i.e. the Euro-élites are counting on the return to 'business as usual'. It won't be though – the 'old normal' is well behind us.

European Council President, Charles Michel, spoke this week about how the EU can achieve 'strategic autonomy': The EU "wants to be stronger, more autonomous, and firmer". The EU, Michel continued, is about to develop an "open model with greater awareness of our strength, with more realism, and perhaps less naivety. We have faith in the virtues of free and open economies, never in protectionism ... But from now on, we will better enforce the level playing field, in a market open to those who respect its standards".

Oh yes? Well, this may be fine for minnow states to be treated as vassals seeking an opening with Empire's good grace for its manufactures, but it won't work for tech, the New Economy, U.S., or the China-Russia axis. (Never mind that hypocrisy that the 'level playing field' is not a form of EU protectionism).

The U.S. is pulling the commanding heights of tech and its standards and taking them 'back home'. China will continue to be expelled from the western digital sphere – as far as the U.S. is able. Wolfgang Munchau reports that the German coalition now has approved a de facto Huawei ban. Its goal is to kill Huawei through full-force application of German
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bureaucracy. And Russia is de-coupling from Europe to work more closely with China, (thanks to Merkel and her cohorts).

But what then? Europe has no substitute to Huawei. 5G networks effectively represent the nervous system connecting the political, strategic, military, informative, economic, financial, industrial and infrastructural dimensions at a personal, local, national, international and transnational level. 5G networks, together with the exponential progresses in computing power and advances in AI, are the transformative agency of the New Economy. The point here is latency: the ability to integrate differing streams of data all together, and with virtually ***no delay***. It is key not just to everyday ways of life, but to defence systems too.

Machine Learning is a specific subset of AI that trains machines. It trains AI to learn and adapt, and without the latency of human-driven decisions, efficiency can be at the forefront. Machine Vision: From autonomous cars and drones to robots and so much more of today's cutting-edge technologies, they all share a dependence on machine vision. That means these machines must be able to "see" to perform their tasks in the physical world.

And all these need 5G to reduce latency. The U.S. hasn't got it. And China leads. It leads on Big Data and on AI. Yes, the U.S. leads on semiconductors or 'chips', but for how long? China simply won't allow itself to be expelled from the global semiconductor market. IT experts from Russia, ASEAN and Huawei are explaining, as Pepe Escobar reports, what could be described as a limitation of quantum physics is preventing a steady move from 5 nm (billionth of a metre) to 3 nm chips. This means that the next breakthroughs may come from other semiconductor materials and techniques. So China, in this aspect, is practically at the same level of research as Taiwan, South Korea and Japan. China's breakthroughs have involved a crucial switch from silicon to carbon. Chinese research is totally invested in this switch, and is nearly ready to transpose its lab work into industrial production.

To whom then is China turning for tech co-operation? It is not Germany. As *Asia Times'* David Goldman notes, "the cumulative impact of a series of sanctions on Russia has pushed Russia toward a strategic alliance with China, including close cooperation with China on 5G telecommunications and semiconductor R&D. Russia's economy may be the size of Italy's, but its brain is bigger than its body: It graduates more engineers per annum than the United States, and they are very well trained".

And so – back to our 'Sarajevo moment'. Pompeo has pulled the trigger on the Arch Duke. Dynamics have been set in motion. Yet we remain stuck in the interregnum waiting on the U.S. – whilst Euro-leaders count that Biden must win, and 'normality' be restored.

In the early twentieth century, Britain's attempt to rip-apart global supply lines – to preserve its own; and to deny Germany *its* external links, effectively channeled resurgent German ambitions eastwards, across the plain of Europe, and ultimately, to a drive on Russia. It ended with war and economic depression.

Today, the U.S. demands that Europe sever from Russia and China, yet America has entered into internal crisis – and even at the best of times, cannot substitute for the Asian axis in most tech spheres. It would be hubris for Europe to imagine it can build a New Economy in rivalry to the Big Two, and absent their tech and diplomatic strategic co-operation. For Europe to try to sit out the present 'phony war' like the Grand Panjandrum, waiting for tech suitors to come to it, is no strategy, but rather a receipt for Depression.

It is not a great prospect ... for European peoples struggling, not with the chimaera of Euro-empire, but with trying to manage their lives in difficult Corona times. One cannot help but notice that European politics at the national level is all domestic (school openings, virus restrictions and shrinking economies), whilst far-away Brussels fantasises about building a stronger, more autonomous, European 'empire'.

Alastair Crooke is a former British diplomat, founder and director of the Beirut-based Conflicts Forum. - "*Source*" -

SINOPHOBIA

Sinophobia, Lies and Hybrid War

By Pepe Escobar

September 24, 2020 "Information Clearing House" –

It took one minute for President Trump to introduce a virus at the virtual 75th UN General Assembly, blasting "the nation which unleashed this plague onto the world".

And then it all went downhill.

Even as Trump was essentially delivering a campaign speech and could not care less about the multilateral UN, at least the picture was clear enough for all the socially distant "international community" to see.

Here's the geopolitical chessboard, once again; it's the "indispensable nation" versus the Russia-China strategic partnership.

As he stressed the importance of the UN, Xi could not be more explicit that no nation has the right to control the destiny of others: "Even less should one be allowed to do whatever it likes and be the hegemon, bully, or boss of the world."

The US ruling class obviously won't take this act of defiance lying down. The full spectrum of Hybrid War techniques will continue to be relentlessly turbo-charged against China, coupled with rampant Sinophobia, even as it dawns on many Dr. Strangelove quarters that the only way to really "deter" China would be Hot War.

Alas, the Pentagon is overstretched – Syria, Iran, Venezuela, South China Sea. And every analyst knows about China's cyber warfare capabilities, integrated aerial defense systems, and carrier-killer Dongfeng missiles.

For perspective, it's always very instructive to compare military expenditure. Last year, China spent \$261 billion while the US spent \$732 billion (38% of the global total).

Rhetoric, at least for the moment, prevails. The key talking point, incessantly hammered, is always about China as an existential threat to the "free world", even as the myriad

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declinations of what was once Obama's "pivot to Asia" not so subtly accrue the manufacture of consent for a future war.

This report by the Qiao Collective neatly identifies the process: "We call it Sinophobia, Inc. – an information industrial complex where Western state funding, billion dollar weapons manufacturers, and right-wing think tanks coalesce and operate in sync to flood the media with messages that China is public enemy number one. Armed with state funding and weapons industry sponsors, this handful of influential think tanks are setting the terms of the New Cold War on China. The same media ecosystem that greased the wheels of perpetual war towards disastrous intervention in the Middle East is now busy manufacturing consent for conflict with China."

That "US military edge"

The demonization of China, infused with blatant racism and rabid anti-communism, is displayed across a full, multicolored palette: Hong Kong, Xinjiang ("concentration camps"), Tibet ("forced labor"), Taiwan, "China virus"; the Belt and Road's "debt trap".

The trade war runs in parallel – glaring evidence of how "socialism with Chinese characteristics" is beating Western capitalism at its own high-tech game. Thus the sanctioning of over 150 companies that manufacture chips for Huawei and ZTE, or the attempt to ruin TikTok's business in the US ("But you can't rob it and turn it into a US baby", as Global Times editor-in-chief Hu Xijin tweeted).

Still, SMIC (Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation), China's top chip company, which recently profited from a \$7.5 billion IPO in Shanghai, sooner or later may jump ahead of US chip manufacturers.

On the military front, "maximum pressure" on China's eastern rim proceeds unabated – from the revival of the Quad to a scramble to boost the Indo-Pacific strategy.

Think Tankland is essential in coordinating the whole process, via for instance the Center for Strategic & International Studies, with "corporation and trade association donors" featuring usual suspects such as Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, General Dynamics and Northrop Grumman.

So here we have what Ray McGovern brilliantly describes as MICIMATT – the Military-Industrial-Congressional-Intelligence-Media-Academia-Think-Tank

complex – as the comptrrollers of Sinophobia Inc.

Assuming there would be a Dem victory in November, nothing will change. The next Pentagon head will probably be Michele Flournoy, former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (2009-2012) and co-founder of the Center for a New American Security, which is big on both the "China challenge" and the "North Korean threat". Flournoy is all about boosting the "U.S. military's edge" in Asia.

So what is China doing?

China's top foreign policy principle is to advance a "community of shared future for mankind". That is written in the constitution, and implies that Cold War 2.0 is an imposition from foreign actors.

China's top three priorities post-Covid-19 are to finally eradicate poverty; solidify the vast domestic market; and be back in full force to trade/investment across the Global South.

China's "existential threat" is also symbolized by the drive to implement a non-Western trade and investment system, including everything from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund to trade bypassing the US dollar.

A Harvard Kennedy School report at least tried to understand how Chinese "authoritarian resilience" appeals domestically. The report found out that the CCP actually benefitted from increased popular support from 2003 to 2016, reaching an astonishing 93%, essentially due to social welfare programs and the battle against corruption.

By contrast, when we have a MICCIMAT investing in Perpetual War – or "Long War" (Pentagon terminology since 2001) – instead of health, education and infrastructure upgrading, what's left is a classic wag the dog. Sinophobia is perfect to blame the abysmal response to Covid-19, the extinction of small businesses and the looming New Great Depression on the Chinese "existential threat".

The whole process has nothing to do with "moral defeat" and complaining

that "we risk losing the competition and endangering the world".

The world is not "endangered" because at least vast swathes of the Global South are fully aware that the much-ballyhooed "rules-based international order" is nothing but a quite appealing euphemism for Pax Americana – or Exceptionalism. What was designed by Washington for post-WWII, the Cold War and the "unilateral moment" does not apply anymore.

Bye, bye Mackinder

As President Putin has made it very clear over and over again, the US is no longer "agreement capable". As for the "rules-based international order", at best is a euphemism for privately controlled financial capitalism on a global scale.

The Russia-China strategic partnership has made it very clear, over and over again, that against NATO and Quad expansion their project hinges on Eurasia-wide trade, development and diplomatic integration.

Unlike the case from the 16th century to the last decades of the 20th century, now the initiative is not coming from the West, but from East Asia (that's the beauty of "initiative" incorporated to the BRI acronym).

Enter continental corridors and axes of development traversing Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Indian Ocean, Southwest Asia and Russia all the way to Europe, coupled with a Maritime Silk Road across the South Asian rimland.

For the very first time in its millenary history, China is able to match ultra-dynamic political and economic expansion both overland and across the seas. This reaches way beyond the short era of the Zheng He maritime expeditions during the Ming dynasty in the early 15th century.

No wonder the West, and especially the Hegemon, simply cannot comprehend the geopolitical enormity of it all. And that's why we have so much Sinophobia, so (continued on Page 21...)



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many Hybrid War techniques deployed to snuff out the “threat”.

Eurasia, in the recent past, was either a Western colony, or a Soviet domain. Now, it stands on the verge of finally getting rid of Mackinder, Mahan and Spykman scenarios, as the heartland and the rimland progressively and inexorably integrate, on their own terms, all the way to the middle of the 21st century.

Pepe Escobar is correspondent-at-large at *Asia Times*. His latest book is *2030*. - "Source" -

THE UNITED STATES OF WAR

US Military Bases Are Key Pieces of the Global War Machine

Review of *The United States of War: A Global History of America's Endless Conflicts*, from Columbus to the Islamic State by David Vine (University of California Press, 2020).

By Sarah Lazare

October 07, 2020 "Information Clearing House" -

We don't hear about them very often, but the estimated 800 US military bases around the globe have played an essential role in turning the whole world into a bloody battlefield. Any effort to roll back US empire has to include dismantling the machinery of US military bases.

The estimated eight hundred US bases in more than seventy countries around the world are a massive military presence unlike anything else seen today, yet rarely acknowledged in US political discourse.

The Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Okinawa might occasionally grab a headline thanks to sustained and vigorous anti-base protests, and US military bases in Guam might briefly make news due to public opposition to “Valiant Shield” war exercises that have taken place on the US colony during the pandemic. But, overwhelmingly, foreign bases simply are not discussed.

They are immutable, unremarkable facts, rarely considered even during an election cycle that repeatedly invokes concepts like “democracy” and “endless war” and, thanks to a raging pandemic and climate crisis, raises existential

questions about what “America” is and should be.

The people living in the countries and US colonies impacted by these bases — the workers who build their plumbing systems, latrines, and labor in the sex trades that often spring up around them, the residents subjected to environmental toxins and war exercises — simply do not exist.

Yet according to David Vine, a political anthropologist at American University, these military bases hold the key to understanding why the United States has consistently been in some state of war or military invasion for nearly every year of its existence as a country.

In his new book, *The United States of War: A Global History of America's Endless Conflicts, from Columbus to the Islamic State*, Vine starts with a simple premise: US military bases around the world, from Diego Garcia to Djibouti, are nuts and bolts in the war machine itself. Military bases provide the logistical, supply, and combat support that has allowed the United States to turn the whole world into its battlefield. They make conflict more likely, and then more wars lead to more military bases, in a vicious cycle of expansion and empire.

“Put another way,” Vine writes, “bases frequently beget wars, which can beget more bases, which can beget more wars, and so on.”

Any effort to understand the US government’s near-constant state of war since independence must examine this key infrastructure — not only in its present form, but dating back to the days of Manifest Destiny when “foreign” forts were outposts on Native American land.

While the idea that the global expansion of military bases corresponds with the rise of US empire may seem obvious, this book convincingly shows that it is both consequence and cause. Vine brilliantly documents the way widespread global military positions — which are always sold to the public as defensive — are, by their very nature, *offensive* and become their own, self-fulfilling ecosystems of conquest.

Just as the “induced demand” principle shows why building more

lanes on highways actually increases traffic, *United States of War* makes the argument that military bases themselves incentivize and perpetuate military aggression, coups, and meddling.

From Manifest Destiny to Global Empire

The trajectory toward empire started with white settler expansion within the United States. In 1785, the US Army initiated what “would become a century-long continent-wide fort-construction program,” Vine writes. These forts were used to launch violent invasions of Native American lands, to protect white settler towns and cities, and to force Native Americans further and further away from the East Coast.

They were also used to expand the fur trade, which, in turn, encouraged other settlers to keep moving west, with some forts functioning in part as trading posts. The famed expedition of Lewis and Clark was a military mission (Meriwether Lewis was an army captain and William Clark a former infantry company commander) to collect geographic data that would be used for more “fort construction, natural resource exploitation and westward colonization by settlers,” Vine notes.

While the United States was expanding its frontier, its Navy was also pursuing fort construction overseas, from North Africa’s Barbary Coast to Chile, often for the purpose of securing trade advantages. In the thirty years following the war of 1812 — primarily a war of US expansion — settlers pushed westward within the United States, building infrastructure as they went: roads, trails, and more than sixty major forts west of the Mississippi River by the 1850s. After the United States went to war with Mexico, army bases were constructed in the annexed territory. Forts in Wyoming protected wagon trails, allowing settlers to expand through the western United States.

The violent conquest and massacre of Native Americans did not stop during the Civil War, and it escalated from 1865 to 1898, when “the U.S. Army fought no fewer than 943 distinct engagements against Native peoples,

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ranging from ‘skirmishes’ to full-scale battles in twelve separate campaigns,” writes Vine. Exterminationist, white supremacist policies were particularly pronounced in California, but took place across the West. After 1876, when President Ulysses S. Grant “turned over” Native Americans to the War Department, Fort Leavenworth was transformed into a prisoner of war camp for the Nimi’ipuu tribe.

Over “almost 115 consecutive years of U.S. wars against indigenous nations,” as Vine puts it, US military forts played a consistent role in protecting white settler pillaging and conquest.

In Vine’s telling, the War of 1898 was “the start of a new form of overseas empire” which “saw the country expand across the continent with the help of U.S. Army forts and near-continuous war.” In some cases, it’s possible to draw a direct line between expansion within the United States and conquest abroad.

Nelson A. Miles, US Army commanding general, waged brutal battles against the Kiowa, Comanche, Sioux, Nez Perce, and Apache tribes, then ordered Gen. George Custer’s calvary to massacre as many as three hundred Lakota Sioux in 1890, then violently put down the Pullman, Illinois railroad workers strike in 1894.

Miles also led a bloody counterinsurgency war in the Philippines, aimed at defeating its independence movement. (Similar continuity between domestic and global repression can be found today as counterinsurgency tactics and military weapons and equipment are used by US police departments.)

Organized labor, immigrants, recently freed slaves, indigenous peoples at home and abroad: They were all subdued by the same military and police forces making way for white settlement and capital expansion.

After seizing Spanish colonies during the 1898 war, the United States began to pursue a new form of imperialism that was “less dependent on the creation of new formal colonies and more dependent on informal, less overtly violent — but violent nonetheless — political and economic tools backed by military might, including bases abroad,” Vine

writes. The United States built up the military presence in the Philippines to seventy thousand troops, using these forces to help put down China’s Boxer rebellion, and used its military might to intervene ruthlessly in Panama.

World War II saw the dramatic expansion of military bases, an era inaugurated in 1940, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a deal with Prime Minister Winston Churchill to trade naval destroyers for ninety-nine-year leases in eight British colonies, all located in the Western Hemisphere. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the United States temporarily shrank military personnel spending, and returned roughly half its foreign bases.

Yet the basic global infrastructure of bases (many of which were built with the labor of colonized workers) would remain entrenched — and a “permanent war system,” as Vine puts it, was established. During the post-World War II era of decolonization, the United States used its military base network and economic influence, buttressed by new institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, to protect its preeminence.

During the Cold War, overseas base expansion became central to the goals of containment and forward positioning, premised on the idea that global bases allow quick response to threats and rapid interventions and deployments in crises. While giving the illusion of increased safety, these bases actually made foreign wars more likely, argues Vine, because they made it easier to wage such wars. In turn, conflict increased construction of US bases.

The Korean War, which killed between three and four million people, prompted a 40 percent increase in the number of US bases abroad, and increasing concern about maintaining bases in the Pacific Ocean. Bases also spread across Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East.

CIA stations expanded alongside military bases, and clandestine meddling and supporting coups became a preferred tool of US empire. When the United States waged brutal war in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, it was assisted by “hundreds of bases in Japan,

Okinawa, the Philippines, and Guam,” Vine notes.

The fate of the roughly one thousand Chagossians (descendants of Indian indentured workers and enslaved Africans) from Diego Garcia, an island in the Indian Ocean, spotlights the remarkable cruelty of the United States’ embrace during this period of “strategic island” approach, whereby the United States established control over small, colonial islands.

After making a secret agreement with Britain in 1966 to purchase basing rights, the US and UK governments expelled its residents between 1967 to 1973, leaving them trapped on Mauritius and Seychelles, without jobs or homes, many of their possessions lost to them forever.

During some phases of the expulsion, residents were forced onto cargo ships, their dogs killed. By 1973, the United States was using this base to support Israel in its 1973 war with Arab nations.

“To this day,” Vine notes, “Chagossians and many others among the displaced are struggling to return home, to win some justice and recompense for what they have suffered.”

This is where Vine’s book is at its best: showing the moral stakes of US empire. Shrouded in the sanitized and sterile think tank-ese of “forward positions,” “kinetic action,” and “open door policy,” the average media consumer would be hard-pressed to know the human costs of these bases. Vine documents the stakes from the vantage point of the displaced and disenfranchised.

As the author of the definitive English-language book on Diego Garcia, and a supporter of the return of the organizing efforts of the Chagossians, Vine rightly does not hide his opposition to this profound injustice. He keeps his critiques grounded in recognition of powerful anti-base movements, including the mass protests and strikes that forced the United States to withdraw from all but two bases in Turkey in 1975, and the No-Bases Movement that booted the United States from the Philippines in (continued on Page 23...)



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1991 (though the United States would later return).

This choice is well conceived. The global movement against US bases — seen in regional cooperation between colonized Pacific islands like Guam (whose indigenous name is Guåhan) and Hawai'i, or the international solidarity developed by the Koreans of Jeju Island — even where it lacks integration and structures for truly coordinated work, is a crucial force in the struggle against US dominance.

War on Terror

The United States used bases from Diego Garcia to Oman to invade Afghanistan in 2001 and, once there, established more bases, and took over former Soviet ones. Likewise, bases from Kuwait to Jordan to Bahrain to Diego Garcia were critical for the 2003 invasion of Iraq, where the United States immediately began building bases and installations post-invasion.

While the Bush-Cheney administration closed some bases in Europe, overall spending on bases “reached record highs” during their time in office, Vine writes. The war with ISIS has seen troops return to Iraq, and the acquisition of bases, even after the Iraqi parliament in 2011 rejected a deal to keep fifty-eight bases in the country.

Since September 11, 2001, the United States has also expanded its presence in Africa, building “lily pads” across the continent — smaller profile, somewhat secretive installations, suggesting “a frog jumping from lily pad to lily pad toward its prey,” writes Vine. US bases have been central to waging the 2011 NATO war in Libya, drone strikes in Yemen, military intervention in Somalia and Cameroon.

“The military has been conducting a variety of operations regularly in at least 49 African countries,” writes Vine. “It may be operating in every single one.”

Meanwhile, base spending has played a key role in the steady uptick of overall military spending. In addition to the direct harm they do through enabling war, bases are associated with incredible fraud and waste, and base contractors renowned for their

significant political contributions. This political force, and self-contained logic of sustenance and expansion, is key to understanding how the Military Industrial Complex “can be like Frankenstein’s monster, taking on a life of its own thanks to the spending it commands,” writes Vine.

The War on Terror ethos, in which the whole world is considered a US battlefield and the United States grants itself broad latitude to wage preemptive war, has come to define US foreign policy. George W. Bush talked about the importance of having a military “ready to strike at a moment’s notice in any dark corner of the world,” a racist reference, Vine says, to the Middle East, Africa, and Muslim areas of Asia.

Today, the war on ISIS — responsible for significant civilian deaths — continues, as does dangerous brinkmanship with Iran, hedging against China, brutal war in Afghanistan, and US support for the war on Yemen, which has unleashed a profound humanitarian crisis.

Military bases, installations, lily pads, and outposts remain the foundation of this bloody US empire, as they have since the first days of Manifest Destiny.

A Call to Action

Vine’s effort to trace the role of US military bases in fomenting wars, and vice versa, is stunningly ambitious. As it should be: the role of US military bases in shaping global history and modern-day cycles of endless war is vast and largely untold. And the only way to explore this relationship is by asking big questions.

Vine should be commended for hurtling himself deftly and intelligently toward a gargantuan task, a thread that runs throughout his work. In his 2015 book *Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World*, Vine similarly tackled a simple yet huge question: How do US military bases hurt people and societies?

Through this lens, he traced stories of forced displacement, environmental destruction, economic dependency, and loss of sovereignty in countries hosting such bases. By asking questions that should be obvious yet are almost entirely omitted from US discourse, Vine places himself among great anti-militarist

writers like the feminist Cynthia Enloe, whose book *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* asks how women’s “private” lives shape war and foreign policy.

Engaging Vine’s book is less like reading a tidy cause-and-effect theory of the relationship between US military bases and wars, and more an exploration of the symbiotic relationship between capital, US empire and racism, and their primary mode of interaction: the military base.

The causal relationship isn’t always clear or neat, but this is true of most complex ecosystems. Vine, to his great credit, leans into this messiness. The effect is that one both absorbs a wealth of information and analysis, and leaves with big questions about the supposed moral foundations of Pax Americana.

Vine’s discussion of the role of the inertia and corruption of the Military Industrial Complex leaves one hungry to know more about how this self-perpetuating machine operates: What are the mechanisms by which lobbyists, think tanks, soft power operations, and defense contractors collaborate and collude to build public support for, and funnel tremendous funds and resources into, the sprawling US empire? How do State Department forward positions like embassies, and soft power agencies like USAID, factor in on a global scale?

Our current pandemic and related economic crisis has shown that the military, one of the most well-resourced institutions in our society, is not only useless at keeping people safe and well, but is actually making the coronavirus crisis worse by bombing and sanctioning hard-hit countries, and contributed to a bloated, militarized state that siphons public resources away from public health.

Could the crisis shatter the notion that the US military truly protects “security,” and therefore present opportunities for deep change? And how has the rapid upshoot of the movement to defund the police domestically created openings for mass numbers of people to question and reenvision “security” at home and abroad?

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Vine's brief discussion at the end of the book of how to correct the profound injustices he has detailed has many great policy solutions but at times feels a bit disconnected from the damning critique in his historical analysis itself. He rightly talks about the need to reduce the political power of the Military Industrial Complex, slash military budgets, and close military bases; and raises the possibility of using antitrust laws to break the power of weapons contractors, as well as introducing legislation prohibiting the Pentagon from lobbying Congress for public funds. He talks about giving people in US colonies full citizenship rights, which would certainly be an improvement on the status quo, but how does this comport with independence movements in places like Puerto Rico?

He argues that "Congress should create a regular review process to assess the need to maintain every base overseas. The Pentagon should be required to scrutinize every base annually as well." But after reading the horrors he lays out in his book, these suggestions seem too incremental and slow.

The most powerful prescription in this book comes through in the historical analysis itself. One walks away convinced that the US empire and its global network of bases must be dismantled if we are to have any hope of putting a stop to the devastating cycle of endless US wars and meddling.

Ultimately, Vine does not tie up every loose end. That's fine — he never promises to. This book should be viewed as the equivalent of a long-distance runner passing a baton, inviting others to take up the inquiry, toward the goal of creating a better world.

"Those concerned and hopefully angered by the U.S. record of war must find ways to demand and force change," Vine writes. Any such change must include the building blocks of US empire: the bases, installations, and lily pads that sprinkle the globe, undermine sovereignty, and make war always

seem like the easier, more attractive, more lucrative option.

To oppose this injustice, we must first recognize that it exists and tell its insidious history. Vine's book takes incredible strides toward that end — the rest is up to us.

Sarah Lazare is web editor at *In These Times*. She comes from a background in independent journalism for publications including the *Intercept*, the *Nation*, and *Tom Dispatch*. - "[Source](#)" -

LOOTING SYRIA

How USA and Turkey Plunder and Loot Syria with Impunity

by **Rick Sterling**

September 16th, 2020

While President Trump lashes out at rioting and looting in Portland and Kenosha, half way around the world, the USA and Turkey are plundering and looting Syria on a vastly greater scale with impunity and little publicity.

Turkey Loots Syria, then Disrupts Safe Water Supply

Turkey has been plundering the Syrian infrastructure for years. Beginning in late 2012 and continuing through 2013 some 300 industrial factories were dismantled and taken to Turkey from Aleppo, the industrial capital of Syria. "Machinery and goods were loaded on trucks and carried off to Turkey through the Cilvegozu and Ceylanpinar crossings. Unfortunately, 'plundering' and 'terror' have become permanent parts of the Syrian lexicon when explaining their saga."

In October 2019 Turkish forces invaded Syria and now occupy a strip of land in north east Syria. The area is controlled by the Turkish military and pro Turkish militia forces misnamed the "Syrian National Army". Turkish President Erdogan dubbed the invasion "Peace Spring" and said the goal was to create a "safe zone". The reality was that 200 thousand Syrians fled the invasion and over 100 thousand have been permanently displaced from their homes, farms, workplaces and livelihoods.

The industrial scale looting continues. As reported recently in the story headlined Turkish-backed factions take apart power pylons in rural Ras Al-Ain:

"Reliable sources have informed SOHR that Turkish-backed factions steal electricity power towers and pylons in 'Peace Spring' areas in Ras Al-Ain countryside."

Turkey now controls the border city of Ras al-Ain and the nearby Allouk water treatment and pumping station. This is the water station supplying safe water to the city Hasaka and entire region. The Turkish forces are using water as a weapon of war, shutting down the station to pressure the population to be compliant. For over two weeks in August, with daily temperatures of 100 F, there was no running water for nearly one million people.

With no tap water, civilians were forced to queue up for hours to receive small amounts from water trucks. Unable to buy the water, other civilians took their chances by drinking water from unsafe wells. According to Judy Jacoub, a Syrian journalist originally from Hasaka, "The residents of Hasaka and its countryside have been pushed to rely on unsafe water sourcesMany residents have been suffering from the spread of fungi, germs and dirt in their hair and bodies as a result of using well water that is not suitable for drinking and personal hygiene. The people of Hasaka remain vulnerable to diseases and epidemics because of the high temperatures and spread of infectious diseases. If the situation is not controlled as soon as possible, the spread of Corona virus will undoubtedly be devastating." A hospital medical director says many people are getting sick from the contaminated water.

Judy Jacoub explains what has happened most recently: "After Syrian and international efforts exerted pressure on the Turkish regime, 17 wells and three pumps were started . The main reservoirs were filled and pumping was started toward the city neighborhoods. However, despite the Turkish militia's resumption of pumping water again, there is great fear among the citizens."

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USA Loots Syrian Oil and Plunders the Economy

The USA also has occupying troops and proxy/puppet military force in north east Syria. The proxy army is misnamed the “Syrian Democratic Forces” (SDF). How they got that name is revealing. They took on this name as they came under the funding and control of the US military. US Army General Ray Thomas told their leadership, “*You have got to change your brand. What do you want to call yourselves besides the YPG?*” Then, he explained what happened: “*With about a day's notice they declared that they are the Syrian Democratic Forces. I thought it was a stroke of brilliance to put democracy in there somewhere.*”

There are numerous parties and trends within the Syrian Kurdish community. The US has been funding and promoting the secessionist element, pushing them to ally with Turkish backed jihadists against the Damascus government. The violation of Syrian sovereignty is extreme and grotesque.

Prior to the war, Syria was self-sufficient in oil and had enough to export and earn some foreign revenues. The primary oil sources are in eastern Syria, where the US troops and proxy forces have established bases. It is desert terrain with little population.

To finance their proxy army, the US has seized control of the major Syrian oil pumping wells. It is likely that President Trump thinks this is brilliant bold move – financing the invasion of Syria with Syrian oil.

In November 2019 President Trump said, “*We're keeping the oil... The oil is secure. We left troops behind only for the oil.*” Recently, it was revealed that a “Little known US firm secures deal for Syrian oil”. Delta Crescent Energy will manage and escalate the theft of Syrian oil.

What would Americans think if another country invaded the US via Mexico, set up bases in Texas, sponsored a secessionist militia, then seized Texas oil wells to finance it? That is comparable to what the US is doing in Syria.

In addition to stealing Syria's oil, the US is trying to prevent Syria from

developing alternate sources. The “Caesar sanctions” on Syria threatens to punish any individual, company or country that invests or assists Syria to rebuild their war damaged country and especially in the oil and gas sector.

The US establishment seems to be doing everything it can to undermine the Syrian economy and damage the Syrian currency. Due to pressure on Lebanese banks, plus the Caesar sanctions, the Syrian pound has plummeted in value from 650 to 2150 to the US dollar in the past 10 months.

North east Syria is the breadbasket of the country with the richest wheat and grain fields. There are reports of US pressuring farmers to not sell their wheat crops to the Syrian government. One year ago, Nicholas Heras of the influential Center for New American Security argued “*Assad needs access to cereal crops in northeast Syria to prevent a bread crisis in the areas of western Syria that he controls.... Wheat is a weapon of great power in this next phase of the Syrian conflict.*” Now, it appears the US is following this strategy. Four months ago, in May 2020, Syrian journalist Stephen Sahiounie reported, “*Apache helicopters of the US occupation forces flew low Sunday morning, according to residents of the Adla village, in the Shaddadi countryside, south of Hasaka, as they dropped 'thermal balloons', an incendiary weapon, causing the wheat fields to explode into flames while the hot dry winds fanned the raging fire.*

After delivering their fiery pay-load, the helicopters flew close to homes in an aggressive manner, which caused residents and especially small children to fear for their lives. The military maneuver was delivering a clear message: don't sell your wheat to the Syrian government.”

To better loot the oil and plunder the Syria economy, in the past weeks the US is sending more heavy equipment and military hardware through the Kurdish region of Iraq.

In the south of Syria, the US has another base and occupation zone at the strategic Al Tanf border crossing. This is at the intersection of the borders of Syria, Iraq and Jordan. This

is also the border crossing for the highway from Baghdad to Damascus. The US controls this border area to prevent Syrian reconstruction projects from Iraq or Iran. When Syrian troops have tried to get near there, they have been attacked on their own soil.

Meanwhile, international funds donated for “Syrian relief” are disproportionately sent to support and assist the last stronghold of Al Qaeda terrorists in Idlib on the north west border with Turkey. The US and its partners evidently want to sustain the armed opposition and prevent the Syrian government from reclaiming their territory.

Flouting International Law and the UN Charter

The USA and Turkey have shown how easy it is to violate international law. The occupation of Syrian land and attacks on its sovereignty are being done in broad daylight. But this is not just a legal issue. Stopping the supply of safe drinking water and burning wheat fields to create more hunger violate the most basic tenets of decency and morality.

With supreme hypocrisy, the US foreign policy establishment often complains about the decline in the “rule of law”. In actuality, there is no greater violator than the US itself.

In his speech to the UN Security Council, Syrian Ambassador Ja'afari decried this situation saying “international law has become like the gentle lamb whose care is entrusted to a herd of wolves.”

- Author's note: To see good political and military maps of Syria, go to southfront.org

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“Eurocentrism is quite simply the colonizer's model of the world.”

— J.M. Blaut, [The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History](#)



DEATH FROM THE SKY

Hiroshima and normalised atrocities

By Binoy Kampmark

Posted Monday, 10 August 2020

When US President Harry S Truman made the decision to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, followed by another on Nagasaki a few days later, he was not acting as an agent untethered from history. In the wheels of his wearied mind lay the battered Marines who, despite being victorious, had received sanguinary lashings at Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

A fear grew, and US military sources speculated about, the slaughter that might follow an invasion of the Japanese homeland. They also pondered the future role of the Soviets, and wondered whether there were other means by which Japan's involvement in the war might be terminated before Moscow got its hands on the battered remains of North East Asia.

Much is made about the moral dilemma Truman faced. He knew there was the nastiest of weapons at hand, born from the race to acquire it from Nazi Germany. But on a certain level, it was merely another weapon, one to use, a choice sample in the cabinet of lethal means and measures. By that stage of the war, killing civilians from the air, not to mention land, was banal and commonplace; enemy populations were to be experimented upon, burned, torched, gassed, shelled and eradicated in the program of total war.

By the time Truman made his decision, Japan had become a graveyard of strategic aerial bombing. General Curtis E. LeMay of the US Air Force prided himself on incinerating the enemy, and was encouraged by various study commissions advocating the use of incendiary bombs against Japan's flammable urban architecture. He was realising the dreams of such figures as the pioneering US aviator and air power enthusiast Billy Mitchell, who fantasised in the 1920s about Japanese cities being "the greatest aerial targets the world has ever seen". In 1941, US Army chief of staff George Marshall spread the word to journalists that the US would "set the paper cities of Japan on fire". Civilians would not be spared.

Towards the end of the war, daylight precision bombing had fallen out of favour; LeMay preferred the use of Boeing B-29 Superfortresses, heavily laden with firebombs, to do the work. His pride of joy in conflagration was Tokyo. During the six-hour raid over the night of March 9 and 10, 1945, the US Strategic Bombing Survey concluded that 87,793 had perished, with 40,918 injuries.

There was little novel in LeMay's blunt approach. Britain's Air Force Marshall Arthur "Bomber" Harris fertilised the ground, and the air, for such an idea. He made it his mission to not only kill Germans but kill German civilians with a cool determination. He did so with a workmanlike conviction so disturbing it chilled the blood of many Britons. As he put it, "The cities of Germany, including their working populations, are literally the heart of Germany's war potential." It was his intention to, he explained to personnel, "in addition to the horrors of fire ... to bring masonry crashing down on top of the Boche, to kill the Boche and to terrify the Boche". The Teutonic enemy came, not so much in all shades, but one. Saturation bombing, regarded after the Second World War as generally ineffective, a ghastly failure to bring the population to its knees, received its blessing in Bomber Command.

This entire process neutered the moral compass of its executioners. Killing civilians had ceased to be a problem of war, one of those afterthoughts which served to sanction mass murder. Britain's chief of the air staff for a good deal of the war, Charles Portal, called it a "fallacy" that bombing Germany's cities "was really intended to kill and frighten Germans and that we camouflaged this intention by the pretence that we would destroy industry. Any such idea is completely false. The loss of life, which amounted to some 600,000 killed, was purely incidental." When 600,000 becomes an incidental matter, we are well on the way to celebrating the charnel houses of indiscriminate war.

When the issue of saturation bombing creased the legal minds behind the Nuremberg and Tokyo war crimes trials, an admission had to be made: all sides of the Second World War had made the

air a realm of convenience in the killing of humanity, uniformed or not. To win was all that mattered. While the Nuremberg Charter left it open to criminalise German aerial tactics, the International Military Tribunal hedged. As chief of the Luftwaffe, Herman Göring was singled out for air attacks on Poland and other states but the prosecutors refrained from pushing the point, likely reflecting the cold fact, as Matthew Lippmann puts it, "that both Germany and the Allies engaged in similar tactics."

It is true that Germany and Japan gave a good pioneering go at indiscriminate aerial slaughter. But the Allied powers, marshalling never before seen fleets of murderous bombers, perfected the bloody harvest. The war had to be won, and, if needed, over the corpses of the hapless mother, defenceless child and frail grandparent. As the historian Charles S. Maier notes with characteristic sharpness, a tacit consensus prevailed after the Second World War that the ledger of brutality was all stacked on one side. German bombings during the Spanish Civil War, notably of Guernica; Warsaw, Rotterdam, London and Coventry during the world war that followed, were seen as "acts of wanton terror". The Allied attacks on Italian, German and Japanese urban centres, in proportion and scale far more destructive, were seen as "legitimate military actions".

Distinctions about civilian and non-civilian vanished in the atomic cloud. Hiroshima's tale is the apotheosis of eliminating distinctions in war. It propagated such dangerous beliefs that nuclear wars might be won, sparing a handful of specialists and breeders in bunkers planning for the new post-apocalyptic dawn. It normalised, even as it constituted a warning, the act of annihilation itself.

Prior to the twin incinerations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the redoubtable nurse and writer Vera Brittain issued a warning that remains salient to those who wish to resort to waging death from the sky: "If the nations cannot agree, when peace returns, to refrain from the use of the

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bombing aeroplane as they have refrained from using poison gas, then mankind itself deserves to perish from the epidemic of moral insanity which today afflicts our civilisation."

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A WORLD GONE MAD

The Nuclearization of American Diplomacy



Talking tough and carrying a radioactive stick.

By Michael T. Klare

Dispatching nuclear-capable B-52s on simulated bombing runs against Chinese and Russian military installations is simply nuts. (Photo: Wilson Hui/Flickr/cc)

On August 21st, six nuclear-capable B-52H Stratofortress bombers, representing approximately one-seventh of the war-ready U.S. B-52H bomber fleet, flew from their home base in North Dakota to Fairford Air Base in England for several weeks of intensive operations over Europe. Although the actual weapons load of those giant bombers was kept secret, each of them is capable of carrying eight AGM-86B nuclear-armed, air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) in its bomb bay. Those six planes, in other words, could have been carrying 48 city-busting thermonuclear warheads. (The B-52H can also carry 12 ALCMs on external pylons, but none were visible on this occasion.) With such a load alone, in other words, those six planes possessed the capacity to incinerate much of western Russia, including Moscow and St. Petersburg.

The B-52 Stratofortress is no ordinary warplane. First flown in 1952, it was designed with a single purpose in mind: to cross the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean and drop dozens of nuclear bombs on the Soviet Union. Some models were later modified to deliver tons of conventional bombs on targets in North Vietnam and other hostile states, but the remaining B-52s are still largely configured for intercontinental nuclear strikes. With only 44 of them now thought to be in active service at any time, those six dispatched to the edge of Russian territory represented a significant commitment of American nuclear war-making capability.

What in god's name were they doing there? According to American officials, they were intended to demonstrate this country's ability to project overwhelming power anywhere on the planet at any time and so remind our NATO allies of Washington's commitment to their defense. "Our ability to quickly respond and assure allies and partners rests upon the fact that we are able to deploy our B-52s at a moment's notice," commented General Jeff Harrigian, commander of U.S. Air Forces in Europe. "Their presence here helps build trust with our NATO allies... and affords us new opportunities to train together through a variety of scenarios."

While Harrigian didn't spell out just what scenarios he had in mind, the bombers' European operations suggest that their role involved brandishing a nuclear "stick" in support of an increasingly hostile stance toward Russia. During their sojourn in Europe, for example, two of them flew over the Baltic Sea close to Kaliningrad, a Russian enclave sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania that houses several key military installations. That September 25th foray coincided with a U.S. troop buildup in Lithuania about 65 miles from election-embattled Belarus, a Russian neighbor.

Since August 9th, when strongman Alexander Lukashenko declared victory in a presidential election widely considered fraudulent by his people and much of the international community, Belarus has experienced recurring anti-

government protests. Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned that his country might intervene there if the situation "gets out of control," while Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has implicitly warned of U.S. intervention if Russia interferes. "We stand by our long-term commitment to support Belarus' sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as the aspiration of the Belarusian people to choose their leader and to choose their own path, free from external intervention," he insisted on August 20th. The flight of those B-52s near Belarus can, then, be reasonably interpreted as adding a nuclear dimension to Pompeo's threat.

In another bomber deployment with no less worrisome implications, on September 4th, three B-52s, accompanied by Ukrainian fighter planes, flew over the Black Sea near the coast of Russian-held Crimea. Like other B-52 sorties near its airspace, that foray prompted the rapid scrambling of Russian interceptor aircraft, which often fly threateningly close to American planes.

At a moment when tensions were mounting between the U.S.-backed Ukrainian government and Russian-backed rebel areas in the eastern part of the country, the deployment of those bombers off Crimea was widely viewed as yet another nuclear-tinged threat to Moscow. As Hans Kristensen, director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), tweeted, "Extraordinary decision to send a nuclear bomber so close to contested and tense areas. This is a real in-your-face statement."

And provocative as they were, those were hardly the only forays by U.S. nuclear bombers in recent months. B-52s also ventured near Russian air space in the Arctic and within range of Russian forces in Syria. Meanwhile other B-52s, as well as nuclear-capable B-1 and B-2 bombers, have flown similar missions near Chinese positions in the South China Sea and the waters around the disputed island of Taiwan. Never since the Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 have so many U.S. nuclear bombers been engaged in "show-of-force" operations of this sort.

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“Demonstrating Resolve” and Coercing Adversaries

States have long engaged in military operations to intimidate other powers. Once upon a distant time, this would have been called “gunboat diplomacy” and naval vessels would have been the instruments of choice for such missions. The arrival of nuclear arms made such operations far more dangerous. This didn’t, however, stop the U.S. from using weaponry of this sort as tools of intimidation throughout the Cold War. In time, however, even nuclear strategists began condemning acts of “nuclear coercion,” arguing that such weaponry was inappropriate for any purpose other than “deterrence” -- that is, using the threat of “massive retaliation” to prevent another country from attacking you. In fact, a deterrence-only posture eventually became Washington’s official policy, even if the temptation to employ nukes as political cudgels never entirely disappeared from its strategic thinking.

At a more hopeful time, President Barack Obama sought to downsize this country’s nuclear arsenal and prevent the use of such weapons for anything beyond deterrence (although his administration also commenced an expensive “modernization” of that arsenal). In his widely applauded Nobel Peace Prize speech of April 5, 2009, Obama swore to “put an end to Cold War thinking” and “reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy.” Unfortunately, Donald Trump has sought to move the dial in the opposite direction, including increasing the use of nukes as coercive instruments.

The president’s deep desire to bolster the role of nuclear weapons in national security was first spelled out in his administration’s Nuclear Posture Review of February 2018. In addition to calling for the accelerated modernization of the nuclear arsenal, it also endorsed the use of such weapons to demonstrate American “resolve” -- in other words, a willingness to go to the nuclear brink over political differences. A large and diverse arsenal was desirable, the document noted, to “demonstrate resolve through the positioning of forces, messaging, and flexible response options.” Nuclear bombers were said to be especially useful for such a purpose:

“Flights abroad,” it stated, “display U.S. capabilities and resolve, providing effective signaling for deterrence and assurance, including in times of tension.”

Ever since, the Trump administration has been deploying the country’s nuclear bomber fleet of B-52s, B-1s, and B-2s with increasing frequency to “display U.S. capabilities and resolve,” particularly with respect to Russia and China.

The supersonic B-1B Lancer, developed in the 1970s, was originally meant to replace the B-52 as the nation’s premier long-range nuclear bomber. After the Cold War ended, however, it was converted to carry conventional munitions and is no longer officially designated as a nuclear delivery system -- though it could be reconfigured for this purpose at any time. The B-2 Spirit, with its distinctive flying-wing design, was the first U.S. bomber built with “stealth” capabilities (meant to avoid detection by enemy radar systems) and is configured to carry both nuclear and conventional weaponry. For the past year or so, those two planes plus the long-lived B-52 have been used on an almost weekly basis as the radioactive “stick” of U.S. diplomacy around the world.

Nuclear Forays in the Arctic and the Russian Far East

When flying to Europe in August, those six B-52s from North Dakota’s Minot Air Force Base took a roundabout route north of Greenland (which President Trump had unsuccessfully offered to purchase in 2019). They finally descended over the Barents Sea within easy missile-firing range of Russia’s vast naval complex at Murmansk, the home for most of its ballistic missile submarines. For Hans Kristensen of FAS, that was another obvious and “pointed message at Russia.”

Strategically speaking, Washington had largely ignored the Arctic until a combination of factors -- global warming, accelerated oil and gas drilling in the region, and increased Russian and Chinese military activities there -- sparked growing interest. As global temperatures have risen, the Arctic ice cap has been melting at an ever-faster pace, allowing energy firms

to exploit the region’s extensive hydrocarbon resources. This, in turn, has led to feverish efforts by the region’s littoral states, led by Russia, to lay claim to such resources and build up their military capabilities there.

In light of these developments, the Trump administration, led by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, has called for an expansion of this country’s Arctic military forces. In a speech delivered at the Arctic Council in Rovaniemi, Finland, in May 2019, Pompeo warned of Russia’s growing military stance in the region and pledged a strong American response to it. “Under President Trump,” he declared. “We are fortifying America’s security and diplomatic presence in the area.”

In line with this, the Pentagon has deployed U.S. warships to the Arctic on a regular basis, while engaging in ever more elaborate military exercises there. These have included Cold Response 2020, conducted this spring in Norway’s far north within a few hundred miles of those key Russian bases at Murmansk. For the most part, however, the administration has relied on nuclear-bomber forays to demonstrate its opposition to an increasing Russian role there. In November 2019, for example, three B-52s, accompanied by Norwegian F-16 fighter jets, approached the Russian naval complex at Murmansk, a move meant to demonstrate the Pentagon’s capacity to launch nuclear-armed missiles at one of that country’s most critical military installations.

If the majority of such nuclear forays have occurred near Norway’s far north, the Pentagon has not neglected Russia’s far eastern territory, home of its Pacific Fleet, either. In an unusually brazen maneuver, this May a B-1B bomber flew over the Sea of Okhotsk, an offshoot of the Pacific Ocean surrounded by Russian territory on three sides (Siberia to the north, Sakhalin Island to the west, and the Kamchatka Peninsula to the east).

As if to add insult to injury, the Air Force dispatched two B-52H bombers over the Sea of Okhotsk in June -- another first for an aircraft of that type. Needless to say, incursions in such a

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militarily sensitive area led to the rapid scrambling of Russian fighter aircraft.

The South China Sea and Taiwan

A similar, equally provocative pattern can be observed in the East and South China Seas. Even as President Trump has sought, largely unsuccessfully, to negotiate a trade deal with Beijing, his administration has become increasingly antagonistic towards the Chinese leadership. On July 23rd, Secretary of State Pompeo delivered a particularly hostile speech in the presidential library of Richard Nixon, the very commander-in-chief who first reopened relations with communist China. Pompeo called on American allies to suspend normal relations with Beijing and, like Washington, treat it as a hostile power, much the way the Soviet Union was viewed during the Cold War.

While administration rhetoric amped up, the Department of Defense has been bolstering its capacity to engage and defeat Beijing in any future conflict. In its 2018 National Defense Strategy, as the U.S. military's "forever wars" dragged on, the Pentagon suddenly labeled China and Russia the two greatest threats to American security. More recently, it singled out China alone as the overarching menace to American national security. "In this era of great-power competition," Secretary of Defense Mark Esper declared this September, "the Department of Defense has prioritized China, then Russia, as our top strategic competitors."

The Pentagon's efforts have largely been focused on the South China Sea, where China has established a network of small military installations on artificial islands created by dredging sand from the sea-bottom near some of the reefs and atolls it claims. American leaders have never accepted the legitimacy of this island-building project and have repeatedly called upon Beijing to dismantle the bases. Such efforts have, however, largely fallen on deaf ears and it's now evident that the Pentagon is considering military means to eliminate the island threat.

In early July, the U.S. Navy conducted its most elaborate maneuvers to date in those waters, deploying two aircraft carriers there -- the USS Nimitz and the

USS Ronald Reagan -- plus an escort fleet of cruisers, destroyers, and submarines. While there, the two carriers launched hundreds of combat planes in simulated attacks on military bases on the islands the Chinese had essentially built.

At the same time, paratroopers from the Army's 25th Infantry Division were flown from their home base in Alaska to the Pacific island of Guam in what was clearly meant as a simulated air assault on a (presumably Chinese) military installation. And just to make sure the leadership in Beijing understood that, in any actual encounter with U.S. forces, Chinese resistance would be countered by the maximum level of force deemed necessary, the Pentagon also flew a B-52 bomber over those carriers as they engaged in their provocative maneuvers.

And that was hardly the first visit of a nuclear bomber to the South China Sea. The Pentagon has, in fact, been deploying such planes there on a regular basis since the beginning of 2020. In April, for example, the Air Force dispatched two B-1B Lancers on a 32-hour round-trip from their home at Ellsworth Air Force Base, North Dakota, to that sea and back as a demonstration of its ability to project power even in the midst of the pandemic. President Trump likes to call "the Chinese plague."

Meanwhile, tensions have grown over the status of the island of Taiwan, which China views as a breakaway part of the country. Beijing has been pressuring its leaders to foreswear any moves toward independence, while the Trump administration tacitly endorses just such a future by doing the previously unimaginable -- notably, by sending high-level officials, Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar among them, on visits to the island and by promising deliveries of increasingly sophisticated weapons. Meanwhile, the Pentagon has upped its military presence in that part of the Pacific, too. The Navy has repeatedly dispatched missile-armed destroyers on "freedom of navigation" missions through the Taiwan Strait, while other U.S. warships have conducted elaborate military exercises in nearby waters.

Needless to say, such provocative steps have alarmed Beijing, which has

responded by increasing the incursions of its military aircraft into airspace claimed by Taiwan. To make sure that Beijing fully appreciates the depth of American "resolve" to resist any attempt to seize Taiwan by force, the Pentagon has accompanied its other military moves around the island with -- you guessed it -- flights of B-52 bombers.

Playing with Fire

And where will all this end? As the U.S. sends nuclear-capable bombers on increasingly provocative flights ever closer to Russian and Chinese territory, the danger of an accident or mishap is bound to grow. Sooner or later, a fighter plane from one of those countries is going to get too close to an American bomber and a deadly incident will occur. And what will happen if a nuclear bomber, armed with advanced missiles and electronics (even conceivably nuclear weapons), is in some fashion downed? Count on one thing: in Donald Trump's America the calls for devastating retaliation will be intense and a major conflagration cannot be ruled out.

Bluntly put, dispatching nuclear-capable B-52s on simulated bombing runs against Chinese and Russian military installations is simply nuts. Yes, it must scare the bejesus out of Chinese and Russian officials, but it will also prompt them to distrust any future peaceful overtures from American diplomats while further bolstering their own military power and defenses. Eventually, we will all find ourselves in an ever more dangerous and insecure world with the risk of Armageddon lurking just around the corner.

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**U.S. CRIMINALS ONE AND ALL**

Every Presidential Election Since The Iraq War Has Featured Candidates Who Supported It

By Caitlin Johnstone

October 13, 2020 "Information Clearing House" –

The most powerful government on earth has still yet to have a single presidential election that doesn't feature a prominent candidate who supported one of the most evil things that government has ever done.

The United States has done many, many profoundly evil things throughout its history, but the 2003 invasion of Iraq is surely in the top ten. It killed over a million human beings, destabilized an entire region, led to the rise of ISIS and Al Nusra and facilitated a rush of new Middle Eastern interventionism, all to no benefit for the American people whatsoever, and it is utterly unforgivable.

Yet there have been no consequences for it. No real changes of any kind were made to American military, governmental, political or media institutions to ensure that a similar atrocity never happens again, because the drivers of US foreign policy had every intention of doing it again. There weren't even any real political consequences for it, as evidenced by the fact that politicians who supported it have been ascending to Democratic and Republican presidential nominee status ever since.

This is insane. The fact that every electoral contest for commander in chief of the most powerful military in the history of civilization has featured at least one candidate who supported one of the most evil things ever done in the blood-soaked history of their nation is too insane to really put into words. And it says so much about the state of the US political system today.

The current Democratic presidential nominee is a particularly egregious example of this fact, having not just supported the Iraq invasion but played a leading role in pushing it through.

Current Affairs explains:

In 2003, Biden was "a senator bullish about the push to war [in Iraq] who helped sell the Bush administration's

pitch to the American public," who "voted for—and helped advance—the Bush agenda." He was the war's "most crucial" senate supporter. Biden repeated the myth that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, saying that "these weapons must be dislodged from Saddam Hussein, or Saddam Hussein must be dislodged from power." The resulting war was one of the most deadly catastrophes in the history of U.S. foreign policy—the Iraqi death toll was in the hundreds of thousands or possibly even the millions, and 4,500 American troops died. And that's just the dead: countless more were left permanently maimed, to suffer with PTSD for the rest of their lives. For every dead person, there is a family who will struggle forever to get over their loss. This is no trivial issue: In selecting a commander in chief, you want someone who doesn't launch catastrophic wars of aggression.

Before Biden it was Hillary Clinton, who as a US senator not only voted in support of the Iraq war but emphatically promoted it on the Senate floor and then more than a year after the invasion said she had no regrets about doing so.

"No, I don't regret giving the president authority because at the time it was in the context of weapons of mass destruction, grave threats to the United States, and clearly, Saddam Hussein had been a real problem for the international community for more than a decade," Clinton told Larry King in April 2004.

Unlike Clinton and Biden, their opponent Donald Trump was in no position to actively facilitate the Iraq invasion since he wasn't in politics at the time, but in 2002 he was asked point-blank by Howard Stern "Are you for invading Iraq?" and he answered in the affirmative. If Trump was unable to see Iraq clearly from the political sidelines at the time, there's no reason to believe he'd have done any better than Biden and Clinton had he been a sitting US senator in 2002 with the immense pressures to conform that were being implemented by the Bush administration.

Before them it was Republican nominee Mitt Romney in 2012, who had previously said in a 2008 Republican primary debate that "It was the right

decision to go into Iraq. I supported it at the time; I support it now."

This was long after all the facts were in and it had obvious for years from even an amoral cost-to-benefit analysis that the Iraq invasion was a disaster based on lies that caused mountains more problems than it solved.

Before that it was John McCain in 2008, who during his miserable psychopathic excuse for a life supported invading not just Iraq but damn near everyone else as well.

And in 2004 it was John Kerry running against the butcher himself George W Bush, who had just voted in support of Bush's war in 2002.

The more you think about it, the more outrageous it becomes. The most powerful elected official in the most powerful government on earth with the most powerful military force the world has ever seen should not be prone to making horrifically evil decisions, and it's insane that this even needs to be said.

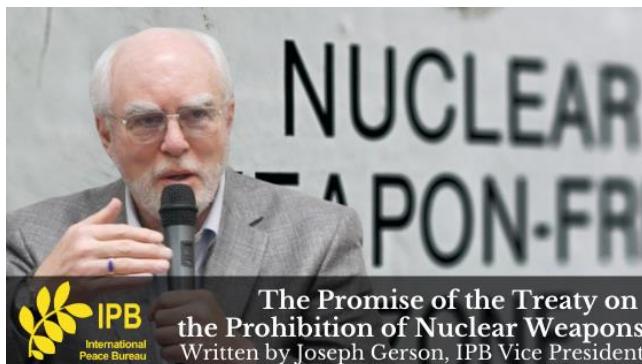
The way principled leftists and anti-imperialists are shamed as privileged and petty whenever they point out the record of a candidate on this crucial matter is disgusting. This is not some kind of pedantic quibble, it's the bare minimum requirement for such an immensely powerful position. The argument that the Iraq invasion was supported by most prominent politicians at the time is not a defense of those politicians, it's an indictment of mainstream American politics.

Nobody who supported the Iraq invasion should be working in politics at all. They shouldn't be able to find employment anywhere more prominent or influential than a cash register. It's entirely legitimate for any voter to reject anyone who supported the unforgivable invasion of Iraq, and indeed to reject the entire political system that gave rise to them.

Caitlin's articles are entirely reader-supported, so if you enjoyed this piece please consider sharing it around, liking her on [Facebook](#), following her antics on [Twitter](#), checking out her [podcast](#), throwing some money into her hat on [Patreon](#) or [Paypal](#), or buying her book *Woke: A Field Guide for Utopia Preppers*. <https://caitlinjohnstone.com>

**BAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

The Promise of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons



The Promise of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
Written by Joseph Gerson, IPB Vice President

Written by **Joseph Gerson***

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) has received the last ratifications needed to put the Treaty into force. With the milestone of 50 ratifications having been achieved, the next critical step will be winning the signing and ratification by one or more of the nuclear weapons umbrella states, a European NATO member or one of the newly christened, “quad”, envisioned as an Asia-Pacific NATO: Japan, Australia and India. (The U.S. being the fourth member of the quad.)

Governments won’t altruistically risk offending the world’s declining hegemon on their own. As we have seen in the past, they can be moved, their policies and commitments changed, in response to public opinion, public debate, and popular mobilizations.

I write as it is reported that the last three national ratifications needed to put the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) into effect are expected prior to Monday’s 75th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. In fact, as Beatrice Finn of ICAN reports, not three but ten governments are moving to ratify the Treaty in time for the anniversary.

The forums and institutions the Treaty will create, and the political forces it will unleash could not come at a more opportune moment. The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* has issued its starker warning ever: the world is 100 seconds to Doomsday, the closest since the beginning of the Cold War. Each of the world’s nuclear powers is upgrading its nuclear arsenal. In the South and East China Seas and the Taiwan Strait, a

military incident, accident, or miscalculation, like the 1914 gunshots in Sarajevo, could ignite an ever-escalating war. The same applies to the Baltic and Black Seas, where provocative U.S. and Russian military “exercises” – including U.S. flights of nuclear capable B-52 bombers – could precipitate catastrophe.

The Treaty’s negotiation and initial promulgation by 122 nations at the United Nations in 2017 should be recognized as a signal achievement of the Hibakusha, those of Hiroshima and other nations from the Marshall Islands and Australia, to Utah and Semipalatinsk downwinders. Their steadfast insistence on sharing their emotionally searing testimonies about what they, their families, and communities suffered, refocused the international debate away from the sterile and deceitful focus on ostensible state security preoccupations to what nuclear weapons actually do, the devastating humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons and nuclear war. In forums like the annual World Conferences in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the three International Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna, the Hibakusha opened, seared, and won people’s hearts and minds including the diplomats who initiated the TPNW negotiations at the United Nations.

In essence, the TPNW prohibits nations that have ratified the Treaty from “developing, testing, producing, manufacturing, acquiring, possessing, or stockpiling nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.” They are barred from transferring or receiving nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices, meaning that they cannot permit nuclear weapons to be stationed or deployed in their countries. They are forbidden to exercise any control over nuclear weapons or to provide assistance for any actions prohibited by the Treaty. They are obligated to assist victims of nuclear weapons and to join

environmental remediation efforts. And, of potentially great importance, Article XII of the Treaty requires governments that have ratified the treaty to press nations outside of the Treaty – including Japan and the United States – to sign and to ratify it.

If they have the necessary courage and imagination, over time Treaty nations could exercise the political, diplomatic economic power and moral suasion needed to universalize the Treaty. As Alexander Kmentt, the former Austrian Disarmament Ambassador who was so moved by Hibakusha testimonies in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and who led the organizing for the Vienna Humanitarian Consequences conference recently observed this will be a long term process, but it is a goal that with steadfastness can be achieved.

The TPNW should not be necessary. Fifty years ago, in Article VI of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), the nuclear powers committed to “pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament.” The following year, the U.N. General Assembly’s first resolution mandated the ‘control of atomic energy to ensure its use only for peaceful purposes,’ and ‘the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.’

Forty years after the NPT came into force, at the conclusion of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the nuclear powers agreed to implement 13 practical steps for the systematic and progressive disarmament of the world’s nuclear weapons with an “irrevocable commitment.” Now, in 2020, only one of those steps has been taken.

Rather than fulfil these international legal obligations the nuclear powers led by the United States have steadfastly resisted taking the steps needed to create the nuclear weapons-free world that can help to ensure humanity’s survival. They have continually upgraded their genocidal and potentially omnicidal nuclear arsenals, refined their nuclear warfighting
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doctrines, and repeatedly prepared and/or threatened to initiate nuclear war. (In his new book *The Bomb*, the journalist/scholar Fred Kapan describes how Donald Trump's "Fire and Fury" threats and preparations for nuclear war brought the world much closer to nuclear catastrophe than all but a few knew.)

The nuclear weapons states have undermined, but not completely destroyed, the NPT's legitimacy by refusing to fulfil their Article VI and 2010's "irrevocable" commitments. These failures which jeopardize human survival, along with the political heat created by the Hibakusha's urgent truth that "human beings and nuclear weapons cannot coexist", and the consistent demands of the world's diverse peace movements led to the negotiation, signings, ratifications and now the entry into force of the TPNW.

While the TPNW in and of itself will not dismantle a single nuclear warhead, it has placed those who are preparing nuclear Armageddon on the defensive.

From the beginning and led by the United States, the five original nuclear powers opposed the negotiation of the TPNW and the Treaty itself, falsely claiming that it jeopardizes the NPT. In fact, as Ambassador Kmentt reiterated, the TPNW complements and reinforces the NPT.

The P-5 boycotted the negotiations, spoke against the TPNW in diplomatic forums and press conferences, and exerted enormous pressure on dependent nations not to sign or ratify the treaty. As the Associated Press (AP) reported, on the eve of the 50th ratification, stating that the nuclear powers "stand unified in our opposition to the potential repercussions" of the TPNW, the Trump administration is pressing governments that have already ratified the Treaty to withdraw their ratifications.

As the old saying has it, this is pissing in the wind, the equivalent to trying to silence the oceans tides. Trump, Putin, and their comrades will be no more successful in preventing the Treaty from coming into force than they have been in containing Covid which is not about to "disappear".

Ninety days after the 50th ratification is registered with the United Nations, the

TPNW will come into force. A signal achievement, it will mark the beginning of a new phase in the struggle to create a nuclear weapons-free world. Hiroshima and Nagasaki Hibakusha and the Japanese peace movement have long led the struggle to eliminate nuclear weapons. Their campaigning played an enormous role in bringing the TPNW into being. As indicated above, the most immediate TNPW challenge now is to win the signing and ratification of one or more "umbrella" states. Such a victory, breaking ranks with the nuclear powers, would be the unraveling of the thread of nuclearism that holds the nuclear disorder in place.

Given Japan's history as the only nation to be attacked by nuclear weapons in wartime and the majority support for the TPNW across country, winning Japanese government support for the Treaty may simply be a matter of time. But this victory can only be won through widespread and dedicated advocacy and action.

Obviously, those of us who are U.S. citizens have the moral responsibility to transform the policies, doctrines, and actions of the world's most threatening nuclear power. The NPT's promise of a nuclear weapons-free world and 2010's 13 steps must be honored and fulfilled.

In eleven days the seemingly endless U.S. presidential election will come to an end. Should Trump prevail via the undemocratic Electoral College system (written into the Constitution 231 years ago to defend slavery), or via a post-election coup, we will face a daunting horizon: the consolidation of a Trumpian tyranny and the doubling down on the Pentagon's extremely dangerous campaign to restore U.S. first-strike supremacy.

The polls are offering limited hope. After four years of dysfunction, deceit, disrespect and disaster, former Vice-President Biden appears to be on track to win the election. Biden won't be signing the TPNW any time soon. Should he prevail, despite his promise to work for a nuclear weapons-free world, the upgrading of the U.S. nuclear arsenal and Washington's preparations to fight and "win" a nuclear war will continue.

But, if we keep our eyes on the prize, the four years of a Biden presidency will give us time, political space, and opportunity to take the next steps in the long march begun by the Hibakusha. We will insist that Biden honor his articulated commitment to a no first use policy. With the urgent need for post-pandemic, post-Trump economic and social revitalization, of necessity there will be a powerful guns or butter debate over national budget priorities, opening the way to restore the JCPOA agreement with Iran, renewed commitment to arms control if not nuclear weapons abolition, and to seriously reduce spending to upgrade Washington's nuclear arsenal and its delivery system.

This week Ambassador Kmentt offered the vision of the TPNW igniting "societal discussion" as in the 1980s, about the urgency of nuclear disarmament. In corners of the imperium, like the Massachusetts state legislature, where legislation has been introduced to initiate a study of what the state would need to do to conform to the TPNW, to press for massive nuclear weapons spending cuts and for the country to fulfil its Article VI NPT commitments, that societal discussion has begun.

***Dr. Joseph Gerson** is President of the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security and author of [With Hiroshima Eyes and Empire and the Bomb](#).

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"It is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as [inherently] exceptional, whatever the motivation. There are big countries and small countries, rich and poor, those with long democratic traditions and those still finding their way to democracy. Their policies differ, too. We are all different, but when we ask for the Lord's blessings, we must not forget that God created us equal."

— Vladimir Putin



THIS IS NOT POETRY

The undeniable cruelty of Trump's 'maximum pressure' on Iran

By Tyler Cullis

October 12, 2020 [Information Clearing House](#) —

The Trump administration calls its policy towards Iran one of "maximum pressure." By its latest move, it would more properly be called "siege and starve," as the feigned interest in establishing leverage for comprehensive negotiations with Iran has been replaced by a full-throttle push to pulverize Iran's economy and collapse its social and economic life.

The Trump administration has now designated Iran's entire financial sector under Executive Order ("E.O.") 13902, subjecting all Iranian financial institutions — formal or otherwise — to an effective international boycott. Even with the crushing sanctions thus far visited on Iran, this move will have devastating impact, severing the limited ties that connect the Iranian people to the outside world and that allow them to sustain some modicum of economic life. Disconnected from the global financial system, unable to conduct the most basic of cross-border financial transactions, and denied their limited currency reserves abroad, Iran's economy will be forced into the dark, surviving, if at all, on a subterranean diet of barter and shell companies.

The humanitarian impact could well be significant. The Iranian people deserve more than the most basic of medicines and foodstuffs, but even those will be made difficult to come by as a result of this policy. Even as the Trump administration claims that it will preserve existing humanitarian exceptions, banks that remain linked to Iran's economy will sever those relationships, unsure of what the future holds, unclear about the financial benefits of maintaining trade with Iran, and fearful of being sanctioned for dealing with Iran's banks in any capacity, humanitarian or otherwise.

Those who practice U.S. sanctions have long been cognizant of the peculiar challenges conducting trade in humanitarian goods with Iran, which existed even when significant parts of Iran's economy remained open for business. Those challenges will now not just be exacerbated but will erect a prohibitive bar. No one, in good-faith, could advise that trade in humanitarian goods with Iran is without sanctions risk.

Some, like those at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies — the brain trust for the Trump administration's Iran policy and a group whose views generally align with Israel's Likud Party — will dispute all this, claiming that the new policy leaves open clear channels for humanitarian trade with Iran. No one need take this argument seriously. Those behind this move have long sought to crush Iran's economy — and, by implication, its people — including through explicit targeting of Iran's access to humanitarian goods. That explains the sanctioning of Iran's central bank and FDD's latest push to add another layer of sanctions and designate all of the non-designated Iranian banks. Their objective is clear: crush the people to stir political change. In some contexts, we use a word for this tactic: terrorism.

Based on reports, the Trump administration's new policy came after visits from the Israeli government and FDD's lobbying efforts. This is par for the course: FDD has long laundered Israeli talking points and intelligence before the U.S. government to make it seem as if there is a natural constituency for the policy being advocated. But there is no sizable constituency, at least not an American one. That is why the policy is being trotted out quietly in the midst of a thunderous presidential election season: to hide from the American people how their government is maliciously targeting Iranians and setting the stage for one last-ditch effort at war. Advocates of this policy know that there will be no referendum on it and that — subsumed by President Trump's total saturation of the news market — the U.S. public will have little chance to even learn of it.

One can only hope the nightmare is a short-lived one for Iranians. In less than a month, the United States will conduct presidential elections, and there is by now clear indication that former Vice President Joe Biden is the strong front-runner. The Biden campaign has intimated its desire to return to the Iran nuclear deal and to lift U.S. sanctions in return for Iran re-establishing nuclear restrictions. That could herald a quick return to the status quo that existed at the end of the Obama administration, in which Iran was slowly re-integrating itself into the global economy while the United States was secure in the knowledge that Iran's nuclear program was under wraps.

But a return to the nuclear deal will not address the pathologies that underlie the Trump administration's "siege and starve" policy towards Iran nor will it compensate what has become a "lost generation" in Iran, struggling under the boot of American economic domination. Washington's policy community will be quick to forgive those who advocated for this outrage, incorporating them back into the fold and treating them as honest interlocutors for a particular policy persuasion. The Iranian perspective will continue to be ignored, shut out from consideration through the potent combination of an embargo that prohibits meaningful dialogue between Americans and Iranians and an attitude of disregard for how our adversaries see things. In this manner, the wheel is reinvented and lessons go unlearned.

But if the United States seeks a sensible policy towards Iran — one that neither avoids the uncomfortable truths about the Islamic Republic nor seeks to destroy the country or risk war at every turn — there will need to be due consideration for how the U.S. has come to this policy, exacting an economic siege without historical precedent in the modern world and degrading what remains of its tattered moral standing in turn.

Tyler Cullis is Counsel at Ferrari & Associates, P.C., where he specializes in the practice of U.S. economic sanctions and export controls. His writings on U.S. sanctions and foreign policy have been published in the New York Times, the Washington Post, CNN, and Foreign Affairs, and he is a frequent commentator on U.S. sanctions developments, including in the Wall Street Journal, the Financial Times, and the Washington Post. - [Source](#) -

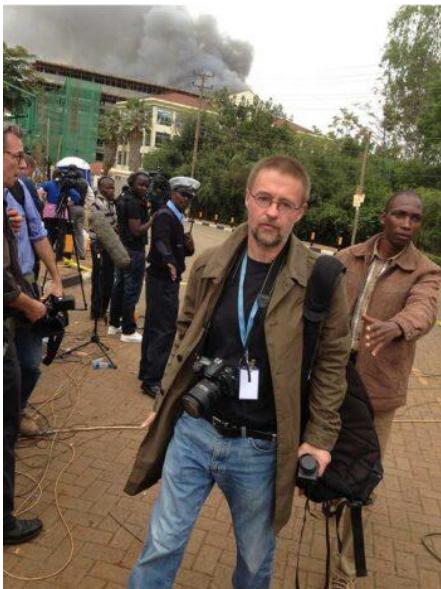


OBITUARY: ANDRE VLTCHEK

The Death of Andre Vltchek, a Passionate Warrior for Truth

by Edward Curtin

September 24th, 2020



In Kenya during Al-Shabaab standoff
(September 24, 2013)

If the world is upside down the way it is now, wouldn't we have to turn it over to get it to stand up straight?

— Eduardo Galeano, *Upside Down*,
1998

For decades, Andre Vltchek, an old-school journalist and artist (but a young man) who traveled the world in search of truth and who always stood up straight, tried to revolve the world and encourage people to revolt against injustice. In this age of arm-chair reporters, he stood out for his boldness and indefatigable courage. He told it straight. This irritated certain people and some pseudo-left publications, who sensed in him a no bullshit fierceness and nose for hypocrisy that frightened them, so they stopped publishing his writing. He went where so many others feared to tread, and he talked to people in places that were often the victims of Western imperialistic violence. He defended the defenseless and encouraged their defense.

Now he is dead. He died in the back seat of a chauffeur driven rental car on an overnight drive to Istanbul, Turkey. He was sleeping, and when his wife attempted to wake him upon arrival at

their hotel, she couldn't. He was 57-years-old.

Let him sleep in peace, but let his words ring out, his passionate cries for justice and peace in a world of violent predators.

Those who knew him and his work feel a great, great loss. His friend and colleague Peter Koenig wrote this touching goodbye.

As Koenig says, Vltchek was always defending those around the world who are considered disposable non-people, the Others, the non-whites, victims of Western wars, both military and economic, in places such as West Papua, Iraq, Syria, Africa, etc. He had a chip on his shoulder, a well justified chip, against the one-sided Western media and its elites that were always lecturing the rest of the world about their realities.

He was recently in the United States, and here is what he wrote:

But notice one thing: it is *them*, telling *us*, again, telling the world what it is and what it is not! You would never hear such statements in Africa, the Middle East, or Asia. There, people know perfectly well *what it really is* all about, whether it is about race or not!

I have just spent two weeks in the United States, analyzing the profound crises of U.S. society. I visited Washington, D.C., Minneapolis, New York, and Boston. I spoke to many people in all those places. What I witnessed was confusion and total ignorance about the rest of the world. The United States, a country which has been brutalizing our Planet for decades, is absolutely unable to see itself in the context of the entire world. People, including those from the media, are outrageously ignorant and provincial.

And they are selfish.

I asked many times: "Do black lives matter all over the world? Do they matter in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and do they matter in West Papua?" I swear, I received no coherent answer.

Somebody has to tell them...
Somebody has to force them to open their eyes.

A few years ago, I was invited to Southern California to show my

documentary work from Africa (my feature documentary film *Rwanda Gambit*, about West-triggered genocides in both Rwanda and later in the Democratic Republic of Congo), where millions of black people are dying, in order for the vast majority of the U.S. whites to live in piggish opulence.

But before I was allowed to present, I was warned: '*Remember, people here are sensitive. Do not show too much of brutal reality, as it could disturb them.*'

Hearing that, I almost left the event. Only my respect for the organizer made me stay.

Now I am convinced: it is time to force *them* to watch; to see rivers of blood, which their laziness, selfishness, and greed have triggered. It is time to force them to hear shouts of the agony of *the others*.

But as everyone knows, it is nearly impossible to force people to open their eyes and ears when they are dead set against doing so. Andre tried so hard to do that, and his frustration grew apace with those efforts that seemed to fall on deaf ears.

He was a relentless fighter, but he was a lover, too. His love for the people and cultures of the world was profound. Like Albert Camus, he tried to serve both beauty and suffering, the noblest of vocations. A lover of literature and culture, the best art and beauty ever produced, he was appalled at the way so many in the West had fallen into the pit of ignorance, illiteracy, and the grip of propaganda so tight that "what is missing is life. Euphoria, warmth, poetry and yes – love – are all in extremely short supply there."

He sensed, and said it, that nihilism rules in the United States beneath the compulsive consumerism and the denial of the violence that the U.S. inflicts on people across the world. It was selfishness run amok. Me me me. It was, he felt, soul death, the opposite of all the ostensible religiousness that is a cover story for despair. He wrote:

It has to be stopped. I say it because I do love this life, the life, which still exists outside the Western realm; I'm

(continued on Page 35...)



(continued from Page 34...)

intoxicated with it, obsessed with it. I live it to the fullest, with great delight, enjoying every moment of it.

Poetry, music, great literature, these he loved as he fought on the barricades for peace.

I urge you to read his article, [Love, Western Nihilism and Revolutionary Optimism](#)

He was a rare and courageous man. Let us ring bells in his honor.

Here's a Kenneth Rexroth poem for Andre, the fighter with the poet's heart:

No Word

The trees hang silent
In the heat....
Undo your heart
Tell me your thoughts
What you were
And what you are....
Like the bells no one
Has ever rung

Edward Curtin writes and his work appears widely. He is the author of [Seeking Truth in a Country of Lies](#).

This article was posted on Thursday, September 24th, 2020

NATO PROVOCATIONS

NATO Increased Warship Presence in Black Sea by 33% Compared to 2019

By Paul Antonopoulos

Global Research, October 07, 2020



By strengthening the presence of warships from non-Black Sea NATO members in the Black Sea, the military bloc is attempting to demonstrate its dominance in the region and the Alliance's desire to neutralize and pressurize Russia's influence in the area. Moscow's Black Sea influence significantly increased after Crimea's 2014 reunification with Russia. NATO's military presence in the Black Sea is significantly strengthening, especially as warships in the area increased by 33%

from January to September compared to the same period time last year. In 40% of cases, these ships are equipped with high-precision long-range weapons. This can be seen as a NATO attempt to intimidate Russia.

NATO is undeniably trying to put pressure on Russia by demonstrating its power.

However, another important goal of the Alliance is to conduct intelligence operations against Crimea and Russia's south. The Alliance is trying to locate Russian facilities, communication links, navigation systems, electronic warfare systems and other related military assets. There is of course the additional goal of training by simulating a battle with the Russian military.

After the reunification of Crimea, Russia gained a huge strategic advantage in the Black Sea region as it prevented NATO warships from being able to go to Sevastopol and turning it into a powerful pivot point that hypothetically could block Russia's access to the Sea of Azov in the event of war. The Sea of Azov is critical to the security of Russia's south as it is the beginning of the Volga–Don Canal.

Officially, the increased presence of NATO warships is in support of the Ukrainian navy. They are constantly participating in manoeuvres, such as the "Sea Breeze" exercises held in July. The number of military exercises is even growing. Countries far from the region, such as Canada and the Scandinavian states, are appearing in the Black Sea. Even this year, despite COVID-19 and all the restrictions, a large number of NATO warships arrived in the Black Sea. The last recorded case of non-Black Sea navy ships entering the Black Sea was recorded on Sunday when a British torpedo destroyer sailed in.

Warships of non-Black Sea countries can only be in the Black Sea for a limited time in accordance to the 1936 Montreux Convention. Therefore, that Convention is actually an obstacle for NATO today. Without this treaty, American and British warships could be permanently stationed in the Black Sea. The significance of this convention is based on guaranteeing the free passage of civilian ships through the Black Sea during peacetime and restricting the passage of warships of non-Black Sea

states. According to the Convention, countries that do not go out to the Black Sea are not allowed to keep their ships in the Black Sea region for more than 21 days. In addition, there are restrictions when it comes to the tonnage and number of warships belonging to non-Black Sea countries – no more than 30,000 tons and nine ships. This means that no aircraft carrier can enter the Black Sea, since they weigh between 45,000 to 100,000 tons.

Also, according to the Montreux Convention, Turkey must not close access to and from the Black Sea via the Bosphorus and the Dardanelle Straits during peacetime. During a war in which Turkey does not participate in, the sea must be closed to the passage of warships of any country participating in the war. Turkey, as a Black Sea state and member of NATO, can stay in the Black Sea as long as it wants and send as many ships as it wants, and has always participated in NATO Black Sea manoeuvres.

Although NATO countries do not recognize Russia's sovereignty over Crimea, this does not correspond with the reality on the ground and they know that the Russian Black Sea Fleet is in a state of combat readiness and will respond to any threat. This increasing pressure in Black Sea also corresponds with pressure against Russia in the seas in the Arctic, the Baltics and the Pacific. The presence of NATO warships in the Black Sea is just a show of strength and it is highly unlikely that this will intimidate the Russian military in the region or make it withdraw from Crimea. For now NATO are respecting the 1936 Montreux Convention but this has not subsided any pressure that is being applied against Russia.

This article was originally published on InfoBrics.

Paul Antonopoulos is an independent geopolitical analyst.

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"Israel's demonstration of its military prowess in 1967 confirmed its status as a 'strategic asset,' as did its moves to prevent Syrian intervention in Jordan in 1970 in support of the PLO. Under the Nixon doctrine, Israel and Iran were to be 'the guardians of the Gulf,' and after the fall of the Shah, Israel's perceived role was enhanced. Meanwhile, Israel has provided subsidiary services elsewhere, including Latin America, where direct US support for the most murderous regimes has been impeded by Congress. While there has been internal debate and some fluctuation in US policy, much exaggerated in discussion here, it has been generally true that US support for Israel's militarization and expansion reflected the estimate of its power in the region.

The effect has been to turn Israel into a militarized state completely dependent on US aid, willing to undertake tasks that few can endure, such as participation in Guatemalan genocide. For Israel, this is a moral disaster and will eventually become a physical disaster as well. For the Palestinians and many others, it has been a catastrophe, as it may sooner or later be for the entire world, with the growing danger of superpower confrontation."

— Noam Chomsky

"It's part of the typical playbook of American corporate media to depict the leader of the government it wants to topple as a dictator and depict its puppet who wants to take power as a noble defender of the people. The reality is the reverse of that."

— Jason Hirthler

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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 Niemoller, 1937