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**ISSUE 135**



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# Goose-stepping towards a Pink Revolution

Beware of easy solutions to the crisis of Trumpism; the deep state doesn't support the people, it supports globalised capitalism, writes **CJ Hopkins**

***The “Russia hacked the Election” narrative, let’s remember, was generated by a series of stories that turned out to be either completely fabricated or based on “anonymous intelligence sources” that could provide no evidence “for reasons of security”***

So the global capitalist ruling classes’ neutralisation of the Trumpian uprising seems to be off to a pretty good start. It’s barely been a month since his inauguration, and the corporate media, liberal celebrities, and their millions of faithful fans and followers are already shrieking for his summary impeachment, or his removal by . . . well, whatever means necessary, including some sort of “deep state” coup. Words like “treason” are being bandied about, treason being ground for impeachment (not to mention being punishable by death), which appears to be where we’re headed at this point.

In any event, the nation is now officially in a state of “crisis.” The editors of The New York Times are demanding congressional investigations to root out the Russian infiltrators who have assumed control of the executive branch. According to prize-winning economist Paul Krugman, “a foreign dictator intervened on behalf of a US presidential candidate” . . . “we are being governed by people who take their cues from Moscow,” or some such nonsense. The Washington Post, CNN, MSNBC, Guardian, New Yorker, Politico, Mother Jones, et al (in other words virtually every organ of the Western neoliberal media) are

robotically repeating this propaganda like the Project Mayhem cultists in Fight Club.

The fact that there is not one shred of actual evidence to support these claims makes absolutely no difference whatsoever. As I wrote in these pages previously, such official propaganda is not designed to be credible; it is designed to bludgeon people into submission through sheer relentless repetition and fear of social ostracisation . . . which, once again, is working perfectly. Like the “Iraq has WMDs” narrative before it, the “Putin hacked the Election” narrative has now become official “reality,” an unchallengeable axiomatic “fact” that can be cited as background to pretend to bolster additional ridiculous propaganda.

This “Russia hacked the Election” narrative, let’s remember, was generated by a series of stories that turned out to be either completely fabricated or based on “anonymous intelligence sources” that could provide no evidence “for reasons of security.” Who could forget the Washington Post’s “Russian Propagandist Blacklist” story (which was based on the claims of some anonymous blog and a third rate neo-McCarthyite think tank), or their “Russians hacked the Vermont





power grid” story (which, it turned out later, was totally made up), or CNN’s “Golden Showers Dossier” story (which was the work of some ex-MI6 spook-for-hire the Never Trump folks had on their payroll), or Slate’s “Trump’s Russian Server” story (a half-assed smear piece by Franklin Foer, who is now pretending to have been vindicated by the hysteria over the Flynn resignation), or (and this is my personal favourite) the Washington Post’s “Clinton Poisoned by Putin” story? Who could possibly forget these examples of courageous journalists speaking truth to power?

Well, OK, a lot of people, apparently, because there’s been a new twist in the official narrative. It seems the capitalist ruling classes now need us to defend the corporate media from the tyrannical criticism of Donald Trump, or else, well, you know, the end of democracy. Which millions of people are actually doing. Seriously, absurd as it obviously is, millions of Americans are now rushing to defend the most fearsome propaganda machine in the history of fearsome propaganda machines from one inarticulate, populist bogeyman who can’t maintain his train of thought for more than 15 or 20 seconds.

All joking aside, the prevailing mindset of the ruling classes, and those aspiring thereto, is more frightening than at any time I can remember. “The resistance” is exhibiting precisely the type of mindlessly fascistic, herd-like behaviour it purports to be trying to save us from. Yes, the mood in resistance quarters has turned quite openly authoritarian. William Kristol captured it succinctly: “Obviously strongly prefer normal democratic and constitutional politics. But if it comes to it, [I] prefer the deep state to the Trump state.” Neoliberal Rob Reiner put it this way: “The incompetent lying narcissistic fool is going down. Intelligence community will not let DT destroy democracy.” Subcommandante Michael Moore went to the caps lock to drive the

point home: “It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to figure out what was going on: TRUMP COLLUDING WITH THE RUSSIANS TO THROW THE ELECTION TO HIM,” and demanded that Trump be immediately detained and renditioned to a secure facility: “Let’s be VERY clear: Flynn DID NOT make that Russian call on his own. He was INSTRUCTED to do so. He was TOLD to reassure them. Arrest Trump.”

These are just a few of the more sickening examples. The point is, millions of American citizens (as well as citizens of other countries) are prepared to support a deep state coup to remove the elected president from office . . . and it doesn’t get much more fascistic than that.

#### **Not a conspiracy**

Now I want to be clear about this “deep state” thing, as the mainstream media is already labelling anyone who uses the term a hopelessly paranoid conspiracy theorist. The deep state, of course, is not a conspiracy. It is simply the interdependent network of structures where actual power resides (ie, the military-industrial complex, multinational corporations, Wall Street, the corporate media, and so on). Its purpose is to maintain the stability of the system regardless of which party controls the government. These are the folks who, when a president takes office, show up and brief him on what is and isn’t “possible” given economic and political “realities.” Despite what Alex Jones may tell you, it is not George Soros and roomful of Jews. It is a collection of military and intelligence officers, CEOs, corporate lobbyists, lawyers, bankers, politicians, power brokers, aides, advisers, and assorted other permanent members of the government and the corporate and financial classes. Just as presidents come and go, so do the individuals comprising the deep state, albeit on a longer rotation schedule. And, thus, it is not a monolithic entity. Like any other decentralised net-

***The deep state, of course, is not a conspiracy. It is simply the interdependent network of structures where actual power resides. Its purpose is to maintain the stability of the system regardless of which party controls the government***

***This is a time for all loyal Americans to set aside their critical thinking and support democracy, the corporate media, and the NSA, and CIA, and the rest of the deep state as they take whatever measures are necessary to defend us from Putin's diabolical plot to Nazify the United States and reenact the Holocaust for no discernible reason***

work, it contains contradictions, conflicts of interest. However, what remains a constant is the deep state's commitment to preserving the system . . . which, in our case, that system is global capitalism.

I'm going to repeat and italicise that to hopefully avoid any misunderstanding. *The system the deep state primarily serves is not the United States of America, ie, the country most Americans believe they live in; the system it serves is globalised capitalism.* The United States, the nation state itself, while obviously a crucial element of the system, is not the deep state's primary concern. If it were, Americans would all have health-care, affordable education, and a right to basic housing, like more or less every other developed nation.

### **Discontent with neoliberal capitalism**

And this is the essence of the present conflict. The Trump regime (whether sincere or not) has capitalised on people's discontent with globalised neoliberal capitalism, which is doing away with outmoded concepts such as the nation state and national sovereignty and restructuring the world into one big marketplace where "Chinese" investors own "American" companies that manufacture goods for "European" markets by paying "Thai" workers three dollars a day to enrich "American" hedge fund crooks whose "British" bankers stash their loot in numbered accounts in the Cayman Islands while "American" workers pay their taxes so that the "United States" can give billions of dollars to "Israelis" and assorted terrorist outfits that are destabilising the Middle East to open up markets for the capitalist ruling classes, who have no allegiance to any country, and who couldn't possibly care any less about the common people who have to live there. Trump supporters, rubes that they are, don't quite follow the logic of all that, or see how it benefits them or their families.

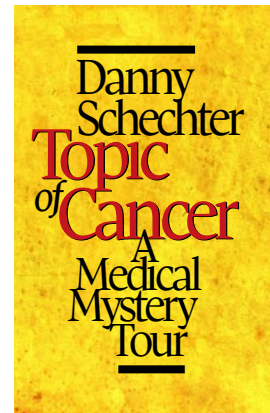
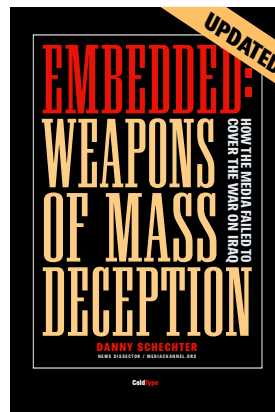
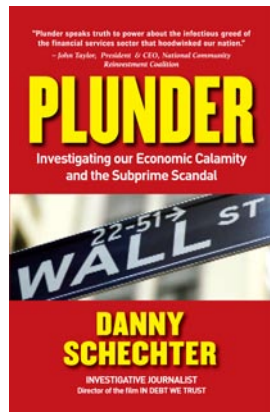
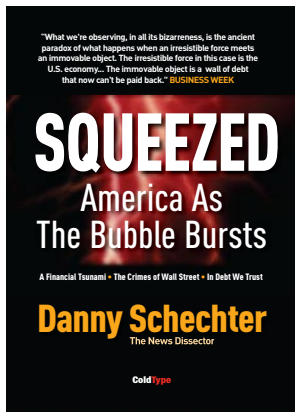
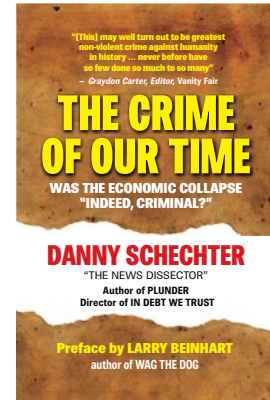
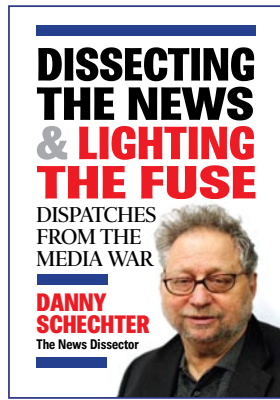
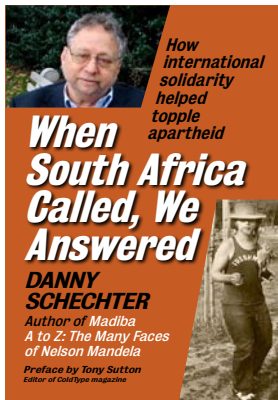
But whatever . . . they're all just fascists, right? And we're in a state of cri-

sis, aren't we? This is not the time to sit around and analyse political and historical dynamics. No, this is a time for all loyal Americans to set aside their critical thinking and support democracy, the corporate media, and the NSA, and CIA, and the rest of the deep state (which doesn't exist) as they take whatever measures are necessary to defend us from Putin's diabolical plot to Nazify the United States and reenact the Holocaust for no discernible reason. The way things are going, it's just a matter of time until they either impeach his puppet, Trump, or, you know, remove him by other means. I imagine, once we get to that point, Official State Satirist Stephen Colbert will cover the proceedings live on the Late Show, whipping his studio audience up into a frenzy of mindless patriotic merriment, as he did in the wake of the Flynn fiasco (accusing the ruling classes' enemies of treason being the essence of satire, of course). After he's convicted and dying in jail, triumphant Americans will pour out onto the lawn of Lafayette Square again, waving huge flags and hooting vuvuzelas, as they did when Obama killed Osama bin Laden. I hope you'll forgive me if I don't attend. Flying home may be a little complicated, as according to the Washington Post, I'm some kind of Russian propagandist now. And, also, I have this problem with authority, which I don't imagine will go over very well with whatever provisional government is installed to oversee the Restoration of Normality, and Love, of course, throughout the nation. **CT**

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# The deep state rises to the surface in France

**Diana Johnstone** reports on another ghastly presidential election campaign

***The aping of the US system began with “primaries” held by the two main governing parties which obviously aspire to establish themselves as the equivalent of American Democrats and Republicans in a two-party system***

As if the 2016 US presidential election campaign hadn't been horrendous enough, here comes another one: in France. The system in France is very different, with multiple candidates in two rounds, most of them highly articulate, who often even discuss real issues. Free television time reduces the influence of big money. The first round on April 23 will select the two finalists for the May 7 runoff, allowing for much greater choice than in the United States.

But monkey see, monkey do, and the mainstream political class wants to mimic the ways of the Empire, even echoing the theme that dominated the 2016 show across the Atlantic: the evil Russians are messing with our wonderful democracy.

The aping of the US system began with “primaries” held by the two main governing parties which obviously aspire to establish themselves as the equivalent of American Democrats and Republicans in a two-party system. The right-wing party of former president Nicolas Sarkozy has already renamed itself Les Républicains and the so-called Socialist Party leaders are just waiting for the proper occasion to call themselves Les Démocrates. But as things are going, neither one of them may come out ahead this time.

Given the nearly universal disaffection

with the outgoing Socialist Party government of President François Hollande, the Republicans were long seen as the natural favourites to defeat Marine LePen, who is shown by all polls to top the first round. With such promising prospects, the Republican primary brought out more than twice as many volunteer voters (they must pay a small sum and claim allegiance to the party's “values” in order to vote) as the Socialists. Sarkozy was eliminated, but more surprising, so was the favourite, the reliable establishment team player, Bordeaux mayor Alain Juppé, who had been leading in the polls and in media editorials.

## **Fillon's family values**

In a surprise show of widespread public disenchantment with the political scene, Republican voters gave a landslide victory to former prime minister François Fillon, a practicing Catholic with an ultra-neoliberal domestic policy: lower taxes for corporations, drastic cuts in social welfare, even health insurance benefits – accelerating what previous governments have been doing, but more openly. Less conventionally, Fillon strongly condemns the current anti Russian policy. Fillon also deviates from the Socialist government's single-minded commitment to overthrowing Assad by showing sympathy for embattled





Christians in Syria and their protector, which happens to be the Assad government.

Fillon has the respectable look, as the French say, of a person who could take communion without first going to confession. As a campaign theme he credibly stressed his virtuous capacity to oppose corruption.

Whoops! On January 25, the semi-satirical weekly *Le Canard Enchaîné* fired the opening shots of an ongoing media campaign designed to undo the image of Mister Clean, revealing that his British wife, Penelope, had been paid a generous salary for working as his assistant. As Penelope was known for staying home and raising their children in the countryside, the existence of that work is in serious doubt. Fillon also paid his son a lawyer's fee for unspecified tasks and his daughter for supposedly assisting him write a book. In a sense, these allegations prove the strength of the conservative candidate's family values. But his ratings have fallen and he faces possible criminal charges for fraud.

### **Cui bono?**

The scandal is real, but the timing is suspect. The facts are many years old, and the moment of their revelation is well calculated to ensure his defeat. Moreover, the very day after the *Canard's* revelations, prosecutors hastily opened an inquiry. In comparison to all the undisclosed dirty work and unsolved blood crimes committed by those in control of the French State over the years, especially during its foreign wars, enriching one's own family may seem relatively minor. But that is not the way the public sees it.

It is widely assumed that, despite National Front candidate Marine LePen's constant lead in the polls, whoever comes in second will win the run-off because the established political class and the media will rally around the cry to "save the Republic!" Fear of the National Front as "a threat to the Republic" has become a sort of protection racket for the established parties, since it stigmatises as unacceptable a large swath of opposition to themselves. In the past, both main

parties have sneakily connived to strengthen the National Front in order to take votes away from their adversary.

Thus, bringing down Fillon increases the chances that the candidate of the now thoroughly discredited Socialist Party may find himself in the magic second position after all, as the knight to slay the LePen dragon. But who exactly is the Socialist candidate? That is not so clear. There is the official Socialist Party candidate, Benoît Hamon. But the independent spin-off from the Hollande administration, Emanuel Macron, "neither right nor left," is gathering support from the right of the Socialist Party as well as from most of the neo-liberal globalist elite.

Macron is scheduled to be the winner. But first, a glance at his opposition on the left. With his ratings in the single digits, François Hollande very reluctantly gave into entreaties from his colleagues to avoid the humiliation of running for a second term and losing badly. The badly attended Socialist Party primary was expected to select the fiercely pro-Israel prime minister Manuel Valls. Or if not, on his left, Arnaud Montebourg, a sort of Warren Beatty of French politics, famous for his romantic liaisons and his advocacy of re-industrialisation of France.

Again, surprise. The winner was a colourless, little-known party hack named Benoît Hamon, who rode the wave of popular discontent to appear as a leftist critic and alternative to a Socialist government which sold out all Holland's promises to combat "finance" and assaulted the rights of the working class instead. Hamon spiced up his claim to be "on the left" by coming up with a gimmick that is fashionable elsewhere in Europe but a novelty in French political discourse: the "universal basic income." The idea of giving every citizen an equal handout can sound appealing to young people having trouble finding a job. But this idea, which originated with Milton Friedman and other apostles of unleashed financial capitalism, is actually a trap. The project assumes that unemployment is permanent, in contrast to

***The semi-satirical weekly *Le Canard Enchaîné* fired the opening shots of an ongoing media campaign designed to undo the image of Mister Clean***

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projects to create jobs or share work. It would be financed by replacing a whole range of existing social allocations, in the name of “getting rid of bureaucracy” and “freedom of consumption.” The project would complete the disempowerment of the working class as a political force, destroying the shared social capital represented by public services, and splitting the dependent classes between paid workers and idle consumers.

There is scant chance that the universal income is about to become a serious item on the French political agenda. For the moment, Hamon’s claim to radicality serves to lure voters away from the independent left-wing candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon. Both are vying for support from greens and militants of the French Communist Party, which has lost all capacity to define its own positions.

An impressive orator, Mélenchon gained prominence in 2005 as a leading opponent of the proposed European Constitution, which was decisively rejected by the French in a referendum, but was nevertheless adopted under a new name by the French national assembly. Like so many leftists in France, Mélenchon has a Trotskyist background (the Posadists, more attuned to Third World revolutions than their rivals) before joining the Socialist Party, which he left in 2008 to found the Parti de Gauche. He has sporadically wooed the rudderless Communist Party to join him as the Front de Gauche (the Left Front) and has declared himself its candidate for President on a new independent ticket called La France insoumise – roughly translated as “Insubordinate France.” Mélenchon is combative with France’s docile media, as he defends such unorthodox positions as praise of Chavez and rejection of France’s current Russophobic foreign policy. Unlike the conventional Hamon, who follows the Socialist party line, Mélenchon wants France to leave both the euro and NATO.

### **Strong personalities**

There are only two really strong personalities in this line-up: Mélenchon on the left

and his adversary of choice, Marine LePen, on the right. In the past, their rivalry in local elections has kept both from winning even though she came out ahead. Their positions on foreign policy are hard to distinguish from each other: criticism of the European Union, desire to leave NATO, good relations with Russia. Since both deviate from the establishment line, both are denounced as “populists” – a term that is coming to mean anyone who pays more attention to what ordinary people want than to what the Establishment dictates.

On domestic social policy, on preservation of social services and workers’ rights, Marine is well to the left of Fillon. But the stigma attached to the National Front as the “far right” remains, even though, with her close advisor Florian Philippot, she has ditched her father, Jean-Marie, and adjusted the party line to appeal to working class voters. The main relic of the old National Front is her hostility to immigration, which now centres on fear of Islamic terrorists. The terrorist killings in Paris and Nice have made these positions more popular than they used to be. In her effort to overcome her father’s reputation as anti-Semitic, Marine LePen has done her best to woo the Jewish community, helped by her rejection of “ostentatious” Islam, going so far as to call for a ban on wearing an ordinary Muslim headscarf in public.

A run-off between Mélenchon and LePen would be an encounter between a revived left and a revived right, a real change from the political orthodoxy that has alienated much of the electorate. That could make politics exciting again. At a time when popular discontent with “the system” is rising, it has been suggested (by Elizabeth Lévy’s maverick monthly *Le Causeur*) that the anti-system Mélenchon might actually have the best chance of winning working class votes away from the anti-system LePen.

But the pro-European Union, pro-NATO, neoliberal Establishment is at work to keep that from happening. On every possible magazine cover or talk show, the media have

shown their allegiance to a “New! Improved!” middle of the road candidate who is being sold to the public like a consumer product. At his rallies, carefully coached young volunteers situated in view of the cameras greet his every vague generalisation with wild cheers, waving flags, and chanting “Macron President!!!” before going off to the discotèque party offered as their reward. Macron is the closest thing to a robot ever presented as a serious candidate for President. That is, he is an artificial creation designed by experts for a particular task.

Emmanuel Macron, 39, was a successful investment banker who earned millions working for the Rothschild bank. Ten years ago, in 2007, age 29, the clever young economist was invited into the big time by Jacques Attali, an immensely influential guru, whose advice since the 1980s has been central in wedding the Socialist Party to pro-capitalist, neoliberal globalism. Attali incorporated him into his private think tank, the Commission for Stimulating Economic Growth, which helped draft the “300 Proposals to Change France” presented to President Sarkozy a year later as a blueprint for government. Sarkozy failed to enact them all, for fear of labour revolts, but the supposedly “left” Socialists are able to get away with more drastic anti-labour measures, thanks to their softer discourse.

### **Reassuring the financiers**

The soft discourse was illustrated by presidential candidate François Hollande in 2012 when he aroused enthusiasm by declaring to a rally: “My real enemy is the world of finance!” The left cheered and voted for him. Meanwhile, he secretly dispatched Macron to London to reassure the City’s financial elite that it was all just electoral talk.

After his election, Hollande brought Macron onto his staff. From there he was given a newly created super-modern sounding government post as Minister of Economy, Industry and Digital affairs in 2014. With all the bland charm of a department store man-

nequin, Macron upstaged his irascible colleague, prime minister Manuel Valls, in the silent rivalry to succeed their boss, President Hollande. Macron won the affection of big business by making his anti-labour reforms look young and clean and “progressive.” In fact, he pretty much followed the Attali agenda.

The theme is “competitiveness.” In a globalised world, a country must attract investment capital in order to compete, and for that it is necessary to lower labour costs. A classic way to do that is to encourage immigration. With the rise of identity politics, the left is better than the right in justifying massive immigration on moral grounds, as a humanitarian measure. That is one reason that the Democratic Party in the United States and the Socialist Party in France have become the political partners of neoliberal globalism. Together, they have changed the outlook of the official left from structural measures promoting economic equality to moral measures promoting equality of minorities with the majority.

Just last year, Macron founded (or had founded for him) his political movement entitled “En marche!” (Let’s go!) characterised by meetings with young groupies wearing Macron T-shirts. In three months he felt the call to lead the nation and announced his candidacy for president.

Many personalities are jumping the marooned Socialist ship and going over to Macron, whose strong political resemblance to Hillary Clinton suggests that his is the way to create a French Democratic Party based on the US model. Hillary may have lost but she remains the NATO-land favourite. And indeed, US media coverage confirms this notion. A glance at the ecstatic puff piece by Robert Zaretsky in *Foreign Policy* magazine hailing “the English-speaking, German-loving, French politician Europe has been waiting for” leaves no doubt that Macron is the darling of the trans-Atlantic globalising elite.

Macron is now second only to Marine LePen in the polls, which also show him de-

***At Macron’s rallies, carefully coached young volunteers situated in view of the cameras greet his every vague generalisation with wild cheers, waving flags, and chanting “Macron President!!!” before going off to the discotèque party offered as their reward***

**What have the Russians done that is so terrible? Mainly, they have made it clear that they have a preference for friends rather than enemies as heads of foreign governments**

feating her by a landslide in the final round. However, his carefully manufactured appeal is vulnerable to greater public information about his close ties to the economic elite.

For that eventuality, there is a preventive strike, imported directly from the United States. It's the fault of the Russians!

What have the Russians done that is so terrible? Mainly, they have made it clear that they have a preference for friends rather than enemies as heads of foreign governments. Nothing so extraordinary about that. Russian news media criticise, or interview people who criticise, candidates hostile to Moscow. Nothing extraordinary about that either.

As an example of this shocking interference, which allegedly threatens to undermine the French Republic and Western values, the Russian news agency Sputnik interviewed a Republican member of the French parliament, Nicolas Dhuicq, who dared say that Macron might be “an agent of the American financial system.” That is pretty obvious. But the resulting outcry skipped over that detail to accuse Russian state media of “starting to circulate rumours that Macron had a gay extramarital affair” (The EU Observer, February 13, 2017). In fact this alleged “sexual slur” had been circulating primarily in gay circles in Paris, for whom the scandal, if any, is not Macron's alleged sexual orientation but the fact that he denies it. The former mayor of Paris, Bertrand Delanoë, was openly gay, Marine Le Pen's second in command Florian Philippot is gay. In France being gay is no big deal.

Macron is supported by a “very wealthy gay lobby,” Dhuicq is quoted as saying. Everyone knows who that is: Pierre Bergé, the rich and influential business manager of Yves Saint Laurent, personification of radical chic, who strongly supports surrogate gestation, which is indeed a controversial issue in France, the real controversy underlying the failed opposition to gay marriage.

The amazing adoption in France of the American anti-Russian campaign is indicative of a titanic struggle for control of the narrative – the version of international real-

ity consumed by the masses of people who have no means to undertake their own investigations. Control of the narrative is the critical core of what Washington describes as its “soft power.” The hard power can wage wars and overthrow governments. The soft power explains to bystanders why that was the right thing to do. The United States can get away with literally everything so long as it can tell the story to its own advantage, without the risk of being credibly contradicted. Concerning sensitive points in the world, whether Iraq, or Libya, or Ukraine, control of the narrative is basically exercised by the partnership between intelligence agencies and the media. Intelligence services write the story, and the mass corporate media tell it.

Together, the anonymous sources of the “deep state” and the mass corporate media have become accustomed to controlling the narrative told to the public. They don't want to give that power up. And they certainly don't want to see it challenged by outsiders – notably by Russian media that tell a different story.

That is one reason for the extraordinary campaign going on to denounce Russian and other alternative media as sources of “false news,” in order to discredit rival sources. The very existence of the Russian international television news channel RT aroused immediate hostility: how dare the Russians intrude on our version of reality! How dare they have their own point of view! Hillary Clinton warned against RT when she was Secretary of State and her successor John Kerry denounced it as a “propaganda bullhorn.” What we say is truth, what they say can only be propaganda.

### **Russian intention**

The denunciation of Russian media and alleged Russian “interference in our elections” is a major invention of the Clinton campaign, which has gone on to infect public discourse in Western Europe. This accusation is a very obvious example of double standards, or projection, since US spying on everybody, including its allies, and interference in foreign



elections are notorious.

The campaign denouncing “fake news” originating in Moscow is in full swing in both France and Germany as elections approach. It is this accusation that is the functional interference in the campaign, not Russian media. The accusation that Marine Le Pen is “the candidate of Moscow” is not only meant to work against her, but is also preparation for the efforts to instigate some variety of “colour revolution” should she happen to win the May 7 election. CIA interference in foreign elections is far from limited to contentious news reports. In the absence of any genuine Russian threat to Europe, claims that Russian media are “interfering in our democracy” serve to brand Russia as an aggressive enemy and thereby justify the huge NATO military buildup in Northeastern Europe, which is reviving German militarism and directing national wealth into the arms industry.

In some ways, the French election is an extension of the American one, where the deep state lost its preferred candidate, but not its power. The same forces are at work

here, backing Macron as the French Hillary, but ready to stigmatise any opponent as a tool of Moscow.

What has been happening over the past months has confirmed the existence of a deep state that is not only national but trans-Atlantic, aspiring to be global. The anti-Russian campaign is a revelation. It reveals to many people that there really is a deep state, a trans-Atlantic orchestra that plays the same tune without any visible conductor. The term “deep state” is suddenly popping up even in mainstream discourse, as a reality that cannot be denied, even if it is hard to define. Instead of the Military Industrial Complex, we should perhaps call it the Military Industrial Intelligence Military Media Complex, or MIIMMC. Its power is enormous, but acknowledging that it exists is the first step toward working to free ourselves from its grip. **CT**

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*Diana Johnstone is the author of Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO, and Western Delusions. Her new book is Queen of Chaos: the Misadventures of Hillary Clinton. This essay was first published at [www.counterpunch.org](http://www.counterpunch.org)*

**Together, the anonymous sources of the “deep state” and the mass corporate media have become accustomed to controlling the narrative told to the public. They don't want to give that power up. And they certainly don't want to see it challenged by outsiders – notably by Russian media that tell a different story**

## HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt



# The deep state won't rescue us from Trump

Be careful what you wish for, advises **Adam Shatz**; just look what happened to Egypt after the military stepped in

***I was recently on the phone with a woman in her seventies who asked why someone couldn't "put out a contract on . . ." I interrupted her; better not to say it***

A few months before Donald Trump was elected president, I was in Paris talking to an American political scientist, a specialist on North Africa who has made his home in France. Laxminarayan (not his real name) was sceptical of Trump's chances. And even if he were to win, Laxminarayan added, it was very clear what would happen next.

'Really?' I said. 'And what is that?'

'He will have to be removed from power by the deep state, or be assassinated.'

Laxminarayan's faith in the power, if not the wisdom, of the American deep state has declined since the election. If there is a deep state – a network of political, military and economic interests operating behind the scenes to ensure the continuity of America's governing structures – it isn't clear that it has the coherence, or the ability to act in periods of emergency, that deep states in the Middle East have, thanks in large part to their foundations in military rule. Laxminarayan and I used to debate the workings of the deep states in Algeria and Egypt, as if it were a kind of experts' game. We also drew, I suspect, a certain relief from the fact that Western democracies were less burdened by their machinations.

Once Trump came to power, however,

Laxminarayan began talking about the deep state in longing tones, hoping – not unlike Middle Easterners welcoming a military coup against a regime they disliked – that it might 'do the job'. Where, he asked in emails, is Khaled Islambouli, who masterminded the assassination of Sadat, or Lee Harvey Oswald, when you needed him? This was dark humour, of course, but it wasn't merely that.

I don't meant to single out Laxminarayan. I was recently on the phone with a woman in her seventies who asked why someone couldn't "put out a contract on . . ." I interrupted her; better not to say it.



Talk of violence, civil war and secession is in the air in the blue states today. Many, perhaps most of us who live in coastal cities have found ourselves having criminal thoughts and violent fantasies since November 9. Some involve Trump and Steve Bannon; others involve white supremacists such as Richard Spencer and Milo Yiannopoulos; still others involve the fabled white working class that is supposed to have voted for Trump (the reality is more complicated than that, I know), which most of us have found it easier to hate than persuade. (I'm as guilty as the next person.) These feelings provide a measure of psychological release, but they are also difficult to manage. Living with bile

and rage is not pleasant; it eats away at the soul, when the adrenaline subsides.

I've been thinking a lot, lately, about what these fantasies mean (aside from the obvious desires they express), and how we might use them (other than for the obvious purpose, which would only be a gift to the administration). My hunch is that they express, above all, a sense not only of horror, but of impotence. The 'resistance,' as the mobilisation against Trump has become known, as if we had all taken to the maquis rather than our smart phones, is gratifying, even encouraging, but it isn't enough, and no matter how widespread and determined, it cannot, on its own, eject Trump and Bannon from power. It is more likely that our president will be in power for four years than that he will be forced out. He can only be removed before the end of his term by impeachment or death, natural or otherwise. That many are fantasising about the last of these is hardly surprising, since neither impeachment nor death by natural causes seems likely. Trump may not be as healthy as Obama, but he isn't ill; and he has control of both houses of Congress for the next two years, at least.

There is no inherent harm in fantasising. People living under tyranny often dream that their leader will come to a violent end (if they haven't embraced him as a beloved father figure). Still, it's notable how easily violent thoughts have come to those of us who have known only a single, and much contested, month of the Trump-Bannon era. American exceptionalism may be dead, but it lives on as a habit of mind, measured now not in the supremacy of our democracy but in the unprecedented horror we imagine ourselves to be experiencing. These thoughts are, in a way, a tribute to the power Trump has over our imagination. If he had a sense of irony, he might draw a perverse pleasure from the fact that he has provoked otherwise pacific people into dreaming of violence – and dreaming that violence is their only resort against him.

It might be useful to think about these fantasies in wider terms, as a way of trying to understand the citizens of other countries, particularly those whom Americans have for the most part refused to sympathise with. We might try, for example, to understand why Palestinians have carried out violent attacks against the people who have occupied them for (as of June this year) half a century. They have been under military rule, without recourse to elections or a fair legal system, much less citizenship, for roughly 600 times as long as we have been under Trump. Americans who think suicide bombs are shocking, or are evidence of cultural backwardness or a Muslim disposition towards violence, might do well to reflect on the fragile psychology of political violence, as we feel the fantasy, even the temptation of violence, rise up in ourselves.

The dangerous fantasy that the deep state might rescue us – Laxminarayan's fantasy – also merits examination, for we have seen its results in Egypt. Without this fantasy, General Sisi could never have come to power. I was among those who deplored Egypt's coup, not because of any sympathy for Mohammed Morsi or the Muslim Brothers, but because I feared that it would lead to the destruction of the Egyptian democracy movement, and of whatever trappings remained of procedural democracy in an already deeply authoritarian society. I haven't changed my mind about that. But I have a better understanding of Egyptian friends who welcomed the military's intervention because they were afraid that Morsi would introduce an Islamist dictatorship. Fear is not a good guide to political wisdom. The Egyptians now live under a far harsher regime than Morsi's, or Mubarak's. Military intervention against Trump, even if it were possible, and I doubt it is, would probably result in a more sweeping and destructive transformation of our democracy. When we act on our fears, we usually end up being ruled by them.

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**Adam Shatz** is a contributing editor at the London Review of Books – [www.lrb.co.uk](http://www.lrb.co.uk) – where this article was first published

**CT**

# The dark money that paid for Brexit

**Peter Geoghegan** and **Adam Ramsay** report on the secret cash that bankrolled Brexit, the loophole it's hiding in, and how it unravelled

**Why did Irish political party spend so much campaigning to leave the EU? The likely answers take you down into a loophole in UK electoral law that allows dark money to flow through Northern Irish politics, and into the British system**

In the coming weeks, Britain's Electoral Commission will publish details of how much cash the various campaigns threw at the European referendum. The list of big spenders will include some familiar faces: the Conservatives, Labour, the official Leave and Remain initiatives.

But there will be an unlikely name featuring among those big beasts, too: Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist party.

Just how much the DUP spent on Brexit remains to be seen. But the Electoral Commission have already let slip something surprising: it's more than £250,000. And the most obvious reason that a relatively small party had so much to spend on this campaign? Because political donations in Northern Ireland are kept secret.

You might not realise it, but it's pretty likely you even saw some of the DUP's Brexit campaign spending. Look closely, for example, at the imprint at the bottom of placards displayed in Edinburgh in the week of the vote. (See photos on next page)

It wasn't just a few stray leaflets or placards that the DUP paid for. On June 21, two days before the vote, the party funded a four-page wrap-around pro-Leave advert in the Metro freesheet. While it's possible to buy such adverts for as few as 10,000 issues

of the paper, openDemocracy has spoken to people who saw this propaganda in editions in London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Dundee, Cardiff, and Sunderland. A UK-wide wrap-around advert in the Metro costs £250,000: on its own, far more than any Northern Irish Party has ever spent on even the most significant election campaigns.

One place the advert didn't appear is the one place the DUP stands for election: Northern Ireland. The Metro doesn't circulate there.

"It is safe to assume that this was the most expensive single piece of propaganda ever issued by an Irish political party," commentator Fintan O'Toole wrote in the Irish Times.

So, why did the DUP spend so much campaigning to leave the European Union? And

where did they get all the money to do so? The likely answers take you down into a loophole in UK electoral law that allows dark money to flow through Northern Irish politics, and into the British system.

A quarter of a million pounds is unlike anything the DUP has spent in the past. Just a month before the EU referendum, the party won 38 seats in the Northern Ireland Assembly elections and retained its position as the largest party there. To do this, they spent less than £90,000.







**Left: Leave campaigners in Edinburgh the day before the vote. Above: The address at the foot of the poster, 91 Dundela Avenue is the DUP headquarters.** Photos: Adam Ramsay

The 2015 general election – where the DUP won eight seats and became the third-equal biggest group in Westminster – cost the party only £58,000. In fact, the total combined spend of all Northern Irish political parties for the 2015 general election was just £221,143. The DUP's most recent accounts show that its total expenditure for the whole of 2015 was £511,766, and its net assets at the end of the year were around £195,000. A bill of more than £250,000 only months later would therefore have left them bankrupt – unless they got significant extra income from somewhere.

But what's really significant is that, because of the aforementioned loophole, we aren't allowed to know where any such donations came from.

Of course, it's theoretically possible that the DUP raised all of this money from its membership through raffles and crowd-funders. But it seems far more likely that the extraordinary sum spent on this ostentatious Brexit advert came from major donations. In which case we won't have any idea who really helped to bankroll this key part of the Leave campaign.

You see, in the rest of the UK, parties must report all donations of more than £7,500 to a national party or £1,500 to a local branch. But the names and addresses of donors to Northern Irish political parties and campaigns are not made public, ostensibly because of "special circumstances": the security situation is used as an excuse for donations to be reported to the Electoral

Commission, but kept 'sealed', so that you and I can't know who they are from.

The Electoral Commission has confirmed to openDemocracy that in the European referendum, where the whole country was treated as a single constituency, donations made to a Northern Irish party such as the DUP could be used to fund campaigning in Scotland, England and Wales, and yet Northern Irish secrecy laws still apply to this cash.

This means that anyone who wanted to donate to the Leave campaign without facing the public accountability required by laws in Great Britain could simply funnel money through the DUP. Whether this is just because such a donor is a bit of a wall-flower, or because of something more sinister which Leave campaigners may wish to hide from the public eye, we don't know.

There is, though, one way we could find out, which we'll get to in a moment. But first, it's worth looking at some of the context for all of this.

### **The DUP and the other Brexiteers**

While we don't know how the DUP came into so much cash all of a sudden, there have been a number of claims that they were looking for money in the run up to the vote.

Arron Banks, the multi-millionaire who poured millions into Brexit, has claimed that the DUP asked for £30,000 a month over four months to back his campaign. In his book *The Bad Boys of Brexit*, Banks says

***Anyone who wanted to donate to the Leave campaign without facing the public accountability required by laws in Great Britain could simply funnel money through the DUP***

***The shady role of the DUP in the Brexit movement adds to a long list of questions about the party's commitment to transparency amid a series of financial scandals***

he told the DUP “that’s not the way we operate.”

The DUP has denied Banks’ claim and insisted that the party’s EU referendum spending reflected their commitment to Brexit. DUP member of the Stormont assembly Mervyn Storey said the Metro advert was “a price worth paying.”

But many have questioned the DUP’s Brexit spending. The Metro adverts “are a donation hidden in plain sight. A very large donation was funnelled through the Northern Irish donor black hole,” says Niall Bakewell from Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland, who have long campaigned for full disclosure of political donations.

“It is hard to understand why the DUP would spend that amount of money on an advert in London or anywhere else in GB. Where are the benefits to the DUP in doing that?” Alliance party leader Naomi Long said. “It is certainly possible that funds were being channelled through a party in Northern Ireland to take advantage of the veil of secrecy that surrounds our party political donations,” Steven Agnew, leader of the Northern Irish Greens, said to openDemocracy, “It would concern me greatly if it was found that ‘donor tourism’ was taking place.

The shady role of the DUP in the Brexit movement adds to a long list of questions about the party’s commitment to transparency amid a series of financial scandals. A botched renewable heating subsidy scheme that could end up costing the Northern Irish exchequer upwards of £450-million precipitated the collapse of Stormont earlier this year amid allegations that key advisers had close links to profiting industries. As enterprise minister in 2012, DUP leader Arlene Foster approved the creation of this Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme.

In 2010, Foster’s predecessor Peter Robinson was forced to temporarily stand aside after a BBC documentary revealed that his wife Iris Robinson – then an MP and councillor – had procured £50,000 in loans

to finance a restaurant for her teenage lover. She failed to declare her interest in the business despite sitting on the council that granted its operating licence.

Last year, Ireland’s National Assets Management Agency reported its former Northern Ireland advisor, Frank Cushnahan, to police over corruption allegations related to a €1.6-billion land sale. Mr Cushnahan had been appointed on the recommendation of the DUP. Concern around political party funding in Northern Ireland has been growing. Transparency International UK has called for legislation to allow for scrutiny of political reporting by the end of this year.

The Electoral Commission began to keep a record of donors to NI parties from 2007 but public access to this record was temporarily banned by the government. This ban, called the ‘Prescribed Period,’ was only due to last until October 2010 but its end date has been repeatedly extended.

In 2010, 77 percent of respondents to a Northern Ireland Office consultation supported full transparency of political donations. After that, Westminster passed a law which states that from January 2014 onwards donations made to political parties in Northern Ireland could at some point in the future be made public – including donations used in the Brexit campaign. However, under the Northern Ireland Miscellaneous Provisions Act (2014) this will not happen until the UK government judges it is safe to do so.

Which is the simplest way that we could find out where this mystery cash for the DUP’s Brexit spending came from: Northern Ireland Secretary of State James Brokenshire has it within his power to simply release them.

Campaigners in Northern Ireland have long called for donor names to be published, saying they have seen no evidence to suggest that those giving over £7,500 a year to a political party are any more at risk than any other willing, partisan participants in Northern Ireland politics. Indeed, under

legislation dating from 1983 the identity of those who donate money to individual election candidates can be accessed, although contributions to parties cannot.

Publicly most Northern Irish political parties, including the DUP, support ending donor secrecy but in practice only the Alliance and the Green party actually publish their donations.

openDemocracy contacted the DUP, the official Vote Leave campaign, and Aaron Banks' Leave.EU to ask about the source of the Brexit campaign funds. The DUP didn't get back, Vote Leave denied any knowledge and Leave.EU said that they believe, though can't prove, that the funding came through Vote Leave.

Transparency is at the heart of democratic politics. Whatever the source of the mysterious DUP funds, voters have a right to know how one of the most significant

political campaigns in recent British history was financed. Any dark money in a campaign pot poisons it all: a loophole like this allows a hiding place for any penny with an embarrassing provenance or private interest behind it. Until the funders behind the DUP campaign are fully disclosed, we should assume there is a good reason that someone doesn't want us to know who they are. The Northern Ireland Secretary James Brokenshire has it within his powers to reveal the source of this cash. It is vital that he does so. **CT**

*Peter Geoghegan is an Irish writer and journalist based in Glasgow. His books include A Difficult Difference: Race, Religion and the 'new' Northern Ireland. Adam Ramsay is co-editor of openDemocracyUK and also works with Bright Green. This essay was first published at [www.opendemocracy.net](http://www.opendemocracy.net)*

**Publicly most Northern Irish political parties, including the DUP, support ending donor secrecy but in practice only the Alliance and the Green party actually publish their donations**

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# Hoping for a Miracle on 34th St

Ignored, scorned and abused, street people get little sympathy from their fellow citizens. **Tom Kavana** meets some of them, listens to their stories and takes their photos

A few days after Christmas, I decided to head into New York City to hang around and check out my favourite camera store on 34th and 9th Streets. I parked the car and began started walking along 34th, taking photographs of homeless/street people. I'm not sure why it is, but I'm drawn to these forgotten, mostly ignored people. I'm always shocked how we treat those less fortunate than ourselves; and believe that we, as a society, are judged by the manner in which we treat those who are less fortunate. It's my duty to acknowledge these people as equal human beings, so I look them in the eye, shake their hands and listen to their stories, aware that this may well be the day's only interaction that affirms their existence in the world. Hopefully, the photos that follow will remind us that these people deserve our aid and sympathy, not scorn, judgment and disregard.







## CHYNA

This is Chyna and her Man. They were sleeping at the entrance to a subway on 34th. After reading her sign, I asked where they stay at night, as the shelters in NYC are very scary places, usually seen as a last resort. Most homeless people in the city would rather take their chances on the street. Chyna told me they sometimes stay in a by-the-hour motel in Brooklyn, which is quite a ride on the subway . . .



## Street Life



### CHAD

As I continued east on 34th, I met Chad. I could tell by his accent he wasn't a new Yorker. I asked how the hell he ended up homeless in NYC. He laughed and said "A woman." We talked about his ex and what his plan was . . . I found out we had both lived in Clearwater, FL, for a long time, and we'd had both gone to the same rehab years earlier . . .



### Sheila

It's easy to spot the chronically homeless who travel with everything they own. Sheila had set up shop with her cats right next to the subway entrance. I sat down and she told me her story. She was from Brooklyn and, along with the very familiar tale of addiction and abuse, she said she was happier on the streets. I brought her a cup of coffee and petted her cats for a while . . .

**Bobby**

After telling me he had just been released from hospital after a fall, Bobby showed me the stitches, as well as his "political pants." Bobby is from New Jersey and had been a mechanic for years before he started drinking again . . .



**Paul**

On the north side of the same block as I had met Chad, I walked by Paul. I turned around just in time to catch him taking a drink out of a 40oz can of Bud before hiding it behind his bags. I spent quite a time observing, with just a touch of envy, his seemingly oblivious attitude. He just kept dancing to music only he could hear. I asked if I could take his photo. He replied, "Sure," and went back to his dancing . . .



## Street Life

See Tom Kavana's Flickr photostream at [www.flickr.com/photos/35817988@N05](http://www.flickr.com/photos/35817988@N05)



### Ty

A veteran, Ty had the most 'luggage' of all the people I met on this cold morning. We chatted about the military and discussed some options for vets. He knows there is help but the demands of addiction exclude him from most of it. Soft-spoken and solemn, Ty is all alone in an uncaring world.

### No Name

I gave this young woman a few bucks. She told me her mom had kicked her out of her home a few months ago. She was reluctant to tell me her name but, said it was cool if I took her picture . . .



### THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Tom Kavana, who lives in the suburbs of New York City is a freelance photographer, whose work is primarily focused on documenting the human race.



# Loving America and resisting Trump

**Frida Berrigan** finds strength in her resistance to the political reality show that is doing its utmost to reshape the future of her country

So reality has inexorably, inescapably penetrated my life. It didn't take long. Yes, Donald Trump is actually the president of the United States. In that guise, in just his first weeks in office, he's already declared war on language, on loving, on people who are different from him – on the kind of world, in short, that I want to live in. He's promised to erect high walls, keep some people in and others out and lock up those he despises, while threatening to torture and abuse with impunity.

Still, a small personal miracle emerges from this nightmare. It turns out that, despite growing up an anarchist protest kid who automatically read Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* alongside the official textbooks, I love this country more each day. So I find myself eternally upset about our new political reality-show, about a man so thin-skinned he lashes out at everything and so insulated in his own alt-reality that no response to him seems to matter.

Above all, I am so mad. Yeah, I'm mad at all those people who voted for Trump and even madder at the ones who didn't vote at all. I'm mad at everyone who thinks the sum total of their contribution to the political well-being of this country is voting every two or four years. I'm mad at our corporate-political system and how easily distracted people are. I'm steaming mad,

but mostly at myself.

Yep, I'm mad at myself and at the Obamas. They made empire look so good! Their grace and intelligence, their obvious love for one another and the way they telegraphed a certain approachability and reasonableness. So attractive! They were fun – or at least they looked like that on social media. Michelle in the karaoke car with Missy Elliot singing Beyoncé and talking about global girls' education! Barack and a tiny Superman at a White House Halloween party. Michelle, unapologetically fierce after Trump's demeaning *Access Hollywood* comments came to light. I loved those Obamas, despite my politics and my analysis. I was supposed to resist all his efforts at world domination through drones and sweeping trade deals and instead I fell a little bit in love, even as I marched and fasted and tried to resist.

## **Falling in love with my country**

Now, we have a new president. And my love is gone, along with my admiration, my pride, and my secret wish to attend a state dinner and chat with the Obamas over local wine and grass-fed beef sliders.

What's not gone, though, what's strangely stronger than ever, is my love for this country.

I didn't love the United States under Jimmy Carter or Ronald Reagan or Bush the

***I am so mad.  
Yeah, I'm mad  
at all those  
people who voted  
for Trump and  
even madder at  
the ones who  
didn't vote at all***

## The New Patriotism

***Of course, the drumbeat for war started instantly in Washington and was echoed throughout the nation, but many of us – the intended victims of that attack – said “our grief is not a cry for war”***

First. I was a kid and they were names on protest banners and headlines in the news. My parents were the Catholic peace activists Liz McAlister and Phil Berrigan, and I grew up in an anarchist collective of Christian resisters. My parents and their friends went to jail repeatedly and resolutely. We demonstrated, rallied, and railed at every institution of power in Washington. Those presidents made the adults around me angry and agitated, so they scared me.

I didn't love the United States under Bill Clinton either – I was young and in college and opposed to everything – nor under George W. Bush. I was young and in New York City and still opposed to almost everything.

I started calling myself a “New Yorker” three years after moving there when, on a sunny Tuesday morning, airplanes became weapons, tall towers fell, and 3,000 people died. I emerged from my routine subway ride at 14th Street, unaware and unscathed, to stand still with the rest of the city and watch the sky turn black. I spent the rest of that day in Manhattan with friends trying to reach my parents and following the news, as we all tried (and failed) to come to grips with the new reality. Once the bridges reopened, we walked home to Brooklyn that evening, terrified and shell-shocked.

9/11 provided the rationale for sweeping changes in Washington. War by fiat, paid for in emergency supplementals that circumvented Congressional processes; a new Department of Homeland Security (where did that word “homeland” even come from?); a proliferation of increasingly muscular intelligence agencies; and a new brand of “legal” scholarship that justified both torture and indefinite detention, while tucking secret black sites away in foreign countries. All this as the United States went to war against “terrorism” – against, that is, an idea, a fringe sentiment that, no matter how heavily weaponised, had been marginalised until

the United States put it on the map by declaring “war” on it.

The US then invaded and occupied big time, including a country that had nothing to do with the terrorists who had attacked us, and we've been at war ever since at a heavy cost – now inching toward \$5-trillion. Conservative estimates of how many people have been killed in the many war zones of what used to be called the Global War on Terror is 1.3 to two-million. The number of US military personnel who have lost their lives is easier to put a number to: more than 7,000, but that doesn't count private contractors (aka mercenaries), or those (far more difficult to quantify) who later committed suicide. Now, President Trump has begun adding to this bloody death toll, having ordered his first (disastrous) strike, a Special Operations raid on Yemen, which killed as many as 30 civilians, including children, and resulted in the death of an American Navy SEAL as well.

September 11th was a long time ago. But I finally fell in love with my country in the days following that awful attack. I saw for the first time a certain strain of patriotism that swept me away, a strain that says we are stronger together than alone, stronger than any blow that strikes us, stronger in our differences, stronger in our unities. I'm talking about the kind of patriotism that said: don't you dare tell us to go to Disney World, Mr. President! (That was, of course, after George W. Bush had assured us that, while he made war, our response as citizens to 9/11 should be to “get down to Disney World in Florida. Take your families and enjoy life, the way we want it to be enjoyed.”)

Instead of heeding that lame advice, some of us went out and began to try to solve problems and build community. I had read about it in books – the labour movement of the 1920s and 1930s and the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s – but I hadn't seen it myself, hadn't been a part of it before, and I fell in love.

Of course, the drumbeat for war started instantly in Washington and was echoed throughout the nation, but many of us – the intended victims of that attack – said “our grief is not a cry for war.” We circled around the victims’ families; we reminded America that it wasn’t only lawyers and hedge-fund managers who died that day, but cooks and couriers and homeless people and undocumented immigrants, too.

We pulled people from the rubble. We made the “pile” a place of sacred memory long before a huge monument and gift shop were erected there. We honoured the first responders who died, we stood up for Muslims and Arabs and all those whom ignorance scapegoated. We marched against war in Afghanistan and then in far vaster numbers against war in Iraq. We called for an international police response to those acts of terrorism – that weapon of the weak, not the powerful – instead of the unilateral, militarised approach adopted by the Bush administration. We celebrated, and saw as a strength, New York’s incredible diversity. We made art and music and poetry. We prayed in all languages to all the names of God.

### **The Donald, a one-man 9/11**

I guess I’ve been thinking about September 2001 again because, only weeks into his presidency, Donald Trump already seems like a one-man 9/11. He’s ridden roughshod over business as usual without even a geopolitical crisis or calamity as an excuse – and that’s not so surprising since Trump himself is that calamity.

With a razor-thin mandate, considerable bluster, and a voracious appetite for alt-facts (lies), he’s not so much tipping over the apple cart as declaring war on apples, carts, and anything else beginning with the letter A or C.

It seems almost that random and chaotic. In these weeks, he’s shown a particular appetite for upending convention, saying screw you to just about everyone and eve-

rything, while scrapping the rules of decorum and diplomacy. With a sweep of his pen and a toss of his hair, he takes away visas, nullifies months of work by advocates for refugees, and sends US Special Forces off to kill and be killed. With a few twitches of his thumbs he baits Mexico, disses China, and throws shade at federal judges. With a few ill-chosen words about Black History month (comments that would have been better written by my 10-year-old), he resurrects Frederick Douglass, disparages inner cities, and slams the “dishonest” media again (and again and again). His almost-month as president can be described as busy and brash, but it barely hides the banality of greed.

Sure, Donald Trump’s a new breed, but perhaps in the end our resistance will make him the aberration he should be, rather than the new normal. So many of his acts are aimed at demeaning, degrading, demonising, and denigrating, but he’s already failing – by driving so many of us to a new radical patriotism. I’m not the only one falling in love with this country again and this love looks like resistance – a resistance that, from the first moments of the Trump era, has seemed to be almost everywhere you looked.

Even at his inauguration, a group of young people stood on chairs wearing matching sweatshirts spelling out R-E-S-I-S-T in big letters. They had positioned themselves in the inner ring of the Capitol and were loud and visible as Chief Justice John Roberts swore the new president into office. The environmental group Greenpeace greeted Trump’s White House with a daring banner drop from a crane across the street – a huge, bright banner also emblazoned with RESIST. Pink woollen “pussy hats” were popularized by the Women’s March, a global event and possibly the largest demonstration in American history, one that rekindled our hope and strengthened our resolve on inauguration weekend. Now, those hats help us recognize and

***With a sweep of his pen and a toss of his hair, Trump takes away visas, nullifies months of work by advocates for refugees, and sends US Special Forces off to kill and be killed***

## The New Patriotism

***The weekend after the inauguration, my husband and I raised a flagpole on the second story porch of our house and hung a rainbow peace flag from it. I look up at it every morning waving in the breeze and I'm glad I live here, in this country, in this moment of radical upsurge and a new spirit of patriotism***

salute one another.

We're working hard. We're tying up the phone lines all over Capitol Hill, turning town halls into rowdy rallies for health care and human rights, shelling out money to support Planned Parenthood, the ACLU, the immigration lawyers fighting for people barred from the US and the closest Black Lives Matter chapter. We're getting organized, getting trained, getting prepared, and getting connected. And we're doing it all with a sense of humour: the Bowling Green Massacre Victims Fund? Priceless!

We are, in short, resisting in old ways and new.

Given my background, it's no surprise that I'm not a flag waver. While growing up, I learned a lot more about what was wrong with my country than about what was right with it. But I'm seeing so much that's right about it in this new Trump era of engagement or, if you prefer, call it radical patriotism. I'm mad . . . I'm scared . . . I'm hopeful . . . I'm still in love – more so than ever – with this country Trump is trying to hijack.

I don't live in a big city any more. I'm not a scrappy kid in my early thirties either. I'm a mother of three kids and a homeowner. I've sunk my roots in a small, struggling, stalwart community along Connecticut's eastern shoreline and I'm planning to live here for the rest of my life.

New London is a community of 27,000 or so, poor and diverse. It's almost a majority-minority community, in fact. We're home to three refugee families settled from Syria and Sudan. We have a good school system, getting better all the time. Every Wednesday, the chefs at the middle school up the street from my house cook a meal, open the cafeteria, and invite the whole community to eat dinner for five dollars per person. I went with my girls a couple of weeks ago for Cajun shrimp stew and white rice. The room was full and the mood was high. Young professionals and hipsters with kids ate alongside folks who had just stood in

line for an hour and a half for a free box of food from the United Way across the street and gotten a free meal coupon as well for their troubles.

New London's mayor held a press conference soon after in the lobby of City Hall where the heads of all the city departments asserted their support for immigrants and refugees in our community. The last city council meeting was standing room only as people pushed an ordinance to keep fracking waste out of our area.

The weekend after the inauguration, my husband and I raised a flagpole on the second story porch of our house and hung a rainbow peace flag from it. I look up at it every morning waving in the breeze and I'm glad I live here, in this country, in this moment of radical upsurge and a new spirit of patriotism.

I'm talking to my neighbours. I'm going to city council meetings. I'm writing letters to the editor of our local paper. I'm taking my Sudanese neighbours grocery shopping and to the post office. I'm loaded for bear (nonviolently, of course) if anyone tries to mess with them.

My kids are the anti-Trumps. "We went to the women's march in Hartford, Mommy," two-year-old Madeline shouts every time she hears the word woman. She knows enough to be proud of that. "Look, Mommy! They have a flag like ours!" says four-year-old Seamus with delight whenever he sees another rainbow, even if it's just a sticker. He's learning to recognise our tribe of patriots.

We're engaged, we're awake, we're in love, and no one is taking our country from us. **CT**

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**Frida Berrigan** writes the *Little Insurrections* blog for [WagingNonviolence.org](http://WagingNonviolence.org) and is the author of *It Runs In The Family: On Being Raised By Radicals and Growing Into Rebellious Motherhood*. She lives in New London, Connecticut. This essay first appeared at [www.tomdispatch.com](http://www.tomdispatch.com)



# Trump, vipers and foreign policy

Provocative and grandiose rhetoric from the White House could provoke an unexpected response, writes **Conn M. Hallinan**

“Chaos,” “dismay,” “radically inept,” are just a few of the headlines analysing President Donald Trump’s foreign policy, and in truth, disorder would seem to be the strategy of the day. Picking up the morning newspaper or tuning on the national news sometimes feels akin to opening up a basket filled with spitting cobras and Gabon vipers.

But the bombast emerging for the White House hasn’t always matched what the Trump administration does in the real world. The threat to dump the “one-China” policy and blockade Beijing’s bases in the South China Sea has been dialed back. The pledge to overturn the Iran nuclear agreement has been shelved. And NATO’s “obsolesce” has morphed into a pledge of support. Common sense setting in as a New York Times headline suggests: “Foreign Policy Loses Its Sharp Edge as Trump Adjusts to Office.”

Don’t bet on it.

First, this is an administration that thrives on turmoil, always an easier place to rule from than order. What it says and does one day may be, or may not be, what it says or does another. And because there are a number of foreign policy crises that have stepped up to the plate, we should all find out fairly soon whether the berserkers or the rationalists are running things.

The most dangerous of these is Iran, which the White House says is “playing with fire” and has been “put on notice” for launching

a Khorramshahr medium-range ballistic missile. The missile traveled 630 miles and exploded in what looks like a failed attempt to test a re-entry vehicle. Exactly what “notice” means has yet to be explained, but Trump has already applied sanctions for what it describes as a violation of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Program of Action – UN Security Council Resolution 2231 – in which Iran agreed to dismantle much of its nuclear energy program.

A 2010 UN resolution did, indeed, state, that Iran “shall not undertake activity related to ballistic missiles.” But that resolution was replaced by UNSCR 2231, which only “calls upon Iran not to test missiles,” wording that “falls short of an outright prohibition on missile testing,” according to former UN weapon’s inspector Scott Ritter.

The Iranians say their ballistic missile program is defensive, and given the state of their obsolete air force, that is likely true.

The Trump administration also charges that Iran is a “state sponsor of terror,” an accusation that bears little resemblance to reality. Iran is currently fighting the Islamic State and al-Qaida in Syria, Iraq, and through its allies, the Houthis, in Yemen. It has also aided the fight against al-Qaida in Afghanistan. As Ritter points out, “Iran is more ally than foe,” especially compared to Saudi Arabia, “whose citizens constituted the majority of the 9/11 attackers and which is responsible for underwriting and the financial support of Islamic

***The Iranians say their ballistic missile program is defensive, and given the state of their obsolete air force, that is likely true***

## The New World

***A US war with Iran would be as catastrophic for the Middle East as the invasion of Iraq. It would also be unwinnable unless the US resorted to nuclear weapons, and probably not even then***

extremists around the world, including Islamic State and al-Qaida.”

In an interview last year, leading White House strategist Steve Bannon predicted, “We’re clearly going into, I think, a major shooting war in the Middle East again.” Since the US has pretty much devastated its former foes in the region – Iraq, Syria and Libya – he could only be referring to Iran. The administration’s initial actions vis-à-vis Teheran are, indeed, worrisome. US Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis recently considered boarding an Iranian ship in international waters to search it for weapons destined for the Houthi in Yemen. Such an action would be a clear violation of international law and might have ended in a shoot out.

The Houthi practice a variation of Shiism, the dominant Islamic school in Iran. They do get some money and weapons from Teheran, but even US intelligence says that the group is not under Teheran’s command.

The White House also condemned a Houthi attack on a Saudi warship – initially Trump Press Secretary Sean Spicer called it an “American” ship – even though the Saudis and their Persian Gulf allies are bombing the Houthi and the Saudi Navy – along with the US Navy – is blockading the country. According to the UN, more than 16,000 people have died in the three-year war, 10,000 of them civilians.

Apparently the Trump administration is considering sending American soldiers into Yemen, which would put the US troops in the middle of a war involving the Saudis and their allies, the Houthi, Iran, al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and various south Yemen separatist groups.

Putting US ground forces into Yemen is a “dangerous idea,” according to Jon Finer, chief of staff for former US Secretary of State John Kerry. But a US war with Iran would be as catastrophic for the Middle East as the invasion of Iraq. It would also be unwinnable unless the US resorted to nuclear weapons, and probably not even then. For all its flaws, Iran’s democracy is light years ahead of most other US allies in the region and Iranians would strongly

rally behind the government in the advent of a conflict.

The other foreign policy crisis is the recent missile launch by North Korea, although so far the Trump administration has let the rightwing Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe carry the ball on the issue. Meeting with Trump in Florida, Abe called the February 12 launch “absolutely intolerable.” Two days earlier Trump had defined halting North Korean missile launches as a “very, very high priority.”

The tensions with North Korea nuclear weapons and missile programme are long running, and this particular launch was hardly threatening. The missile was a mid-range weapon and only travelled 310 miles before breaking up. The North Koreans have yet to launch a long-range ICBM, although they continue to threaten that one is in the works.

According to a number of Washington sources, Barak Obama told Trump that North Korea posed the greatest threat to US military forces, though how he reached that conclusion is puzzling. It is estimated North Korea has around a dozen nuclear weapons with the explosive power of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs – about 20 kilotons. The average US warhead packs an explosive force of from 100 to 475 kilotons, with some ranging up to 1.2 megatons. It has more than 4,000 nuclear weapons.

While the North Koreans share the Trump administration’s love of hyperbole, the country has never demonstrated a suicidal streak. A conventional attack by the US, South Korea and possibly Japan would be a logistical nightmare and might touch off a nuclear war, inflicting enormous damage on other countries in the region. Any attack would probably draw in China.

What the North Koreans want is to talk to someone, a tactic that the Obama administration never tried. Nor did it consider trying to look at the world from Pyongyang’s point of view. “North Korea has taken note of what happened in Iraq and Libya after they renounced nuclear weapons,” says Norman

Dombey, an expert on nuclear weapons and a professor of theoretical physics at Sussex University. “The US took action against both, and both countries’ leaders were killed amid violence and chaos.”

The North Koreans know they have enemies – the US and South Korea hold annual war games centred on a military intervention in their country – and not many friends. Beijing tolerates Pyongyang largely because it worries about what would happen if the North Korean government fell. Not only would it be swamped with refugees, it would have a US ally on its border.

Obama’s approach to North Korea was to isolate it, using sanctions to paralyse the country. It has not worked, though it has inflicted terrible hardships on the North Korean people. What might work is a plan that goes back to 2000 in the closing months of the Clinton administration.

That plan proposed a non-aggression pact between the US, Japan, South Korea and North Korea, and the re-establishment of diplomatic relations. North Korea would have been recognised as a nuclear weapons state, but agree to forgo any further tests and announce all missile launches in advance. In return, the sanctions would be removed and North Korea would receive economic aid. The plan died when the Clinton administration got distracted by the Middle East.

Since then the US has insisted that North Korea give up its nuclear weapons, but that is not going to happen – see Iraq and Libya. In any case, the demand is the height of hypocrisy. When the US signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, it agreed to Article VI that calls for “negotiations in good faith” to end “the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament.”

All eight nuclear powers – the US, Russia, China, France, Britain, India, Pakistan and Israel – have not only not discussed eliminating their weapons, all are in the process of modernising them. The NPT was never meant to enforce nuclear apartheid, but in practice that is what has happened.

A non-aggression pact is essential. Article VI also calls for “general and complete disarmament,” reflecting a fear by smaller nations that countries like the US have such powerful conventional forces that they don’t need nukes to get their way. Many countries – China in particular – were stunned by how quickly and efficiently the US destroyed Iraq’s military.

During the presidential campaign, Trump said he would “have no problem” speaking with North Korean leader Kim Jung Un. That pledge has not been repeated, however, and there is ominous talk in Washington about a “preemptive strike” on North Korea, which would likely set most of north Asia aflame.

There are a number of other dangerous flashpoints out there besides Iran and North Korea.

- The Syrian civil war continues to rage and Trump is talking about sending in US ground forces, though exactly who they would fight is not clear. Patrick Cockburn of the Independent once called Syria a three-dimensional chess game with nine players and no rules. Is that a place Americans want to send troops into?

- The commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan – now America’s longest running war – is asking for more troops.

- The war in the Eastern Ukraine smoulders on, and with NATO pushing closer and closer to the Russian border, there is always the possibility of misjudgment. The same goes for Asia, where Bannon predicted “for certain” the U.S. “is going to go to war in the South China Sea in five to 10 years.”

How much of the White House tweets are provocation and grandiose rhetoric is not clear. The president and the people around him are lens licks who constantly romance the spotlight. They have, however, succeeded in alarming a lot of people. As the old saying goes, “Boys throw rocks at frogs in fun. The frogs dodge them in earnest.”

Except in the real world, “fun” can quickly translate into disaster, and some of the frogs are perfectly capable of tossing a few of their own rocks.

***The US has insisted that North Korea give up its nuclear weapons, but that is not going to happen – see Iraq and Libya***

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**Conn M. Hallinan** is a columnist for *Foreign Policy In Focus*. He has a PhD in Anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley and oversaw the journalism program at the University of California at Santa Cruz for 23 years. He is a winner of a Project Censored “Real News Award,” and lives in Berkeley, California.

**CT**

# Factory outlet

**George Monbiot** tells how a regime of cramming and testing is crushing young people's instinct to learn and is destroying their future

***As far as relevance and utility are concerned, we might as well train children to operate a spinning jenny. Our schools teach skills that are not only redundant but counter-productive***

In the future, if you want a job, you must be as unlike a machine as possible: creative, critical and socially skilled. So why are children being taught to behave like machines?

Children learn best when teaching aligns with their natural exuberance, energy and curiosity. So why are they dragooned into rows and made to sit still while they are stuffed with facts?

We succeed in adulthood through collaboration. So why is collaboration in tests and exams called cheating?

Governments claim to want to reduce the number of children excluded from school. So why are their curricula and tests so narrow that they alienate any child whose mind does not work in a particular way?

The best teachers use their character, creativity and inspiration to trigger children's instinct to learn. So why are character, creativity and inspiration suppressed by a stifling regime of micromanagement?

There is, as Graham Brown-Martin explains in his book *Learning {Re}imagined*, a common reason for these perversities. Our schools were designed to produce the workforce required by 19th-century factories. The desired product was workers who would sit silently at their benches all day, behaving identically, to produce identical products, submitting to punishment if they failed to achieve the requisite standards. Collabora-

tion and critical thinking were just what the factory owners wished to discourage.

As far as relevance and utility are concerned, we might as well train children to operate a spinning jenny. Our schools teach skills that are not only redundant but counter-productive. Our children suffer this life-defying, dehumanising system for nothing.

The less relevant the system becomes, the harder the rules must be enforced, and the greater the stress they inflict. A current advertisement in *The Times Educational Supplement* asks: "Do you like order and discipline? Do you believe in children being obedient every time? . . . If you do, then the role of Detention Director at Michaela Community School could be for you." Yes, many schools have discipline problems. But is it surprising when children, bursting with energy and excitement, are confined to the spot like battery chickens?

## **Careers destroyed by overwork**

Teachers are now leaving the profession in droves, their training wasted and their careers destroyed by overwork and a spirit-crushing regime of standardisation, testing and top-down control. The less autonomy they are granted, the more they are blamed for the failures of the system. A major recruitment crisis beckons, especially in crucial subjects such as physics and design and technology. This is what



governments call efficiency.

Any attempt to change the system, to equip children for the likely demands of the 21st-century, rather than those of the 19th, is demonised by governments and newspapers as “social engineering.” Well, of course it is. All teaching is social engineering. At present we are stuck with the social engineering of an industrial workforce in a post-industrial era. Under Donald Trump’s education secretary, Betsy DeVos, and a nostalgic government in Britain, it’s likely only to become worse.

When they are allowed to apply their natural creativity and curiosity, children love learning. They learn to walk, to talk, to eat and to play spontaneously, by watching and experimenting. Then they get to school, and we suppress this instinct by sitting them down, force-feeding them with inert facts and testing the life out of them.

There is no single system for teaching children well, but the best ones have this in common: they open up rich worlds that children can explore in their own ways, developing their interests with help rather than indoctrination. For example, the Essa Academy in Bolton gives every pupil an iPad, on which they create projects, share material with their teachers and each other and can contact their teachers with questions about their homework. By reducing their routine tasks, this system enables teachers to give the children individual help.

Other schools have gone in the opposite direction, taking children outdoors and using the natural world to engage their interests and develop their mental and physical capacities (the Forest School movement promotes this method). It’s not a matter of high-tech or low-tech; the important point is that the world a child enters is rich and diverse enough to ignite their curiosity, and allow them to discover a way of learning that best reflects their character and skills.

There are plenty of teaching programmes designed to work with children, not against them. For example, the Mantle of the Ex-

pert encourages them to form teams of enquiry, solving an imaginary task – such as running a container port, excavating a tomb or rescuing people from a disaster – that cuts across traditional subject boundaries. A similar approach, called Quest to Learn, is based on the way children teach themselves to play games. To solve the complex tasks they’re given, they need to acquire plenty of information and skills. They do it with the excitement and tenacity of gamers.

The Reggio Emilia approach, developed in Italy, allows children to develop their own curriculum, based on what interests them most, opening up the subjects they encounter along the way with the help of their teachers. Ashoka Changemaker schools treat empathy as “a foundational skill on a par with reading and math,” and use it to develop the kind of open, fluid collaboration that, they believe, will be the 21st Century’s key skill.

The first mixed-race school in South Africa, Woodmead, developed a fully democratic method of teaching, whose rules and discipline were overseen by a student council. Its integrated studies programme, like the new system in Finland, junked traditional subjects in favour of the students’ explorations of themes, such as gold, or relationships, or the ocean. Among its alumni are some of South Africa’s foremost thinkers, politicians and business people.

In countries like Britain and the United States, such programmes succeed despite the system, not because of it. Had these governments set out to ensure that children find learning difficult and painful, they could not have done a better job.

Yes, let’s have some social engineering. Let’s engineer our children out of the factory and into the real world. **CT**

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**George Monbiot’s** latest book, *How Did We Get Into This Mess?*, is published by Verso. This article was first published in the *Guardian* newspaper. Monbiot’s web site is [www.monbiot.com](http://www.monbiot.com)

**There is no single system for teaching children well, but the best ones have this in common: they open up rich worlds that children can explore in their own ways, developing their interests with help rather than indoctrination**

# I was six when the Russians came

This is the story of Farzana, who grew up under various armies of occupation in Afghanistan. It was translated by her daughter Zarghuna, and written by **Maya Evans**

**Although Kabul was full of Russians, and “bad men” who would beat people, Afghan women wore short skirts and sometimes didn’t wear headscarves**

*This interview took place when Farzana travelled from Bamiyan to Kabul for Zarghuna’s graduation ceremony. Today the roads from Bamiyan are extremely unsafe as they’re patrolled by the Taliban, ISIS and criminals. If a bus is stopped people say they are travelling to see family or for hospital, if students or government workers are found they are likely to be executed. If foreigners are discovered they will be kidnapped or killed. A white flag on a house signals the Taliban.*

*Zarghuna is a member of the Afghan Peace Volunteers; she is the first person in her family to become a college graduate, the first woman in her village and one of the first APVs. She translated her mother’s story and added details from her own recollections. Farzana was extremely proud to see her daughter graduate.*

*This was also written the week a UNAMA report was published stating that a record number of 3,948 civilians were killed in 2016 and 7,920 injured. Since 2009, the armed conflict in Afghanistan has claimed the lives of 24,841 civilians and injured 45,347 others.*

**W**hen I was six, life was good. I didn’t know anything outside my mother and father’s world. In the village where I lived, it was possible to see the mud houses from far away; the Baba Mountains stretched forever into the distance. In spring, everything was lush green, the water flowed from the

mountains feeding the stream in front of our house, all the time you could hear water flowing. People worked hard on the land every day in the mountains herding sheep and goats or working in the shops at the bazaar. Women made bread in tandoors. Life in the village of Topi was hard, but people were happy.

I had been at school for maybe a month when the war started. The Russians had come to Bamiyan and it was the beginning of war for Afghanistan. When the helicopters started to drop bombs on our village the people fled to the mountains to live in caves. Sometimes two families would live in a cave for two or three months. We loaded food and blankets onto a donkey and crossed the rocky mountain paths to the safety of the caves. During the day, the men would go out to cut alfalfa and the women sometimes travelled back to the farms to collect vegetables. I stayed in the cave and played with my dolls and my siblings, an older sister and two big brothers.

It took a long time for the Russian war to end, maybe two or three presidents passed. It was hard growing up under constant pressure. People were always afraid and they couldn’t travel freely.

When I was 12, I got to travel with my grandmother to Kabul when it was under the control of the Russian “iron fist.”

Although Kabul was full of Russians, and “bad men” who would beat people, Afghan women wore short skirts and sometimes didn’t wear headscarves. I remember once being on a bus and a woman admired my handmade scarf from Bamiyan. The woman stroked it and said she had never seen a scarf like mine and asked me to bring one from Bamiyan for her.

Kabul was clean then, not like today. The rivers, which now contain more rubbish than water, were a source of life and leisure for Afghans, with people fishing on the banks and even swimming. The streets weren’t crowded and the air was clean. I remember seeing the Russian tanks leaving to fight in the Panjsheer valley. When the soldiers left, they were happy but when they returned they were beaten, carrying their dead and wounded from battle. This victory made the Tajik Commander Ahmed Sheer Mahsood’s name, forever glorified in Afghan history as “The Lion of the Panjsheer.”

After the war, people were very poor and there wasn’t much food. Many Afghans, including my two brothers, became refugees in Iran. One of my brothers travelled on foot in women’s clothing to avoid being forced to become a fighter. Those still living in the village returned to work on their farms, growing potatoes and wheat, and keeping cows. My grandmother and I planned to follow my brothers but my older sister, who had recently married in Kabul, fell pregnant so my grandmother stayed to help her with the baby.

By the time that war ended, I was 13 and it was decided that I should marry. It was autumn when I married. It was an exciting day and although it wasn’t my decision, I realised I had to accept it. My husband Rahmony was 19, handsome and kind. We had grown up in the same village so I knew him. Everyone knew everyone in the village as there were only 32 families.

My mother and father-in-law brought candies to the wedding and threw them in

the air like confetti. The women played the doryha drum and danced, while they sang a special coming-of-age song. When I went to live with her husband’s family it was very difficult as it was a big family; he had three brothers and four sisters, plus grandparents. One of the brothers had already married, so his wife also lived in the house. My husband was gentle and would sweep the floor and cook. His brother would say he was not a real man, but I loved him and appreciated his kindness. Unlike other husbands he never beat me.

Every day I washed the clothes, collected alfalfa off the land and milked the sheep and cows. The alfalfa naturally grew near the potatoes and wheat and we knew that the crops would grow strong if the alfalfa grew. The men were all farmers and would spend the day working on the land.

Then the fighting started again and many of the men joined the Mujahideen, but not Rahmony; he stayed to work on the land as he didn’t like the violence.

The men would mainly fight each other in the mountains but sometimes violence came to the village. I often saw flame throwers – canisters of gas propelled through the air by a flame. The fighting was between five groups and they would fire at anyone who was walking around. The different groups were drawn up along ethnic lines and were supported by different countries. “Nasar” were helped by the Americans, “Harakat” and “Scepor” were backed by Iran, “Jamyat” were Tajik and Pashtoon and there was also “Shora.” They all fought in the Jang-e-dohkhely – the war inside.

I heard from the people in my village that America was a country far away but I didn’t know where. I heard the names of other countries such as Iran, Russia and Pakistan, but only when people in the village talked about where the weapons came from.

I was 15 when my first child, Khamed, was born. Life was hard because of the Mujahideen but because of my husband Rahmony I was happy. A year later my second

**My husband Rahmony was 19, handsome and kind. We had grown up in the same village so I knew him. Everyone knew everyone in the village as there were only 32 families**

## A Girl's Life

***My husband took his scarf and wrapped it around seven-year-old Zarghuna, the daughter who never liked to be away from him, who told her not to be afraid and that he would always be with her. Five minutes later we heard the sound of gunfire***

son Lolla was born, then four years later my first daughter Zarghuna was our third blessing.

After the Mujahideen things weren't clear. Najibullah became president and I thought he was good for the people. I remember listening to the radio at home, being warmed by the flames of our stove. I heard Najibullah's voice crackling through the radio, with his message urging peace and asking the fighters in the mountains to come down, to have peace and life. But they did not listen. I didn't understand why they continued to fight, maybe it had something to do with the business of weapons, but I don't know.

By this point my second daughter Karima had arrived, and then my younger sons Abdul and Arif, making six. Life for me was the same: I still went out to collect alfalfa for the cows, washed clothes and looked after my family. My eldest daughter Zarghuna adored her father and never liked to be separated from him. Sometimes he liked to sleep outside under the stars and although she was afraid of the worms in the ground, she would insist on sleeping next to him, lulled to sleep by the sound of the stream running past their home. Rahmony was keen for his daughters to attend school. It was he who enrolled Zarghuna at age six and it was him who often fetched her from school.

And then the Taliban came to Kabul.

I had heard from others in the village that the Taliban killed everyone, especially the Hazaras, but I did not believe these stories. Then one day men from the Mujahideen returned to the village and said the Taliban were coming, and that even they were afraid. At first the Talibs arrived by car and then on horseback. They carried guns and long knives. I realised then that the stories I had heard were true.

There was no time; it was chaos. Rahmony and I collected all our children, except for Khamed and Abdul who were missing. But the family had to flee for their lives – imme-

diately. During the day we crossed mountains, and that night we saw the smoke of burning houses the Taliban had set alight. We had nearly escaped to the safety of the mountain tops where the Taliban would not find us.

We were not the only family which was fleeing. In our group were Rahmony's brother and his family plus two other men. We walked for nearly a day when we became aware of the voices of Talibs close by, so we crouched in the shady shadows under an overhanging cliff. Everyone was frozen to their hiding space. Karima said that she was thirsty but still we didn't move as we could sense danger was near. The women were praying that the Taliban would not see them; we needed to stay hidden for just a few more hours and then dusk would hide our escape into the mountains where we would not be found.

A man we didn't know happened to wander past, he wasn't a Talib and he didn't sense the danger. He saw the group sheltering under the rock and called them to come out. His voice cut the silence of the mountains.

I had dressed my young son Lolla in my own clothing so he looked like a girl, but there was no disguising Rahmony, his brother and the two other men. Zarghuna clung to her father as the Talibs ordered the men out of our hiding place. Rahmony took his scarf and wrapped it around seven-year-old Zarghuna, the daughter who never liked to be away from him, who told her not to be afraid and that he would always be with her. Five minutes later we heard the sound of gunfire.

The Taliban told the women and children to return home. The shock left me unable to talk and my legs stopped working. I had to go down the mountain by dragging myself along the ground. The next day we decided to try and find Rahmony but it was snowing and very cold. We searched but did not find him.

Rahmony's mother realised that the men



had been killed so she went out to find the bodies. She discovered them not far from where we had been separated, holes were dug and they were buried at the spot that they had been killed.

Rahmony, my kind and handsome husband was gone.

Now I had to think about the lives of my six children. At first, I didn't want to tell Arif and Karima that the Taliban had killed their father, plus I still had no news about my eldest son Khamed and four-year-old Abdul. We asked the people returning from the mountains if they had seen them, but they had not. After 20 days, the people in the village said that they must have been killed by the Taliban, but finally after 40 long days, a cousin came to say that they were safe and at an aunt's house.

Life was nearly impossible without Rahmony. Two of his brothers and his father had also been killed. I asked his remaining family if I could have his share of the land. One of the brothers agreed but the other did not. But I was now the head of a family and like an Afghan man I claimed my piece of land. Security was still bad, the threat of the Taliban still loomed heavily so we sold our remaining livestock and planned to leave. We bought two sacks of flour for bread and loaded up our donkey. I led my young family as we travelled for weeks; sleeping on hilltops and under the stars, dodging Talibs. Abdul was still a slow walker and Arif had to be carried, but still I kept my family together and safe.

Finally, we reached the outskirts of Kabul and found a kind woman who wanted to share her large house with a family which did not have any men. Her husband and father had both left for Pakistan, leaving her with three children and the house to look after. The room which we were given was beautiful as the kind woman's father was rich. Lolla, now 11, got a job in a local shop and also went to the mountains with Khamed to collect bushes to fuel the tandoor and sell to other families.

We stayed in that house for six months until relatives in Bamiyan told us the Taliban had gone and it was safe to return. We made the long journey back to our village, though by now it was winter so the journey was extra arduous. We collected wood and bushes during the day to burn at night.

When we returned to our house we found someone else had been there. The pictures on the wall had been burnt, a box of clothes which we left in the corner had been thrown outside, and on the floor were bullets. My grandmother told stories of becoming a cook for the Taliban. They would call her mother and bring chicken for her to cook or flour to make bread. The Talibs who occupied the village were different from the Talibs who first came and killed and beat women for not wearing socks. These Talibs accepted my grandmother and even gave her a new scarf because the one she wore was thread bare.

When the Americans came the Taliban left in cars with camouflage netting stretched across the roofs.

I remember food parcels being dropped from the sky and one of my neighbours running out into the field, unaware of a landmine which someone had planted during one of the many wars. Then foreign soldiers came, but the village people did not ask questions. It was a time of peace even though everyone was poor and many people had been killed or had left.

Things were expensive. Khamed worked on the land and Lolla sold things on the street like bubblegum, socks, matches and walnuts – a walnut in its shell was two Afghanis (around 2p). Karima and Zarghuna worked at home washing clothes and collecting water from the spring, they also returned to school.

After so much travel and being hungry and scared, we found hope to be alive. **CT**

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**Maya Evans** co-coordinates the work of  
*Voices for Creative Nonviolence-UK*  
 – [www.vcnv.org](http://www.vcnv.org)

***I remember food parcels being dropped from the sky and one of my neighbours running out into the field, unaware of a landmine which someone had planted during one of the many wars***

# It was always about one state

**Jonathan Cook** discusses the inevitable entrenchment of Israeli apartheid as Donald Trump pulls plug on the peace process

***Netanyahu was offered a regional peace deal that included almost everything he had demanded of the Palestinians. And still he said no***

For more than 15 years, the Middle East “peace process” initiated by the Oslo accords has been on life support. Last month, United States president Donald Trump pulled the plug, whether he understood it or not. Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu could barely stifle a smile as Trump demoted the two-state solution from holy grail. Instead, he said of resolving the conflict: “I am looking at two states or one state . . . I can live with either one.”

Given the huge asymmetry of power, Israel now has a free hand to entrench its existing apartheid version of the one-state solution – Greater Israel – on the Palestinians. This is the destination to which Netanyahu has been steering the Israel-Palestine conflict his entire career.

It emerged that at a secret summit in Aqaba last year – attended by Egypt and Jordan, and overseen by US secretary of state John Kerry – Netanyahu was offered a regional peace deal that included almost everything he had demanded of the Palestinians. And still he said no.

Much earlier, in 2001, Netanyahu was secretly filmed boasting to settlers of how he had foiled the Oslo process a short time earlier by failing to carry out promised withdrawals from Palestinian territory. He shrugged off the US role as something that could be “easily moved to the right direction.” Now he has the White House exactly



**Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law.**

Art: Donkeyhotey, via Flickr.com

www.flickr.com/photos/donkeyhotey/32887571942

where he wanted it. In expressing ambivalence about the final number of states, Trump may have assumed he was leaving options open for his son-in-law and presumed peace envoy, Jared Kushner.

But words can take on a life of their own, especially when uttered by the president of the world's only superpower. Some believe Trump, faced with the region's realities, will soon revert to Washington's playbook on two

states, with the US again adopting the bogus role of “honest broker.” Others suspect his interest will wilt, allowing Israel to intensify settlement building and its abuse of Palestinians. The long-term effect, however, is likely to be more decisive. The one-state option mooted by Trump will resonate with both Israelis and Palestinians because it reminds each side of their historic ambitions.

The international community has repeatedly introduced the chimera of the two-state solution, but for most of their histories the two sides favoured a single state – if for different reasons. From the outset, the mainstream Zionist movement wanted an exclusive Jewish state, and a larger one than it was ever offered. Some even dreamed of the recreation of a Biblical kingdom whose borders incorporated swaths of neighbouring Arab states. In late 1947, the Zionist leadership backed the United Nations partition plan for tactical reasons, knowing the Palestinians would reject the transfer of most of their homeland to recent European immigrants.

A few months later they seized more territory – in war – than the UN envisioned, but were still not satisfied. Religious and secular alike hungered for the rest of Palestine. Shimon Peres was among the leaders who began the settlement drive immediately following the 1967 occupation. Those territorial ambitions were muffled by Oslo, but will be unleashed again in full force by Trump’s stated indifference.

Palestinian history points in a parallel direction. As Zionism made its first inroads into Palestine, they rejected any compromise with what were seen as European colonisers. In the 1950s, after Israel’s creation, the resistance under Yasser Arafat espoused a single secular democratic state in all of historic Palestine. Only with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Palestinians’ growing isolation in the early 1990s, did Arafat cave in to European and US pressure and sign up for partition.

But for Palestinians, Oslo has not only

entailed enduring Israel’s constant bad faith, but it has also created a deeply compromised vehicle for self-government. The Palestinian Authority has split the Palestinian people territorially – between Fatah in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza – and required a Faustian pact to uphold Israel’s security, including the settlers’, at all costs.

The truth, obscured by Oslo, is that the one-state solution has underpinned the aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians for more than a century. It did not come about because each expected different things from it.

For Israelis, it was to be a fortress to exclude the native Palestinian population. For Palestinians, it was the locus of national liberation from centuries of colonial rule. Only later did many Palestinians, especially groups such as Hamas, come to mirror the Zionist idea of an exclusive – in their case, Islamic – state.

Trump’s self-declared detachment will now revive these historic forces. Settler leader Naftali Bennett will compete with Netanyahu to take credit for speeding up the annexation of ever-greater blocs of West Bank territory while rejecting any compromise on Jerusalem. Meanwhile, Palestinians, particularly the youth, will understand that their struggle is not for illusory borders but for liberation from the Jewish supremacy inherent in mainstream Zionism.

The struggle Trump’s equivocation provokes, however, must first play out in the internal politics of Israelis and Palestinians. It is a supremely clarifying moment. Each side must now define what it really wants to fight for: a fortress for their tribe alone, or a shared homeland ensuring rights and dignity for all.

**CT**

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**Jonathan Cook** won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His latest books are “*Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East*” (Pluto Press) and “*Disappearing Palestine: Israel’s Experiments in Human Despair*” (Zed Books). His website is [www.jonathan-cook.net](http://www.jonathan-cook.net)

**Palestinians, particularly the youth, will understand that their struggle is not for illusory borders but for liberation from the Jewish supremacy inherent in mainstream Zionism**



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# ColdType Insights

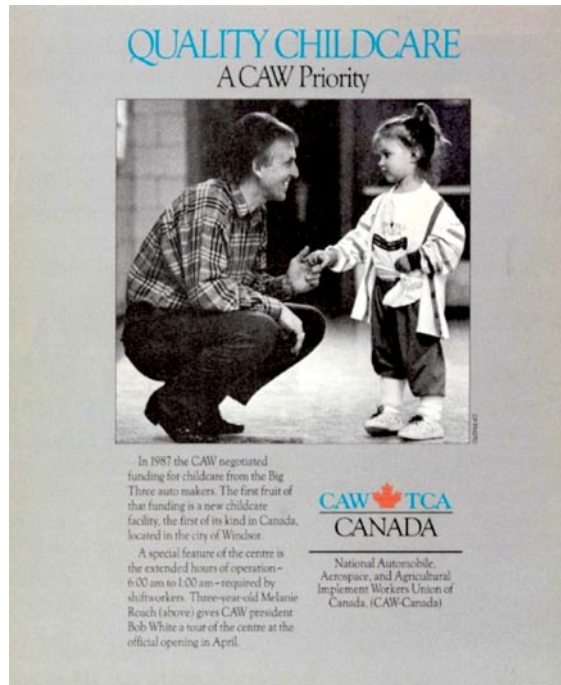
## A union boss with rare leadership and charisma

Rick Salutin pays a heartfelt tribute to Bob White, the fearless former leader of Canada's auto workers who died last month

I saw a kind of apparition as I drove along the Toronto lake front on February 21: pickets with signs, on a strike or lockout. A sales promo? Film shoot? In the recent past you'd just think: Workers fighting back. Back in the day, all newspapers used to have a full-time labour reporter. It didn't mean they were pro-labour any more than having a Moscow correspondent meant they were communists. They just went where the news was – emphasis on “was.”

Bob White's death at 81 on February 19 was like that. It was noted in the mainstream media, but flashed by, as if they knew guys like him mattered but couldn't recall why. It would be like reporting who won hockey's Stanley Cup but not knowing which sport it was awarded for.

It's ironic that White died the same week a judge ordered the transit union in Toronto to reinstate their elected leader, who had been deposed by its US union headquarters. Someone even suggested that



A Canadian Auto Worker's ad from 1990 featuring its president Bob White, who has died, aged 81.

Photo: Canadian Auto Workers

was a tribute to White – because he led Canadian auto workers out of their US union to independence in the 1980s. It was a resounding call for national dignity and it wasn't easy for White, who came of age in that union. But he wouldn't let them dictate settlements to Cana-

dians and said he'd wrap himself in the fucking Canadian flag if he had to. He was as fearless taking on his own side as against the Big Three automakers.

(We know all this because he let a National Film Board crew film his 1984 negotiations with General Motors and, when it turned into a death struggle with US union HQ, he let them stay. When I agree to something, I'm all in, he said.)

It's especially hard to lose him at a time when leadership in most of the world is so conspicuously puny. The worst have always risen to the top easily but the best, not so much. He had a genuine charisma, in Max Weber's original sense: leaders who inspire loyalty in others through something inexpressible yet recognisably trustworthy. He was that kind of natural. When he squatted down to talk to a kid, you knew he knew a camera was there, but you also knew he knew that's how to treat kids, workers, or anyone – with respect.

Like all great labour leaders (a category that used to be as obvious as great hockey players), he felt it wasn't just about getting more stuff for his members; it was about addressing the social roots of inequality and ugliness. It would have made perfect sense for him to move on and lead the New Democratic Party (NDP). But party elders, such as Ed Broadbent and

Stephen Lewis, declined to encourage him, maybe because he wasn't of their professorial ilk and hailed from the workers themselves.

He'd come from Ireland at 12 and left high school to work in a factory. He swore a lot (he said he never got credit for 10 years of Sunday school). Instead, they chose Audrey McLaughlin, who's faded from history much as she used to fade right in front of you.

So he became head of the Canadian Labour Congress, to pursue those larger matters, but it was harder there. Probably because he missed the direct contact with working people that had always nourished him. Ottawa kills.

Speaking personally, it was White who made me feel welcome, versus a pariah, in the "House of Labour." Previously, I'd been anathematised for working with a renegade group of independent unions. I'm not whining, I'm kind of proud of it, but it was a delight collaborating

with him and sometimes bargaining hard over material I wrote for occasions like elections. (Always voluntary, not paid.) If he saw other unionists getting edgy about some of my views, he'd bark, "Go write your fucking ad!" and deal with the tetchy brothers and sisters himself.

Final thought? Leadership – the ability to bring out the best in others – is among the rarest social resources, and White's would've been squandered had there been no labour movement in which to emerge. It gave him a chance to be who he was, and I think that's how he understood its importance for others. Before he went onstage to debate free trade before a national TV audience during the election of 1988, he mused, "Not bad for a guy with Grade 10."

**CT**

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*Rick Salutin is a social activist and author. This article originally appeared in the Toronto Star, where he writes a weekly column.*

ter his nomination. But subsequent review revealed that Mnuchin, a one-time Goldman Sachs partner who went on to even greater hedge fund glory, had failed to disclose assorted personal assets worth over \$100 million.

Mnuchin's explanation for missing all those millions? The official disclosure questionnaire made him do it.

"I think, as you all can appreciate, filling out these government forms is quite complicated," he told a Senate hearing.

That big, round \$100 million figure came up again last week with another Trump administration top pick. Gary Cohn, the administration's choice to head the National Economic Council, used to be the president and chief operating officer of Goldman Sachs. Cohn resigned those positions to accept his new Trump position. But he won't be walking away from the bank empty-handed.

On Tuesday, news reports related that Goldman Sachs would be blessing Cohn's service with a \$100 million windfall. By Thursday, more disclosures had swelled that reward to \$285 million in stock and cash. This quarter-billion-plus comes over and above the \$20 million the bank has already paid Cohn for his regular 2016 compensation.

Will Cohn, following his Goldman confrère Mnuchin, now lose track of his new millions? Would you — if someone dropped \$100 million or more in your lap?

Probably not. The average American with a college degree, over the course of a working a career, will only collect a grand total of \$2.1 million in paychecks. The average

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## Donald Trump's \$100-million men

For us: another day, another dollar.

For them: another day, another fortune, writes **Sam Pizzigati**

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**H**ow rich have America's rich become? So rich that they can squirrel away \$100 million and then lose track of it.

Steven Mnuchin, the Donald Trump nominee for US treasury secretary, did just that earlier this month.

Treasury secretary-designate Steven Mnuchin is having trouble keeping track of his personal fortune.

All cabinet secretary picks have to file paperwork on their personal financial holdings, and Mnuchin dutifully filed his required records af-

American high school grad will earn \$1.2 million.

Most all of this paycheck income, in both cases, will go toward meeting daily expenses. Not much will be left over. In fact, the typical 401(k) account of Americans aged 55 to 64 now holds just \$71,579.

A new Rhode Island proposal aims to tax excessive executive compensation.

So Gary Cohn, with his latest \$285 million from Goldman Sachs, is walking away with nearly 4,000 times the reward for a lifetime of labor that goes to Americans of modest means.

Somebody should do something about this enormous disparity in corporate pay. Many people are doing something. Among them: Rhode Island lawmaker Aaron Regunberg. Representative Regunberg has just introduced a measure that would, if passed, become the first-ever state-level tax on excessive executive compensation.

Regunberg's proposal would place a 10 percent business surtax on publicly traded corporations that pay their top execs over 100 times what their median — most typical — workers earn. Firms that pay their top execs over 250 times worker pay would face a 25 percent surtax.

“The spectacular concentration of income and wealth among the top 0.1 percent hurts our economy and corrupts our democracy,” Regunberg noted when he and five colleagues filed the excessive pay surtax legislation. “Nobody needs to receive more than what their employee would earn in a century.”

Early last month, in Oregon,

Portland city officials adopted a similar pay ratio surtax on excessive corporate executive compensation, the first-ever municipal move against America's gaping corporate pay divide. A host of other cities — led by San Francisco — have since then begun exploring actions along the same line.

So far, meanwhile, no one seems to have asked treasury secretary-designate Mnuchin what he thinks about this notion of levying extra taxes on companies that pay their CEOs excessively. But Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, did ask the Goldman Sachs alum whether he thought having CEOs making hundreds of times more than their workers rat-

ed as “fair.”

Shareholders, Mnuchin responded, should determine how much CEOs make.

“I don't think it is the proper role of the federal government to prescribe limitations,” added Donald Trump's choice to run the federal government's entire financial apparatus.

Fortunately for the rest of us, the United States also has a good many local and state governments. And they — increasingly — have some different ideas. **CT**

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**Sam Pizzigati** co-edits *Inequality.org*. His most recent book, *The Rich Don't Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class, 1900–1970*.

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## Barack Obama, the swaggering castrato

Donald Trump's Supreme Court pick may turn out to be a disaster. If so, blame Obama, writes **Thomas S. Harrington**

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Like that Trump Supreme Court pick, Neil Gorsuch? Well, you can thank the brave fighter for justice and the common man, Barack Hussein Obama for it. You know, the guy who — after watching the party he led for eight years receive one of the largest full-spectrum drubbings in the history of American politics at the hands of an ignorant buffoon — cockily proclaimed that he would have won the presidency again had he been allowed to run.

Under the US Constitution, the

president is charged with the important task of nominating the country's Supreme Court justices.

Does the Senate sometimes reject nominees as inappropriate on personal or temperamental grounds as part of its consent function?

Sure.

But that's not what happened with Obama. What happened was that the Republicans in the Senate simply pretended he had not nominated anyone to this key post, thus effectively abrogating this core exec-

utive-branch prerogative.

And this, after Obama – always more eager to placate his powerful opponents than satisfy the people who voted for him – forwarded a nominee, Merrick Garland, whose judicial philosophy is much closer to that of the Republicans than the bulk of his liberal base.

If ever there was an occupant of the White House who should have been capable of understanding the grave precedential ramifications of Republican gambit it was Obama who, as we were told ad nauseam in the run-up to the 2008 elections, is an accomplished constitutional scholar.

The US president has many tools at his disposal to induce his opponents to act in ways that are amenable to his desires. None of these is more powerful than going to the American people and calling them out for their unpatriotic and small-minded treachery.

But Obama did none of this. As he has shown all along, he sees himself as being above engaging in political fights. The true and profound narcissist that he is, he thought about this matter as he thought about all other matters during his eight years in office, that is, in terms of preserving his “brand” as the coolest and most reasonable guy in the US political class. According to this personal creed, giving Mitch McConnell and company a much-called-for bloody nose in public would be insufferably *louche*, a real comedown for a man of his obviously superior moral ways.

If the absolute silence about this turn of among Democratic partisans tells us anything it is that they seem to agree that their man is, and in-



**Barack Obama.** Photo: Mark Nozell, Flickr.com

deed should always remain, ABOVE IT ALL, beyond the dirty and unseemly work of using his power and privilege to actually fight for those who entrusted their votes to him.

One wonders when, if ever, these dreamy acolytes will begin to make the connection between the practice of ceding prerogative after prerogative to a party of corporate thugs led by McConnell and the arrival of the serial bully Trump to the presidency

of the nation.

I’ve got to say that the early returns are not promising. Rather than thinking of ways to discipline Obama and the Democrats for their pusillanimity and the orgy of civic violence and bullying it invited, they seem to be more interested in organising support groups where they can wax nostalgic about the wholly mythical record of progressive accomplishments during the last eight years and cry together about the uncertainty of living in the terrible world which, of course, appeared out of nowhere on November 8, 2016. **CT**

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*Thomas S. Harrington is a professor of Hispanic Studies at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, and the author of *Public Intellectuals and Nation Building in the Iberian Peninsula, 1900–1925: The Alchemy of Identity*, published in 2014 by Bucknell University Press.*

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## Solving terrorism with social media accounts

**Peter van Buren** checks the entry forms for foreign visitors to the US and finds a perplexing new question

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**T**he United States government seems to have a real thing for social media and terrorism, stoutly believing if only they could “take out” Twitter the global jihadi movement would collapse. Or something like that. Maybe it’s Instagram?

But while Trump talks the talk, Obama walked the walk. You may not know it, but since December, the Unit-

ed States quietly changed the standard online entry form (ESTA) used by US Customs and Border Protection, a part of your neighbourhood Department of Homeland Security.

The question added is “Please enter information associated with your online presence – Provider/Platform – Social media identifier.” The question is for all foreign travellers who use



the visa waiver (visa-free) system for admission into the US. The form is not used for American citizens.

The form also asks for info on citizenship, passport data, and contact information in the US, along with hilarious questions inquiring if the traveller is coming to the US to commit espionage, sabotage or terrorism (seriously; see here). Not so many people answer Yes.

The entry process for all foreigners already includes fingerprinting, photographing, an in-person interview, and numerous database checks.

The US government had 77.5-million foreign visitors in 2015. Collecting social media accounts for all visitors is producing one of the largest government-controlled databases of its kind. And even though the social media question is voluntary, apparently most travellers have been filling in the blank out of fear of calling attention to themselves and prompting further attention at the border.

As a reminder to all those who bark fascism at every turn: this change went into effect by order of the Obama administration, not Trump's.

And who is having their social media examined? Citizens from the visa-waiver countries. No, no, not those naughty people from the Seven Banned Muslims nations, but American allies like Japan, the UK, Germany and the like. And guess what? There's not been a word of protest, not a single court challenge. It's almost as if people paid no attention to any of this before Trump came long. According to the rules, the new info "will be an optional data field to request social media identifiers to be used for vetting purposes, as well as applicant contact information. Collecting social media data will enhance the existing investigative

process and provide DHS greater clarity and visibility to possible nefarious activity and connections by providing an additional tool set which analysts and investigators may use to better analyse and investigate the case."

So the concept is that Mohammed Atta (for example) rolls up to the Customs checkpoint at the airport, and jots down his Twitter handle as @terrorist911 and then enters the US to resume his flight lessons. Some-

one from Customs later trolls Atta's account to discover "Shout out to all the brothers, gonna lay down some whoop ass on Septemb-" Ah poo, only 140 characters, now we'll never know. **CT**

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*Peter van Buren* blew the whistle on State Department waste and mismanagement during the "reconstruction" of Iraq. He blogs at [www.wemeantwell.com](http://www.wemeantwell.com)

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## Russian spies, fake news and a Clockwork Orange

On the centenary of author Anthony Burgess's birth, **Philip Sargeant** finds lessons in his dystopian vision

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The writer Anthony Burgess is most famous for his novel, *A Clockwork Orange*. The centenary of the writer's birth on February 25 passed with his dystopian vision still casting a long shadow over popular culture. But what is perhaps more intriguing is how the book was once drawn into a world of Russian espionage, fake news and paranoia.

During his lifetime, Burgess wrote more than 30 novels, 25 non-fiction books, three symphonies and countless other musical works. But 55 years after its publication, it's still *A Clockwork Orange* that has the most enduring influence.

One of the more unusual examples of this influence was the novel's appropriation by the espionage community. During the 1970s, the title supposedly became the code-

name for an alleged campaign to undermine Britain's prime minister, Harold Wilson, prompted, apparently, by fears that Wilson was a Soviet agent who'd been placed in office after the KGB had poisoned the previous Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell.

Elements within the British secret service are alleged to have bugged his staff's phones, burgled their houses and instigated a campaign to spread false rumours about him through the media. All of this was intended as a precursor to a coup which would see the army seize Heathrow airport and Buckingham Palace and put an interim prime minister in place.

The symbolism of the use of this title – of a novel about state brainwashing and civil disorder – is inventive, to say the least. It also has a strange resonance today, where again there's rampant speculation

of “kompromat” (compromising material) is being used to manipulate Donald Trump who some fear is under the control of the Russian secret service.

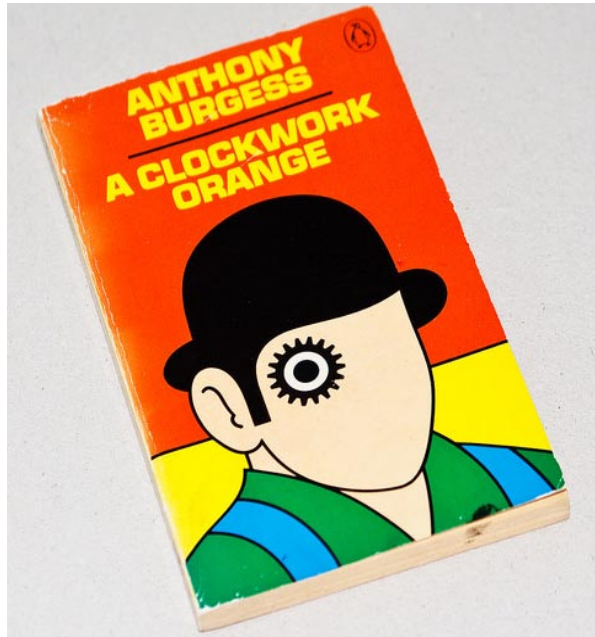
This story may appear as something of an outlier in the influence the book has had. But politics and culture have rubbed shoulders throughout its history.

Someone else who was greatly influenced by the book was David Bowie. In the early 1970s, he'd wanted to make a musical of another famous work of dystopian fiction, 1984, but George Orwell's widow, Sonia, refused him

the rights. Instead, he adapted his ideas into *Diamond Dogs* and created his own dystopian world: a broken society where “a disaffected youth . . . lived as gangs on roofs and . . . had the city to themselves.”

In the Britain of that time, with food shortages, power cuts and IRA bombings, an artistic fascination with these ideas isn't that surprising. The bleakness of the social landscape shared much of the mood and outlook of the post-war period in which Orwell was writing. But the world that Bowie ended up imagining arguably has as much to do with Burgess's “world of adolescent violence and governmental retribution” depicted in *A Clockwork Orange*.

Coincidentally, Sonia Orwell also played a bit part in an incident which was formative in the inception of the novel. In 1944, when Burgess was stationed with the army in Gibraltar, it was Sonia Orwell who sent the letter informing him that



**A Clockwork Orange.** Photo: Simon Zirkinow/Flickr.com

his wife, Lynne, had been attacked in London by four GIs. Lynne suffered a miscarriage and it seems likely that the incident contributed to her later ill-health and early death.

### Violence and catharsis

Not only does *A Clockwork Orange* explore a society overrun by random acts of recreational violence but Burgess also includes a scene in which an unnamed writer is attacked and forced to watch while his wife is raped. In his introduction to the novel, Blake Morrison suggests that writing this was a form of catharsis for Burgess – although later in his life Burgess spoke of the dejection he felt at the accusations that his artwork was some sort of promo glamorising violence.

Following a failed attempt by the Rolling Stones to film the novel and Andy Warhol's highly experimental take on it, Stanley Kubrick's celebrated adaptation came out in 1971. This

further bolstered the cultural impact. Bowie, for example, borrowed from both its visual style and soundtrack for his live shows, while his fascination with Burgess's invented language, Nadsat, was to continue right up until his final album *Blackstar*, which features a song mostly written in it.

In 1973 – around the same time as the Wilson plot was first being hatched – Kubrick withdrew his film version of the novel from British cinemas, following several high-profile cases of supposed copycat violence. For Burgess, the film had always been a mixed blessing.

When the novel came out in America, his publishers decided to cut the final chapter, which shows the protagonist grown up and wishing to settle down and start a family. Instead, it ends with him unrepentant and returned to the psychotic mindset that he'd had prior to his brainwashing treatment. It was that version that Kubrick filmed.

Burgess felt this prevented the book from working properly as a novel, where moral growth is a part of the essence of narrative. He saw the decision as symptomatic of the politics of the times – his book was Kennedyan, he wrote, when what was wanted was something Nixonian, “with no shred of optimism in it.” He concluded: “America prefers the other, more violent, ending. Who am I to say America is wrong? It's all a matter of choice.” **CT**

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## Not about oil? You must be joking ...

British researcher **Brian Mitchell** digs out a few political truths about the West's insatiable need to own the world's oil supply

"We must become the owners, or at any rate the controllers at the source, of at least a proportion of the oil which we require." – *British Royal Commission, agreeing with Winston Churchill's policy towards Iraq, 1913.*

"He who owns oil will own the world ... who has oil has empire." – *Henry Berenger, Commissioner General for Oil Products, France, during WWI.*

"... if we appear to be reactionary in Mesopotamia, there is always the risk that Faisal will encourage the Americans to take over both, and it should be borne in mind that the Standard Oil company is very anxious to take over Iraq." – *Sir Arthur Hirtzel, Head of the British government's India Office Political Department, 1919.*

"I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. ... In China in 1927 I helped see to it that the Standard Oil went its way unmolested. – *Testimony of General Smedley Butler, US Marine Corps, to the McCormack Dickstein Committee. 1935.*

"The oil of Saudi Arabia constitutes one of the world's greatest prizes." – *US Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 1943.*

"Behind the conflict in the Near East is OIL. Britain owns rich wells in Iraq ... Socialists ... [must] ... condemn the Oil Imperialism of Britain and America and demand the pooling of

all the oil resources of the world according to the needs of the peoples." – *Lord Fenner Brockway, 1947.*

"Iran is the only source of Middle Eastern oil which is not under the control of an Arab government, and present production could be considerably increased in an emergency. This strengthens the West's hand vis-a-vis the Arab oil producing countries." – *British Joint Intelligence Committee, 1961.*

"Western industrialised societies are largely dependent on the oil resources of the Middle East region and a threat to access to that oil would constitute a grave threat to the vital national interests. This must be dealt with; and that does not exclude the use of force if necessary." – *US Secretary of State Alexander Haig, March 11 1981.*

"Mideast oil is the West's lifeblood. It fuels us today, and being 77 percent of the Free World's proven oil reserves, it is going to fuel us when the rest of the world has run dry. ... It is estimated that within 20 or 40 years the US will have virtually depleted its economically available oil reserves, while the Persian Gulf region will still have at least 100 years of proven oil reserves." – *US General Norman Schwarzkopf, February 8 1990.*

"Shell's operations are impossible unless ruthless military operations

are undertaken for smooth economic activities to commence." – *Ken Saro-Wiwa, after reading a secret Nigerian military memo, May 1994. He was executed in 1995.*

"If they turn on the radars we're going to blow up their goddamn SAMs (surface-to-air missiles). They know we own their country [Iraq]. We own their airspace. ... We dictate the way they live and talk. And that's what's great about America right now. It's a good thing, especially when there's a lot of oil out there we need." – *US Brigadier General William Looney, Washington Post, August 30 1999.*

"The use of solar energy has not been opened up because the oil industry does not own the sun." – *US activist and author Ralph Nader.*

"The mistake of the West was to put the Saudis on the throne of Saudi Arabia and give them control of the world's oil fortune, which they then used to propagate Wahhabi Islam." – *British novelist Salman Rushdie.*

"My point is that it's incorrect to say that the Iraq policy isn't working. It is working. It is doing what they want. They have got control of the oil and they are exporting it, and they have stripped a government that was 90% state owned and they are privatizing it. – *US political scientist and author Michael Parenti.*

"And finally, this notion that the United States is getting ready to attack Iran is simply ridiculous. And having said that, all options are on the table." – *US President George Bush.*

**CT**

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**Brian Mitchell** is a London-based author and journalist. He is a former trade union organiser and teacher.

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