

**BANG GOES THE TRICKLE DOWN THEORY | GEORGE MONBIOT**  
**IRAN HOSTAGE CRISIS: TWO TALES, ONE TRUTH | DAVID SWANSON**  
**PROFIT IS BEAUTIFUL | JEFF NYGAARD**

FEBRUARY 2013

# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 72



**MEME WARS:** IS THIS THE FUTURE FOR CAPITALISM?



**Cover Photo:**  
Mohsen Mahbob  
From Meme Wars

# ColdType

FEBRUARY 2013 / ISSUE 72

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Editor: Tony Sutton – [editor@coldtype.net](mailto:editor@coldtype.net)

# Iran hostage crisis: Two tales, one truth

We should ignore the ‘sloppy’ one-dimensional narrative of the Iran crisis told by the movie *Argo*, and check out the unfolding drama of events depicted in a new book by human rights activist Margot White, writes **David Swanson**

According to one theory, US-Iranian relations began around November 1979 when a crowd of irrational religious nutcases violently seized the US embassy in Iran, took the employees hostage, tortured them, and held them until scared into freeing them by the arrival of a new sheriff in Washington, a man named Ronald Reagan. From that day to this, according to this popular theory, Iran has been run by a bunch of subhuman lunatics with whom rational people couldn’t really talk if they wanted to. These monsters only understand force. And they have been moments away from developing and using nuclear weapons against us for decades now. Moments away, I tell you!

According to another theory – a quaint little notion that I like to refer to as “verifiable history” – the CIA, operating out of that US embassy in Tehran in 1953, maliciously and illegally overthrew a relatively democratic and liberal parliamentary government, and with it the 1951 *Time* magazine man of the year Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, because Mossadegh insisted that Iran’s oil wealth enrich Iranians rather than foreign corporations.

The CIA installed a dictatorship run by the Shah of Iran who quickly became a major source of profits for US weapons makers, and his nation a testing ground for surveillance techniques and human rights abuses.

The US government encouraged the Shah’s development of a nuclear energy program. But the Shah impoverished and alienated the people of Iran, including hundreds of thousands educated abroad. A secular pro-democracy revolution nonviolently overthrew the Shah in January 1979, but it was a revolution without a leader or a plan for governing. It was co-opted by rightwing religious forces led by a man who pretended briefly to favor democratic reform.

The US government, operating out of the same embassy despised by many in Iran since 1953, explored possible means of keeping the Shah in power, but some in the CIA worked to facilitate what they saw as the second best option: a theocracy that would substitute religious fanaticism and oppression for populist and nationalist demands.

When the US embassy was taken over by an unarmed crowd the next November, immediately following the public announcement of the Shah’s arrival in the United States, and with fears of another US-led coup widespread in Tehran, a sit-in planned for two or three days was co-opted, as the whole revolution had been, by mullahs with connections to the CIA and an extremely anti-democratic agenda.

They later made a deal with US Republicans, as Robert Parry and others have well documented, to keep the hostage crisis going until Carter lost the 1980 presidential

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## WHOSE HISTORY?

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election to Ronald Reagan. Reagan's government secretly renewed weapons sales to the new Iranian dictatorship despite its public anti-American stance and with no more concern for its religious fervor than for that of future al Qaeda leaders who would spend the 1980s fighting the Soviets with US weapons in Afghanistan. At the same time, the Reagan administration made similarly profitable deals with Saddam Hussein's government in Iraq, which had launched a war on Iran and continued it with US support through the length of the Reagan presidency.

The mad military investment in the United States that took off with Reagan and again with George W. Bush, and which continues to this day, has made the nation of Iran – which asserts its serious independence from US rule – a target of threatened war and actual sanctions and terrorism.

Ben Affleck was asked by *Rolling Stone* magazine, "What do you think the Iranians' reaction is gonna be?" to Affleck's movie *Argo*, which depicts a side-story about six embassy employees who, in 1979, avoided being taken hostage. Affleck, mixing bits of truth and mythology, just as in the movie itself, replied:

"Who the FUCK knows – who knows if their reaction is going to be anything? This is still the same Stalinist, oppressive regime that was in place when the hostages were taken. There was no rhyme or reason to this action. What's interesting is that people later figured out that Khomeini just used the hostages to consolidate power internally and marginalize the moderates and everyone in America was going, 'What the fuck's wrong with these people?' You know, 'What do they want from us?' It was because it wasn't about us. It was about Khomeini holding on to power and being able to say to his political opponents, of which he had many, 'You're either with us or you're with the Americans' – which is, of course, a tactic that works really well. That revolution was a students' revolution. There were students

and communists and secularists and merchants and Islamists, it's just that Khomeini fucking slowly took it for himself."

The takeover of the embassy is an action virtually no one would advocate in retrospect, but asserting that it lacked rhyme or reason requires willful ignorance of Iranian-US relations. Claiming that nobody knew what the hostage-takers wanted requires erasing from history their very clear demands for the Shah to be returned to stand trial, for Iranian money in US banks to be returned to Iran, and for the United States to commit to never again interfering in Iranian politics.

In fact, not only were those demands clearly made, but they are almost indisputably reasonable demands. A dictator guilty of murder, torture, and countless other abuses should have stood trial, and should have been extradited to do so, as required by treaty. Money belonging to the Iranian government under a dictatorship should have been returned to a new Iranian government, not pocketed by a US bank. And for one nation to agree not to interfere in another's politics is merely to agree to compliance with the most fundamental requirement of legal international relations.

*Argo* devotes its first two minutes or so to the 1953 background of the 1979 drama. Blink and you'll miss it, as I'm betting most viewers do. For a richer understanding of what was happening in Iran in the late 1970s and early 1980s I have a better recommendation than watching *Argo*. For a truly magnificent modern epic I strongly encourage getting hold of the forthcoming masterpiece by M. Lachlan White, titled *Waking Up in Tehran: Love and Intrigue in Revolutionary Iran*, due to be published this spring. Weighing in at well over 300,000 words, or about 100,000 more than *Moby Dick*, *Waking Up in Tehran* is the memoir of Margot White, an American human rights activist who became an ally of pro-democracy Iranian student groups in 1977, traveled to Iran, supported the revolution, met with



the hostage-takers in the embassy, became a public figure, worked with the Kurdish resistance when the new regime attacked the Kurds for being infidels, married an Iranian, and was at home with her husband in Tehran when armed representatives of the government finally banged on the door. I'm not going to give away what happened next. This book will transport you into the world of a gripping novel, but you'll emerge with a political, cultural, and even linguistic education. This is an action-adventure that would, in fact, make an excellent movie – or even a film trilogy. It's also an historical document.

There are sections in which White relates conversations with her friends and colleagues in Iran, including their speculations as to who was behind what government intrigue. A few of these speculations strike me as in need of more serious support. They also strike me as helpful in understanding the viewpoints of Iranians at the time. Had I edited this book I might have framed them a little differently, but I wouldn't have left them out.

I wouldn't have left anything out. This is a several-hundred-page love letter from a woman to her husband and from an activist to humanity. It is intensely romantic and as honest as cold steel. It starts in 1977.

On November 15, 1977, at the White House, our human rights president, Jimmy Carter, was holding an outdoor press conference with his good friend the Shah. The police used pepper spray on the protesters, including Margot White, in front of the White House. But then the wind shifted. Carter and the Shah ended up in tears as their wives fled indoors. Later that day, White and an Iranian friend were attacked with a knife, chased by spies, and occupied with hiding the wallets of anti-Shah protesters in a D.C. hospital from pro-Shah forces eager to identify them. In December, White was off to Iran to meet with the opposition, including those who had backed Mossadegh a quarter century before. She learned

the size and strength of the movement and came to understand its power to overthrow the Shah better than did the US government or the US media. White was followed by the Shah's secret police, SAVAK, during her stay.

In 1978 White spoke in Europe and the United States about the growing revolution and its members' certainty that the Shah would be thrown out. She returned to Iran. She met with greedy Americans there who believed the Shah secure on his throne. She met with the opposition, including a grandson of Mossadegh, who believed the Shah was doomed and who saw the revolution as secular. He saw the mullahs as a danger and as a force susceptible to US manipulation.

White was followed and chased by SAVAK. The NSA (yes, the one based in Maryland) had wiretapped the whole country (yes, the Iranians' country) – an abuse that would later come home to the United States, as such things do. White met with torture victims. She visited Eagle City, a colony of the US military industrial complex and its spouses and children. She met with many activists in the revolutionary movement, all of whom, in the summer of '78, saw the movement as secular. No one ever brought up the Ayatollah Khomeini, and if she brought him up (responding to his prominence in the US media) they attributed no importance to him. White described the state of US media coverage:

“The ‘benevolent monarch’ image was fast disappearing as the reality of the Pahlavi police state became widely exposed. Unfortunately, despite this, Iran's protestors were being referred to as ‘mobs,’ instead of the courageous, unarmed, exhausted and determined citizens that they were. Their demands for social justice and political participation were barely mentioned, leaving the impression the protests were senseless and inexplicable, some sort of collective ‘over-reaction’ to the Shah's ‘excesses.’”

The movement was depicted as Islamic. White quotes one of her friends' reactions

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## WHOSE HISTORY?

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**When one of the largest newspapers in Iran reported that the Islamic Republic was being run by men with ties to the CIA, the government shut down the newspaper**  
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at the time:

“We think it’s a conscious decision, from several sources. It makes the Revolution seem ‘anti-West’ instead of ‘anti-US/Shah.’ It blurs the significance of Washington’s responsibility for most of the repression in Iran. It makes it sound like an ‘ideological’ movement, instead of a political one, like Iranians have some abstract, philosophical problem with Western ‘culture,’ rather than very concrete problems with jailing writers, torturing teenagers, and condemning millions of children to an early death from lack of clean water!”

White learned that Khomeini’s senior advisor in his exile in Paris was an Iranian-born American citizen named Dr. Ibrahim Yazdi, a close friend of Richard Cottam of the CIA.

By January 1979 the Shah was gone, and that spring White was back in Iran where Khomeini was consolidating power and turning against the movement that had toppled the Shah. There were huge protests on Women’s Day and May Day and on the anniversary of Mossadegh’s death.

When one of the largest newspapers in Iran reported that the Islamic Republic was being run by men with ties to the CIA, the government shut down the newspaper. It banned the pro-democracy groups that had led the revolution. It sent US-made airplanes to bomb Kurdistan. Activists began organizing within the Iranian military to resist orders to attack the Kurds.

After the embassy was seized in November, a crowd of reporters gathered daily outside the gates, many of them new to Iran. White spoke to some of them and tried to educate them about Iran’s past and present. They encouraged her, as an American living in Iran, to hold a press conference and express her views. She did so, and hundreds of reporters came. She pointed out that the students said they had seized the embassy as a protest against current, not just past, CIA presence and interference. She noted the “elaborate cameras, surveillance technolo-

gy and radar equipment” they had found in the embassy, photographed, and publicized. She said Iranians had good reason to want “no further CIA presence in their country, having suffered years of political repression, torture and surveillance carried out by CIA-trained SAVAK state police.”

White’s statements were front-page news in the *International Herald Tribune* and big news around the world. The next day, Walter Annenberg, a wealthy Republican backer, placed a full page ad in the *New York Times* denouncing her. Also that day, the students in the embassy asked to meet her.

White was allowed into the embassy, where she met the students but not the hostages. Some of the students had studied in the United States and very much liked the United States, just not its government’s interference in Iran. During her meeting with the students, a mullah came into the room briefly. He clearly exercised authority over the students without actually holding their loyalty. The relationship fit with accounts of the mullahs having co-opted an action they did not initiate. The students told White they wanted the Shah returned to stand trial. They wanted his money returned. They gave White some of the many documents they were piecing back together following their shredding by the embassy staff. In *Argo* we see photographs of the six employees who escaped being pieced back together. In *Waking Up in Tehran* we learn that the documents given to White included US plans to bring the Shah to the United States three months before he was actually brought there for medical care, as well as documenting the CIA’s presence in the embassy.

The hostage-takers in White’s telling were, among other things, an early version of WikiLeaks. They “continued to publish reconstructed Embassy documents, eventually producing 54 volumes of evidence of CIA operatives ... manipulating, threatening and bribing world leaders, rigging foreign elections, hijacking local political systems,

shuffling foreign governments like decks of cards, sabotaging economic competitors, assassinating regional, national and tribal leaders at will, choreographing state-to-state diplomacy like cheap theater.”

White had herself become a news story. She stumbled upon “a life-size photo of me near the gates at the front of the US Embassy, looking rather baffled, my fist raised tentatively into the air. I felt awkward about it, not least because an American reporter had urged me to strike that pose. I’d asked the desk clerk where he’d gotten such a thing. He told me that someone had apparently enlarged the news photo into life size billboards that were being posted all around Tehran – at bus stations, the railway station, the Bazaar, and various other spots – all the way from Shoosh Square in the south up to Damavand. I’d begged the Manager to take it down and he had obliged.”

I asked White about Argo, and she said she’d watched it three times and taken notes. “As history,” she told me, “it’s worse than sloppy. The depiction of the students at the embassy is way off, as are several other things. Public hangings were over with long before November 1979. They occurred mostly in February 1979, and were mostly the upper echelons of SAVAK. The six Americans were being rescued in January 1980, almost a year later. Those things were not happening. Just the opposite – the Resistance was underway.”

White finds fault with other details: “Even the suggestion that the students were using ‘kids’ or ‘sweat shop children’ to piece together the shredded embassy documents is wrong. They had high school and college students doing it, mostly their own younger brothers and sisters. Kids of the age shown would not yet have been able to read Farsi, much less English! There is no way such children could piece together those documents.”

White objects to the general depiction of ordinary Iranians in the film: “Most troubling is the depiction of people in the Ba-

zaar going after the Americans. That would never happen. Anyone visiting Iran would be treated as a ‘guest.’ The tradition of ‘the guest’ is so deep in Persian culture – dating back to the caravans of the silk road – that it reaches almost absurd proportions. But it precludes any such behavior as that depicted in the Argo Bazaar. Iranians, unlike Americans, don’t blame the people for their government’s policies. Iranian men, in particular, would never approach an American woman that way, with such aggression, and speak about politics. They might politely inquire why they were in Iran, what they thought of the country, and they might even offer them tea! They would never behave as depicted.

“Likewise, the banging on the car windows. On the contrary, cars were so thick in Tehran that crowds could not be in the streets at the same time. Also, the burning cars were long gone by January of 1980! In Argo, the crowds are shown shouting ‘down with the Shah’ long after the Shah was overthrown. The crowds in the streets were, increasingly – as in my book – from the Resistance!”

White continued: “There’s another troubling depiction in Argo that I question, but I have no way to prove this. It’s the scene showing mock executions. I doubt they happened. The reason I doubt this is that when the hostages were released, they had one ticker tape parade (as noted in my book) and virtually disappeared – no talk shows, no endless interviews, no lecture circuits. Why? Wouldn’t Washington have wanted to publicize the worst features of their ordeal? If the hostages had really been subject to that level of torture, why keep silent about it? A) Reagan’s deal with the Ayatollahs? B) they weren’t tortured. Both A and B would be my guess. The students voted on their policies. They were a mixed group, but torture had been ruled out. I believe that is the case. Captivity, obviously, is a human rights violation, but torture is something else. Again, however, I have no

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## WHOSE HISTORY?

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way to prove this definitively.”

In the spring of 1980 Iran began bombing the Kurds in northern Iran with US-made planes, and soldiers began deserting to the Kurdish side. The Iranian military attacked Tehran University, killing unarmed students, advancing a plan to Islamicize the curriculum. The hostage crisis dragged on. President Carter launched an unsuccessful rescue mission.

“Interestingly,” writes White, “most people suspected the truth even though they couldn’t prove it: that the hostage situation was being deliberately prolonged – and not by the students inside, but by those unseen forces typically referred to as ‘they.’ Why were the negotiations taking so long? The students had continued, of course, to print and publicly display copies of the embassy’s classified documents, many of them meticulously re-assembled, pieced together strip by shredded strip. They revealed decades of clandestine CIA operations throughout Eurasia and the Middle East, conducted primarily out of this particular embassy in Tehran – precisely the interventions and atrocities against Third World peoples described by John Stockwell’s book, *In Search of Enemies*. They also revealed ties with CIA on the part of certain powerful Iranian clerics dating back to the 1953 coup .... The students boldly sought publicity for the documentary evidence, but their efforts were repeatedly blocked by the regime. ... [I]f such documentary evidence existed and was published, it would destroy the current regime’s credibility overnight. The students were being subjected to a news ‘blackout,’ and no wonder. Western media, for the most part, however, continued to refer to the embassy takeover as an action of Iran’s government, something done by the regime, rather than by its critics, or by ‘Iranians’ as a whole. Negotiations to resolve the crisis were necessarily between the two governments, reinforcing the perception that the regime had initiated and endorsed the action – instead of frantically trying to

block it at every turn, fearing what would be revealed.”

The next unusual request for a meeting that White received came from Khomeini’s grandson. She agreed to meet with him. He asked her if Carter would lose the coming election if the hostages were still not freed. “We don’t like Carter,” the grandson told her.

The day Reagan was inaugurated, the hostages were freed. That week massive roundups of activists began in Iran. Crack-downs targeted anyone and anything “insufficiently Islamic.” Arbitrary arrests were followed by executions of “infidels,” including poets and leaders of the revolution. A May Day rally in 1981 was attacked. Pro-democracy and anti-Shah activists were going to prison in large numbers.

That summer, two men began standing all day, every day on White’s street and watching her house. She and her husband made plans to leave for the United States. They attended one more protest, an anti-Khomeini rally on June 20th. Then things really got interesting. I’ll leave it to you to read the book. I’ll mention only this: White herself was the victim of a mock execution. She knows in a very direct way that mock executions happened and how and by whom they were employed.

She also knows what war is and what sacrifices in the struggle against war involve. The reason the United States should stop threatening war against Iran today is not that the United States has mistreated and abused Iran in the past. It is not related to the quality of Iran’s current government. It is entirely related to the evil of war. There is nothing worse than war that war can be used to prevent – not even greater war, something that war has always made more – not less – likely. Stephen Kinzer, in his book *All the Shah’s Men*, relates a conversation he had with another grandson of Mossadegh:

“He told me that a few weeks before the 1953 coup, he attended a reception at the



home of an Iranian diplomat in Washington and overheard the wife of Colonel Abbas Farzanegan, a military attaché who was on the CIA's secret payroll, boast that her husband was involved in a plot that would soon make him a cabinet minister. The next morning Mahmoud Mossadegh cabled this intelligence home to his grandfather. 'Later on, after the coup, I asked him if he had received my cable. He said, "Of course I did." When I asked him why he hadn't done something about it, he told me there was nothing he could have done. He said he knew full well that this coup was coming. His choice was to surrender or arm his supporters and call them out to civil war. He hated to think about giving up everything he believed in, but the other alternative was out of the question.'"

Shirin Ebadi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 for her work on behalf of human rights, women's rights, and children's rights in Iran. She is a critic of the current Iranian government, and lives in exile. In a message written for RootsAction.org, Ebadi opposes any attack on Iran:

"Not only military attack but even threat of military attack would slow down the progress of democracy in Iran because the government, under the pretext of safeguarding national security, would further intensify its crackdown on pro-democracy activists and critics. Moreover, such an eventuality would incite people's nationalist sentiment, which would cause them to forget their criticisms of the government."

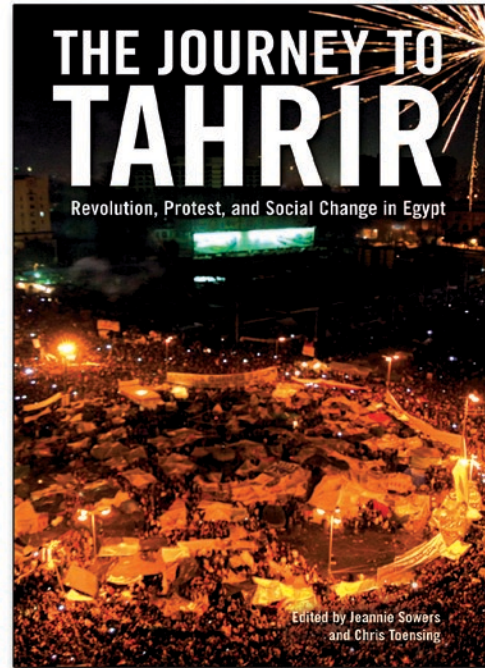
If we cannot learn from our own history or this kind of common sense, let us learn from Mossadegh. War is not a solution. War is not a tool of public policy. War is not the first option, the second option, or the last resort. War is out of the question. **CT**

*David Swanson's books include "War Is A Lie." He blogs at <http://davidswanson.org> and works as Campaign Coordinator for the online activist organization <http://rootsaction.org>*

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# When did the United States coup take place?

Luke Hiken wonders how the military took over the government

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This “secret” world of US terror exists side-by-side with the 1,000 identified US military bases throughout the globe  
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When did the coup happen here, and how did we miss it? I always imagined military coups to occur when jack-booted generals marched into the town square in front of columns of heavily armed soldiers. Pinochet, Mussolini, Franco come to mind – we’ve all seen the pictures. But here in the United States, nobody even has a clue as to when the Pentagon, and its secret policing, “anti-terrorist” organizations took control of the US government and its people.

Recently, the newspapers indicated that the US/NATO was sending scud missiles to Turkey and US soldiers would be stationed there to fire them at Syria. No declaration of war, no ok from Congress, not a word from the President. If the Pentagon wants to go to war against Syria, it simply does so. We are already fighting other wars throughout the Middle East – not just in Afghanistan and Iraq, Libya, Bahrain and (add the Muslim nation of your choice), but in dozens of other countries, as well.

Last month, we sent groups of “anti-terrorist” mercenaries to 35 countries in Africa. Most Americans can’t even name 25 countries on that continent, but the Pentagon is making sure that every African nation is on board for at least one US base. That way, we can justify invading any country we want in case something happens to one of our “heroes” protecting Africa.

The US government has secret prisons for “renditions” (torture is what the rest of the world calls it); secret assassination squads (“Seals” in the euphemistic jargon for such mercenaries); CIA “destabilization” officers throughout the world: the list of assassins go on and on. This “secret” world of US terror exists side-by-side with the 1,000 identified US military bases throughout the globe.

The ascendancy of an all-powerful, unrestrained military system, unaccountable to the Congress, the courts, or the public, was one of the subtlest coups anywhere in the history of the world.

Certainly, the presidencies of Dwight D. Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan consolidated the authority that the Pentagon held over the American people, but nobody ever recognized that during those regimes there was a formal abdication of power to the military-corporate state by the civilian government.

After World War II, with the development of the nuclear weapons industry, there was a recognition that the complexity of modern warfare was beyond the knowledge and capacity of the American people to control. Reinforced by the Pentagon’s propaganda efforts during the Cold War, and the establishment of a secret Central Intelligence Agency (under the auspices of numerous named and unnamed front groups), the Congress and executive governments grad-

ually gave more and more power to these agencies. With the advent of “terrorists” as the new shibboleth, and “Homeland Security” as the front group, the Pentagon and its secret police are so protected that it is a crime to even talk publicly about what these monsters are doing to those we characterize as “terrorists” throughout the world. Whistleblowers are at risk of being tortured and assassinated as quickly and deftly as are our “enemies.”

And now there is not even a pretext at controlling this run-away military/industrial complex. Even if President Obama, or his predecessors, had the courage or integrity to try to control the Pentagon and its cohorts, they could not do so. Instead, we witness one clown after another, sitting in the White House, rubber-stamping outrageously expensive military budgets, and endorsing one unpopular war after another, with no oversight by any civilian authority. The creation of one unnecessary program after another is the standard for Pentagon spending.

That Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and General Adolph Betray-us would be “in bed” with each other, is not a caricature of their relationship, but rather, constitutes the normal state of affairs. Hillary will un-

doubtedly be the next President of the United States, since she represents everything that the Pentagon wants in a leader: total dishonesty, coupled with unrestrained violence against those who would oppose US world domination.

The shibboleth of “terrorism” is merely the Pentagon’s latest excuse for permanent war, and endless drone attacks, not only on foreign populations, but also for the domestic police surveillance state, at home. The silent military coup that has taken place in this country is beyond the reach of our elected officials. Whatever hope we ever had for regaining control over the Pentagon was lost with the Citizens United decision issued by the puppets on the US Supreme Court, and we, like the rest of the world, are left with no government *independent* enough to fight back. History demonstrates that military empires burn themselves out eventually, but in the meantime, we are facing a long, difficult period of oppression and violence. **CT**

*Luke Hiken is an attorney who has engaged in the practice of criminal, military, immigration, and appellate law.*

*This was first published at <http://progressiveavenues.org>*

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**We witness one clown after another, sitting in the White House, rubber-stamping outrageously expensive military budgets, and endorsing one unpopular war after another, with no oversight by any civilian authority**  
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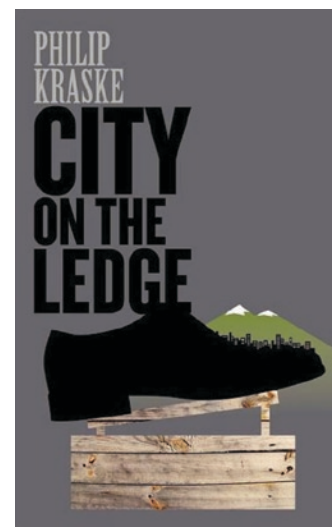
## CITY ON THE LEDGE

PHILIP KRASKE

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# Bang goes the trickle-down theory

George Monbiot tells how neoliberalism trashed your life, but made the super-rich even richer

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**The policies which made the global monarchs so rich are the policies squeezing everyone else. This is not what the theory predicted**  
.....

**H**ow they must bleed for us. In 2012, the world's 100 richest people became \$241 billion richer(1). They are now worth \$1.9 trillion: just a little less than the GDP of the United Kingdom.

This is not the result of chance. The rise in the fortunes of the super-rich is the direct result of policies. Here are a few: the reduction of tax rates and tax enforcement; governments' refusal to recoup a decent share of revenues from minerals and land; the privatisation of public assets and the creation of a toll-booth economy; wage liberalisation and the destruction of collective bargaining.

The policies which made the global monarchs so rich are the policies squeezing everyone else. This is not what the theory predicted. Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman and their disciples – in a thousand business schools, the IMF, the World Bank, the OECD and just about every modern government – have argued that the less governments tax the rich, defend workers and redistribute wealth, the more prosperous everyone will be. Any attempt to reduce inequality would damage the efficiency of the market, impeding the rising tide that lifts all boats(2). The apostles have conducted a 30-year global experiment and the results are now in. Total failure.

Before I go on, I should point out that I don't believe perpetual economic growth is either sustainable or desirable(3). But if growth is your aim – an aim to which every government claims to subscribe – you couldn't make a bigger mess of it than by releasing the super-rich from the constraints of democracy.

Last year's annual report by the UN Conference on Trade and Development should have been an obituary for the neoliberal model developed by Hayek and Friedman and their disciples(4). It shows unequivocally that their policies have created the opposite outcomes to those they predicted.

As neoliberal policies (cutting taxes for the rich, privatising state assets, deregulating labour, reducing social security) began to bite from the 1980s onwards, growth rates started to fall and unemployment to rise.

The remarkable growth in the rich nations during the 1950s, 60s and 70s was made possible by the destruction of the wealth and power of the elite, as a result of the Depression and the second world war. Their embarrassment gave the other 99% an unprecedented chance to demand redistribution, state spending and social security, all of which stimulated demand.

Neoliberalism was an attempt to turn back these reforms. Lavishly funded by

millionaires, its advocates were amazingly successful: politically(5). Economically they flopped.

Throughout the OECD countries, taxation has become more regressive: the rich pay less, the poor pay more(6). The result, the neoliberals claimed, would be that economic efficiency and investment would rise, enriching everyone. The opposite occurred. As taxes on the rich and on business diminished, the spending power of both the state and poorer people fell, and demand contracted. The result was that investment rates declined, in step with companies' expectations of growth(7).

The neoliberals also insisted that unrestrained inequality in incomes and flexible wages would reduce unemployment. But throughout the rich world both inequality and unemployment have soared(8). The recent jump in unemployment in most developed countries – worse than in any previous recession of the past three decades – was preceded by the lowest level of wages as a share of GDP since the second world war(9). Bang goes the theory. It failed for the same obvious reason: low wages suppress demand, which suppresses employment.

As wages stagnated, people supplemented their incomes with debt. Rising debt fed the deregulated banks, with consequences of which we are all aware. The greater inequality becomes, the UN report finds, the less stable the economy and the lower its rates of growth. The policies with which neoliberal governments seek to reduce their deficits and stimulate their economies are counter-productive.

The impending reduction of the UK's top rate of income tax (from 50% to 45%) will not boost government revenue or private enterprise(10), but it will enrich the speculators who tanked the economy: Goldman Sachs and other banks are now thinking of delaying their bonus payments to take advantage of it(11). The welfare bill approved by parliament last month will

not help to clear the deficit or stimulate employment: it will reduce demand, suppressing economic recovery. The same goes for the capping of public sector pay. "Relearning some old lessons about fairness and participation," the UN says, "is the only way to eventually overcome the crisis and pursue a path of sustainable economic development."(12)

As I say, I have no dog in this race, except a belief that no one, in this sea of riches, should have to be poor. But staring dumbfounded at the lessons unlearned in Britain, Europe and the United States, it strikes me that the entire structure of neoliberal thought is a fraud. The demands of the ultra-rich have been dressed up as sophisticated economic theory and applied regardless of the outcome. The complete failure of this world-scale experiment is no impediment to its repetition. This has nothing to do with economics. It has everything to do with power. **CT**

*George Monbiot is the author of "Heat: How to Stop the Planet from Burning". Read more of his writings at <http://monbiot.com>*

**Notes:**

1. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-01-01/billionaires-worth-1-9-trillion-see-advantage-in-2013.html>
2. Milton Friedman and Rose Friedman, 1980. *Free to Choose*. Secker & Warburg, London.
3. For an alternative vision, see Tim Jackson, 2009, *Prosperity Without Growth*. Sustainable Development Commission. [http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/data/files/publications/prosperity\\_without\\_growth\\_report.pdf](http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/data/files/publications/prosperity_without_growth_report.pdf)
4. UNCTAD, 2012. *Trade and Development Report: Policies for Inclusive and Balanced Growth*. [http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/tdr2012\\_en.pdf](http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/tdr2012_en.pdf)
5. See David Harvey, 2005. *A Brief History*

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**The neoliberals also insisted that unrestrained inequality in incomes and flexible wages would reduce unemployment. But throughout the rich world both inequality and unemployment have soared**  
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## FAILED PREDICTIONS

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**“The proposition that greater flexibility of the aggregate wage level and lower average wages are necessary to boost employment, as they lead to a substitution of labour for capital in the economy as a whole, can be directly refuted”**  
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of Neoliberalism. Oxford University Press.  
6. The UN reports: “The overall effect of these changes in the tax structure made taxation more regressive. Indeed, a review of tax reforms in OECD countries did not find a single country where the tax system became more progressive (Steinmo, 2003: 223).” UNCTAD, 2012, as above.

7. “Redistribution through fiscal measures may therefore be in the interest of society as a whole, especially where inequality is particularly pronounced as in many developing countries. This is supported by the experience in developed countries, as investment rates were not lower – but indeed often higher – in the first three decades of the post-war era, even though taxes on profits and top incomes were higher than after the widespread fiscal reforms implemented subsequently. There are strong reasons to believe that the willingness of entrepreneurs to invest in new productive capacity does not depend primarily on net profits at a given point in time, but on their expectations regarding future demand for the goods and services they can produce with additional capacity. This is of particular importance when considering the overall effect of an increase in corporate taxes. Provided that higher tax revenues are used for additional government expenditures, companies’ expectations of a growth in demand will improve. This demand effect is independent of whether the additional government expenditures take the form of government consumption, public investment or social transfers. When the level of fixed investment is maintained as a result of favourable demand expectations gross profits will rise – and generally so will net profits, notwithstanding the initial tax increase. In the process, additional income and employment will be created for the economy as a whole.” UNCTAD, 2012, as above.

8. “The proposition that greater flexibility of the aggregate wage level and lower average wages are necessary to boost employ-

ment, as they lead to a substitution of labour for capital in the economy as a whole, can be directly refuted, given the strong positive correlation between investment in gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) and employment creation that exists in developed countries (chart 6.3). This correlation contradicts the neoclassical model: in the real world, companies invest and disinvest in capital and labour at the same time, and the level of their investment depends on the overall state of the economy, which determines their demand expectations. This implies that, in the macroeconomic context, capital and labour can be considered substitutes only to a very limited extent.” UNCTAD, 2012, as above.

9. “Just ahead of the new big jump in unemployment in developed countries – from less than 6 per cent in 2007 to close to 9 per cent in 2010-2011 – the share of wages in overall GDP had fallen to the lowest level on record since the end of the Second World War (i.e. to 57 per cent, down from more than 61 per cent in 1980). This should be a wake-up call. If unemployment rises more than during any other recession that occurred during the last three decades, even though the share of wages in GDP has fallen, there must be something fundamentally wrong with an economic theory that justifies the rise of inequality mainly in terms of the need to tackle persistent unemployment.” UNCTAD, 2012, as above.

10. Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez and Stefanie Stantcheva calculate that the optimal level for the top rate of income tax (to maximise revenue) is between 57 and 83%. Piketty, Saez and Stantcheva, 2011. Optimal taxation of top labor incomes: A tale of three elasticities. National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, MA. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w17616>

11. Patrick Jenkins, 14th January 2013. Goldman Eyes Tax Delay on UK Bonuses. Financial Times (£).

12. UNCTAD, 2012, as above.

# Swell times for America's swollen fortunes

Sam Pizzigati on how the rich manage to perpetuate their wealth

**C**an a democracy survive if the richest of the rich within it can pass on to their heirs, generation after generation, the vast bulk of their fortunes?

In the United States, that question first became a top-tier topic of political debate back over a century ago. Fortunes of almost unimaginable size were then towering over the nation's economic landscape. These huge fortunes, Americans feared, could easily become the building blocks for a new aristocracy, for financial dynasties that could leave America's democracy a dead letter.

How could average Americans prevent that ruin? The nation needed, more and more Americans came to agree, to tax – and tax heavily – the fortunes the super rich bequeathed to their heirs.

America, President Theodore Roosevelt declared in 1906, must place “a constantly increasing burden on the inheritance of those swollen fortunes which it is certainly of no benefit to this country to perpetuate.”

A decade later, Congress began to put that burden in place. Lawmakers enacted a federal tax on the grand estates the rich left behind at death, and this new estate tax would eventually have steady support in the White House, from Republicans and Democrats alike.

Vast “inherited economic power,” as Franklin D. Roosevelt opined in 1935, “is as inconsistent with the ideals of this generation as inherited political power was inconsistent with the ideals of the generation which established our Government.”

Any society that tolerates a “fabulously wealthy” class, Republican President Dwight Eisenhower would add a generation later in 1960, is asking for trouble.

“Since time began,” Ike reminded America, “opulence has too often paved for a nation the way to depravity and ultimate destruction.”

Depravity here we come. A dozen years ago, America's political leaders took it upon themselves to start hacking away at the federal estate tax. The last-minute budget deal struck at the end of 2010 extended – and deepened – that hacking.

Our latest last-minute federal budget deal – the “fiscal cliff” bargain reached right on the eve of 2013 – has now locked all that hacking in place. Our rich today can now do exactly what Republican Teddy Roosevelt warned us against. They can easily “perpetuate” their “swollen fortunes.”

The ease of this perpetuating hasn't come across in most news accounts of the fiscal cliff deal. These accounts typically note that the deal allows a wealthy person to leave behind, tax-free, the same \$5 million that the 2010 tax deal wrote into the

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**Depravity here we come. A dozen years ago, America's political leaders took it upon themselves to start hacking away at the federal estate tax**  
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Decades ago, Congress realized that dynastic fortunes would flourish if the rich could avoid estate tax liability at death by giving away, while they were still living, the bulk of their fortunes to heirs

tax code. But this \$5 million figure only hints at the huge free pass America's lawmakers have handed America's most awesomely affluent.

That \$5 million, for starters, gets adjusted annually for inflation. In 2013, this adjustment will up the exemption to \$5.25 million. This \$5.25 million, in turn, only applies per spouse. A couple will this year be able to totally exempt from estate taxation \$10.5 million.

Even this arithmetic doesn't tell the full story.

Decades ago, Congress realized that dynastic fortunes would flourish if the rich could avoid estate tax liability at death by giving away, while they were still living, the bulk of their fortunes to heirs. The solution: the gift tax, a federal levy on substantial transfers of cash and other assets.

The gift tax and the estate tax have worked in tandem. The substantial gifts the wealthy give to their heirs during their lifetimes get subtracted from the total allowable estate tax exemption. In 2013, a wealthy couple that has bestowed \$2 million in gifts will only get to exempt, at death, another \$8.5 million.

Or so the tax theory goes. In reality, the rich can "gift" their way to a much greater estate tax exemption. In 2013, the gift tax will only kick in when a single wealthy person gives a single individual more than

\$14,000 within a single year.

A wealthy couple, under this lucrative loophole, can together give \$28,000 a year to as many individuals the two spouses choose, for as many years as they want, and face not one penny of gift tax.

Consider, for instance, a CEO with two grown children and four grandkids. This exec and spouse can gift \$168,000 a year to their six nearest and dearest without paying any taxes at all on the gift.

And those six nearest and dearest? They don't have to pay a penny of personal income tax on any of that \$168,000. They don't even have to report the \$168,000 on their tax returns. Nor will these six heirs face any taxes on – or even have to report – the additional mega millions they'll eventually inherit.

We're letting, in other words, our grandest fortunes swell without any reasonable limit. Our progressive forbears didn't accept that swelling. Neither should we. **CT**

*Sam Pizzigati, editor of the online weekly Too Much - <http://toomuchonline.org>, writes widely about inequality. An excerpt from his latest book, "The Rich Don't Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class", has just been published by Seven Stories Press, was featured in the last issue of ColdType.*



# Bombing increases threat of wider war

Israeli air strikes could cause even more destabilisation in the Middle East, warns **Bill Van Auken**

**T**he bombing of a Syrian military site by Israeli warplanes at the end of last month has ratcheted up the danger that the Western-backed civil war in Syria will spill over into a broader regional conflagration.

Unnamed US officials cited by the *New York Times* claimed that the target of the dawn air strike on January 30 was a military convoy carrying arms that were supposedly destined for Hezbollah, the Shia political movement and militia in Lebanon.

The Syrian government, however, said that air strikes were directed against a military research center in Jamraya, in the Qasioun mountain range about three miles west of Damascus. It said that two workers at the center were killed in the bombing and five others were wounded.

“Israeli warplanes violated our airspace at dawn today and directly struck one of the scientific research centers responsible for elevating the resistance and self-defense capabilities in the area of Jamraya in the Damascus countryside,” Syria’s military said in a statement published by the official Sana news agency.

The Syrian regime charged that the air strikes had been facilitated by coordinated attacks on the part of the US and Western-backed “rebels” against the country’s radar networks and air defense

systems.

“Late Wednesday, a US official said the accounts of two targets – a convoy of weapons and a military site – weren’t mutually exclusive,” the Wall Street Journal reported. The official suggested that the convoy was attacked inside the military facility. How Israel determined that it was carrying weapons bound for Hezbollah across the border in Lebanon has not been clarified.

For its part, the Israeli regime has maintained a complete silence on its act of aggression against Syria. The following day, the *New York Times* described this silence as “part of a longstanding strategy to give targeted countries face-saving opportunities to avoid conflict escalation.” According to this perverse reasoning, Syria’s public statement on the attack – rather than the attack itself – was responsible for “increasing the likelihood of a cycle of retaliation.”

The air strike was reportedly carried out by four Israeli warplanes that flew low over Syrian territory before firing as many as a dozen missiles into the complex.

The Lebanese *Daily Star* quoted residents of the Jamraya area who said that they were woken by blasts at the military site. “We were sleeping. Then we started hearing rockets hitting the complex and

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**The air strike was reportedly carried out by four Israeli warplanes that flew low over Syrian territory before firing as many as a dozen missiles into the complex**  
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**The Netanyahu government is exploiting the crisis in Syria to carry out military strikes aimed at weakening its potential adversaries and paving the way for a new eruption of open warfare**  
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the ground started shaking and we ran into the basement,” a woman who lives next to the complex told the Lebanese newspaper.

Another Syrian, who has a relative working inside the military site, told Reuters: “It appears that there were about a dozen rockets that appeared to hit one building in the complex. The facility is closed today.”

The extreme right-wing government of Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu has claimed that it fears the nearly two-year-old civil war in Syria will lead to advanced weapons falling into the hands of Hezbollah or the Western-backed Islamist militias. In reality, as it begins its third term in office, the Netanyahu government is exploiting the crisis in Syria to carry out military strikes aimed at weakening its potential adversaries and paving the way for a new eruption of open warfare.

According to US officials, the alleged convoy headed to Lebanon was not carrying chemical weapons or any other offensive arms, but rather Russian-made SA-17 anti-aircraft missiles, which would be capable of hitting Israeli fighter-bombers, helicopters and drones.

As NBC News put it, “They would remove Israel’s critical freedom of flight over Lebanon.” The Israeli regime has exercised this “freedom” repeatedly in the last several days. The Lebanese army reported that Israeli warplanes had carried out two sorties over Lebanese territory, circling for hours on January 29 and returning before dawn the following day.

More importantly, this unchallenged control over Lebanon’s airspace is critical for Israel if it is preparing yet another war against the country to its north, which it last invaded in 2006, destroying much of its infrastructure with air and sea bombardments and killing over 1,100 people.

This eventuality was strongly suggest-

ed by a top Israeli military commander. On the eve of the air strike on Syria, Major-General Amir Eshel, the chief of Israel’s air force, declared that Israel was now engaged in a “war between wars” and that “this campaign is 24/7, 365 days a year. We are taking action to reduce the immediate threats, to create better conditions in which we will be able to win the wars, when they happen.”

Eshel said that Tel Aviv was trying “to keep [our] efforts beneath the level at which war breaks out,” but added, “... if there is no alternative – maybe it will.”

The Israeli attack was carried out after prior consultation with the Obama administration in Washington, which, like Tel Aviv, has maintained a guilty silence over the air strikes.

Indeed, the only official US response came in the form of a statement by the White House deputy national security advisor, Ben Rhodes, who issued a warning to Syria that it should not “further destabilize the region by transferring weaponry to Hezbollah.”

Israel’s carrying out a so-called “preventive” military action, i.e., unprovoked aggression, against a sovereign territory was clearly not seen by the US administration as “destabilizing.” This was just the latest in a long line of such criminal actions, carried out by Washington’s ally, including last October’s attack on an alleged weapons factory in Sudan and endless violence against the Palestinian populations in the occupied territories of the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

The Israeli air strikes were condemned by the Russian government, which called them “unprovoked attacks on targets on the territory of a sovereign country, which blatantly violates the UN Charter and is unacceptable, no matter the motives to justify it.”

Iran, Syria’s closest regional ally, warned that the “Zionist regime’s attack on the outskirts of Damascus will have



grave consequences for Tel Aviv.” Previously Tehran had warned that it would treat an attack on Syria as an act of aggression against its own territory.

In Lebanon, President Michel Suleiman denounced the Israeli attack as “flagrant aggression” and accused Israel of “exploiting the developments in Syria to carry out its aggressive policies, indifferent to all the humanitarian and international treaties.”

Debka.com, an Israeli military intelligence web site with close ties to the Israeli secret services, reported that the strike on Syria had “touched off high military alerts across the region,” includ-

ing on the part of a Russian fleet of 18 warships in the eastern Mediterranean, the Lebanese and Jordanian armies and US forces based at the Incerlik air base in Turkey, as well as US special operations troops deployed in Jordan.

The US-backed Israeli attack on Syria is only the beginning of what threatens to explode into a far wider war, including against Iran, dragging the entire region into a bloodbath and endangering the lives of millions. **CT**

*Bill Van Auken is editor of the World Socialist Web Site – <http://wsws.org> – where this article was originally posted*

In Lebanon, President Michel Suleiman denounced the Israeli attack as “flagrant aggression”



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# John Brennan versus a 16-year-old boy

Since when is the slaughter of innocent children ethical, wise and in compliance with international war?, asks **Medea Benjamin**

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**With the push of a button by a pilot at a US base thousands of miles away, both boys were instantly vaporized – only a few chunks of flesh remained**  
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In October 2011, 16-year-old Tariq Aziz attended a gathering in Islamabad where he was taught how to use a video camera so he could document the drones that were constantly circling over his Pakistani village, terrorizing and killing his family and neighbors. Two days later, when Aziz was driving with his 12-year-old cousin to a village near his home in Waziristan to pick up his aunt, his car was struck by a Hellfire missile. With the push of a button by a pilot at a US base thousands of miles away, both boys were instantly vaporized – only a few chunks of flesh remained.

Afterwards, the US government refused to acknowledge the boys' deaths or explain why they were targeted. Why should they? This is a covert program where no one is held accountable for their actions.

The main architect of this drone policy that has killed hundreds, if not thousands, of innocents, including 176 children in Pakistan alone, is President Obama's counterterrorism chief and his pick for the next director of the CIA: John Brennan.

On my recent trip to Pakistan, I met with people whose loved ones had been blown to bits by drone attacks, people who have been maimed for life, young victims with no hope for the future and aching for revenge. For all of them, there has been no apology, no compensation, not even an acknowledgement of their losses. Nothing.

That's why when John Brennan spoke at the Woodrow Wilson International Center in Washington DC last April and described our policies as ethical, wise and in compliance with international law, I felt compelled to stand up and speak out on behalf of Tariq Aziz and so many others. As they dragged me out of the room, my parting words were: "I love the rule of law and I love my country. You are making us less safe by killing so many innocent people. Shame on you, John Brennan."

Rather than expressing remorse for any civilian deaths, John Brennan made the extraordinary statement in 2011 that during the preceding year, there hadn't been a single collateral death "because of the exceptional proficiency, precision of the capabilities we've been able to develop." Brennan later adjusted his statement somewhat, saying, "Fortunately, for more than a year, due to our discretion and precision, the US government has not found credible evidence of collateral deaths resulting from US counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan or Iraq." We later learned why Brennan's count was so low: the administration had come up with a semantic solution of simply counting all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants.

The UK-based Bureau of Investigative Journalism has documented over 350 drones strikes in Pakistan that have killed 2,600-

3,400 people since 2004. Drone strikes in Yemen have been on the rise, with at least 42 strikes carried out in 2012, including one just hours after President Obama's reelection. The first strike in 2013 took place just four days into the new year.

A May 29, 2011 *New York Times* exposé showed John Brennan as President Obama's top advisor in formulating a "kill list" for drone strikes. The people Brennan recommends for the hit list are given no chance to surrender, and certainly no chance to be tried in a court of law. The kind of intelligence Brennan uses to put people on drone hit lists is the same kind of intelligence that put people in Guantanamo. Remember how the American public was assured that the prisoners locked up in Guantanamo were the "worst of the worst," only to find out that hundreds were innocent people who had been sold to the US military by bounty hunters?

In addition to kill lists, Brennan pushed for the CIA to have the authority to kill with even greater ease using "signature strikes," also known as "crowd killing," which are strikes based solely on suspicious behavior.

When President Obama announced his nomination of John Brennan, he talked about Brennan's integrity and commitment to the values that define us as Americans. He said Brennan has worked to "embed our efforts in a strong legal framework" and that he "understands we are a nation of laws."

A nation of laws? Really? Going around the world killing anyone we want, whenever we want, based on secret information? Just think of the precedent John Brennan is setting for a world of lawlessness and chaos, now that 76 countries have drones – mostly surveillance drones but many in the process of weaponizing them. Why shouldn't China declare an ethnic Uighur activist living in New York City as an "enemy combatant" and send a missile into Manhattan, or Russia launch a drone attack against a Chechen living in London? Or why shouldn't a relative of a drone victim retaliate against

us here at home? It's not so far-fetched. In 2011, 26-year-old Rezwan Ferdaus, a Massachusetts-based graduate with a degree in physics, was recently sentenced to 17 years in prison for plotting to attack the Pentagon and US Capitol with small drones filled with explosives.

In his search for a new CIA chief, Obama said he looked at who is going to do the best job in securing America. Yet the blowback from Brennan's drone attacks is creating enemies far faster than we can kill them. Three out of four Pakistanis now see the US as their enemy – that's about 133 million people, which certainly can't be good for US security. When Pakistani Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar was asked the source of US enmity, she had a one word answer: drones.

In Yemen, escalating US drones strikes are radicalizing the local population and stirring increasing sympathy for al-Qaeda-linked militants. Since the January 4, 2013 attack in Yemen, militants in the tribal areas have gained more recruits and supporters in their war against the Yemeni government and its key backer, the United States. According to Abduh Rahman Berman, executive director of a Yemeni National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms, the drone war is failing. "If the Americans kill 10, al-Qaeda will recruit 100," he said.

Around the world, the drone program constructed by John Brennan has become a provocative symbol of American hubris, showing contempt for national sovereignty and innocent lives.

If Obama thinks John Brennan is a good choice to head the CIA and secure America, he should contemplate the tragic deaths of victims like 16-year-old Tariq Aziz, and think again. **CT**

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**Medea Benjamin** (*medea@globalexchange.org*), cofounder of *Global Exchange* and *CODEPINK: Women for Peace*, is the author of *"Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control"*

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**In his search for a new CIA chief, Obama said he looked at who is going to do the best job in securing America. Yet the blowback from Brennan's drone attacks is creating enemies far faster than we can kill them**  
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# Invasion of the body snatchers

**John W. Whitehead** finds the increasing use of unwarranted cavity searches on innocent people to be a disturbing sign of an emerging police state

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**During the second strip search, presumably in an effort to ferret out drugs, a female officer “forcibly removed” a tampon from Tarantino’s body. No contraband or anything illegal was found**  
.....

*“The Fourth Amendment was designed to stand between us and arbitrary governmental authority. For all practical purposes, that shield has been shattered, leaving our liberty and personal integrity subject to the whim of every cop on the beat, trooper on the highway and jail official. The framers would be appalled.” – Herman Schwartz, The Nation*

If you want a recipe for disaster, take police officers hyped up on their own authority and the power of the badge, throw in a few court rulings suggesting that security takes precedence over individual rights, set it against a backdrop of endless wars and militarized law enforcement, and then add to the mix a populace distracted by entertainment, out of touch with the workings of their government, and more inclined to let a few sorry souls suffer injustice than to challenge the status quo.

The resulting concoction, I can promise you, will be a messy, noxious stew unfit for consumption, miserable to digest and with after-effects that will leave you reeling and clutching your stomach in dismay. Such is the nature of life in the emerging police state that is America today, where roadside police stops have devolved into government-sanctioned exercises in humiliation and degradation with a complete disregard for privacy and human dignity.

Consider, for example, what happened to 38-year-old Angel Dobbs and her 24-year-old niece, Ashley, who were pulled over by a Texas state trooper on July 13, 2012, allegedly for flicking cigarette butts out of the car window. First, the trooper berated the women for littering on the highway. Then, insisting that he smelled marijuana, he proceeded to interrogate them and search the car. Despite the fact that both women denied smoking or possessing any marijuana, the police officer then called in a female trooper, who carried out a roadside cavity search, sticking her fingers into the older woman’s anus and vagina, then performing the same procedure on the younger woman, wearing the same pair of gloves. No marijuana was found.

Leila Tarantino was allegedly subjected to two roadside strip searches in plain view of passing traffic during a routine traffic stop, while her two children – ages 1 and 4 – waited inside her car. During the second strip search, presumably in an effort to ferret out drugs, a female officer “forcibly removed” a tampon from Tarantino’s body. No contraband or anything illegal was found.

Meanwhile, four Milwaukee police officers have been charged with carrying out rectal searches of suspects on the street and in police district stations over the course of several years. One of the officers is accused of conducting searches of men’s anal and

scrotal areas, often inserting his fingers into their rectums and leaving some of his victims with bleeding rectums. Half-way across the country, the city of Oakland, California, has agreed to pay \$4.6 million to 39 men who had their pants pulled down by police on city streets between 2002 and 2009.

And then there's the increasingly popular practice of doing blood draws at DUI checkpoints, where drivers who refuse a breathalyzer test find themselves subjected to forcible blood extractions to test for alcohol levels. Police in Tangipahoa Parish, Louisiana, actually had a registered nurse and an assistant district attorney on hand "to help streamline the 'blood draw' warrants and collect blood samples from suspected impaired drivers" at one exercise in holiday drunk driving enforcement. A similar case, *Missouri v. McNeely*, which deals with a driver who failed a sobriety test, then refused a breathalyzer test and was subjected to a warrantless blood draw, is currently before the US Supreme Court.

Of course, the issue being debated in *McNeely* is not so much whether the government can forcibly take your blood but whether it can do so without a warrant. As important as the Fourth Amendment's warrant requirement may be, it's scant comfort in the face of a societal acceptance of roadside stops where blood is being drawn and cavity searches are being carried out.

No matter which way the Supreme Court rules in *Missouri v. McNeely*, it will do little to rein in this runaway police state of ours. Indeed, as we have seen repeatedly, by the time a case arrives before the US Supreme Court, it's almost too late for any real change to take place, especially when it's a matter of government abuse. More often than not, during the course of however many years it takes for a case to make its way through the courts, the particular violations being challenged have already been accepted by the citizenry as part of the government's *modus operandi*.

Such was the case with *Florence v. Bd. of*

*Chosen Freeholders of County of Burlington*, which attempted to challenge the practice of forcible strip searches by government officials, namely jail wardens. Albert Florence, an African-American man in his mid-thirties, was on his way to Sunday dinner in 2005 when his then-pregnant wife, who was driving, was pulled over by a New Jersey State Police trooper. Asked to show his ID, Florence soon found himself handcuffed, erroneously arrested for failing to pay a traffic fine, and forced to submit to two egregious strip and visual body-cavity searches at two different county jails. After spending six days in jail, Florence was finally able to prove his innocence. Outraged, Florence sued the jail officials who had needlessly degraded his bodily integrity.

It took seven years for Florence's case to make it to the Supreme Court, and a year later, in April 2012, the Court handed down a 5-4 ruling which struck a blow to any long-standing protections against blanket strip searches, declaring that any person who is arrested and processed at a jail house, regardless of the severity of his or her offense (i.e., they can be guilty of nothing more than a minor traffic offense), can be subjected to a strip search by police or jail officials without reasonable suspicion that the arrestee is carrying a weapon or contraband.

However, all the while Florence was making its way through the courts, law enforcement officials were playing fast and loose with the Fourth Amendment's prohibition on searches and seizures, especially as it relates to violations of bodily integrity and roadside strip searches. Examples of minor infractions which have resulted in strip searches include: individuals arrested for driving with a noisy muffler, driving with an inoperable headlight, failing to use a turn signal, riding a bicycle without an audible bell, making an improper left turn, engaging in an antiwar demonstration (the individual searched was a nun, a Sister of Divine Providence for 50 years). Police have also carried out strip searches for passing a bad

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**Asked to show his ID, Florence soon found himself handcuffed, erroneously arrested for failing to pay a traffic fine, and forced to submit to two egregious strip and visual body-cavity searches at two different county jails**  
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## LAW AND DISORDER

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**This brings us to the present moment where we find ourselves hapless, helpless passengers in a runaway car hurtling down the road toward a police state**  
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cheque, dog leash violations, filing a false police report, failing to produce a driver's license after making an illegal left turn, having outstanding parking tickets, and public intoxication. A failure to pay child support could also result in a strip search.

This brings us to the present moment where we find ourselves hapless, helpless passengers in a runaway car hurtling down the road toward a police state, and the only hope of salvation rests with the Supreme Court, which is little hope at all when you consider that the Court has, in recent years alone, given a green light to all manner of police abuses, including the tasing of a pregnant woman for failing to sign a speeding ticket.

It must be remembered that the Fourth Amendment to the US Constitution was intended to protect the citizenry from being subjected to "unreasonable searches and

seizures" by government agents. While the literal purpose of the amendment is to protect our property and our bodies from unwarranted government intrusion, the moral intention behind it is to protect our human dignity.

Unfortunately, the rights supposedly guaranteed by the Fourth Amendment have been steadily eroded over the past few decades. Court rulings justifying invasive strip searches as well as Americans' continued deference to the dictates of achieving total security have left us literally stranded on the side of the road, grasping for dignity. **CT**

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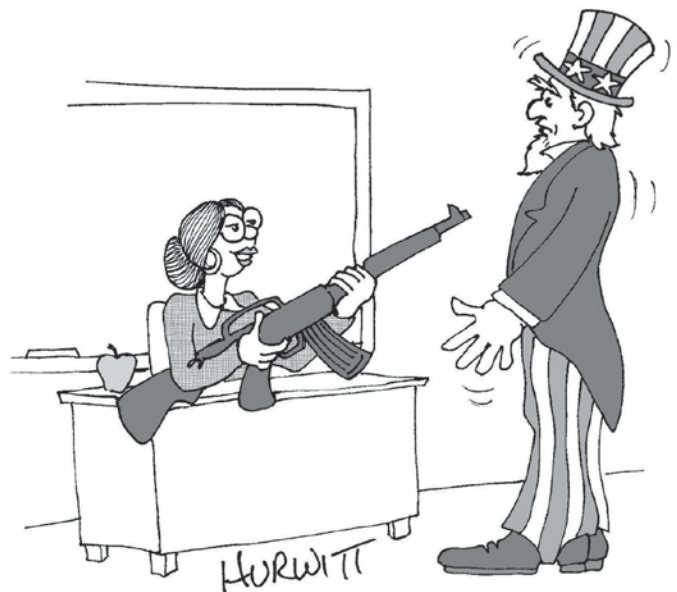
## HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt

**"The NRA says we all have to take responsibility for protecting ourselves now and that includes teachers."**



**"Well then, what's this I heard about cuts to Public Employee Benefits?"**



# Welcome to the Shammies

**John Pilger** announces the media awards that recognise truly unsung talent

**T**here are awards for everyone. There are the Logies, the Commies, the Tonys, the Theas, the Millies (“They cried with pride”) and now the Shammies.

The Shammies celebrate the finest sham media. “Competition for the 2013 Gold Shammy,” said the panel of judges, “has been cutthroat.”

The Shammies are not for the tabloid lower orders. Rupert Murdoch has been honoured enough. Shammies distinguish respectable journalism that guards the limits of what the best and brightest like to call the “national conversation”.

The Shammy judges were especially impressed by a spirited campaign to rehabilitate Tony Blair.

The winner will receive the coveted Jeremy Paxman Hoodwink Prize, in honour of the famous BBC broadcaster who says he was “hoodwinked” over Iraq – regardless of the multiple opportunities he had to challenge Blair and expose the truth and carnage of the illegal invasion.

Short-listed for Hoodwink is Michael White, the *Guardian*’s political editor, whose lament for Blair’s “wasted talent” is distinguished by his defence of Blair as the victim of a “very unholy alliance between a familiar chorus of America-bashers and Blair baiters]”. (I am included).

On 19 December, another contender,

White’s colleague, Jane Martinson, was granted a “rare” interview with Cherie Blair in her “stately private office” with its “gorgeous views over Hyde Park” and “imposing mahogany furniture”.

In such splendour does Mrs Blair (she prefers her married name for its “profile”) run her “foundation for women” in Africa, India and the Middle East. Her political collusion in her husband’s career and support for adventures that destroyed the lives of countless women was not mentioned. A PR triumph and odds-on for a Shammy.

Also nominated: the brains behind the *Guardian*’s front page of 8 November: “The best is yet to come”, dominated by a half-page picture of the happy-huggy-drone Obama family. And who could fail to appreciate the assurance from the BBC’s Mark Mardell that, in personally selecting people to murder with his drones, “the care taken by the president is significant”?

## Warrior President

Matt Frei, formerly of the BBC now of Channel 4 News, drew commendation for his reporting of Obama as a “warrior president” and Hugo Chavez as a “chubby-faced strongman”. A study by the University of the West of England found that, of the 304 BBC reports on Venezuela published in a decade, only three mentioned the Chavez govern-

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**who could fail to appreciate the assurance from the BBC’s Mark Mardell that, in personally selecting people to murder with his drones, “the care taken by the president is significant”?**  
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ment’s extraordinary record in promoting human rights and reducing poverty.

In the Gold Shammy category, the judges were struck by the outstanding work of the *Guardian*’s Decca Aitkenhead. “Everywhere we went, before my eyes people fell in love with him ... no one seemed to be immune.” This was her memorable encounter with Peter Mandelson in 2009. She described his “effortless allure ... the intensity of his theatre is electrifying to behold ... His skin is dewey, as if fresh from a spa facial, and his grooming so flawless he looks almost hyper-real, the cuff links and tie delicately co-ordinated, with their detail inversely echoed in his socks ... His whole body seems weirdly untroubled by the passage of time ...”

Aitkenhead had previously “profiled” Alistair Darling, the Chancellor who presided over the worst financial collapse in memory. Greeted as “old friends” by Darling and his “gregarious” wife Maggie “who cooks and makes tea and supper while Darling lights the fire”, Aitkenhead effused over “a highly effective minister ...he seems almost too straightforward, even high-minded, for the low cunning of political warfare.”

The judges were asked to compare and contrast such moments of journalistic ecstasy with the same writer’s profile of Julian Assange on 7 December. Assange answered her questions methodically, providing her with a lot of information about the state’s abuse of technology and mass surveillance. “There is no debate that Assange knows more about this subject than almost anyone alive,” she wrote. No matter. Rather than someone who had exposed more state criminality than any journalist, he was described as “someone convalescing after a breakdown”: a mentally ill figure she likened to “Miss Havisham”.

Unlike the alluring, electrifying, twice disgraced Mandelson, and the high-minded, disastrous Chancellor, Assange had a “messianic grandiosity”. No evidence was offered. The Gold Shammy was within her grasp.

Then, on Christmas Eve, the BBC News magazine published an article marking the 40th anniversary of the 1972 Christmas bombing of Hanoi. The bombing, wrote Rebecca Kesby, “was President Richard Nixon’s attempt to hasten the end of the Vietnam war, as the growing strength of the Viet Cong caused heavy casualties among US ground troops”.

In fact, Nixon promised “an honourable end to the war” four years earlier. His 1972 Christmas bombing of Hanoi in the north was as much concerned with peace as Hitler’s bombing of Poland: a cynical, vengeful act of barbarism that changed nothing in the stalled Paris talks. Kesby cites Henry Kissinger’s absurd claim that the North Vietnamese “were on their knees”. Far from hastening “the end of the Vietnam war”, America’s savagery ensured the war went on for another two and a half years, during which more Vietnamese were killed than during the previous decade.

Kesby claimed that previous US targets had been “fuel depots and munitions stores”. On my wall is a photograph I took of a hamlet in the north obliterated by F-105 and Phantom fighters flying at 200 feet in order to pick off “soft targets” – human beings. In the town of Hongai, I stood in the debris of churches, hospitals, schools. A new type of “dart bomb” was used; the darts were made from a plastic that did not show in X-rays, and the victims, mostly children, suffered until they died. Filmed by Malcolm Aird and James Cameron, a news report on this type of terror bombing was suppressed by the BBC.

Today our memory of all of this is sanitised. America and its allies, using even more diabolical weapons, continue to “hasten to the end of war”. Such has been the BBC’s unerring theme since Vietnam. The Gold Shammy is richly deserved. **CT**

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*John Pilger’s documentaries have won academy awards in both the UK and the US. His website is <http://johnpilger.com>*

# Zero Dark Thirty: Selling extra-judicial killings

Deepa Kumar analyses a movie that glorifies the use of torture

The film *Zero Dark Thirty* has sparked debate on its justification of torture, its misuse of facts, and its pro-CIA agenda. The main focus of the debate so far has been on whether torture was necessary to track Osama bin Laden and whether the film is pro or anti torture.

Criticism of the film has come from the highest levels of the political establishment. In a letter to the CIA, Diane Feinstein, Karl Levin and John McCain, members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, fault the film for showing that the CIA obtained through torture the key lead that helped track down Osama bin Laden. The letter further blasts former CIA leaders for spreading such falsehoods in public statements.

Film director Kathryn Bigelow and screenwriter Mark Boal, who worked with the CIA in the making of this film, likely did not expect such push back since they seem to have got a green light from the White House.

In the face of these attacks, some have risen to the film makers' defense such as Mark Bowden, the author of *The Finish: The Killing of Osama bin Laden*. Writing in the *Atlantic*, he argues that the film is not pro-torture because the first scene shows that torture could not stop an attack in Saudi Arabia, instead it was cleverness and

cunning that produced results.

Far more commentators, however, in a range of mainstream media from the *New York Times*, to CNN and the *Daily Beast*, have stated that the film lied about torture. Taking their lead from Feinstein et al numerous voices have condemned the film and insisted that bin Laden's whereabouts where obtained through means other than torture.

It's hard to say who is correct. The CIA clearly has an interest in promoting its version in order to win public support for its clandestine activities. The Democrats have an interest in distancing themselves from torture so as to separate themselves from the worst of the Bush era policies.

While much of the air is being sucked up by this debate, scant attention has been paid to the larger, and in my view, more significant message of this film: that extra judicial killing is good. The film teaches us that brown men can and should be targeted and killed with impunity, in violation of international law, and that we should trust the CIA to act with all due diligence.

At a time when the key strategy in the "war on terror" has shifted from conventional warfare to extra judicial killing, here comes a film that normalizes and justifies this strategy. The faux controversy around this film will no doubt increase its box office success, but don't expect mainstream

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debate on extra judicial killing. On this, there is bipartisan consent. Therefore the real scandal behind this Oscar nominated film – its shameless propaganda for extra judicial murder – will remain largely hidden.

### Rebranding the Killing Machine

Zero Dark Thirty has very clear cut “good guys” and “bad guys.” The CIA characters, in particular Maya and Dan, are the heroes and brown men, be they Arab or South Asian, are the villains.

The first brown man we encounter, Omar, is brutally tortured by Dan as Maya the protagonist (played by Jessica Chastain) watches with discomfort and anxiety. We soon learn, however, that Omar and his brethren wanted “to kill all Americans” thereby dispelling our doubts, justifying torture, and establishing his villainy.

In an interesting reversal (first established by the TV show 24) torture, a characteristic normally associated with villains, is now associated with heroes. This shift is acceptable because all the brown men tortured in the film are guilty and therefore worthy of such treatment. Maya soon learns to overcome her hesitation as she becomes a willing participant in the use of torture. In the process, audiences are invited to advance with her from discomfort to acceptance.

A clear “us” versus “them” mentality is established where “they” are portrayed as murderous villains while “we” do what we need to in order to keep the world safe. One scene in particular captures “their” irrational rage against all Americans. This is the scene when Maya is attacked by a barrage of machine gun fire as she exits a safe house in her car. We are then told that her identity as a CIA agent is not public and that in fact all Americans are the targets of such murderous rage and brutal attacks in Pakistan.

Pakistan, the country in which the ma-

jority of the film is set, is presented as a hell hole. In one the early scenes, Maya as a CIA freshman new to the area, is asked by a colleague what she thinks of Pakistan. She replies: “it’s kind of fucked up.”

Other than being the target of bombing attacks in her car and at a hotel, a part of what seems to make Pakistan “fucked up” is Islam. In one scene she is disturbed late at night by the Muslim call to prayer sounding loud enough that it wakes her from her sleep.

Disgusted by this, she grunts “oh God” and rolls back to sleep. Maya also uses the term “mullah crackadollah” to express her contempt for Muslim religious leaders (I have never heard this term before and hope that I transcribed it correctly. I certainly do not wish to waste another \$14 to watch the film again, and will wait till the film is out on DVD to confirm this term).

What does not need re-viewing to confirm is the routine and constant use of the term “Paks” to refer to Pakistani people, a term that is similar to other racist epithets like “gooks” and “japs.” The film rests on the wholesale demonization of the Pakistani people. If we doubt that the “Paks” are a devious lot that can’t be trusted, the film has a scene where Maya’s colleague and friend is ambushed and blown to bits by a suicide bomber whom she expected to interrogate.

Even ordinary men standing by the road or at markets are suspicious characters who whip out cell phones to inform on and plot against the CIA. It is no wonder then that when Pakistanis organize a protest outside the US embassy we see them with contempt and through the eyes of Maya, who is standing inside the embassy, and whose point of view we are asked to identify with.

For a film maker of Bigelow’s talent it is shocking to see such unambiguous “good guys” and “bad guys.” The only way to be brown and not to be a villain in her narrative is to be unflinchingly loyal to the



Americans, as the translator working for the CIA is. The “good Muslim” does not question, he simply acts to pave the way for American interests.

Against the backdrop of this racist dehumanization of brown men, Maya and her colleagues routinely use the word “kill” without it seeming odd or out of place. After Maya has come to terms with the anguish of losing her friend in the suicide attack she states: “I’m going to smoke everybody involved in this operation and then I’m going to kill Osama bin Laden.” When talking about a doctor who might be useful in getting to bin Laden, she says if he “doesn’t give up the big man” then “we kill him.”

At the start of the film Maya refuses a disguise when she re-enters the cell in which Omar is being held. She asks Dan if the man will ever get out and thereby reveal her identity to which he replies “never,” suggesting that Omar will either be held indefinitely or killed.

A top CIA official blasting a group of agents for not making more progress in the hunt for bin Laden sums up the role of the CIA as a killing machine in the following manner, he says “do your fucking jobs and bring me people to kill.” By this point in the film, the demonization of brown men is so complete that this statement is neither surprising nor extraordinary.

It is a clever and strategic choice that the resolution of film’s narrative arc is the execution of Osama bin Laden. After all, who could possibly object to the murder of this heinous person other than the “do good” lawyers who are chastised in the film for providing legal representation for terrorists.

Here then is the key message of the film: the law, due process, and the idea of presenting evidence before a jury, should be dispensed with in favor of extra judicial killings. Further, such killings can take place without public oversight. The film not only uses the moral unambiguity of

assassinating bin Laden to sell us on the rightness and righteousness of extra judicial killing, it also takes pains to show that this can be done in secret because of the checks and balances involved before a targeted assassination is carried out.

Maya is seen battling a male dominated bureaucracy that constantly pushes her to provide evidence before it can order the strike.

We feel her frustration at this process and we identify with her when she says that she is 100% sure that bin Laden is where she says he is. Yet, a system of checks and balances that involves scrupulous CIA heads, and a president who is “smart” and wants the facts, means that due diligence will not be compromised even when we know we are right.

This, in my view, is the key propaganda accomplishment of the film: the selling of secret extra judicial killing at a time when this has been designated the key strategy in the “war on terror” for the upcoming decade.

### The Disposition Matrix

As I have argued in my book *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire*, the Obama administration has drawn the conclusion, after the failed interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, that conventional warfare should be ditched in favor of drone strikes, black operations, and other such methods of extra judicial killing.

The *New York Times* expose on Obama’s “kill list,” revealed that this strategy is one presided over by the president himself. John Brennan, his top counterterrorism advisor, is one of its key authors and architects.

Brennan’s nomination to head the CIA is a clear indication that this strategy will not only continue but that the spy agency will more openly become a paramilitary force that carries out assassinations through drone attacks and other means,

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**We live in an Orwellian world: the government has sought and won the power to indefinitely detain and to kill US citizens, all wrapped in cloud of secrecy, and to lie to us without any legal constraints**  
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with little or no public oversight.

Greg Miller's piece in the *Washington Post* reveals that the Obama administration has been working on a "blueprint for pursuing terrorists" based on the creation of database known as the "disposition matrix."

The matrix developed by the National Counterterrorism Center brings together the separate but overlapping kill lists from the CIA and the Joint Operations Special Command into a master grid and allocates resources for "disposition." The resources that will be used to "dispose" those on the list include capture operations, extradition, and drone strikes.

Miller notes that Brennan has played a key role in this process of "codify[ing] the administration's approach to generating capture/kill lists." Based on extensive interviews with top Obama administration officials Miller states that such extra judicial killing is "likely to be extended at least another decade." Brennan's nomination to the CIA directorship no doubt will ensure such a result.

In short, at the exact point that a strategic shift has been made in the war on terror from conventional warfare to targeted killing, there comes a film that justifies this practice and asks us to trust the CIA with such incredible power.

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**Remaking the Cia brand**

No doubt the film had to remake the CIA brand dispelling other competing Hollywood images of the institution as a clandestine and shady outfit. The reality, however, is that unlike the film's morally upright characters Brennan is a liar and an unabashed torture advocate (except for waterboarding).

As Glenn Greenwald notes, Brennan has "spouted complete though highly influential falsehoods to the world in the immediate aftermath of the Osama bin Laden killing, including claiming that bin Laden "en-

gaged in a firefight" with Navy SEALs and had "used his wife as a human shield".

Zero Dark Thirty, nominated for the "best picture of year" Oscar award, is a harbinger of things to come. The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) signed into law by Obama last month includes an amendment, passed in the House last May, that legalizes the dissemination of propaganda to US citizens.

Journalist Naomi Klein argues that the propaganda "amendment legalizes something that has been illegal for decades: the direct funding of pro-government or pro-military messaging in media, without disclosure, aimed at American citizens."

We can therefore expect not only more such films, but also more misinformation on our TV screens, in our newspapers, on our radio stations and in social media websites. What used to be an informal arrangement whereby the State Department and the Pentagon manipulated the media has now been codified into law. Be ready to be propagandized to all the time, everywhere.

We live in an Orwellian world: the government has sought and won the power to indefinitely detain and to kill US citizens, all wrapped in cloud of secrecy, and to lie to us without any legal constraints.

The NDAA allows for indefinite detention, and a judge ruled that the Obama administration need not provide legal justification for extra judicial killings based on US law thereby granting carte blanche authority to the president to kill whoever he pleases with no legal or public oversight.

Such a system requires an equally powerful system of propaganda to convince the citizenry that they need not be alarmed, they need not speak out, they need not think critically, in fact they need not even participate in the deliberative process except to pull a lever every couple of years in an elaborate charade of democracy. We are being asked, quite literally, to amuse ourselves to death.

**CT**

# Death of a 'hero'

David Cromwell discusses a general, his media adulation and the forgotten victims of the first Gulf war

One measure of a society's honesty is what it says about its political and military leaders when they die. Are the deceased leader's perceived virtues exalted, while any blemishes are air-brushed out of the picture? Recent media coverage following the death of General Norman "Stormin'" Schwarzkopf, the Allied military commander during the Persian Gulf War in 1991, is a case in point.

A glowing tribute to the general appeared in the *Independent* by Rupert Cornwell, the paper's longstanding safe pair of hands on US politics. Cornwell revved up the rhetoric:

'Not since the Second World War and its immediate aftermath, and Generals named Eisenhower, Patton and MacArthur, was there a US military hero like Norman Schwarzkopf. He had brains, self-confidence and swagger by the truckload. He gave quotes to die for. Most important of all, he was a winner.'

Cornwell quickly reached top gear:

'The first Gulf war, in which Schwarzkopf commanded the 670,000-strong US-led coalition force that swept Saddam Hussein's army from Kuwait in 1991 in a ground war lasting 100 hours, restored to the American military the self-belief, reputation and prestige that had been lost in the disaster of Vietnam a generation earlier. And for the first time in almost half a century a general had caught America's national imagination.'

An obituary in the *Daily Telegraph* contin-

ued the theme, noting of the 1991 Gulf War:

'It had been utterly one-sided. Schwarzkopf had expected between 10,000 and 20,000 casualties and was, by his own admission, profoundly surprised that only a few hundred Allied soldiers were killed in the campaign. When he made his victory speech he described the toll as "miraculous"'

There was no mention of the not so 'miraculous' Iraq death toll (which we'll come to below). But that's par for the course.

Schwarzkopf's autobiography, noted the *Telegraph*, was titled *It Doesn't Take A Hero*. But he was a sensitive hero, as the *Times* took pains to point out: 'He served in Vietnam, and came back a far more thoughtful soldier.' And: 'Not only had he endured the political anxieties of the Vietnam War but had also travelled widely and lived in the Middle East as a boy. Schwarzkopf was the first to perceive that his military plans must not upset the rulers of Saudi Arabia, from where the attack on Iraq was to be launched, the British, French or any other national member of the coalition, otherwise it would quickly begin to fall apart. ('General H. Norman Schwarzkopf; Commander of coalition forces during the First Gulf War who was noted for his professionalism and his tactical and political awareness', Obituary, the *Times*, December 29, 2012).

The *Los Angeles Times* stitched together a whole series of propaganda gems to maintain the mythology of the US as the good guys.

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**If all this glorification of a military commander had happened in the North Korean or the Soviet-era press, it would have rightly elicited scorn and ridicule amongst commentators here**  
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Readers were told that ‘burly “Stormin’ Norman” came to define the nation’s renewed sense of military pride.’

The paper gave pride of place to warm words from former President George Bush Sr., as did much of the rest of the corporate media. Schwarzkopf, he said, was ‘a true American patriot and one of the great military leaders of his generation.’ The newspaper noted that Schwarzkopf saw the Vietnam War as a ‘cesspool’ in which ‘military commanders were more interested in promoting their careers than in winning the war.’ The implication was that if only the US had had more burly heroes in Vietnam, the US might have won that war!

President Obama was not to be outdone in the gushing praise-storm. ‘We’ve lost an American original’, the White House said in a statement. ‘Gen. Schwarzkopf stood tall for the country and Army he loved. Our prayers are with the Schwarzkopf family, who tonight can know that his legacy will endure in a nation that is more secure because of his patriotic service.’

The *Guardian* also fondly remembered the great man – ‘I’d like to think I’m a caring human being’- and provided a hagiographic gallery of heroic Schwarzkopf images on its website.

If all this glorification of a military commander had happened in the North Korean or the Soviet-era press, lavishly praising an ‘original’ who’d given years of ‘patriotic service’ in wars abroad, it would have rightly elicited scorn and ridicule amongst commentators here.

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**Destroying Iraq’s Life Support Systems**

The US-led attack ‘to drive Saddam from Kuwait’ in the Gulf War began on January 16, 1991. French diplomat Eric Rouleau later observed that Iraqis: ‘had difficulty comprehending the Allied rationale for using air power to systematically destroy or cripple Iraqi infrastructure and industry: electric power stations (92 percent of installed capacity de-

stroyed), refineries (80 percent of production capacity), petrochemical complexes, telecommunications centers (including 135 telephone networks), bridges (more than 100), roads, highways, railroads, hundreds of locomotives and boxcars full of goods, radio and television broadcasting stations, cement plants, and factories producing aluminum, textiles, electric cables, and medical supplies.’ (Eric Rouleau, ‘The View From France: America’s Unyielding Policy toward Iraq’, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 1, January/February 1995).

Noam Chomsky noted that the massive assault on civilian infrastructure was ‘a form of biological warfare, having little relation to driving Iraq from Kuwait – rather, designed for long-term US political ends.’ This was not so much war, ‘but state terrorism, on a colossal scale.’ (Noam Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy*, Vintage, 1992, p. 410).

Former US Attorney-General Ramsay Clark said that: ‘US planes flew more than 109,000 sorties, raining 88,000 tons of bombs, the equivalent of seven Hiroshimas [...] Iraq lost between 125,000 and 150,000 soldiers. The US has said it lost 148 in combat, and of those, 37 were caused by friendly fire [...] US planes pounded troops in the Kuwaiti theater of operations and southern Iraq with carpet-bombing, fuel-air explosives, and other illegal weaponry.’ Napalm bombs and cluster bombs were unleashed. (Ramsey Clark, ‘The Fire This Time: US War Crimes in the Gulf’, *Thunder’s Mouth*, 1992).

Media reporting underpinned and amplified the military script that the Allied attack would rely on ‘surgical’ strikes and ‘smart’ bombs against ‘Saddam’s war machine’. John Pilger exposed the propaganda carried in the British press: ‘“GO GET HIM BOYS,” said the London *Daily Star* on the day war broke out. The London *Daily Mirror* juxtaposed pictures of a soldier and an airman beneath the banner headline, “THE HEROES,” with a scowling Saddam Hussein, headlined “THE VILLAIN.” [...] anything short of resolute military action was, like the Munich Agreement in 1938, the work of the “spineless appeasers” (said

the London Sun) and “the give-sanctions-a-chance-brigade” (*Daily Express*). (John Pilger, *Hidden Agendas*, Vintage, 1998, p. 44).

Pilger added: ‘ “The world watched in awe,” reported the *Daily Mirror*, “as Stormin’ Norman played his “home video” – revealing how allied planes are using Star Wars technology to destroy vital Iraqi targets. Just like Luke Skywalker maneuvering his fighter into the heart of Darth Vader’s space complex, the US pilots zeroed into the very heart of Saddam Hussein’s Baghdad.” (Ibid., p. 45).

BBC News presented a suitably sober version of the same propaganda: “The BBC’s David Dimbleby spoke urgently about the “surgical” effect of the new bombs, which were known by the name “smart,” as if to endow them with human intelligence. As Greg Philo and Greg McLaughlin wrote in their review of the reporting of the war, the assumption that the “surgical” weapons ensured low civilian casualties freed journalists from their humanitarian “dilemma.”” (Ibid., p. 45).

Philo and McLaughlin noted: ‘Like two sports commentators, David Dimbleby and the BBC defence correspondent, David Shukman, were almost rapt with enthusiasm. [...] They called for freeze-frames and replays and they highlighted “the action” on screen with computer “light-pens.” “This is the promised hi-tech war,” said Shukman. “Defence contractors for some time have been trying to convince everybody that hi-tech weapons can work.... Now, by isolating [the target], they are able to destroy [it]...without causing casualties among the civilian population around.”’ (Quoted, Ibid., p. 45).

But as Ramsay Clark noted after the Gulf War:

‘The surgical strike myth was a cynical way to conceal the truth. The bombing was a deadly, calculated, and deeply immoral strategy to bring Iraq to its knees by destroying the essential facilities and support systems of the entire society. . . . The overall plan was described [by *Washington Post* reporter Barton Gellman] after interviews with several of the war’s top planners and extensive research

into how targets were determined [...]: “Many of the targets were chosen only secondarily to contribute to the military defeat of [Iraq]. . . . Military planners hoped the bombing would amplify the economic and psychological impact of international sanctions on Iraqi society. . . . They deliberately did great harm to Iraq’s ability to support itself as an industrial society. . . .” Compounded by [United Nations] sanctions [maintained especially at the behest of Washington and London], the damage to life-support systems in Iraq killed more after the war than direct attacks did during the war. . .’ (Clark, op. cit.).

Eric Hoskins, a Canadian doctor and coordinator of a Harvard study team on Iraq, reported that the allied bombardment:

‘effectively terminated everything vital to human survival in Iraq - electricity, water, sewage systems, agriculture, industry and health care...Food warehouses, hospitals and markets were bombed. Power stations were repeatedly attacked until electricity supplies were at only 4 percent of prewar levels.’ Hoskins’ team asked themselves ‘if these children are not the most suffering child population on earth.’ (Quoted, Mark Curtis, *The Ambiguities Of Power: British Foreign Policy Since 1945*, Zed Books, 1995, pp.189-90).

The major international relief agencies reported that 1.8 million people had been made homeless, and Iraq’s electricity, water, sewage, communications, health, agriculture and industrial infrastructure had been ‘substantially destroyed’, producing ‘conditions for famine and epidemics.’ The Clark Commission concluded that the US-led assault violated the Geneva Convention of 1949 which expressly prohibits attacks on ‘objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas...crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works,’ as well as ‘dams, dykes and electrical generating stations,’ without which there will be ‘consequent severe losses among the civilian population.’ (Pilger, op. cit., p. 53).

A UN team visiting Iraq immediately after

.....  
**“The bombing was a deadly, calculated, and deeply immoral strategy to bring Iraq to its knees by destroying the essential facilities and support systems of the entire society”**  
 .....



.....  
“Schwarzkopf did provide figures to Congress, indicating that at least 100,000 Iraqi soldiers had been killed. He offered no estimate of civilian deaths”  
.....

the Gulf War summarised:

‘the recent conflict has wrought near-apocalyptic results upon the infrastructure.... Most means of modern life support have been destroyed or rendered tenuous...’ (Quoted, Howard Zinn, ‘A People’s History of the United States’, Perennial, 1999, p. 599).

.....  
**The Flesh And Blood Of Collateral Damage**  
.....

As for the war dead, Pilger observed that:

‘General Schwarzkopf’s policy was that Iraqi dead were not to be counted. One of his senior officers boasted, “This is the first war in modern times where every screwdriver, every nail is accounted for.” As for human beings, he added, “I don’t think anybody is going to be able to come up with an accurate count for the Iraqi dead.” In fact, Schwarzkopf did provide figures to Congress, indicating that at least 100,000 Iraqi soldiers had been killed. He offered no estimate of civilian deaths.’ (Pilger, op. cit., p. 51).

Indeed when Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was asked about the number of Iraqis killed, he said: ‘It’s really not a number I’m terribly interested in.’

Among the number that didn’t ‘terribly interest’ Powell, or presumably Schwarzkopf, were the 400 people, possibly many more, who were incinerated in the Amariyah civilian bomb shelter in Baghdad when two bombs landed on it in the early morning hours of February 13, 1991. Many, perhaps most, of the dead were women and children.

Ramsay Clark recounts that:

‘Neighborhood residents heard screams as people tried to get out of the shelter. They screamed for four minutes. Then the second bomb hit, killing almost everybody. The screaming ceased. The US public saw sanitized, heavily edited footage of the bombed shelter. But the Columbia Journalism Review reported in its May/June 1991 issue that much more graphic images were shown on news reports in Jordan and Baghdad [...]. The Review obtained the footage via unedited C.N.N. feeds and Baghdad’s WTN., and described it

as follows: “This reporter viewed the unedited Baghdad feeds [...]. They showed scenes of incredible carnage. Nearly all the bodies were charred into blackness; in some cases the heat had been so great that entire limbs were burned off. Among the corpses were those of at least six babies and ten children, most of them so severely burned that their gender could not be determined. Rescue workers collapsed in grief.” (Clark, op. cit.).

In 1995, Maggie O’ Kane had a moving piece in the *Guardian* about Sergeant Joe Queen from Bryson City, North Carolina. He had seen much of the war from inside a US armoured bulldozer:

‘His job was to bury the Iraqis alive in their trenches and then cover over the trenches real smooth so the rest of the Big Red One, as the First Armoured Mechanised Brigade is called, could come nice and easy behind him.

‘Joe Queen doesn’t know how many Iraqi troops he buried alive on the front line. But five years later, at his military base in Georgia, he remembers well how it worked:

“‘The sand was so soft that once the blade hits the sand it just caves in right on the sides, so we never did go back and forth. So you are travelling at five, six, seven miles an hour just moving along the trench . . . You don’t see him. You’re up there in the half hatch and you know what you got to do. You did it so much you could close your eyes and do it ... I don’t think they had any idea because the look on their faces as we came through the berm was just a look of shock.” [...] Military sources in Baghdad and Washington put the total number of Iraqis buried alive during the war as between one and two thousand.

“‘While I was retreating, I saw some of the soldiers trying to surrender, but they were buried. There were two kinds of bulldozers, real ones, actual ones, and also they had tanks and they put something like a bulldozer blade in front of them. Some of the soldiers were walking towards the troops holding their arms up to surrender and the tanks moved in and killed them. They dug a hole in the ground and then they buried the soldiers and

levelled it' (Maggie O'Kane, 'Bloodless Words Bloody War' [the original title as given in the Lexis-Nexis database], *Guardian*, December 16, 1995).

In December 2012, on the death of the war 'hero' General Schwarzkopf, the *Guardian* presumably felt it prudent not to refer back to its own journalist's powerful reporting from 1995. If not prudence, then perhaps amnesia.

Patrick Sloyan of the US publication *Newsday* had also written about the mass slaughter of Iraqi soldiers in trenches:

'The US Army division that broke through Saddam Hussein's defensive frontline used plows mounted on tanks and combat earth-movers to bury thousands of Iraqi soldiers – some still alive and firing their weapons – in more than 70 miles of trenches, according to US Army officials... The unprecedented tactic has been hidden from public view... Not a single American was killed during the attack that made an Iraqi body count impossible...

'Bradley Fighting Vehicles and Vulcan armored carriers straddled the trench lines and fired into the Iraqi soldiers as the tanks covered them with mounds of sand. "I came through right after the lead company," [Col. Anthony] Moreno said. "What you saw was a bunch of buried trenches with peoples' arms and things sticking out of them. . . ." [General Norman] Schwarzkopf's staff has privately estimated that, from air and ground attacks, between 50,000 and 75,000 Iraqis were killed in their trenches. . . . Only one Iraqi tank round was fired at the attackers, Moreno said.' (Patrick Sloyan, 'Buried Alive: US Tanks Used Plows To Kill Thousands In Gulf War Trenches', *Newsday*, September 12, 1991).

As President George Bush, Sr. proudly proclaimed after the Gulf War: 'The specter of Vietnam has been buried forever in the desert sands of the Arabian peninsula.'

A horribly appropriate turn of phrase in light of the mass desert-sand burial of live soldiers.

Many of the soldiers were conscripts from the Kurdish and Shia communities so cruelly persecuted by Saddam. These were the same

people called upon by George Bush Sr., Prime Minister John Major and General Schwarzkopf to 'take heart' and 'rise up in revolt'. (Pilger, op. cit., pp. 50-51). As well as Iraqi soldiers, the death toll for Iraqi civilians was truly horrific. Pilger notes that: 'Shortly before Christmas 1991, the Medical Educational Trust in London published a comprehensive study of casualties. Up to a quarter of a million men, women and children were killed or died as a direct result of the American-led attack on Iraq. This confirmed American and French intelligence estimates of "in excess of 200,000 civilian deaths."' (Ibid., pp. 52-53).

Using the Lexis-Nexis news database, we searched all UK press reports and obituaries about General Schwarzkopf and we could not find a single mention of the live burial of Iraqi soldiers by bulldozers. Or the deaths of several hundred civilians in the Amariyah shelter. Or the total death toll of Iraqis.

But these are matters we are trained not to be 'terribly interested' in. Instead, we are encouraged to focus on the positives of the Gulf War. As Zbigniew Brzezinski, former National Security Adviser for Jimmy Carter, gloated afterwards: 'The benefits are undeniably impressive. First, a blatant act of aggression was rebuffed and punished.... Second, US military power is henceforth likely to be taken more seriously... Third, the Middle East and Persian Gulf region is now clearly an American sphere of preponderance.' (Zinn, op. cit., p. 599).

Very little of the sickening reality on the ground – all the incinerated men, women and children of the Amariyah shelter, the tens of thousands of sand-suffocated and slaughtered soldiers, the destruction of Iraq's infrastructure, and the hidden agendas of Western power - somehow made it into the news reports and obituaries about that 'burly hero', General Norman "Stormin'" Schwarzkopf. That would be too difficult, too painful, too honest.

**CT**

*David Cromwell is co-editor of the British media watchdog Medialens at <http://medialens.org>*

.....  
**Very little of the sickening reality – all the incinerated men, women and children of the Amariyah shelter, the tens of thousands of sand-suffocated and slaughtered soldiers, the destruction of Iraq's infrastructure - made it into the news reports and obituaries about that 'burly hero'**  
 .....

# ‘Once tenured, I could take more chances’

In this excerpt from *Meme Wars*, Julie Mattkaei tells of her efforts to introduce a radical perspective to economics into her university courses

.....  
I pointed out that supply and demand curves only determine prices in perfectly competitive markets ... which don't exist  
.....

Wellesley hired me in 1978 as the college's first and only radical economist. I was hired in response to student pressure: While doing their junior year studies abroad, students had been exposed to theories other than mainstream American neoclassical economics and they wanted these views represented at school. The department posted a job for someone to teach what they called "competing paradigms of economics." I was a PhD candidate in economics at Yale, where I studied with David Levine (Yale's one Marxist economist ... he didn't get tenure). I applied and was hired.

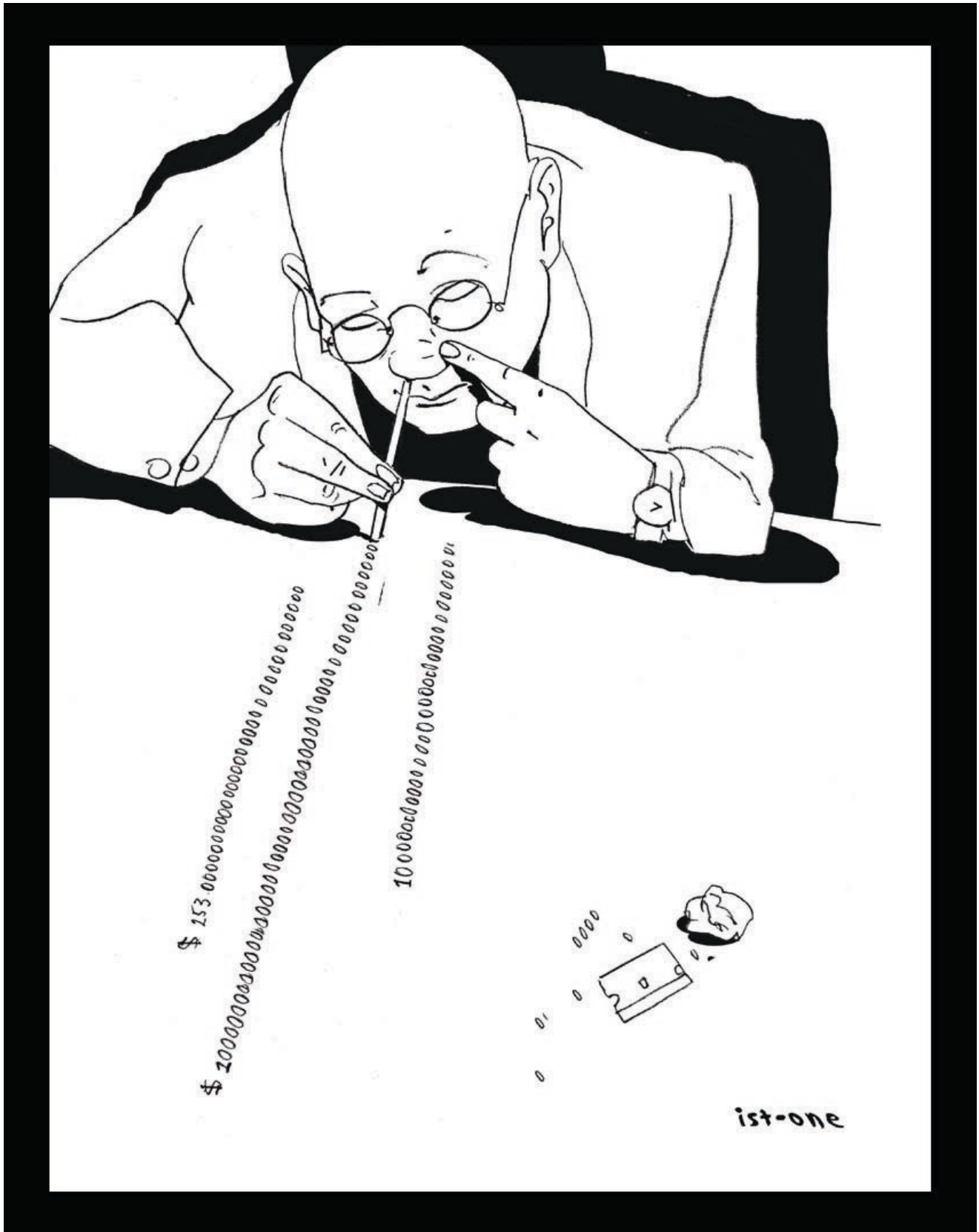
All Wellesley economics faculty were required to teach two of the required "core" courses. I was assigned to introductory and intermediate microeconomics and given the mainstream textbook, but I refused to teach mainstream economics straight. Instead, I presented the material in the textbook, critiqued it and taught the outlines of the alternative, radical view. I remember feeling that by criticizing the economics bible I was engaging in a deeply subversive activity. I used to imagine that a huge arm would reach into the classroom, pick me up and carry me off. Luckily nothing of the sort happened. Instead, based on my popularity with students and the success of my first book, *An Economic History of Women in America*, I received a permanent, tenured



position.

Once tenured, I could relax a bit and take more risks with my teaching. I began to realize that my critiques of mainstream economic theory and advanced capitalist economy seemed to be backfiring. From the very first time I presented the supply and demand framework to my intro econ students, for example, I pointed out that supply and demand curves only determine prices in perfectly competitive markets ... which don't exist. I considered this key to my students' education, especially since mainstream economists apply the framework inappropriately so often, yet many of them continued to forget this key fact on their tests.

Teaching about market equilibrium, a situation in which there is neither shortage nor surplus of a product, presented another particularly bothersome failure. I always

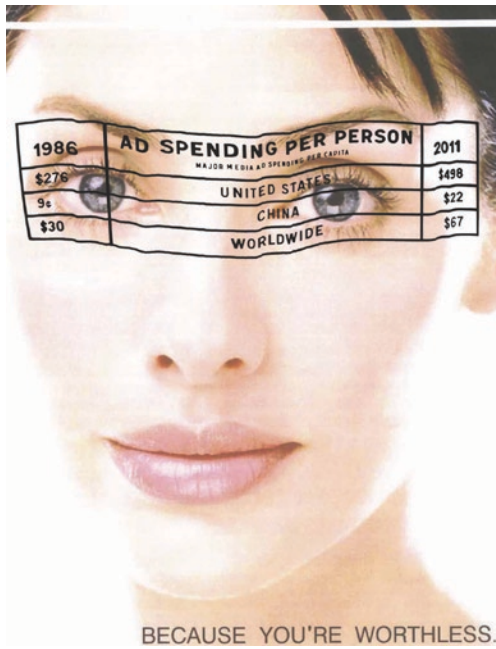




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BOOK EXCERPT

All artwork used  
in this book review  
are taken from  
**Meme Wars:  
The Creative  
Destruction of  
Neoclassical  
Economics**



.....  
**It seemed the  
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.....

took care to explore the fact that equilibrium – where the supply and demand curves cross, and quantity supplied equals quantity demanded – does not mean that everyone is happy, or that basic needs are met. Many people could, in fact, be starving because they are too poor to be able to “demand” what they need. Even when no lines or shortages exist, people can still be dying from starvation. Despite my lessons, many of my students were unable to point out the falseness of the statement “everybody is happy in equilibrium” on their tests. They left my class accepting the free market/neoliberal line that government policies which intervene in markets – such as minimum wages or rent control – are inherently bad because they prevent markets from getting to equilibrium. I wanted to pull my hair out.

It seemed the more I critiqued mainstream economics, the more I strengthened its hold on most of my students.

At first I tried to heighten my criticism of mainstream economic theory, and to begin it earlier in the course. I would criticize supply and demand curves and marginal utility curves before I even drew them. As I taught the theories, I would interlace critique in virtually every sentence. This approach, however, frustrated my students: Why was I teaching it to them if it was wrong? How could they learn the material if I didn't present it to them completely before attacking it? While some of my students – usually those who were radical themselves – understood and appreciated my criticism, many of them found it confusing, alienating and discouraging.





A similar problem emerged with my radical critique of advanced capitalism. My classes on radical economics presented the neo-Marxist view that large corporations dominated the economic landscape: Oppressing workers, brainwashing consumers through advertising to keep them enslaved by the work/spend cycle and manipulating the government to do their bidding through campaign financing and bribes. I juxtaposed this view with that of our mainstream text, which obscured corporate power by focusing on small, helpless firms controlled by sovereign consumers who – when market failures made it necessary – use their votes to get the government to intervene on their behalf. I was amused – and dismayed – to find that many of my students’ exams showed they actually thought I had been

teaching them about two different countries!

Even as I adjusted my teaching to make sure my students understood that these were two views of the US economy, however, I realized another problem. The students who believed in the radical view were also convinced that large corporations were so powerful that nothing could be done about them. Instead of inspiring my students to radical activism, I had taught them to be cynical and resigned about the prevailing economic dysfunction and injustice. If they couldn’t do anything about it, they figured, why not at least get rich by becoming an investment banker?

Then I learned about the spiritual principle of nonreaction. When you react to someone, you are letting him determine your be-

.....  
 The students who believed in the radical view were also convinced that large corporations were so powerful that nothing could be done about them  
 .....

Q: WHO GROWS UP HAPPIER ...



THE SUBURBAN KIDS IN NORTH AMERICA OR THE KIDS IN THE SLUMS OF DHAKA?

.....  
**One wonders why anyone ever believed that a solely profit-motivated corporation, dedicated to serving its owners (the stockholders), would be able to do right by its other stakeholders: Consumers, workers, suppliers, government and the environment**  
.....

havior rather than choosing it yourself. My teaching was largely reactive: By centering on a critique of the text I was continually “reacting” to the book rather than achieving my goal of demolishing mainstream economics – in my students’ heads and in the world. My radical critiques of large corporations were also a reaction, and only emphasized corporate power to such a degree that it made my students feel helpless.

I began to evolve a new way of teaching that focuses less on mainstream economic theory and powerful, profit-motivated corporations. Now we begin the term identifying both pressing economic problems and the global warming crisis. I point out the problems associated with consumers, workers and firms acting in self-interested and materialistic ways. I present, discuss and give examples of the emerging “solidarity economy,” which is based on socially responsible or “high road” economic values, practices and institutions: Ethical consumption, fair trade, socially responsible corporations. This puts materialistic competitive consumerism and traditional profit-moti-

vated corporations on the defensive. From this point of view one wonders why anyone ever believed that a solely profit-motivated corporation, dedicated to serving its owners (the stockholders), would be able to do right by its other stakeholders: Consumers, workers, suppliers, government and the environment.

Or why anyone would imagine that buying more and more material things would bring true fulfillment.

One of my most successful assignments in recent terms was based on the PBS documentary *Affluenza and Me*, which analyzes contemporary consumer culture in the US as an illness. The symptoms of this “affluenza” are overwork, time shortage, debt, breakdown of family relationships, ecological destruction, etc. We also read and discussed an excerpt from P. A. Payutto’s book *Buddhist Economics*, which presents enlightened consumption as building well-being through resistance to advertising and cravings, knowledge of one’s true needs and service to the whole.

I no longer teach the core aspects of



mainstream microeconomics as some superpower theory. I now present microeconomics as a theory that understands some aspects of the economy but misses others. It's a theory whose models can only be used if their limitations are acknowledged, and if they are supplemented by other concepts and understandings. The supply and demand curve framework, for example, can be very helpful in elucidating problems in contemporary labor markets – such as below-subsistence level wages caused by an excess of labor.

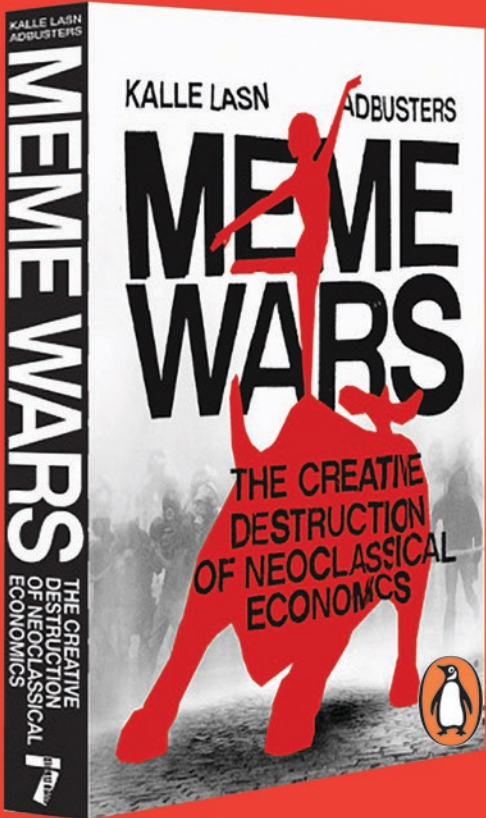
I no longer teach my students about corporate power as an overpowering monolithic force but as something which has to be continually constructed through the collaboration of consumers, workers, managers, government officials and laws. I show them that it is something that needs to be radically reconstructed through socially responsible behavior.

I teach my students how to make their

microeconomic decisions – as consumers, workers, entrepreneurs, parents and citizens – in ways that create well-being for themselves and their loved ones. I teach them how to use their economic power to express and actualize their deepest values – to repudiate the false god of money and the prevailing economic religion of the market. I teach them that enlightened self-interest involves behaving in a socially responsible manner, since we all depend on each other ... and on the whole. We all have to do our part to save both the planet and ourselves – there is plenty that we can do by aligning our economic decisions with our true values. **CT**

*Julie Matthaei is an economics professor at Wellesley College and a cofounder and board member of the US Solidarity Economy Network ([www.ussen.org](http://www.ussen.org)). She coedited "Solidarity Economy: Building Alternatives for People and Planet", available at [www.lulu.com/changemaker](http://www.lulu.com/changemaker)*

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**HEY ALL YOU STUDENTS, OUTLIERS AND WORLD CHANGERS OUT THERE,**

*Meme Wars: The Creative Destruction of Neoclassical Economics* is a textbook for the future of economics – a future that realizes the reality of economics is about people, not curves. Featuring the likes of Herman Daly, Joseph Stiglitz, John Ralston Saul and Steve Keen, and art by Edward Burtynsky, Chris Jordan and Jonathan Barnbrook, *Meme Wars* relays a powerful paradigm shift – away from neoclassical left-cortex logic freaks toward something new.

PUBLISHED BY SEVEN STORIES PRESS IN THE US  
KICKITOVER.ORG

# Fascism, American style

Sherwood Ross on Obama's attempts to keep the world in line by making examples of the few rather than making mincemeat of the many

.....  
**Critics of the Bush and Obama regimes have been, and are, free to speak, write, and demonstrate – even though this last is becoming increasingly hazardous as the Feds militarize the once friendly cop on the beat**  
.....

**P**olite Fascism has come to America. If this concept sounds preposterous to Americans it may sound otherwise to foreigners who are getting the worst of it. The public judges the White House largely by its conduct of domestic affairs, about what it has done for them, and not by its foreign wars, which is where America's fascist brutality is largely exercised and of which the US public knows little. Obama has quieted many Leftist critics by taking actions to appease their needs, such as securing passage of Obamacare. He has satisfied gays, by pledging to treat them as human beings. He has indicated he will not let the Republicans eviscerate Social Security, reassuring the elderly. And he is calling for enactment of gun control legislation, long sought by the Left.

What's more, neither the Pentagon nor the FBI is rounding up large numbers of domestic dissidents and putting them in "detention camps," as Nixon's Attorney General Richard Kleindienst once threatened would be the fate of anti-war demonstrators who tied up traffic in Washington, D.C. Obama's Department of Homeland Security may be a sword hung over the heads of the citizenry but its officers are not smashing store windows and beating Jews on the Hitler model. Suffice it to say the FBI now and then entraps Muslims in dangerous bomb plot "conspiracies," which are alleged plots,

not actions. But it has made no wholesale arrests. The object of Polite Fascism apparently is to keep people in line by making examples of the few rather than mincemeat of the many.

Critics of the Bush and Obama regimes have been, and are, free to speak, write, and demonstrate – even though this last is becoming increasingly hazardous as the Feds militarize the once friendly cop on the beat. Demonstrators these days are in jeopardy of having their First Amendment rights quashed by the promiscuous use of tear gas against them. Overall, though, the Obama regime fits this Webster definition of "fascist": "A totalitarian governmental system led by a dictator and emphasizing an aggressive nationalism, militarism, and often racism." However, when it comes to "emphasizing an aggressive nationalism" and "militarism," Mr. Obama can't deny those terms don't fit him. They do. Even though he masquerades as a moderate, left-of-center liberal, he is the most powerful fascist who has ever lived, the commander-in-chief of the largest war machine ever, and he operates with a reckless brutality that is killing innocent people and inspiring fear over vast areas of the world, literally turning life for millions into a living hell and causing their populations to despise America.

Suffice it to say enactment of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) on

New Year's Eve, 2011, gave Mr. Obama more power than any king. As the American Civil Liberties Union put it: "Although President Obama issued a signing statement saying he had 'serious reservations' about the NDAA's detention provisions, the statement only applies to how his administration would use them, and would not affect how the law is interpreted by subsequent administrations. The provisions – which were negotiated by a small group of members of Congress, in secret, and without proper congressional review – are inconsistent with fundamental American values." The law, in fact, allows the federal authority to arrest and detain any person indefinitely without trial, effectively giving the president the powers of a king and subverting the Constitution.

It is in the application of illegal force abroad that Obama has thus far brazenly identified his fascist-style cruelty and terrorism. By his admitted use of the drone war machine against alleged terrorist suspects he is murdering human beings wholesale and plunging wide communities into perpetual fear of his attacks. If one just enumerates the number of terror strikes, said to exceed 200 in Pakistan alone, (and killing 2,500), Mr. Obama is the foremost terrorist operating on the planet today.

Reports are emanating out of Pakistan, for example, of civilians living under the perpetual threat of the drones, of people being driven insane by the fear that their families will be killed by their dreadful Hellfire missiles, and, when they are, of not even being able to identify them from what remains of their body parts. In these communities, people are afraid to shop, to go to work, drive their cars, and to send their children to school or outdoors to play. They are afraid to go to mosques or gather anywhere for public meetings, which have been repeatedly struck. And they do not rush to the aid of the surviving wounded in need of medical care lest they be stricken in the act by a follow-up drone strike. Their communities have been brazenly converted into war

zones by Mr. Obama, whose self-authorized attacks reportedly have killed more than a hundred children even as he takes care to provide armed guards to protect his own two daughters. And while the president brazenly lies that his attacks are only killing terrorists, in point of fact the follow-up attacks against first responders cannot possibly be confined to terrorists. Killing innocent people without judge or jury who have not been convicted of any crime is murder, pure and simple. These actions surely fit the Webster definition of fascism as it relates to "nationalism" and "militarism."

The only honorable course for dealing with this tyrant is impeachment and trial for murder. His knowing accomplices in the Pentagon, CIA, and the Congress need to be prosecuted with him. Such prosecution might also extend to the officials of Lockheed Martin Corp., of Bethesda, Md., manufacturers in Orlando, Fla., of the Hellfire missile. This war-enabling corporation blandly identifies itself as "a global security and aerospace company" involved in "advanced technology systems, products, and services." Its Board of Directors authorized a first quarter 2013 dividend of \$1.15 per share, suggesting that business is good. Meanwhile, survivors of many cities in Pakistan are mourning the loss of their family members and friends. Survivors must also live with mutilated and incapacitated loved ones, including children maimed for life. They are also mourning the loss of homes, businesses, incomes, education, and sanity swept away by the Hellfire strikes. This is nothing less than the mass torture of large civilian populations, as deplorable as anything experienced by Londoners during the World War Two Nazi blitz, and a very crime against humanity as well. As the UK Guardian newspaper reported last June 21st, the UN rapporteur on extrajudicial killings, Christof Heyns, says the drone killings "challenge the system of international law that has endured since the Second World War."

**CT**

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**Sherwood Ross**  
*is the author of "Gruening of Alaska" (Best Books) and numerous magazine articles and blogs on political subjects*  
 .....



# Where did South Africa's revolution go wrong?

What happened to the bold attempts to create a new and more equal society after the end of apartheid?, asks **Danny Schechter**

.....  
**Politics does not intrude except in my own mind as I reflect on what brought me here 45 years ago, at the height of the State of Emergency to do my bit, on a clandestine anti-apartheid mission**  
.....

I spent the morning staring, staring at the sea, the Indian Ocean actually, and at a flotilla of freighters parked, many at the horizon, waiting for their turn to enter the port of Durban on the east coast of South Africa. The ships seem to defy the chop of the turbulent waters, and appear anchored and steady.

I am at the beachfront, in a small ocean-side clubhouse/restaurant that used to belong only to White surfers in the days when the beach was segregated, Apartheid-style, with unequal slices of sand designated for Whites, Indians and, sometimes, Blacks. There are no African names on the Surf Club's roster of the men – all men – who ran the show here for decades.

Overhead, the loud noise of the wind and the waves is interrupted by two military helicopters probably carrying the South Africa's president Jacob Zulu whose pricey homestead at Nkandla is about 100 kilometers up the beach in the rolling hills of what is now Kwazulu Natal.

I learned later that he spent the day there at a ceremony asking his ancestors to support his bid for re-election.

Like many of the country's elite and leadership, he seems more comfortable flying above the fray and looking down. At the moment, he is distracted by charges that the government spent 250 million rand enhancing security at his private home. His defend-

ers call it his 'compound,' which he did or did not build with personal funds for his four wives with his own funds, a "national key point" that must be defended against any and all threats, domestic, foreign and probably extra-terrestrial.

Otherwise, politics at the beach does not intrude except in my own mind as I reflect on what brought me here 45 years ago, at the height of the State of Emergency to do my bit, on a clandestine anti-apartheid mission. I saw the whole area then as enemy territory, a battleground in a holy war against racism.

Surrounding me now is the new, post apartheid South Africa, a work in progress twenty plus years on. Back in 1967, I was at the beach in Durban with signs telling people where they belonged. Today I am in the Northern suburb of Umhlanga that shot up around a huge mall for all with office parks and ritzy residential towers like the one I am staying in. It is modeled in design after a world famous hotel in Dubai; its four levels of parking look like a BMW/Mercedes dealership.

An economic apartheid replaced the racial one, Northern suburbs here and in Johannesburg became epicenters for concentrated wealth and industry. The center cities have been abandoned to their own devices as the big money and then new money flock to a new homeland-like enclave.

The part time black maid assigned to my rented apartment tells me that she can only get jobs cleaning, and that many young people are dropping out of school because there are so few opportunities for them.

Soon, this area has become a hub of the “festive season,” a time for vacations and downtime. There are rows of spiffy hotels just waiting for the onslaught of sun-hungry holiday-makers. Most are foreign-owned so the profits don’t stay in South Africa but are remitted back to their owners overseas.

This new South Africa looks and feels familiar to Americans like myself. The fast food restaurants are everywhere. And so are the brands and movies that I am supposedly comfortable with. Ten percent of the population prosper in privilege like affluent Californians. Unfortunately, more than 50 percent are still trapped in desperate poverty, often without food, or much hope.

The revolution fought in their name has yet to reach them.

It’s hard not to be disillusioned as I search for the fading fumes of the freedom struggle that has become, like the civil rights movement I was part of in the States, part of the past, a subject found more in museums and classrooms than in the active thoughts of millions of South Africans under the age of 25. Nelson Mandela’s face is now on the currency but his ideals seem distant from many minds.

All I hear is grumbling and contempt for politicians, especially those in the ANC, whose honeymoon is long over. The media seems to have joined the opposition and is brimming with non-stop stories of betrayal, greed, and corruption. They are as hostile as the apartheid media was in the days when the movement was ritually denounced as terrorist and rarely quoted. Today, it is only quoted in stories that make it look bad.

This is not new, say veterans of the ANC including an old friend who was part of the “struggle” in its long years in exile. (I am not naming her or others I quote because I interviewed them for a still unreleased film,

not this essay.)

“Danny we always had that. We had people who were very rich in the movement. A lot of the whites who came into the movement in the 50s had money, were highly educated. There were a few cases, there weren’t as many cases as there are now, but there were cases of corruption. There’s nothing new about all of this. And there were always dissatisfied comrades. And there was always moaning and groaning. We’re not moving fast enough, we’re not moving in the right direction, we’re selling out. Always...”

Back in 1994, on the very day of the country’s first democratic election I sat with ANC leader Joe Slovo, who even then worried and prophetically warning about the dangers of corruption by comrades who feel “the struggle owes them a living.”

I later chatted about this situation with one of South Africa’s top writers, a world famous figure. She was besides herself, expressing a deep sense of personal loss:

“I find it very painful. Very disillusioning. It looks worse every day and every week. And then this terrible massacre going on between the police and workers at the Platinum Mines. So it’s very difficult not to feel discouraged. But I just say, now look, if we got through and rid of apartheid, somehow or another we must be able to get through and get rid of this corruption.”

She then put events in a historical context of conquest and colonialism, a context hardly on the minds of many whites:

“I think that without making any excuse for this, it is partly the legacy, not just of apartheid, but going back to 1652, when the first man from the Dutch East India Company landed on what is now the Cape. That was the beginning of the colonist period, the moment the foot of a white man went on the shore there. And the black population in SA, the indigenous people, have indeed been deprived of 90% of what life should mean for these centuries.

“And so then we had apartheid which was really the epitome of everything that

.....

**It’s hard not to be disillusioned as I search for the fading fumes of the freedom struggle that has become, like the civil rights movement I was part of in the States, part of the past**

.....

.....  
**I feel at times  
like I am at the  
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the flawed system  
that it upholds.  
Or, that there is  
anyone really who  
wants to listen**  
.....

has been done to black people for centuries. I can only think it's in the DNA, if you're black. So there is this push to say, well we had nothing, now we must have everything. At any cost! And that leads to terrible corruption. I'm not excusing it, because the saddest thing for me is that some of our great heroes from the struggle have fallen into this mode of accepting corruption as part of what they were fighting for. And it's the absolute opposite. It's complete denial of everything the struggle meant."

Another writer, a black literary lion who has appeared in some of my films, shares her view:

"It is precisely because of the high moral ground that the ANC is deeply associated with that there is a sense that the ANC, of all organisations, should have known better. And should have better prepared for the hurdles that we're going through now.

"I have an understanding for black economic empowerment. I have an understanding of the attractions of wealth to people who have had a long history of deprivation and suddenly are in power. But always there is another angle to this. That often when people suddenly have a lot of money, there is a history of them not knowing what to do with it. And then, all of it vaporizing, and disappearing within a short space of time.

"That is the danger... I don't think that the ANC, as a party of liberation, can be free from the accountability of having not handled that issue very well."

Oddly, on the literary right, an Afrikaner writer who makes a living coming up with gripping stories that eloquently unmask what he sees as the pretensions and hypocrisy of a struggle he condemns as fraudulent on almost every level, concludes his recent collection of stories that seem driven by fury if not bile, by realizing that he has no more cheap shots to share.

He refers his own bromides as "the same old what-ifs chas(ing) the same old "if only's" around the same old obstacle course

usually working their way toward conclusions so dismaying that I want to shoot myself."

In the end, Rian Malan is hopeful that "the issues that divide us now will seem absurd in retrospect. The good that white men did will be acknowledged; the evil forgotten. The wounds of history will be healed. Would that I could live to see it."

For me, I feel at times like I am at the end of my time here politically. I don't think it's my place to rage and rail against the government and the flawed system that it upholds. Or, that there is anyone really who wants to listen. I have plenty to criticize at home.

I still write and make films now about South Africa in hopes my work is relevant in some way.

I started out with a passion to change my own country and found myself somehow immersed with/supporting/reporting on a movement so many miles away that was hospitably supportive of my desire to be helpful.

I served, as best as I could, over more than four decades. I am not sorry I did.

Great things were accomplished that many of us never expected. Some think it was a miracle; I see it as the product of so many working so hard, and on so many levels. for so long.

Surely, larger than life leaders like Mandela, Sisulu, Tambo and Slovo. Mbeki, and other key 'comrades' played the big role, but in the end, it was the people they inspired that brought down the old system with their blood, sweat and sacrifice.

Many of the people once viewed as the "masses" now want to move on, want to be optimistic but are trapped in structural poverty reinforced by a globally enforced system of neo-liberalism and remote control. The "Washington Consensus" has an unspoken consensus that they must stay where they are.

When they protest - and many do in a growing number of increasingly violent township and labor "incidents," they end

up fighting against the very government they once struggled for.

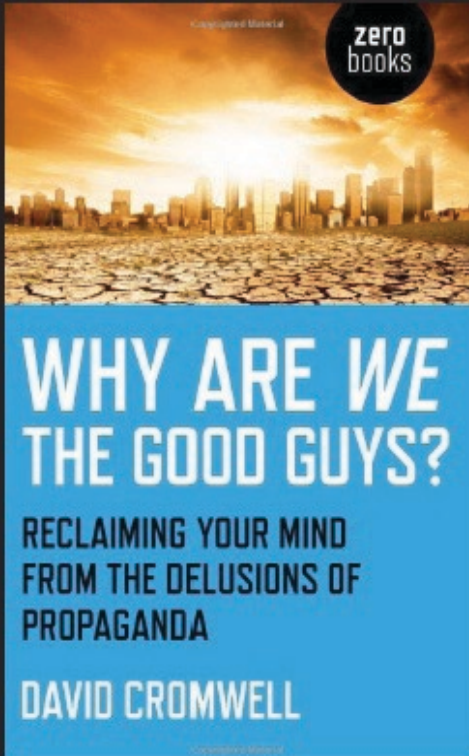
Yes, parts of it came out badly, but look around the world, and name a country and a popular struggle that has achieved so much,

Years ago, after the old government unbanned the ANC, I was, in effect, still banned, forbidden to come back here in the early 90's. I considered it a badge of honor, and I persevered.

And like an old dog, grayer now and slower afoot, I still persevere to say we were right to fight what we fought for, and now, to fight to make it right. **CT**

*News Dissector* Danny Schechter produced the TV series *South Africa Now* and directed 6 films with and about Nelson Mandela, He blogs at [Newsdissector.net](http://Newsdissector.net). Comments to [dissector@mediachannel.org](mailto:dissector@mediachannel.org)

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*"One of the beacons in a politically dark world is the light cast by a few who analyse and reveal how journalism works in the cause of power. David Cromwell has pride of place in this company" – John Pilger*

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# How the media let Israel get away with murder

If the media stopped deferring to military sources, people might begin to question the killing of young Palestinians, says **Charlotte Silver**

.....  
**Mustafa Jarad was aged 21 and a farmer from Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip. He was shot in the forehead by an Israeli sniper on 14 January while working his land**  
.....

Israel spends a lot of time talking about secure borders and how the need for them drives its policies regarding the Palestinians. With few exceptions, the media act as willing promoters of this perversion of reality.

Between 11 and 15 January, four young Palestinians – aged 17 to 22 – were shot dead by Israeli occupation forces. The murders took place in the Gaza Strip and at different points along Israel’s wall in the West Bank. In all instances the Israeli army justified the use of lethal force by invoking its need to protect the integrity of the wall and Israel’s borders.

On 11 January, 22-year-old Anwar Mam-louk was reportedly just outside the Jabaliya refugee camp in Gaza when Israeli soldiers gunned him down.

The next day, Odai al-Darawish, 21, was shot to death at three o’clock in the afternoon while crossing Israel’s wall in the West Bank to get to work in Israel. Initially, Israeli sources claimed the soldiers shot al-Darawish in his legs, in accordance with the “rules of engagement” (“Israeli troops kill Palestinian trying to cross barrier,” the *Chicago Tribune*, 12 January 2013).

But medical sources quickly revealed that he was hit in the back, indicating that he was likely shot while trying to run to safety (“Israeli forces shoot, kill worker south of Hebron,” Ma’an News Agency, 12

January 2013).

Al-Darawish was from the village of Dura, near Hebron, where in September last year a man attempted to immolate himself in a desperate protest of the dire economic conditions Palestinians face in the occupied West Bank (“Palestinian man attempts to set himself on fire in West Bank village of Dura,” *Haaretz*, 17 January 2013).

Mustafa Jarad was aged 21 and a farmer from Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip. He was shot in the forehead by an Israeli sniper on 14 January while working his land. But despite the Israeli gunman’s skillful marksmanship, Jarad was not killed immediately.

Doctors at al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City tried to remove the bullet from his severely injured brain, but Jarad died after surgery (“Mustafa Abu Jarad, murdered in Gaza, by the Israeli army,” International Solidarity Movement, 15 January 2013).

.....  
**Shooting a schoolboy**

On 14 January, Samir Awad, a 17-year-old from Budrus, a West Bank village located near Ramallah, was shot from behind in the head, torso and leg while running away from soldiers.

Samir had just completed his last exam before school break and had joined a group of boys to protest the wall. Samir’s family



has lost five acres of land with 3,000 olive trees due to the construction of Israel's wall; Samir had also been jailed three times for his participation in demonstrations ("Israeli forces shot youth in the back as he ran away, say Palestinians," *Guardian*, 15 January 2013).

English-language reports of these murders have been scant where they exist at all. For example, the press is in disagreement over the circumstances of Anwar Mam-louk's death. Reuters reported that Anwar's brother, Hani, stated that Anwar had been studying outdoors when he was shot ("Israeli forces kill Palestinian along border with Gaza: Hamas," NBC News, 11 January 2013).

The BBC, however, relayed only the Israeli military's version of events and reported that Anwar had entered the "forbidden area" along Gaza's boundary with dozens of other Palestinians ("Gaza: Palestinian farmer killed by Israeli gunfire," 11 January 2013).

.....  
**Shifting the blame**

The *New York Times* took the murder of Samir Awad, the fourth in the spate of Israeli willful killing of unarmed Palestinians, as an opportunity to remark on the "growing unrest" in the West Bank, bizarrely shifting culpability for the deaths onto Palestinians ("Israeli forces kill Palestinian at barrier," 15 January 2013).

It must be noted that when 17-year-old Muhammad al-Salaymeh was slain by a border police officer in Hebron on his birthday in December 2012, the *New York Times* remained silent.

Reading the *New York Times'* coverage of the murder of Palestinians by Israelis is an apt lesson for any aspiring spin-doctor on the language of equivocation.

The paper's reporter Isabel Kershner pivots the focus of Monday's murder in Budrus away from Israel's trigger-happy soldiers operating in a world of endless and un-

questioned impunity and onto Palestinians' "simmering restiveness"; their increased participation in "disturbances" of the "relative stability" that Israel has tried to maintain; and their "dire financial crisis that has prevented the Palestinian Authority ... from paying ... government workers."

Notably there is no explanation provided as to why the PA has not been able to pay its tens of thousands of workers, namely that Israel has stolen the Palestinians' tax and customs duty funds.

This is how the *New York Times* turns the cold-blooded murder of a teenage boy into a deliberately obfuscating story that describes an opaque haze of "tensions" and "growing unrest."

This exonerating cloud of ambiguity is kept afloat by the newspaper's methodical omission of facts: not only the facts of the recent murders of Odai al-Darawish, Muhammad al-Salaymeh and Anwar Mam-louk, but those of the countless incursions, demolitions and violence that Israel perpetrates against Palestinians every week ("Weekly report on Israeli human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territory," Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, 10 January 2013).

These are the kind of facts that, if properly reported by the journal of record, would allow readers to know that it is Israel which is the violator of the terms of the country's own precious "borders." Proper reportage would give stark and unassailable lie to the notion that in order to protect these borders, it must shoot and kill innocent men and boys, or women and girls.

The awful truth of what happened last month lies outside stories in which gunned-down youths are identified by their intentions to trespass, and in which the wall is described as designed to keep out "terrorists." Yet the BBC, the *New York Times*, Reuters and AP all deferred to Israeli military sources to report on the deaths of four young people. The result is that their readers are told

.....  
**Proper reportage would give stark and unassailable lie to the notion that in order to protect these borders, it must shoot and kill innocent men and boys, or women and girls**  
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.....  
The media dutifully joined ranks with the State of Israel, grinding out the useful fiction that implicates these dead young Palestinians as menaces to security  
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that Israeli soldiers followed the proper protocol to protect Israel's sovereignty and borders.

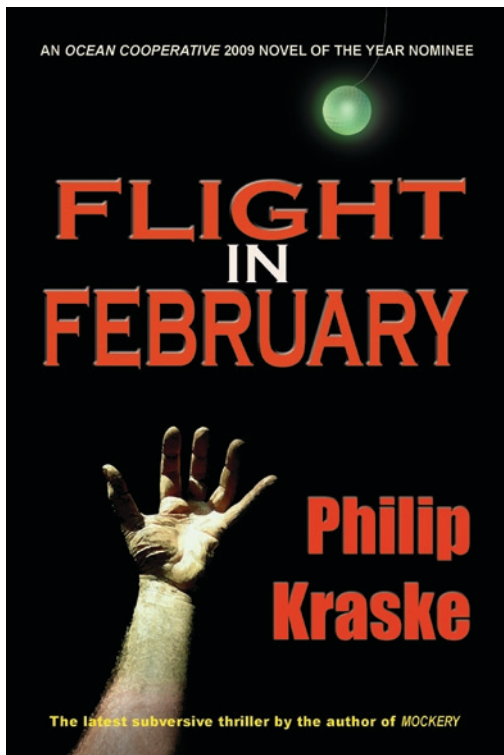
With the notable exception of British newspapers the *Guardian* and *The Independent* (see "Did Israeli troops deliberately provoke boy, only to shoot him in the back?" 16 January 2013), the media dutifully joined ranks with the State of Israel, grinding out the useful fiction that implicates these dead young Palestinians as menaces to the security and stability supposedly maintained by

the chimera of separation.

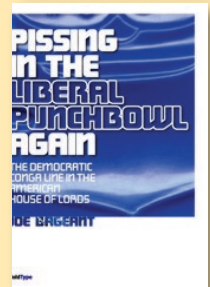
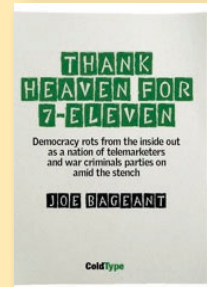
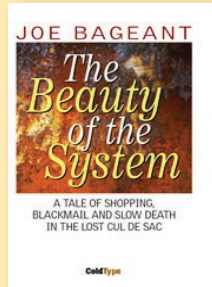
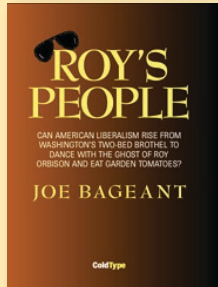
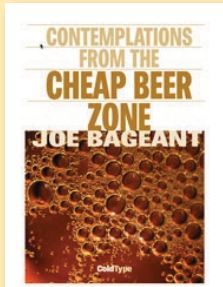
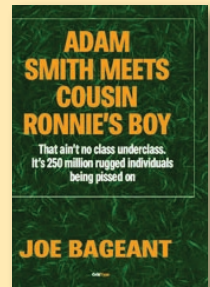
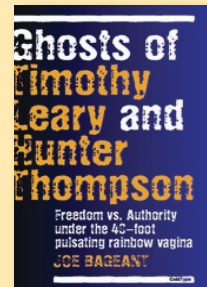
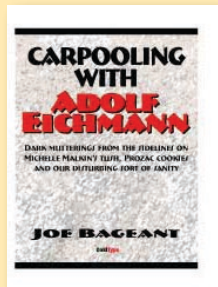
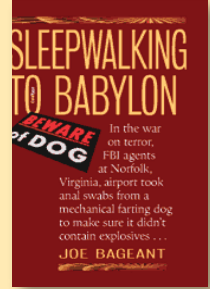
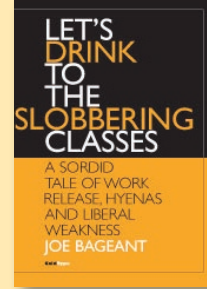
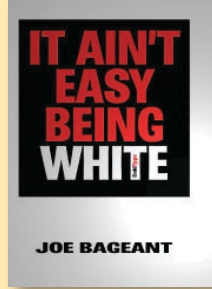
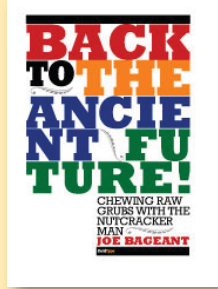
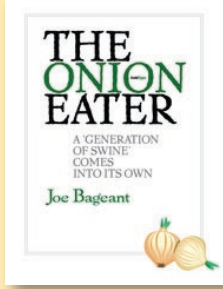
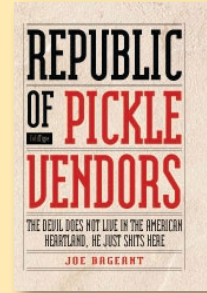
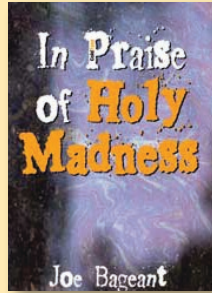
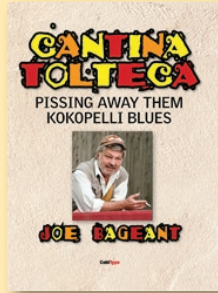
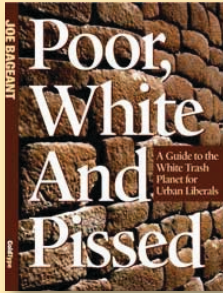
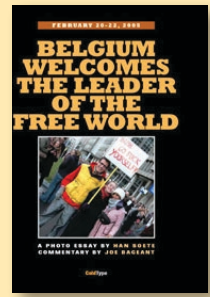
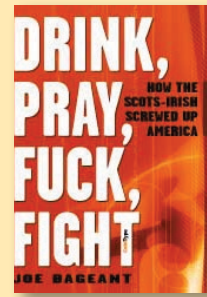
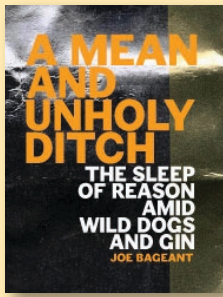
As for borders, it's exceedingly likely that the grief-stricken parents of the slain youths would love to see the existence of any kind of boundary on Israel that might protect their children from the presence of a threatening, violent and usurping entity. **CT**

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*Charlotte Silver* is a journalist based in occupied Palestine and San Francisco. This story originally appeared in the *Electronic Intifada* at <http://electronicintifada.net>

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# Profit is beautiful!

We have a big problem when the media celebrate the notion that profits are more important than people, writes **Jeff Nygaard**

.....  
**Other than the people taking in the profits, is there anyone who would not choose cheap energy and high employment over profitability?**  
.....

**E**duardo Porter is an economics columnist at the *New York Times*, specializing in “business, regulation, trade and international economic relations.” He’s been at the *Times* for quite a while, and sat on the editorial board of that agenda-setting newspaper from 2007 until last year.

On January 16th, Mr Porter decided to write about the privatization of public services, using the example of British Petroleum. British Petroleum, now called BP, was largely state-owned until the 1980s, when the conservative Thatcher government sold off the British government’s shares. Porter’s opinion on that process is made clear in his opening paragraph: “Few corporate sagas capture the virtues and vices of state-owned companies and private enterprise better than the drama of BP’s roller-coaster ride between failure and success.”

“Success” equals profits, as is made clear in the second paragraph, where we are told that BP is considered by “the energy world” to be “the unprofitable duckling” which had been “transformed by privatization under the government of Margaret Thatcher into a highly profitable swan.” The Danish folk tale being referenced here is the story of the “ugly duckling” growing into the beautiful swan. In Porter’s version, we substitute “unprofitable” for “ugly,” and “profitable” for “beautiful.” Get it?

This isn’t necessarily Porter’s opinion, but that of “the energy world.” The question that Porter is addressing, he says, is “What does the private sector do better than government, and what does it do worse?” But the underlying idea that profit is inherently good colors the article, as we can see in this paragraph:

“While in government hands, British Petroleum paid too little attention to profitability, constrained by its need to please elected officials who often cared more about keeping energy cheap and employment high. But in private hands, it may have cared about profits far too much, at the expense of other objectives. ‘BP veered from being a company that made sure nothing blew up to one focusing on cost-cutting at all costs,’ Professor Fisman said.” [That’s Ray Fisman, a professor at Columbia Business School whose book about organizational culture Porter cites in his column.]

That’s a pretty bizarre paragraph, so let’s take it apart a little bit.

.....  
**Profits, or Jobs? Hmmm....**

The first point of this paragraph highlights a conflict between “profitability” on the one hand and, on the other, affordable (“cheap”) energy and jobs. Really, now. Other than the people taking in the profits, is there anyone who would not choose cheap energy and

high employment over profitability? That is, if you could have a state-owned company that breaks even while providing good jobs and boosting the overall economy by keeping energy prices low, wouldn't you come down in favor of that? We are told that choices made by the company will have to please either "elected officials" or "private hands." The "private hands," of course, are not elected, but are simply the hands with money in them.

Speaking of the hands with money in them, Porter doesn't mention who receives the beautiful profits when public functions are privatized. It may surprise you to learn that only about one-half of US households own any stock at all – and that's including retirement accounts and other managed assets. When we break it down by income, another issue emerges: While 91 percent of households in the top 10 percent in terms of income – \$109,000/year or more – hold stocks, fewer than 15 percent of households in the bottom fifth hold any stock at all. And the average value of the stock held by the top 10 percent is more than 30 times the value of that held by the few lower-income households who have any. So we can see that any profits from privatization tend to go to the wealthier sectors of society. By the way, the people who could do something about this – members of the US Congress – are all in the top ten percent of income earners, with salaries of \$174,000 per year. Many are far wealthier than that, but we don't know their total incomes since most of them refuse to reveal those numbers.

A second point made in this paragraph is that there is a tradeoff between higher profits and "things blowing up." Isn't this another no-brainer? It's not hypothetical, actually, as BP has been associated with 8,000 spills, besides the 2010 Gulf disaster, since 1990. (Use your search engine to find out about BP accidents in Texas City – 15 killed – and Prudhoe Bay, Alaska.) I wasn't able to find statistics for BP accidents for the years before it was privatized.

.....  
**Profit: The Primary Incentive?**

Later on in the article, Porter mentions "the debate over the competence of public and private organizations" where we find "a significant difference in how they meet their goals." Then he says that "Profit is one of the most potent incentives known to man – a powerful tool to align managers' interests with corporate goals. But it also has drawbacks. With earnings as the overriding, non-negotiable priority, private enterprise often has little wiggle room to handle the tension between conflicting objectives."

That's another bizarre statement. Profit, he says, is an "incentive" to align something with "corporate goals." But in any company with publicly-traded stock, it's true that "earnings" (the corporate term for "profit") are the "overriding, nonnegotiable priority." That is, profit is and must be the "goal." So, what Porter is saying here is that "profit" is the "incentive" to align managers' "interests" with the "goal" of . . . profit!

"Powerful incentives" other than profit do exist – compassion, honor, empathy, ethics, altruism, solidarity come to mind. Untold numbers of people have already organized themselves into cooperatives, transition communities, worker-owned businesses, and many other economic entities that reject profit as the main organizing principle. So the real "tension" in this equation is the tension between human values like these and the self-serving profit-seeking that is assumed in conventional economics to be the motor that drives us all. (That is, "one of the most potent incentives known to man.")

Porter insists that "There are instances in which privatization can help achieve broad social goals," but the only success story he cites is the case of Argentina, which "privatized many of its municipal water supply systems in the 1990s," after which, says Porter, "investment soared, the network expanded into previously underserved poor

.....  
**"Powerful incentives" other than profit do exist – compassion, honor, empathy, ethics, altruism, solidarity come to mind. Untold numbers of people have already organized themselves into cooperatives, transition communities, worker-owned businesses, and many other economic entities that reject profit as the main organizing principle**  
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## THE MONEY GAME

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**Scientists doing research on life-saving drugs don't need profit to motivate them, after all; they simply want to be allowed to make their contribution to public health**  
.....

areas and the number of children dying of infectious and parasitic diseases tumbled.” For another opinion on this “success” I recommend a look at a Canadian television program from 2004 called “Argentina: A Grand Experiment in Water Privatization That Failed.” <http://www.cbc.ca/fifth/dead-inthewater/argentina.html>.

Let's return to the question that Porter is considering: “What does the private sector do better than government, and what does it do worse?” This question, he says, “has acquired new urgency as governments from Washington to statehouses and city halls around the country consider privatizing everything from Medicare to the management of state parks as a possible solution to their budget woes.”

When Porter says that profit is the “overriding, nonnegotiable priority” of private companies, he's right. A company that fails to please its stockholders by making sufficient profits will cease to exist, regardless of any good intentions on the part of its managers or workers. A company, or organization, that is controlled by the public, on the other hand, can be set up to rely on other incentives, like the ones I mentioned above:

compassion, honor, empathy, ethics, altruism, solidarity. Scientists doing research on life-saving drugs don't need profit to motivate them, after all; they simply want to be allowed to make their contribution to public health. Transit workers don't need profit to motivate them; they want to be a part of an efficient, friendly service network. And so it goes: Actors want to act, autoworkers want to make cars, teachers want to teach. All of us want to do meaningful work, and will gladly do it in exchange for some security and enough income to raise our kids and take care of ourselves.

Great damage is done in articles like this, in which media tacitly accepts – and thus reinforces – the mainstream economic principle that people are motivated by narrow self-interest (“profit”) above all else. Selfishness and greed are, no doubt, “potent incentives,” but they're not the only ones. We're better than that, and our media should strive to remind us that we are. **CT**

.....  
*Jeff Nygaard is a writer and activist in Minneapolis, Minnesota who publishes the free email newsletter Nygaard Notes, at [www.nygaardnotes.org](http://www.nygaardnotes.org)*

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# Eyes like blank discs

David Edwards takes a close look at politics, English language, London's *Guardian* newspaper and an essay by George Orwell

January 21, 'Orwell Day', marked the 63rd anniversary of George Orwell's death, Steven Poole notes in the *Guardian*. To commemorate 110 years since Orwell was born (June 25), BBC radio will broadcast a series about his life while Penguin will publish a new edition of his essay, *Politics and the English Language*. This essay, Poole comments, is Orwell's 'most famous shorter work, and probably the most wildly overrated of any of his writings'.

Why 'wildly overrated'?

'Much of it is the kind of nonsense screed against linguistic pet hates that anyone today might compose in a green-text email to the newspapers.'

The essay's 'assault on political euphemism', it seems, 'is righteous but limited', while its more general attacks 'on what he perceives to be bad style are often outright ridiculous, parading a comically arbitrary collection of intolerances'.

This is strong stuff indeed. Was one of Orwell's most highly-regarded essays really about venting 'linguistic pet hates'? The answer is in the essay. Orwell noted that the writing he admired was generally provided by 'some kind of rebel, expressing his private opinions and not a "party line"'. Orthodoxy, of whatever colour, seems to demand a lifeless, imitative style'.

As for the mainstream productions of his day – the 'pamphlets, leading articles, mani-

festos': 'one almost never finds in them a fresh, vivid, homemade turn of speech. When one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases – bestial, atrocities, iron heel, bloodstained tyranny, free peoples of the world, stand shoulder to shoulder – one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy: a feeling which suddenly becomes stronger at moments when the light catches the speaker's spectacles and turns them into blank discs which seem to have no eyes behind them'.

This typically dramatic and disturbing passage makes clear that Orwell was not focusing on 'linguistic pet hates'. Rather, he was motivated to resist a process of social dehumanisation facilitated by 'imitative' and 'lifeless' communication, by a toxic 'orthodoxy'. He underlined his reasoning: 'I have not here been considering the literary use of language, but merely language as an instrument for expressing and not for concealing or preventing thought.'

If this was a crucial issue in Orwell's time, it is even more so today.

In his book *The Sane Society*, published five years after Orwell's death, Erich Fromm explored the 'curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being' with his analysis of the 'marketing orientation': 'In this orientation, man experiences himself as a thing to be employed successfully on the market.'

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**Was one of Orwell's most highly-regarded essays really about venting 'linguistic pet hates'? The answer is in the essay**  
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**Orwell would have enjoyed the breezy reference to ‘far-off sandy places’ in describing British and American bloodbaths constituting some of the greatest crimes of the modern era**  
.....

He does not experience himself as an active agent, as the bearer of human powers. He is alienated from these powers. His aim is to successfully sell himself on the market.’ (Fromm, *The Sane Society*, Rinehart and Winston, 1955, pp.137-8)

Fromm added: ‘Being employed, he is not an active agent, has no responsibility except the proper performance of the isolated piece of work he is doing... Nothing more is expected of him, or wanted from him. He is part of the equipment hired by capital, and his role and function are determined by this quality of being a piece of equipment.’ (Ibid., pp.175-6)

This, Fromm argued, was symptomatic of the rise of a ‘machine society’, which ‘has been described most imaginatively by Orwell and Aldous Huxley’. (Fromm, *The Revolution Of Hope*, Harper & Row, 1968, p.41)

Orwell and Fromm understood that broader political and ethical concerns were being eliminated from awareness by state-corporate forces persuading people to view themselves as producers and consumers rather than as responsible human beings.

More recently, American physicist Jeff Schmidt, who edited *Physics Today* magazine for 19 years, describes how media professionals are trained in exactly this way to internalise the understanding that they should not ‘question the politics built into their work’:

‘The resulting professional is an obedient thinker, an intellectual property whom employers can trust to experiment, theorise, innovate and create safely within the confines of an assigned ideology. The political and intellectual timidity of today’s most highly educated employees is no accident.’ (Schmidt, *Disciplined Minds*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2000, p.16)

Ironically, Poole’s review of Orwell is itself a textbook example of the kind of alienated response described by Orwell, Fromm and Schmidt.

Whereas Orwell’s essay is the work of an impassioned, outspoken individual opposing ‘the machine society’, Poole’s article is the

work of a corporate professional operating ‘within the confines of an assigned ideology’.

Indicatively, Poole writes that Orwell’s essay ‘is savagely contemptuous of politicians and what they say’. True, but Poole omits to mention that it is also ‘savagely contemptuous’ of ‘pamphlets’ and ‘leading articles’ – that is, of Poole’s own profession. Clearly, it would have been absurd for Orwell to focus solely on the political abuse of language while ignoring mainstream journalism. But as we at Medialens have documented many times, honest analysis of this issue is deeply problematic for any corporate media employee. Imagine Poole agreeing with, or even mentioning, this comment from Orwell’s essay *England Your England*:

‘Is the English press honest or dishonest? At normal times it is deeply dishonest. All the papers that matter live off their advertisements, and the advertisers exercise an indirect censorship over news.’

Poole writes: ‘Media invocations of Orwell’s virtues increased markedly after 9/11, when it seemed to some opportunist intellectuals as though his life and oeuvre prophetically justified the pre-emptive invasion of far-off sandy places.’

Orwell would have enjoyed the breezy reference to ‘far-off sandy places’ in describing British and American bloodbaths constituting some of the greatest crimes of the modern era. He would also have noticed Poole’s reference to ‘pre-emptive invasion’ and his omission of the key adjective ‘illegal’. In reality, of course, there was no question of the West acting to stop an intended attack by Iraq or Afghanistan. Noam Chomsky commented:

‘The [Bush regime’s] strategy asserts the right of the US to undertake “preventive war” at will: Preventive, not pre-emptive. Pre-emptive war might fall within the framework of international law. Thus if bombers had been detected approaching the US from a military base in Grenada, then, under a reasonable interpretation of the UN Charter, a pre-emptive attack destroying the planes and perhaps even the Grenadan base would have

been justifiable.

‘But the justifications for pre-emptive war do not hold for preventive war, particularly as that concept is interpreted by its current enthusiasts: the use of military force to eliminate an imagined or invented threat. Preventive war falls within the category of war crimes.’

Poole is unhappy with this, one of Orwell’s most celebrated passages: ‘In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible. Things like the continuance of British rule in India, the Russian purges and deportations, the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan, can indeed be defended, but only by arguments which are too brutal for most people to face, and which do not square with the professed aims of political parties. Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness... Political language... is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.’

Poole’s problem: ‘What is worrying, however, is that Orwell’s diagnosis of “cloudy vagueness” and “pure wind” might seem to sanction an impatient dismissal. Should we just assume that everything politicians say is hot air? To do so would be to let our guards down... Rather than waving it away as “pure wind”, it is necessary to listen all the more closely to this stuff, because you need to bring the buried argument out into the open in order to defeat it.’

These are really curious grounds for criticising such insightful and courageous comments. Orwell’s essay is precisely an exercise in bringing out the buried arguments in order to defeat them, as he makes clear:

‘One cannot change this all in a moment, but one can at least change one’s own habits, and from time to time one can even, if one jeers loudly enough, send some worn-out and useless phrase – some jackboot, Achilles’ heel, hotbed, melting pot, acid test, veritable inferno, or other lump of verbal refuse – into the dustbin where it belongs.’

Orwell’s concern was not at all with complacently ‘waving... away’ political speech, but with challenging and discrediting language that makes ‘murder respectable’.

**Of The Critical Spirit And The Corporate Professional**

Poole provides his own examples of the modern abuse of language: ‘Political rhetoric now as in Orwell’s day exploits not only euphemism (“austerity”) but dysphemism (“skivers”) and loaded metaphor (“fiscal cliff”)

And: ‘Take the ubiquitous calls today for European countries to do just what will “re-assure the markets”, as though holders of government bonds were trembling, paranoid little flowers who must be psychically coddled at all costs.’

This is a feeble swipe, at best. Are these really the most toxic examples of modern ‘newspeak’? It is hard to imagine how anyone could write an article reviewing Orwell today without mentioning the endless use of the term ‘humanitarian intervention’ as a cover for savage Western realpolitik. Orwell would have found bitter significance in the fact that the destruction of Iraq – with one million dead as a result of the 2003 war – was part of an ‘ethical foreign policy’: old-style imperialism conducted by ‘New Labour’.

Similarly, to read Hans von Sponeck’s analysis of the sanctions regime imposed on Iraq at the cost of half a million infant lives, *A Different Kind Of War* (Berghahn Books, 2006), is to almost see the light catch on the spectacles of the international political system such that it ‘turns them into blank discs which seem to have no eyes behind them’.

A further hard-to-miss classic of Orwellian ‘newspeak’ was the 2011 ‘no-fly zone’ used to enforce Nato’s ‘one-side-may-fight zone’ favouring Nato’s allies as part of the West’s cynical determination to impose regime change on Libya.

And how can we discuss Orwell’s views on thought control without mentioning, for example, that six media corporations closely

Orwell would have found bitter significance in the fact that the destruction of Iraq – with one million dead as a result of the 2003 war – was part of an ‘ethical foreign policy’: old-style imperialism conducted by ‘New Labour’

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**Orwell's real objection is clear: language should be 'an instrument for expressing and not for concealing or preventing thought'**  
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allied to state power now control 90 per cent of what Americans read, watch and hear? The high-tech surveillance of an increasingly digitised world policed by untouchable killer robots fighting 'perpetual war' is also straight out of Orwell's 1984.

By contrast, this mildly amusing episode of Poole's Unspeak web-video series is closer to light comedy than to Orwell's fierce political analysis.

Like so many corporate journalists, Poole writes with a detached, cynical tone. In our media culture, it is cool to mock, but decidedly uncool to become a 'crusader' for a cause in the way of Orwell, who was very nearly killed fighting in the Spanish Civil War. Orwell was passionately engaged in attempts to change the world. He perceived suffering and injustice as his personal responsibility, his work was clearly driven by the intense anguish he felt.

But this is really not what the *Guardian*, or corporate journalism in general, is about. Why? Because journalists are employed professionals, 'part of the equipment hired by capital'. Poole, for example, is paid to write book reviews for his employer, the corporate *Guardian*. And yet he has the gall to suggest that Orwell's 'assault on political euphemism' is 'righteous but limited'.

Schmidt highlights the gulf that separates free-thinking dissidents like Orwell from the average media professional: 'Real critical thinking means uncovering and questioning social, political and moral assumptions; applying and refining a personally developed worldview; and calling for action that advances a personally created agenda. An approach that backs away from any of these three components lacks the critical spirit.'

Apparently oblivious to the compassion that drove Orwell, Poole pours derision on his 'linguistic xenophobia': 'His essay comforts, for example, the kind of Little Englander of the verbals who is suspicious of words from beyond these shores. If you ever feel tempted to say "status quo" or "cul de sac", for instance, Orwell will sneer at you for "pre-

tentious diction.'"

Why? 'Because these phrases are of "foreign" origin.' Poole adds: 'Orwell's eccentric final tip-list includes "Never use a long word where a short one will do" (why ever not?), and "Never use the passive where you can use the active." No good reason is offered or indeed imaginable...'

Again, Orwell's real objection is clear: language should be 'an instrument for expressing and not for concealing or preventing thought'.

Poole reveals much when he writes that Orwell's writing tips are 'are all undone by the last: "Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous." But, the eager student might ask, how is one to tell whether what one has said is barbarous or not? Orwell is silent on the matter. Presumably it ends up being a question of taste.'

Here a cold light really is glinting from the 'blank discs' of modern corporate culture. Fromm again: 'To the degree to which a person conforms he cannot hear the voice of his conscience, much less act upon it. Conscience exists only when man experiences himself as man, not as a thing, as a commodity.' (Fromm, *The Sane Society*, op. cit., p.168)

In our corporate age, questions of conscience make no sense. In the absence of some guiding authority they become a mere 'question of taste'.

Poole concludes his piece: 'Orwell even concedes, at the end of "Politics", that you could follow all his rules and "still write bad English". But then, compiling lists of writing tips is a pleasant work-avoidance strategy for writers, too.'

Is there anything in our modern world that might cause us to be impassioned, outraged, even compelled to act? It seems not.

Shepherding us towards this conclusion, it should hardly need saying, is a key function of our corporate, decidedly unfree press. **CT**

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**David Edwards** is co-editor of *Medialens*, the British media watchdog –  
<http://medialens.org>



# Have our war-lovers learned anything?

Most people learn from their mistakes. But when it comes to international law, the United States is the dumbest of all, writes **William Blum**

Over the past four decades, of all the reasons people over a certain age have given for their becoming radicalized against US foreign policy, the Vietnam War has easily been the one most often cited. And I myself am the best example of this that you could find. I sometimes think that if the war lovers who run the United States had known of this in advance they might have had serious second thoughts about starting that great historical folly and war crime.

At other times, however, I have the thought that our dear war lovers have had 40 years to take this lesson to heart, and during this time what did they do? They did Salvador and Nicaragua, and Angola and Grenada. They did Panama and Yugoslavia, and Afghanistan and Iraq. And in 2012 American President Barack Obama saw fit to declare that the Vietnam War was “one of the most extraordinary stories of bravery and integrity in the annals of military history”.<sup>1</sup>

So, have they learned nothing? When it comes to following international law, is the United States like a failed state? The Somalia of international law? Well, if they were perfectly frank, the war lovers would insist that the purpose of all these interventions, and many others like them, was to keep the atheists out of power – the non-believers in America’s god-given right to rule the world

– or to at least make life as difficult as possible for them. And thus the interventions were successful; nothing to apologize for; even the Vietnam War achieved its purpose of preventing that country from becoming a good development option for Asia, a socialist alternative to the capitalist model; precisely the same reason for Washington’s endless hostility toward Cuba in Latin America; and Cuba has indeed inspired numerous atheists and their alternatives for a better world.

If they were even more honest, the war lovers might quote George Kennan, the legendary State Department strategist, who wrote prophetically during the Cold War: “Were the Soviet Union to sink tomorrow under the waters of the ocean, the American military-industrial establishment would have to go on, substantially unchanged, until some other adversary could be invented. Anything else would be an unacceptable shock to the American economy.”<sup>2</sup>

But after all these years, after decades of American militarism – though not a day passes without some government official or media acolyte expressing his admiration and gratitude for “our brave boys” – cracks in the American edifice can be seen. Some of the war lovers, and their TV groupies would have us believe that they have actually learned something. One of the first was Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in Febru-

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**When it comes to following international law, is the United States like a failed state? The Somalia of international law?**  
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**Goes history offer any example of a highly militaristic power – without extreme coercion – seeing the error of its ways?**  
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ary 2011: “In my opinion, any future defense secretary who advises the president to again send a big American land army into Asia or into the Middle East or Africa should have his head examined.”

And here’s former Secretary of State George Shultz speaking before the prestigious Council of Foreign Relations last month (January 29): “Iraq and Afghanistan cannot be the template for how we go about” dealing with threats of terrorism.

A few days earlier the very establishment and conservative Economist magazine declared: “The best-intentioned foreign intervention is bound to bog its armies down in endless wars fighting invisible enemies to help ungrateful locals.”

However, none of these people are in power. And does history offer any example of a highly militaristic power – without extreme coercion – seeing the error of its ways? One of my readers, who prefers to remain anonymous, wrote to me recently:

“It is my opinion that the German and Japanese people only relinquished their imperial culture and mindset when they were bombed back to the stone age at the end of WWII. Something similar is the only cure for the same pathology that now is embedded into the very social fabric of the USA. The USA is a full-blown pathological society now. There is no other cure. No amount of articles on the Internet pointing out the hypocrisies or war crimes will do it.”

So, while the United States is busy building bases and anti-missile sites in Europe, Asia and Africa, deploying space-based and other hi-tech weapons systems, trying to surround Russia, China, Iran and any other atheist that threatens American world hegemony, and firing drone missiles all over the Middle East I’m busy playing games on the Internet. What can I say? In theory at least, there is another force besides the terrible bombing mentioned above that can stop the American empire, and that is the American people. I’ll continue trying to educate them. Too bad I won’t live long enough to see the

glorious transformation.

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**Afghanistan: Manufacturing the American Legacy**

“A decade ago, playing music could get you maimed in Afghanistan. Today, a youth ensemble is traveling to the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall. And it even includes girls.”

Thus reads the sub-heading of a Washington Post story of February 3 about an orchestra of 48 Afghan young people who attended music school in a country where the Taliban have tried to silence both women and music. “The Afghan Youth Orchestra is more than a development project,” the article informs us. For “the school’s many international donors, it serves as a powerful symbol of successful reconstruction in Afghanistan. And by performing in Washington and New York, the seats of U.S. political and financial power, the orchestra hopes to showcase what a decade of investment has achieved.”

“The U.S. State Department, the World Bank, the Carnegie Corporation and Afghanistan’s Ministry of Education have invested heavily in the tour. The U.S. Embassy in Kabul awarded nearly \$350,000 footing most of the estimated \$500,000 cost. For international donors, the tour symbolizes progress in a country crippled by war.”

The State Department’s director of communications and public diplomacy for Afghanistan and Pakistan declares: “We wanted Americans to understand the difference their tax dollars have made in building a better future for young people, which translates into reduced threats from extremists in the region.”

“There’s a lot of weariness in the U.S. and cynicism about Afghanistan,” said William Harvey, an American violinist who teaches at the school, where 35 of 141 students are girls. “What are we doing there? What can be achieved? These concerts answer those questions in the strongest way possible: Co-

operation between Afghanistan and the international community has made it safe for young girls and boys to learn music.”

There can be no question that for the sad country of Afghanistan all this is welcome news. There can also be little doubt that a beleaguered and defensive US foreign policy establishment will seek to squeeze out as much favorable publicity as possible from these events. On the issue of the severe oppression of women and girls in Afghanistan, defenders of the US occupation of that desperate land would have you believe that the United States is the last great hope of those poor females. However, you will not be reminded that in the 1980s the United States played an indispensable role in the overthrow of a secular and relatively progressive Afghan government, one which endeavored to grant women much more freedom than they’ll ever have under the current Karzai-US government, more probably than ever again. Here are some excerpts from a 1986 US Army manual on Afghanistan discussing the policies of this government concerning women:

- \* “provisions of complete freedom of choice of marriage partner, and fixation of the minimum age at marriage at 16 for women and 18 for men”

- \* “abolished forced marriages”

- \* “bring [women] out of seclusion, and initiate social programs”

- \* “extensive literacy programs, especially for women”

- \* “putting girls and boys in the same classroom”;

- \* “concerned with changing gender roles and giving women a more active role in politics”. 3

The US-led overthrow of this government paved the way for the coming to power of Islamic fundamentalist forces, which led directly to the awful Taliban. And why did the United States in its infinite wisdom choose to do such a thing? Because the Afghan government was allied with the Soviet Union and Washington wanted to draw the

Russians into a hopeless military quagmire – “We now have the opportunity of giving to the Soviet Union its Vietnam War”, said Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter’s National Security Adviser. 4

The women of Afghanistan will never know how the campaign to raise them to the status of full human beings would have turned out, but this, some might argue, is but a small price to pay for a marvelous Cold War victory.

**Guantánamo Bay**

People on the left never tire of calling for the closing of the US prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The fact that President Obama made the closing a promise of his 2008 campaign and repeated it again in the White House, while the prison still remains in operation, is seen as a serious betrayal. But each time I read about this I’m struck by the same thought: The horror of Guantánamo is not its being open, not its mere existence. Its horror lies in its being the site of more than 10 years of terrible abuse of human beings. If the prison is closed and all its inmates are moved to another prison, and the abuses continue, what would have been accomplished? How would the cause of human rights be benefitted? I think that activists should focus on the abuses, regardless of the location.

**The War on Terror – They’re really getting serious about it now**

For disseminating classified materials that exposed war crimes, Julian Assange is now honored as an official terrorist as only America can honor. We Shall Never Forget 9/11, Vol. II: The True Faces of Evil - Terror, a graphic coloring novel for children, which comes with several pages of perforated, detachable “terrorist trading cards”. Published by Really Big Coloring Books Inc. in St. Louis, the cards include Assange, Timothy McVeigh, Jared Lee Loughner, Ted Kaczyn-

**The horror of Guantánamo is not its being open, not its mere existence. Its horror lies in its being the site of more than 10 years of terrible abuse of human beings**

The choir needs to be frequently reminded and enlightened to be better able to influence others, to be better activists

ski, Maj. Nidal Hasan, Bill Ayers, and others. 5

New Book and talk

The eagerly awaited (I can name at least three people) new book by William Blum is here at last. America's Deadliest Export – Democracy: The Truth About US Foreign Policy and Everything Else is made up of essays which are a combination of new and old; combined, updated, expanded; many first appeared in one form or another in the Anti-Empire Report, or on my website, at various times during the past ten years or so.

As mentioned in the book, activists like myself are sometimes scoffed at for saying the same old things to the same old people; just spinning our wheels, we're told, "preaching to the choir" or "preaching to the converted". But long experience as speaker, writer and activist in the area of foreign policy tells me it just ain't so. From the questions and comments I regularly get from my audiences, via email and in person, I can plainly see that there are numerous significant information gaps and misconceptions in the choir's thinking, often leaving them unable to see through the newest government lie or propaganda trick; they're unknowing or forgetful of what happened in the past that illuminates the present; or knowing the facts but unable to apply them at the appropriate moment; vulnerable to being led astray by the next person who of-

fers a specious argument that opposes what they currently believe, or think they believe; and, perhaps worst of all, many of them suffer pathetically from an over-abundance of conspiracy thinking, often carrying a justified suspicion or idea to a ridiculous level; virtually nothing is taken at face value.

The choir needs to be frequently reminded and enlightened to be better able to influence others, to be better activists.

To order a signed copy directly from me you can go to my website: http://killing-hope.org.

CT

William Blum is the author of "Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War I", Rogue State: a guide to the World's Only Super Power" and "West-Bloc Dissident: a Cold ar Political memoir" His latest book is "America's Deadliest Export – Democracy: The Truth About US Foreign Policy and Everything Else:

Notes

- 1. May 28, 2012, speaking at the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington
2. George Kennan, Wikipedia entry
3. US Department of the Army, Afghanistan, A Country Study (1986), pp.121, 128, 130, 223, 232 (Library of Congress Call Number DS351.5 .A34 1986)
4. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Wikipedia entry
5. View the press release; see the cards





# Not a bubble, but a bunker

**Norman Solomon** tells how Washington's war-makers lie and deceive – and then try to pass the blame

**W**ith the tenth anniversary of the Iraq invasion coming up next month, we can expect a surge of explanations for what made that catastrophe possible. An axiom from Orwell – “who controls the past controls the future” – underscores the importance of such narratives.

I encountered a disturbing version while debating Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, former chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell. Largely, Wilkerson blamed deplorable war policies on a “bubble” that surrounds top officials. That’s not just faulty history; it also offers us very misleading guidance in the present day.

During our debate on Democracy Now, Wilkerson said: “What’s happening with drone strikes around the world right now is, in my opinion, as bad a development as many of the things we now condemn so readily, with 20/20 hindsight, in the George W. Bush administration. We are creating more enemies than we’re killing. We are doing things that violate international law. We are even killing American citizens without due process. . .”

But why does this happen?

“These things are happening because of that bubble that you just described,” Colonel Wilkerson told host Amy Goodman. “You can’t get through that bubble” to top foreign-policy officials, “penetrate

that bubble and say, ‘Do you understand what you’re doing, both to American civil liberties and to the rest of the world’s appreciation of America, with these increased drone strikes that seem to have an endless vista for future?’”

Wilkerson went on: “This is incredible. And yet, I know how these things happen. I know how these bubbles create themselves around the president and cease and stop any kind of information getting through that would alleviate or change the situation, make the discussion more fundamental about what we’re doing in the world.”

Such a “bubble” narrative encourages people to believe that reaching the powerful war-makers with information and moral suasion is key – perhaps *the* key – to ending terrible policies. This storyline lets those war-makers off the hook – for the past, present and future.

Hours after my debate with Wilkerson, I received an email from Fernando Andres Torres, a California-based journalist and former political prisoner in Chile under the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet. Referring to Wilkerson as “that bubble guy,” the email said: “Who they think they are? No accountability? Or do they think the government bubble gives them immunity for all the atrocities they commit? Not in the people’s memory.”

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**Wilkerson blamed deplorable war policies on a “bubble” that surrounds top officials. That’s not just faulty history; it also offers us very misleading guidance in the present day**  
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Later in the day, Torres sent me another note: “Not sure if we can call it a bubble, ’cause a bubble is easy to break; they were in a lead bunker from where the bloody consequences of their action can pass unnoticed.”

Wilkerson’s use of the bubble concept is “a tautology, a contradiction implicit,” wrote the co-editor of DissidentVoice.org, Kim Petersen, in an article analyzing the debate. “Often people escape culpability through being *outside the loop*. After all, how can one be blamed for what one does not know because one was not privy to the information. Can one credibly twist this situation as a defense? Wilkerson and other Bush administration officials were *in the loop* -- privy to information that other people are denied – and yet Wilkerson, in a strong sense, claims to be a victim of being in a bubble.”

In that case, the onus is shared by those inside and outside the bubble. Wilkerson said as much when I mentioned that a decade ago, during many months before the invasion, my colleagues and I at the Institute for Public Accuracy helped to document – with large numbers of news releases and public reports – that the Bush administration’s claims about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction were full of holes.

From there, our debate swiftly went down a rabbit hole, as Wilkerson took me to task for not getting through the bubble that surrounded him as chief of staff for Secretary of State Powell. “I didn’t see a single one of your reports,” Wilkerson said. “So, nobody called me from your group. Nobody tried to get in – nobody tried to get into my office and talk to me from your group. Other groups did, but your group never got into my office, never called me on the phone – never talked to me. Other groups did. Why didn’t you? . . . You didn’t call. . . You didn’t call. . . You did not call.

Non-apology apologies have been a

forte of former impresarios of the Iraq war. It speaks volumes that Col. Wilkerson has been more apologetic than most of them. The scarcity of genuine public remorse is in sync with the absence of legal accountability or political culpability.

The partway apologies are tethered to notable narcissism. It’s still mainly about *them*, the seasoned ones who have worked in top echelons of government, whose self-focus is enduring. At the same time, scarcely a whisper can be heard about renouncing the prerogative to launch aggressive war.

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**Low points**

So, when faced with occasional media questions about Powell’s WMD speech to the U.N. Security Council six weeks before the Iraq invasion, both Wilkerson and Powell routinely revert to the same careful phrasing about their own life sagas. Interviewed by CNN in 2005, after his three years as Secretary of State Powell’s chief of staff, Wilkerson described his key role in preparing that speech as “the lowest point in my life.” Last week, in our debate, he called the U.N. presentation “the lowest point in my professional and personal life.”

As for Colin Powell, guess what? That U.N. speech was “a low point in my otherwise remarkable career,” he told AARP’s magazine in 2006. Yet the U.N. speech gave powerful propaganda support for the invasion that began the Iraq war – a war that was also part of Powell’s “otherwise remarkable career.

So, too, a dozen years earlier, was the Gulf War that Powell presided over as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in early 1991. On the same day that the Associated Press cited estimates from Pentagon sources that the six-week war had killed 100,000 Iraqi people, Powell told an interviewer: “It’s really not a number I’m terribly interested in.”

The illustrious and sturdy bow on the

entire political package is immunity – a reassuring comfort to retired and present war leaders alike. Former Bush officials and current Obama officials have scant reason to worry that their conduct of war might one day put them in a courtroom dock. They’ve turned their noses up at international law, lowered curtains on transparency and put some precious civil liberties in a garbage compactor with the president’s hand on the switch.

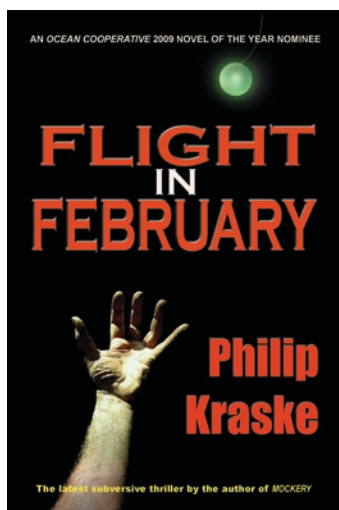
Normalizing silence and complicity is essential fuel for endless war. With top officials relying on their own exculpatory status, a grim feedback loop keeps spinning as the increasingly powerful warfare state runs roughshod over the principle of consent of the governed. Top officials dodge responsibility – and pay no penalty – for lying the country into, and into continuing, horrendous wars and other interventions.

Without an honest reckoning of what did and didn’t happen in the lead-up to the Iraq war, a pernicious message comes across from Wilkerson, Powell and many others: *of course we stuck it out and followed orders, we had private doubts but fulfilled our responsibilities to maintain public support for the war.* It’s a kind of role modeling that further corrodes the political zeitgeist. The upshot is that people at the top of the U.S. government – whether in 2003 or 2013 – have nothing to lose by going along with the program for war. In a word: *impunity.* **CT**

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**Top officials dodge responsibility – and pay no penalty – for lying the country into, and into continuing, horrendous wars and other interventions**  
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*Norman Solomon is co-founder of RootsAction.org and founding director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. His books include “War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death.” He writes the Political Culture 2013 column*

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# When truth tried to stop war

Ray McGovern on the intelligence officers who told the truth ...

.....  
**Katharine Gun could smell a rat, as well as the sulphur of war, and she would not put her career and comfort ahead of the slaughter and devastation that war inevitably brings to innocent people**  
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**T**en years ago, Katharine Gun, then a 28-year-old British intelligence officer, saw an e-mailed memo from the US National Security Agency (NSA) that confirmed for her in black and white the already widespread suspicion that the US and U.K. were about to launch war against Iraq on false pretenses.

Doing what she could to head off what she considered, correctly, an illegal war of aggression, she printed a copy of the memo and arranged for a friend to give it to the *London Observer*. “I have always ever followed my conscience,” she said, explaining what drove her to take such a large risk. Those early months of 2003 were among the worst of times – and not just because the US and U.K. leaders were perverting the post-World War II structure that those same nations designed to stop aggressive wars, but because the vast majority of US and U.K. institutions including the major news organizations and the nations’ legislatures were failing miserably to provide any meaningful check or balance.

The common excuse from politicians, bureaucrats, editors and other opinion leaders was that there was no way the momentum toward war could be stopped, so why take on the career damage that would result from getting in the way. And if Ms. Gun were made of lesser stuff, she might have hidden behind a similar self-serving excuse or found solace

in other comforting rationalizations, like the government must know what it’s doing, or what do I, a Mandarin-to-English translator, know about Iraq.

But Katharine Gun could smell a rat, as well as the sulphur of war, and she would not put her career and comfort ahead of the slaughter and devastation that war inevitably brings to innocent people. In that, she distinguished herself, just as many others in positions of authority disgraced themselves.

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**Missing WMD**

In fall 2002, Iraq’s leader Saddam Hussein shocked the world by agreeing to a very intrusive U.N. inspection regime with inspectors crawling all over suspect sites in Iraq, though not finding one “weapon of mass destruction.” Since Iraq’s inventory of WMD was the main casus belli, things were getting downright embarrassing. Even a few in the domesticated “mainstream” media in the US and U.K. were feeling some discomfort in merely feeding off the official statements of President George W. Bush and co-conspirator Prime Minister Tony Blair.

At that key moment, the US and U.K. leaders intensified their effort to get the U.N. Security Council to approve the kind of resolution that would enable them to attack Iraq with at least a thin veneer of legality. We know from the Downing Street memos,



which were leaked two years later, that U.K. Attorney General Peter Goldsmith had told Blair in July 2002 that, absent a new Security Council resolution, war on Iraq would be illegal.

So, in early 2003, the focus was riveted on the U.N. Security Council where Bush and Blair were having trouble rallying the three other recalcitrant permanent members – France, China and Russia – to support war on Iraq. Already facing that resistance, Bush and Blair were not about to brook interference by the non-permanent members. Thus, word went out to the US/U.K. intelligence services to ensure that none of those upstart nations did anything to complicate US/U.K. plans for war

Accordingly, the NSA intensified electronic collection on those countries’ representatives (as well as on officials of the three obstinate permanent members). The Bush administration wanted to learn immediately of anything that could help win the Security Council’s approval of a resolution to make the attack “legal.”

On Jan. 31, 2003, NSA’s Frank Koza, head of “Regional Targets” (RT) sent a “HIGH-Importance,” Top Secret e-mail to Britain’s NSA counterpart, GCHQ, where Katharine Gun worked. The e-mail asked that British eavesdroppers emulate NSA’s “surge” in electronic collection against Security Council members “for insights ... [on] plans to vote on any Iraq-related resolutions ... the whole gamut of information that could give US policymakers an edge in obtaining results favorable to US goals or to head off surprises. ... [T]hat means a ... surge effort to revive/create efforts against UNSC members Angola, Cameroon, Chile, Bulgaria and Guinea, as well as extra focus on Pakistan UN matters.”

Koza’s “surge” instruction left no doubt in Gun’s mind that Bush and Blair were hell-bent to have their war – legal or illegal – and that she had been correct in dismissing recent assurances by GCHQ management that she and her co-workers would not be asked to cooperate in facilitating unprovoked war.

As Gun explained later to Marcia and Thomas Mitchell, authors of *The Spy Who Tried to Stop a War*, she calculated that if people could see how desperate Bush and Blair were to have an appearance of legitimacy for war, “Their eyes would be opened; they would see that the intention was not to disarm Saddam but in fact to go to war.”

She made a copy of the Koza memo, walked out with it in her purse, and eventually gave it to a friend with contacts in the media. The *Observer* got hold of it, was able to establish that it was authentic, and on March 2, 2003, two and a half weeks before the attack on Iraq front-paged the text of the memo with an accompanying article.

The report shook the government of Tony Blair and caused consternation on several continents. In the US, however, it was not a big story. For the *New York Times*, whose editors were either cheering on false articles about Iraq’s WMD or going into a self-protective career crouch, it was no story at all.

The US intelligence agencies stonewalled any media inquiries and the journalists quickly moved on to the main event, embedding themselves inside the US military as war correspondents. The story from Gun’s document – indicating a major spying initiative to coerce sovereign countries to support an unprovoked war – simply didn’t fit with the narrative of “good guy” America taking on “bad guy” Iraq.

Despite the spying, Bush and Blair failed to win approval from the Security Council to invade Iraq, forcing Bush and Blair to lead a “coalition of the willing” and counting on the cowardice and complicity of the US/U.K. mainstream news media to ignore the inconvenient truth about the illegality of the invasion.

**Confession and Charge**

Gun soon confessed to what she had done. She later explained to the Mitchells: “I’m pretty rubbish at telling lies ... and I try to be an honest person. ... I have to say that

.....  
**The story from Gun’s document – indicating a major spying initiative to coerce sovereign countries to support an unprovoked war – simply didn’t fit with the narrative of “good guy” America taking on “bad guy” Iraq**  
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**The Sam Adams award is named for the late CIA analyst Sam Adams who challenged false assessments of Vietcong and North Vietnamese troop strength during the height of that conflict**  
.....

I've only ever followed my conscience. And it, my conscience, is such a nuisance.”

On Nov. 13, 2003, she was charged with violating the UK's Official Secrets Act. She planned to plead “not guilty,” stressing that she acted to prevent imminent loss of life in an illegal war.

Gun's pro bono lawyers insisted that the Blair government produce the opinions of U.K. Attorney General Peter Goldsmith on the legality of the war but the government refused. It was already widely known, well before the leak of the Downing Street memos, that Goldsmith initially advised that an attack on Iraq would be illegal without a second U.N. Security Council resolution authorizing it, and that, only after intense consultation with several lawyers from the White House, Goldsmith showed the required flexibility and changed his mind.

Blair was not about to release such damning documents. Even the usually docile UN Secretary General Kofi Annan finally got around to acknowledging the obvious and agreeing that the attack on Iraq was illegal, albeit Annan found his voice only well after the butchery was underway.

So, when Gun's case came to court on Feb. 25, 2004, her lawyers did not need to argue that trying to stop an illegal act (a war of aggression) trumped Gun's obligations under the Official Secrets Act. The Blair government clearly did not want to let Lord Goldsmith's dirty laundry hang out on the line. Within half an hour, the prosecution dropped the case and Katharine Gun walked.

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**The Sam Adams Award**

For her courage and commitment to principle, Katharine Gun was the second recipient of the Sam Adams Award for Integrity in Intelligence. The citation read at the presentation on April 14, 2004, noted that:

“Heeding the dictates of conscience and true patriotism, Ms. Gun put her career and her very liberty at risk trying to prevent the launching of an illegal war. That she is

here with us today and not in a prison cell bespeaks a tacit but clear admission by her government that the US/UK attack on Iraq in March 2003 was in defiance of international law.

“Ms. Gun's beacon of light pierced a thick cloud of deception. She set a courageous example for those intelligence analysts of the ‘Coalition of the Willing’ who have first-hand knowledge of how intelligence was corrupted to ‘justify’ war, but who have not yet been able to find their voice.”

Commenting on Katharine Gun's courage and integrity, Pentagon Papers whistleblower Dan Ellsberg had this to say:

“No one has had this story to tell before, because no one else – including myself – has ever done what Katharine Gun did: tell secret truths at personal risk, before an imminent war, in time, possibly, to avert it. Hers was the most important – and courageous – leak I've ever seen, more timely and potentially more effective than the Pentagon Papers.”

Fast forward to Jan. 23, 2013, in the Debate Chamber of the Oxford Union where the tenth annual Sam Adams award presentation was held before a packed house of Oxford students. Ms. Gun, her husband, and their four-year-old daughter shed their coveted privacy long enough to allow Katharine to be one of two former Sam Adams Award winners to present this year's award.

The other was Coleen Rowley, former FBI special agent and counsel at the Minneapolis bureau, who blew the whistle on FBI and other shortcomings before 9/11 and was named one of the three Persons of the Year by *Time* magazine in 2002. The Sam Adams award is named for the late CIA analyst Sam Adams who challenged false assessments of Vietcong and North Vietnamese troop strength during the height of that conflict.

The 10th annual Sam Adams Award for Integrity in Intelligence was given to Thomas Fingar, the consummate intelligence professional who led the US Nation-

al Intelligence Council from 2005 to 2008 (and is now a professor in Stanford's over-seas program at Oxford).

Fingar supervised the drafting of the eye-opening National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) of 2007 on Iran, which differed markedly from previous estimates in assessing that Iran had stopped working on a nuclear weapon at the end of 2003 and had not resumed such work – and key finding re-validated every year since by the Director of National Intelligence in formal testimony to Congress.

With the help of that honest assessment, US military leaders and other honest officials were able to beat back pressure from Vice President Dick Cheney and the neoconservatives for an attack on Iran during 2008 – the last year of the Bush administration. (See Bush's own memoir, *Decision Points*, page 419.)

The poignancy of the moment was not lost on the audience at the Oxford Union. After Katharine Gun read the citation (text below) for the award to Tom Fingar, she turned toward Fingar, and suggested that if honest professionals like him had been supervising US and U.K. intelligence analysis in 2002-2003, the warping of intelligence to support plans for war would have been prevented. And Gun could have avoided the painful choice that her conscience required.

It was quite a spectacle: One "spy" who tried her best (but failed) to stop the Iraq war was giving the Sam Adams award to another, more senior intelligence official who, simply by adhering tightly to the professional ethos of following the evidence wherever it leads, played a huge role in stopping war on Iran.

Also "giving evidence" (in British parlance) on Jan. 23 at the Sam Adams Award evening at the Oxford Union were three other former awardees besides Gun and Rowley – former U.K. ambassador to Uzbekistan Craig Murray, former NSA executive Thomas Drake and, video-linked from asylum at the Ecuadorian embassy in London, Julian Assange of WikiLeaks.

Other Sam Adams associates also spoke briefly, including former U.K. MI5 officer Annie Machon and two of the three US diplomats who resigned on principle before the attack on Iraq – Ann Wright and Brady Kiesling. Oxford Union President Maria Rioumine joined me in introductory remarks; still other associates made the trek across the Atlantic, at considerable personal expense, just to be there to honor Thomas Fingar.

**Iran: Always Iran**

There is yet another poignant back story here In 2006, as Thomas Fingar was settling into his position as chief analyst for the entire US intelligence community, the threats from the West and Israel directed at Iran were proliferating in an alarming way, and the National Intelligence Estimate on Iran's nuclear program was just in the planning stage.

Amid the calls for military action against Iran, Katharine Gun came out of seclusion and wrote an op-ed titled "Iran: Time to Leak." Her article appeared on March 20, 2006, the third anniversary of the US/U.K. invasion of Iraq.

Apparently unaware of the paradigm shift toward honesty in drafting US intelligence estimates, Ms. Gun drew on her own experience and tried to motivate analysts to blow the whistle when necessary, as she had done three years before:

"Truth telling and whistle blowing [continue to be] crucial after a war as ill advised as Iraq – at least it allows us to piece together the facts – but it's too late to save lives. Where are the memos and emails about Iran now?

"I urge those in a position to do so to disclose information which relates to this planned aggression; legal advice, meetings between the White House and other intelligence agencies, assessments of Iran's threat level (or better yet, evidence that assessments have been altered), troop deployments and army notifications. Don't let 'the intelligence and the facts be fixed around the

.....  
**Apparently unaware of the paradigm shift toward honesty in drafting US intelligence estimates, Ms. Gun drew on her own experience and tried to motivate analysts to blow the whistle when necessary**  
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**WikiLeaks somehow got hold of the script to a DreamWorks movie, 'The Fifth Estate,' which paints a much more ominous picture of Iran's nuclear intentions and capabilities and takes the customary US mass-media potshots at WikiLeaks and Assange**  
.....

policy' this time. ...

"As the political momentum builds toward a military 'solution,' it would be wrong to wait until the bombs have fallen on Iran and families destroyed before finally informing the public."

Only when the Fingar-supervised *NIE, Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities*, emerged in November 2007 could Katharine Gun (and the rest of us) understand that integrity had been restored to the estimative analysis process. It would be extremely difficult to attack Iran with that NIE on the books. No need to leak this time.

Not to say pressures to attack Iran have disappeared. Ironically, it was Julian Assange, the Sam Adams award winner in 2010, who alerted the Oxford Union audience (via videolink from the Ecuadorian embassy) of a DreamWorks movie, "Fifth Estate," now in production. WikiLeaks somehow got hold of the script, which paints a much more ominous picture of Iran's nuclear intentions and capabilities and takes the customary US mass-media potshots at WikiLeaks and Assange.

Not to over-use "ironic," the timely leak of that transcript to WikiLeaks will give those of us who remain committed to combating falsehood and pro-war propaganda advance time to expose the film for what it is and dissect its none-too-subtle objectives. No rest for the weary, as the expression goes.

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**Thwarting another war**

Meanwhile, with the example set by Thomas Fingar, and the systems he has put in place to ensure intelligence assessments are not "fixed around the policy" – as the 2002 Downing Street Memo famously depicted the fabrication of the case for war with Iraq – there is reason to hope that yet another "war of choice" can be thwarted.

Following is the citation read by Katharine Gun to accompany the award to Thomas Fingar:

"Know all ye by these presents that

Thomas Fingar is hereby awarded the Corner-Brightener Candlestick, presented by Sam Adams Associates for Integrity in Intelligence.

"In 2005, when Tom Fingar assumed responsibility for supervising the preparation of National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs), the discipline of intelligence analysis had been corrupted on both sides of the Atlantic. We know from the Downing Street Minutes of July 23, 2002 that 'the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy' prior to the US/UK attack on Iraq.

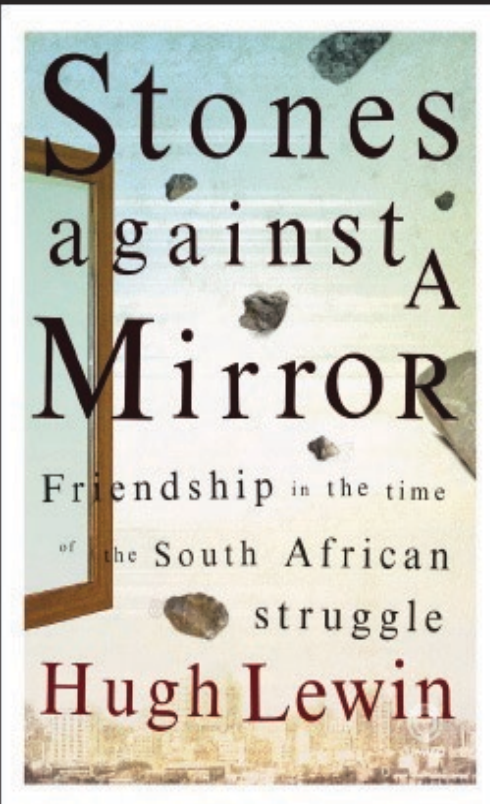
"Integrity and professionalism were the only cure. Dr. Fingar oversaw the landmark 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran, which concluded with 'high confidence' that Iran had halted its nuclear weapon design and weaponization work in 2003. That NIE was issued with the unanimous approval of all 16 US intelligence agencies. Its key judgments have been revalidated every year since by the Director of National Intelligence.

"The Estimate's findings were a marked departure from earlier assessments of Iran's nuclear program. That it was instrumental in thwarting an attack on Iran is seen in President George W. Bush's own memoir in which he complains that the 'eye-popping' findings of the 2007 NIE stayed his hand: 'How could I possibly explain using the military to destroy the nuclear facilities of a country the intelligence community said had no active nuclear weapons program?'

"Presented this 23rd day of January 2013 at Oxford University by admirers of the example set by our former colleague, Sam Adams. **CT**

.....  
**Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He is a former Army Infantry/Intelligence officer and served as a CIA analyst for 27 years. He is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS), as well as Sam Adams Associates for Integrity in Intelligence.**





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