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ColdType

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ISSUE 123



Britain's new Scramble for Africa

How 101 companies listed on the London Stock Exchange – most of them British – have mining operations in 37 sub-Saharan African countries and collectively control more than \$1-trillion worth of Africa's most valuable resources



Cover art:

The Rhodes Colossus.
Striding from Cape Town to Cairo
Punch, December 10, 1892

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Editor: Tony Sutton – editor@coldtype.net

COLDTYPE'S SUMMER BREAK

ColdType will be enjoying what's left of the summer sunshine during August.
Issue 124 will appear in early September

The big boom: Nukes, NATO and Russia

Conn M. Hallinan warns of the dangers of a potential nuclear catastrophe on the borders of Eastern Europe

“Today, the danger of some sort of a nuclear catastrophe is greater than it was during the Cold War and most people are blissfully unaware of this danger.” – William J. Perry, US Secretary Of Defense (1994-97)

William Perry has been an inside player in the business of nuclear weapons for more than 60 years and his book, “My Journey at the Nuclear Brink,” is a sober read. It is also a powerful counterpoint to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) current European strategy that envisions nuclear weapons as a deterrent to war: “Their [nuclear weapons] role is to prevent major war, not to wage wars,” argues the alliance’s magazine, NATO Review.

But, as Perry points out, it is only by chance that the world has avoided a nuclear war – sometimes by nothing more than dumb luck – and, rather than enhancing our security, nukes “now endanger it.” The 1962 Cuban missile crisis is generally represented as a dangerous standoff resolved by sober diplomacy. In fact, it was a single man – Russian submarine commander Vasili Arkhipov – who countermanded orders to launch a nuclear torpedo at an American destroyer that could have set off a full-scale nuclear exchange between the USSR and the US

There were numerous other incidents

that brought the world to the brink. On a quiet morning in November 1979, a NORAD computer reported a full-scale Russian sneak attack with land- and sea-based missiles, which led to the scrambling of US bombers and alerting US missile silos to prepare to launch. There was no attack, just an errant test tape. Lest anyone think the incident was an anomaly, a little more than six months later, NORAD computers announced that Soviet submarines had launched 220 missiles at the US. This time the cause was a defective chip that cost 49 cents – again resulting in scrambling interceptors and putting the silos on alert.

But don’t these examples prove that accidental nuclear war is unlikely? That conclusion is a dangerous illusion, argues Perry, because the price of being mistaken is so high and because the world is a more dangerous place than it was in 1980.

It is 71 years since atomic bombs destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and humanity’s memory of those events has dimmed. But even were the entire world to read John Hersey’s book Hiroshima, it would have little idea of what we face today.

The bombs that obliterated those cities were tiny by today’s standards, and comparing “Fat Man” and “Little Boy” – the incongruous names of the weapons that levelled both cities – to modern weapons stretches any analogy beyond the breaking point. If

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NEW COLD WAR

When the US helped engineer the 2014 coup against the pro-Russian government in Ukraine, it ignited the current crisis that has led to several dangerous incidents between Russian and NATO forces

the Hiroshima bomb represented approximately 27 freight cars filled with TNT, a one-megaton warhead would require a train 300 miles long. Each Russian RS-20V Voevoda intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) packs 10 megatons.

What has made today's world more dangerous, however, is not just advances in the destructive power of nuclear weapons, but a series of actions by the last three US administrations.

First was the decision by President Bill Clinton to abrogate a 1990 agreement with the Soviet Union not to push NATO further east after the reunification of Germany or to recruit former members of the defunct Warsaw Pact.

NATO has also reneged on a 1997 pledge not to install "permanent" and "significant" military forces in former Warsaw Pact countries. This month NATO decided to deploy four battalions on, or near, the Russian border, arguing that since the units will be rotated they are not "permanent" and are not large enough to be "significant." It is a linguistic slight of hand that does not amuse Moscow.

Second was the 1999 US-NATO intervention in the Yugoslav civil war and the forcible dismemberment of Serbia. It is somewhat ironic that Russia is currently accused of using force to "redraw borders in Europe" by annexing the Crimea, which is exactly what NATO did to create Kosovo. The US subsequently built Camp Bond Steel, Washington's largest base in the Balkans.

Third was President George W. Bush's unilateral withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the decision by the Obama administration to deploy anti-missile systems in Romania and Poland, as well as Japan and South Korea.

Last is the decision by the White House to spend upwards of \$1-trillion to upgrade its nuclear weapons arsenal, which includes building bombs with smaller yields, a move that many critics argue blurs the line between conventional and nuclear weapons.

The Yugoslav war and NATO's move east convinced Moscow that the alliance was surrounding Russia with potential adversaries, and the deployment of anti-missile systems (ABM) – supposedly aimed at Iran's nonexistent nuclear weapons – was seen as a threat to the Russian's nuclear missile force.

One immediate effect of ABMs was to chill the possibility of further cuts in the number of nuclear weapons. When Obama proposed another round of warhead reductions, the Russians turned it down cold, citing the anti-missile systems as the reason. "How can we take seriously this idea about cuts in strategic nuclear potential while the United States is developing its capabilities to intercept Russian missiles?" asked Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin.

When the US helped engineer the 2014 coup against the pro-Russian government in Ukraine, it ignited the current crisis that has led to several dangerous incidents between Russian and NATO forces – at last count, according to the European Leadership Network, more than 60. Several large war games were also held on Moscow's borders. Former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev went so far as to accuse NATO of "preparations for switching from a cold war to a hot war."

In response, the Russians have also held war games, involving up to 80,000 troops.

It is unlikely that NATO intends to attack Russia, but the power differential between the US and Russia is so great – a "colossal asymmetry," Dmitri Trenin, head of the Carnegie Moscow Center, told the Financial Times – that the Russians have abandoned their "no first use" of nuclear weapons pledge.

It the lack of clear lines that make the current situation so fraught with danger. While the Russians have said they would consider using small, tactical nukes if "the very existence of the state" was threatened by an attack, NATO is being deliberately opaque about its possible tripwires. Ac-

According to NATO Review, nuclear “exercises should involve not only nuclear weapons states . . . but other non-nuclear allies,” and “to put the burden of the doubt on potential adversaries, exercises should not point at any specific nuclear thresholds.”

In short, keep the Russians guessing. The immediate problem with such a strategy is: what if Moscow guesses wrong?

That won't be hard. The US is developing a long-range cruise missile – as are the Russians – that can be armed with conventional or nuclear warheads. But how will an adversary know which is which? And given the old rule in nuclear warfare – use 'em, or lose 'em – uncertainty is the last thing one wants to engender in a nuclear-armed foe.

Indeed, the idea of no “specific nuclear thresholds” is one of the most extraordinarily dangerous and destabilising concepts to come along since the invention of nuclear weapons. There is no evidence that Russia contemplates an attack on the Baltic states or countries such as Poland, and, given the enormous power of the US, such an undertaking would court national suicide.

Moscow's “aggression” against Georgia and Ukraine was provoked. Georgia attacked Russia, not vice versa, and the Ukraine coup torpedoed a peace deal negotiated by the European Union, the US, and Russia. Imagine Washington's view of a Moscow-supported coup in Mexico, followed by an influx of Russian weapons and trainers.

In a memorandum to the recent NATO meetings in Warsaw, the Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity argued, “There is not one scintilla of evidence of any Russian plan to annex Crimea before the coup in Kiev and coup leaders began talking about joining NATO. If senior NATO leaders continue to be unable or unwilling to distinguish between cause and effect, increasing tension is inevitable with potentially disastrous results.”

The organisation of former intelligence analysts also sharply condemned the NATO war games. “We shake our heads in disbelief

when we see Western leaders seemingly oblivious to what it means to the Russians to witness exercises on a scale not seen since Hitler's army launched ‘Unternehmen Barbarossa’ 75 years ago, leaving 25 million Soviet citizens dead.”

While the NATO meetings in Warsaw agreed to continue economic sanctions aimed at Russia for another six months and to station four battalions of troops in Poland and the Baltic states – separate US forces will be deployed in Bulgaria and Poland – there was an undercurrent of dissent. Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras called for de-escalating the tensions with Russia and for considering Russian President Vladimir Putin a partner not an enemy.

Greece was not alone. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier called NATO manoeuvres on the Russian border “war mongering” and “sabre rattling.” French President Francois Hollande said Putin should be considered a “partner,” not a “threat,” and France tried to reduce the number of troops being deployed in the Baltic and Poland. Italy has been increasingly critical of the sanctions.

Rather than recognising the growing discomfort of a number of NATO allies and that beefing up forces on Russia's borders might be destabilising, US Secretary of State John Kerry recently inked defence agreements with Georgia and Ukraine.

After disappearing from the radar for several decades, nukes are back, and the decision to modernise the US arsenal will almost certainly kick off a nuclear arms race with Russia and China. Russia is already replacing its current ICBM force with the more powerful and long range “Sarmat” ICBM, and China is loading its ICBM with multiple warheads.

Add to this volatile mixture military manoeuvres and a deliberately opaque policy in regard to the use of nuclear weapons, and it is no wonder that Perry thinks that the chances of some catastrophe is a growing possibility.

Moscow's “aggression” against Georgia and Ukraine was provoked. Georgia attacked Russia, not vice versa, and the Ukraine coup torpedoed a peace deal negotiated by the European Union, the US, and Russia

Conn M. Hallinan
is a columnist for Foreign Policy In Focus. He has a PhD in anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley and oversaw the journalism program at the University of California at Santa Cruz for 23 years. and lives in Berkeley, California

CT

Britain's new scramble for Africa

A new War On Want publication shows how British conglomerates are robbing Africa of its strategic energy and mineral resources, writes **Colin Todhunter**



Africa is facing a new and devastating colonial invasion driven by a determination to plunder the natural resources of the continent, especially its strategic energy and mineral resources.

That's the message from a damning new report from War On Want – *The New Colonialism: Britain's scramble for Africa's energy and mineral resources*, that highlights the role of the British government in aiding and abetting the process.

Written and researched by Mark Curtis, the report reveals the degree to which British companies now control Africa's key mineral resources, notably gold, platinum, diamonds, copper, oil, gas and coal. It documents how 101 companies listed on the London Stock Exchange (LSE) – most of them British – have mining operations in 37 sub-Saharan African countries and collectively control over \$1-trillion worth of

Africa's most valuable resources.

The UK government has used its power and influence to ensure that British mining companies have access to Africa's raw materials. The report exposes the long-term involvement of British governments (Labour and Conservative) to influence and control British companies' access to raw materials. Access has been secured through a revolving door between the political establishment and British mining companies, with at least five British government officials taking up seats on the boards of mining companies operating in Africa.

Augmented by WTO rules, Britain's leverage over Africa's political and economic systems has resulted in companies such as Glencore being able to show revenues 10 times that of the gross domestic product (GDP) of Zambia.

Under the guise of the UK helping Africa in its economic development (a continuation of the colonial paternal narrative), \$134-billion has flowed into the continent each year in the form of loans, foreign investment and aid, while the British government has enabled the extraction of \$192-billion from Africa, mainly in profits of foreign companies, tax dodging, and the cost of adapting to climate change.

The report highlights the roles played by major companies such as Rio Tinto, Glencore and Vedanta. From the displace-

ment of people and killings to labour rights violations, environmental degradation, and tax dodging, Africa appears to have become a free-for-all. In only a minority of mining operations do African governments have a shareholding in projects. And even if they do, it tends to be as low as 5-20 percent.

In the report, Curtis argues that African countries would benefit from mining operations by insisting that companies employ a large percentage of their staff from the country and buy a large proportion of the goods and services they procure from the country. However, World Trade Organisation rules prevent African countries from putting such policies in place.

Countries could also benefit from corporate taxation, but tax rates and payments in Africa are minimal and companies are easily able to avoid paying taxes, either by their use of tax havens or because they have been given large tax incentives by governments – or often both. And when companies export minerals, governments usually do not benefit at all. Governments only benefit from exports when there is an export tax. There are almost none in Africa.

Various case studies of abuses and disregard for people's rights

One of the case studies in the report is the scramble for gas and oil in Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara. Morocco has occupied much of Western Sahara since 1975. Most of the population has been expelled by force, many to camps in the Algerian desert, where 165,000 refugees still live. Morocco's occupation is a blatant disregard for international law, which accords the Saharawi people the right to self-determination and the way in which their resources are to be used.

More than 100 UN resolutions call for this right to self-determination, but UN efforts to settle the conflict by means of a referendum have been thwarted by Morocco. The International Court of Justice has stated that there are no ties of sover-

eignty between Morocco and Western Sahara, and no state in the world recognises Morocco's self-proclaimed sovereignty over the territory. Despite this, six British and/or LSE-listed companies have been handed permits by the Moroccan government to explore for oil and gas resources, making them complicit in the illegal and violent occupation of Western Sahara.

Cairn Energy, based in Edinburgh and LSE listed, is one such company. It is part of a consortium, led by US company Kosmos Energy, that, in December 2014, became the first to drill for, and later discover, oil off the coast of Western Sahara. The former Director of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, Sir Richard Dearlove, has been a member of the Kosmos Board of Directors since 2012.

Saharawis have consistently protested the exploration activities of oil companies in Western Sahara, but by doing deals with the Moroccan government, oil companies such as Cairn, are directly undermining the Saharawis' right to a referendum on self-determination.

Cairn's claim to support human rights is hard to square with Morocco's activities in Western Sahara, where basic rights and freedoms are routinely suppressed by the same authorities that have given oil companies 'rights' to operate.

The report states that, instead of reining in companies such as Cairn, the British government has actively championed them through trade, investment and tax policies. Successive British governments have long been fierce advocates of liberalised trade and investment regimes in Africa that provide access to markets for foreign companies. They have also consistently opposed African countries putting up regulatory or protective barriers, and have backed policies promoting low corporate taxes.

In response to the report's findings, War on Want has said that UK companies must be held responsible for their behaviour in Africa, and the UK government must be

War on Want has said that UK companies must be held responsible for their behaviour in Africa, and the UK government must be held accountable for its complicity in the plunder

COVER STORY

"For too long, British companies have been at the forefront of the plunder, yet rather than rein in these companies, successive UK governments are actively championing them through trade, investment and tax policies"

held accountable for its complicity in the plunder. It supports calls for mining revenues to stay in the countries where they are mined, for raw materials to be processed in the countries where they are mined to promote maximum value addition, and for governments to protect the rights of people affected by mining rather than protecting the profit margins of corporations exploiting them.

On the back of the report, Saranel Benjamin, international programmes director at War on Want, says: "The African continent is today facing a new colonial invasion, no less devastating in scale and impact than the one it suffered during the 19th-century. It's a scandal that Africa's wealth in natural resources in being seized by foreign, private interests, whose operations are leaving a devastating trail of social, environmental and human rights abuses in their wake. For too long, British companies have been at the forefront of the plunder, yet rather than rein in these companies, successive UK governments are actively championing them through trade, investment and tax policies. It is time British companies and the UK government were held to account."

Government help for industry

It is not the first time we see the enabling role of government where the private sector is concerned, regardless of the massive adverse impacts on people, communities and the environment. In capitalism, the state's role is first and foremost to secure the interests of private capital. In 2014, Craig Murray, the former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan, said the UK was prepared to go

to war to make a few people wealthy. He added that he had seen things from the inside and the UK's foreign interventions are almost always about resources.

Military intervention is, however, often the final resort. The institutions of international capitalism – from the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO to the compliant bureaucracies of national states or supra-national unions – facilitate private capital's ability to appropriate wealth and institute everyday forms of structural violence (unemployment, infant mortality, bad housing, poverty, disease, malnutrition, environmental destruction, etc.) that have become accepted as necessary and taken for granted within mainstream media and political narratives.

When referring to Western countries, those narratives like to use the euphemism "austerity" for deregulation, privatisation and gross inequalities and hardship, while hiding being the mantra, "there is no alternative."

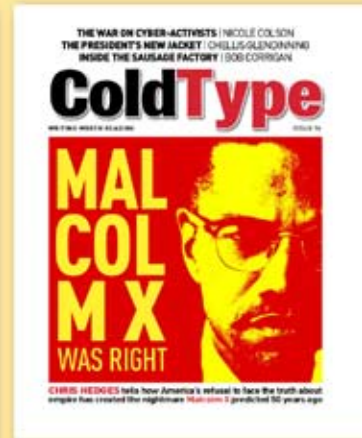
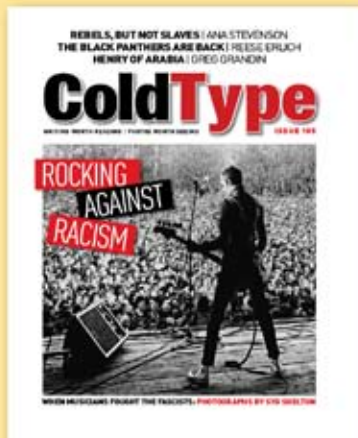
When referring to Africa, they use the euphemism "helping Africa," for colonialism and economic plunder, while hiding behind the term "investing in." **CT**

Colin Todhunter is an independent writer and former social policy researcher. His work has been extensively published both online and in the print media. Although he writes on a wide range of issues, his main area of concern involves how large corporations, especially transnational agribusiness, have captured key international and national institutions to undermine indigenous models of agriculture. His web site is www.colintodhunter.com

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Soul traders

If we saw it anywhere else, we would recognise our political funding system as utterly corrupt, writes **George Monbiot**

The fear of losing money is a constant anxiety, and, consciously or subconsciously, people with an instinct for self-preservation will adapt their policies to suit those most likely to fund them

Is Britain a democracy or is it a plutocracy? Between people and power is a filter through which decisions are made, a filter made of money. In the European referendum, remain won 46 percent of the money given and lent to the two sides (£20.4-m) and 48 percent of the vote. Leave won 54 percent of the money and 52 percent of the vote. This fearful symmetry should worry anyone who values democracy. Did the vote follow the money? Had the spending been the other way round, would the result have reflected that? These should not be questions you need to ask in a democracy.

If spending has no impact, no one told the people running the campaigns: both sides worked furiously at raising funds, sometimes from gruesome people. The top donor was the stockbroker Peter Hargreaves, who gave £3.2-m to Leave. eu. He explained his enthusiasm for leaving the EU thus: “It would be the biggest stimulus to get our butts in gear that we have ever had . . . We will get out there and we will become incredibly successful because we will be insecure again. And insecurity is fantastic.”

No one voted for such people, yet they are granted power over our lives. It is partly because the political system is widely perceived to be on sale that people have become so alienated. Paradoxically, politi-

cal alienation appears to have boosted the leave vote. The leave campaign thrived on the public disgust generated by the system that helped it to win.

If politics in Britain no longer serves the people, our funding system has a lot to do with it. While in most other European nations, political parties and campaigns are largely financed by the state, in Britain they are largely funded by millionaires, corporations and trade unions.

Most people are not fools, and they rightly perceive that meaningful choices are being made in private, without democratic consent. Where there is meaning, there is no choice. Where there is choice, there is no meaning.

No influence?

Politicians insist that donors have no influence on policy, but you would have to be daft to believe it. The fear of losing money is a constant anxiety, and, consciously or subconsciously, people with an instinct for self-preservation will adapt their policies to suit those most likely to fund them. Nor does it matter whether policies follow the money or money follows the policies: those whose proposals appeal to the purse holders will find it easier to raise funds.

Sometimes the relationship appears to be immediate. Before the last general election, 27 of the 59 richest hedge fund

managers in Britain sponsored the Conservatives. Perhaps these donations had nothing to do with the special exemption from stamp duty on stock market transactions the chancellor had granted to hedge funds, depriving the public sector of around £145-m a year. But that doesn't seem likely.

At the Conservatives' Black and White Ball, you get the access you pay for: £5,000 buys you the company of a junior minister; £15,000, a cabinet minister. Politicians insist that there's no relationship between donations and appointments to the House of Lords, but a study at Oxford University found that the probability of this being true is "approximately equivalent to entering the National Lottery and winning the jackpot five times in a row."

We might not have had a say in the choice of the new prime minister, but I bet there was a lively conversation between Conservative MPs and their major funders.

Among the many reasons for the current crisis in the Labour Party is the desertion of its large private donors. One of them, the corporate lawyer Ian Rosenblatt, complains, "I don't think Jeremy Corbyn or anyone around him is remotely interested in whether people like me support the party or not." Why should the leader of the Labour Party have to worry about the support of one person ahead of the votes of millions?

'Suck up and do things you don't like'

The former Labour adviser Ayesha Hazarika urged Corbyn to overcome his scruples, "Meeting rich people and asking for money is not exactly part of the brand that has been so successful among his party faithful. But . . . sometimes you just have to suck it up and do things you don't like." Under our current system, she might be right, not least because the Conservatives have cut Labour's other sources of funding: trade union fees and public money. But what an

indictment of the system that is. During the five years before the last election, 41 percent of the private donations made to political parties came from just 76 people. This is what plutocracy looks like.

Stand back from this system and marvel at what we have come to accept. If we saw it anywhere else, we would immediately recognise it as corruption. Why should parties have to grovel to oligarchs to win elections? Or, for that matter, trade unions? The political system should be owned by everyone, not by a subset. But the corruption at its heart has become so normalised that we can scarcely see it.

Here is one way in which we could reform our politics: each party would be allowed to charge the same fee for membership – a modest amount, perhaps £20. The state would then match this money, at a fixed ratio. And that would be it. There would be no other funding for political parties. The system would be simple, transparent and entirely dependent on the enthusiasm politicians could generate. They would have a powerful incentive to burst their bubbles and promote people's re-engagement with politics. The funding of referendums would be even simpler: the state would provide an equal amount for each side.

The commonest argument against such arrangements is that we can't afford them. Really? We can't afford, say, £50-million for a general election, but we can afford the crises caused by the corruption of politics? We could afford the financial crisis, that arose from politicians' unwillingness to regulate their paymasters? We can afford the costs of Brexit, which might have been bought by a handful of millionaires? Those who urged us to leave the EU promised that we would take back control. Well, this is where it should begin. **CT**

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George Monbiot's new book, *How Did We Get into This Mess?*, is published by Verso. His web site is www.monbiot.com

During the five years before the last election, 41 percent of the private donations made to political parties came from just 76 people. This is what plutocracy looks like

SISTERS-IN-ARMS

The Hand That Rocks The Cradle (1996)



MADELEINE ALBRIGHT, President Bill Clinton's Secretary of State, during an interview with CBS's Leslie Stahl on 60 Minutes, May 12, 1996, discussing US sanctions against Iraq. **Lesley Stahl**: We have heard that a half million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?" **Madeleine Albright**: "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price – we think the price is worth it.

Photo: US State Department

The Hand That Rocks The Cradle (2016)



THERESA MAY, British Prime Minister, in an exchange during the House of Commons debate on spending billions of pounds on updating the British nuclear deterrent, on July 17, 2016. **Scottish Nationalist MP, George Kerevan**: "Is she personally prepared to authorise a nuclear strike that can kill 100,000 innocent men, women and children?" **Theresa May**: "Yes. And I have to say to the honourable gentleman the whole point of a deterrent is that our enemies need to know that we would be prepared to use it." **Photo: UK Home Office**

Five reasons why Trump will win in November

Don't believe me? Just keep a close watch on the Rust Belt, warns **Michael Moore**

Unfortunately, you are living in a bubble that comes with an adjoining echo chamber where you and your friends are convinced the American people are not going to elect an idiot for president

I am sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but I gave it to you straight last summer when I told you that Donald Trump would be the Republican nominee for president. And now I have even more awful, depressing news for you: Donald J. Trump is going to win in November. This wretched, ignorant, dangerous part-time clown and full time sociopath is going to be our next president. President Trump. Go ahead and say the words, 'cause you'll be saying them for the next four years: "PRESIDENT TRUMP."

Never in my life have I wanted to be proven wrong more than I do right now.

I can see what you're doing right now. You're shaking your head wildly - "No, Mike, this won't happen!" Unfortunately, you are living in a bubble that comes with an adjoining echo chamber where you and your friends are convinced the American people are not going to elect an idiot for president. You alternate between being appalled at him and laughing at him because of his latest crazy comment or his embarrassingly narcissistic stance on everything because everything is about him. And then you listen to Hillary and you behold our very first female president, someone the world respects, someone who is whip-smart and cares about kids, who will continue the Obama legacy because that is what the American people clearly want! Yes! Four more years of this!

You need to exit that bubble right now.

You need to stop living in denial and face the truth which you know deep down is very, very real. Trying to soothe yourself with the facts - "77 percent of the electorate are women, people of colour, young adults under 35 and Trump cant win a majority of any of them!" - or logic - "people aren't going to vote for a buffoon or against their own best interests!" - is your brain's way of trying to protect you from trauma. Like when you hear a loud noise on the street and you think, "Oh, a tyre just blew out," or, "Wow, who's playing with firecrackers?" because you don't want to think you just heard someone being shot with a gun. It's the same reason why all the initial news and eyewitness reports on 9/11 said "A small plane accidentally flew into the World Trade Center."

We want to - we need to - hope for the best because, frankly, life is already a shit show and it's hard enough struggling to get by from pay cheque to pay cheque. We can't handle much more bad news. So our mental state goes to default when something scary is actually, truly happening. The first people ploughed down by the truck in Nice spent their final moments on earth waving at the driver whom they thought had simply lost control of his truck, trying to tell him that he jumped the curb: "Watch out!," they shouted. "There are people on the sidewalk!"

Well, folks, this isn't an accident. It is happening. And if you believe Hillary Clinton is



CONTENDERS: Donald Trump has the edge on Hillary Clinton, who is hugely unpopular outside the Washington media bubble.

Caricatures: Tony Jenkins, www.jenkinsdraws.com

going to beat Trump with facts and smarts and logic, then you obviously missed the past year of 56 primaries and caucuses where 16 Republican candidates tried that and every kitchen sink they could throw at Trump and nothing could stop his juggernaut. As of today, as things stand now, I believe this is going to happen – and in order to deal with it, I need you first to acknowledge it, and then maybe, just maybe, we can find a way out of the mess we're in.

Don't get me wrong. I have great hope for the country I live in. Things are better. The left has won the cultural wars. Gays and lesbians can get married. A majority of Americans now take the liberal position on just about every polling question posed to them: Equal pay for women – check. Abortion should be legal – check. Stronger environmental laws – check. More gun control – check. Legalise marijuana – check. A huge shift has taken place – just ask the socialist who won 22 states this year. And there is no doubt in my mind that if people could vote from their couch at home on their X-box or PlayStation, Hillary would win in a landslide.

But that is not how it works in America. People have to leave the house and get in

line to vote. And if they live in poor, Black or Hispanic neighbourhoods, they not only have a longer line to wait in, everything is being done to literally stop them from casting a ballot. So in most elections it's hard to get even 50 percent to turn out to vote. And therein lies the problem for November: who is going to have the most motivated, most inspired voters show up to vote? You know the answer to this question. Who's the candidate with the most rabid supporters? Whose crazed fans are going to be up at 5a.m on Election Day, kicking ass all day long, all the way until the last polling place has closed, making sure every Tom, Dick and Harry (and Bob and Joe and Billy Bob and Billy Joe and Billy Bob Joe) has cast his ballot? That's right. That's the high level of danger we're in. And don't fool yourself – no amount of compelling Hillary TV ads, or outfacting him in the debates or libertarians siphoning votes away from Trump is going to stop his mojo.

Here are the five reasons Trump is going to win:

1. Midwest Math, or Welcome to Our Rust Belt Brexit. I believe Trump is going to focus much of his attention on the four blue states in the rust belt of the upper Great

Whose crazed fans are going to be up at 5a.m on Election Day, kicking ass all day long, all the way until the last polling place has closed, making sure every Tom, Dick and Harry (and Bob and Joe and Billy Bob and Billy Joe and Billy Bob Joe) has cast his ballot?

LETTER TO AMERICA

When Trump stood in the shadow of a Ford Motor factory during the Michigan primary, he threatened the corporation that if they did indeed go ahead with their planned closure of that factory and move it to Mexico, he would slap a 35 percent tariff on any Mexican-built cars shipped back to the United States

Lakes – Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Four traditionally Democratic states – but each has elected a Republican governor since 2010 (only Pennsylvania has now finally elected a Democrat). In the Michigan primary in March, more Michiganders came out to vote for the Republicans (1.32 million) than the Democrats (1.19 million). Trump is ahead of Hillary in the latest polls in Pennsylvania and tied with her in Ohio. Tied? How can the race be this close after everything Trump has said and done? Well maybe it's because he's said (correctly) that the Clintons' support of NAFTA helped to destroy the industrial states of the Upper Midwest. Trump is going to hammer Clinton on this and her support of TPP and other trade policies that have royally screwed the people of these four states. When Trump stood in the shadow of a Ford Motor factory during the Michigan primary, he threatened the corporation that if they did indeed go ahead with their planned closure of that factory and move it to Mexico, he would slap a 35 percent tariff on any Mexican-built cars shipped back to the United States. It was sweet, sweet music to the ears of the working class of Michigan, and when he tossed in his threat to Apple that he would force them to stop making their iPhones in China and build them here in America, well, hearts swooned and Trump walked away with a big victory that should have gone to the governor next-door, John Kasich.

From Green Bay to Pittsburgh, this, my friends, is the equivalent of the middle of England – broken, depressed, struggling, smokestacks strewn across the countryside with the carcass of what we use to call the middle class. Angry, embittered working (and non-working) people who were lied to by the trickle-down of Reagan and abandoned by Democrats who still try to talk a good line but are really just looking forward to rub one out with a lobbyist from Goldman Sachs who'll write them nice big cheque before leaving the room. What happened in the UK with Brexit is going to happen here.

Elmer Gantry shows up looking like Boris Johnson and just says whatever shit he can make up to convince the masses that this is their chance! To stick to ALL of them, all who wrecked their American Dream! And now The Outsider, Donald Trump, has arrived to clean house! You don't have to agree with him! You don't even have to like him! He is your personal Molotov cocktail to throw right into the center of the bastards who did this to you! SEND A MESSAGE! TRUMP IS YOUR MESSENGER!

And this is where the math comes in. In 2012, Mitt Romney lost by 64 electoral votes. Add up the electoral votes cast by Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. It's 64. All Trump needs to do to win is to carry, as he's expected to do, the swath of traditional red states from Idaho to Georgia (states that'll never vote for Hillary Clinton), and then he just needs these four rust belt states. He doesn't need Florida. He doesn't need Colorado or Virginia. Just Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. And that will put him over the top. This is how it will happen in November.

2. The Last Stand of the Angry White Man.

Our male-dominated, 240-year run of the USA is coming to an end. A woman is about to take over! How did this happen?! On our watch! There were warning signs, but we ignored them. Nixon, the gender traitor, imposing Title IX on us, the rule that said girls in school should get an equal chance at playing sports. Then they let them fly commercial jets. Before we knew it, Beyoncé stormed on the field at this year's Super Bowl (our game!) with an army of black women, fists raised, declaring that our domination was hereby terminated! Oh, the humanity!

That's a small peek into the mind of the Endangered White Male. There is a sense that the power has slipped out of their hands, that their way of doing things is no longer how things are done. This monster, the "Feminazi," the thing that as Trump says, "bleeds through her eyes or wherever she bleeds," has con-

quered us – and now, after having had to endure eight years of a black man telling us what to do, we’re supposed to just sit back and take eight years of a woman bossing us around? After that it’ll be eight years of the gays in the White House! Then the transgenders! You can see where this is going. By then animals will have been granted human rights and a fuckin’ hamster is going to be running the country. This has to stop!

3. The Hillary Problem. Can we speak honestly, just among ourselves? And before we do, let me state, I actually like Hillary – a lot – and I think she has been given a bad rap she doesn’t deserve. But her vote for the Iraq War made me promise her that I would never vote for her again. To date, I haven’t broken that promise. For the sake of preventing a proto-fascist from becoming our commander-in-chief, I’m breaking that promise. I sadly believe Clinton will find a way to get us in some kind of military action. She’s a hawk, to the right of Obama. But Trump’s psycho finger will be on The Button, and that is that. Done and done.

Let’s face it: Our biggest problem here isn’t Trump – it’s Hillary. She is hugely unpopular – nearly 70 percent of all voters think she is untrustworthy and dishonest. She represents the old way of politics, not really believing in anything other than what can get you elected. That’s why she fights against gays getting married one moment, and the next she’s officiating a gay marriage. Young women are among her biggest detractors, which has to hurt considering it’s the sacrifices and the battles that Hillary and other women of her generation endured so that this younger generation would never have to be told by the Barbara Bushes of the world that they should just shut up and go bake some cookies. But the kids don’t like her, and not a day goes by that a millennial doesn’t tell me they aren’t voting for her. No Democrat, and certainly no independent, is waking up on November 8 excited to run out and vote

for Hillary the way they did the day Obama became president or when Bernie was on the primary ballot. The enthusiasm just isn’t there. And because this election is going to come down to just one thing – who drags the most people out of the house and gets them to the polls – Trump right now is in the catbird seat.

4. The Depressed Sanders Vote. Stop fretting about Bernie’s supporters not voting for Clinton – we’re voting for Clinton! The polls already show that more Sanders voters will vote for Hillary this year than the number of Hillary primary voters in ’08 who then voted for Obama. This is not the problem. The fire alarm that should be going off is that while the average Bernie backer will drag him/herself to the polls that day to somewhat reluctantly vote for Hillary, it will be what’s called a “depressed vote” – meaning the voter doesn’t bring five people to vote with her. He doesn’t volunteer 10 hours in the month leading up to the election. She never talks in an excited voice when asked why she’s voting for Hillary. A depressed voter. Because, when you’re young, you have zero tolerance for phonies and BS. Returning to the Clinton/Bush era for them is like suddenly having to pay for music, or using MySpace or carrying around one of those big-ass portable phones. They’re not going to vote for Trump; some will vote third party, but many will just stay home. Hillary Clinton is going to have to do something to give them a reason to support her – and picking a moderate, bland-o, middle of the road old white guy as her running mate is not the kind of edgy move that tells millennials that their vote is important to Hillary. Having two women on the ticket – that was an exciting idea. But then Hillary got scared and has decided to play it safe. This is just one example of how she is killing the youth vote.

5. The Jesse Ventura Effect. Finally, do not discount the electorate’s ability to be mischievous or underestimate how any millions fancy themselves as closet anarchists once

Our biggest problem here isn’t Trump – it’s Hillary. She is hugely unpopular – nearly 70 percent of all voters think she is untrustworthy and dishonest. She represents the old way of politics, not really believing in anything other than what can get you elected

LETTER TO AMERICA

In the election booth, you can push the button and vote a straight party line, or you can write in Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck. There are no rules

they draw the curtain and are all alone in the voting booth. It's one of the few places left in society where there are no security cameras, no listening devices, no spouses, no kids, no boss, no cops, there's not even a friggin' time limit. You can take as long as you need in there and no one can make you do anything. You can push the button and vote a straight party line, or you can write in Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck. There are no rules. And because of that, and the anger that so many have toward a broken political system, millions are going to vote for Trump not because they agree with him, not because they like his bigotry or ego, but just because they can. Just because it will upset the apple cart and make mommy and daddy mad. And in the same way like when you're standing on the edge of Niagara Falls and your mind wonders for a moment what would that feel like to go over that thing, a lot of people are going to love being in the position of puppet master and plunking down for Trump just to see what that might look like. Remember back in the '90s when the people of Minnesota elected

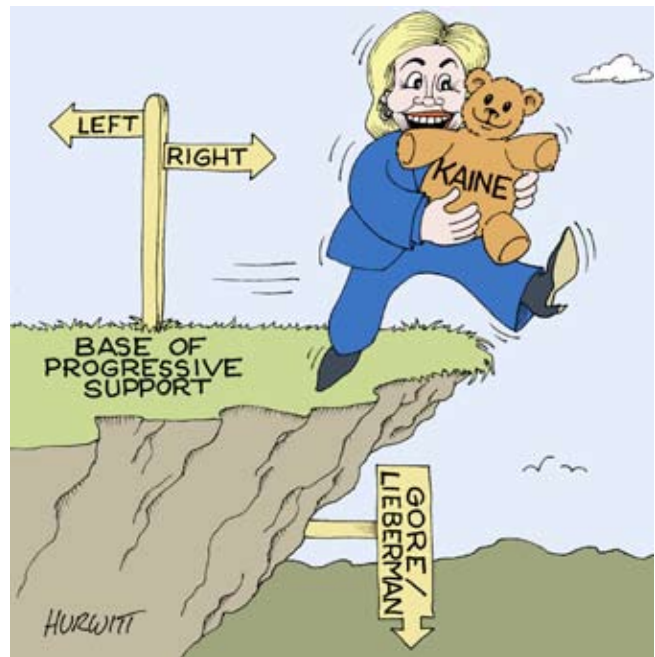
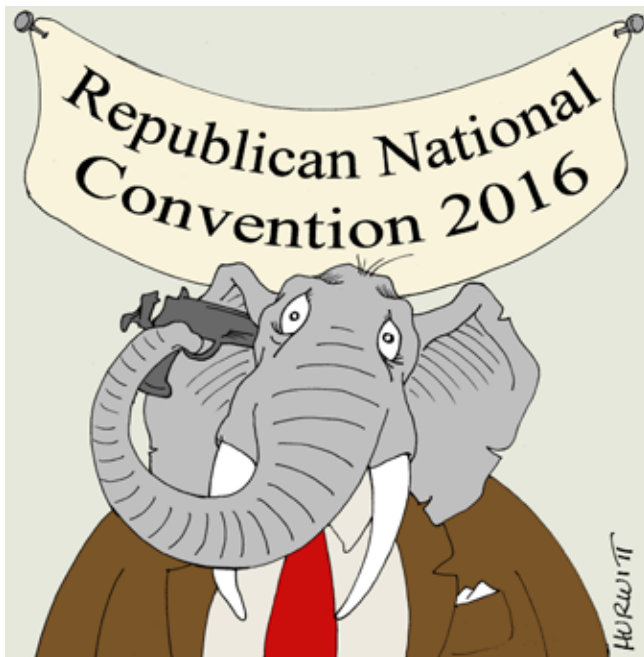
a professional wrestler as their governor? They didn't do this because they're stupid or thought that Jesse Ventura was some sort of statesman or political intellectual. They did so just because they could. Minnesota is one of the smartest states in the country. It is also filled with people who have a dark sense of humour – and voting for Ventura was their version of a good practical joke on a sick political system. This is going to happen again with Trump.

Coming back to the hotel after appearing on Bill Maher's Republican Convention special this week on HBO, a man stopped me. "Mike," he said, "we have to vote for Trump. We HAVE to shake things up." That was it. That was enough for him. To "shake things up." President Trump would indeed do just that, and a good chunk of the electorate would like to sit in the bleachers and watch that reality show. **CT**

Michael Moore is an anti-war activist, author, documentary filmmaker and satirist. His web site is www.michaelmoore.com

HURWITT'S EYE ON THE CONVENTIONS

Mark Hurwitt



Blue is not beautiful

The pro-police slogan “Blue Lives Matter” has some unintended implications, writes **Danny Katch**

“All Lives Matter” is good propaganda. Sure, the slogan used by everyone from liberals to the right wing as a scolding response to the call to make black lives matter is simplistic and deceptive. But it’s the tried-and-true simplistic deception of colour blindness – the ideology that has helped drive the post-Civil Rights movement backlash for decades.

But in the wake of the shootings of cops in Dallas and Baton Rouge, the fury of conservatives can’t be sated by the smug moralism of All Lives Matter. As speaker after speaker at the Republican National Convention (RNC) in Cleveland raged against the Black Lives Matter movement, it’s the harder-edged Blue Lives Matter slogan that got the crowd fired up.

When pro-police forces started demanding that Blue Lives Matter after the shooting of two New York City cops in late 2014, it seemed redundant, given that politicians and corporate media outlets were giving the slain officers days of non-stop adulation that black victims of police never receive. It also seemed a little clueless – like office managers who insist that employees celebrate Boss’s Day on October 16.

But it’s neither of those anymore. The shootings in Dallas and Baton Rouge have added momentum to the wave of Blue Lives Matter bills calling for any violence against police to be regarded as hate crimes – legis-

lation has now been introduced in Congress and statehouses across the country.

One such law was already enacted this past May in Louisiana – where, of course, it did nothing whatsoever to deter Gavin Long from deciding to open fire on Baton Rouge cops, killing three and wounding several others.

Many of the speakers in Cleveland used All Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter interchangeably, not seeming to mind that one completely undermines the other.

You can’t dish out the “Who me? I don’t even see race!” bullshit behind All lives matter, while simultaneously singling out and elevating an entirely new race of blue people. More like a super-race, actually, of heroic beings far more noble and brave than the wimps and scum they walk among – or at least that’s how they and their champions regard them.

There’s a hidden truth in the first two words of Blue Lives Matter that many of its users probably don’t intend. Counter-posing blue lives to black ones acknowledges that the cops really are set apart. They’re obviously not a race unto themselves – whatever race even means – but definitely a separate caste in American society with its own culture and laws.

This is a reality recognised not just by right-wingers but also by politicians across

It seems like an entirely new race of blue people. More like a super-race, actually, of heroic beings far more noble and brave than the wimps and scum they walk among

NAME GAMES



WHAT MATTERS: Political buttons for sale at the Democrat convention in Cleveland.

Photo: Matt McGrogan mattpluscamera.com

The dream of cities being patrolled by friendly beat cops who are part of the neighbourhood fabric was always based on an imagined past that never existed in poor and working class neighbourhoods

the ideological spectrum, including Democrats, who express sorrow for victims of police violence but do nothing to win justice in their names. Instead, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton talk about the need to “bridge the divide” between police departments and African Americans.

This supposedly even-handed approach confuses what should be a simple matter – cops shouldn’t get away with killing unarmed people, whether their actions are videotaped or not – into a complicated clash of two cultures that need to overcome their differences and find common ground.

It calls to mind the patronising and bogus histories often used to explain away wars and conflicts in other parts of the world: “Oh, well, you know the blues and the blacks have been fighting for as long as anyone can remember. It’s an age-old conflict.”

Radicals have always criticised the liberal attitude that police brutality isn’t systematic, but instead is merely a matter of a few “bad apples” that need to be removed from the barrel. But today, liberals such as Barack Obama and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio refuse to even go after the bad apples, retreating instead behind empty calls for dialogue.

Meanwhile, as Democrats are driven by their own inaction toward – whether they admit it or not – acknowledging the “Blue Lives” logic that cops operate by their own set of rules, they are undermining another traditional liberal ideal: community policing.

The dream of cities being patrolled by friendly beat cops who are part of the neighbourhood fabric was always based on an imagined past that never existed in poor

and working class neighbourhoods. But community policing is even harder to promote when you're talking about cops and black people being separate tribes.

Blue Lives Matter laws should cause many to question their previous support for hate crimes legislation as a way to fight oppression. These laws haven't prevented increasing attacks on Latinos, Muslims and LGBTQ people. What they have done is give the government a new tool to entrench police power.

Then there's the question of what Blue Lives Matter laws are intended to accomplish. Louisiana already had enhanced penalties for assaulting a police officer – as do most other states. And it's a safe bet that people arrested for attacking cops are prosecuted with extra vigour in all 50 states.

The only tangible outcome of passing a Blue Lives Matter law is to encourage a crackdown on perceived threats to blue people – such as protests against police violence and even angry social media posts.

Since the familiar colour blind ideology of All Lives Matter has failed to slow the spread of anti-racist protests, "Blue Lives Matter" is becoming the rallying cry for those who want to shut down Black Lives Matter, using the claim that the demonstrations themselves are fomenting anti-police violence.

If anything, the truth is probably the other way around, as my friend Dom Renda noted the other day on Facebook: "The shooting of cops in Louisiana and Texas has occurred despite, not because, of the Black Lives Matter movement. People resort to violence when they don't have a peaceful outlet of protest, or if they feel that outlet is not effective. There's an irony in conservatives blaming Black Lives Matter for these shootings, because if Black Lives Matter didn't exist, there would have been more violent conflicts with cops already."

There's no equivalency between these two BLMs. The history of American protest

movements from abolition to civil rights proves Alicia Garza's famous point that "When black people get free, everybody gets free."

By contrast, the more that police are "freed" from any laws or restraints, the less freedoms any of the rest of us have.

And as long as cops aren't ordinary citizens with the same rights and responsibilities as you and me, but are instead made into a super-race of blue people, then I don't mind saying that I'm an anti-blue racist.

I don't like the way they dress, with their storm trooper body armour and Darth Vader face shields.

I don't like the way they keep multiplying – New York City hired 1,300 more cops last year even though crime is at historic lows – and bleeding government budgets dry so that actual crime-fighting measures like after-school programmes or creating more public-sector jobs can't be funded.

And I really don't like the way that even the supposed good ones won't speak out against the violent extremists in their midst who are killing Americans at a rate of once every eight hours.

The point is that not only should there be fewer blue people – which can be accomplished by cutting bloated police budgets – but ultimately, there should be no blue people at all. We need a society where there is no separate caste of people operating above the law that they're charged to enforce.

Let's not back down in the face of the right-wing "Blue Lives Matter" backlash that says we should all just get along. Let's unite behind the black freedom struggle – and against the blue wall trying to hold it back.

CT

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Danny Katch is the author of *Socialism... Seriously: A Brief Guide to Human Liberation*. This article first appeared at www.socialistworker.org

I really don't like the way that even the supposed good cops won't speak out against the violent extremists in their midst who are killing Americans at a rate of once every eight hours

Now we're droning our own people

Peter van Buren explains why it matters that the Dallas police used a bomb to kill someone in America

I am not suggesting in any way that the cops should have invited the sniper out for tea

The Dallas police ended a stand-off with a gunman who killed five officers early this month with a tactic that is unprecedented: it blew him up using a robot. This represents the first time in American history that a drone (wheels for now, maybe wings later) has been used to kill an American citizen on American soil.

I get it, I get it.

The Dallas sniper had killed five cops. He was prepared to kill as many more as he could. He was in a stand-off with police, and negotiations had broken down. The Supreme Court has made it clear that in cases such as this, the due process clause (ie, a trial before execution in this instance) does not apply. If not for the robot bomb, the Dallas police would have eventually shot the sniper anyway. They were fully in their legal rights to kill him. None of those issues are in contention. I am not suggesting in any way that the cops should have invited the sniper out for tea.

I am suggesting we stop and realise that in 2016 the police used a robot to send in an explosive to blow a person up. I am unaware that such a thing has happened in Russia, North Korea, China, Iran or other places where the rule of law is held by the few in power.

The robot represents a significant escalation in the tools law enforcement use on the streets of America. Another weapon of

war has come home from the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan. In the isolated case of the sniper, dead may be dead, whether by explosive or rifle shot. But in the precedent set on the streets of Dallas, a very important line has been crossed.

Here's why this is very bad.

As in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is clear that an escalation in force by the police can only serve to inflame a situation, and trigger a subsequent escalation among those who will then seek to defend themselves against robots sent against them. In America's wars, the pattern of "You use a drone, I plant an IED," is all too familiar. Will the blowing up of a person by the cops be likely to soothe community tensions, or exacerbate them? Did the use of other military weaponry calm things in Ferguson, or encourage that anger to metastasise into other locations?

More force sooner?

And will robots increase or decrease the likelihood that cops will employ more force sooner in a situation?

"The further we remove the officer from the use of force and the consequences that come with it, the easier it becomes to use that tactic," said Rick Nelson, a fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a former counter-terrorism official. "It's what we have done with drones in warfare. Yet in war, your object is always to kill.

REMOTE DEATH

Law enforcement has a different mission.”

Who is responsible?

With a drone, it becomes easier to select the easier wrong of killing over the harder right of complex negotiations and methodical police work. Police officers sign up accepting in some ways a higher level of risk than soldiers, in that cops should be exercising a much more complex level of judgement in when and how to use force. Simply because they can use deadly force – or can get away with it – does not make it right. A robot removes risk, and dilutes personal responsibility.

For example, if an individual officer makes a decision to use his/her personal weapon, s/he takes on full responsibility for the outcome. In the case of a robot, the decision is the product of a long chain of command extending far from whomever has a finger on the switch. The same is true for

America’s drone army abroad. The shooter and the decider are far removed from one another.

Who is responsible? What if we start to believe no one is? **CT**

Peter Van Buren, a 24-year veteran of the State Department, spent a year in Iraq. Following his book, *We Meant Well: How I Helped Lose the Battle for the Hearts and Minds of the Iraqi People*, the Department of State began proceedings against him. Through the efforts of the Government Accountability Project and the ACLU, Van Buren instead retired from the State Department on his own terms. *Hooper’s War*, an anti-war novel, is due out in 2016. It is a tale of moral complexity, of decisions made in the split seconds that make up war, set in a fictional WWII where the atomic bomb never worked, and a land invasion of Japan took place. His web site is www.wemeantwell.com

Police officers sign up accepting in some ways a higher level of risk than soldiers, in that cops should be exercising a much more complex level of judgement in when and how to use force

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Terror imitates art

Marcus O'Donnell on the action thriller that was just a little too close to reality

In the weeks before the attack in Nice, posters across France had advertised the new Idris Elba action thriller Bastille Day with the eerie slogan: "This year they will become the fireworks."

As France was reeling from the deaths of 84 people at the Bastille Day festivities in Nice, millions of others around the world were obsessed with the augmented reality app Pokémon Go.

It may seem insensitive to mention these two events in the same sentence, and I am in no way drawing any kind of equivalence, but they do both challenge us, in different ways, to think about our augmented realities. They both tell us something about the global public imagination.

Increasingly, our experience of the "real" is an augmented or mediated one that integrates digital streams with everyday interactions. We are part of one another in increasingly large scale, mediated ways. From Montreal to Mexico to Brisbane, cities all over the world lit their buildings in red, white and blue as a sign of solidarity with the victims of Nice. They also, of course, took their grief to social media.

But Brexit, and the popularity of politicians such as Pauline Hanson and Donald Trump, also tell us that any emerging sense of global solidarity is complex and fractious. This sense that we are at the mercy of a staggering series of tragedies was expressed by a series of responses to the hashtag #2016InThreeWords.

Even before Nice, this feeling of being overwhelmed following Orlando and other shootings in the US and the assassination of Jo Cox in the UK was expressed on Twitter when YouTube comedian Matt Oswalt tweeted: "Is

Quentin Tarantino directing 2016?" More than 16,000 people retweeted his question.

That the horror of real world events is somehow cinematic or film-like has become a popular way of expressing the uneasy coexistence of both disbelief and a sense of these events' absolute normality.

In the weeks before the attack in Nice, posters across France had advertised the new Idris Elba action thriller Bastille Day with the eerie slogan: "This year they will become the fireworks."

In the film, which has been described by critics as a "competent popcorn-flavoured thriller" with some great chase scenes, Elba plays a macho CIA agent who has to work against the clock and his superiors to avert a terror attack on France's national holiday.

The film had been released earlier in the year elsewhere. But it was deliberately held back in France (where it was co-produced), and released on Wednesday, July 13, to coincide with the Bastille Day holiday. Immediately after the attacks, its distributors withdrew the film from release (and the posters).

In March, meanwhile, following the Brussels attacks, Sky Atlantic delayed the release of the second season of the TV series *The Tunnel* because of its terror theme.

This is not the first time that a film's release has been suspended in the wake of a terror attack. Forty-five films were cancelled, rescheduled or altered in the months follow-

NOT IN THE SCRIPT

ing the September 11 attacks. The Arnold Schwarzenegger vehicle *Collateral Damage*, which featured a graphic bomb assault orchestrated by Colombian terrorists, was delayed for months. The *Quiet American*, which traced CIA-seeded terrorist attacks on civilians in Vietnam, was held back for more than 12 months.

Black Hawk Down, on the other hand, suited the post 9/11 patriotic zeitgeist. A film about American military heroism and mateship, set against the tragedy of Somali genocide, it was rushed into cinemas ahead of schedule.

Bush sent his chief lieutenant Karl Rove to meet with Hollywood executives after 9/11 to discuss ways in which the administration and the film industry could work together around what a White House spokesman called: “the themes the government is emphasising, including tolerance, courage and patriotism.”

But far from Hollywood helping, some critics, including the filmmaker Robert Altman, blamed Hollywood for the terror attacks. He feared life was imitating art: “The movies set the pattern, and these people have copied the movies . . . How dare we continue to show this kind of mass destruction in movies? I just believe we created this atmosphere and taught them how to do it.”

Idris Elba was at pains after the Nice attack to not only offer his heartfelt solidarity to victims but also to distance himself from the kind of attitude Altman expressed. Elba emphasized that the film had been made two years previously, stressing that there was “no sort of correlation” between the events in Nice and the scenario in his film.

While producers and stars become very sensitive in the immediate aftermath of terror attacks, terror has actually become a standard trope in television and film post 9/11.

24’s Jack Bauer and his successor *Homeland*’s Carrie Mathison are the most famous examples. But 2013, for instance, produced two almost identical films about attacks on the White House: *White House Down* and *Olympus Has Fallen*.

This year *White House Down* producers



Poster for *Bastille Day* (2016). Photo: Studio Canal

have followed up with *London Has Fallen*. Then there’s *Bourne*. And *Bond*.

Still, the connection between terrifying violence and film is much more complex than one of either reckless inspiration or patriotic bulwark.

Jack Bauer, for example, was blamed for normalising torture and thus buttressing the Bush administration, but *24* also featured a series of ever more byzantine conspiracies that critiqued relationships between the White House, the oil industry and international terrorists.

In our highly mediated world, reality is augmented constantly. We are receiving streams of information and images that invite us into unexpected parallel worlds and we often struggle to make sense of them. Which is why we resort to easy proxies for solidarity, such as hashtags, or quick solutions, such as suspending films.

But we respond emotionally to both fictional narratives and media streams of world events in a complex range of ways. They can cause fear and anxiety but they also intensify our life, prompt reflection and allow for the development of empathy. **CT**

We are receiving streams of information and images that invite us into unexpected parallel worlds and we often struggle to make sense of them

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Marcus O'Donnell is associate professor, director of digital learning, at Deakin University in Victoria, Australia. This article was first published at www.theconveration.com

IN THE PICTURE



Images by Michael Subotsky & Patrick Waterhouse: Ponte City (Stredl)

BLIGHTED: Above – Rising high into the sky, Ponte City was once Johannesburg’s best residential address. Right – Clearing out the rubbish from the base of the inner core of the cylindrical building.

City life

Johannesburg’s Ponte City was built as luxury apartments for rich whites in 1975, its 54 floors making it the tallest residential tower in Africa. But, after the fall of apartheid, it became a dystopian hell-hole inhabited by gangsters, drug dealers, pimps and prostitutes. The building was almost turned into a prison before it was bought in 2007 by a new owner, who dreamed of restoring it as expensive condos . . .

Photos: **Mikhael Subotsky & Patrick Waterhouse**

Words: **Tony Sutton**





IN THE PICTURE



Images by Michael Subotsky & Patrick Waterhouse: Ponte City (Steidl)

PRAYING FOR HELP: A religious service takes place on the hill above Ponte City. In the background is Hillbrow Tower. Both are situated in an area that once was a white playground, but abandoned by them after the fall of apartheid.

Much international architecture in the early '70s followed the stark stylings of Mies Van Der Rohe: soaring edifices, stripped to a concrete and glass minimalism. Johannesburg had plenty of those, but Ponte City, built in 1975, strayed from the template. It didn't resemble an upended box, but looked more like a giant toilet roll – stark concrete on the outside, with a hole right through the centre – 54-floors of apartments, with windows that didn't open, and no verandahs to break the monotonous symmetry.

At first, the building – designed by 29-year-old architect Rodney Grosskopff in the aptly named New Brutalist style – seemed blessed. Erected as an up-market jewel on the skyline of the cosmopolitan Hillbrow/Berea area, Ponte was an elite residential gem, offering luxury apartments with a dominating view of picturesque mine-dumps and the nearby shimmering lights of the city's whites-only urban playground. The 567ft tower was the

highest residential building on the continent, an urban oasis of sophisticated living.

The dream began its descent into nightmare during in the early '90s, the collapse of apartheid stimulating a hectic white flight from Hillbrow, whose residents who didn't head back to their overseas homelands opted for the relative security of the city's gated northern suburbs. Ponte quickly degenerated into an urban slum as former township residents, and penniless refugees escaping political devastation in the Congo, Zimbabwe and Somalia, replaced the previous well-heeled tenants. This influx was augmented by gangsters, drug dealers, pimps and prostitutes, who turned the area into a crime-riddled hellhole.

I saw Ponte almost every day during the 14 years I lived in Johannesburg and during many business trips since, but I've only set foot in it twice: first when my wife and I visited a colleague who lived mid-way up the tower.

IN THE PICTURE

Images by Michael Subotsky & Patrick Waterhouse: Ponte City (Steidl)



Wall Game: Above – Photograph on the wall of one of the apartments vacated during a failed attempt at gentrification. Below – The underground car park at Ponte City. It is said this, and some of the lower floors, was once a brothel.



Stepping out of the lift, Jools panicked at the huge gaping vastness of the black hole in the centre of the building. Then, ‘safely’ inside the apartment, her legs turned to jelly once again as she was invited to stand by the almost full-length, full-width, windows and admire the view. Overwhelmed by vertigo, she turned her back, vowing never to return.

My second – more apprehensive – trip took place a decade or so ago, when I was escorted into the building by a journalist pal, during a tour that took in a few other areas in the city that the guidebooks were inclined to ignore. “No problem,” he said, “The people are friendly; just make sure your wallet is locked in the car, along with your camera and anything else that might be easy to sell on the nearest street corner.” He was right –

IN THE PICTURE



Images by Michael Subotsky & Patrick Waterhouse: Ponte City (Steidl)

FAMILY TIME: In the kitchen of one of the apartments at Ponte City.

the people we met were friendly, although some of those who lurked on the fringes of the scene seemed markedly less so. I was pleased to have visited the place, more so after a few soothing beers in a bar several miles away.

As the 20th-century drew to a close, the fed-up owners tried to sell the building, which by now had earned the gruesome nickname – Suicide Central – due to the number of people who’d leaped off the tower. Then the government took a look and decided that it might make a fine prison – a concrete Alcatraz-in-the-sky. That plan was abandoned, and Ponte was taken over in 2007 by a new owner, who promptly kicked out half the tenants, gutted the empty rooms and started to refurbish the building as a desirable, New York-style, upmarket address topped by \$500,000 penthouses. Ponte’s construction manager Quinton Oosthuizen described the dire

state of the building to the Mail & Guardian newspaper: “It was nasty; we pulled out some very funny things. Anything from mattresses, rubble, loose steel, kitchen and bathroom fittings – even dead stray cats.” However, the 2008 financial crisis ended that dream: the developer went bankrupt and would-be buyers lost their deposits.

Ponte reverted to its former owners, who signalled another change of plan. This time, instead of aiming at the top end of the market, the tower became a working class ‘haven’ in the middle of the brutal city, the new selling pitch ‘security,’ rather than ‘luxury.’ The plan was a success: today, Ponte is a cheap home for students and middle-class families – including, for the first time in decades, a handful of whites – with security that is claimed to be “as tight as Fort Knox.”

Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse were part of

IN THE PICTURE

Images by Michael Subotsky & Patrick Waterhouse: Ponte City (Steidl)



THE VIEW FROM HERE: Looking out of an apartment window at another local icon – the Hillbrow Tower.

the 2007 revitalisation team, and spent much of their time photographing the apartments as they were emptied and prepared for luxury renovation. Over the following five years, they documented every aspect of Ponte, photographing every door and the view from every window, developing their award-winning book, *Ponte City*. The book's introduction recalls, "Sitting in apartments where the televisions were tuned to South African soap operas, Congolese sitcoms, Hollywood romances and Nollywood melodramas, it sometimes felt that all the stories of violence and seduction they had heard about Ponte were not in the building itself, but on the screens.

"Perceptions of Ponte have always been extreme, its joys and ills exaggerated equally. It has been hailed as the next big thing in urban living and derided as a suicide centre and a rubbish dump. The commentary

here does not discount these myths but positions them in relation to the many other historical accounts of the building. It is an attempt to understand the unique place of the building in Johannesburg and in the popular imagination.

"Today life in Ponte goes on, as ordinary and extraordinary as life anywhere else. But the building is still enveloped in contending projections. It remains a focal point of the city's dreams and nightmares, seen as refuge or monstrosity, dreamland or dystopia, a lightning rod for a society's hopes and fears, and always a beacon to navigate by."

In addition to the hard-back book of photographs, this epic record of a remarkable building is accompanied by 17 booklets, edited by noted Johannesburg author, Ivan Vladislavic, which tell the story of Ponte from every imaginable viewpoint. It's a collection that has

IN THE PICTURE



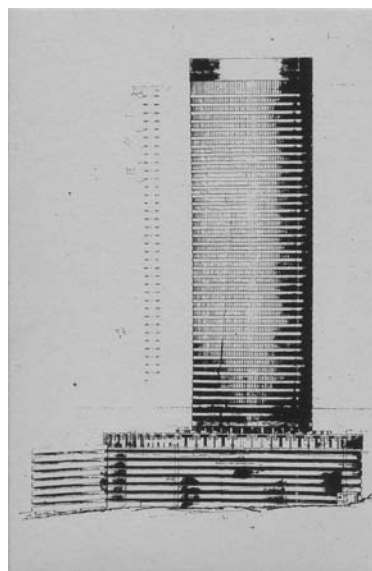
Images by Michael Subotsky & Patrick Waterhouse: Ponte City (Steidl)

SUICIDE CENTRAL: The inner core of the Ponte is a destination for people who feel the need for oblivion.

been described by Mother Jones magazine as “an audacious deep-dive into Ponte City that traces its history through archival documents and photographs of those who live there.”

After all of this, you’d be excused for thinking that Ponte City is cursed, and the best thing might be to demolish it and start again. Yes, that idea has crossed the minds of anguished owners and urban officials. The biggest obstacle seems to be that the structure is so solid that nothing short of a nuclear bomb would shift it – and even that’s not a certainty.

“Ponte may never be suitable for residents of this civilisation,” said one observer in that Joburg bar I visited more than a decade ago, after my second trip to Ponte, “but it’ll make a perfect post-apocalyptic fortress for a real-life Mad Max.” **CT**



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Me Tarzan. You Adam

Adam Hochschild tells how he met the ghosts of his own work

I saw myself as one of the good guys, protecting America from “alien” invasions and the potential nuclear obliteration of the country at the hands of godless communists from the Soviet Union

Some time ago I wrote a book about one of the great crimes of the last 150 years: the conquest and exploitation of the Congo by King Leopold II of Belgium. When *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* was published, I thought I had found all the major characters in that brutal patch of history. But a few weeks ago I realised I had left one out: Tarzan.

Let me explain. Although a documentary film based on my book did appear, I often imagined what Hollywood might do with such a story. It would, of course, have featured the avaricious King Leopold, who imposed a slave labour system on his colony to extract its vast wealth in ivory and wild rubber, with millions dying in the process. And it would surely have included the remarkable array of heroic figures who resisted or exposed his misdeeds. Among them were African rebel leaders such as

KING LEOPOLD’S GHOST

A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa

Adam Hochschild

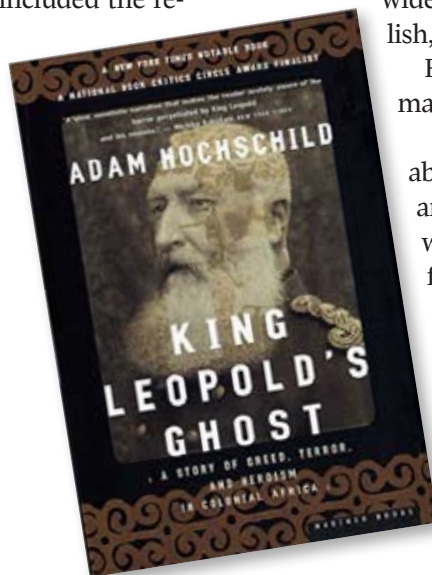
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\$9.50 (Amazon.com)

Chief Mulume Niama, who fought to the death trying to preserve the independence of his Sanga people; an Irishman, Roger Casement, whose exposure to the Congo made him realise that his own country was an exploited colony and who was later hanged by the British; two black Americans who courageously managed to get information to the outside world; and the Nigerian-born Hezekiah Andrew Shanu, a small businessman who secretly leaked documents to a British journalist and was hounded to death for doing so. Into the middle of this horror show, travelling up the Congo River as a steamboat officer in training, came a young seaman profoundly shocked by what he saw. When he finally got his impressions onto the page, he would produce the most widely read short novel in English, *Heart of Darkness*.

How could all of this not make a great film?

I found myself thinking about how to structure it and which actors might play what roles. Perhaps the filmmakers would offer me a bit part. At the very least, they would undoubtedly seek my advice. And so I pictured myself on location with the cast, a voice for good politics



HEROES & VILLAINS

and historical accuracy, correcting a detail here, adding another there, making sure the film didn't stint in evoking the full brutality of that era. The movie, I was certain, would make viewers in multiplexes across the world realise at last that colonialism in Africa deserved to be ranked with Nazism and Soviet communism as one of the great totalitarian systems of modern times.

In case you hadn't noticed, that film has yet to be made. And so imagine my surprise, when, a few weeks ago, in a theatre in a giant mall, I encountered two characters I had written about in *King Leopold's Ghost*. And who was onscreen with them? A veteran of nearly a century of movies – silent and talking, in black and white as well as colour, animated as well as live action (not to speak of TV shows and video games): Tarzan.

The Legend of Tarzan, an attempt to jump-start that ancient, creaking, franchise for the 21st-century, has made the most modest of bows to changing times by inserting a little more politics and history than dozens of the ape man's previous adventures found necessary. It starts by informing us that, at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, the European powers began dividing up the colonial spoils of Africa, and that King Leopold II now holds the Congo as his privately owned colony.

Tarzan, however, is no longer in the jungle where he was born and where, after his parents' early deaths, he was raised by apes. Instead, married to Jane, he has taken over his ancestral title, Lord Greystoke, and has occupied his palatial manor in England. (Somewhere along the line he evidently took a crash course that brought him from "Me Tarzan, you Jane" to the manners and speech of a proper earl.)

But you won't be surprised to learn that Africa needs him badly. There's a diamond scandal, a slave labour system, and other sculduggery afoot in Leopold's Congo. A bold, sassy black American, George Washington Williams, persuades him to head

back to the continent to investigate, and comes along as his sidekick. The villain of the story, Leopold's top dog in the Congo, scheming to steal those African diamonds, is Belgian Captain Léon Rom, who promptly kidnaps Tarzan and Jane. And from there the plot only thickens, even if it never deepens. Gorillas and crocodiles, cliff-leaping, heroic rescues, battles with man and beast abound, and in the movie's grand finale, Tarzan uses his friends, the lions, to mobilise thousands of wildebeest to storm out of the jungle and wreak havoc on the colony's capital, Boma.

With Jane watching admiringly, Tarzan and Williams then sink the steamboat on which the evil Rom is trying to spirit the diamonds away, while thousands of Africans lining the hills wave their spears and cheer their white saviour. Tarzan and Jane soon have a baby, and seem destined to live happily ever after – at least until the Legend of Tarzan II comes along.

History provides the characters, Tarzan the vines

Both Williams and Rom were, in fact, real people and, although I wasn't the first to notice them, it's clear enough where Hollywood's scriptwriters found them. There's even a photo of Alexander Skarsgård, the muscular Swede who plays Tarzan, with a copy of *King Leopold's Ghost* in hand. Samuel L. Jackson, who plays Williams with considerable brio, has told the press that the director, David Yates, sent him the book in preparation for his role.

A version of Batman in Africa was not quite the film I previewed so many times in my fantasies. Yet I have to admit that, despite the context, it was strangely satisfying to see those two historical figures brought more or less to life on screen, even if to prop up the vine swinger created by novelist Edgar Rice Burroughs and played most famously by Johnny Weissmuller. Williams, in particular, was a remarkable man. An American Civil War veteran, lawyer, jour-

Over the last half-century, whenever and wherever the US military "deploys," often to underdeveloped towns and villages in places such as Vietnam, Afghanistan, or Iraq, it arrives very much in the spirit of those sci-fi aliens

HEROES & VILLAINS

It went without question that we weren't the heartless evil empire. We were the Jedi! And metaphorically speaking, weren't we the ones who, in the end, blew up the Soviet Death Star and won the Cold War?

nalist, historian, Baptist minister, and the first black member of the Ohio state legislature, he went to Africa expecting to find, in the benevolent colony that King Leopold II advertised to the world, a place where his fellow black Americans could get the skilled jobs denied them at home. Instead, he discovered what he called “the Siberia of the African Continent” – a hellhole of racism, land theft, and a spreading slave labour system enforced by the whip, gun, and chains.

From the Congo, he wrote an extraordinary “open letter” to Leopold, published in European and American newspapers and quoted briefly at the end of the movie. It was the first comprehensive exposé of a colony that would soon become the subject of a worldwide human rights campaign. Sadly, he died of tuberculosis on his way home from Africa before he could write the Congo book for which he had gathered so much material. As New York Times film critic Manohla Dargis observed, “Williams deserves a grand cinematic adventure of his own.”

By contrast, in real life as in the film (where he is played with panache by Christoph Waltz), Léon Rom was a consummate villain. An officer in the private army Leopold used to control the territory, Rom is elevated on screen to a position vastly more important than any he ever held. Nonetheless, he was an appropriate choice to represent that ruthless regime. A British explorer once observed the severed heads of 21 Africans placed as a border around the garden of Rom's house. He also kept a gallows permanently erected in front of the nearby headquarters from which he directed the post of Stanley Falls. Rom appears to have crossed paths briefly with Joseph Conrad and to have been one of the models for Mr. Kurtz, the head-collecting central figure of *Heart of Darkness*.

The Legend of Tarzan is essentially a superhero movie, Spiderman in Africa (even if you know that the footage of African landscapes was blended by computer with



JUNGLE JUSTICE: Poster for an earlier version of Tarzan

actors on a sound stage in England). Skarsgård (or his double or his electronic avatar) swoops through the jungle on hanging vines in classic Tarzan style. Also classic, alas, is the making of yet another movie about Africa whose hero and heroine are white. No Africans speak more than a few lines and, when they do, it's usually to voice praise or friendship for Tarzan or Jane. From *The African Queen* to *Out of Africa*, that's nothing new for Hollywood.

Nonetheless, there are, at odd moments, a few authentic touches of the real Congo: the railway cars of elephant tusks bound for the coast and shipment to Europe (the first great natural resource to be plundered); Leopold's private army, the much-hated Force Publique; and African slave labourers in chains – Tarzan frees them, of course.

While some small details are reasonably accurate, from the design of a steamboat to the fact that white Congo officials such as Rom indeed did favour white suits, you won't be shocked to learn that the film takes liberties with history. Of course, all novels and films do that, but the Legend of Tarzan does so in a curious way: it brings Leopold's rapacious regime to a spectacular halt in 1890, the year in which it's set – thank you, Tarzan! That, however, was the moment when the worst of the horror the king had unleashed was just getting underway.

HEROES & VILLAINS

It was in 1890 that workers started constructing a railroad around the long stretch of rapids near the Congo River's mouth; Joseph Conrad sailed to Africa on the ship that carried the first batch of rails and ties. Eight years later, that vast construction project, now finished, would accelerate the transport of soldiers, arms, disassembled steamboats, and other supplies that would turn much of the inland territory's population into slave labourers. Leopold was by then hungry for another natural resource: rubber. Millions of Congolese would die to satisfy his lust for wealth.

Tarzan in Vietnam

Here's the good news: I think I'm finally getting the hang of Hollywood-style filmmaking. Tarzan's remarkable foresight in vanquishing the Belgian evildoers before the worst of Leopold's reign of terror opens the door for his future films, which I've started to plan – and this time, on the film set, I expect one of those canvas-backed chairs with my name on it. Naturally, our hero wouldn't stop historical catastrophes before they begin – there's no drama in that – but always in their early stages.

For example, I just published a book about the Spanish Civil War, another perfect place and time for Tarzan to work his wonders. In the fall of 1936, he could swing his way through the plane and acacia trees of Madrid's grand boulevards to mobilise the animals in that city's zoo and deal a stunning defeat to Generalissimo Francisco Franco's attacking Nationalist troops. Sent fleeing at that early moment, Franco's soldiers would, of course, lose the war, leaving the Spanish Republic triumphant and the Generalissimo's long, grim dictatorship excised from history.

In World War II, soon after Hitler and Stalin had divided Eastern Europe between them, Tarzan could have a twofer if he stormed down from the Carpathian mountains in late 1939, leading a vast pack of that region's legendary wolves. He could deal

smashing blows to both armies, and then, just as he freed slaves in the Congo, throw open the gates of concentration camps in both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. And why stop there? If, after all this, the Japanese still had the temerity to attack Pearl Harbor, Tarzan could surely mobilise the dolphins, sharks, and whales of the Pacific Ocean to cripple the Japanese fleet as easily as he sunk Léon Rom's steamboat in a Congo harbour.

In Vietnam – if Tarzan made it there before the defoliant Agent Orange denuded its jungles – there would be vines aplenty to swing from and water buffalo he could enlist to help rout the foreign armies, first French, then American, before they got a foothold in the country.

Some more recent wartime interventions might, however, be problematic. In whose favour, for example, should he intervene in Iraq in 2003?: Saddam Hussein or the invading troops of George W. Bush? Far better to unleash him on targets closer to home: Wall Street bankers, hedge-fund managers, select Supreme Court justices, a certain New York real estate mogul. And how about global warming? Around the world, coal-fired power plants, fracking rigs, and tar sands mining pits await destruction by Tarzan and his thundering herd of elephants.

If the Legend of Tarzan turns out to have the usual set of sequels, take note, David Yates: since you obviously took some characters and events from my book for the first instalment, I'm expecting you to come to me for more ideas. All I ask in return is that Tarzan teach me to swing from the nearest vines in any studio of your choice, and let me pick the next battle to win. **CT**

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Adam Hochschild is the author of eight books, most recently *Spain in Our Hearts: Americans in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939*, and teaches at the Graduate School of Journalism, University of California, Berkeley, California. This article first appeared at www.tomdispatch.com

We Americans still think of ourselves as the underdogs, the rebels, the liberators. And so we once were, a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away

Why Corbyn terrifies the Guardian

Jonathan Cook explains how the changing political scene is causing chaos and confusion in the newsroom of Britain's most liberal newspaper

The Guardian, the house paper of the British left – long the preferred choice of teachers, social workers and Labour activists – has been savaging Corbyn too, all while it haemorrhages readers and sales revenue

Political developments in Britain appear more than a little confusing at the moment. The Parliamentary Labour Party is in open revolt against a leader recently elected with the biggest mandate in the party's history. Most Labour MPs call Jeremy Corbyn "unelectable," even though they have worked tirelessly to undermine him from the moment he became leader, never giving him a chance to prove whether he could win over the wider British public.

Now they are staging a leadership challenge and trying to rig the election by denying tens of thousands of Labour members who recently joined the party the chance to vote. If the MPs fail in the coming election, as seems almost certain, indications are that they will continue their war of attrition against Corbyn, impervious to whether their actions destroy the party they claim to love.

Meanwhile, the Guardian, the house paper of the British left – long the preferred choice of teachers, social workers and Labour activists – has been savaging Corbyn too, all while it haemorrhages readers and sales revenue. Online, the Guardian's reports and commentaries about the Labour leader – usually little more than character assassination or the reheating of gossip and innuendo – are ridiculed below the line by its own read-

ers. And yet it ploughs on regardless.

The Labour Party ignores its members' views, just as the Guardian ignores its readers' views. What is going on?

Strangely, a way to understand these developments may have been provided by a scientific philosopher named Thomas Kuhn. Back in the 1960s, he wrote an influential book, the *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. His argument was that scientific thought did not evolve in a linear fashion, as scientific knowledge increased. Rather, modern human history had been marked by a series of forceful disruptions in scientific thought that he termed "paradigm shifts." One minute a paradigm such as Newtonian mechanics dominated, the next an entirely different model, such as quantum mechanics, took its place – seemingly arriving out of nowhere.

Importantly, a shift, or revolution, was not related to the moment when the previous scientific theory was discredited by the mounting evidence against it. There was a lag, usually a long delay, between the evidence showing the new theory was a better "fit" and the old theory being discarded.

The reason, Kuhn concluded, was because of an emotional and intellectual inertia in the scientific community. Too many people – academics, research institutions, funding bodies, pundits – were invested in

the established theory. As students, it was what they had grown up “knowing.” Leading professors in the field had made their reputations advancing and “proving” the theory. Vast sums had been expended in trying to confirm the theory. University departments were set up on the basis that the theory was correct. Too many people had too much to lose to admit they were wrong.

A paradigm shift typically occurred, Kuhn argued, when a new generation of scholars and researchers exposed to the rival theory felt sufficiently frustrated by this inertia and had reached sufficiently senior posts that they could launch an assault on the old theory. At that point, the proponents of the traditional theory faced a crisis. The scientific establishment would resist, often aggressively, but at some point the fortifications protecting the old theory would crumble and collapse. Then, suddenly, almost everyone would switch to the new theory, treating the old theory as if it were a relic of the dark ages.

Science and politics are, of course, not precisely analogous. Nonetheless, I would suggest this is a useful way of understanding what we see happening to the British left at the moment. A younger generation no longer accepts the assumptions of neoliberalism that have guided and enriched an elite for nearly four decades.

Ideas of endless economic growth, inexhaustible oil, and an infinitely adaptable planet no longer make sense to a generation looking to its future rather than glorying in its past. They see an elite with two heads, creating an illusion of choice but enforcing strict conformity. On the fundamentals of economic and foreign policy, the Red Tories are little different from the Blue Tories.

Or at least that was the case until Corbyn came along. He and his supporters threaten a paradigm shift. The old elites, whether in the Labour Parliamentary Party or the Guardian editorial offices, sense the danger, even if they lack the necessary awareness to

appreciate Corbyn’s significance. They will fight tooth and nail to protect what they have. They will do so even if their efforts create so much anger and resentment they risk unleashing darker political forces.

Corbyn’s style of socialism draws on enduring traditions and values – of compassion, community and solidarity – that the young have never really known, except in history books. Those values seem very appealing to a generation trapped in the dying days of a deeply atomised, materialist, hyper-competitive world. They want change and Corbyn offers them a path to it.

But whatever his critics claim, Corbyn isn’t just a relic of past politics. Despite his age, he is also a very modern figure. He exudes a Zen-like calm, a self-awareness and a self-effacement that inspires those who have been raised in a world of 24-hour narcissism.

In these increasingly desperate times, Corbyn’s message is reaching well beyond the young, of course. A paradigm shift doesn’t occur just because the young replace the old. It involves the old coming to accept – however reluctantly – that the young may have found an answer to a question they had forgotten needed answering. Many in the older generation know about solidarity and community. They may have been dazzled by promises of an aspirational lifestyle and the baubles of rampant consumption, but it is slowly dawning on them, too, that this model has a rapidly approaching sell-by date.

Those most wedded to the neoliberal model – the political, economic and media elites – will be the last to be weaned off a system that has so richly rewarded them. They would rather bring the whole house crashing down than give Corbyn and his supporters the chance to repair it. **CT**

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Jonathan Cook *Jonathan Cook won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His website is www.jonathan-cook.net*

Ideas of endless economic growth, inexhaustible oil, and an infinitely adaptable planet no longer make sense to a generation looking to its future rather than glorying in its past

Almost-forgotten: UK's role in torture flights

Justice has been evaded in the aftermath of country's shameful complicity in renditions and detentions during the War on Terror, says **Sam Raphael**

An aborted judge-led inquiry into British involvement in prisoner mistreatment uncovered more than 200 separate allegations of abuse, at least 40 of which were significant enough to warrant detailed investigation

Even as the Chilcot Report lays bare the sad story of the UK's decision to join in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, a veil is still drawn over another dark aspect of Britain's partnership with George W Bush's administration. For years now, the British state has barely acknowledged its alleged deep involvement in the abuse of terror suspects, and there has been very little in the way of justice for the victims of torture and "rendition" – the practice of abducting suspects without due legal process and transferring them to other countries or territories for interrogation.

Nonetheless, my colleague Ruth Blakeley and I have found that this involvement was direct, deep and longstanding. Moreover, most official channels have been closed to keep the extent of the UK's co-operation from coming to light.

An aborted judge-led inquiry into British involvement in prisoner mistreatment uncovered more than 200 separate allegations of abuse, at least 40 of which were significant enough to warrant detailed investigation. Some of these cases have led to civil action against the British government in the UK courts, others have led to police investigations and criminal inquiry.

In response, however, the government has maintained its innocence in every individual case while simultaneously working to block the release of relevant information.

There have been attempts to withhold publication of key documents in open court, such as those which demonstrate that British intelligence knew about the torture of prisoners by the CIA before participating directly in their interrogation.

Where British courts have refused to accept government attempts to hold hearings in camera, the government has offered substantial payouts without any admission of liability. Indeed, the 2013 Justice and Security Act, which introduced so-called "closed material procedures" into the main civil courts, gave the state the legal ability to keep details of British involvement in torture out of the public record.

Outside the UK court system, government officials have made regular representations to the US Senate to ensure that any mention of the UK was redacted from its report into CIA torture. Likewise, my Freedom of Information Act requests for official records have been met with a range of techniques to deny the release of information regarding British involvement in torture.

Individual cases, meanwhile, aren't finding resolution. It was recently announced that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) will not press charges against an unnamed intelligence official for involvement in the rendition of Libyan dissidents and their families to Colonel Gaddafi's torture chambers as there was insufficient evidence to

proceed. However, the CPS said that there was sufficient evidence to support the claim that the official in question had been in communication with individuals from the foreign countries responsible for torture and rendition, and that he'd sought informal political authority to do so. The official wasn't named explicitly, but it is widely understood to be Sir Mark Allen, a former director of counter-terrorism at MI6.

This decision is simply the latest instalment in the government's attempt to hide its hand. But to be clear, despite all the obfuscation and murk, there is now a huge weight of evidence which points, undeniably, towards British complicity in these crimes, including renditions to Gaddafi's Libya.

Alongside a number of investigative journalists, human rights investigators and legal teams, we at the Rendition Project – www.therenditionproject.org.uk – have spent years documenting this evidence. Having gathered and reviewed what's available, our conclusions are clear: Britain's involvement in rendition and torture during the “war on terror” was deep, direct, multi-faceted, and should now be considered a matter of historical record.

British intelligence and security agencies have worked with counter-terrorism partners to identify and apprehend suspects and disappear them into secret detention where torture was endemic. Once suspects were in secret detention, British intelligence and security agencies were, in many cases, intimately involved in the torture that took place, either by participating in the interrogations, providing the intelligence which formed the basis of the torture, or receiving intelligence gained through torture.

In addition, British territory was used as a key logistical hub for the global network of secret detention and torture, with the UK facilitating the movement of suspects between secret prisons.

The evidence of this complicity is nowhere clearer than in the rendition of Libyan dissidents and their families back to the

Gaddafi government. One memo from the CIA to its Libyan counterpart made clear that the agency was “aware that your service had been cooperating with the British to effect [Sami al-Saadi's] removal to Tripoli,” and offered to step in to “render [him] and his family into your custody.”

Similarly, a memo from Allen to his counterpart in Libya, Musa Kusa – obtained by Human Rights Watch after the fall of Tripoli and submitted to the UN Committee against Torture – explicitly congratulated Kusa on the “safe arrival” of Libyan rebel commander Abu ‘Abd Allah Sadiq Belhadj and discussed direct British access to the detainee's interrogations: “Most importantly, I congratulate you on the safe arrival of Abu ‘Abd Allah Sadiq [Belhadj]. This was the least we could do for you and for Libya to demonstrate the remarkable relationship we have built over the years. I am so glad . . . Amusingly, we got a request from the Americans to channel requests for information from Abu ‘Abd Allah through the Americans. I have no intention of doing any such thing. The intelligence on Abu ‘Abd Allah was British. I know I did not pay for the air cargo. But I feel I have the right to deal with you direct on this and am very grateful for the help you are giving us.”

Al-Saadi and Belhadj have testified that they were interrogated by British intelligence officers once in Libyan custody, with further evidence that intelligence agencies sent more than 1,600 questions to their Libyan counterparts. Al-Saadi, his wife and their four children were subsequently rendered and detained for six years. The dissident himself was beaten and subjected to electric shocks.

The UK's involvement may have been one step removed, focused on supporting counter-terrorism allies in ways which would hide the British hand, but justice has nonetheless been evaded. It remains to be seen how and when the full truth of Britain's complicity in torture and illegal detention during the War on Terror will come out.

Britain's involvement in rendition and torture during the “war on terror” was deep, direct, multifaceted, and should now be considered a matter of historical record

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Sam Raphael is senior lecturer in international relations at the University of Westminster in London. This report was originally published at www.theconversation.com

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The world after me

Tom Engelhardt opens an old photo album and reflects on the eternal wartime that is modern-day America

In all those years when I might have pressed my mother for so much more about herself, her family, her youthful years, I was too young to give a damn. Now, I can't tell you what I'd give to ask those questions and find out what I can never know

I recently dug my mother's childhood photo album out of the depths of my bedroom closet. When I opened it, I found the glue she had used as a girl to paste her life in place had given way, and on many pages the photos were a jumble.

My mother was born early in the last century. Today, for most of that ancient collection of photos and memorabilia – drawings (undoubtedly hers), a Caruthers School of Piano programme, a Camp Weewan-Eeta brochure, a Hyde Park High School junior prom “senior ticket,” and photos of unknown boys, girls, and adults – there's no one left to tell me who was who or what was what.

In some of them, I can still recognise my mother's youthful face, and that of her brother, who died so long ago but remains quite recognisable (even so many decades before I knew him). As for the rest – the girl in what looks like a gym outfit doing a headstand, all those young women lined up on a beach in what must then have been risqué bathing suits, the boy kneeling with his arms outstretched toward my perhaps nine-year-old mother – they've all been swept away by the tides of time.

And so it goes, of course. For all of us, sooner or later.

My mother was never much for talking about the past. Intent on becoming a professional caricaturist, she lit out from

her hometown, Chicago, for the city of her dreams, New York, and essentially never looked back. For whatever reason, looking back frightened her.

And in all those years when I might have pressed her for so much more about herself, her family, her youthful years, I was too young to give a damn. Now, I can't tell you what I'd give to ask those questions and find out what I can never know. Her mother and father, my grandparents who died before I was born, her sister whom I met once at perhaps age six, her friends and neighbours, swains and sidekicks, they're all now the dust of history in an album that is disintegrating into a pile of black flakes at the slightest touch. Even for me, most of the photos in it are as meaningless (if strangely moving) as the ones you'd pick up in an antique store or at a garage sale.

Lost children on a destabilising planet

I just had – I won't say celebrated – my 72nd birthday. It was a natural moment to think about both the past that stretches behind me and the truncated future ahead. Recently, in fact, I've had the dead on my mind. I'm about to re-copy my ancient address book for what undoubtedly will be the last time. (Yes, I'm old enough to prefer all that information on paper, not in the ether.) And, of course, when I flip through those fading pages, I see, as befits my age,

something like a book of the dead and realise that the next iteration will be so much shorter.

It's sometimes said of the dead that they've "crossed over." In the context of our present world, I've started thinking of them as refugees of a sort – every one of them uprooted from their lives (as we all will be one day) and sent across some unknown frontier into a truly foreign land. But if our fate is, in the end, to be the ultimate refugees, heading into a place where there will be no resettlement camps, assumedly nothing at all, I wonder, too, about the world after me, the one I'll leave behind when I finally cross that border.

I wonder, too – how could I not with my future life as a "refugee" in mind? – about the 65 million human beings uprooted from their homes in 2015 alone, largely in places where we Americans have been fighting our wars for this last decade and a half. And it's hard not to notice how many more have followed in their path this year, including at least 80,000 of the Sunni inhabitants of Iraq's recently "liberated" and partially destroyed city of Fallujah. In the process, tens of millions of them have remained internal exiles in their own country (or what is left of it), while tens of millions have officially become refugees by crossing borders into Turkey, Lebanon, or Jordan, by taking to the seas in flimsy, overcrowded craft heading for Greece (from Turkey) or Italy (from Libya) moving onward in waves of desperation, hope, and despair, and drowning in alarming numbers. At the end of their journeys, they have sometimes found help and succour, but often enough only hostility and loathing, as if they were the ones who had committed a crime, done something wrong.

I think as well about the nearly 10 percent of Iraqi children, 1.5 million of them in a country gripped by chaos, war, ethnic conflict, insurgency, and terror who, according to a recent UNICEF report, have had to flee their homes since 2014, or the 20% of

Iraqi kids (kids!) who are "at serious risk of death, injury, sexual violence, and recruitment into armed groups." I think about the 51 percent of all those refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and elsewhere who were children, many separated from their parents and alone on Planet Earth.

No child deserves such a fate. Ever. Each uprooted child who has lost his or her parents, and perhaps access to education or any childhood at all, represents a crime against the future.

And I think often enough about our response to all this, the one we've practiced for the last 15 years: more bombs, more missiles, more drone strikes, more advisers, more special ops raids, more weapons deals, and with it all not success or victory by any imaginable standard, but only the further destabilisation of increasing regions of the planet, the further spread of terror movements, and the generation of yet more uprooted human beings, lost children, refugees – ever more, that is, of the terrorised and the terrorists. If this represents the formula from hell, it's also been a proven one over this last decade-and-a-half. It works, as long as what you mean to do is bring chaos to significant swathes of the planet and force yet more children in ever more unimaginable situations.

If you live in the United States, it's easy enough to be shocked (unless, of course, you're a supporter) when Donald Trump calls for the banning of Muslims from this country, or Newt Gingrich advocates the testing of "every person here who is of a Muslim background and if they believe in sharia they should be deported," or various Republican governors fight to keep a pitiful few Syrian refugees out of their states. It's easy enough to tsk-tsk over such sentiments, cite a long tradition of American xenophobia and racism, and so on. In truth, however, most of this (however hair-raising) remains bluster at this point. The real "xenophobic" action has taken place in distant lands where the US Air Force reigns

The US response is more bombs, more missiles, more drone strikes, more advisers, more special ops raids, more weapons deals, and with it all not success or victory by any imaginable standard, but only the further destabilisation of increasing regions of the planet, the further spread of terror movements, and the generation of yet more uprooted human beings

FUTURE SHOCK

There isn't the faintest understanding here that if you really don't want to create generations of terrorists amid a growing population loosed from all the boundaries of normal life, you'd better have a Marshall Plan for the Greater Middle East

supreme, where a country that once created the Marshall Plan to raise a continent levelled by war can no longer imagine investing in or creating anything but further vistas of destruction and destabilisation.

The Muslims that Donald Trump wants to ban are, after all, the very ones his country has played such a part in uprooting and setting in motion. And how can the few who might ever make it to this country compare to the millions who have flooded Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon, among other places, further destabilising the Middle East (which, in case you forgot, remains the oil heartland of the planet)? Where is the Marshall Plan for them or for the rest of a region that the US and its allies are now in the process of dismantling (with the eager assistance of the Islamic State, various extremist outfits, Bashar al-Assad, and quite a crew of others)?

What bombs can't build

We Americans think well of ourselves. From our presidents on down, we seldom hesitate to imagine our country as a singularly "exceptional" nation – and also as an exceptionally generous one. In recent years, however, that generosity has been little in evidence at home or abroad (except where the US military is concerned). Domestically, the country has split between a rising 1 percent (and their handlers and enablers) and parts of the other 99 percent who feel themselves on the path to hell. Helped along by Donald Trump's political circus, this has given the US the look of a land

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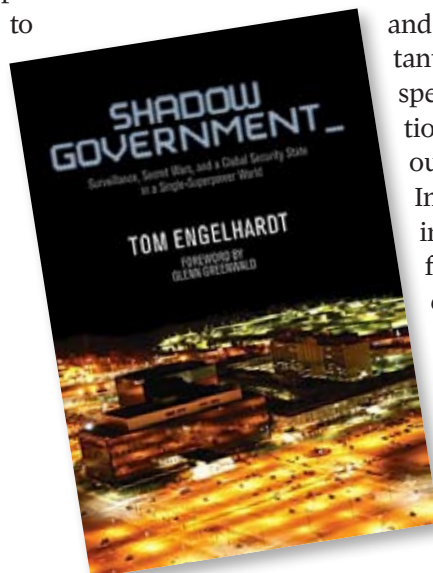
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spinning into something like Third Worldism, even though it remains the globe's "sole superpower" and wealthiest country.

Meanwhile, our professed streak of generosity hasn't extended to our own infrastructure, which – speaking of worlds swept away by the tides of time – would have boggled the minds of my parents and other Americans of their era. The idea that the country's highways, byways, bridges, levees, pipelines, and so on could be decaying in significant ways and starved for dollars without a response from the political class would have been inconceivable to them. And it does represent a strikingly ungenerous message sent from that class to the children of some future America: you and the world you'll inhabit aren't worth our investment.

In these years – thank you, Osama bin Laden, ISIS, and endless American politicians, officials, military figures, and terror "experts" – fear has gripped the body politic over a phenomenon, terrorism, that, while dangerous, represents one of the lesser perils of American life. No matter. There's a constant drumbeat of discussion about how to keep ourselves "safe" from terrorism in a world in which freelance lunatics with an assault rifle or a truck can indeed kill startling numbers of people in suicidal acts. The problem is that, in this era, preserving our "safety" always turns

out to involve yet more bombs and missiles dropped in distant lands, more troops and special operators sent into action, greater surveillance of ourselves and everyone else. In other words, we're talking about everything that further militarises American foreign policy, puts the national security state in command, and assures the continued demobilisation of a scared and rattled citizenry, even



as, elsewhere, it creates yet more uprooted souls, more children without childhoods, more refugees.

Our leaders – and we, too – have grown accustomed to our particular version of eternal “wartime,” and to wars without end, wars guaranteed to go on and on as more parts of the planet plunge into hell. In all of this, any sense of American generosity, either of the spirit or of funds, seems to be missing in action. There isn’t the faintest understanding here that if you really don’t want to create generations of terrorists amid a growing population loosed from all the boundaries of normal life, you’d better have a Marshall Plan for the Greater Middle East.

It should be obvious (but isn’t in our American world) that bombs, whatever they may do, can never build anything. You’d better be ready instead to lend a genuine hand, a major one, in making half-decent lives possible for millions and millions of people now in turmoil. You’d better know that war isn’t actually the answer to any of this, that if ISIS is destroyed in a region reduced to rubble and without hope of better, a few years from now that brutal organisation could look good in comparison to whatever comes down the pike. You’d better know that peaceful acts – peace being a word that, even rhetorically, has gone out of style in “wartime” Washington – are still possible in this world.

Lost to the future

Before those tides wash us away, there’s always the urge to ensure that you’ll leave something behind. I fear that I’m already catching glimpses of what that might be, of the world after me, an American world that I would never have wanted to turn over to my own children or grandchildren, or anyone else’s. My country, the United States, is hardly the only one involved in what looks like a growing global debacle of destabilisation: a tip of the hat is necessary to the Pakistanis, the Saudis, our European

allies, the Brexit British, the Russians, and so many others.

I have to admit, however, that my own focus – my sense of duty, you might say – is to this country. I’ve never liked the all-American words “patriot” and “super-patriot,” which we only apply to ourselves – or those alternatives, “nationalist” and “ultra-nationalist,” which we reserve pejoratively for gung-ho foreigners. But if I can’t quite call myself either an American patriot or an American nationalist, I do care, above all, about what this country chooses to be, what it wants to become. I feel some responsibility for that and it pains me to see what’s happening to us, to the country and the people we seem to be preparing to be. We, too, are perhaps beginning to show the strains of the global destabilisation now evidently underway and, unnerved, we are undoubtedly continuing to damage the future in ways still hard to assess.

Perhaps someday, someone will have one of my own childhood photo albums in their hands. The glue will have worn off, the photos will be heading toward the central crease, the pages will be flaking away, and the cast of characters, myself included, will be lost to the past, as so many of those children we had such a hand in uprooting and making into refugees will be lost to the future. At that moment, my fate will be the norm and there will be nothing to mourn about it. The fate of those lost children, if they become the norm, will however be the scandal of the century, and will represent genuine crimes against the future. **CT**

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

I’m already catching glimpses of what that might be, of the world after me, an American world that I would never have wanted to turn over to my own children or grandchildren, or anyone else’s

You're overdrawn. They're overpaid

Banks are squeezing consumers because the squeezing can really pay off – at the top, writes **Sam Pizzigati**

Banks particularly enjoy “reordering” the purchases consumers make. Banks that “re-order” process a day’s biggest charge or check first, even if smaller charges or checks came earlier in the day

Almost two-thirds of Americans today – 63 percent – don’t have enough savings to cover an unexpected \$500 expense, anything from an emergency brake job to a refrigerator on the fritz.

Most American households, in other words, are living on the financial edge. And that suits America’s biggest bank CEOs just fine. They love to see people desperately juggling credit cards and chequing accounts to keep bills paid.

With all that juggling, our banksters know, something will inevitably get dropped. A chequing account will be slightly overdrawn. A debit card transaction will overstep a limit. And that’s when the banks start to really clean up – through overdraft fees.

“Over the years,” Consumer Financial Protection Bureau director Richard Cordray has testified, “overdraft programmes have become a significant source of industry revenues.”

Bank execs use quotas, a new National Employment Law Project report details, to pressure bank workers into foisting extra fees onto consumers.

How significant? Over the first three months of this year, Bank of America collected \$393-million in overdraft fees, up from \$371-million in the first quarter of 2015. Wells Fargo pulled in even more, with \$411-million – a 16 percent increase from

the same period last year.

Banks play all sorts of games to maximize these mega-millions in overdraft income. They particularly enjoy “reordering” the purchases consumers make. Banks that “re-order” process a day’s biggest charge or cheque first, even if smaller charges or cheques came earlier in the day.

What difference does this re-ordering make? A great deal more than you might think.

Say you start the day with \$80 in your account and you charge three \$25 items – and then find yourself having to shell out another \$100 later in the day. If the bank processes these charges in chronological order, you’ll pay only one overdraft fee when the \$100 charge pushes you over your limit.

But if the bank processes the \$100 charge first, ahead of the three smaller purchases, you’ll end up paying four overdraft fees for the exact same day’s worth of charges.

Who’s benefiting from this sort of chicanery? Not the bank branch managers. They’re only averaging \$54,820 a year, calculates PayScale. And certainly not the bank tellers. The typical American teller last year earned just \$12.70 an hour, about \$26,410 a year, says the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

But the bank CEOs, on the other hand,

are living spectacularly high on the hog. Last year, the 10 most lavishly compensated of these top execs averaged over \$15.5-million each, with the CEO of overdraft fee king Wells Fargo coming in at more than \$19.3-million.

Overdraft fees make these over-the-top CEO rewards possible. But let's keep in mind an even more important point: Sky-high rewards for CEOs make overdraft chicanery inevitable. They give banking execs a powerful incentive to maximise overdraft income ranging from re-ordering and all sorts of other tricks of the banking industry trade.

The federal government's Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is trying to

clamp down on these tricks and has already made some progress. But as overdraft revenues continue to rise, bank execs simply have no incentive to turn off the spigot. If we want to see real reform in the financial industry, we can't just put some limits on how much banks can grab from overdrafts. Maybe we need to start talking about limiting how much pay can go to the executives who run our biggest banks. **CT**

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

Let's keep in mind an even more important point: Sky-high rewards for CEOs make overdraft chicanery inevitable

BY THE NUMBERS

www.inequality.org



Russian billionaire Alisher Usmanov's new 512-foot yacht weighs in at 16,000 tons and rates as the world's heftiest private pleasure ship. How hefty? The yacht sports two landing pads for helicopters. Its cost? A clean \$479 million.

Mr Headphones

Dell Franklin flits from bar to bar with an irritating, inattentive, passenger

He replaces the headphones around his ears as I drive out of the park. He smiles distantly, bobs his head and rocks back and forth as I drive along

I get a call to pick up Willard, or “Mr. Headphones,” because fellow cabbie Bruce, who resembles a fat squirrel, has inherited the dispatch phone on this dead, stock-still Sunday afternoon. That means he can take the out-of-town rides or the lucrative local rides, and saddle me with Willard, because our regular dispatcher is out sick. Bruce is never one to deny he is a greedy, corrupt, opportunist.

Willard lives in one of many San Luis Obispo mobile home parks. When I pull up, this dumpy blob is sitting on his porch surrounded by empty and crushed Bud half-quart cans, while drinking from one.

He’s around 30 and bundled up on this warm day in an army-surplus parka and sports wrap-around shades with bright orange rims. Pulled over his bushy head is a ballcap and headphones. He sees me pull up, but he’s not going to get up until he finishes that beer. He takes two huge slugs, crushes the can, and then stands and picks up a large, unwieldy pack which he slings on before trudging off the porch toward my cab.

He settles in the back and lowers his headphones to his neck.

“Hey, Chief, take me to a bar,” he says, and pulls the headphones back up.

“What bar?” I ask. He ignores me, is into

his music. “WHAT BAR?!” I turn and holler. He lowers his headphones.

“What?”

“What bar do you want to go to?”

“Downtown, Chief. Take me downtown.”

“What bar downtown?”

“It don’t matter. Anywhere downtown where bars are, Chief. You want a beer? I got a sixer in my backpack.”

“No thanks, I’m fine.”

“How about a sip of Schnapps? I got peach.”

“I’m fine, but thanks.”

He replaces the headphones around his ears as I drive out of the park. He smiles distantly, bobs his head and rocks back and forth as I drive along. I’m

soon downtown, on the main drag. There are five bars within a few doors of one another; I halt in front of Mother’s Tavern.

“This where you want to go?” I ask, but he’s smiling to himself. “THIS WHERE YOU WANT TO GO?” I holler.

He lowers his headphones to his neck. “What?”

“This where you want to go?”

“Yeh, Chief. I’m goin’ in and have a sip. You wait for me. I’ll be back in five.”

He places the headphones around his ears and gets out of the cab before I tell him I don’t want to wait around for



him, that he should pay now, and when he needs a ride later he can call the dispatcher. He lowers his headphones at the cab window and shows me his cellphone. “I’ll call yah from the bar,” he says. “What’s your cell number?”

“I don’t have a cellphone.”

“How come? All the cabbies got cells, Chief.”

“I only have the cab phone,” I tell him. “You’re gonna have to call the dispatcher. Ask for Bruce. He’ll be happy to pick you up.”

But he already has his headphones around his ears and walks into the bar next to Mother’s, a less upscale establishment. Since there are no rides waiting on this lazy Sunday, I do not stress over losing fares, though I know Bruce is at the airport so he’ll be first up when planes come in half an hour.

Just as I get my Sunday crossword started, Willard appears, headphones down. “How’s it goin’, Chief?” Before I can answer he’s got the phones back to his ears. “I’m goin’ across the street to the Frog and Peach to have a brewski,” he announces, and trudges across the street. I revisit my crossword for about 10 minutes when he’s at the window, phones down. “How’s it goin’, Chief?”

“Good. . . .” But the headphones are up and he’s headed into Mother’s. I wait a few minutes, then get out and stand by the door to watch my fare sitting at the bar, conversing, and yet not conversing, with drinkers on either side of him. He will say something, and when the person he’s talking to starts to answer, he lifts his headphones to his ears; then, when he has a retort, he lowers them. Finally, nobody is bothering to talk to him, and he is back in the cab wanting to go to a neighbourhood bar over by the Greyhound station, a mile or two away. The meter is up to \$12.

“I’m pretty sure Mr. Z’s is closed,” I tell him. He’s into his music, bobbing, smiling. “I’m FUCKING POSITIVE MR. Z’S IS

CLOSED!” I bellow as loud as I can.

He lowers the phones. “What?”

“MR. Z’S IS CLOSED! THEY DON’T OPEN UNTIL FIVE!”

“Go there anyway.” He lifts the phones to his ears. I drive to Mr. Z’s. A pit. They are closed. He gets out anyway, stands at the door, knocking, peering in, returns; settles in the back.

“Take me to the Gaslight,” he says, not bothering to lower his phones. I drive down a residential artery, turn onto Broad Street and pull into the tiny parking lot of the Gaslight. A few sodden characters stand just off the doorway, smoking. My fare gets out and enters the bar. I wait a while, and then go into the grim murk of the Gaslight. Willard sits at the bar, talking and not listening, lifting and lowering his headphones. Then he’s on his cellphone. Soon Bruce is on my cab phone, wanting to know what the hell’s going on with my fare.

“I’m standing at the door of the Gaslight watching him drink,” I tell Bruce.

“He says he wants a cab. He says he wants me.”

“He’s already got a goddam cab. What the fuck you think I’m doing? You saddled me with this jackass and now I’m waiting for him to finish his drink.”

I hear him sigh. “Ten-four.”

Soon my fare is back in his seat, wants to go to another bar downtown, a block from the bars he’s already been in, a mile away.

“I’m sick of driving you around,” I tell him. “I’m taking you home.”

But he’s already got the headphones up. I yell at him. He lowers them. I inform him I’m driving him home. He begs me to take him to just one more bar, promises a big tip, waves around a thick wad.

“Come on, Chief, chill, huh?” He lifts his headphones. I drive him to Bull’s Tavern. He staggers in, comes right back, lowers his headphones. “The prick won’t serve me,” he announces. “Goddam assholes.

Willard sits at the bar, talking and not listening, lifting and lowering his headphones. Then he’s on his cellphone. Soon Bruce is on my cab phone, wanting to know what the hell’s going on with my fare

ON THE ROAD

He rocks and bobs and smiles distantly until he realises I am hauling ass along the artery leading to his home. He lowers his headphones

I spend a lotta money in there. They say I'm too drunk. I'm not drunk. They say I'm eighty-sixed. I don't remember nobody eighty-sixin' me, Chief."

"Get in, I'll take you home."

He gets in, lifts his headphones. "I don't wanna go home. Take me to McCarthy's."

I nod. McCarthy's is right around the corner. I set out in the opposite direction while he bobs and rocks back and forth and smiles. When he finally realises what's going on, he lowers his headphones. "Hey, Chief, McCarthy's is the other way." He lifts the phones.

"I have to go to the end of the block and turn around," I explain. "because it's a one-way street. Don't you know that, you moron? You've lived here all your life, and you don't know what bar's open and what bar's closed, and you don't know when you're drunk and not drunk, and you don't know what bar you're eighty-sixed from and what bar you're not eighty-sixed from; you don't know your ass from first base, you worthless slug – how the fuck do you survive?"

He rocks and bobs and smiles distantly until he realises I am hauling ass along the artery leading to his home. He lowers his headphones.

"Where you goin', Chief?"

"Taking you home, Chief."

"Bullshit! This is my cab. I rule."

"You're going home, Chief. Put your headphones back around your ears and enjoy the ride."

"Look, take me to my friend's house on Laurel lane."

"No. That's across town."

"Fuck, man, you're an asshole. There goes your tip."

"Tip? You cheapskate, you never tip."

I swerve into the mobile home park and zip around, surpassing the 10 mph posted limit and bouncing over speed bumps, pissing off residents, and halt at his residence. He's leafing through his wad. The fare is \$22.60. He gives me a twenty. Before he can dig out and hand me two singles, I snare a bunch of singles and order him out of my cab.

"You're stealin' my money, asshole. Fuckin' asshole, man!"

"Get out, Chief. Call your friend on Laurel Lane. OUT!"

"You stole money from me. You're a thief!"

I have \$29. I toss him a single, which he snatches. "Get out, Chief, you're eighty-sixed from my cab. Next time ask for Bruce."

"I'm reporting you, asshole." He gets out, has trouble standing. "I'm callin' that other cabbie. He takes good care-a me. All-a cabbies take good care-a me. I tip 'em good. You're a real puke."

As I pull away, stashing money in my pocket, I see him through the rearview mirror, headphones down, cellphone to ear. A minute later Bruce calls.

"Take Willard to Laurel Lane." He says in a voice heavy with authority.

"Piss off," I say. "I'm heading to the airport. He's all yours." **CT**

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Dell Franklin is a journalist and founder of the *Rogue Voice* literary magazine. He blogs at www.dellfranklin.com

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Hillary, the Bleeding-Heart Peacenick

A poem by **Philip Kraske**

A riddle of politics have I yet to parse:
 Why do conservatives kick Hillary's arse?
 Yes, she's a Dem but there've surely been worse,
 Guys who spend tons and pry open your purse.
 Her favourite schmoozes are Goldman and Chase,
 Neither one socialist or leftist nut case.

She's kissed the Israelis, ignored the poor Pals,
 Done wonders in Libya and bombed Muslim gals.
 She took the Ukraine off V. Putin's hands,
 Helped to push Nato right up to his lands,
 And smiled when rich Latins imposed a new reich.
 From Dick Cheney's viewpoint, what's not to like?

Dissing Maduro, bad blood with the Chinese,
 The usual with Iraq stuck on its trapeze.
 Her arrogant demand that "Assad must go,"

Showed off her ignorance and neocon gusto.
 If what you're looking for's the end of the world,
 You could hardly ask more than what she's unfurled.

Yet the right never fails to jerk hard her chain,
 Averring she's soft and quails to cause pain.
 Her measures are patches, her words are just words,
 Her backers are wimps and her helpers just nerds.
 You have to wonder, when you look at the whole,
 If these folks are serious, or just playing a role.

Methinks it's the latter more than anything else,
 That and the newsfolk saving own jobs and pelts.
 The divine above have a loftier aim:
 To make more war or less the name of the game,
 And make fools of those who say 'Peace in our time,'
 And turn ol' Hillary into a bleeding-heart mime. **CT**

Philip Kraske lives in Madrid, Spain, where he teaches English on a freelance basis and does some translation.
 His four novels, of varied plots but centring on American politics and society, began to appear in 2009.
 His website is www.philipkraske.com

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