

INSIDE: THE PALESTINE PAPERS ● DARWIN WAS RIGHT ● SHOT IN THE HEAD ● FUTURE WEAPONS FOR FUTURE WARS ● CRIMINAL KOSOVO ● & MORE

The ^{ColdType} READER

WRITING WORTH READING ● ISSUE 53 ● FEBRUARY 2011



**THE
REVOLUTION
IS BEING
TELEVISED**

JESS HURD / REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

NEW DAWN IN EGYPT: FAZILA FAROUK JESS HURD CHRIS HEDGES ANDY WORTHINGTON DAVID MICHAEL GREEN BARRY LANDO TOM ENGELHARDT

The ^{ColdType} READER



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ISSUE 53

FEBRUARY 2011

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Protesters burn down the ruling National Democratic Party HQ in Cairo.



The revolution is being televised

Words: **Fazila Farouk** Photos: **Jess Hurd**

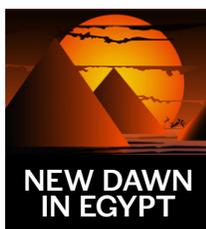
Forty years ago, musician and poet, Gil Scott-Heron wrote, “The revolution will not be televised,” as he encouraged an awakening of activism amongst disenfranchised African Americans whose sense of indignation had been dulled by that opiate of the masses, television.

In the four decades since those words were penned, they’ve assumed a global significance for the downtrodden and disenfranchised of our world, who, for too long have borne the burden of a

jaded public sleepwalking their way through a world of human rights violations and global injustices.

But idealists around the world have suddenly had their faith restored, first by the grassroots-driven regime change in Tunisia and now by the overwhelming and seamless show of solidarity amongst Egyptians, who, emboldened by the example of their Tunisian brothers and sisters, took to the streets in their hundreds of thousands demanding that dictator Hosni Mubarak who

Idealists around the world have suddenly had their faith restored





Demonstrators stop tanks from taking control of Al-Tahrir (Liberation Square).

Egyptians have defied a curfew to join in mass action against the authoritarian regime

has ruled over them for 30 years, steps down.

Since January 25, protests in Egypt have shaken the country's political establishment to the core and caught the rest of the world completely by surprise.

On January 24, *Egypt News* ran what appeared to be a run of the mill article, aimed at informing the public about a protest against the authoritarian regime. It wasn't groundbreaking news: protests against the regime have not been uncommon in Egypt that has been witnessing an increase in political activism in recent years.

"Egypt activists hope 25 January protest will be start of something big," ran the headline of the article in a typically tantalising style, as it reported that 80,000 Facebook users had confirmed that they would join activists from a range of established political movements and organisations for a nation-wide protest to demand "the restoration of a fair minimum wage, the end of Emergency Law, and the limitation of the presidency to two terms."

Nothing could have prepared that publication and the rest of the world for the prophesy of their headline, as the January 25 did indeed usher in the "start of something big" in Egypt. Reports put the number of people who joined the protest on that fateful day at 50,000, heralding a defining moment in Egyptian anti-government activism, which had never before enjoyed such a show of public support.

Egyptians have since continued their public protests and in their hundreds of thousands have flocked to and occupied the aptly named Al-Tahrir (Liberation) Square in Cairo, which has become the key site for the struggle against Mubarak.

Every day since January 25, Egyptians have defied a curfew to join in mass action against the authoritarian regime, braving brutal clashes with police that have left more than a hundred people dead. Simultaneously Egyptians heeded the call for a "million man march" on February 1, where more than a million people turned out in Tahrir Square and its surround-



A protester celebrates after hearing the announcement that President Mubarak would not stand in the September elections.



Pro-Mubarak supporters throw rocks at the protesters.

This time, the revolution is being televised. This time, the cameras haven't turn away from the Egyptian people for more than a week

ing area, reported the television network, Al Jazeera.

The protests have been a site to behold. No longer are the protestors merely made up of unemployed youth fed up with their bleak futures. In recent days, people from all walks of life have joined them. Men and women, young and old, rich and poor, are united in their call for Mubarak to step down.

It's a revolution unlike any other we've witnessed in modern times. Egyptians have overcome social barriers, reaching out to each other across religious, socio-economic and other divides to form a united front against the dictator Mubarak.

And this time, the revolution is being tele-

vised. This time, the cameras haven't turn away from the Egyptian people for more than a week. This time, the world is marveling at the dignity of a movement that has shown such strength in numbers and cohesion around a single demand. This time, we are all awestruck by the enduring courage of a people driven by compassion for each other's shared destiny. But the plight of the Egyptian people will not be resolved as easily as that of their Tunisian counterparts. It will require vigilance from the Egyptian people to ensure that a false solution does not present itself as the panacea for the nation's problems.

Given both real and feigned support from global powers for the plight of the Egyptian people, one wonders why Mubarak isn't being whisked away in the middle of the night to a faraway country to live what's left of his golden years in luxurious exile. Instead he is being left to fiddle with reshuffling and appointing a new cabinet, while his son who was being groomed for the presidency, has fled the country.

America, which has enormous influence in the Middle East, is watching developments with trepidation. While pledging their support for the demand for a real democracy in Egypt, US President Barack Obama and Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, have not gone far enough in demanding unequivocal regime change. Instead there's been a preoccupation with the narrative of regional stability. "Stability" has become the buzzword for describing any response to the situation in Egypt. This has had the effect of exposing the hypocrisy of US foreign policy in the Middle East.

Regional stability is apparently more important than Egypt deposing its dictator. There's a reason behind this, as Egypt under Mubarak is the only Arab nation to have a peace treaty with Israel, making it a strategic partner of the Israel-America alliance in the geopolitics of the region.

To reward Egypt for its cooperation with Israel, America has been providing US\$1.3bn dollars of aid to the country on an annual basis. However, this aid does not reach Egypt in the form of cash transfers, rather it arrives in



Pro-Mubarak supporters fight protesters in a bloody running battle outside the Cairo Museum, near Al-Tahrir

the form of military aid, which some analysts argue, more aptly describes it as aid to America's military industrial complex.

Regardless, what this has resulted in is a compliant partner with huge military capability that bends to the whims of the Israel-America alliance, while Israel continues to violate international laws in occupied Palestine, rubbishing any genuine attempts at reaching a peaceful accord with the Palestinians.

Egypt's future is intimately tied to developments in Israel and occupied Palestine. Mubarak is known to side with Western concerns for so-called regional stability as opposed to Arab concerns for human rights in Palestine, and has gone as far as closing Egypt's Rafah border crossing with the Gaza strip and building a 30 meters deep/10 kilometres long underground steel wall to stop tunnel smuggling, which is one of the only ways to get goods into Gaza.

Israel, for its part has been nervously appraising the current situation in Egypt and is hugely concerned about any regime change that could potentially result in an Islamist government, which would surely signal the

beginning of the end of the peace agreement between the two countries.

But Israel has little to fear, at least in light of Mubarak's announced on February 1 that he plans to step down from the presidency later this year, and that neither he nor his son would stand for presidential elections scheduled for September, possibly sooner.

Mubarak's announcement has the hallmark of a diplomatic scramble behind it, as the strategic US-Egypt alliance buys more time to establish a new political dispensation that would still maintain Egypt's foreign policy status quo. Given the US' generous aid package, relations between the top brass in both the American and Egyptian militaries appear to be warm. For the Americans, it wouldn't really matter who was running Egypt as long as this relationship remains intact.

But where do Mubarak's latest announcements leave the anti-government protest movement? It's been reported that protesters in Tahrir Square rejected Mubarak's announcement, still demanding his immediate resignation. And protestors remained on Tah-

For the Americans, it wouldn't really matter who was running Egypt as long as this relationship remains intact



Demonstrators say their prayers beside a tank.

They have added to the scepticism surrounding America's foreign policy in the Middle East and rocked the foundations of authoritarian rule in the Arab world

rir Square engaged in further demonstrations and demanding that the US stops meddling in the country's domestic affairs.

And what about the Egyptian opposition? Egypt's opposition parties are weak not least because the tyrannical Mubarak smashed all opposition. That is, until the most recent ballot when opposition parties were allowed to contest elections, resulting in the Muslim Brotherhood securing just under 20% of the seats in Egypt's lower house of parliament. Regardless of scaremongering in the Western media, the Muslim Brotherhood pose no real threat to toppling the incumbent regime nor of winning future elections given the strongly secular nature of Egyptian society. "Muslims, Christians, we are all Egyptians," was a common slogan chanted during the protests.

Sensing the weakness of their position, the Muslim Brotherhood have entered into an alliance with Mohamed ElBaradei, who has been described as a credible outsider and may also have Washington's backing. He is best known for challenging the Bush Administration, as head of the International Atomic

Energy Agency (IAEA) on the question of nuclear weapons in Iran – a stance that cost him a second term as head of the IAEA. But ElBaradei is not well known by the people of Egypt and may struggle to garner their support if he has long-term political ambitions. For the moment, he seems to be tapped for a transitional role in Egyptian politics.

Much remains up in the air in the aftermath of Egypt's million-man march. The revolutionary fervour of the Egyptian people will be tested in the days ahead. One thing is for sure; they have added to the scepticism surrounding America's foreign policy in the Middle East and rocked the foundations of authoritarian rule in the Arab world. The world is watching. **CT**

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***Jess Hurd** is a photographer with the British photo agency ReportDigital.co.uk*

It's Egypt's revolution, not ours

Don't be fooled by the glib sloganeering or facile reporting by Western reporters, says **Chris Hedges**

The uprising in Egypt, although united around the nearly universal desire to rid the country of the military dictator Hosni Mubarak, also presages the inevitable shift within the Arab world away from secular regimes toward an embrace of Islamic rule. Don't be fooled by the glib sloganeering about democracy or the facile reporting by Western reporters – few of whom speak Arabic or have experience in the region. Egyptians are not Americans.

They have their own culture, their own sets of grievances and their own history. And it is not ours. They want, as we do, to have a say in their own governance, but that say will include widespread support – especially among Egypt's poor, who make up more than half the country and live on about two dollars a day – for the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic parties.

Any real opening of the political system in the Arab world's most populated nation will see an empowering of these Islamic movements. And any attempt to close the system further – say a replacement of Mubarak with another military dictator – will ensure a deeper radicalization in Egypt and the wider Arab world.

The only way opposition to the U.S.-backed regime of Mubarak could be ex-

pressed for the past three decades was through Islamic movements, from the Muslim Brotherhood to more radical Islamic groups, some of which embrace violence. And any replacement of Mubarak (which now seems almost certain) while it may initially be dominated by moderate, secular leaders will, once elections are held and popular will is expressed, have an Islamic coloring.

A new government, to maintain credibility with the Egyptian population, will have to more actively defy demands from Washington and be more openly antagonistic to Israel. What is happening in Egypt, like what happened in Tunisia, tightens the noose that will – unless Israel and Washington radically change their policies toward the Palestinians and the Muslim world – threaten to strangle the Jewish state as well as dramatically curtail American influence in the Middle East.

Ethnic cleansing

The failure of the United States to halt the slow-motion ethnic cleansing of Palestinians by Israel has consequences. The failure to acknowledge the collective humiliation and anger felt by most Arabs because of the presence of U.S. troops on Muslim soil, not only in Iraq and Afghanistan but in the staging bases set up in Kuwait and

The failure of the United States to halt the slow-motion ethnic cleansing of Palestinians by Israel has consequences



Arabs understand that we, like the Israelis, primarily speak to the Muslim world in the crude language of power and violence

Saudi Arabia, has consequences.

The failure to denounce the repression, including the widespread use of torture, censorship and rigged elections, wielded by our allies against their citizens in the Middle East has consequences. We are soaked with the stench of these regimes. Mubarak, who reportedly is suffering from cancer, is seen as our puppet, a man who betrayed his own people and the Palestinians for money and power.

The Muslim world does not see us as we see ourselves. Muslims are aware, while we are not, that we have murdered tens of thousands of Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. We have terrorized families, villages and nations. We enable and defend the Israeli war crimes carried out against Palestinians and the Lebanese—indeed we give the Israelis the weapons and military aid to carry out the slaughter. We dismiss the thousands of dead as “collateral damage.” And when those who are fighting against occupation kill us or Israelis we condemn them, regardless of context, as terrorists.

Our hypocrisy is recognized on the Arab street. Most Arabs see bloody and disturbing images every day from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, images that are censored on our television screens. They have grown sick of us. They have grown sick of the Arab regimes that pay lip service to the suffering of Palestinians but do nothing to intervene. They have grown sick of being ruled by tyrants who are funded and supported by Washington.

Arabs understand that we, like the Israelis, primarily speak to the Muslim world in the crude language of power and violence. And because of our entrancement with our own power and ability to project force, we are woefully out of touch. Israeli and American intelligence services did not foresee the popular uprising in Tunisia or Egypt.

Gen. Aviv Kochavi, Israel’s new intelligence chief, told Knesset members last Tuesday that “there is no concern at the

moment about the stability of the Egyptian government.” Tuesday, it turned out, was the day hundreds of thousands of Egyptians poured into the streets to begin their nationwide protests.

What is happening in Egypt will damage and perhaps unravel the fragile peace treaty between Egypt and Jordan with Israel. It is likely to end Washington’s alliance with these Arab intelligence services, including the use of prisons to torture those we have disappeared into our vast network of black sites.

The economic ties between Israel and these Arab countries will suffer. The current antagonism between Cairo and the Hamas government in Gaza will be replaced by more overt cooperation. The Egyptian government’s collaboration with Israel, which includes demolishing tunnels into Gaza, the sharing of intelligence and the passage of Israeli warship and submarines through the Suez Canal, will be in serious jeopardy. Any government – even a transition government that is headed by a pro-Western secularist such as Mohamed ElBaradei – will have to make these changes in the relationship with Israel and Washington if it wants to have any credibility and support. We are seeing the rise of a new Middle East, one that will not be as pliable to Washington or as cowed by Israel.

Discredited and moribund

The secular Arab regimes, backed by the United States, are discredited and moribund. The lofty promise of a pan-Arab union, championed by the Egyptian leader Gamal Abd-al-Nasser and the original Baathists, has become a farce. Nasser’s defiance of Washington and the Western powers has been replaced by client states.

The secular Arab regimes from Morocco to Yemen, for all their ties with the West, have not provided freedom, dignity, opportunity or prosperity for their people. They have failed as spectacularly as the secular Palestinian resistance movement led by Yasser Arafat. And Arabs, frustrated and

enduring mounting poverty, are ready for something new. R

adical Islamist groups such as the Palestinian Hamas, the Shiite Hezbollah in Lebanon and the jihadists fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan are the new heroes, especially for the young who make up most of the Arab world. And many of those who admire these radicals are not observant Muslims. They support the Islamists because they fight back.

Communism as an ideological force never took root in the Muslim world because it clashed with the tenets of Islam. The championing of the free market in countries such as Egypt has done nothing to ameliorate crushing poverty. Its only visible result has been to enrich the elite, including Mubarak's son and designated heir, Gamal.

Islamic revolutionary movements, because of these failures, are very attractive. And this is why Mubarak forbids the use of the slogan "Islam is the solution" and bans the Muslim Brotherhood.

These secular Arab regimes hate and fear Hamas and the Islamic radicals as deeply as the Israelis do. And this hatred only adds to their luster.

The decision to withdraw the police from Egyptian cities and turn security over to the army means that Mubarak and his handlers in Washington face a grim choice. Either the army, as in Tunisia, refuses to interfere with the protests, meaning the removal of Mubarak, or it tries to quell the protests with force, a move that would

leave hundreds if not thousands dead and wounded. The fraternization between the soldiers and the crowds, along with the presence of tanks adorned with graffiti such as "Mubarak will fall," does not bode well for Washington, Israel and the Egyptian regime.

The army has not been immune to the creeping Islamization of Egypt – where bars, nightclubs and even belly dancing have been banished to the hotels catering to Western tourists. I attended a reception for middle-ranking army officers in Cairo in the 1990s when I was based there for the *New York Times* and every one of the officers' wives had a head covering.

Mubarak will soon become history. So, I expect, will neighboring secular Arab regimes. The rise of powerful Islamic parties appears inevitable. 'It appears inevitable not because of the Quran or a backward tradition, but because we and Israel believed we could bend the aspirations of the Arab world to our will through corruption and force. **CT**

Chris Hedges spent nearly two decades as a foreign correspondent in Central America, the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans. He spent seven years in the Middle East, most of them as the bureau chief there for The New York Times. He left the Times after being issued a formal reprimand for denouncing the Bush administration's invasion of Iraq. Hedges is now a senior fellow at The Nation Institute. His newest book is "Death of the Liberal Class."

The championing of the free market in countries such as Egypt has done nothing to ameliorate crushing poverty. Its only visible result has been to enrich the elite, including Mubarak's son and designated heir, Gamal

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A lesson in revolution and hypocrisy

No wonder the West is becoming jittery about the tumble of its favourite dictatorships, writes **Andy Worthington**

The horrors of the Cold War are behind us, but on the Islamist front, it is all too easy to see how the United States, in particular, enlisted the support of the dictatorial regimes in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Morocco in its “War on Terror”

For the United States and other Western countries, the popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt (which threaten to spread to other countries, including Yemen and Algeria) are something of a nightmare. Just as the authorities in these countries are struggling – and failing – to cope with popular uprisings, so too the United States and other Western countries are rudderless when faced with an undefined enemy – and make no mistake about it, the people of foreign countries are the enemy when their revolts against dictatorship threaten Western interests.

Only the most perceptive people in the West realize that, for decades, the perceived threat of communism, and, in recent years, the perceived threat of Islamists, has led their governments to support the dictatorial regimes that are now being challenged or overwhelmed by ordinary people whose eruptions of revolutionary anger are largely spontaneous and leaderless, and, as such, cannot easily be suppressed.

What will happen next is unknown. It is no wonder that the West is getting jittery, but it is difficult to see how Western governments will be able to maintain their influence when the revolutionary movements know that, although they have been oppressed by their own rulers – kept in pov-

erty, deprived of work, and often subjected to torture, arbitrary detention, disappearances, and extrajudicial execution – their rulers have largely been able to abuse them so thoroughly because of the backing of the West.

The horrors of the Cold War are behind us, but on the Islamist front, it is all too easy to see how the United States, in particular, enlisted the support of the dictatorial regimes in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Morocco in its “War on Terror,” drawing on their expertise in torture to host secret torture prisons on behalf of the CIA, where dozens of men and boys – seized in other countries and subjected to “extraordinary rendition” – were delivered, some of whom have never been seen or heard from again.



Horrendous civil war

It is also easy to see how numerous countries, including the U.K. and France, responded to the Islamic Salvation Front’s first-round electoral victory in Algeria in 1991 by backing a military takeover that led to an almost unspeakably horrendous civil war, while protecting Western interests in Algeria’s supplies of oil and gas, and how Libya – previously a pariah – was also drawn into the “War on Terror,” when Colonel Gaddafi, with his plenteous supplies of oil, also joined the Western alliance.

With Libya, the hypocrisy was laid bare – although few realize it – when political refugees to the U.K., whose claims for asylum had been accepted, were suddenly labeled as terrorist suspects and imprisoned, or held under control orders (a pernicious form of house arrest) without charge or trial, and on the basis of secret evidence, after Gaddafi became a British ally in 2005.

Although judges intervened independently to prevent the involuntary repatriation of these men, ruling that “diplomatic assurances,” which were supposed to guarantee humane treatment on their return, were fundamentally untrustworthy, the control orders against the men were only finally dropped in the last few years when the Gaddafi regime began a program of reconciliation with its former opponents.

The West’s hypocrisy in the “War on Terror” also included Tunisia and the brutal regime of President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali (whose fall is leading to hopes that the terrorist stigma attached to his former political opponents might now be exposed for what it was), and, of course, Syria, whose fearsome Mukhabarat (secret police) tortured at least nine CIA “ghost prisoners” in 2001 and 2002, even as Bush’s speechwriters were including the regime in an “axis of evil.” A few of these prisoners – who included teenagers rendered from Pakistan – have resurfaced (most notably, the Canadian citizen Maher Arar), but others remain unaccounted for.

Allies in torture

Of all the allies in torture, however, Egypt was the most prominent, the final bloody destination for those seized in America’s first forays into “extraordinary rendition” under President Clinton, and the place where, in the “War on Terror,” an untold number of men were disappeared.

Just a few of these stories are known, but they expose the true horrors of America’s relationship with Egypt. One prominent victim is Mamdouh Habib, an Australian citizen, seized on a bus in Pakistan, who was rendered to Egypt before being sent

to Guantánamo (and released in January 2005). Providing a dark insight into why Hosni Mubarak’s decision to appoint intelligence chief Omar Suleiman as vice president on Saturday is the worst possible move for Egyptians seeking total regime change, the author and journalist Richard Neville, drawing on Habib’s memoir, reported:

“Habib was interrogated by the country’s Intelligence Director, General Omar Suleiman ... Suleiman took a personal interest in anyone suspected of links with Al-Qaeda. As Habib had visited Afghanistan shortly before 9/11, he was under suspicion. Habib was repeatedly zapped with high-voltage electricity, immersed in water up to his nostrils, beaten, his fingers were broken and he was hung from metal hooks ... To loosen Habib’s tongue, Suleiman ordered a guard to murder a gruesomely shackled Turkistan prisoner in front of Habib – and he did, with a vicious karate kick.”

Another prominent torture victim is Abu Omar (Osama Mustafa Hassan Nasr), an Egyptian cleric who was brazenly kidnapped from a street in Milan in February 2003, by CIA operatives and their Italian counterparts. In November 2009, an Italian judge handed down, in absentia, a sentence of between five and eight years to 22 CIA agents and a U.S. Air Force colonel for their part in Abu Omar’s kidnap and rendition (and two Italian agents received three-year sentences), but not before Abu Omar had been imprisoned in Egypt for four years, and, during much of that time, subjected to torture.

The most significant story of all, however, is that of Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, the emir of the Khaldan training camp in Afghanistan, which was closed down by the Taliban in 2000, when he refused to cooperate with Osama bin Laden.

After his capture in December 2001 – in Afghanistan, or crossing the border into Pakistan – al-Libi was rendered to Egypt by the CIA, where, under torture, he falsely confessed that al-Qaeda representatives had been meeting Saddam Hussein to dis-

Of all the allies in torture, however, Egypt was the most prominent, the final bloody destination for those seized in America’s first forays into “extraordinary rendition” under President Clinton, and the place where, in the “War on Terror,” an untold number of men were disappeared

His death was convenient for at least three countries – Libya itself, and the two countries responsible for the deadly lie about Iraq; namely, Egypt and the United States

cuss the use of chemical and biological weapons. Despite the fact that al-Libi later recanted his false testimony, it was used by the United States to justify the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, figuring prominently in Colin Powell's presentation to the U.N. the month before.

After visits to other torture prisons run by or on behalf of the CIA, al-Libi was eventually returned to Libya, where he died in prison in May 2009, allegedly by committing suicide – although no one who knows anything about “suicides” in Libyan jails believed that particular story. His death was convenient for at least three countries – Libya itself, and the two countries responsible for the deadly lie about Iraq; namely, Egypt and the United States.

More than anything else, the story of Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi defines the blood-soaked relationship between the Bush administra-

tion and the brutal regime of Hosni Mubarak, and if there is to be genuine change in Egypt and throughout the Middle East, then the Obama administration and other Western governments need to step back from supporting torturers or enlisting their torture assistance or making convenient arrangements with them to establish secret dungeons in their countries to pursue their own repulsive agendas. **CT**

Andy Worthington is the author of “*The Guantánamo Files: The Stories of the 774 Detainees in America’s Illegal Prison*” (published by Pluto Press, distributed by Macmillan in the US) and of two other books: “*Stonehenge: Celebration and Subversion*” and “*The Battle of the Beanfield*.” This essay was first published on the website of the Future of Freedom Foundation at www.fff.org

HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt

Be Careful
What You Say
You Wish For...



Walk like an Egyptian

David Michael Green contrasts the bravery of the young people in Egyptian streets with the cowardice shown in US newsrooms and government

Courage is standing in the streets demanding the end of a thirty year despotic dictatorship, in a country with no tradition of democracy or the protection human rights.

Cowardice is talking about how other people should have human rights delivered to them by foreign militaries.

Courage is risking your life to bring democracy to your country.

Cowardice is talking about democracy for others while actually undermining it when you don't like the results.

Courage is walking like an Egyptian.

Cowardice is talking like a neocon.

It's impossible not to admire the courage of the Egyptian people, walking daily into the maws of a repressive regime and its violent goon squads, willing to sacrifice everything in order to end decades of American-backed autocracy in their country.

And it's impossible not to be embarrassed by the silence of the American right, who bloviate endlessly about bringing democracy to the Middle East, but have gone somehow all quiet lately. These folks couldn't have been more excited two years ago when the Iranian public was doing exactly what the Egyptians are doing now, but for some reason they aren't out there cheer-

ing this time. Hmm. I wonder, what could be the difference?

Actually, it's just most of them that are silent. We should be so lucky where the others are concerned.

Glenn Beck is completely out of his tree, although that's about as surprising as stink on a turd, and about as pleasant. He has decided that the democracy movement in Egypt is the beginning of the much-predicted and much-feared rise of the Muslim caliphate. Um, even though it is being led by young people with a secular agenda, and the Muslim Brotherhood has been on the sidelines.

He has declared that this is part of some great big ol' conspiracy that involves jihadists and socialists and lesbians and Barack Obama. Um, even though, those aren't crowds who normally have lots to do with one another.

Oh well, if his (thankfully diminishing, not to mention diminished) audience can buy the fantasy that the secularist Saddam Hussein was behind 9/11 and thus belly up for a ten-year war on that basis, why not see Obamacare-death-panel-commie-pinko-fag conspiracies on the streets of Cairo as well? It makes about as much sense. It's about as contradictory as Jesus supporting capitalism, a notion which any good regressive will be happy to argue today. Logic never before

It's about as contradictory as Jesus supporting capitalism, a notion which any good regressive will be happy to argue today



The bloody truth is that these regresso-monsters couldn't possibly care less about democracy, except to be sure to block it wherever it interferes with their real agenda

stopped that locomotive from going off the rails at a hundred miles per hour, and it isn't now.

Okay, well, Beck is sorta sui generis (or so it's a bit comforting to think). What's happening on the 'sane' right, where politics is only sometimes based on wild conspiracy theories? The answer that they don't know what the hell to do with themselves. Egypt has exposed them as liars, hypocrites and autocrats, and it ain't exactly a comfortable place to be in.

Take the exquisitely appropriately named Charles Krauthammer (please) as an example. You won't need to devote a whole lot of processing cycles from the CPU between your ears to figure out what he's up to once you see the title of his latest piece: "Egypt's Dangerous Road Ahead: The Muslim Brotherhood's A Force, ElBaradei's A Useful Idiot". Just the same, he starts off the piece by asking "Who doesn't love a democratic revolution? Who is not moved by the renunciation of fear and the reclamation of dignity in the streets of Cairo and Alexandria?"

Great question, but guess who, after all, it turns out doesn't seem to love a democratic revolution so very much?!?! Instead of waxing joyous about the redemptive delivery of democracy to the Middle East – you know, like he did when Iran's public was rising up, or like when he was justifying the Iraq invasion – Herr Blitzkrieg is instead all full of warnings, danger signs and bogeymen. 'Cause, you know, we all remember how the French Revolution went awry: "The romance could be forgiven if this were Paris 1789. But it is not. In the intervening 222 years, we have learned how these things can end."

Wait, didn't the Americans once have a revolution too? Would Krauthammer have warned against that one?

You bet. As a matter of fact, just about the only thing that allows regressives to continue to exist at all is the severe historical amnesia of the American public. The plain truth is that the right opposes every progressive movement in its time – just as

they oppose gay rights today, and women's rights yesterday, and racial civil rights just before that – and then pretends to celebrate it a generation or two later. Of course they would have opposed the American Revolution.

We know that because: They did! They were called Tories, and they in fact sided with the monarchical, repressive Brits. No doubt Hamiltonians would have been seen as the surreptitious Muslim Brotherhood equivalents of the time, threatening the freedom that monarchy provides, with George Washington playing the role of their useful idiot. He'd be even more 'idiotic' if, like ElBaradei, he also happened as head of the IAEA to have committed the cardinal sin of making the WMD-chanting neocon lunatics who demanded the Iraq adventure look like, well, idiots.

The right gives themselves away when they are confronted with the possible outcome they claim to desire in the public interest, but which turns out to be nothing more than marketing blabber. Why, for example, do their tax cuts for the wealthy always seem to be paramount, even when they result in a massive increase to the national debt that regressives are so fond of ranting against? Why must Cuba be strangled, but China traded with?

And why does Krauthammer write, concerning Egypt, that "We are told by sage Western analysts not to worry about the Brotherhood because it probably commands only about 30% of the vote. This is reassurance? In a country where the secular democratic opposition is weak and fractured after decades of persecution, any Islamist party commanding a third of the vote rules the country."

Blocking democracy

The bloody truth is that these regresso-monsters couldn't possibly care less about democracy, except to be sure to block it wherever it interferes with their real agenda. In the case of Egypt, the exposure of their hypocrisy could not be more complete if we

had video from a neocon nude beach party. Wait, never mind. Dick Cheney and Peggy Noonan in the buff? Ew. Some metaphors are too horrible to contemplate, despite their illuminating power.

On and on went the likes of Wolfowitz and Rice and Krauthammer about the need to bring democracy to the Middle East, even if that meant launching a war in Iraq which was disastrous in every way imaginable. But, of course, democracy was neither the goal nor outcome in that country, which today has three far more likely scenarios in front of it: either a reversion to Saddam-like dictatorship, civil war, and/or centrifugal explosion into at least three countries instead of one.

Similarly, the Bush administration went on and on about the need for the Palestinians to embrace democracy, until they actually did it. Lo and behold, when elections were held and Hamas won a crushing defeat, the US immediately began undermining the new government's legitimacy. But that's hardly news. American efforts to undermine democracy in the Middle East date back to at least 1953, with the toppling of the democratically elected Iranian government, whose great crime was to piss-off British Petroleum by asserting the ludicrous notion that Iranian oil should belong to Iranians. What cheeky little brown bastards, eh?!

But killing Iraqis to set them free was always logically absurd, anyhow, for anyone who doesn't take their politics as a religion (literally and figuratively), and is willing to examine with even the slightest scintilla of scrutiny the right's daily dose of dogma for dummies. Iraq was supposed to be a model in the region, which other states would then follow.

But that concept was always idiotic from the get-go because the model was already there – indeed, had been there, more or less, for a century – right next door. Turkey was and is a majority Islamic state that is nevertheless pretty solidly democratic and mostly secular, often quite adamantly so.

Why did perhaps a million people have to die in order to have a democratic model in the Middle East when there already was one, right there?

Even more ludicrous was the continuing close relationship between the United States – especially Republicans, and especially especially the House of Bush – with the autocracies of the Middle East we're supposedly meant to be democratizing. I mean, really, if the US government wanted to democratize the Middle East, why not just pull a Saudi prince or two aside for a chat at the next family barbeque? Why not pick up the phone, call Mubarak and tell him to quit screwin' around with his whole secret police thing?

And, if he didn't get the message, why not just stop sending him gobs of money? Or stop training those very secret police? You know, why not apply a little of that much-vaunted conservative tough love?

Chickenhawk cowards

The reason is the same explanation for why no one on the right is embracing real democracy as it is occurring right before our eyes in Egypt, right now. It isn't democracy that is desired by these chickenhawk cowards, who all seemed to have been quite preoccupied with studying Machiavelli or business administration when the US was 'bringing democracy' to Vietnam during their era, and thus, goshdarnit, unfortunately had to miss the war.

Despite the breathtaking bravery of the Egyptian public seeking to overthrow their American stooge-tyrant and his violent squads of mercenary goons, regressives don't seem quite moved, other than to cynicism. And as for Nobel Peace Prize winners who are out on the streets risking life and limb, and who might be the perfect match for the moment, they are "useful idiots". Instead, says Krauthammer, let's have a military dictatorship to replace the political one, and give us what we really want: "The overriding objective is a period of stability

As for Nobel Peace Prize winners who are out on the streets risking life and limb, and who might be the perfect match for the moment, they are "useful idiots"

The question is not whether the train will roll, but only whether each of us will be on board, on the platform, or digging up the rail

during which secularists and other democratic elements of civil society can organize themselves for the coming elections and prevail. ElBaradei is a menace. Mubarak will be gone one way or the other. The key is the military. The U.S. should say very little in public and do everything behind the scenes to help the military midwife – and then guarantee – what is still something of a long shot: Egyptian democracy.”

The military? Does Krauthammer mean the same military that has been propping up the Mubarak regime for thirty years? The one with deep ties to the US and even Israel? The one that seems to be doing little of use during the current crisis? Gosh, I’m confused. Maybe he’s thinking of a different Egyptian army.

Did I mention Israel? That is, of course, one of the main – if not the top – reason that neocons hate the idea of democracy in region, and undermine it everywhere they can, except in places like Iran. What is happening in Egypt is brilliant and inspirational for any number of reasons, but one of them is that it will effectively knock the stool out from underneath the arrogant, repressive and petulant foreign policy of the Israelis. Their ongoing unwillingness to forsake a transparent colonialism project in exchange for peace in the region will now likely be far less sustainable.

As long as Israel no longer had to worry about neighbors like Egypt and Jordan reacting to their land-grabs and wholesale human rights violations, they could act with impunity.

For years, everyone has been waiting for an American government to clip Israel’s wings, as seemingly the only solution to the protracted crisis, but it never happened. No one ever thought about the other fundamental assumptions on which Israeli policy is predicated. Now they are.

Barack the bystander

Which is, also, no doubt why Barack Obama is once again playing the role of historical bystander he seems to find so comforting.

Mr. Incremental. Mr. Behind-The-Scenes. Mr. Change-You-Believe-In-As-Long-As-You-Do-It-For-Yourself.

It’s disgusting. Look, you’re either the bat or you’re the ball, and Obama’s got plenty of stitches to show emphatically which side of the equation he’s on, despite the awesome powers of the American presidency that he possesses, something none of the rest of us have at our disposal. Including every one of those kids on the streets of Cairo, Alexandria and Suez getting their heads cracked open.

They know a thing or two about the effect of baseball bats. And they know which side America has always been on, and which side it is on now.

Is this supposed to be prudent, realist, foreign policy? Just exactly how do they think a new regime is going to treat America after decades of US sponsored repression and then hostility to a liberating revolutionary movement at the moment when crunch time hits? Gee, I dunno. Can you say ‘Iran’? Why does ‘Mubarak’ all of a sudden improbably rhyme so well with ‘Pahlavi’?

The train of liberation has left the station, and may traverse across much of the Middle East before all is said and done. The question is not whether the train will roll, but only whether each of us will be on board, on the platform, or digging up the rails.

Bottom line, ladies and gentlemen, these are our moral choices:

Walk like an Egyptian.

Talk like a Neocon.

Gawk like an Obama.

I don’t know about anyone else, but I’m with the kids on the streets of Cairo.

As for the United States and its leadership of old men dressed in young people’s clothing, the world is passing us by.

It should. We’re dinosaurs.

On a good day.

CT

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Kissinger on Egypt? Give us a break!

Barry Lando wonders when Henry will shut up and go away

Always comforting to have Henry Kissinger around to advise the current U.S. administration what to do. His latest advice to Obama re Egypt: slow down, take things easier, don't rush Egypt's sensitive leaders.

"We should be looking at a democratic evolution," said Kissinger. But he warned the U.S. should cultivate key democratic reformists and military leaders in a low-key fashion during the process. "It should not look like an American project. The Egyptians are a proud people. They threw out the British and they threw out the Russians."

On the other hand, when thin-skinned right wing dictators in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay were disappearing "democratic reformists" by the thousands in 1976, Henry Kissinger, then Secretary of State – not having to worry about lurid accounts of torture on Twitter and Facebook and Al Jazeera – advised South American generals to get on with their grisly task so as not to provoke censure from a U.S. Congress beginning to waken to the on-going slaughter. Or, as Kissinger put it to Argentine Foreign Minister Admiral Cesar August Guzzetti, in June 1976, "If there are things that have to be done, you should do them quickly. But you should get back quickly to normal procedures."

The things to be done were no secret:

human rights organizations and State Department memorandum supplied all necessary details. In Argentina alone more than 10,000 people had been "disappeared" by the end of 1976. But, in the name of fighting the Cold War, those messy kinds of things had to be done said the Generals and their apologists – Kissinger included.

Ironically, for the past thirty years, Hosni Mubarak and his apologists have justified his brutal repression in similar terms. Some are still doing it. It's just the name of the bogeyman that's changed: from Communism to Radical Islam aka the Moslem Brotherhood – from Fidel Castro's revolutionary virus to Osama Bin Laden's Al Qaeda. The fact that Al Qaeda's leaders have condemned the Moslem Brotherhood for its willingness to participate in Egyptian politics is a detail.

The parallels between Egypt and the trio of South American military dictators is striking. According to the State Department memo on the June 10 meeting between Kissinger and Admiral Guzzetti, obtained by the National Security Archives, the Argentine told Kissinger, "Our main problem in Argentina is terrorism. It is the first priority of the current government that took office on March 24. There are two aspects to the solution. The first is to ensure the internal security of the country; the second is to

In Argentina alone more than 10,000 people had been "disappeared" by the end of 1976



One could almost hear an American official today – sotto voce – giving similar advice to Egypt’s new Vice-President General Omar Suleiman, the man, let’s not forget, who for the past eight years headed up the feared Intelligence Directorate – infamous for systematic brutality, torture and disappearances

solve the most urgent economic problems over the coming 6 to 12 months. Argentina needs United States understanding and support....”

The NSA analysis of that memo continued, “This at a time when the international community, the U.S. media, universities, and scientific institutions, the U.S. Congress, and even the U.S. Embassy in Argentina were clamoring about the indiscriminate human rights violations against scientists, labor leaders, students, and politicians by the Argentine military, Secretary Kissinger told Guzzetti: “We are aware you are in a difficult period. It is a curious time, when political, criminal, and terrorist activities tend to merge without any clear separation. We understand you must establish authority.”

The U.S. Ambassador had earlier protested to the Argentina government about the disappearance and torture of human rights workers, including American citizens. Kissinger, however, told Guzzetti, “In the United States we have strong domestic pressures to do something on human rights... We want you to succeed. We do not want to harrass [sic] you. I will do what I can....”

One could almost hear an American of-

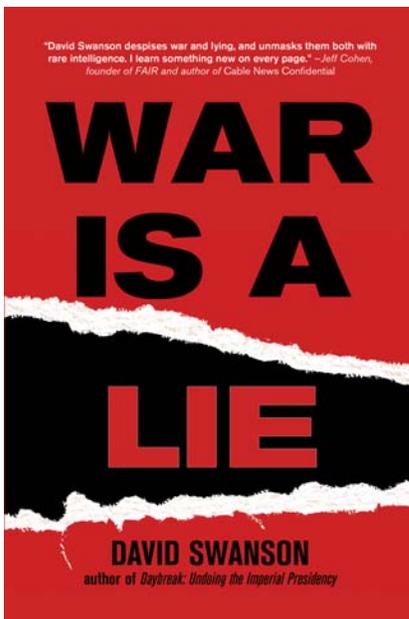
ficial today – sotto voce – giving similar advice to Egypt’s new Vice-President General Omar Suleiman, the man, let’s not forget, who for the past eight years headed up the feared Intelligence Directorate – infamous for systematic brutality, torture and disappearances; so skilled at their work that it was Suleiman and his uniformed thugs who were frequently used by the CIA’s rendition program.

All of a sudden though, Suleiman with his impeccable dark suit and tie and unflappable demeanor – is now not only the go-to man for torture but also, the go-to man to engineer “a transition to democracy.”

Not too fast a transition though, and certainly not too democratic.

Just as Henry the K. would advise. **CT**

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“David Swanson writes in the tradition of Howard Zinn. War Is A Lie is as clear as the title. Wars are all based on lies, could not be fought without lies, and would not be fought at all if people held their governments to any reasonable standard of honesty.” — **Charles M. Young**.

“David Swanson is an antidote to the toxins of complacency and evasion. He insists on rousing the sleepwalkers, confronting the deadly prevaricators and shining a bright light on possibilities for a truly better world.” — **Norman Solomon**, author of *War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death*

WAR IS A LIE
DAVID SWANSON

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Pox Americana

Tom Engelhardt tells how America has been driving through the gates of hell in the greater Middle East

As we've watched the dramatic events in the Middle East, you would hardly know that we had a thing to do with them. Oh yes, in the name of its War on Terror, Washington had for years backed most of the thuggish governments now under siege or anxious that they may be next in line to hear from their people. When it came to Egypt in particular, there was initially much polite (and hypocritical) discussion in the media about how our "interests" and our "values" were in conflict, about how far the U.S. should back off its support for the Mubarak regime, and about what a "tight-rope" the Obama administration was walking. While the president and his officials flailed, the mildest of questions were raised about how much we should chide our erstwhile allies, or encourage the massed protestors, and about whether we should "take sides" (as though we hadn't done so decisively over the last decades).

With popular cries for "democracy" and "freedom" sweeping through the Middle East, it's curious to note that the Bush-era's now-infamous "democracy agenda" has been nowhere in sight. In its brief and disastrous life, it was used as a battering ram for regimes Washington loathed and offered as a soft pillow of future possibility to those it loved.



Still, make no mistake, there's a story in a Washington stunned and "blindsided," in an administration visibly toothless and in disarray as well as dismayed over the potential loss of its Egyptian ally, "the keystone of its Middle Eastern policy," that's so big it should knock your socks off. And make no mistake: part of the spectacle of the moment lies in watching that other great power of the Cold War era finally head ever so slowly and reluctantly for the exits. You know the one I'm talking about. In 1991, when the Soviet Union disappeared and the United States found itself the last superpower standing, Washington mistook that for a victory most rare. In the years that followed, in a paroxysm of self-satisfaction and amid clouds of self-congratulation, its leaders would attempt nothing less than to establish a global Pax Americana. Their breathtaking ambitions would leave hubris in the shade.

The results, it's now clear, were no less breathtaking, even if disastrously so. Almost 20 years after the lesser superpower of the Cold War left the world stage, the "victor" is now lurching down the declinist slope, this time as the other defeated power of the Cold War era.

So don't mark the end of the Cold War in 1991 as our conventional histories do. Mark it in the early days of 2011, and consider the events of this moment a symbolic goodbye-

There's a story in a Washington stunned and "blindsided," in an administration visibly toothless and in disarray as well as dismayed over the potential loss of its Egyptian ally, "the keystone of its Middle Eastern policy," that's so big it should knock your socks off

As a spectacle of imperial power on the decline, we haven't seen anything like it since 1989 when the Berlin Wall came down. Then, too, people power stunned the world

to-all-that for the planet's "sole superpower."

Abroads, Near and Far

The proximate cause of Washington's defeat is a threatened collapse of its imperial position in a region that, ever since President Jimmy Carter proclaimed his Carter Doctrine in 1980, has been considered the crucible of global power, the place where, above all, the Great Game must be played out. Today, "people power" is shaking the "pillars" of the American position in the Middle East, while – despite the staggering levels of military might the Pentagon still has embedded in the area – the Obama administration has found itself standing by helplessly in grim confusion.

As a spectacle of imperial power on the decline, we haven't seen anything like it since 1989 when the Berlin Wall came down. Then, too, people power stunned the world. It swept like lightning across the satellite states of Eastern Europe, those "pillars" of the old Soviet empire, most of which had (as in the Middle East today) seemed quiescent for years.

It was an invigorating time. After all, such moments often don't come once in a life, no less twice in 20 years. If you don't happen to be in Washington, the present moment is proving no less remarkable, unpredictable, and earthshaking than its predecessor.

Make no mistake, either (though you wouldn't guess it from recent reportage): these two moments of people power are inextricably linked. Think of it this way: as we witness the true denouement of the Cold War, it's already clear that the "victor" in that titanic struggle, like the Soviet Union before it, mined its own positions and then was forced to watch with shock, awe, and dismay as those mines went off.

Among the most admirable aspects of the Soviet collapse was the decision of its remarkable leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, not to call the Red Army out of its barracks, as previous Soviet leaders had done in East Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956, and Prague

in 1968. Gorbachev's conscious (and courageous) choice to let the empire collapse rather than employ violence to try to halt the course of events remains historically little short of unique.

Today, after almost two decades of exuberant imperial impunity, Washington finds itself in an uncomfortably unraveling situation. Think of it as a kind of slo-mo Gorbachev moment – without a Gorbachev in sight.

What we're dealing with here is, in a sense, the story of two "abroads." In 1990, in the wake of a disastrous war in Afghanistan, in the midst of a people's revolt, the Russians lost what they came to call their "near abroad," the lands from Eastern Europe to Central Asia that had made up the Soviet Empire. The U.S., being the wealthier and stronger of the two Cold War superpowers, had something the Soviets never possessed. Call it a "far abroad." Now, in the midst of another draining, disastrous Afghan war, in the face of another people's revolt, a critical part of its far abroad is being shaken to its roots.

In the Middle East, the two pillars of American imperial power and control have long been Egypt and Saudi Arabia – along, of course, with obdurate Israel and little Jordan. In previous eras, the chosen bulwarks of "stability" and "moderation," terms much favored in Washington, had been the Shah of Iran in the 1960s and 1970s (and you remember his fate), and Saddam Hussein in the 1980s (and you remember his fate, too). In the larger region the Bush administration liked to call "the Greater Middle East" or "the arc of instability," another key pillar has been Pakistan, a country now in destabilization mode under the pressure of a disastrous American war in Afghanistan.

And yet, without a Gorbachevian bone in its body, the Obama administration has still been hamstrung. While negotiating madly behind the scenes to retain power and influence in Egypt, it is not likely to call the troops out of the barracks. American military intervention remains essentially inconceivable. Don't wait for Washington to send paratroop-

ers to the Suez Canal as those fading imperial powers France and England tried to do in 1956. It won't happen. Washington is too drained by years of war and economic bad times for that.

Facing genuine shock and awe (the people's version), the Obama administration has been shaken. It has shown itself to be weak, visibly fearful, at a loss for what to do, and always several steps behind developing events. Count on one thing: its officials are already undoubtedly worried about a domestic political future in which the question (never good for Democrats) could be: Who lost the Middle East? In the meantime, their oh-so-solemn, carefully calibrated statements, still in command mode, couched in imperial-speak, and focused on what client states in the Middle East must do, might as well be spoken to the wind. Like the Cheshire Cat's grin, only the rhetoric of the last decades seems to be left.

The question is: How did this happen? And the answer, in part, is: blame it on the way the Cold War officially ended, the mood of unparalleled hubris in which the United States emerged from it, and the unilateralist path its leaders chose in its wake.

Let's do a little reviewing.

Second-Wave Unilateralism

When the Soviet Union dissolved, Washington was stunned – the collapse was unexpected despite all the signs that something monumental was afoot – and then thrilled. The Cold War was over and we had won. Our mighty adversary had disappeared from the face of the Earth.

It didn't take long for terms like "sole superpower" and "hyperpower" to crop up, or for dreams of a global Pax Americana to take shape amid talk about how our power and glory would outshine even the Roman and British empires. The conclusion that victory – as in World War II – would have its benefits, that the world was now our oyster, led to two waves of American "unilateralism" or go-it-alone-ism that essentially drove the car of state directly toward the

nearest cliff and helped prepare the way for the sudden eruption of people power in the Middle East.

The second of those waves began with the fateful post-9/11 decision of George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and company to "drain the global swamp" (as they put it within days of the attacks in New York and Washington). They would, that is, pursue al-Qaeda (and whomever else they decided to label an enemy) by full military means.

That included the invasion of Afghanistan and the issuing of a with-us-or-against-us diktat to Pakistan, which reportedly included the threat to bomb that country "back to the Stone Age." It also involved a full-scale militarization, Pentagonization, and privatization of American foreign policy, and above all else, the crushing of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and the occupation of his country. All that and more came to be associated with the term "unilateralism," with the idea that U.S. military power was so overwhelming Washington could simply go it alone in the world with any "coalition of the billing" it might muster and still get exactly what it wanted.

That second wave of unilateralism, now largely relegated to the memory hole of history by the mainstream media, helped pave the way for the upheavals in Tunisia, Egypt, and possibly elsewhere. As a start, from Pakistan to North Africa, the Bush administration's Global War on Terror, along with its support for thuggish rule in the name of fighting al-Qaeda, helped radicalize the region. (Remember, for instance, that while Washington was pouring billions of dollars into the American-equipped Egyptian Army and the American-trained Egyptian officer corps, Bush administration officials were delighted to enlist the Mubarak regime as War on Terror warriors, using Egypt's jails as places to torture terror suspects rendered off any streets anywhere.)

In the process, by sweeping an area from North Africa to the Chinese border that it dubbed the Greater Middle East into that

It didn't take long for terms like "sole superpower" and "hyperpower" to crop up, or for dreams of a global Pax Americana to take shape amid talk about how our power and glory would outshine even the Roman and British empires

Today, Iraq remains a barely breathing carcass of a nation, unable to deliver something as simple as electricity to its restive people or pump enough oil to pay for the disaster

War on Terror, the Bush administration undoubtedly gave the region a new-found sense of unity, a feeling that the fate of its disparate parts was somehow bound together.

In addition, Bush's top officials, fundamentalists all when it came to U.S. military might and delusional fantasists when it came to what that military could accomplish, had immense power at its command: the power to destroy. They gave that power the snappy label "shock and awe," and then used it to blow a hole in the heart of the Middle East by invading Iraq. In the process, they put that land, already on the ropes, onto life support.

It's never really come off. In the wars, civil and guerrilla, set off by the American invasion and occupation, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis undoubtedly died and millions were sent into exile abroad or in their own land. Today, Iraq remains a barely breathing carcass of a nation, unable to deliver something as simple as electricity to its restive people or pump enough oil to pay for the disaster.

At the same time, the Bush administration sat on its hands while Israel had its way, taking Palestinian lands via its settlement policies and blowing its own hole in southern Lebanon with American backing (and weaponry) in the summer of 2006, and a smaller hole of utter devastation through Gaza in 2009. In other words, from Lebanon to Pakistan, the Greater Middle East was destabilized and radicalized.

The acts of Bush's officials couldn't have been rasher, or more destructive. They managed, for instance, to turn Afghanistan into the globe's foremost narco-state, even as they gave new life to the Taliban – no small miracle for a movement that, in 2001, had lost any vestige of popularity. Most crucial of all, they and the Obama administration after them spread the war irrevocably to populous, nuclear-armed Pakistan.

To their mad plans and projects, you can trace, at least in part, the rise to power of Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in

Gaza (the only significant result of Bush's "democracy agenda," since Iraq's elections arrived, despite Bush administration opposition, due to the prestige of Ayatollah Ali Sistani). You can credit them with an Iran-allied Shiite government in Iraq and a resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan, as well as the growth of a version of the Taliban in the Pakistani tribal borderlands. You can also credit them with the disorganization and impoverishment of the region. In summary, when the Bush unilateralists took control of the car of state, they souped it up, armed it to the teeth, and sent it careening off to catastrophe.

How hollow the neocon quip of 2003 now rings: "Everyone wants to go to Baghdad. Real men want to go to Tehran." But remember as well that, however much the Bush administration accomplished (in a manner of speaking), there was a wave of unilateralism, no less significant, that preceded it.

Our Financial Jihadis

Though we all know this first wave well, we don't usually think of it as "unilateralist," or in terms of the Middle East at all, or speak about it in the same breath with the Bush administration and its neocon supporters. I'm talking about the globalists, sometimes called the neoliberals, who were let loose to do their damndest in the good times of the post-Cold-War Clinton years. They, too, were dreamy about organizing the planet and about another kind of American power that was never going to end: economic power. (And, of course, they would be called back to power in Washington in the Obama years to run the U.S. economy into the ground yet again.) They believed deeply that we were the economic superpower of the ages, and they were eager to create their own version of a Pax Americana.

Intent on homogenizing the world by bringing American economic power to bear on it, their version of shock-and-awe tactics involved calling in institutions like the International Monetary Fund to discipline de-

veloping countries into a profitable kind of poverty and misery.

In the end, as they gleefully sliced and diced subprime mortgages, they drove a different kind of hole through the world. They were financial jihadis with their own style of shock-and-awe tactics and they, too, proved deeply destructive, even if in a different way. The irony was that, in the economic meltdown of 2008, they finally took down the global economy they had helped “unify.” And that occurred just as the second wave of unilateralists were facing the endgame of their dreams of global domination. In the process, for instance, Egypt, the most populous of Arab countries, was economically neoliberalized and – except for a small elite who made out like the bandits they were – impoverished.

Talk about “creative destruction”! The two waves of American unilateralists nearly took down the planet. They let loose demons of every sort, even as they ensured that the world’s first experience of a sole superpower would prove short indeed.

Heap onto the rubble they left behind the global disaster of rising prices for the basics – food and fuel – and you have a situation so combustible that no one should have been surprised when a Tunisian match lit it aflame.

That this moment began in the Greater Middle East should be no surprise either. That it might not end there should not be ruled out. This looks like, but may not be, an “Islamic” moment. If the second wave of American unilateralists ensured that this would start as a Middle Eastern phenomenon, conditions for people’s-power movements exist elsewhere as well.

The Gates of Hell

Nobody today remembers how, in September 2004, Amr Musa, the head of the Arab League, described the post-invasion Iraqi situation. “The gates of hell,” he said, “are open in Iraq.” This was not the sort of language we were used to hearing in the U.S., no matter what you felt about the war. It read

– and probably still reads – like an over-the-top metaphor, but it could as easily be taken as a realistic depiction of what happened not just in Iraq, but in the Greater Middle East and, to some extent, in the world.

Our unilateralists twice drove blithely through those gates, imagining that they were the gates to paradise. The results are now clear for all to see.

And don’t forget, the gates of hell remain open. Keep your eyes on at least two places, starting with Saudi Arabia, about which practically no one is yet writing, though one of these days its situation could turn out to be shakier than now imagined. Certainly, whoever controls the Saudi stock market thought so, because as the situation grew more tumultuous in Egypt, Saudi stocks took a nosedive.

With Saudi Arabia, you couldn’t get more basic when it comes to U.S. policy or the fate of the planet, given the amount of oil still under its desert sands. And then don’t forget the potentially most frightening country of all, Pakistan, where the final gasp of America’s military unilateralists is still playing itself out as if on a reel of film that just won’t end.

Yes, the Obama administration may squeeze by in the region for a while. Perhaps the Egyptian high command – half of which seems to have been in Washington at the moment the you-know-what hit the fan in their own country – will take over and perhaps they will suppress people power again for a period. Who knows?

One thing is clear inside the gates of hell: whatever wild flowers or weeds turn out to be capable of growing in the soil tilled so assiduously by the victors of 1991, Pax Americana proved to be a Pox Americana for the region and the world. **CT**

Tom Engelhardt, co-founder of the American Empire Project, runs the Nation Institute’s TomDispatch.com. His latest book is “The American Way of War: How Bush’s Wars Became Obama’s” (Haymarket Books).

The two waves of American unilateralists nearly took down the planet. They let loose demons of every sort, even as they ensured that the world’s first experience of a sole superpower would prove short indeed



The Face of Freedom

PHOTO BY JESS HURD
www.reportdigital.co.uk

Criminal Kosovo: America's gift to Europe

Diana Johnstone on the prime minister accused of running a criminal enterprise that murders prisoners for organ transplants

The US media have given more attention to hearsay allegations of Julian Assange's sexual encounters with two talkative Swedish women than to an official report accusing Kosovo prime minister Hashim Thaci of running a criminal enterprise which, among almost every other crime in the book, has murdered prisoners in order to sell their vital organs on the world market.

The report by Swiss liberal Dick Marty was mandated two years ago by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). Not to be confused with the European Union, the Council of Europe was founded in 1949 to promote human rights, the rule of law and democracy and has 47 member states (compared to 27 in the EU).

While US legal experts feverishly try to trump up charges they can use to demand extradition of Assange to the United States, to be duly punished for discomfiting the empire, US State Department spokesman Phillip Crowley piously reacted to the Council of Europe allegations by declaring that the United States will continue to work with Thaci since "any individual anywhere in the world is innocent until proven otherwise".

Everyone, that is, except, among others, Bradley Manning who is in solitary confinement although he has not been found guilty of anything. All the Guantanamo prisoners have been considered guilty, period. The

United States is applying the death penalty on a daily basis to men, women and children in Afghanistan and Pakistan who are innocent until proven dead.

Embarrassed supporters of Thaci's little self-proclaimed state dismiss the accusations by saying that the Marty Report does not prove Thaci's guilt.

Of course it doesn't. It can't. It is a report, not a trial. The report was mandated by the PACE precisely because judicial authorities were ignoring evidence of serious crimes. In her 2008 memoir in Italian *La caccia. Ioei criminali di guerra* (The Hunt. Me and the War Criminals), the former prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague, Carla del Ponte, complained that she had been prevented from carrying out a thorough investigation of reports of organ extraction from Serb and other prisoners carried out by the "Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)" in Albania. Indeed, rumors and reports of those atrocities, carried out in the months following the occupation of Kosovo by NATO-led occupation forces, have been studiously ignored by all relevant judicial authorities.

The Marty report claims to have uncovered corroborating evidence, including testimony by witnesses whose lives would be in danger if their names were revealed. The conclusion of the report is not and could not be a verdict, but a demand to compe-

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CRIME AND GOVERNMENT

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tent authorities to undertake judicial proceedings capable of hearing all the evidence and issuing a verdict.

Skepticism about atrocities

It is always prudent to be skeptical about atrocity stories circulating in wartime. History shows many examples of totally invented atrocity stories that serve to stir up hatred of the enemy during wartime, such as the widely circulated World War I reports of the Germans “cutting off the hands of Belgian babies”. Western journalists and politicians abandoned all prudent skepticism regarding the wild tales that were spread of Serb atrocities used to justify the 1999 NATO bombing of Serbia. Personally, my skepticism extends to all such stories, regardless of the identity of the alleged perpetrators, and I have refrained for years from writing about the Albanian organ transplant stories for that reason. I never considered Carla del Ponte a reliable source, but rather a gullible and self-aggrandizing woman who had been selected by the US sponsors of the ICTY because they thought they could manipulate her. No doubt the sponsors of the Tribunal she was working for, which was set up by and for the United States and NATO allies in order to justify their choice of sides in the Yugoslav civil wars, would have called a halt before she could stray from her assigned path to stick her nose into crimes committed by America’s Albanian protégés. But that does not prove that the alleged crimes actually were committed.

However, the Marty report goes beyond vague rumors to make specific allegations against the KLA’s “Drenica group” led by Hashim Thaci. Despite refusal of Albanian authorities to cooperate, there is ample proof that the KLA operated a chain of “safe houses” on Albanian territory during and after the 1999 NATO war against Serbia, using them to hold, interrogate, torture and sometimes murder prisoners. One of these safe houses, belonging to a family identified by the initial “K”, was cited by Carla del Ponte and media reports as “the yellow

house” (since painted white). To quote the Marty Report (paragraph 147):

“There are substantial elements of proof that a small number of KLA captives, including some of the abducted ethnic Serbs, met their death in Rripe, at or in the vicinity of the K. house. We have learned about these deaths not only through the testimonies of former KLA soldiers who said they had participated in detaining and transporting the captives while they were alive, but also through the testimonies of persons who independently witnessed the burial, disinterment, movement and reburial of the captives’ corpses (...)”

An undetermined but apparently small number of prisoners were transferred in vans and trucks to an operating site near Tirana international airport, from which fresh organs could be flown rapidly to recipients.

“The drivers of these vans and trucks – several of whom would become crucial witnesses to the patterns of abuse described – saw and heard captives suffering greatly during the transports, notably due to the lack of a proper air supply in their compartment of the vehicle, or due to the psychological torment of the fate that they supposed awaited them” (paragraph 155).

Captives described in the report as “victims of organised crime” included “persons whom we found were taken into central Albania to be murdered immediately before having their kidneys removed in a makeshift operating clinic” (paragraph 156).

These captives “undoubtedly endured a most horrifying ordeal in the custody of their KLA captors. According to source testimonies, the captives ‘filtered’ into this final subset were initially kept alive, fed well and allowed to sleep, and treated with relative restraint by KLA guards and henchmen who would otherwise have beaten them up indiscriminately” (paragraph 157).

“The testimonies on which we based our findings spoke credibly and consistently of a methodology by which all of the captives were killed, usually by a gunshot to the

head, before being operated on to remove one or more of their organs. We learned that this was principally a trade in ‘cadaver kidneys’, i.e. the kidneys were extracted posthumously; it was not a set of advanced surgical procedures requiring controlled clinical conditions and, for example, the extensive use of anaesthetic” (paragraph 162).

Skepticism about “liberation”

The Marty report also recalls what is common knowledge in Europe, namely that Hashim Thaci and his “Drenica Group” are notorious criminals. While “liberated” Kosovo sinks ever further into poverty, they have amassed fortunes in various aspects of illicit trade, notably enslaving women for prostitution and controlling illegal narcotics across Europe.

“Notably, in confidential reports spanning more than a decade, agencies dedicated to combating drug smuggling in at least five countries have named Hashim Thaci and other members of his “Drenica Group” as having exerted violent control over the trade in heroin and other narcotics” (paragraph 66).

“Similarly, intelligence analysts working for NATO, as well as those in the service of at least four independent foreign Governments, made compelling findings through their intelligence-gathering related to the immediate aftermath of the conflict in 1999. Thaci was commonly identified, and cited in secret intelligence reports, as the most dangerous of the KLA’s ‘criminal bosses’” (paragraph 67).

The leftists who fell hook, line and sinker for the “war to rescue the Kosovars from genocide” propaganda that justified NATO’s debut as aggressive bomber/invaser in 1999 readily accepted the identification of the “Kosovo Liberation Army” as a national liberation movement deserving their support. Isn’t it part of romantic legend for revolutionaries to rob banks for their cause? Leftists assume such criminal activities are merely a means to the end of

political independence. But what if political independence is in reality the means to sanctuarize criminal activities?

Assassinating policemen, the KLA specialty prior to being given Kosovo by NATO, is an ambiguous activity. Is the target “political oppression”, as claimed, or simply law enforcement?

What have Thaci and company done with their “liberation”? First of all, they allowed their American sponsors to build a huge military base, Camp Bondsteel, on Kosovo territory, without asking permission from anyone. Then, behind a smokescreen of talk of building democracy, they have terrorized ethnic minorities, eliminated their political rivals, fostered rampant crime and corruption, engaged in electoral fraud, and ostentatiously enriched themselves thanks to the criminal activities that constitute the real economy.

The Marty Report recalls what happened when Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic, under NATO threat of wiping out his country, agreed to withdraw from Kosovo and allow a U.N. force called KFOR (quickly taken over by NATO) to occupy Kosovo.

“First, the withdrawal of the Serb security forces from Kosovo had ceded into the hands of various KLA splinter groups, including Thaci’s “Drenica Group”, effectively unfettered control of an expanded territorial area in which to carry out various forms of smuggling and trafficking” (paragraph 84).

“KFOR and UNMIK were incapable of administering Kosovo’s law enforcement, movement of peoples, or border control, in the aftermath of the NATO bombardment in 1999. KLA factions and splinter groups that had control of distinct areas of Kosovo (villages, stretches of road, sometimes even individual buildings) were able to run organised criminal enterprises almost at will, including in disposing of the trophies of their perceived victory over the Serbs” (paragraph 85).

“Second, Thaci’s acquisition of a greater degree of political authority (Thaci having

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CRIME AND GOVERNMENT

Joe Biden is said to have complained that Madeleine Albright was “in love” with Thaci

appointed himself Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of Kosovo) had seemingly emboldened the “Drenica Group” to strike out all the more aggressively at perceived rivals, traitors, and persons suspected of being “collaborators” with the Serbs” (paragraph 86).

In short, NATO drove out the existing police, turning the province of Kosovo over to violent gangsters. But this was not an accident. Hashim Thaci was not just a gangster who took advantage of the situation. He had been hand-picked by US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and her right-hand man, James Rubin, for the job.

“You ought to be in movies...”

Until February 1999, Hashim Thaci’s only claim to fame was in Serbian police records, where he was wanted for various violent crimes. Then suddenly, at a French chateau called Rambouillet, he was thrust into the world spotlight by his American handlers. It is one of the most bizarre twists to the whole tragi-comic Kosovo saga.

Ms Albright was eager to use the ethnic conflict in Kosovo to make a display of US military might by bombing the Serbs, in order to reassert US dominance of Europe via NATO. But some European NATO country leaders thought it politically necessary to make at least a pretense of seeking a negotiated solution to the Kosovo problem before bombing. And so a fake “negotiation” was staged at Rambouillet, designed by the United States to get the Serbs to say no to an impossible ultimatum, in order to claim that the humanitarian West had no choice but to bomb.

For that, they needed a Kosovo Albanian who would play their game.

Belgrade sent a large multi-ethnic delegation to Rambouillet, ready to propose a settlement giving Kosovo broad autonomy. On the other side was a purely ethnic Albanian delegation from Kosovo including several leading local intellectuals experienced in such negotiations, including the internationally recognized leader of the Albanian

separatist movement in Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova who, it was assumed, would lead the “Kosovar” delegation.

But to the general surprise of observers, the seasoned intellectuals were shoved aside, and leadership of the delegation was taken over by a young man, Hashim Thaci, known in law-enforcement circles as “the Snake”.

The American stage-managers chose Thaci for obvious reasons. While the older Kosovo Albanians risked actually negotiating with the Serbs, and thus reaching an agreement that would prevent war, Thaci owed everything to the United States, and would do as he was told. Moreover, putting a “wanted” criminal at the top of the delegation was an affront to the Serbs that would help scuttle negotiations. And finally, the Thaci image appealed to the Americans’ idea of what a “freedom fighter” should look like.

Albright’s closest aide, James Rubin, acted as talent scout, gushing over Thaci’s good looks, telling him he was so handsome he should be in Hollywood. Indeed, Thaci did not look like a Hollywood gangster, Edward G. Robinson style, but a clean-cut hero with a vague resemblance to the actor Robert Stack. Joe Biden is said to have complained that Madeleine Albright was “in love” with Thaci. Image is everything, after all, especially when the United States is casting its own Pentagon superproduction, “Saving the Kosovars”, in order to redesign the Balkans, with its own “independent” satellite states.

The pretext for the 1999 war was to “save the Kosovars” (the name assumed by the Albanian population of that Serbian province, to give the impression that it was a country and that they were the rightful inhabitants) from an imaginary threat of “genocide”. The official US position was to respect the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. But it was always quite obvious that behind the scenes, the United States had made a deal with Thaci to give him Kosovo as part of the destruction of Yugoslavia and the crippling

of Serbia. The chaos that followed the withdrawal of Yugoslav security forces enabled the KLA gangs to take over and the United States to build Camp Bondsteel.

Cheered on by a virulent Albanian lobby in the United States, Washington has defied international law, violated its own commitments (the agreement ending the 1999 war called for Serbia to police Kosovo's borders, which was never allowed), and ignored muted objections from European allies to sponsor the transformation of the poor Serbian province into an ethnic Albanian "independent state". Since unilaterally declaring independence in February 2008, the failed statelet has been recognized only by 72 out of 192 U.N. members, including 22 of the European Union's 27 members.

EULEX versus Clan Loyalty

A few months later, the European Union set up a "European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo" (EULEX) intended to take over judicial authority in the province from the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) that had ostensibly exercised such functions after NATO drove out the Serbs. The very establishment of EULEX was proof that the EU's recognition of Kosovo's independence was unjustified and dishonest. It was an admission that Kosovo, after being delivered to KLA bands (some in war against each other), was unable to provide even a semblance of law and order, and thus in no way prepared to be "an independent state".

Of course the West will never admit this, but it was the complaints of the Serb minority in the 1980s that they could not count on protection by police or law courts, then run by the majority ethnic Albanian communist party, that led to the Serbian government's limitation of Kosovo's autonomy, portrayed in the West as a gratuitous persecution motivated by racial hatred of Hitlerian proportions.

The difficulties of obtaining justice in Kosovo are basically the same now as they were then – with the difference that the Serbian police understood the Albanian

language, whereas the UNMIK and EULEX internationals are almost entirely dependent on local Albanian interpreters, whose veracity they are unable to check.

The Marty Report describes the difficulties of crime investigation in Kosovo:

"The structure of Kosovar Albanian society, still very much clan orientated, and the absence of a true civil society have made it extremely difficult to set up contacts with local sources. This is compounded by fear, often to the point of genuine terror, which we have observed in some of our informants immediately upon broaching the subject of our inquiry.

"The entrenched sense of loyalty to one's clansmen, and the concept of honour ... rendered most ethnic Albanian witnesses unreachable for us. Having seen two prominent prosecutions undertaken by the ICTY leading to the deaths of so many witnesses, and ultimately a failure to deliver justice, a Parliamentary Assembly Rapporteur with only paltry resources in comparison was hardly likely to overturn the odds of such witnesses speaking to us directly.

"Numerous persons who have worked for many years in Kosovo, and who have become among the most respected commentators on justice in the region, counseled us that organized criminal networks of Albanians ('the Albanian mafia') in Albania itself, in neighbouring territories including Kosovo and 'the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia', and in the Diaspora, were probably more difficult to penetrate than the *Cosa Nostra*; even low-level operatives would rather take a jail term of decades, or a conviction for contempt, than turn in their clansmen."

A second report submitted last month to the Council of Europe by rapporteur Jean-Charles Gardetto on witness protection in war crimes trials for former Yugoslavia notes that there is no witness protection law in Kosovo and, more seriously, no way to protect witnesses that might testify against fellow ethnic Albanians.

The chaos that followed the withdrawal of Yugoslav security forces enabled the KLA gangs to take over and the United States to build Camp Bondsteel

The first time a reporter queried Kouchner about the organ transplant accusations, a few months ago, Kouchner responded with a loud horse laugh, before telling the reporter to go have his head examined

“In the most serious cases, witnesses are able to testify anonymously. However, it was made clear to the rapporteur that these measures are useless as long as the witness is physically in Kosovo, where everybody knows everybody else. Most witnesses are immediately recognised by the defence when they deliver their testimony, despite all the anonymity measures.”

“There are many limitations to the protection arrangements currently available, not least because Kosovo has a population of less than two million with very tight-knit communities. Witnesses are often perceived as betraying their community when they give evidence, which inhibits possible witnesses from coming forward. Furthermore, many people do not believe that they have a moral or legal duty to testify as a witness in criminal cases.

“Moreover, when a witness does come forward, there is a real threat of retaliation. This may not necessarily put them in direct danger, losing their job for example, but there are also examples of key witnesses being murdered. The trial of Ramush Haradinaj, the former leader of the Kosovo Liberation Army, well illustrates this. Mr. Haradinaj was indicted by the ICTY for crimes committed during the war in Kosovo but was subsequently acquitted. In its judgment, the Tribunal highlighted the difficulties that it had had in obtaining evidence from the 100 prosecution witnesses. Thirty-four of them were granted protection measures and 18 had to be issued with summonses. A number of witnesses who were going to give evidence at the trial were murdered. These included Sadik and Vesel Muriqi, both of whom had been placed under a protection program by the ICTY.”

Europe’s Dilemma

Naturally, European accomplices in putting the Thaci gang in charge of Kosovo have been quick to dismiss the Marty report. Tony Blair apologist and former Labour minister Dennis MacShane wrote in the *Independent* (UK) that, “There is not one single name

or a single witness to the allegations that Thaci was involved in the harvesting of human organs from murdered victims.” To someone unfamiliar with the circumstances and with the report, that may sound like a valid objection. But Marty has made it clear that he can supply names of witnesses to competent judicial authorities. Thaci himself acknowledged that they exist when he stated that he would publish the names of Marty’s witnesses – a statement understood as a death threat by those familiar with the Pristina scene.

One of the most prominent Europeans to hope that the Marty report will disappear is the French media humanitarian Bernard Kouchner, until recently Sarkozy’s foreign minister, who officially ran Kosovo as the first head of UNMIK after the NATO occupation. Contrary to Kouchner’s protests of ignorance, the UNMIK police chief in 2000 and 2001, Canadian Captain Stu Kellock, has called it “impossible” that Kouchner was not aware of organized crime in Kosovo. The first time a reporter queried Kouchner about the organ transplant accusations, a few months ago, Kouchner responded with a loud horse laugh, before telling the reporter to go have his head examined. After the Marty report, Kouchner merely repeated his “skepticism”, and called for an investigation... by EULEX.

Other NATO defenders have taken the same line. One investigation calls for another, and so on. Investigating the charges against the KLA is beginning to look like the Middle East peace process.

The Marty Report itself concludes with a clear call on EULEX to “to persevere with its investigative work, without taking any account of the offices held by possible suspects or of the origin of the victims, doing everything to cast light on the criminal disappearances, the indications of organ trafficking, corruption and the collusion so often complained of between organized criminal groups and political circles” and “to take every measure necessary to ensure effective protection for witnesses and to

gain their trust”.

This is a tall order, considering that EULEX is ultimately dependent on EU governments deeply involved in ignoring Kosovo Albanian crime for over a decade. Still, some of the most implicated personalities, such as Kouchner, are nearing the end of their careers, and there are many Europeans who consider that things have gone much too far, and that the Kosovo cesspool must be cleaned up.

EULEX is already prosecuting an organ trafficking ring in Kosovo. In November 2008, a young Turkish man who had just had a kidney removed collapsed at Pristina airport, which led police to raid the nearby Medicus clinic where a 74-year-old Israeli was convalescing from implantation of the young man’s kidney. The Israeli had allegedly paid 90,000 euros for the illegal implant, while the young Turk, like other desperately poor foreigners lured to Pristina by false promises, was cheated of the money promised.

The trial is currently underway in Pristina of seven defendants charged with involvement in the illegal Medicus organ trafficking racket, including top members of the Kosovo Albanian medical profession. Still at large are Dr. Yusuf Sonmez, a notorious international organ trafficker, and Moshe Harel, an Israeli of Turkish origin accused of organizing the illicit international organ trade. Israel is known to be a prime market for organs because of Jewish religious restrictions that severely limit the number of Israeli donors.

The Marty Report notes that the information it has obtained “appears to depict a broader, more complex organized criminal conspiracy to source human organs for illicit transplant, involving co-conspirators in at least three different foreign countries besides Kosovo, enduring over more than a decade. In particular, we found a number of credible, convergent indications that the organ-trafficking component of the post-conflict detentions described in our report is closely related to the contemporary

case of the Medicus Clinic, not least through prominent Kosovar Albanian and international personalities who feature as co-conspirators in both.”

But EULEX prosecution of the Medicus case does not automatically mean that the European judicial authorities in Kosovo will pursue the even more criminal organ trafficking denounced in the Marty Report. One obstacle is that the alleged crimes took place on the territory of Albania, and so far Albanian authorities have been uncooperative, to say the least. A second inhibition is fear that the attempt to prosecute leading KLA figures would lead to unrest. Indeed, on January 9, several hundred Albanians carrying Albanian flags (not the Western-imposed flag of Kosovo) demonstrated in Mitrovica against the Marty report shouting “UCK, UCK” (KLA in Albanian). Still, EULEX has indicted two former KLA commanders for war crimes committed on Albanian territory in 1999 when they allegedly tortured prisoners, ethnic Albanians from Kosovo either suspected of “collaborating” with legal Serb authorities or because they were political opponents of the KLA.

A striking and significant political fact that emerges from the Marty report is that:

“The reality is that the most significant operational activities undertaken by members of the KLA – prior to, during, and in the immediate aftermath of the conflict – took place on the territory of Albania, where the Serb security forces were never deployed” (paragraph 36).

Thus, to a very large extent, the Serbian province of Kosovo was the object of a foreign invasion from across its border, by Albanian nationalists keen on creating “Greater Albania”, and aided in this endeavor by diaspora lobbies and, decisively, NATO bombing. Far from being an “aggressor” in its own historic province, Serbia was the victim of a major two-pronged foreign invasion.

America’s disposable puppets

NATO could not have waged a ground war

The trial is currently underway in Pristina of seven defendants charged with involvement in the illegal Medicus organ trafficking racket, including top members of the Kosovo Albanian medical profession

The West, that is, the United States, the European Union and NATO may be able to agree on a “curse on both their houses” approach, concluding that the Serbs they persecuted and the Albanians they helped are all barbarians, unworthy of their benevolent intervention

against Serbian forces without suffering casualties. So it waged a 78-day air war, ravaging Serbia’s infrastructure. To save his country from threatened annihilation, Milosevic gave in. For its ground force, the United States chose the KLA. The KLA was no match for Serbian forces on the ground, but it aided the United States/NATO war in peculiar ways.

The United States provided KLA fighters on the ground with GPS devices and satellite telephones to enable them to spot Serb targets for bombing (very inefficiently, as the NATO bombs missed almost all their military targets).

The KLA in some places ordered Kosovo Albanian civilians to flee across the border to Albania or to ethnic Albanian parts of Macedonia, where photographers were waiting to enrich the imagery of a population persecuted by Serb “ethnic cleansing” – an enormous propaganda success. And crucially, before the NATO bombing, the KLA pursued a strategy of provocation, murdering policemen and civilians, including disobedient Albanians, designed to commit acts of repression that could be used as a pretext for NATO intervention.

Thaci even boasted subsequently of the success of this strategy.

Thaci has played the role assigned to him by the empire. Still, considering the history of American disposal of collaborators who have outlived their usefulness (Ngo Dinh Diem, Noriega, Saddam Hussein...), he has reasons to be uneasy.

Thaci’s uneasiness could be sharpened by a recent trip to the region by William Walker, the US agent who in 1999 created the main pretext for the NATO bombing campaign by inflating casualties from a battle between Serb police and KLA fighters in the village of Racak into a massacre of civilians, “a crime against humanity” perpetrated by “people with no value for human life”. Walker, whose main professional experience was in Central America during the Reagan administration’s bloody fight against revolutionary movements in

Nicaragua and El Salvador, had been imposed by the United States as head of a European mission ostensibly mandated to monitor a cease-fire between Serb forces and the KLA. But in fact, he and his British deputy used the mission to establish close contacts with the KLA in preparation for joint war against the Serbs. The grateful gangster regime has named a street in Pristina after him.

In between receiving a decoration in Kosovo and honorary citizenship in Albania, Walker took political positions that could make both Thaci and EULEX nervous. Walker expressed support for Albin Kurti, the young leader of the radical nationalist “Self-Determination” movement (Vetëvendosje), which is gaining support with its advocacy of independence from EU governance as well as in favor of “natural Albania”, meaning a Greater Albania composed of Albania, Kosovo and parts of southern Serbia, much of Macedonia, a piece of Montenegro and even northern Greece. Was Walker on a talent-scouting mission in view of replacing the increasingly disgraced Thaci? If Kurti is the new favorite, a US-chosen replacement could cause even more trouble in the troubled Balkans.

The West, that is, the United States, the European Union and NATO may be able to agree on a “curse on both their houses” approach, concluding that the Serbs they persecuted and the Albanians they helped are all barbarians, unworthy of their benevolent intervention. What they will never admit is that they chose, and to a large extent created, the wrong side in a war for which they bear criminal responsibility. And whose devastating consequences continue to be borne by the unfortunate inhabitants of the region, whatever their linguistic and cultural identity. **CT**

Diana Johnstone is author of “Fools’ Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions.”

A shorter version of this essay first appeared in the CounterPunch print edition.

Darwin was right

We are descended from monkeys; there can be no other explanation, writes **Fred Reed**

Pondering Whither America, I reflected on a story, probably apocryphal but which I am going to believe because I like it, about catching monkeys. Tribesmen somewhere craft a heavy pot with a hole in it large enough that a monkey can insert an open hand, but not withdraw a closed fist. They then put monkey food in the pot. The monkey reaches in, grabs the food and, refusing to let go when the hunters approach, is caught and eaten.

Here we have our politics in a paragraph. The American national monkey can't let go. The party is over, boys and girls, but we aren't going to adapt.

For example: When people recently found that they could no longer afford the SUVs, the McMansions, the buying of absurdities in a frenzy of competitive consumerism, they just put it on the credit card. The monkey can't let go. And now they are screwed.

Same-same domestic policy. The US has played War-on-Drugs for half a century, with no results but to make drugs an integral part of the economy. The evils engendered are great. Yet the monkey can't let go.

It is internationally that the monkey principle really bites. The country is well on its way to being a merely regional power militarily, economically, and diplomatically. Short of a miracle, short of a conceivable

but unlikely catastrophe in China, Americans will soon be medium potatoes. There is nothing we can do about it, but we will bankrupt ourselves trying. We can't let go.

If you look beyond the Reader's Digest patriotism of Fox News, and the high-school cheerleading of little Sarah Palin, if you look beyond the national borders, all of this is obvious.

By Chinese standards, America is a small country, having a quarter of its population. Their economy grows at close to double digits. Yes, it may slow down, or it may not. Short of unforeseen disaster, the question is not whether but when the Chinese economy will dwarf the American economy. Tell me why this is not true.

All power springs from economic power. While America decays, plays, and sucks its thumb, China invests. Everywhere. There is nothing unprincipled in this. It is just intelligent commerce.

Do not underestimate these people of the epicanthic fold. I have lived among the Chinese, in Taiwan years ago. I liked them, and still do. I know them to be smart, disciplined, studious, practical – as well as nationalistic and very racially conscious. No, we do not think these attitudes proper. It doesn't matter what we think.

Note that China has that perfect government, an intelligent dictatorship concerned with advancing the country. The American

When people recently found that they could no longer afford the SUVs, the McMansions, the buying of absurdities in a frenzy of competitive consumerism, they just put it on the credit card

MONKEY SEE . .

The US continues to buy things it can't pay for, to play roles it can no longer maintain, because it pains the national vanity no longer to be the biggest kid on the block. The monkey can't let go

government consists of self-interested lobbies and Wall Street looters. China is run by engineers, America by lawyers. Watch.

The US is midway through an inexorable suicide. If a country does not manufacture things, it does not have an economy, and manufacturing has fled American shores. Ship-building, steel, consumer electronics, railroads: gone. You may think your HP laptop is an American product, but in all likelihood every component was made overseas and it was assembled in Taiwan.

The country as a whole, as always, looks inwards and doesn't understand, doesn't know what stirs without. Communism no longer protects America from Chinese competition.

America is the world's greatest debtor nation, China the greatest creditor. We cannot possibly repay what we owe, so we must either default or inflate. If another choice exists, I am unaware of it. And yet the government spends, spends, spends, and borrows, borrows, borrows. No one is in charge. No one cares. All line their own pockets. Wait.

Rationally, this would seem a good time to let go of unaffordable luxuries. But no. The US continues to buy things it can't pay for, to play roles it can no longer maintain, because it pains the national vanity no longer to be the biggest kid on the block. The monkey can't let go.

The millstone around the American neck is the Pentagon. The direct cost alone of feeding the military contractors is almost mortal to a sinking economy: \$720 billion this year, plus another \$120 billion requested for the unending wars, plus huge black programs, the Veterans Administration, and so on. A trillion wilting green ones, call it. The more perceptive note the opportunity cost of wasting so much engineering talent, so much money for research and development, on martial zoom-wowees.

China, Russia, the Moslem world, Latin America and all the rest who detest the US must be enjoying the spectacle. Spend on, spend on, oh round-eyed fools....

Vanity. We do not garrison South Korea

because Pyong Yang may send its troops across our common border into Arkansas. We do it because we think it our birthright to rule the world. The monkey cannot let go.

Our practical choice is between retracting the military or going down hard. But we cannot retract. Once you have made your economy dependent on huge unproductive expenditures, there is no quitting. It might seem wise for example to reduce the military rolls by the 30,000 troops in South Korea. But they would simply increase the rate of unemployment, already dangerously high. Since most of the military contributes nothing to the defense of the United States, releasing all unneeded soldiers into joblessness would probably precipitate an armed rebellion.

There is worse. Towns spring up around large bases to supply the troops and their families. Close the bases, and the towns die. Closing Camp Lejeune would kill Jacksonville; Fort Bragg, Fayetteville; Fort Hood, Killeen. Further, huge companies – Lockheed-Martin, much of Boeing, and dozens of others – being unable to compete in the civilian economy, have become obligate military suppliers. Cut their big programs and you unemploy tens of thousands for whom there are no civilian jobs.

The federal bureaucracy is much the same, employing vast numbers yet producing nothing. Politicians drone about wanting “smaller government.” How? Eliminate the Departments of Education, or Housing and Urban Development, or Commerce – and where do the people go?

We can pretend that the current recession is temporary, and not a manifestation of dying opulence, just as a fading beauty can pile on the make-up and hope that men don't notice. We can spend while others grow, buy their goods on credit – for a little while longer. The monkey can't let go.

And any who say that we ought to put our house in order and come to terms with reality? They will be said to Hate America. Well and good, until the bill comes due. **CT**

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Britain's real domestic extremists

Who threatens the country most – peaceful campaigners or a private militia run by police chiefs? asks **George Monbiot**

This is what the head of a police unit set up to monitor domestic extremism said in 2009. “I’ve never said – and we don’t see – that any environmentalist is going to or has committed any violent acts.” That chimes with my experience. Two years ago I searched all the literature I could lay hands on, and couldn’t find a single proven instance of a planned attempt in the UK to harm people in the cause of defending the environment. (That’s in sharp contrast to animal rights campaigning, where there has been plenty of violence). No one has yet produced a factual challenge to that conclusion. Yet every year a shadowy body spends most of its £5m budget on countering a non-existent threat that officers call eco-terrorism.

The National Public Order Intelligence Unit (NPOIU) employed the undercover officer Mark Kennedy, who was embedded and bedded for seven years among peaceful green activists. Kennedy claims that it has supervised 15 other undercover agents on the same mission. But what is the mission? Sorry, can’t tell you. NPOIU is run by the Association of Chief Police Officers. As Simon Jenkins pointed out recently in the *Guardian*, ACPO is not a police force but a private limited company, beyond democratic scrutiny, not subject to freedom of information laws. While it receives much of its funding from the government, it is not accountable

to the public. It looks to me like a state-sanctioned private militia, fighting public protest on behalf of corporations.

Until it was forced to back down by bad publicity, one of the other units that ACPO runs published a list of domestic extremists, to help its officers identify dangerous elements. Dr Peter Harbour, a 70-year old retired physicist and university lecturer, found his name on the list. Apart from the occasional speeding ticket, he has never been tried or convicted of an offence. So why was he on the database? Because he had peacefully marched, demonstrated and petitioned against a proposal by RWE npower, which owned Didcot power station, to drain the beautiful lake beside his village and fill it with pulverised fly ash. He had broken no law, damaged no property, issued no threats. Dr Harbour wrote to the unit, asking for his name to be removed from its blacklist. It refused.

NPOIU, the unit for which Kennedy worked, runs a similar list of extremists – which means people who have attended a protest or a public meeting. Surveillance officers are given spotter cards so that they can follow people on the database and monitor their movements. Vehicles which have been used by protesters are tracked all over the country by number-plate recognition cameras. One man, who has never been convicted of an offence, has been stopped

ACPO is not a police force but a private limited company, beyond democratic scrutiny, not subject to freedom of information laws

POLICE POWER

Aggravated trespass is a crime invented by the previous Conservative government, to prosecute protestors who weren't otherwise breaking the law

25 times because his car appears on the list.

There is no obvious connection between the kind of people in these files and criminality: they're distinguished only by the fact that they have taken an interest in politics. You might expect that this would mark them out as good citizens. But this policing appears to have nothing to do with the public good. If the claims that Kennedy also functioned as an agent provocateur are true, it has nothing to do with upholding the law. ACPO appears to be persecuting peaceful citizens who are trying to protect the places and values they cherish from destructive companies.

Twenty of the activists whose plans Kennedy betrayed to his handlers were convicted on the desperate charge of conspiracy to commit aggravated trespass. This means that they had decided to step onto property belong to the power company E.On. The prosecutors couldn't find anything more serious to throw at them. Aggravated trespass is a crime invented by the previous Conservative government, to prosecute protestors who weren't otherwise breaking the law. The judge who passed sentence described these dangerous criminals as "decent" people with "the highest possible motives" (they were campaigning to prevent climate breakdown). The case against another six was dropped when the police realised that they would have to release documents about Kennedy's activities, and tanked the trial.

This is what the £1.75m it cost to run Mark Kennedy has delivered; this is the sole legal product of seven years of work by a unit ostensibly fighting terrorism and extremism. Twenty peaceful people convicted on a pathetic charge, by a jury from whom the police withheld key facts; another group walking free after those facts threatened to emerge. Does anyone believe this represents good value? Does anyone think this is proportionate policing?

Even the *Daily Mail* fulminated about ACPO's lack of accountability and questioned its relationship with corporations and the lawfulness of its actions. It pointed

out that "the right to peaceful protest is a cornerstone of our democracy." This looks like a possible turning point. The government might have to keep its promise to reform the laws restricting civil liberties.

But don't expect too much. Kennedy says that his superior officer told him that the information he gathered "was going directly to Tony Blair's desk." This sounds plausible. It accords with the paranoid style that Blair imported into British politics. It fits with his instinctive support of power against the people, and his efforts to free the corporations (banks included) from the care they owe to society, while passing draconian laws to prevent society from challenging them. This government shares his inclinations.

The people challenging corporate power are often defamed as destructive anarchists. Yet they are seeking to defend the fabric of our lives from the anarchic destruction of market fundamentalism. The police, on the other hand, are fighting – often without obvious justification – to shield destructive companies from both unlawful and lawful challenges. They are defending neoliberalism's atomising, kleptocratic projects from those who question them.

So who are the domestic extremists? Which body represents the real threat to society, to public order and the rule of law? A group of peaceful campaigners acting on "the highest possible motives"? Or a private corporation running a secret spy ring, which looks as if it's using police budgets to try to change the political character of the nation?

This government claims to be concerned about both civil liberties and law enforcement. So here is a straightforward test. If it is committed to these principles, it will strip the Association of Chief Police Officers of its powers and its funding, shut down the units it runs and launch an inquiry into the alleged collusion between senior police officers and large corporations. Which does Cameron put first: the rule of law or corporate power? If ACPO is still operating in 2012, you'll have your answer. **CT**

George Monbiot's latest book is "Bring On The Apocalypse"

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The war on Wikileaks

John Pilger investigates and talks to Julian Assange

As Assange points out, the task of interpreting material and editing that which might harm innocent individuals demands “standards [befitting] higher levels of information and primary sources”

The attacks on WikiLeaks and its founder, Julian Assange, are a response to an information revolution that threatens old power orders, in politics and journalism. The incitement to murder trumpeted by public figures in the United States, together with attempts by the Obama administration to corrupt the law and send Assange to a hell hole prison for the rest of his life, are the reactions of a rapacious system exposed as never before.

In recent weeks, the US Justice Department has established a secret grand jury just across the river from Washington in the eastern district of the state of Virginia. The object is to indict Julian Assange under a discredited espionage act used to arrest peace activists during the first world war, or one of the “war on terror” conspiracy statutes that have degraded American justice. Judicial experts describe the jury as a “deliberate set up”, pointing out that this corner of Virginia is home to the employees and families of the Pentagon, CIA, Department of Homeland Security and other pillars of American power.

“This is not good news,” Assange told me when we spoke recently, his voice dark and concerned. He says he can have “bad days – but I recover”.

When we met in London last year, I said, “You are making some very serious enemies, not least of all the most powerful government engaged in two wars. How do you deal

with that sense of danger?” His reply was characteristically analytical. “It’s not that fear is absent. But courage is really the intellectual mastery over fear – by an understanding of what the risks are, and how to navigate a path through them.” Regardless of the threats to his freedom and safety, he says the US is not WikiLeaks’ main “technological enemy”.

“China is the worst offender. China has aggressive, sophisticated interception technology that places itself between every reader inside China and every information source outside China. We’ve been fighting a running battle to make sure we can get information through, and there are now all sorts of ways Chinese readers can get on to our site.”

It was in this spirit of “getting information through” that WikiLeaks was founded in 2006, but with a moral dimension. “The goal is justice,” wrote Assange on the homepage, “the method is transparency.”

Contrary to a current media mantra, WikiLeaks material is not “dumped”. Less than one per cent of the 251,000 US embassy cables have been released. As Assange points out, the task of interpreting material and editing that which might harm innocent individuals demands “standards [befitting] higher levels of information and primary sources”.

To secretive power, this is journalism at its most dangerous. On 18 March 2008, a war on

WikiLeaks was foretold in a secret Pentagon document prepared by the “Cyber Counter-intelligence Assessments Branch”. US intelligence, it said, intended to destroy the feeling of “trust” which is WikiLeaks’ “centre of gravity”. It planned to do this with threats of “exposure [and] criminal prosecution”. Silencing and criminalising this rare source of independent journalism was the aim, smear the method. Hell hath no fury like imperial mafiosi scorned. Others, also scorned, have lately played a supporting part, intentionally or not, in the hounding of Assange, some for reasons of petty jealousy. Sordid and shabby describe their behaviour, which serves only to highlight the injustice against a man who has courageously revealed what we have a right to know.

As the US Justice Department, in its hunt for Assange, subpoenas the Twitter and email accounts, banking and credit card records of people around the world – as if we are all subjects of the United States – much of the “free” media on both sides of the Atlantic direct their indignation at the hunt. “So, Julian, why won’t you go back to Sweden now?” demanded the headline over Catherine Bennett’s *Observer* column on 19 December, which questioned Assange’s response to allegations of sexual misconduct with two women in Stockholm last August.

“To keep delaying the moment of truth, for this champion of fearless disclosure and total openness,” wrote Bennett, “could soon begin to look pretty dishonest, as well as inconsistent.” Not a word in Bennett’s vitriol considered the looming threats to Assange’s basic human rights and his physical safety, as described by Geoffrey Robertson QC, in the extradition hearing in London on 11 January.

In response to Bennett, the editor of the online Nordic News Network in Sweden, Al Burke, wrote to the *Observer* explaining that “plausible answers to Catherine Bennett’s tendentious question” were both critically important and freely available. Assange had remained in Sweden for more than five weeks after the rape allegation was made – and subsequently dismissed by the chief prosecutor

in Stockholm – and that repeated attempts by him and his Swedish lawyer to meet a second prosecutor, who re-opened the case following the intervention of a government politician, had failed. And yet, as Burke pointed out, this prosecutor had granted him permission to fly to London where “he also offered to be interviewed – a normal practice in such cases”.

So it seems odd, at the very least, that the prosecutor then issued a European Arrest Warrant. The *Observer* did not publish Burke’s letter. This record-straightening is crucial because it describes the perfidious behaviour of the Swedish authorities – a bizarre sequence confirmed to me by other journalists in Stockholm and by Assange’s Swedish lawyer, Bjorn Hurtig.

Not only that; Burke catalogued the unforeseen danger Assange faces should he be extradited to Sweden. “Documents released by Wikileaks since Assange moved to England,” he wrote, “clearly indicate that Sweden has consistently submitted to pressure from the United States in matters relating to civil rights. There is ample reason for concern that if Assange were to be taken into custody by Swedish authorities, he could be turned over to the United States without due consideration of his legal rights.”

These documents have been virtually ignored in Britain. They show that the Swedish political class has moved far from the perceived neutrality of a generation ago and that the country’s military and intelligence apparatus is all but absorbed into Washington’s matrix around NATO. In a 2007 cable, the US embassy in Stockholm lauds the Swedish government dominated by the conservative Moderate Party of prime minister Fredrik Reinfeldt as coming “from a new political generation and not bound by [anti-US] traditions [and] in practice a pragmatic and strong partner with NATO, having troops under NATO command in Kosovo and Afghanistan”.

The cable reveals how foreign policy is largely controlled by Carl Bildt, the current foreign minister, whose career has been

Others, also scorned, have lately played a supporting part, intentionally or not, in the hounding of Assange, some for reasons of petty jealousy

ATTACKING ASSANGE

What is most striking about these “interviews” is not so much their arrogance and lack of intellectual and moral humility; it is their indifference to fundamental issues of justice and freedom and their imposition of narrow, prurient terms of reference

based on a loyalty to the United States that goes back to the Vietnam war when he attacked Swedish public television for broadcasting evidence that the US was bombing civilian targets. Bildt played a leading role in the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, a lobby group with close ties to the White House of George W. Bush, the CIA and the far right of the Republican Party.

“The significance of all this for the Assange case,” notes Burke in a recent study, “is that it will be Carl Bildt and perhaps other members of the Reinfeldt government who will decide – openly or, more likely, furtively behind a façade of legal formality – on whether or not to approve the anticipated US request for extradition. Everything in their past clearly indicates that such a request will be granted.”

For example, in December 2001, with the “war on terror” under way, the Swedish government abruptly revoked the political refugee status of two Egyptians, Ahmed Agiza and Mohammed al-Zari. They were handed to a CIA kidnap squad at Stockholm airport and “rendered” to Egypt, where they were tortured. When the Swedish Ombudsman for Justice investigated and found that their human rights had been “seriously violated”, it was too late.

The implications for the Assange case are clear. Both men were removed without due process of law and before their lawyers could file appeals to the European Human Rights Court, and in response to a US threat to impose a trade embargo on Sweden. Last year, Assange applied for residency in Sweden, hoping to base Wikileaks there.

It is widely believed that Washington warned Sweden through mutual intelligence contacts of the potential consequences. In December, Prosecutor Marianne Ny, who re-activated the Assange case, discussed the possibility of Assange’s extradition to the US on her website. Almost six months after the sex allegations were first made public, Julian Assange has been charged with no crime, but his right to a presumption of innocence has been wilfully denied.

The unfolding events in Sweden have been farcical, at best. The Australian barrister James Catlin, who acted for Assange in October, describes the Swedish justice system as “a laughing stock... There is no precedent for it. The Swedes are making it up as they go along”.

He says that Assange, apart from noting contradictions in the case, has not publicly criticised the women who made the allegations against him. It was the police who tipped off the Swedish equivalent of the *Sun*, *Expressen*, with defamatory material about them, initiating a trial by media across the world.

In Britain, this trial has welcomed yet more eager prosecutors, with the BBC to the fore. There was no presumption of innocence in Kirsty Wark’s *Newsnight* court in December. “Why don’t you just apologise to the women?” she demanded of Assange, followed by: “Do we have your word of honour that you won’t abscond?”

On Radio 4’s *Today* programme, John Humphrys, the partner of Catherine Bennett, told Assange that he was obliged to go back to Sweden “because the law says you must”. The hectoring Humphrys, however, had more pressing interests. “Are you a sexual predator?” he asked. Assange replied that the suggestion was ridiculous, to which Humphrys demanded to know how many women he had slept with. “Would even Fox News have descended to that level?” wondered the American historian William Blum. “I wish Assange had been raised in the streets of Brooklyn, as I was. He then would have known precisely how to reply to such a question: ‘You mean including your mother?’”

What is most striking about these “interviews” is not so much their arrogance and lack of intellectual and moral humility; it is their indifference to fundamental issues of justice and freedom and their imposition of narrow, prurient terms of reference. Fixing these boundaries allows the interviewer to diminish the journalistic credibility of Assange and Wikileaks, whose remarkable achievements stand in vivid contrast

to their own. It is like watching the old and stale, guardians of the status quo, struggling to prevent the emergence of the new. In this media trial, there is a tragic dimension, obviously for Assange, but also for the best of mainstream journalism.

Having published a slew of professionally brilliant editions with the WikiLeaks disclosures, feted all over the world, the *Guardian* recovered its establishment propriety on 17 December by turning on its besieged source. A major article by the paper's senior correspondent Nick Davies claimed that he had been given the "complete" Swedish police file with its "new" and "revealing" salacious morsels.

Assange's Swedish lawyer Bjorn Hurtig says that crucial evidence is missing from the file given to Davies, including "the fact that the women were re-interviewed and given an opportunity to change their stories" and the tweets and SMS messages between them, which are "critical to bringing justice in this case". Vital exculpatory evidence is also omitted, such as the statement by the original prosecutor, Eva Finne, that "Julian Assange is not suspected of rape".

Having reviewed the Davies article, Assange's former barrister James Catlin wrote to me: "The complete absence of due process is the story and Davies ignores it. Why does due process matter? Because the massive powers of two arms of government are being brought to bear against the individual whose liberty and reputation are at stake." I would add: so is his life.

The *Guardian* has profited hugely from the Wikileaks disclosures, in many ways. On the other hand, WikiLeaks, which survives on mostly small donations and can no longer receive funds through many banks and credit companies thanks to the bullying of Washington, has received nothing from the paper. In February, Random House will publish a *Guardian* book that is sure to be a lucrative best-seller, which Amazon is advertising as *The End of Secrecy: the Rise and Fall of WikiLeaks*. When I asked David Leigh, the *Guardian* executive in charge of

the book, what was meant by "fall", he replied that Amazon was wrong and that the working title had been *The Rise (and Fall?) of WikiLeaks*. "Note parenthesis and query," he wrote, "Not meant for publication anyway." (The book is now described on the *Guardian* website as *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy*).

Still, with all that duly noted, the sense is that "real" journalists are back in the saddle. Too bad about the new boy, who never really belonged. On 11 January, Assange's first extradition hearing was held at Belmarsh Magistrates Court, an infamous address because it is here that people were, before the advent of control orders, consigned to Britain's own Guantanamo, Belmarsh prison. The change from ordinary Westminster magistrates' court was due to a lack of press facilities, according to the authorities. That they announced this on the day US Vice President Joe Biden declared Assange a "high tech terrorist" was no doubt coincidental, though the message was not.

For his part, Julian Assange is just as worried about what will happen to Bradley Manning, the alleged whistleblower, being held in horrific conditions which the US National Commission on Prisons calls "torturous". At 23, Private Manning is the world's pre-eminent prisoner of conscience, having remained true to the Nuremberg Principle that every soldier has the right to "a moral choice".

His suffering mocks the notion of the land of the free. "Government whistleblowers", said Barack Obama, running for president in 2008, "are part of a healthy democracy and must be protected from reprisal." Obama has since pursued and prosecuted more whistleblowers than any other president in American history.

"Cracking Bradley Manning is the first step," Assange told me.

"The aim clearly is to break him and force a confession that he somehow conspired with me to harm the national security of the United States. In fact, I'd never heard his name before it was published in the press.

Assange's first extradition hearing was held at Belmarsh Magistrates Court, an infamous address because it is here that people were, before the advent of control orders, consigned to Britain's own Guantanamo, Belmarsh prison

ATTACKING ASSANGE

What WikiLeaks has given us is truth, including rare and precious insight into how and why so many innocent people have suffered in reigns of terror disguised as wars, and executed in our name

WikiLeaks technology was designed from the very beginning to make sure that we never knew the identities or names of people submitting material. We are as untraceable as we are uncensorable. That's the only way to assure sources they are protected."

He adds: "I think what's emerging in the mainstream media is the awareness that if I can be indicted, other journalists can, too. Even the *New York Times* is worried. This used not to be the case. If a whistleblower was prosecuted, publishers and reporters were protected by the First Amendment that journalists took for granted. That's being lost. The release of the Iraq and Afghanistan war logs, with their evidence of the killing of civilians, hasn't caused this – it's the exposure and embarrassment of the political class: the truth of what governments say in secret, how they lie in public; how wars are started. They don't want the public to know these things and scapegoats must be found."

What about the allusions to the "fall" of Wikileaks? "There is no fall," he said. "We have never published as much as we are now. WikiLeaks is now mirrored on more than 2,000 websites. I can't keep track of the of the spin-off sites: those who are doing their own WikiLeaks... If something happens to me or to WikiLeaks, 'insurance' files will be released. They speak more of the same truth to power, including the media. There are 504 US embassy cables on one broadcasting organisation and there are cables on Murdoch and NewsCorp."

The latest propaganda about the "damage" caused by WikiLeaks is a warning by the US State Department to "hundreds of human rights activists, foreign government officials and business people identified in leaked diplomatic cables of possible threats to their safety".

This was how the *New York Times* dutifully relayed it on 8 January, and it is bogus. In a letter to Congress, Secretary of Defence Robert Gates has admitted that no sensitive intelligence sources have been compromised. On 28 November, McClatchy Newspapers reported that "US officials conceded they have

no evidence to date that the [prior] release of documents led to anyone's death." NATO in Kabul told CNN it could not find a single person who needed protecting.

The great American playwright Arthur Miller wrote: "The thought that the state... is punishing so many innocent people is intolerable. And so the evidence has to be internally denied."

What WikiLeaks has given us is truth, including rare and precious insight into how and why so many innocent people have suffered in reigns of terror disguised as wars, and executed in our name; and how the United States has secretly and wantonly intervened in democratic governments from Latin America to its most loyal ally in Britain.

Javier Moreno, the editor of *El Pais*, which published the WikiLeaks logs in Spain, wrote, "I believe that the global interest sparked by the WikiLeaks papers is mainly due to the simple fact that they conclusively reveal the extent to which politicians in the West have been lying to their citizens."

Crushing individuals like Julian Assange and Bradley Manning is not difficult for a great power, however craven. The point is, we should not allow it to happen, which means those of us meant to keep the record straight should not collaborate in any way.

Transparency and information, to paraphrase Thomas Jefferson, are the "currency" of democratic freedom.

"Every news organisation," a leading American constitutional lawyer told me, "should recognise that Julian Assange is one of them, and that his prosecution will have a huge and chilling effect on journalism". My favourite secret document – leaked by WikiLeaks, of course – is from the Ministry of Defence in London. It describes journalists who serve the public without fear or favour as "subversive" and "threats". Such a badge of honour. **CT**

John Pilger's latest film, "The War You Don't See", is now available on DVD at Amazon.co.uk. His web site is www.johnpilger.com

The US media: Selling views, calling it news

John Kozy explains why we should distrust the ‘free’ press which, he says, exists merely to sell various brands of snake oil

Sometime in the 1960s, I took part in a university symposium along with three other faculty members – a political scientist, a historian, and a journalism professor. The topic was *Freedom of the Press – Good or Bad*.

During the sixties, the Cold War was being fought mightily. The Soviet Union’s news agencies, TASS and Pravda, were continually attacked by the American “free press” as untrustworthy. A common claim was that a controlled press could never be trusted while a free press could, and my three colleagues on the panel supported that view. I did too, but only partially.

A controlled press, I argued, most certainly could not be trusted when reporting on governmental actions or policies, but I pointed out that much news is not affected by government, and I saw no reason to be suspicious of a controlled press’ reporting on such matters. But I also argued that there was good reason to distrust the so called free press no matter what was being reported.

My argument rested upon the observation that a controlled press, being funded by its controlling government, had no need to attract readers while the so called free press had to rely on readers to remain economically viable. The free press had to market its wares in the same way that any retail company must, and one way to do that was to slant the news in ways that made it attrac-

tive to the news organization’s target groups which, in a sense, biased all the stories the free press reported. And although the free press claimed to maintain objectivity by balancing the presentation, using two people of divergent political views, I pointed out that it was easy to select the two people in ways that made it seem that one side always prevails, the result being that the media divided itself into ideological groups, not even to mention that large segment of the press openly termed sensational-tabloid.

Although this symposium took place approximately half a century ago, my argument is easier to make today than it was then. The media in America today often openly declare their various points of view, from conservative Fox News to liberal MSNBC.

Distinguished from these “all news” outlets are the more traditional networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC. These can be likened to department stores, in which various products are sold throughout each day, so called news being only one of them. These networks have their departments – the game show department, the reality show department, the sports department, the business department, the celebrity department, and, of course, the “news” department.

What either type of medium does, however, is similar. Just as Macy’s sells products of various kinds, the news sells stories, and each outlet distinguishes itself from the oth-

The media in America today often openly declare their various points of view, from conservative Fox News to liberal MSNBC

MEDIA BLUES

So anyone who criticizes the mainstream press for not being truthful, neutral, or objective is misguided. That's not what the mainstream press sells and criticizing it is as unreasonable as criticizing McDonalds for not selling lamb chops

ers by the slant in which each frames their products. Just as McDonalds distinguishes its burgers from those sold by BurgerKing, ABC distinguishes its stories from those told by NBC. In short, in the free press, the news is sold by slanting it in ways that make it appealing to the target audiences, and the slanting often takes up more time than telling the story does. An anchor often tells a story and then so called experts are used to embellish it by providing the slant. Unfortunately, the “experts” used often know nothing more about the issues discussed than the average viewer/listener does. The news, which many believe should consist of facts, becomes mere opinion.

Everyone must remember that there is no Hippocratic Oath for journalists; a person does not have to swear to report events truthfully to be a journalist. In fact, less is required of a journalist than of the plumber you call to unstop your toilet. In short, today's American journalist can be likened to the teenager on roller skates who brings the hot dog you ordered to your car at Sonic or the clerk behind the counter at Macy's. So anyone who criticizes the mainstream press for not being truthful, neutral, or objective is misguided. That's not what the mainstream press sells and criticizing it is as unreasonable as criticizing McDonalds for not selling lamb chops.

That the media need to differentiate products from those of competitors also limits the kinds of stories that can be reported. If adding a bias to a story is difficult because of the story's nature, the “free” press tends to ignore it. For instance, when the Iranian opposition engaged in anti-governmental demonstrations after the last election, the American press made much of it because the story could easily be presented as an oppressive government's suppression of dissent. But the demonstrations against austerity policies taking place in Iceland, Ireland, Great Britain, France, and Greece have gone unreported because those demonstrations cannot be presented as demonstrations against oppressive governments. Similarly,

the killing of Christians in Iraq and Egypt have gone unreported because they cannot be slanted to make them seem justified. If slanted any other way, they would provide anti-war Americans with another reason to argue against the wars. Furthermore, it is difficult to sensationalize stories about foreigners Americans know nothing of. So, for instance, stories about the antics of Italy's Berlusconi would have little attraction to American viewers/listeners. Ever since it joined Mrs. Merkel's German government, the fortunes of the pro-business Free Democrats have been dramatically changed from a party that won 15 percent during the federal elections of September 2009 to below 5 percent today, because of an increasing negative attitude of Germans for business since the current economic collapse began, a story that cannot easily be told to Americans because of American pro-business attitudes.

Worthless media

Snardfarker.ning.com claims that there are five reasons that the mainstream media is worthless.

(1) Self-Censorship by journalists who are afraid to do what journalists were put on this green earth to do. “There's the intense pressure to maintain access to insider sources. . . . There's the fear of being labeled partisan if one's bullshit-calling isn't meted out in precisely equal increments along the political spectrum.”

(2) Censorship by higher-ups. “If journalists do want to speak out about an issue, they also are subject to tremendous pressure by their editors or producers to kill the story.”

(3) To drum support for war. “Why has the American press consistently served the elites in disseminating their false justifications for war? One of the reasons is because the large media companies are owned by those who support the militarist agenda or even directly profit from war and terror (for example, NBC . . . was owned by General Electric, one of the largest defense contractors in the world – which directly profits from war, terrorism and chaos).”

(4) Access. “For \$25,000 to \$250,000, The Washington Post . . . offered lobbyists and association executives off-the-record, nonconfrontational access to ‘those powerful few’ Obama administration officials, members of Congress, and – at first – even the paper’s own reporters and editors.” And

(5) Censorship by the Government. “the government has exerted tremendous pressure on the media to report things a certain way. Indeed, at times the government has thrown media owners and reporters in jail if they’ve been too critical.” These reasons are true to some extent, but the ultimate reason is merely the need to grow the bottom line, to make money which is, after all, the reason the media exists in America.

The consequence of all of this is that Americans have become mentally isolated. The world beyond America’s borders is an amorphous, unknown land. As Zbigniew Brzezinski has recently said, “most Americans are close to total ignorance about the world. They are ignorant.” What people don’t realize is how much of this ignorance is the result of the American “free” press’ need to slant its reporting. Brzezinski finds this “unhealthy,” and he is right, since America’s “foreign policy has to be endorsed by the people if it is to be pursued.” And this ignorance makes it easy for the government to convince the people that some disastrous policy is appropriate.

Americans who are critical of the mainstream press have an idealized notion of what the press is. They indict the press for not being what the press *should be* but is not and never has been. The press’ need to sell its products makes it impossible to be what it should be.

Unfortunately, the alternative press has adopted many of the mainstream press’ models. There are sites devoted exclusively to ideological stories – conservative, liberal, libertarian, pro and anti war, global warming, carbon taxation, and more – all in an attempt to attract readers. So the truth doesn’t emerge there either. How then can we find it?

There was once a small segment of the

“free” press called investigative journalism which has now become almost entirely extinct. Perhaps this has happened because of the difficulty of prying information out of governmental agencies and corporate entities. About the only way to get that hidden information is to have it leaked by some whistleblower to some site that can protect the anonymity of the leaker. WikiLeaks is a start, but many such sites are needed if all the lies and disinformation is to be revealed. And, yes, it is likely that governments and even corporations will create pseudo-leaking sites to try to obfuscate the truth revealed by any leaker. But if the sites can, as WikiLeaks does, disseminate actual source documents that any reader can judge the authenticity of for her/himself, much more of the truth will emerge than can emerge now.

Slanted journalism must, of course, be debunked. Many alternative journalists already do this quite well, but sites like WikiLeaks are also necessary to combat the increasing secrecy that even the “free” press must contend with. Slanted reporting must be debunked, and leaking and whistleblowing must be encouraged and protected if the truth is ever to get a change of emerging from the darkness of insidious secrecy.

America’s journalists are not “newshounds.” Although I suspect that each and every one of them will consider this an insult, they are nothing more than salesclerks, hocking the products their employers want to sell. The pretty faces – well at least not ugly – that now function as most news anchors are no different than the pretty models used to sell other products. The American “free” press is comprised of nothing more than a number of retail outlets which sell stories slanted to please their target audiences. As such, they exist merely to sell snake oil. **CT**

John Kozy is a retired professor of philosophy and logic who writes on social, political, and economic issues. After serving in the US Army during the Korean War, he spent 20 years as a university professor and another 20 years working as a writer

America’s journalists are not “newshounds.” Although I suspect that each and every one of them will consider this an insult, they are nothing more than salesclerks, hocking the products their employers want to sell

The Palestine Papers

Jonathan Cook tells how leaked documents unmask Israel's peacemakers

It is difficult to imagine how the resulting patchwork of Palestinian enclaves in East Jerusalem, surrounded by Jewish settlements, could ever have functioned as the capital of the new state of Palestine

For more than a decade, since the collapse of the Camp David talks in 2000, the mantra of Israeli politics has been the same: “There is no Palestinian partner for peace.”

Last month, the first of hundreds of leaked confidential Palestinian documents confirmed the suspicions of a growing number of observers that the rejectionists in the peace process are to be found on the Israeli, not Palestinian, side.

Some of the most revealing papers, jointly released by Al-Jazeera television and Britain's Guardian newspaper, date from 2008, a relatively hopeful period in recent negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

At the time, Ehud Olmert was Israel's prime minister and had publicly committed himself to pursuing an agreement on Palestinian statehood. He was backed by the United States administration of George W Bush, which had revived the peace process in late 2007 by hosting the Annapolis conference.

In those favourable circumstances, the papers show, Israel spurned a set of major concessions the Palestinian negotiating team offered over the following months on the most sensitive issues in the talks.

Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Authority president, has tried unconvincingly to deny the documents' veracity, but has not been helped by the failure of Israeli officials to come to his aid.

According to the documents, the most significant Palestinian compromise – or “sell-out”, as many Palestinians are calling it – was on Jerusalem.

During a series of meetings over the summer of 2008, Palestinian negotiators agreed to Israel's annexation of large swaths of East Jerusalem, including all but one of the city's Jewish settlements and parts of the Old City itself.

It is difficult to imagine how the resulting patchwork of Palestinian enclaves in East Jerusalem, surrounded by Jewish settlements, could ever have functioned as the capital of the new state of Palestine.

At the earlier Camp David talks, according to official Israeli documents leaked to the *Haaretz* daily in 2008, Israel had proposed something very similar in Jerusalem: Palestinian control over what were then termed territorial “bubbles”.

In the later talks, the Palestinians also showed a willingness to renounce their claim to exclusive sovereignty over the Old City's flashpoint of the Haram al-Sharif, the sacred compound that includes the al-Aqsa mosque and is flanked by the Western Wall. An international committee overseeing the area was proposed instead.

This was probably the biggest concession of all – control of the Haram was the issue that “blew up” the Camp David talks, according to an Israeli official who was present.

Saeb Erekat, the PLO's chief negotiator, is quoted promising Israel "the biggest Yerushalayim in history" – using the Hebrew word for Jerusalem – as his team effectively surrendered Palestinian rights enshrined in international law.

The concessions did not end there, however. The Palestinians agreed to land swaps to accommodate 70 per cent of the half a million Jewish settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and to forgo the rights of all but a few thousand Palestinian refugees.

The Palestinian state was also to be demilitarised. In one of the papers recording negotiations in May 2008, Erekat asks Israel's negotiators: "Short of your jet fighters in my sky and your army on my territory, can I choose where I secure external defence?" The Israeli answer was an emphatic: "No."

Interestingly, the Palestinian negotiators are said to have agreed to recognise Israel as a "Jewish state" – a concession Israel now claims is one of the main stumbling blocks to a deal.

Israel was also insistent that Palestinians accept a land swap that would transfer a small area of Israel into the new Palestinian state along with as many as a fifth of Israel's 1.4 million Palestinian citizens. This demand echoes a controversial "population transfer" long proposed by Avigdor Lieberman, Israel's far-right foreign minister.

The "Palestine Papers", as they are being called, demand a serious re-evaluation of two lingering – and erroneous – assumptions made by many Western observers about the peace process.

The first relates to the United States' self-proclaimed role as honest broker. What shines through the documents is the reluctance of US officials to put reciprocal pressure on Israeli negotiators, even as the Palestinian team make major concessions on core issues. Israel's "demands" are always treated as paramount.

The second is the assumption that peace talks have fallen into abeyance chiefly because of the election nearly two years ago of a rightwing Israeli government under Benja-

min Netanyahu. He has drawn international criticism for refusing to pay more than lip-service to Palestinian statehood.

The Americans' goal – at least in the early stages of Mr Netanyahu's premiership – was to strong-arm him into bringing into his coalition Tzipi Livni, leader of the centrist opposition party Kadima. She is still widely regarded as the most credible Israeli advocate for peace.

However, Ms Livni, who was previously Mr Olmert's foreign minister, emerges in the leaked papers as an inflexible negotiator, dismissive of the huge concessions being made by the Palestinians. At a key moment, she turns down the Palestinians' offer, after saying: "I really appreciate it".

The sticking point for Ms Livni was a handful of West Bank settlements the Palestinian negotiators refused to cede to Israel. The Palestinians have long complained that the two most significant – Maale Adumim, outside Jerusalem, and Ariel, near the Palestinian city of Nablus – would effectively cut the West Bank into three cantons, undermining any hopes of territorial contiguity.

Ms Livni's insistence on holding on to these settlements – after all the Palestinian compromises – suggests that there is no Israeli leader either prepared or able to reach a peace deal – unless, that is, the Palestinians cave in to almost every Israeli demand and abandon their ambitions for statehood.

One of the Palestine Papers quotes an exasperated Mr Erekat asking a US diplomat last year: "What more can I give?"

The man with the answer may be Mr Lieberman, who unveiled his own map of Palestinian statehood this week. It conceded a provisional state on less than half of the West Bank. **CT**

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What shines through the documents is the reluctance of US officials to put reciprocal pressure on Israeli negotiators, even as the Palestinian team make major concessions on core issues

Obama's plan to take over the internet

John W. Whitehead discusses disturbing plans to develop a national identity program via the internet

This latest move is nothing short of a Trojan Horse attempt to sidestep privacy concerns and institute a national ID, all the while giving the government even greater access to our most personal information

"Today the tyrant rules not by club or fist, but disguised as a market researcher, he shepherds his flocks in the ways of utility and comfort." – Marshall McLuhan

The Obama Administration has yet to come up with a plan to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan which are draining our economy, prevent the continuing mortgage meltdown, get more Americans back to work, or do away with pork-barrel spending and government corruption, to name just a few of the overriding concerns plaguing our nation today. Instead, purportedly motivated by a desire to make our lives easier, the president wants to implement a universal internet ID that would eliminate the need for multiple usernames and passwords.

For those inclined to view government as a benevolent institution, this can be viewed as a considerate gesture in a time of economic and social unrest. However, for those who would take seriously John Adams' warning "to trust no man living with power to endanger the public liberty," this latest move is nothing short of a Trojan Horse attempt to sidestep privacy concerns and institute a national ID, all the while giving the government even greater access to our most personal information.

Under the stated goal of achieving internet security and consumer convenience,

the Identity Ecosystem, as the program has been dubbed, would supposedly streamline the process of doing business online by replacing the various login names and passwords currently used to access personal accounts and information on various websites with a *universal* internet ID. However, as Curt Hopkins points out in the *New York Times*, "a user would have one, 'verified' ID, which would be known by the government, and a set of large corporations. Given the periodic outbreak of governmental and corporate shenanigans, we fail to see the benefit of such a system."

And who has the president entrusted with being the gatekeeper of our most sensitive online transactions? Not the Department of Homeland Security, which spent a year masterminding the strategy, nor the National Security Agency, which carries out the government's warrantless eavesdropping program.

Commerce oversight

Rather, the Identity Ecosystem will supposedly be overseen by the Commerce Department – a move clearly intended to assuage fears that the government would improperly make use of such highly personal information. Yet in the wake of 9/11, information sharing between government agencies has become so commonplace that it would be naïve to think that the DHS and NSA, both

of which have been jockeying for control of the nation's cybersecurity, won't have easy access to the information.

Still, if the American people refuse to accept a universal internet ID as a way of life, then does it really matter who oversees the program? In its typical Orwellian fashion, the government has come up with a way around that potential hurdle, as well. Touting the internet ID's convenience and so-called ability to enhance online trust and privacy, the Obama Administration essentially plans to push its Identity Ecosystem as a way to cut through the government's bureaucratic red tape at the federal, state and local levels. Private corporations will eventually follow suit, making it all but impossible for the average American to avoid using the ID.

National ID?

Considering the degree to which Social Security numbers have come to be relied on by those outside government circles for identification purposes (everyone from cable television and credit card companies to hospitals and utility companies), it would not take much for a universal internet ID to become a de facto national ID, and the consequences could be devastating. Why?

First, such a system will give the government unprecedented access to Americans' internet activities – something it has sought for years. Indeed, last fall, the *New York Times* reported that the Obama administration was preparing to submit legislation to Congress that would make it easier for the government to wiretap the internet. As Charlie Savage noted, “Essentially, officials want Congress to require all services that enable communications – including encrypted e-mail transmitters like BlackBerry, social networking Web sites like Facebook and software that allows direct ‘peer to peer’ messaging like Skype – to be technically capable of complying if served with a wiretap order.” This would inevitably lead to governmental agencies, in cooperation with the mega corporations, knowing virtu-

ally everything about our lives. And privacy as we have known it will be no more.

Second, it will eventually allow the government to have control over *all* internet activity, e.g., acting as a clearinghouse for who can and cannot access the internet and the extent to which they can do so. As Curt Hopkins notes, “the ‘Identity Ecosystem’ sounds strangely like the national intranet the Chinese government has been working on, as an alternative to the Internet as a whole, and more controllable.” *Control* is the key word here, and total control is the government's objective.

Third, it would enable the government to better monitor Americans' internet activities – another long desired goal. For example, in 2009, under the guise of combating child pornography, lawmakers proposed the “Internet Stopping Adults Facilitating the Exploitation of Today's Youth Act of 2009” which required that *all* internet users' online surfing habits be retained for two years. The danger, of course, is that the information could be used by corporate entities and law enforcement agencies alike. Although that legislation stalled in committee, the underlying mindset has not changed – namely, that the internet and its users need to be monitored.

Fourth, it would empower the government in its quest to regulate not only internet activity but also the *content* of expressive activities. In fact, in the wake of the Tucson shootings, FOX News Channel host Greta Van Susteren voiced her support for an identification system for web users seeking to post and comment at online venues in order to “tone down the viciousness on the internet.”

Finally, a single internet ID would make Americans that much more vulnerable to security breaches. Just consider some of the more egregious security breaches that have occurred over the past five years:

In 2005, ChoicePoint, a commercial data-broker that provides identification and credential verification services, announced that more than 160,000 consumer records,

In the wake of the Tucson shootings, FOX News Channel host Greta Van Susteren voiced her support for an identification system for web users seeking to post and comment at online venues in order to “tone down the viciousness on the internet”

KEEPING WATCH

It doesn't really matter what party controls the White House or Congress, because the objective of our bureaucratic government remains the same: total control – of the nation, of the internet, and ultimately of you and me

including names, addresses, and identification numbers, had been stolen. For the federal government, which is barred by the 1974 Privacy Act from forming a database, commercial database brokers like Choice-Point have become the government's own private intelligence agencies.

In 2006, 26.5 million veterans had their personal information – names, birth dates and Social Security numbers – jeopardized after a Veterans Administration employee took the data home, only to have it stolen when his home was burglarized.

In 2007, more than 146,000 user IDs and passwords, email addresses, names, phone numbers, and some basic demographic data were stolen from the online job database used by the United States Office of Personnel Management.

In 2008, the US State Department announced that a security breach in its records system, which contains personal information, including Social Security numbers, may have left hundreds of passport applicants open to identity theft.

In 2009, the US Office of Personnel Management once again suffered a security breach in which sensitive data on applicants seeking government jobs was stolen.

In December 2010, just a few days before Christmas, an email spam attack disguised as a White House Christmas Card captured data from numerous government agencies. It was the second such reported attack in a year, aimed at accessing not only government secrets, but also financial data, including sites such as eBay, MySpace and Microsoft, as well as online-payment processors, PayPal and e-gold.

Greater access

The last bastion of democracy is the internet, and the government is well aware of this. For years now, government agencies

have lobbied for greater access to our personal internet activities.

In fact, back in 2005, John Ashcroft, George Bush's Attorney General, urged the FCC to require that internet communications be easier to wiretap. As a result, the Bush Administration came under fire from the media and civil liberties groups alike for seeking to expand the government's online surveillance powers. Unfortunately, many of those who were quick to lambast Bush for his civil liberties violations have been less vocal in their public criticism of Obama, despite the fact that when it comes to civil liberties, Obama is no better and may, in fact, be worse.

Case in point: if Congress falls in line with the Obama Administration's dictates, all online communications services – including communications sent using texting platforms, BlackBerries, social networking sites, and other “peer to peer” communications software such as Skype – will be required to use technologies that would make it easier for the government to collect private communications and decode encrypted messages that Americans send. That doesn't sound like any kind of “change we can believe in” to me.

When all is said and done, it doesn't really matter what party controls the White House or Congress, because the objective of our bureaucratic government remains the same: total control – of the nation, of the internet, and ultimately of you and me. **CT**

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READ THE BEST OF TOM ENGELHARDT

<http://coldtype.net/tom.html>

Media as a branch of government

Justin Raimondo uses the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue as a metaphor for the easy and corrupt relationship between media and government

The complete phoniness of the toppling of Saddam's statue was exposed by the web site antiwar.com and others when it occurred, but now Peter Maass, writing in the *New Yorker*, is calling the stage-managed nature of that operation into question. While not contesting that the narrative symbolized by the imagery was misleading, Maass avers it wasn't the US government, but the Western media that – without much prompting – obligingly created and broadcast a carefully-cropped image of a nearly empty square to give the impression that US soldiers were being greeted by the Iraqis as “liberators.” As Maass puts it, the real significance of the statue toppling was that the Americans had taken central Baghdad, and yet:

“Everything else the toppling was said to represent during repeated replays on television – victory for America, the end of the war, joy throughout Iraq – was a disservice to the truth. Yet the skeptics were wrong in some ways, too, because the event was not planned in advance by the military.”

As for whose idea it was to bring down the statue, Maass traces it to a lowly sergeant who, out of the blue, came up with the bright idea all by his lonesome. But there are several holes in Maass's story.

To begin with, long shots of the square show the area around the statue completely blocked off by US tanks, and yet, according

to Maass's own account, “a handful of Iraqis had slipped into the square” – at precisely the moment the sergeant asked permission to take the statue down.

Who were these Iraqis? Reading Maass, one would simply assume they were random residents of Baghdad, curiosity seekers out on a lark, but a look at these photos disabuses us of this notion. They were members of the Iraqi National Congress – those now-infamous “heroes in error” – who had played a key role in the “weapons of mass destruction” deception and were being groomed by the neocons to take power in post-Saddam Iraq.

Along with their leader, the wanted embezzler and suspected Iranian agent Ahmed Chalabi, 700 INC “fighters” were flown into Nasiriyah by the Pentagon a few days before, and were whisked to Baghdad, where they arrived just in time for their Big Media Moment.

Doing their job

In short, these Iraqis were on the American payroll – and simply doing their job.

That the English-speaking media were also doing their job – which is, as we all know, to parrot the line their governments were putting out – comes as no surprise. As Salon.com's Glenn Greenwald has noted, the links between our government and the “mainstream” media have become so

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LIBERTY BESIEGED

Mainstream media organizations didn't need to wait for orders from Washington: they did it all on their own

intimate that one can fairly speak of an informal “merger.” Yet we ought not to disappear the governmental aspect of this untoward symbiosis. We need to ask: how is it that practically the entire membership of the Iraqi National Congress wound up in that square, on that day, while ordinary Iraqis were being blocked by US tanks?

I have no doubt that both aspects of the Government-Media Complex were acting in perfect tandem on that occasion, and certainly Maass emphasizes this in his piece. That some journalists on the scene who saw what was happening, and protested to their editors that the statue-toppling imagery projected the wrong story, were told to shut up and fix their cameras on the fallen idol will shock the naïve, and amuse the realists among us. Mainstream media organizations didn't need to wait for orders from Washington: they did it all on their own. Yet we don't need to read a WikiLeaks cable detailing the mechanics of the deception to understand how the occupiers set the stage for a successful bit of performance art.

This merger of Big Media and Big Government is not anything new, at least to libertarians. As Murray Rothbard, the founder of the modern libertarian movement, put it: “All States are governed by a ruling class that is a minority of the population, and which subsists as a parasitic and exploitative burden upon the rest of society.

Since its rule is exploitative and parasitic, the State must purchase the alliance of a group of “Court Intellectuals,” whose task is to bamboozle the public into accepting and celebrating the rule of its particular State. The Court Intellectuals have their work cut out for them. In exchange for their continuing work of apologetics and bamboozlement, the Court Intellectuals win their place as junior partners in the power, prestige, and loot extracted by the State apparatus from the deluded public.”

Implicit consent

Even a dictatorship requires the implicit consent of the majority, which puts up with

its depredations until the weight of tyranny presses down so hard that the impetus to rebel is inevitably provoked. What keeps the spirit of rebellion in check are the blandishments of the Court Intellectuals, among whom the mandarins of the “mainstream” media figure prominently.

Rothbard, in the essay cited above, was discussing historical revisionism – the practice of revising the accepted or “official” (i.e. government-generated) history of an event, such as a war, in light of new and often deliberately overlooked or suppressed data. The term entered common usage in the period following World War I, when it was revealed that, far from being a glorious and heroic crusade to “make the world safe for democracy,” the conflict was all about making the world safe for European imperialism, for the arms trade, and for American banking interests whose loans to the Allies were guaranteed by US entry into the war. As Rothbard notes:

“The noble task of Revisionism is to debamboozle: to penetrate the fog of lies and deception of the State and its Court Intellectuals, and to present to the public the true history of the motivation, the nature, and the consequences of State activity.

By working past the fog of State deception to penetrate to the truth, to the reality behind the false appearances, the Revisionist works to delegitimize, to desanctify, the State in the eyes of the previously deceived public. By doing so, the Revisionist, even if he is not a libertarian personally, performs a vitally important libertarian service.”

The task of Revisionism looks very much like the alleged role of journalism in a free society, and so it is. Yet as we've lost our freedoms, down through the years, ceding them to government at every critical turn, our “free” media, instead of “working past the fog of State deception to penetrate to the truth,” has acted like a fog machine, generating and legitimizing deception rather than exposing it.

This is why WikiLeaks was inevitable: the death of investigative journalism has

created a void, which Julian Assange and his collaborators have filled – much to the chagrin and outrage of our alleged “journalists,” who, as semi-official Court Intellectuals, are concerned not with exposing but with protecting the regime. This is why the journalistic profession has not risen as one in defense of WikiLeaks: indeed, far from it, they’ve been in the vanguard of the anti-WikiLeaks lynch mob.

Media half-truth

In what Greenwald calls an “unintentionally hilarious” piece in *Newsweek*, we are told the answer to the question “why haven’t journalists been defending WikiLeaks?” is because they are fearful of “advocacy.” Gee, is that what all those post-9/11 flag lapel pins were about? The idea that the media is averse to advocacy is a half-truth: certain kinds of advocacy are verboten, while others are assumed.

When it comes to cheerleading the national security state, the US media has historically been ahead of the general populace in ginning up wars and inciting war hysteria.

When William Randolph Hearst sent his “journalists” to Cuba, just before the outbreak of the Spanish-American war, he instructed them: “You furnish the pictures. I’ll furnish the war.” Nothing has changed in the interim, except that the government-media partnership has gotten tighter. This marriage was going along swimmingly, until that harlot known as the worldwide web threatened to come between the happy couple.

The Internet blew apart the media monopoly, and destroyed the role of the journalist as semi-official gatekeeper. That’s why our rulers have been so eager to regulate it, tax it, and rein it in – and if they succeed in the case of WikiLeaks, they will have won a decisive victory. In doing all in their power to obstruct and destroy WikiLeaks, and imprison Julian Assange, Washington and its journalistic Praetorian Guard have a much broader goal in mind: neutralize the internet.

Already, legal scholars – some of whom lamely protest that they’re only trying to preserve the First Amendment – are busily constructing arguments to accomplish this task, by coming up with novel arguments, e.g. the concept of “low value” speech, and such statements as “society needs not an absence of ‘chill,’ but an optimal level.” And, yes, our old “friend” Cass Sunstein is in on this one.

Liberals, conservatives, Democrats, and Republicans – all are united on the alleged necessity of reining in the internet. Their motivations may vary, but their goals converge – and freedom’s only defenders are those liberals who remember what true liberalism means, those (few) conservatives who value individual liberty over and above the State, and, of course, all libertarians (with the exception of Michael Moynihan and the editors of *Reason* magazine).

Liberty, besieged, is hanging by a thread – a very narrow and swiftly unraveling thread that looks just about to give way. The only hope is a grassroots rebellion as the Powers That Be get ready to throw the “kill switch” – or are the American people so domesticated that they have lost the power to resist, or even care? I don’t believe it, I can’t believe it, and surely don’t want to believe it – but time will tell.

CT

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The idea that the media is averse to advocacy is a half-truth: certain kinds of advocacy are verboten, while others are assumed

Nothing but shit strewn everywhere

Jeff Archer remembers the 20th anniversary
of one of America's most diabolical massacres

Bush looked at it another way. He now had his chance to slaughter tens of thousands of defenseless soldiers and one of the most barbaric massacres in history began

Twenty years ago, one of the most diabolical slaughters in war history occurred in Iraq. Despite the assurances of the Bush I regime that retreating Iraqi soldiers would not be attacked, just the opposite happened. Iraqi soldiers and civilians were massacred after Saddam Hussein called for their exit of Kuwait.

More than 100,000 Iraqi soldiers were killed in five weeks, the majority during the 100-hour ground war. You may say, "This is war and people get killed." That's true, but tens of thousands of Iraqi soldiers were killed by illegal weapons in a most brutal manner that contradicted international laws that apply to war.

When then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, was asked about the number of deaths the Iraqi military suffered, he said, "I don't have a clue and I don't plan to undertake any real effort to find out." This is the same man who stated several months after Desert Storm that his goal was to "make the world scared to death of the United States."

We all know how Powell as Secretary of State lied to the world about Iraq in 2002 and 2003, yet few remember his affinity for killing during the Gulf War. He was just as vicious and untruthful in 1991 as he was in the early part of the 21st century.

Prior to the start of the ground phase, many countries were trying to dissuade the

U.S. from attacking. Moscow came up with a peace plan that Bush called "a cruel hoax." Bush kept saying that the only objective was for Iraqi troops to leave Kuwait. When one reporter asked him how the Iraqis could retreat while they were still being heavily bombed, Bush answered, "That's for them to find out."

On February 22, 1991, White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater played his own "cruel hoax." He stated, "The United States and its coalition partners reiterate that their forces will not attack retreating Iraqi forces."

Ordered retreat

Despite all the efforts to bring a peaceful conclusion, none was accepted by the U.S. Saddam Hussein ordered a retreat of Iraqi troops from Kuwait on February 25, 1991. This order, with Fitzwater's earlier statement, appeared to be the beginning of the end of violence in Kuwait and Iraq.

Bush looked at it another way. He now had his chance to slaughter tens of thousands of defenseless soldiers and one of the most barbaric massacres in history began.

On February 25, 1991, at a junction of roads leading from Kuwait City, U.S. Marine aircraft, flying close support for ground troops, arrived and saw a five-vehicle-wide stream moving on the highway out of Kuwait City. The vehicles were occupied by Iraqi military personnel (mostly unarmed) and civilians of

many nationalities.

The Marines allowed the vehicles to get out of the city and then laid down an aerial barrage of anti-armor mines across the road, making it impossible for the vehicles to move ahead. There were miles of vehicles and thousands of passengers who were not able to move. Kill zones were assigned to groups of eight aircraft sent into the target area every 15 minutes. According to Major General Royal N. Moore, commander of the Marine Air Wing 3, "It was like a turkey shoot until the weather turned sour."

By the morning of February 26, the 2nd Marine Division and its augmenting armored brigade (the Tiger brigade) of the Army's 2nd Armored Division arrived on the scene. Other ground division followed. Now, the slaughter on what has become to be known as "The Highway of Death" began in earnest.

U.S. troops observed thousands of Iraqis trying to escape up the highway. They attacked the defenseless soldiers from the high ground, cutting to shreds vehicles and people trapped in a miles-long traffic jam. Allied jets repeatedly pounded the blocked vehicles. Schwarzkopf's orders were "not to let anybody or anything out of Kuwait City."

On February 27, the first words hit the outside world about this carnage, however, it still would be a few more weeks until photographs of the destruction made their way to the public, and then only a few were seen. A pool reporter with the 2nd Armored Division wrote:

"As we drove slowly through the wreckage, our armored personnel carrier's tracks splashed through great pools of bloody water. We passed dead soldiers lying, as if resting, without a mark on them. We found others cut up so badly; a pair of legs in its trousers would be 50 yards from the top half of the body. Four soldiers had died under a truck where they sought protection."

The Iraqi retreat extended north of Jahra, where the two main roads going into Iraq split at al-Mutlaa. Because the main road was so jammed, Iraqi troops were being diverted along a coastal route. These soldiers suffered

the same fate as those on the Highway of Death. According to a U.S. Army officer on the scene (the coastal road):

"There was nothing but shit strewn everywhere, five to seven miles of just solid bombed-out vehicles. The Air Force had been given the word to work over the entire area, to find anything that moved and take it out."

Surrendering Iraqi troops were also slaughtered. A media pool report of February 27 stated:

"One Navy pilot, who asked not to be identified, said Iraqis have affixed white flags to their tanks and are riding with turrets open, scanning the skies with their binoculars. The flier said that under allied rules of engagement, pilots were still bombing tanks unless soldiers abandoned the vehicles and left them behind."

Objected to slaughter

The first British pilots to arrive at the scenes of slaughter returned to their base. They protested taking part in attacking defenseless soldiers, but, under threat of court martial, they eventually took part in the massacre.

A report by Greenpeace called On Impact proclaimed:

"Aboard the U.S. aircraft carrier USS Ranger, air strikes against Iraqi troops were being launched so feverishly ... that pilots said they took whatever bombs happened to be closest to the flight deck. S-3 Viking anti-submarine patrol aircraft were brought into the bombing campaign, carrying cluster bombs. The number of attacking aircraft was so dense that air traffic control had to divert planes to avoid collisions."

On March 10, the scenes at the coastal road were still horrendous. Reporter Michael Kelly described them:

"For a 50 or 60-mile stretch from just north of Jahra to the Iraqi border, the road was littered with exploded and roasted vehicles, charred and blown-up bodies ... I saw no bodies that had not belonged to men in uniform. It was not always easy to ascertain

The first British pilots to arrive at the scenes of slaughter returned to their base. They protested taking part in attacking defenseless soldiers

DISGRACE IN IRAQ

The most appalling aspect of this end to Desert Storm was the bravado of the U.S. government and the top military officers. They ordered this unnecessary slaughter and took glee every time they publicly spoke of it

this because the force of the explosions and the heat of the fires had blown most of the clothing off the soldiers, and often too had cooked their remains into wizened, mummified, charcoal-men.”

General McPeak took great pride in the slaughter. He said, “When enemy armies are defeated, they retreat. It’s during this phase that the true fruits of victory are achieved from combat, when the enemy’s disorganized.” Less than a week after the White House spokesman assured the world that U.S. forces would not attack a retreating Iraqi army, most of the army was destroyed while it was retreating.

When the operation was completed, Iraq was stuck with the bill. One of the conditions of the cease-fire was that Iraq had to pay Kuwait \$50 billion in reparations for damage caused by the U.S. When the oil-for-food program began, the first 15% of all revenues taken in by Iraq went to Kuwait.

The most appalling aspect of this end to Desert Storm was the bravado of the U.S. government and the top military officers. They ordered this unnecessary slaughter and took glee every time they publicly spoke of it. Powell and McPeak gained the military accolades that had diverted them a couple of decades earlier in Vietnam.

In addition to the Highway of Death carnage, an incident occurred that has since been forgotten by most of the world. On the first two days of the ground war (February 24 and 25, 1991), U.S. troops, using tanks and earthmovers that had been specially-fitted with plows, buried thousands of Iraqi soldiers alive.

Three brigades of the 1st Mechanized Infantry Division (the Big Red One) used the tactic to destroy trenches and bunkers that were defended by about 10,000 Iraqi soldiers. These combatants were draftees, not seasoned troops such as the Republican Guard.

The assault was carefully planned and rehearsed. According to U.S. participants, about 2,000 Iraqis surrendered and were not buried. Most of the rest, about 8,000, were buried beneath tons of sand – many trying

to surrender. Captain Bernie Williams was rewarded for his part in the burying with a Silver Star. He said, “Once we went through there, other than the ones who surrendered, there wasn’t anybody left.”

According to a senior Army official who, under anonymity, was questioned by *The Spotlight* about the tactics, the use of earthmovers is standard procedure in breaching obstacles and minefields. The heavy equipment precedes armored and infantry units to level barriers, then the vehicles can move quickly through enemy defenses. The official stated that any Iraqi troops who remained in their bunkers would have been buried and killed. He added, “This is war. This isn’t a pickup basketball game.”

Colonel Anthony Moreno, commander of the 2nd Brigade, said, “For all I know, we could’ve killed thousands.” A thinner line of trenches on Moreno’s left flank was attacked by the 1st Brigade, commanded by Colonel Lon Maggart. He estimated that his troops alone buried about 650 Iraqis alive.

Buried alive

After the cease-fire, in an interview with *New York Newsday*, Maggart and Moreno came forward with some of the first public testimony about the burying alive of Iraqi soldiers. Prior to their interview, then Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney, never mentioned the atrocities, even when he submitted a report to Congress just prior to the interviews.

The technique used in burying the soldiers involved a pair of M1-A1 tanks with plows shaped like giant teeth along each section of the trench line. The tanks took up positions on either side of the trenches. Bradley fighting vehicles and Vulcan armored personnel carriers straddled the trench line and fired into the Iraqi soldiers as the tanks covered them with piles of sand.

Moreno recalled, “I came through right after the lead company. What you saw was a bunch of buried trenches with peoples’ arms and things sticking out of them.” Maggart added, “I know burying people alive sounds

pretty nasty, but it would be even nastier if we had to put our troops in the trenches and clean them out.”

The attack contradicted U.S. Army doctrine, which calls for troops to leave their armored vehicle to clean out trenches or to bypass and isolate fortified positions. Moreno admitted that the assault was not according to policy:

“This was not doctrine. My concept is to defeat the enemy with your power and equipment. We’re going to have to bludgeon them with every piece of equipment we’ve got. I’m not going to sacrifice the lives of my soldiers – it’s not cost-effective.”

The most disturbing aspect of the incident was the secrecy involved. When *Newsday* broke the story, many were taken by surprise. According to members of the U.S. House and Senate Armed Forces Committees, the Pentagon had withheld details of the assault from the committees. Senate Chairman, Sam Nunn, was unaware of the assault and after he was notified, he stated, “It sounds like another example of the horrors of war.” Quickly, the incident was forgotten.

The killing of defenseless soldiers and civilians did not end with the cease-fire. On the morning of March 2 (two days after the cease-fire was announced), a convoy of Iraqi vehicles was reported moving through the demarcation point of allied operations on Highway 8 about 50 kilometers west of Basra.

According to a pool reporter from the UPI, a platoon of the 24th Infantry Division reported that the “massive Iraqi convoy ... had just shot a couple of rockets at it.” The *Washington Post* added that the convoy of 700 wheeled vehicles and 300 armored vehicles “opened fire in an effort to clear a path toward a causeway across the Euphrates.” Lt. Chuck Ware, the battalion commander, received permission to return fire and the battalion received backup from Army artillery and 20 U.S. Cobra and Apache helicopters.

The ensuing fighting was one-sided and several thousand Iraqis (civilian and military) were killed in two hours. There were

few Iraqi survivors.

A *Washington Post* report on March 18, 1991 said:

“U.S. tanks were shooting Iraqi tanks off heavy equipment trailers trying to haul them to safety. Bradley fighting vehicles shattered truck after truck with 25mm cannon fire as Iraqi civilians and soldiers alike ran into the surrounding marshes.”

Lt. Col. Ware said, “They shot first, we won big.” Another U.S. officer stated, “We really waxed them.”

Massacre followed ceasefire

This massacre took place after the cease-fire had been announced. At the time, it was thought that the convoy was not aware of its position; therefore it ran into the U.S. Army personnel. All the equipment was being transported on trucks – it was not in position to use in battle – so the U.S. forces had nothing to fear in terms of casualties. Some Iraqi soldiers were lying down on the vehicles and sleeping or obtaining a sun-tan.

When the post-cease-fire massacre occurred, the U.S. news agencies mentioned a “skirmish” between Iraqi and U.S. troops and said there were no U.S. casualties. They did not mention the slaughter.

The information made it appear that the unlucky Iraqis had taken a wrong turn somewhere and happened to run into a trigger-happy group of soldiers. The truth, however, is much more diabolical.

In May 2000, the *New Yorker* published an article by Seymour Hersh called “Overwhelming Force.” Hersh spent years tracking down some of the participants in the slaughter, which was given the moniker the “Battle of Rumaila.”

Instead of a wayward convoy of Iraqis who had the bad luck to shoot at U.S. forces, Hersh paints a picture of U.S. General Barry McCaffrey intentionally giving wrong location information to his superiors so he could concoct a battle with the hapless Iraqis who, in reality, were exactly where they were supposed to be according to the “safe” routes of

The ensuing fighting was one-sided and several thousand Iraqis (civilian and military) were killed in two hours

DISGRACE IN IRAQ

Despite the prospect of an inquiry, McCaffrey openly bragged about his unit's performance in the massacre

return designated by the U.S.

Hersh explained:

"McCaffrey's insistence that the Iraqis attacked first was disputed in interviews for this article by some of his subordinates in the wartime headquarters of the 24th Division, and also by soldiers and officers who were at the scene on March 2nd. The accounts of these men, taken together, suggest that McCaffrey's offensive, two days into a cease-fire, was not so much a counterattack provoked by enemy fire as a systematic destruction of Iraqis who were generally fulfilling the requirements of retreat; most of the Iraqi tanks traveled from the battlefield with their cannons reversed and secured, in a position known as travel-lock. According to these witnesses, the 24th faced little determined Iraqi resistance at any point during the war or its aftermath; they also said that other senior officers exaggerated the extent of Iraqi resistance throughout the war."

The slaughter may have been forgotten and never discussed if not for an anonymous letter sent to the Pentagon that accused McCaffrey of a series of war crimes. The letter stated that McCaffrey's division began the March 2nd assault without Iraqi provocation and it included information only an insider would know. An investigation ensued, but, eventually, McCaffrey was exonerated.

Despite the prospect of an inquiry, McCaffrey openly bragged about his unit's performance in the massacre. He told another general's battalion that the 24th Division had carried out:

"absolutely one of the most astounding goddamned operations ever seen in the history of military science ... We were not fighting the Danish Armed Forces up here. There were a half million of those assholes that were extremely well-armed and equipped."

Some participants of the battle say that Iraq did not fire the first shot. Others maintain the Iraqis shot first, but only once. Authorities differed on the time between the supposed Iraqi shot and the beginning of the U.S. actions. Some say it was about 40 minutes, while others say the time lapse was

close to two hours. Either way, it was evident that if Iraq did fire a shot, there was no follow-up or change of formation for the convoy. It still went forward with its equipment not in place for battle.

Soon, a call came asking for every available unit to come to rescue the U.S. troops. Sergeant Stuart Hirstein and his team rushed to the site. When Hirstein arrived, he said there was no attack and no imminent threat from retreating Iraqi tanks. He stated:

"Some of the tanks were in travel formation, and their guns were not in any engaged position. The Iraqi crew members were sitting on the outside of their vehicles, catching rays. Nobody was on the machine guns."

Wanted battle

Despite the intelligence that stated the Iraqis were no threat, and the doubts of other officers about an Iraqi attack, McCaffrey still wanted to go to battle. There were more discussions and Captain Bell, who had been involved with the talks before the U.S. "counter-attack," believed that McCaffrey moved his brigades to the east of the original cease-fire line to provoke the Iraqis. He added that there is a huge difference between a round or two fired in panic and McCaffrey's determination that the Iraqis were "attacking us." He added, that "is pure fabrication."

Hersh described the beginning of the hostilities that wiped out thousands:

"The division log placed the time of McCaffrey's first known battle order at five minutes after nine o'clock. According to Log Item 74. McCaffrey directed that the causeway "be targeted," thus blocking the basic escape route for the retreating forces. The division's Apache helicopters were to "engage from south with intent of terminating engagement." Within moments, the assault was all-out. One company reported that it had engaged a force of between a hundred and two hundred Iraqi "dismounts." By ten o'clock, division headquarters had begun receiving reports of extensive damage to the Iraqi forces. One group of Apache helicopters

reported in mid-morning, “Enemy not firing back, they are jumping in ditches to hide.” Forty minutes later, according to another log item, McCaffrey ordered artillery to be “used in conjunction with personnel sweep to ‘pound these guys’ and end the engagement.”

“The 24th Division continued pounding the Iraqi column throughout the morning, until every vehicle moving toward the causeway – tank, truck, or automobile – was destroyed

“McCaffrey was triumphant at battle’s end. “He was smiling like a proud father,” John Brasfield told me ...

“... A couple of evenings later, Pierson was driving toward the causeway. “It must have been a nightmare along this road as the Apaches dispensed death from five kilometers away, one vehicle at a time. I stopped as a familiar smell wafted through the air ... It was the smell of a cookout on a warm summer day, the smell of seared steak.”

Why are you killing us?

After the battle, a captured Iraqi tank commander asked again and again, “Why are you killing us? All we were doing was going home. Why are you killing us?”

Shortly before his troops flew back to Fort Stewart in the U.S., McCaffrey told them he had never been:

“more proud of American soldiers in my entire life as watching your attack on 2 March ... It’s fascinating to watch what’s happening in our country. God, it’s the damndest thing I ever saw in my life. It’s probably the single most unifying event that has happened in America since World War II ... The upshot will be that, just like Vietnam had the tragic effect on our country for years, this one has brought back a new way of looking at ourselves.”

McCaffrey weathered the storm and received his fourth star in 1994. In 1996, he retired from the Army and was appointed by the Clinton administration as the director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, more commonly known as the U.S. Drug

Czar.

Hersh’s article received much pre-publicity in 2000 and many people were anticipating the piece. Then, a couple of days before The New Yorker was to appear on the stands with the article, a press conference was called to address the issue. A Clinton spokesman took to the podium and criticized the article. He called it “old wine in a new bottle.” In the space of about five minutes, an article that should have been read by the American public was dismissed as rubbish by the Clinton administration.

The curious aspect of this denigration is that the article had not yet appeared. Normally, an administration tears apart something in the press after it is published. This fact alone should have piqued the interest of the public. However, the opposite occurred. Within a couple of days of its publishing, few spoke of the article again. It became a non-issue.

The entire article is a must-read for anyone who wants to know the truth about how the U.S. military conducted itself in Desert Storm. Not all the personnel were as bloodthirsty as McCaffrey, and Hersh interviewed participants who opposed the decision to slaughter thousands of Iraqis who could not fight back. It is available online at many websites. Punch in the name of the article on a search engine and you will be able to find the entire piece.

Marlin Fitzwater’s statement that retreating Iraqi troops would not be attacked was an outright lie, yet neither he nor the administration paid a price for the deceit. Up to 100,000 retreating Iraqis were slaughtered after he made the statement to the world. Among the retreating Iraqi soldiers were civilian men, women and children of various nationalities. Their deaths were, according to various U.S. military officers, the “spoils of war.”

CT

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Marlin Fitzwater’s statement that retreating Iraqi troops would not be attacked was an outright lie, yet neither he nor the administration paid a price for the deceit

I'm okay, you're criminally insane

Michael I. Niman finds a direct line between the shooting of an Arizona congresswoman and the creation of a neurotic fear state

Mixed in with all the logical, rational condemnation of violent rhetoric, however, is a bit of kneejerk lunacy

I'm going to keep this one simple. We all know the basic story. Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, an increasingly rare Arizona Democrat, was critically shot through the head by a wannabe assassin wielding a machine gun which he bought after being suspended from his community college due to behavioral issues. And we know the backstory. Giffords was one of 20 Democratic members of Congress "targeted" for defeat with crosshairs over her district on Sarah Palin's graphic hit-list map. Eighteen of the targets were unseated in the 2010 election. Giffords was one of two to survive, until she was shot earlier this month, along with 19 others who joined her at a public event. Six are now dead. A few others are in critical condition. The shooter used an assault weapon designed to kill up to 33 "deer" in a single quick volley. Such weapons, or at least their ammunition clips, were illegal until a Republican-controlled Congress allowed the ban to expire in 2004.

There's been much written during the weeks since this tragedy. Most of it makes sense. Much of the discourse addresses our increasingly violent political rhetoric. It's not a loaded political statement to say that almost all of this violent rhetoric comes from the political right. It's easily quantifiable. Vitriol is a cheap substitute when empiricism fails your cause. The thousands of mediated calls we've heard this to tone

down the hate are decades overdue. Palin is nothing new. Reagan called for a "blood-bath" right before the historic Kent and Jackson State National Guard massacres of unarmed student antiwar protestors. Right-wing calls for violence against opponents they can't contend with intellectually have been unrelenting.

Take the case of journalist Julian Assange. In the weeks leading up to the Giffords shooting, Fox News (sic) commentator Bob Beckel called for shooting him. Conservative columnist Jonah Goldberg complained that he wasn't "garroted" or shot by "a CIA agent with a sniper rifle." His fellow syndicated columnist, William Kristol, suggested he should be "neutralized." The *Washington Times* ran a column under the headline, "Assassinate Assange." The list of right-wing wonks and politicians calling for Assange's murder grows by the week. Why are we surprised that someone who shares their political worldview would actually act in a way "respectable" people advocate?

Mixed in with all the logical, rational condemnation of violent rhetoric, however, is a bit of kneejerk lunacy. Take Republican New York Congressman Peter King – he wants to sponsor a law banning guns within 1,000 feet of government officials. This is akin to members of Congress reserving the public healthcare option just for themselves, or giving themselves raises when the economy

is tanking. Now the same folks who revoked the assault weapon ban want to ban assault weapons, and other guns, just around themselves, the rest of us be damned. This is the same Peter King, by the way, who just two months ago proposed designating the journalistic organization Wikileaks as a “foreign terrorist organization,” to be targeted much like al Qaeda. His gun ban, of course, won’t apply to journalists, unless, I suppose, they’re on the government payroll.

The King law, by the way, would be hell on cops, who would have to enforce such bans when, say, government officials – whatever that means – ride the subway or drive on freeways, perpetually moving their 1,000-foot-radius zones of tranquility across a population of concealed-carry zealots.

Republicans haven’t cornered the market on idiocy. Take Philadelphia’s Democratic Congressman Robert Brady. He recently announced plans to introduce a bill to criminalize the use of “language or symbols” that “could be perceived” as threatening to federal officials. This vague wording leaves the definition of what construes a “threat” to the obfuscated, unnamed source who could, as the passive voice reads, perceive it. Thanks, Representative Brady, for calling Big Brother in to protect us from language and symbols, free speech be damned. On his website, Brady clarifies his intent, explaining that this legislation “would make it a federal crime to make criminal threats against Members of Congress or their staff while performing official duties.” This from a member of Congress. Way to go, Philadelphia.

Got that? It will be a “crime to make criminal threats.” That’s because it’s already a crime to make threats. Only now, it will be a super-duper-bad double crime. Wow! Of course this law only pertains to threats against members of Congress, and only when they’re on the job. Threatening them, say, when they’re at the movies, would only be a normal crime. Unless maybe you use symbols, like a crosshair. Which brings us to the question, why can’t Brady just call

up Sarah Palin and get this shit off his chest and leave our damned constitutional rights to free speech alone? Of course, he better make this call quick, before his bill is enacted. But wait – Palin isn’t a member of Congress, so Brady can vent his spleen and then have Palin arrested when she responds – which, I hear, is an old Philadelphia tradition.

Moving right along, let’s look at former Clinton White House adviser William Galston’s column in the conservative *New Republic*. Galston, who pulls double-duty at the Brookings Institution, wants to re-write federal mental health laws in the wake of the Giffords shooting. Okay, the shooter was disturbed. That’s a given. He shot someone. Hence, according to Galston, we need to pass laws mandating that, as he puts it, “those who acquire credible evidence of an individual’s mental disturbance should be required to report it to both law enforcement authorities and the courts, and the legal jeopardy for failing to do so should be tough enough to ensure compliance.”

Put simply, the Giffords shooting is the fault of the shooter’s community college professors for not reporting his disorderly student conduct to authorities. Okay. The problem is, community college professors, like the rest of us, come in regular contact with a plethora of people every day who they think are disturbed. Rattling them out could turn into a full-time job. Sorting them out would be impossible, especially because we eliminated most mental health service providers a generation ago. And then there’s that whole new class of criminals: those who came in contact with a disturbed person and didn’t see that they were disturbed, didn’t rat them out, and hence face “legal jeopardy for failing to do so.”

This doesn’t deter Galston. Once they’ve been rattled out, he wants to make it easier to incarcerate those accused of being disturbed. As he puts it, “the law should no longer require, as a condition of involuntary incarceration, that seriously disturbed individuals constitute a danger to themselves

This doesn’t deter Galston. Once they’ve been rattled out, he wants to make it easier to incarcerate those accused of being disturbed

DARK DEEDS

As always, it's all about Sarah Palin. Sarah Palin is the real victim – victim of the bad things people are saying about the bad things she's said and tweeted

or others, let alone a 'substantial' or 'imminent' danger, as many states do."

If you don't see a direct line between the Giffords shooting and the need to transform society into a neurotic fear state dominated by a mental health incarceration-industrial complex, I'm with you. This Galston guy seems a bit disturbed.

Which of course brings us back to Alaska governor turned Fox reality show host Sarah Palin – the star of 2011 so far, like it or not. She went public with her own delusion on the day the rest of the nation was mourning the 20 victims of the Giffords shooting melee. You see, forget them. As always, it's

all about Sarah Palin. Sarah Palin is the real victim – victim of the bad things people are saying about the bad things she's said and tweeted. To quote her, such slander is a "blood libel." The term commonly refers to the anti-Semitic mythology that Jews murder children in order to use their blood in religious rituals and the baking of Matzos. Did I mention that Gabrielle Giffords is Jewish?

Meanwhile, on Planet Earth...

CT

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BENDIB'S WORLD

Khalil Bendib



Shot in the head

Alison Weir on the crimes that link Gabrielle Giffords, Tom Hurndall and Palestinian children

There is something particularly horrifying when someone is shot in the head. Perhaps it's the gruesome image, the destruction of the brain, the clear intent to kill. The recent shooting of Arizona Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords is made even more nightmarish by the location of her devastating injury.

Those of us who focus on Israel-Palestine are acutely aware of this horror.

Several years ago, I was researching the cause of death of Palestinian children killed by Israeli forces during the first months of the Second Intifadah, the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation. As I counted up the numbers, I was chilled to discover that the single most frequent cause of death in those beginning months was "gunfire to the head."

In the past 10 years Israeli forces have killed at least 255 Palestinian minors by fire to the head, and the number may actually be greater, since in many instances the specific bodily location of the lethal trauma is unlisted. In addition, this statistic does not include the many more Palestinian youngsters shot in the head by Israeli soldiers who survived, in one form or another.

Here is a small sampling of those who died. (The term IDF stands for "Israeli Defense Forces," although these forces are, in reality, an occupation army and are almost always deployed offensively; the incidents

below took place on Palestinian territory):

Sami, 12, died of head wounds from IDF gunfire during a demonstration. Abdul, 9, was killed by IDF gunfire to his head during a funeral. Ala, 14, died of head wounds from IDF gunfire while on the terrace of his home one hour after injuring an Israeli soldier with a stone. Omar, 11, died of head wounds from IDF gunfire during a demonstration. Diya, 3 months, was killed, along with her older brother, by Israeli settler gunfire to her head and back. Bara, 10, was killed by IDF gunfire to his head while near his home. Ayman, 15, was killed by IDF tank fire to his head while farming. Khalil, 11, was killed by IDF tank fire to his head while playing with a friend. Rami, 13, was killed by IDF helicopter fire to his head while playing in front of his house. Yaser, 11, died of head wounds from an IDF rubber-coated bullet fired at close range during a demonstration...

Imagine if these names were Bobby... Michael... Susan... Melissa... Jimmy... and that the foreign troops killing them were invading Arizona, Connecticut, Ohio.

Brain-dead boy

I remember seeing one little brain-dead boy when I was in Gaza in February of 2001; long before any rockets had been fired out of this already assaulted enclave. It's not a sight you forget, regardless of the name or nationality.

As I counted up the numbers, I was chilled to discover that the single most frequent cause of death in those beginning months was "gunfire to the head"

OTHER VICTIMS

Two recent non-Palestinian victims shot in the head, in this case by high velocity tear gas canisters, are 37-year-old Tristan Anderson and 21-year-old Emily Henochowicz

A 2009 article in the UK *Telegraph* entitled “Bullets in the brain, shrapnel in the spine: the terrible injuries suffered by children of Gaza,” investigated a situation in which doctors at a hospital near Gaza were “almost overwhelmed by the number of Palestinian children needing treatment for bullet wounds to their heads.”

The article began: “On just one day last week staff at the El-Arish hospital in Sinai were called to perform sophisticated CAT brain scans on a nine-year-old, two 10-year-olds and a 14-year-old – each of whom had a bullet still lodged in their brain, after coming under fire during the Israeli ground assault on Gaza.”

Asked about the nature of these shootings, a physician replied:

“I can’t precisely decide whether these children are being shot at as a target, but in some cases the bullet comes from the front of the head and goes towards the back, so I think the gun has been directly pointed at the child.”

Chilling testimony

Israeli soldiers in a group called “Breaking the Silence” have provided chilling testimonies about Israeli military culture; the titles alone tell a great deal. Following are a few:

“The battalion commander ordered us to shoot anyone trying to remove the bodies”, “The commander of the navy commandos put the muzzle of the rifle into the man’s mouth”, “They told us to shoot at anybody moving in the street”, “You can do whatever you feel like, nobody is going to question it.”

Another person shot in the head by Israeli forces was 21-year-old Tom Hurndall. Hurndall, a student and photographer, had wanted to “make a difference” with his life. In 2003 he went to Gaza to join the nonviolence movement against Israeli aggression and to photograph what he saw.

On April 11th he was nearby when a group of children who had been playing suddenly came under Israeli rifle fire. Most of the children fled, but three, aged four

to seven, froze with fear. Hurndall dashed over, rushed one small boy to safety and returned for two little girls. Just as he was reaching to lift one up, an Israeli sniper shot him in the head.

Despite the urgency of his injury, Israeli officials delayed his transport to specialized medical care for over two and a half hours. A British television crew in the area filmed a powerful on-the-scene report that was aired on England’s Channel 4, but has never, to my knowledge, been shown on American television. Tom remained in a vegetative state for nine months, finally dying on Jan. 13t, 2004.

From the end of 2002 to the spring of 2003, Israeli forces killed four internationals and shot another in the face. One of the dead was a UN official, Iain Hook. As with Hurndall, Israeli forces retarded efforts to provide critical medical care. Another was filmmaker James Miller, who had been waving a white flag. He was shot in the throat.

Two recent non-Palestinian victims shot in the head, in this case by high velocity tear gas canisters, are 37-year-old Tristan Anderson and 21-year-old Emily Henochowicz. Both have survived, Emily without an eye and Tristan in a wheelchair. Part of his right frontal lobe has been removed, he is partially paralyzed, blind in one eye, and it is unclear to what degree his cognitive abilities will return. After shooting him at close range, Israeli forces twice delayed his ambulance to a hospital.

It is difficult to know how many of the 45,000 Palestinian men, women, and children killed or injured by Israeli forces since September 29, 2000 have been shot in the head. Quite likely the number is staggering. Former Yale professor and author Mazin Qumsiyeh describes one:

[Mohammed] was 12 years old when Israeli soldiers shot him in the head with a rubber coated steel bullet, fragmenting his skull and damaging part of his brain. Ten years later, Israeli army officers severely beat and tortured him. He got married... the young couple received a blessing in the

form of a donation of a very small plot of land from their uncle and they built a humble one room house... they lived in this house for 3 years... Then the Israeli army demolished the home saying that it was built without permit (Israel gave no permits for any houses in the village since the occupation began in 1967.) The family rebuilt the house but Israeli threats forced them to not live in it (Israel wants also some NIS 20,000 for the cost of destroying the home and wants to levy other fines on the family.) So the young family came to live in a small dwelling underground...

A Dec. 23rd news story by the International Middle East Middle Center mentions another:

“After being brought to the hospital, 22-year old Salamah Abu Hashish succumbed to his wounds. He had been shot in the back by Israeli troops stationed at the border. Another of the victims was a 14-year old boy who was critically injured when he was shot in the head while collecting rubble near where Abu Hashish was tending his sheep.”

The stories go on and on.

Friend of Israel

Ironically, Gabrielle Giffords, the American Congresswoman recently so tragically shot in the head has been extremely close to the Israel lobby, which has played a critical role in enabling the tragedies sketched above. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) works year after year to ensure that the approximately \$7-8 million per day of American tax to Israel keeps flowing regardless of how many civilians its troops kill.

Giffords has been known as “a safe pro-Israel vote in the House” and could be counted on to support AIPAC’s various initiatives to shield Israel from negative consequences for its ruthless and illegal use of American weaponry.

She called a 2001 visit to Israel a turning point in her life (Israeli forces killed 103 children that year, 31 of them shot in the

head) and wrote in 2006 (a year in which Israeli forces killed 665 Palestinians, 139 of them children, and Palestinians killed 23 Israelis, two of them children) that “the United States must do everything possible to secure Israel’s long-term security.” /1Palestinian victims – killed first and in far greater numbers – seem to have been invisible to her.

Giffords, of course, wasn’t the only victim of the Tucson shooting; 14 were injured and six were killed. It is deeply saddening to read about the dead and to imagine the unending grief for their survivors. It is particularly difficult to view the sweet, smiling picture of nine-year-old Christina Taylor Green, knowing that her bright life is no longer before her.

It is equally tragic to read of nine-year-old Akaber, killed by Israeli gunfire to her head while riding in her uncle’s car to get medical stitches removed, and of the 29 other nine-year-olds killed by Israeli forces in the past decade, eight of them by Israeli gunfire to the head.

It is too late for Akabar, Diya, Mohammed, Tom, and the multitude of others. But there is hope that Gabrielle Giffords is going to survive. Let us pray that she recovers fully, that she is able to return to Congress, and that she then works to prevent others – including Palestinians – from being shot in the head.

We have better uses for our money than to fund atrocities. **CT**

Alison Weir is President of the Council for the National Interest and Executive Director of If Americans Knew, which has produced posters and cards for people to disseminate in commemoration of the seventh anniversary of Tom Hurndall’s killing – http://ifamericansknew.org/cur_sit/hurndall-articles.html – and about Palestinian children, (which contain a picture of the Gaza boy she saw) – http://ifamericansknew.org/about_us/opcard.html – She can be reached at alisonweir@ifamericansknew.org.

Giffords has been known as “a safe pro-Israel vote in the House” and could be counted on to support AIPAC’s various initiatives to shield Israel from negative consequences for its ruthless and illegal use of American weaponry

A cautionary tale

William Blum says we should remember Portugal before celebrating the demise of Middle Eastern dictatorships

The visual symbol of the Portuguese “revolution” had become the picture of a child sticking a rose into the muzzle of a rifle held by a friendly soldier

In July of 1975 I went to Portugal because in April of the previous year a bloodless military coup had brought down the US-supported 48-year fascist regime of Portugal, the world’s only remaining colonial power. This was followed by a program centered on nationalization of major industries, workers control, a minimum wage, land reform, and other progressive measures. Military officers in a Western nation who spoke like socialists was science fiction to my American mind, but it had become a reality in Portugal. The center of Lisbon was crowded from morning till evening with people discussing the changes and putting up flyers on bulletin boards. The visual symbol of the Portuguese “revolution” had become the picture of a child sticking a rose into the muzzle of a rifle held by a friendly soldier, and I got caught up in demonstrations and parades featuring people, including myself, standing on tanks and throwing roses, with the crowds cheering the soldiers. It was pretty heady stuff, and I dearly wanted to believe, but I and most people I spoke to there had little doubt that the United States could not let such a breath of fresh air last very long. The overthrow of the Chilean government less than two years earlier had raised the world’s collective political consciousness, as well as the level of skepticism and paranoia on the left.

Washington and multinational corporate

officials who were on the board of directors of the planet were indeed concerned. Besides anything else, Portugal was a member of NATO. Destabilization became the order of the day: covert actions; attacks in the US press; subverting trade unions; subsidizing opposition media; economic sabotage through international credit and commerce; heavy financing of selected candidates in elections; a US cut-off of Portugal from certain military and nuclear information commonly available to NATO members; NATO naval and air exercises off the Portuguese coast, with 19 NATO warships moored in Lisbon’s harbor, regarded by most Portuguese as an attempt to intimidate the provisional government. In 1976 the “Socialist” Party (scarcely further left and no less anti-communist than the US Democratic Party) came to power, heavily financed by the CIA, the Agency also arranging for Western European social-democratic parties to help foot the bill. The Portuguese revolution was dead, stillborn.

The events in Egypt cannot help but remind me of Portugal. Here, there, and everywhere, now and before, the United States of America, as always, is petrified of anything genuinely progressive or socialist, or even too democratic, for that carries the danger of allowing god-knows what kind of non-America-believer taking office. Honduras 2009, Haiti 2004, Venezuela 2002, Ecuador

2000, Bulgaria 1990, Nicaragua 1990 ... dozens more ... anything, anyone, if there's a choice, even a dictator, a torturer, is better.

We are so good even our enemies believe our lies

I've devoted a lot of time and effort to the question of how to reach the American mind concerning US foreign policy. To a large extent what this comes down to is trying to counterbalance the lifetime of indoctrination someone raised in the United States receives. It comes in news stories every day.

On January 27, the *Washington Post* ran a story about the State Department personnel who were held hostage at the American embassy in Tehran, Iran for some 14 months, 1979-81. The former hostages were preparing to hold a 30th anniversary remembrance the next day.

"It was wrong on every conceivable count," said L. Bruce Laingen, who was the charge d'affaires. "It was absolutely wrong. ... That is my most vivid memory today." Former political officer John W. Limbert agrees, saying that he "would take any opportunity" to tell his captors "what a terrible thing they had done by their own criteria."

What criteria, I wonder, did the man think his Iranian captors were guided by? In 1954, the United States had overthrown the democratically elected government of Mohammad Mossadegh, resulting, as planned, in the return to power from exile of the Shah. This led to 25 years of rule by oppression including routine torture as the Shah was safeguarded continuously by US military support. Is this not reason enough for Iranians to be bitterly angry at the United States? What was Mr. Limbert thinking? What do Americans who read or hear such comments think? They read or hear distorted news reports pertaining to America's present or historical role in the world every day, and like in the *Washington Post* article cited here – there's no correction by the reporter, no questions asked, no challenge put forth to the idea of America the Noble, America the perpetual victim of the Bad Guys.

Atheist: "Blasphemy is a victimless crime."

Salman Taseer was murdered in Pakistan a few weeks ago. He was the governor of Punjab province and a member of the secular Pakistan People's Party. The man who killed him, Mumtaz Qadri, was lauded by some as a hero, showering rose petals on him. Photos taken at the scene show him smiling.

Taseer had dared to speak out against Pakistan's stringent anti-blasphemy law, calling for leniency for a Christian mother sentenced to death under the blasphemy ban. A national group of 500 religious scholars praised the assassin and issued a warning to those who mourned Taseer. "One who supports a blasphemer is also a blasphemer," the group said in a statement, which warned journalists, politicians and intellectuals to "learn" from the killing. "What Qadri did has made every Muslim proud."

Nice, really nice, very civilized. It's no wonder that decent, god-fearing Americans believe that this kind of thinking and behavior justify Washington's multiple wars; that this is what the United States is fighting against – Islamic fanatics, homicidal maniacs, who kill their own countrymen over some esoteric piece of religious dogma, who want to kill Americans over some other imagined holy sin, because we're "infidels" or "blasphemers". How can we reason with such people? Where is the common humanity the naive pacifists and anti-war activists would like us to honor?

But war can be seen as America's religion – most recently Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen, and many more in the past – all non-believers in Washington's Church of Our Lady of Eternal Invasion, Sacred Bombing, and Immaculate Torture, all condemned to death for blasphemy, as each day the United States unleashes blessed robotic death machines called Predators flying over their lands to send "Hellfire" (sic) missiles screaming into wedding parties, funerals, homes, not knowing who the victims are, not caring who the victims are, thousands

There's no correction by the reporter, no questions asked, no challenge put forth to the idea of America the Noble, America the perpetual victim of the Bad Guys

ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

Mumtaz Qadri believes passionately in something called Paradise. The CIA man believes passionately in something called American Exceptionalism

of them by now, as long as Washington can claim each time -- whether correctly or not -- that amongst their number was a prominent blasphemer, call him Taliban, or al Qaeda, or insurgent, or militant. How can we reason with such people, the ones in the CIA who operate these drone bombers? What is the difference between them and Mumtaz Qadri? Qadri was smiling in satisfaction after carrying out his holy mission. The CIA man sits comfortably in a room in Nevada and plays his holy video game, then goes out to a satisfying dinner while his victims lay dying. Mumtaz Qadri believes passionately in something called Paradise. The CIA man believes passionately in something called American Exceptionalism.

As do the great majority of Americans. Our drone operator is not necessarily an "extremist". Sam Smith, the publisher of the marvelously readable newsletter, the *Progressive Review*, recently wrote: "One of the greatest myths draped over this land is that the so-called wing nuts mainly come from the far right and left. And that there is, however, a wise and moderate establishment that will save us from their madness. In fact, the real wing nuts are to be found in the middle. ... having captured both public office and major media, [they] spread disaster, death and decay with impunity. Take, for example, the 60,000 some American troops killed in pointless wars beginning with Vietnam. Now count the number of political assassinations, hate murders, terrorist acts and so forth. There is simply no comparison. Yet every war that we have fought in modern times has been the direct choice of the American establishment, those who pompously describe themselves as moderates, centrists, or bipartisan."

Extending the comparison: In 2008 a young American named Sharif Mobley moved to Yemen to study Arabic and religion. American officials maintain that his purpose was actually to join a terror group. They "see Mobley as one of a growing cadre of native-born Americans who are drawn to violent jihad." Can one not say as well that

the many young native-born Americans who voluntarily join the military to fight in one of America's many foreign wars "are drawn to violent jihad"?

Items of interest from a journal I've kept for 40 years

(Some written by me, most by others; for those lacking a source you can send me an email.)

- "The biggest crimes of our generation -- torture, warrantless wiretapping, and extraordinary rendition -- would not have come to light but for the unauthorized disclosure of classified information. For the hand-wringing "but we can't willy-nilly reveal classified information" crowd, do you think Abu Ghraib wasn't classified?" -- *Jesselyn Radack*

- "The principal beneficiary of America's foreign assistance programs has always been the United States." -- US Agency for International Development, "Direct Economic Benefits of U.S. Assistance Programs" (1999); i.e., most of the money is paid directly to US corporations.

- In 1963, the Kennedy administration was faced with a steadily disintegrating situation in Vietnam. At a turbulent cabinet meeting, Attorney General Robert Kennedy asked: If the situation is so dire, why not withdraw? Historian Arthur Schlesinger, present at the meeting, noted how "the question hovered for a moment, then died away." It was "a hopelessly alien thought in a field of unexplored assumptions and entrenched convictions."

- Soviet expansion was self-defense, not imperialism like with the United States. The Soviets, in World War I and II, lost about 40 million people because the West had used Eastern Europe as a highway to invade Russia. It should not be surprising that after WW2 the Russians were determined to close down that highway.

- In March 2010 Secretary of "Defense" Robert Gates complained that "the general [European] public and the political class" are so opposed to war they are an "impedi-

ment” to peace.

- The major problem in establishing both the United States and Israel as nations was what to do with the indigenous people. Same solution. Kill ‘em. Without legality. Without mercy.

- From the film “The Battle of Algiers”:

Journalist: M. Ben M’Hidi, don’t you think it’s a bit cowardly to use women’s baskets and handbags to carry explosive devices that kill so many innocent people?

Ben M’Hidi: And doesn’t it seem to you even more cowardly to drop napalm bombs on defenseless villages, so that there are a thousand times more innocent victims? Of course, if we had your airplanes it would be a lot easier for us. Give us your bombers, and you can have our baskets.

- One of the reasons some countries allow US bases is because the leaders are worried about being overthrown in a coup and they think that the presence of the US military might discourage such action, or that if a coup breaks out the US can help to put it down. There’s also the large payments made to the government by the US and the prestige factor. Small countries can have inferiority complexes and, as absurd as it may seem to the likes of you and I, having an American base in the country can seem to be a feather in their cap; one of the same reasons they join NATO. Another reason for a base: the US can have intelligence information embarrassing to the country’s leader. This is known as blackmail.

- “Since both the US and France lost in Vietnam, then the ‘fight for our freedom’ must have been unsuccessful, and we must be under the occupation of the North Vietnamese Army. Next time you’re out on the street and you see a passing NVA patrol, please wave and tell them Tim says hello.” – *Tim Moriarty*

- The American Museum of History, on the Mall in Washington, DC: One of the popular exhibitions in recent years was “The Price of Freedom: Americans at War”.

This included a tribute to the “exceptional Americans [who] saved a million lives” in Vietnam, where they were “determined to stop communist expansion”. In Iraq, other true hearts “employed air strikes of unprecedented precision”.

- Orange, Rose and Green Revolutions in other countries require coordinated US government intervention aimed at creating what has been called “genetically modified” grassroots movements.

- Mikhail Gorbachev: “I feel betrayed by the West. The opportunity we seized on behalf of peace has been lost. The whole idea of a new world order has been completely abandoned.” (Interview in 2000.)

- George Bernard Shaw used three concepts to describe the positions of individuals in Nazi Germany: intelligence, decency, and Naziism. He argued that if a person was intelligent, and a Nazi, he was not decent. If he was decent and a Nazi, he was not intelligent. And if he was decent and intelligent, he was not a Nazi. – (I suggest that the reader make any substitution for the word “Nazi” s/he deems appropriate.)

- “The whole art of Conservative politics in the 20th century is being deployed to enable wealth to persuade poverty to use its political freedom to keep wealth in power.” – *Aneurin Bevan, Labour Party (UK) minister, 1897-1960*

- “Which adversary has a navy justifying our expenditure of \$90 billion for 30 Virginia-class submarines, and which enemy air force justifies our plans for about 340 F-22 fighter planes at a cost of \$63 billion? This is pork and waste writ large, making the ‘Bridge to Nowhere’ look like child’s play.” – *Letter in the Washington Post, 2009.* **CT**

William Blum is the author of: “*Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2*”; “*Rogue State: A Guide to the World’s Only Superpower*”; “*West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir*”; and “*Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire*”

“Next time you’re out on the street and you see a passing NVA patrol, please wave and tell them Tim says hello”

Why Washington hates Hugo Chavez

Mike Whitney tells a story about Venezuela's president that is different to the ones you'll read in your local news media

Washington wants regime change so it can install a puppet who will hand over Venezuela's reserves to big oil while making life hell for working people

In late November, Venezuela was hammered by torrential rains and flooding that left 35 people dead and roughly 130,000 homeless. If George Bush had been president, instead of Hugo Chavez, the displaced people would have been shunted off at gunpoint to makeshift prison camps – like the Superdome – as they were following Hurricane Katrina. But that's not the way Chavez works. The Venezuelan president quickly passed “enabling” laws which gave him special powers to provide emergency aid and housing to flood victims. Chavez then cleared out the presidential palace and turned it into living quarters for 60 people, which is the equivalent of turning the White House into a homeless shelter. The disaster victims are now being fed and taken care of by the state until they can get back on their feet and return to work.

The details of Chavez's efforts have been largely omitted in the US media where he is regularly demonized as a “leftist strongman” or a dictator. The media refuses to acknowledge that Chavez has narrowed the income gap, eliminated illiteracy, provided health care for all Venezuelans, reduced inequality, and raised living standards across the board. While Bush and Obama were expanding their foreign wars and pushing through tax cuts for the rich, Chavez was busy improving the lives of the poor and needy while fending off the latest wave of

US aggression.

Washington despises Chavez because he is unwilling to hand over Venezuela's vast resources to corporate elites and bankers. That's why the Bush administration tried to depose Chavez in a failed coup attempt in 2002, and that's why the smooth-talking Obama continues to launch covert attacks on Chavez today. Washington wants regime change so it can install a puppet who will hand over Venezuela's reserves to big oil while making life hell for working people.

Recently released documents from WikiLeaks show that the Obama administration has stepped up its meddling in Venezuela's internal affairs. Here's an excerpt from a recent post by attorney and author, Eva Golinger:

“In a secret document authored by current Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Craig Kelly, and sent by the US Embassy in Santiago in June 2007 to the Secretary of State, CIA and Southern Command of the Pentagon, along with a series of other US embassies in the region, Kelly proposed “six main areas of action for the US government (USG) to limit Chavez's influence” and “reassert US leadership in the region”.

Kelly, who played a primary role as “mediator” during last year's coup d'etat in Honduras against President Manuel Zelaya, classifies President Hugo Chavez as an “en-

emy” in his report.

“Know the enemy: We have to better understand how Chavez thinks and what he intends...To effectively counter the threat he represents, we need to know better his objectives and how he intends to pursue them. This requires better intelligence in all of our countries”.

Further on in the memo, Kelly confesses that President Chavez is a “formidable foe”, but, he adds, “he certainly can be taken”. (Wikileaks: Documents Confirm US Plans Against Venezuela, Eva Golinger, Postcards from the Revolution)

State department funding

The State Department cables show that Washington has been funding anti-Chavez groups in Venezuela through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that pretend to be working for civil liberties, human rights or democracy promotion. These groups hide behind a facade of legitimacy, but their real purpose is to topple the democratically elected Chavez government. Obama supports this type of subversion just as enthusiastically as did Bush. The only difference is the Obama team is more discreet. Here’s another clip from Golinger with some of the details on the money-trail:

“In Venezuela, the US has been supporting anti-Chavez groups for over 8 years, including those that executed the coup d’etat against President Chavez in April 2002. Since then, the funding has increased substantially. A May 2010 report evaluating foreign assistance to political groups in Venezuela, commissioned by the National Endowment for Democracy, revealed that more than \$40 million USD annually is channeled to anti-Chavez groups, the majority from US agencies....

Venezuela stands out as the Latin American nation where NED has most invested funding in opposition groups during 2009, with \$1,818,473 USD, more than double from the year before. ... Allen Weinstein, one of NED’s original founders, revealed once to the *Washington Post*, “What we do

today was done clandestinely 25 years ago by the CIA...” (America’s Covert “Civil Society Operations”: US Interference in Venezuela Keeps Growing”, Eva Golinger, Global Research)

Laast month the Obama administration revoked the visa of Venezuela’s ambassador to Washington in retaliation for Chávez’s rejection of nominee Larry Palmer as American ambassador in Caracas. Palmer has been openly critical of Chavez saying there were clear ties between members of the Chavez administration and leftist guerrillas in neighboring Colombia. It’s a roundabout way of accusing Chavez of terrorism. Even worse, Palmer’s background and personal history suggest that his appointment might pose a threat to Venezuela’s national security. Consider the comments of James Suggett of Venezuelanalysis on Axis of Logic:

“Take a look at Palmer’s history, working with the US-backed oligarchs in the Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Sierra Leone, South Korea, Honduras, “promoting the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).”

Just as the US ruling class appointed an African-American, Barack Obama to replace George W. Bush with everything else intact, Obama in turn, appoints Palmer to replace Patrick Duddy who was involved in the attempted coup against President Chávez in 2002 and an enemy of Venezuelans throughout his term as US Ambassador to Venezuela.” (http://axisoflogic.com/artman/publish/printer_60511.shtml)

Venezuela is already crawling with US spies and saboteurs. They don’t need any help from agents working inside the embassy. Chavez did the right thing by giving Palmer the thumbs down.

The Palmer nomination is just “more of the same”; more interference, more subversion, more trouble-making. The State Dept was largely responsible for all of the so-called color-coded revolutions in Ukraine, Lebanon, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan etc; all of which were cookie cutter, made-for-TV events that pitted the interests of wealthy

Venezuela is already crawling with US spies and saboteurs. They don’t need any help from agents working inside the embassy

SOCIALISM AT WORK

Tens of thousands of people need shelter now, which is why Chavez is putting pressure on the banks to lend a hand. Of course, the banks don't want to help so they've slipped into crybaby mode

capitalists against those of the elected government. Now Hillary's throng want to try the same strategy in Venezuela. It's up to Chavez to stop them, which is why he's pushed through laws that "regulate, control or prohibit foreign funding for political activities". It's the only way he can defend against US meddling and protect Venezuelan sovereignty.

Financial reform

Chavez is also using his new powers to reform the financial sector. Here's an excerpt from an article titled "Venezuelan National Assembly Passes Law Making Banking a "Public Service":

"Venezuela's National Assembly on Friday approved new legislation that defines banking as an industry "of public service," requiring banks in Venezuela to contribute more to social programs, housing construction efforts, and other social needs while making government intervention easier when banks fail to comply with national priorities."...

The new law protects bank customers' assets in the event of irregularities on the part of owners... and stipulates that the Superintendent of Banking Institutions take into account the best interest of bank customers - and not only stockholders... when making any decisions that affect a bank's operations."

So why isn't Obama doing the same thing? Is he too afraid of real change or is he just Wall Street's lackey? Here's more from the same article:

"In an attempt to control speculation, the law limits the amount of credit that can be made available to individuals or private entities by making 20% the maximum amount of capital a bank can have out as credit. The law also limits the formation of financial groups and prohibits banks from having an interest in brokerage firms and insurance companies.

The law also stipulates that 5% of pre-tax profits of all banks be dedicated solely to projects elaborated by communal councils.

10% of a bank's capital must also be put into a fund to pay for wages and pensions in case of bankruptcy.

According to 2009 figures provided by Softline Consultores, 5% of pre-tax profits in Venezuela's banking industry last year would have meant an additional 314 million bolivars, or \$73.1 million dollars, for social programs to attend the needs of Venezuela's poor majority." <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/5880>

"Control speculation"? Now there's a novel idea. Naturally, opposition leaders are calling the new laws "an attack on economic liberty", but that's pure baloney. Chavez is merely protecting the public from the predatory practices of bloodthirsty bankers. Most Americans wish that Obama would do the same thing.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, "Chávez has threatened to expropriate large banks in the past if they don't increase loans to small-business owners and prospective home buyers, this time he is increasing the pressure publicly to show his concern for the lack of sufficient housing for Venezuela's 28 million people."

Caracas suffers from a massive housing shortage that's gotten much worse because of the flooding. Tens of thousands of people need shelter now, which is why Chavez is putting pressure on the banks to lend a hand.

Of course, the banks don't want to help so they've slipped into crybaby mode. But Chavez has shrugged off their whining and put them "on notice". In fact, on Tuesday, he issued this terse warning:

"Any bank that slips up...I'm going to expropriate it, whether it's Banco Provincial, or Banesco or Banco Nacional de Crédito."

Bravo, Hugo. In Chavez's Venezuela the basic needs of ordinary working people take precedent over the profiteering of cutthroat banksters. Is it any wonder why Washington hates him? **CT**

Mike Whitney is a freelance writer living in Washington State, USA.

Future weapons for future wars

Nick Turse on the new arms race

In the future, the power of magnetism will be harnessed to make today's high explosives seem feeble, "guided bullets" will put the current crop of snipers to shame, and new multi-purpose missiles will strike targets in a flash from high-flying drones. At least, that's part of the Pentagon's battlefield vision of tomorrow's tomorrow.

Ordinarily, planning for the future is not a US government forte. A mere glance at the national debt, now around \$14 trillion and climbing, or two recent studies showing how China's green technology investments have outpaced US efforts should drive home that fact. But one government agency is always forward-looking, the Department of Defense's blue skies research branch, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

Born in the wake of an American panic over the 1957 Soviet launch of the Sputnik satellite, DARPA set to work keeping the Pentagon ahead of potential adversaries on the technology front. It counts the Internet and the Global Positioning System among its triumphs, and psychic spying and a mechanical elephant designed for use in the jungles of Southeast Asia among its many failures. It also boasts a long legacy when it comes to creating and enhancing lethal technologies, including M-16 rifles, Predator drones, stealth fighters, Tomahawk

cruise missiles, and B-52 bombers, which have been employed in conflicts across the globe.

Today, DARPA is carrying on that more than half-century-old tradition through a host of programs designed with war, death, and destruction in mind. Wielding a budget of about \$3 billion a year and investing heavily in futuristic weaponry and other military technology, it is undoubtedly helping to fuel the arms races of 2020 and 2030. While the United States seems content to let China sprint ahead in green technology, a number of its future weapons appear to be designed with a country like China in mind.

All of its planning is, however, shrouded in remarkable secrecy. Make inquiries about any of the weapons systems it's exploring and a barrage of excuses for telling you next to nothing pour forth – a program is between managers, or classified, or only now in the process of awarding its contracts. DARPA spokespeople and project managers even prefer not to clarify or explain publicly available information. Still, it's possible to offer a sketch of some of the future weaponry the Pentagon has in development, and in the process glimpse what messages it's sending to other nations around the world.

Mayhem Without the "Y"

Even in military culture, where arcane, clunky, or sometimes witty acronyms are

While the United States seems content to let China sprint ahead in green technology, a number of its future weapons appear to be designed with a country like China in mind

OVERKILL

Once upon a time, broadsides and boarding parties typified warfare on the high seas. In the future, the US military has its sights set on something slightly more high tech

a dime a dozen, DARPA projects stand out. Sometimes it almost seems as if like the agency comes up with a particularly badass name first and then creates a weapons system to suit. Take as an example the Magneto Hydrodynamic Explosive Munition or – wait for it – MAHEM.

This program, run out of DARPA's Tactical Technology Office, seeks to “demonstrate compressed magnetic flux generator (CMFG)-driven magneto hydrodynamically formed metal jets and self-forging penetrators (SFP) with significantly improved performance over explosively formed jets (EFJ) and fragments,” according to the agency's website.

If you're scratching your head about what that could mean, don't ask DARPA. When I inquired about the basics of how the weapon would function, a simple lay definition for the folks paying for this wonder-weapon-to-be, spokesman Richard Spearman insisted that “sensitivities” prevented him from giving me any further information.

As near as can be told, though, you should imagine an anti-tank round with a powerful magnetic field. Upon impact, it will utilize magnetic force to ram a jet of molten metal into the target. Theoretically, this will pack more punch than today's high-explosive-propelled projectiles and lead, according to DARPA, to “increased lethality precision.”

Hasta La Vista, Baby

In the 2003 science-fiction sequel Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines, or T3, a metal monster from the future, a Terminatrix, is sent back to alter the present in order to ensure a future where machines rule the world and humans face extinction. Today, DARPA, the Air Force, and a couple defense industry heavyweights are seeking to change the future of munitions with a monster of their own – “a high speed, long-range missile that can engage air, cruise missile, and air defense targets.” The name of the program? I kid you not: Triple Target Terminator (T3).

Designed to be fired by either manned aircraft or drones, the Triple Target Termi-

nator seeks to “increase the number and variety of targets that could be destroyed on each sortie” by allowing an aircraft to engage in air-to-air combat or air-to-ground attack with the same armament. Just what future air force the US military imagines itself attacking with this weapon is not the sort of thing you'll find out from DARPA. Spokesperson Spearman told me that “sensitivities” again prevented him from explaining even the basics of the system or its future uses. “A good part of the program itself is classified,” he assured me.

Last fall, Defense Industry Daily reported that Raytheon had received a \$21.3 million contract for the Triple Target Terminator (T3) program. This was followed, a few weeks later, by the same sum being awarded to Boeing for work on the project. These contracts constitute an initial one-year attempt to design a missile that meets “program objectives” and will set the stage for future efforts.

In a prepared statement provided to TomDispatch.com late last year, DARPA declared: “Depending on successful phase completion, follow on efforts will continue in two more phases with multiple-technology risk reduction demonstrations, including live fire from tactical aircraft. The program is structured to last three years, culminating in test demonstrations in 2013.”

Once upon a time, broadsides and boarding parties typified warfare on the high seas. In the future, the US military has its sights set on something slightly more high tech. To that end, DARPA is now developing a Long Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM) that seeks to provide “a dramatic leap ahead in US surface warfare capability.”

Designed to evade advanced enemy countermeasures, this would-be smart weapon is supposed to permit “high probability target identification in dense shipping environments, and precision aimpoint targeting for maximum lethality.” DARPA isn't talking about this program either. LRASM, Spearman told me in December, was “in the final throes of getting all its contracts awarded.

Until that happens and we have an official announcement, I can't set up any media engagements on that one."

By mid-January when I followed up, the final throes had yet to cease, but just days later DARPA awarded two contracts, totaling \$218 million, to military-corporate powerhouse Lockheed Martin for work on two different LRASM missiles. "Lockheed Martin is proud to offer our technology for Navy solutions," announced Lockheed's tactical missile honcho Glenn Kuller. "These LRASM contracts will demonstrate two mature tactical missiles for new generation anti-surface warfare weapons capability; one low and stealthy, the other high and fast with moderate stealth."

It's the farthest thing from a fair fight. A man peers through an advanced telescopic sight. He zeros in on his prey, a figure without a sporting chance who has no idea that he's being targeted for death. The sniper, who has lugged his 30 pound, .50 caliber rifle up a ridgeline in order to kill with a single shot, breathes slow and steady, focuses, waits, waits, and finally pulls the trigger. A breeze he never felt, somewhere in the 4,000 feet between him and his target, sends the round off course. The sniper doesn't log another kill. The human target gets to live another day.

To the US military, this is a terribly sad story, and so they've turned to DARPA to look for a happier ending – in this case via the Extreme Accuracy Tactical Ordnance, or EXACTO program which aims to allow "the sniper to prosecute moving targets even in high wind conditions, such as those commonly found in Afghanistan."

The plan is for DARPA scientists to develop "the first ever guided small caliber bullet." If you've ever watched a heat-seeking missile follow a fighter jet in a lame 1980s action flick (or the smart bullet from the 1984 Tom Selleck sci-fi disaster *Runaway*), then you get the idea. DARPA is focused on creating a maneuverable bullet (controlled by a guidance system) that moves with the target, adjusting in flight to slam into a hu-

man head and turn it into a red mist – thus writing an upbeat ending to tomorrow's sniper stories.

When asked for further information in mid-December, Spearman told me that "the PM [project manager] for EXACTO is in the process of transitioning his replacement into DARPA, making neither of them available for interviews." About a month later, the new project manager, he said, was still not up to speed and thus both officials remained unavailable for comment.

The New Blitz

As Nazi air power pounded London during World War II, England's Prime Minister Winston Churchill sheltered in an underground bunker to stay alive. Today, the leaders of other nations have bigger, stronger bomb shelters than Churchill's and the US military wants the means to destroy them without generating the negative press that using nuclear weapons might incur.

To bust those bunkers, DARPA's Strategically Hardened Facility Defeat program is investigating nuke-free, earth-penetrating munitions to counter the "threat posed by our adversaries' use of hard and deeply buried targets." Specifically aimed at the "senior leaders, command and control functions, and weapons of mass destruction" employed by "rogue' nations," these powerful, high-impact weapons will be designed to tunnel deep into the earth before exploding.

Not all DARPA projects are designed to kill people and destroy hard targets. Some are geared toward delivering men, materiel, and someday robots to do the job instead. Others are aimed at intrusive surveillance, cyber-war, or making silver-screen dreams come true.

One long-term focus of military futurists and DARPA scientists has been the "urban environment." (Think: the billion or more poor and potentially rebellious people already living in the slum cities of our planet.) The Urban Ops Hopper program, for example, seeks to develop small robots or

Not all DARPA projects are designed to kill people and destroy hard targets. Some are geared toward delivering men, materiel, and someday robots to do the job instead

OVERKILL

For many years, the Pentagon has dreamed of persistent surveillance of planetary hot spots, developing, for instance, drone technologies to serve as spies in the skies across the globe

semi-autonomous land drones – unmanned ground vehicles or UGVs in mil-speak – that can “adapt to the urban environment in real-time and provide the delivery of small payloads to any point of the urban jungle while remaining lightweight [and] small to minimize the burden on the soldier.” And yes, they might even hop.

For many years, the Pentagon has dreamed of persistent surveillance of planetary hot spots, developing, for instance, drone technologies to serve as spies in the skies across the globe. In 2003, Noah Shachtman, writing for the *Village Voice*, profiled the military’s Combat Zones That See, or CTS program.

The rationale for the effort was, he wrote, to “protect our troops in cities like Baghdad, where... fleeting attackers have been picking off American fighters in ones and twos.” However, he added, “[D]efense experts believe the surveillance effort has a second, more sinister, purpose: to keep entire cities under an omnipresent, unblinking eye.”

All these years later, Americans are still in Baghdad, still periodically under siege there, and still, in the case of DARPA, dreaming of snooping on whole cities. With an acronym that brings to mind over-priced polo shirts, preppies on tennis courts, and an angry little alligator, DARPA’s Large Area Coverage Optical Search-while-Track and Engage, or LACOSTE program is dedicated to achieving the dream of CTS: imaging technology that will allow for “single sensor day/night persistent tactical surveillance of all moving vehicles in a large urban battlefield.” Think of it as placing an entire city in a panopticon where the jailor has true omniscience.

Through its Gravity Anomaly for Tunnel Exposure, or GATE, program, DARPA is also developing technologies that could someday allow drones, flying overhead, to “see” below the Earth’s surface and identify areas with underground tunnels. And just this month, DARPA kicked off a new program called Mind’s Eye “aimed at developing a visual intelligence capability for unmanned

systems.”

Partnering with defense giant General Dynamics, Roomba vacuum cleaner manufacturer iRobot, and long-time Pentagon contractor Toyon Research Corporation, as well as scientists from military-academic powerhouses like Carnegie Mellon University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of California Berkeley, and the University of Southern California, the Pentagon is exploring the idea of creating robots with artificial intelligence that could roll ahead of infantry patrols, scan the scene, analyze it, and figure out what to do next. In other words, the quest to build a robotic point man will now join a long list of DARPA projects certain to inspire fears of a future straight out of the Terminator films.

In 1977’s *The Spy Who Loved Me*, secret agent James Bond’s Lotus Esprit sports car morphed into a mini-submarine. Never one to let an old silver-screen dream go to waste, DARPA is now attempting to one-up 007. Through its Submersible Aircraft program, the agency seeks to “combine the speed and range of an airborne platform with the stealth of an underwater vehicle by developing a vessel that can both fly and submerge.” Revolutionary it may be as a machine, but the reasons for creating it remain thoroughly predictable: the “insertion and extraction of expeditionary forces at greater ranges.” In other words, it’s meant to facilitate deploying forces overseas, perhaps for the next Iraq or Afghan War.

DARPA and the New Arms Race

Recently, some military experts went into mild hysterics over the unveiling of China’s first stealth fighter plane and word that the Chinese military was developing a “carrier killer” missile. Never mind that the jet is not unlike the F-22, a relatively useless fighter in the US arsenal, and is still years away from production; never mind that the man who garnered headlines for the aircraft-carrier story, Admiral Robert Willard, the alarmist chief of the US Pacific Command, said intelligence indicated only “that the component

parts of the anti-ship ballistic missile have been developed and tested.”

Still, advances like the proto-plane and not-yet-effective missile have made great hyperbolic copy for the military-corporate complex. Some pundits went so far as to suggest that US military “weakness” in Asia was emboldening China.

From the Chinese point of view, it undoubtedly looks quite different. After all, the US has all-but-encircled China with military bases, sites, and facilities – more than 100 in Japan, around 85 in South Korea, even a few in Central Asia – and has around 50,000 troops deployed to East Asia and the Pacific, and another 100,000 or more deployed in South Asia, as well as the largest Navy on the planet patrolling offshore waters.

As for the future, perhaps the Chinese don’t quite believe that DARPA’s Long Range Anti-Ship Missile is meant to take out Somali pirates, or that the Triple Target Terminator is geared to counter the al-Qaeda air corps (which mainly seems to consist of ill-constructed bomb-laced underwear and explosive printer cartridges on commercial aircraft), or that the US military plans to deploy Magneto Hydrodynamic Explosive Munitions to fight off non-existent Taliban tanks.

Amid talk of a new arms race, the American people should know more about just what billions of their tax dollars are paying for and what message they’re sending to the world. With Beijing holding close to \$1 tril-

lion in US debt, it’s unlikely that either country has actual military designs on the other. It’s far more likely that such DARPA projects (and pundit saber-rattling) will simply lead to needless expenditures on weapons designed for wars the US won’t fight. In the end, if history is any guide, many of these weapons will become the overpriced means of killing lightly armed men, along with unarmed men, women, and children in one poverty-stricken country or another in the decades to come.

Unfortunately, Americans can’t begin to have an honest conversation about any of this until DARPA comes clean about exactly what billions of their tax dollars are being spent on – and why. Only then can the taxpayers begin to consider what message their future weapons plans are sending to the world and whether the US really should be spending increasingly scarce dollars on making MAHEM. **CT**

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Amid talk of a new arms race, the American people should know more about just what billions of their tax dollars are paying for and what message they’re sending to the world

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Life at the top

Sam Pizzigati finds an endless bowl of bonuses for those at the top of the tree

On Wall Street, business has hardly ever been better, with profits this past year projected to settle at the fourth-highest all-time total

The latest figures on Wall Street compensation reveal a recovery that starts – and stops – at America’s economic summit.

Back in the Great Depression, even at the height of America’s misery, some people made quite a bit of money. Chase National Bank chair Albert Wiggin, for instance, netted a windfall worth over \$4 million after the 1929 stock market crash – the equivalent of over \$52 million today – trading his own bank short.

But most of America’s rich actually saw their fortunes sink, and significantly so, during the Great Depression.

The average incomes of the nation’s richest tenth of 1 percent, calculates economist Emmanuel Saez, fell from \$1,242,237 in 1928, the last full year before the Great Depression, to \$737,861 in 1931, as measured in today’s dollars.

Our current Great Recession is most definitely not repeating this sinking-at-the-top history. Our rich today are more than holding their own.

On Wall Street, business has hardly ever been better, with profits this past year projected to settle at the fourth-highest all-time total. Wall Street bonuses, new data show, are enriching bankers and traders at levels not far off the records set in the go-go years right before the 2008 financial industry meltdown.

At JPMorgan Chase, news reports last month detailed, \$9.33 billion in 2010 compensation will be divvied up among 26,314 employees, for a \$369,651 per employee average, about the same as the \$378,600 average in 2009.

But few “average” JPMorgan employees will make anywhere near that \$369,651 figure. Bonuses at JPMorgan – and every other Wall Street giant – go disproportionately to top bankers and traders.

At Goldman Sachs, 35,700 employees will “share” \$15.4 billion in compensation for 2010, a \$430,700 average, down somewhat from 2009’s \$498,246 average. For Goldman execs, not to worry. The \$15.4 billion 2010 pay total doesn’t include any of the stock trading windfalls that Goldman’s top executives – the bank’s 475 managing “partners” – will soon be reaping.

Back in December 2008, with Wall Street reeling and Goldman shares selling at a bargain-basement \$78 each, Goldman’s power suits awarded themselves options to buy 36 million shares of Goldman stock at that bargain price, ten times more options than Goldman granted the year before.

Goldman shares have lately been selling around \$175 each, creating a potential \$100 per share personal profit for Goldman’s elite. Overall, analysts reported last week, Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein and his family are now sitting on a stash of

Goldman shares worth \$355 million.

All these dollars cascading onto Wall Street, says JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon, signal “the foundation of a broad-based economic recovery.”

That signal, outside Wall Street, remains exceedingly weak. Unemployment rates in the United States are running substantially above jobless rates in Germany, Japan, and other peer nations. And US wages, the *Wall Street Journal* noted earlier this month, “have taken a sharp and swift fall” all across the nation.

One consequence: America’s “doubled-up” population – families that have lost their homes and moved in with friends or relatives – has hit the 6 million mark.

These hard times everywhere but at the top, *New York Times* analyst David Leonhardt suggested last week, most likely at root reflect contemporary America’s deep-seated power imbalance “between employers and employees.”

US employers, notes Leonhardt, now “operate with few restraints.” With labor protection laws loophole-ridden and courts tilting aggressively the corporate way, companies can dictate outright labor relations terms with their employees.

To maintain profit rates, these companies can downsize, outsource, and replace full-timers with temps. Or shove down wages and slash benefits. Or hoard cash and speculate on financial markets – and never have to worry that anyone in government will intervene.

We historically, here in the United States, have had a word for power imbalances this striking and stark: plutocracy, or rule by the rich.

The plutocratic rule we experience today can seem all-encompassing. The rich and powerful appear to slide endlessly and ef-

fortlessly from the summit of one sphere of American economic and political power to another.

Some of these moves make national headlines. Peter Orszag, after running the federal budget office for the Obama White House, moves to a plush senior global banking slot at Citigroup. Former JPMorgan Chase executive Bill Daley becomes the new White House chief of staff.

Other moves go more under the radar. Former US senator Mel Martinez, a Florida Republican, moves to JPMorgan Chase. Theo Lubke, the lead derivatives expert at the New York Federal Reserve Bank, hops in bed with Goldman Sachs.

The top exec in the New York City public school system, Joel Klein, joins the Rupert Murdoch media empire as an executive vice-president.

In this clubby atmosphere, backs get scratched at the power summits – and every day people get shafted. New York City’s richest 1 percent, as one new report details, now average more income per day – about \$10,000 – than New York’s poorest 1 million residents average in a year.

How long can this state of affairs continue? History can be a guide – and an inspiration, too. In the Great Depression, over five years passed before Congress felt enough grassroots heat to start passing the landmark bills – like the Wagner labor rights legislation – that truly upended America’s power dynamics.

We’re still only three years into the Great Recession. Wall Street’s bonus boys may not be as home-free as they think. **CT**

Sam Pizzigati is the editor of the online weekly Too Much – www.toomuchonline.org – and an associate fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies.

In this clubby atmosphere, backs get scratched at the power summits – and every day people get shafted

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The imperial war presidency

Remember Obama ran as an Iraq war opponent? As president, he has ruinously escalated foreign military commitments writes **David Swanson**

Nearly two thirds of US citizens believe that our wars in Afghanistan and Iraq should be ended and that overall military spending should be dramatically reduced

“So tonight, I am proposing that starting this year, we freeze annual domestic spending for the next five years.” Thus spoke President Barack Obama in his state of the union speech on Tuesday. “Domestic” spending means non-war and non-military spending. Over half of our public spending in the United States goes to wars and the military. Even the president’s own deficit commission recommended cutting \$100bn from military spending.

Why leave it out of the freeze? This may be why: “And we’ve sent a message ... to all parts of the globe: we will not relent, we will not waver, and we will defeat you.”

That’s going to be expensive, and President Obama promised lower taxes on corporations in the same speech. He’s already signed off on tax cuts for billionaires, even while promising for the second year in a row to oppose them. Spending cuts will have to come somewhere else.

“Already, we’ve frozen the salaries of hardworking federal employees for the next two years. I’ve proposed cuts to things I care deeply about, like community action programmes. The secretary of defence has also agreed to cut tens of billions of dollars in spending that he and his generals believe our military can do without.”

But those little cuts out of the \$1tn we spend on the military each year are planned

for future years, not this one. The president is expected to propose a larger military budget for the third year in a row next month. And he has thus far consistently used off-the-books supplemental bills to add more funding to his wars.

Progressive groups have made so much noise cheering for the elimination of this or that weapon, that the overall increase in the military budget each year has been missed, just as it will be missed by any casual viewer of the latest speech. But a group of hundreds of prominent activists, authors, and academics has recently released a statement outlining Obama’s militarist record and committing to oppose his candidacy for the Democratic nomination next year unless he changes course.

Nearly two thirds of US citizens believe that our wars in Afghanistan and Iraq should be ended and that overall military spending should be dramatically reduced. Since he became president, Obama has had three opportunities to work with Congress to reduce military spending, but instead, has championed increases in that spending each time, despite the fact that this spending represents a clear threat to the economic future of our country.

He has continued, as well, to try to hide the true costs of the wars by funding them with off-the-books supplemental spending bills, despite the fact that he campaigned

against this very practice. The president has escalated the war on Afghanistan, in which rising civilian deaths and atrocities have become routine.

He has given the CIA even greater freedom of action to launch lethal drone strikes against civilian houses in Pakistan on the mere assumption of some connection with Taliban or other organisations, despite the warning from the US ambassador in late 2009 – revealed in a WikiLeaks cable – that such attacks could “destabilise” the Pakistani government; despite many reports that civilians, including children, are disproportionately victims; and despite the contention of the United Nations and many US allies that this practice is illegal.

Obama has approved an increase in covert operations by CIA-controlled Afghan troops into Pakistan, and his administration has remained silent while the US command in Afghanistan leaked to the *New York Times* plans for new special operations forces (SOF) raids into Pakistan aimed at Afghan Taliban targets.

The president has expanded the use of

SOF, operating in virtually total secrecy and without any accountability to Congress, in one country after another. SOF troops are presently in some 75 nations – 15 more than when Obama took office.

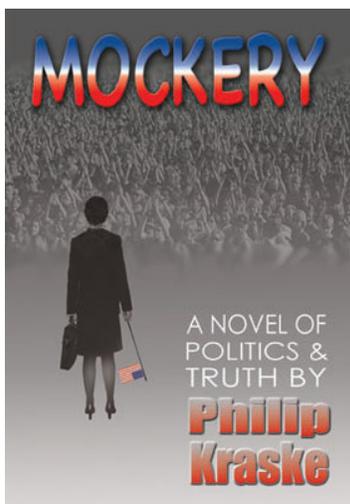
President Obama has, on a later schedule than he campaigned on, finally reduced US troop presence in Iraq. But he has not fully withdrawn US combat forces from Iraq or ended US combat there, his claims to have done so notwithstanding. His vice president has suggested, without correction by the president, the possibility of a US military presence in the country even after the deadline for withdrawal under the US-Iraq withdrawal agreement, if only through the use of military contractors.

Of course, none of this is very troubling. After all, Obama speaks well and is not a Republican. **CT**

David Swanson's latest book is "War Is A Lie," www.warisalie.org – This article first appeared in the Comment Is Free section of the Guardian newspaper at www.theguardian.co.uk

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Bradley Manning's torture: What's new?

Sadistic isolation is an everyday thing in supermax prisons, writes **Sherwood Ross**

Stalin's goons called this sort of endless torture the "conveyor belt"

The corrosive, solitary confinement being inflicted upon PFC Bradley Manning, accused of leaking material to Wikileaks, in the Quantico, Va., brig is no exceptional torture devised exclusively for him. Across the length and breadth of the Great American Prison State, the world's largest, with its 2.4-million captives stuffed into 5,000 overcrowded lock-ups, some 25,000 other inmates are suffering a like fate of sadistic isolation in so-called supermax prisons, where they are being systematically reduced to veritable human vegetables.

To destroy Manning as a human being, the Pentagon has, for the past seven months, barred him from exercising in his cell, and to inhibit his sleep denies him a pillow and sheet and allows him only a scratchy blanket, according to Heather Brooke of "Common Dreams" (January 26.) He is awakened each day at five a.m. and may not sleep until 8 p.m. The lights of his cell are always on and he is harassed every five minutes by guards who ask him if he is okay and to which he must respond verbally. Stalin's goons called this sort of endless torture the "conveyor belt."

Not surprisingly, Manning is attracting global attention to the Pentagon's sadism. If anyone did not believe the Pentagon's ruthless treatment of Iraqi prisoners when the Abu Ghraib torture photos were released,

they believe it now that it is torturing one of its own. In this assault upon the body and mind of a 23-year-old American soldier, all of the Pentagon's arrogance and clumsiness is revealed to the world. Perhaps not even the French military – when its frame-up on treason charges of Jewish Colonel Alfred Dreyfus was exposed – attracted to itself the global searchlights of opprobrium now bathing the walls of a Marine Corps brig at Quantico.

The kind of isolation torture Manning is enduring in recent years has spread itself quietly throughout US correctional facilities like a deadly gangrene. According to one reliable report, by 2003 between five and eight percent of the prison populations of Arizona, Colorado, Maine, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, Rhode Island, and Virginia were rotting in isolation. In some federal prisons the cells are referred to euphemistically as "Communications Management Units" and are, incidentally, "disproportionately inhabited by Muslim prisoners," according to an American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) law suit challenging them. In another suit, the ACLU has accused the Texas Youth Commission of "throwing children (girls) into cold, bare solitary confinement cells..." and told the TYC bluntly its "reliance on solitary confinement has to stop."

Dr. Stuart Grassian, a veteran of 25 years on the faculty of Harvard Medical School,

wrote in a law school journal of his interviews with prisoners in solitary. He said almost a third of them experienced impaired brain function. They “described hearing voices, often in whispers, often saying frightening things to them.” In an article published in the *Long Term View*, the magazine of the Massachusetts School of Law at Andover, Grassian wrote that about a third succumbed to “acute psychotic, confusional states” in which they saw objects “becoming larger and smaller, seeming to ‘melt’ or change form.” And this was only one of the syndromes experienced.

In a related article published in the same issue (Volume 7, No. 2), Dr. Atul Gawande of Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Boston, cited the findings of psychology professor Craig Haney of the University of California at Santa Cruz on isolation’s impact. Some inmates in the Pelican Bay supermax, Haney found, even after just months of isolation, suffered “Chronic apathy, lethargy, depression, and despair often result ... In extreme cases, prisoners may literally stop behaving, becoming essentially catatonic.”

No one listening

This, of course, is what the Pentagon apparently seeks to inflict on Manning. In June, 2006, the Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons recommended ending long-term isolation of prisoners but the so-called “House of War” wasn’t listening.

In the 2008 presidential race, Gawande wrote, both Obama and McCain came out firmly for banning torture and closing Guantanamo Bay prison where hundreds have been held in years-long isolation, yet neither “addressed the question of whether prolonged solitary confinement is torture.” McCain spent two of his five years as a POW in Viet Nam in solitary, later stating: “It’s an awful thing, solitary. It crushes your spirit and weakens your resistance more effectively than any other form of mistreatment.”

The US willingness to hold prisoners in

isolation for years “made it easy to discard the Geneva Conventions prohibiting similar treatment of foreign prisoners of war, to the detriment of America’s moral stature in the world,” Gawande wrote, adding, “In much the same way that a previous generation of Americans countenanced legalized segregation, our (generation) has countenanced legalized torture. And there is no clearer manifestation of this than our routine use of solitary confinement – -on our own people, in our own communities, in a supermax prison...”

“This conduct (solitary confinement) by the US Federal and State governments constitutes torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment in violation of the Convention Against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which are treaties to which the United States is a contracting party,” says international legal authority Francis Boyle, professor of the subject at the University of Illinois, Champaign.

Boyle believes, “As citizens of America and human beings in the world, we must do all in our power to terminate such illegal and criminal practices that are daily perpetrated by our own governmental institutions in our name against our fellow citizens and human beings.” Boyle is the author of “Defending Civil Resistance Under International Law”(Amazon).

Those supporting Manning need to recognize he is an icon for the bizarre, systemic destruction of tens of thousands of other human beings locked away in perpetual silence by their tormentors, often for mere infractions of prison rules, without the review of any judge or jury. As the ACLU told the TYC, this must be stopped. **CT**

Sherwood Ross is a Florida-based public relations consultant for good causes and director of the Anti-War News Service.

Disclosure: he was editor of “The Long-Term View” magazine cited in this article and is a media consultant to the Massachusetts School of Law at Andover.

Both Obama and McCain came out firmly for banning torture and closing Guantanamo Bay prison where hundreds have been held in years-long isolation, yet neither “addressed the question of whether prolonged solitary confinement is torture”

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