

A GOOD WAR FOR ARMS INVESTORS | BINOY KAMPMARK
BIDEN TOUTS VIETNAM AS PROUD HISTORY | NORMAN SOLOMON
LOOK BACK IN ANGER | TREVOR GRUNDY

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Issue 250

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our future: Transhumanism,
world peace – and extinction

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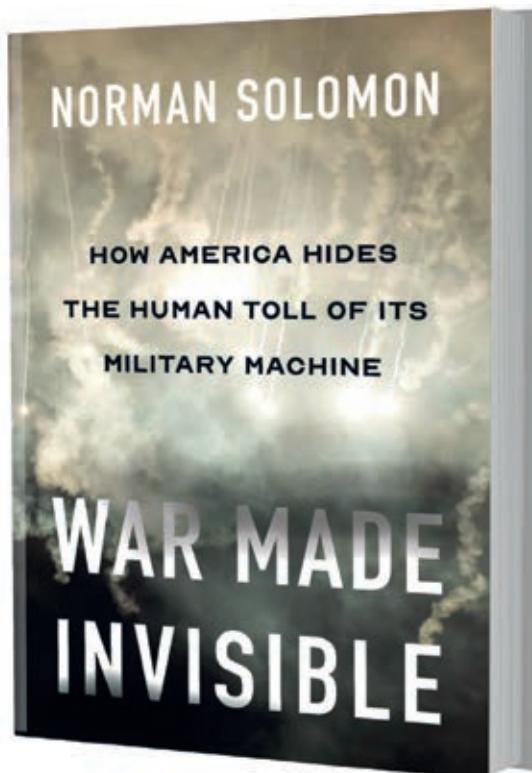
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—**Noam Chomsky**



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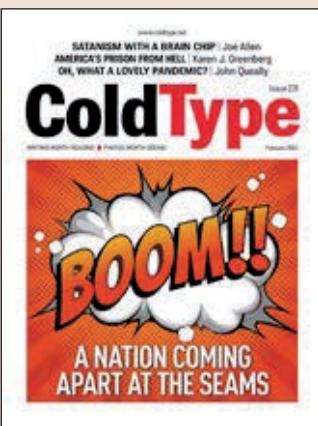
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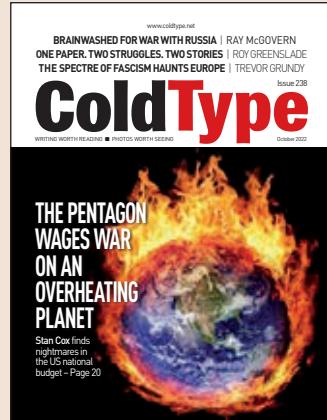
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Binoy Kampmark

A GOOD WAR – FOR ARMS INVESTORS AT LEAST

t all tallies. War, investments and returns. The dividends, solid, though the effort expended – at least by others – awful and bloody.

While a certain narrative in US polities continues in the vein of traditional cant and hustling ceremony regarding the Ukraine War – “noble freedom fighters, we salute you!”

twinned with

“Russian aggressors will be defeated” – there are the inadvertently honest ones let things slip. A subsidised war pays, especially when it is fought by others.

The latter narrative has been something of a retort, an attempt to deter a growing wobbling sentiment in the US about continuing support for Ukraine.

In a Brookings study published in April, evidence of wearying was detected. “A plurality of Americans, 46 percent, said the United States should stay the course in supporting Ukraine for only one to two years, compared with 38 percent who said the United States should stay the course for as long as it takes.”

DEADLY FORCE:
The F-35
strike
aircraft.



In early August, a CNN survey found that 51 percent of respondents believed that Washington had done enough to halt Russian military aggression in Ukraine, with 45 percent approving of additional funding to the war effort. A breakdown of the figures on ideological grounds revealed that additional funding is supported by 69 percent of liberals, 44 percent of moderates and 31 percent of conservatives.

In Congress, opposition to greater, ongoing spending is growing among the Republicans, reflecting increasing concern among GOP voters that

too much is being done to prop up Kyiv.

Such a mood has been anticipated by number crunching types keen to reduce human life to an adjustable unit on a spreadsheet. The Centre for European Policy Analysis, for example, suggested that a “cost-benefit analysis” would be useful regarding US support for Ukraine.

“Its producing wins at almost every level,” came the confident assessment. In spectacularly vulgar language, the centre notes that, “from numerous perspectives,

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when viewed from a bang-per-buck perspective, US and Western support for Ukraine is an incredibly cost-effective investment.”

War-intoxicated Democrats would do well to remind their Republican colleagues about such wins, notably to those great patriots known as the US Arms Industry. Aid packages to Ukraine, while dressed up as noble, democratic efforts to ameliorate a suffering country’s position vis-à-vis Russia, are much more than that.

In May 2022, for instance, President Joe Biden signed a bill providing Kyiv \$40.1-billion in emergency funding, split between \$24.6-billion for military programs, and \$15.5-billion for non-military objects. Even then, it was clear that one group would prove the greatest beneficiary. Stephen Semler of the Security Policy Reform Institute was unequivocal: US military contractors.

Of the package, rich rewards amounting to \$17.3-billion would flow to such contractors, comprising goods, be they in terms of weapons and equipment, or services in the form of training, logistics and intelligence. “It allows the Biden administration,” writes Semler, “to continue escalating the United States’ military involvement in the war as the administration appears increasingly disinterested in bringing it to an end through diplomacy.”

Broadly speaking, the US military-industrial complex continues to gorge and get larger. Whatever the outcome of this war – talk of absolute victory or defeat being the stuff of dangerous fantasy – it remains the true beneficiary, the sole victor fed by new markets

and opportunities.

Former Israeli foreign minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, now vice president of the Toledo Center for Peace, had to concede that the US arms industry was the “one clear winner” in this bloody tangle.

The addition of new member states to NATO, in this case Finland and Sweden, will, Ben Ami suggests, “open up a big new market for US defence contractors, because the alliance’s interoperability rule would bind them to American-made defence systems.” The evidence is already



Madeleine Albright: Fatuous remark.

there, with Finland’s order of 64 new F-35 strike fighters developed by Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and BAE Systems. The Ukraine War has been nothing short of lucrative in that regard.

Such expansion also comes with another benefit. The interoperability requirement in the NATO scheme acts as a bar to any alternatives. “The market for their goods is expanding,” writes Jon Markman for *Forbes*, “and they will face no competition for the foreseeable future.”

It should come as little surprise that the US defence contractors have been banging the drum for NATO enlargement from the late 1990s on.

While a good number of those in the US diplomatic stable feared the consequences of an aggressive membership drive, those in the business of making and selling arms would have none of it. The end of the Cold War necessitated a search for new horizons in selling instruments of death. And with each new NATO member – Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic – the contracts came. Washington and the defence contractors, twinned with purpose, pursued the agenda with gusto.

In 1997, Democratic Senator Tom Harkin was awake to that fact in hearings of the Senate Appropriations Committee on the cost of NATO enlargement. He was particularly concerned by a fatuous remark by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright comparing NATO’s expansion with the economic Marshall plan implemented in the aftermath of the Second World War. “My fear is that NATO expansion will not be a Marshall plan to bring stability and democracy to the newly freed European nations but, rather, a Marshall plan for defense contractors who are chomping [sic] at the bit to sell weapons and make profits.”

The moral here from the US military-industrial complex is: stay the course. The returns are worth it. And in such a calculus, concepts such as freedom and democracy can be commodified and budgeted. As for Ukrainian suffering? Well, let it continue. **CT**

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Caitlin Johnstone

AN HONEST AD FROM BILL KRISTOL!

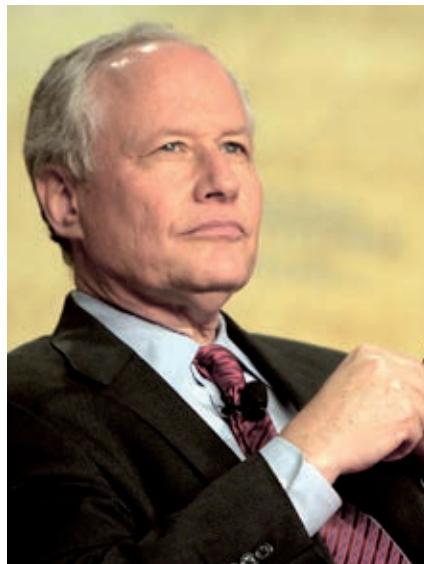
The Bill Kristol-led group “Republicans for Ukraine” has released a TV ad to help drum up GOP support for Washington’s proxy war against Russia, and it’s surprisingly honest about what this war is really about: advancing US strategic interests using Ukrainians as sacrificial pawns.

Here’s a transcript:

“When America arms Ukraine, we get a lot for a little. Putin is an enemy of America. We’ve used 5 percent of our defense budget to arm Ukraine, and with it, they’ve destroyed 50 percent of Putin’s Army. We’ve done all this by sending weapons from storage, not our troops. The more Ukraine weakens Russia, the more it also weakens Russia’s closest ally, China. America needs to stand strong against our enemies, that’s why Republicans in Congress must continue to support Ukraine.”

“Republicans for Ukraine” was launched last month by “Defending Democracy Together”, another Kristol-led narrative management operation which is funded by oligarchs like Pierre Omidyar.

One of the dumbest things the empire asks us to believe is that this war simultaneously (A) was completely unprovoked and (B) just coincidentally happens to massively advance the strategic interests of the government accused of provoking it. From the moment Russia invaded Ukraine in February



Bill Kristol: Proxy war.

derous Russians who invaded solely because they are evil and hate freedom;

and 2. that it’s in the interest of Americans to continue this war.

The second point is required because the message that the US is merely an innocent passive witness to the violence in Ukraine necessarily causes certain political factions to ask, “Okay, so what are we doing there then? Why are we pouring all this money into something that has nothing to do with us?” So another narrative is required to explain that backing this proxy war also just so happens to be a massive boon to US strategic interests abroad while creating American jobs manufacturing weapons at home.

And of course this war advances US strategic interests. Of course it does. Only an idiot would believe the US is pouring weapons into another country because it loves the people who live there and wants them to be free, and that it is only by pure coincidence that this happens to kill a lot of Russians, bolster NATO, and advance US energy interests in Europe. It doesn’t benefit normal Americans at home, but it absolutely does serve the interests of the globe-spanning empire that’s centralised around Washington. That’s why the empire deliberately provoked it.

Empire managers were openly discussing the ways a war in Ukraine would directly benefit the US empire long before the invasion. In 2019 a Pentagon-funded Rand Corporation paper titled “Extending Russia—Competing from Advantageous Ground” detailed how the empire can use proxy warfare, economic warfare and other Cold War tactics to push its longtime geopolitical foe to the brink without

2022 westerners were aggressively hammered over and over and over again by the mass media with the uniform propaganda message that this was an “unprovoked invasion”, but ever since then we’ve also been receiving these peculiar messages from US empire managers and spinmeisters that this war is helping the United States crush its geopolitical enemies and advance its interests abroad.

This bizarre two-step occurs because the US-centralised empire needs to convey two self-evidently contradictory messages to the public at all times:

1. that the US is an innocent little flower who just wants to help its good friends the Ukrainians protect their democracy from the mur-

Gage Skidmore

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costing American lives or sparking a nuclear conflict. The US Army-commissioned paper mentioned Ukraine hundreds of times, and explicitly discussed how a war there could be used to promote sanctions against Moscow and attack Russia's energy interests in Europe.

In December of 2021 John Deni of NATO propaganda firm The Atlantic Council authored a piece for *the Wall Street Journal* titled "The Strategic Case for Risking War in Ukraine," subtitled "An invasion would be a diplomatic, economic and military mistake for Putin. Let him make it if he must." Deni argued that "there are good strategic reasons for the West to stake out a hard-line approach" against Moscow and refuse to negotiate or back down over Ukraine, because if doing so provokes Russia to invade it would "forge an even stronger anti-Russian consensus across Europe," "result in another round of more debilitating economic sanctions that would further weaken Russia's economy," and "sap the strength and morale of Russia's military while undercutting Mr. Putin's domestic popularity and reducing Russia's soft power globally."

The minds on the inside of the empire were talking about how this war would benefit the US before the invasion, and they've been talking about how much it benefits the US ever since. As the *Washington Post*'s David Ignatius put it this past July: "these 18 months of war have been a strategic windfall, at relatively low cost (other than for the Ukrainians). The West's most reckless antagonist has been rocked. NATO has grown much stronger with the additions of Sweden and Finland. Germany has weaned itself from dependence on Russian

energy and, in many ways, rediscovered its sense of values. NATO squabbles make headlines, but overall, this has been a triumphal summer for the alliance."

The managers of the empire are getting everything they want out of this war. In public they rend their garments and cry crocodile tears and call it a terrible criminal atrocity, but every now and then they look at the camera and flash it a quick Fleabag-style grin.

They knew exactly what they were doing when they provoked this war, and they know exactly what they're doing by keeping it going.

And they're loving every minute of it. **CT**

Caitlin Johnstone is an Australian political commentator. She blogs at www.caitlinjohnstone.com.au, where this article was first published.

Yves Engler

RUSSIAPHOBIA: A 150-YEAR CANADIAN PASSION

There has been a great deal of reporting about Canada's parliament celebrating a World War II Nazi soldier. But even though he was praised specifically for fighting Russia the media has ignored the horrors inflicted by the Nazis on Russians.

During Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's recent speech to parliament, 98-year-old Yaroslav Hunka was labelled a "hero" by the Speaker of Parliament for fighting Russia. In subsequently justifying his embarrassing presentation of the 14th Waffen SS volunteer, Anthony Rota noted, "my intention was to show that the conflict between Russia and Ukraine is not a new one." For Rota the Nazi bit was an aside.

This idea isn't new. The mid 1980s federal government-appointed Deschênes Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals in Canada came to a similar conclusion. In justifying

a do-nothing approach to Canadian former Waffen SS members – who swore allegiance to Adolf Hitler and were part of an organisation deemed criminal by the Nuremberg Tribunal – the commission noted that the division's soldiers volunteered "not because of a love of the Germans but because of their hatred for the Russians and the Communist tyranny."

What the Nazis did to Russians during World War II was horrific. According to official statistics, 11-million Russian/USSR military personnel and 16-million civilians were killed. The siege of Leningrad (present-day Saint Petersburg) was ghastly. As a result of one of the longest and most destructive sieges in history, around 1.5-million died.

In a statement pointing out there are over 200 000 Canadians of Russian descent and that almost all Russians "lost at least one relative in combating Nazism", that coun-

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try's ambassador noted, "I strongly believe that despite deep disagreements between Moscow and Ottawa on the current geopolitical situation, the Government and the Parliament of Canada must find courage to apologize directly to all Russians and the Russian Canadian community for the disgraceful incident the whole world was watching on September 22."

Another important omission from the discussion is Canada's long-standing belligerence towards Russia. As part of its ties to the British

empire, Ottawa has been in a near state of war with Russia for over a century and a half.

Much of the British garrison in Canada left for Crimea during the 1853-56 war and many Canadians also volunteered for British units fighting Russia. In "How the Crimean War of 1853 Helped Shape the Canada of Today," historian C.P. Champion describes how the naval base on Vancouver Island was greatly expanded in response

to the war. He also quotes historian John Castell Hopkins explaining that the Militia Act of 1855, which formed the basis for today's army, was "a result of the feeling aroused by the Crimean War."

Recently a well-known Canadian leftist suggested she was unaware that Canada invaded Russia a century ago. The vast majority of Canadians don't know that between 1917 and 1920 six thousand Canadians fought there. In the summer of 1919 the British air force dropped di-phenylchloroarsine against the Bol-

WE ARE ALL FRIENDS



INSIGHTS

sheviks in Murmansk and Archangel. They fled in panic from a gas that caused uncontrollable coughing and individuals to vomit blood. About 600 Canadians fought in Murmansk and Archangel.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s Ottawa worked to isolate Moscow. Canada opposed a treaty to guarantee Russia's pre-World War I frontiers and for most of that period had no diplomatic relations with Moscow.

The Canadian/European elite's pre-war dalliance with Hitler was largely because of his dislike of communism/Russia/Slavs. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is deeply anti-Slavic and he calls for the destruction of Soviet Russia.

In fact, one of Hitler's aims at the start of the war was to expel or wipe out Slavs to make living space for German settlers.

At the end of World War II, the US dropped nuclear weapons on Japan partly as a threat to Moscow. After the war an Iron Curtain descended over Europe. When the USSR dissolved, Canada immediately pushed to expand NATO to Russia's doorstep and backed anti-Russian civil society groups in eastern Europe. US officials like former vice-president Dick Cheney have talked about breaking up the Russian Federation while foreign minister Melanie Joly has suggested that Canada's aim in the current war is to precipitate regime change in Moscow. Through its 2015 Operation Unifier Ukrainian military training mission Canada effectively entered into a low-level proxy war with Russia. Moscow massively expanded that conflict 19 months ago. Since then, Canada has ploughed in huge amounts of arms in a bid to weaken Russia.

The scandal over Parliament's standing ovations for a Nazi soldier is principally about Russophobia in Canadian politics. Yet, in both his 'apologies' on the Hudak incident Prime Minister Justin Trudeau actually doubled down on the fearmongering, decrying "Russian propaganda" and "Russian disinformation".

While Moscow's action in Ukraine are condemnable,

Russophobia in Canada is largely an outgrowth of the country's relationship to the British and US Empires, which has viewed Russia as an imperial competitor.

NaziGate highlights that few in Canadian politics see any problem in killing Russians. **CT**

Yves Engler is a Montreal-based author and political activist. His web site is www.yvesengler.com.

Sam Pizzigati

A TELLING TALE OF TWO PRESS LORDS



E.W. Scripps, circa 1912: "Devoted to the service of the 95 percent."



Rupert Murdoch: Media machinations helped reduce taxes for the rich.

Could we realistically have expected anything even a bit more socially redeeming from a media mogul as powerful as Murdoch?

Well, actually, history does offer up some models for media moguls interested in something besides maximising their mega millions.

Take, for instance, E.W. Scripps, the famed newspaper publisher who passed away nearly a century ago in 1926.

The youngest of 13 children, Scripps borrowed \$10,000 to launch his first newspaper in 1878. He would spend the next quarter-century building a chain of dailies

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and a national news service that would evolve into the United Press International. His papers, Scripps pledged, would “always be devoted to the service of the 95 percent, namely the working man and the poor and unfortunate.”

By 1917 and America’s entry into the First World War, Scripps and a handful of other socially conscious men of means had come to realize that the war in Europe had opened up an opportunity to cut our Gilded Age rich down to something approximating democratic size. To meet the cost of waging world war, the nation would either have to tax the rich at significant rates or borrow from the rich, by selling war bonds, a choice that would leave the United States even more plutocratic.

“The country will be the gainer by tapping and reducing the great fortunes,” Scripps wrote to a similarly minded man of means, “and once the people learn how easy it is, and how beneficial to all parties concerned it is to get several billions a year by an Income Tax, the country hereafter may be depended upon to raise most, if not all, of the revenues for the Nation, and the States, and the cities from this source.”

The Scripps-backed American Committee on War Finance would soon be demanding a cap on annual income, what the Committee would call “a conscription of wealth.”

No American, the Committee’s tax plan for the war proposed, ought to be able to retain after taxes “an annual net income in excess of \$100,000,” about \$2.4-million in today’s dollars.

“All income of over one hundred thousand dollars a year should be conscripted,” Scripps telegraphed

to President Woodrow Wilson. “Such legislation would cost me much more than half my present income.”

“Some of us have very large incomes,” Scripps would later explain to the House Ways and Means Committee. “We employ servants who produce nothing for the common good and only minister to our vices. We purchase costly

and showy clothing, houses, food, furniture, automobiles, jewellery, etc, etc, the production of which has taken the labour of many hundreds of thousands of men and women, who if they were not so employed would be producing other commodities in such quantity as to cheapen them and make them more accessible to the poor.”

“An enormously high rate of

“

Allowing Julian Assange to be extradited sends a chilling message to journalists the world over

#FreeAssangeNOW

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Income Tax,” Scripps argued, “would have the effect of diverting all this labour, what is given to practically useless things, into other channels where production would be useful to the whole people.”

Nearly all of the nation’s fabulously wealthy – and their most avid advocates – would respond to the “conscription of wealth” campaign with predictable hysterics. But by mid-1917 the campaign had completely redefined the nation’s tax-the-rich frame of reference.

The result? By the war’s end in 1918, America’s rich faced a top-bracket tax rate of 77 percent, up from 15 percent in 1916.

By 1926, with Scripps passed away, the nation’s wealthy had regrouped enough to get that top rate trimmed all the way down to 25 percent. But the World War I “conscription of wealth” campaign had touched a nerve. In the months after Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Roosevelt renewed the World War I-era call for a 100 percent top-bracket tax rate, and, by the end of World War II, America’s rich faced a 94 percent federal tax on income over \$200,000.

That top tax rate would hover around 90 percent for the next two decades, years that would see the United States give birth to the first mass middle class the world had ever seen.

Today, thanks in no small part to the media machinations of Rupert Murdoch, our richest now face – on paper – a top-bracket income tax

rate less than half that high.

In real life, ProPublica revealed this past spring, our tax code’s incredibly ample and generous current loopholes have America’s 25 wealthiest taxpayers paying a “true tax rate” of less than 4 percent.

What can we now expect from Rupert Murdoch’s successor, his son Lachlan? Don’t hold your breath waiting for Murdoch 2.0 to take his family media colossus down a path any less plutocratic. Lachlan doesn’t have much E. W.

Scripps in him.

Back in 2019, he spent \$150-million on an 11-acre estate in LA. At that time, Lachlan’s new home rated as the second-most expensive US mansion ever purchased. **CT**

Sam Pizzigati co-edits *Inequality.org* at the Institute for Policy Studies. His books include *The Case for a Maximum Wage* and *The Rich Don’t Always Win*. This article was distributed by OtherWords.org.

Norman Solomon

NOW BIDEN TOUTS VIETNAM WAR AS PROUD HISTORY

When Joe Biden flew out of Hanoi in the middle of September, he was leaving a country where US warfare caused roughly 3.8-million Vietnamese deaths. But, like every other president since the Vietnam War, he gave no sign of remorse. In fact, Biden led up to his visit by presiding over a White House ceremony that glorified the war as a noble effort.

Presenting the Medal of Honor to former Army pilot Larry L. Taylor for bravery during combat, Biden praised the veteran with effusive accolades for risking his life in Vietnam to rescue fellow soldiers from “the enemy.” But that heroism was 55 years ago. Why present the medal on national television just days before travelling to Vietnam?

The timing reaffirmed the shameless pride in the US war

on Vietnam that one president after another has tried to render as history. You might think that – after killing such a vast number of people in a war of aggression based on continuous deceptions – some humility and even penance would be in order.

But no. As George Orwell put it, “Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.” And a government that intends to continue its might-makes-right use of military power needs leaders who do their best to distort history with foggy rhetoric and purposeful omissions. Lies and evasions about past wars are prefigurative for future wars.

And so, at a press conference in Hanoi, the closest Biden came to acknowledging the slaughter and devastation inflicted on Vietnam by

INSIGHTS

the US military was this sentence: “I’m incredibly proud of how our nations and our people have built trust and understanding over the decades and worked to repair the painful legacy the war left on both our nations.”

In the process, Biden was pretending an equivalency of suffering and culpability for both countries -- a popular pretence for commanders in chief ever since the first new one after the Vietnam War ended.

Two months into his presidency in early 1977, Jimmy Carter was asked at a news conference if he felt “any moral obligation to help rebuild that country.” Carter replied firmly: “Well, the destruction was mutual. You know, we went to Vietnam without any desire to capture territory or to impose American will on other people. We went there to defend the freedom of the South Vietnamese. And I don’t feel that we ought to apologise or to castigate ourselves or to assume the status of culpability.”

And, Carter added, “I don’t feel that we owe a debt, nor that we should be forced to pay reparations at all.”

In other words, no matter how many lies it tells or how many people it kills, being the United States government means never having to say you’re sorry.

When President George H.W. Bush celebrated the US victory in the 1991 Gulf War, he proclaimed: “By God, we’ve kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all.”

Bush meant that the triumphant killing of Iraqi people – estimated at 100,000 in six weeks – had ushered in American euphoria

about military action that promised to wipe away hesitation to launch future wars.

From Carter to Biden, presidents have never come anywhere near providing an honest account of the Vietnam War. None could imagine engaging in the kind of candour that Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg provided when he said: “It wasn’t that we were on the wrong side. We were the wrong side.”

Mainstream political discourse has paid scant attention to the deaths and injuries of Vietnamese people. Likewise the horrendous ecological damage and effects of poisons from the Pentagon’s arsenal have gotten very short shrift in US media and politics.

Does such history really matter now? Absolutely. Efforts to portray

the US government’s military actions as well-meaning and virtuous are incessant. The pretences that falsify the past are foreshadowing excuses for future warfare.

Telling central truths about the Vietnam War is a basic threat to the US war machine. No wonder the leaders of the warfare state would rather keep pretending. **CT**

Norman Solomon is the national director of RootsAction.org and executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. He is the author of a dozen books including *War Made Easy*.

His latest book, *War Made Invisible: How America Hides the Human Toll of Its Military Machine*, was recently published by The New Press.

HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt



Vijay Prashad

WHAT IF THERE HAD BEEN NO 1973 COUP IN CHILE?

The right wing coup in Chile destroyed lives and suspended a process of great promise. Today, that promise must be revived

Imagine this scenario. On 11 September 1973, the reactionary sections of the Chilean army, led by General Augusto Pinochet and given a green light by the US government, did not leave their barracks. President Salvador Allende, who led the Popular Unity government, went to his office in La Moneda in Santiago to announce a plebiscite on his government and to ask for the resignation of several senior generals. Then, Allende continued his fight to bring down inflation and to realise his government's programme to advance the socialist agenda in Chile.

Until the moment when the Chilean Army descended upon La Moneda in 1973, Allende and the Popular Unity government were in a pitched fight to defend Chile's sovereignty, particularly over its copper resources and its land as they sought to raise sufficient funds to eradicate hunger and illiteracy and to produce innovative means to deliver health care and housing.

In the Popular Unity programme (1970), the Allende government founded its charter:

"The social aspirations of the Chilean people are legitimate and possible to satisfy. They want, for example, dignified housing without readjustments that exhaust their income; schools and universities for

their children; sufficient wages; an end once and for all to high prices; stable work; timely medical attention; public lighting; sewers; potable water; paved streets and sidewalks; a just and operable social security system without privileges and without starvation-level pensions; telephones; police; children's playgrounds; recreation areas; and popular vacationing and sea resorts.

The satisfaction of these just desires of the people – which, in truth, are rights that society must recognise – will be a preoccupation of high priority for the popular government."

Realising the 'just desires of the people' – a laudable objective – was possible amidst the public's optimism for the Popular Unity government. Allende's administration adopted a model that decentralised the government and mobilised the people to attain their own 'just desires'.

Had this model not been interrupted, the depositors in the government's social security institutions would have remained on directive councils with oversight of these funds. Organisations of slum dwellers would have continued to inspect the operations of the housing department

tasked with building quality housing for the working class. Old democratic structures would have continued to strengthen as the government used new technologies (such as Project Cybersyn) to create a distributed decision system. "It is not only about these examples", the programme noted, "but about a new understanding in which the people participate in state institutions in a real and efficient way."

As Chile's people, led by the Popular Unity government, took control over their economic and political lives and worked hard to improve their social and cultural worlds, they sent a flare into the sky announcing the great possibilities of socialism.

Their advances mirrored those that had been attained in several other projects, such as in Cuba, and boosted the confidence of people across the Third World to test their own possibilities. The eradication of poverty and the creation of housing for every family was an inspiration for Latin America.

Had the Popular Unity project not been cut short, it very well might have encouraged other left projects to demand the satisfaction of just desires in a world where it was possible to attain them. No longer would we live in a world of scarcity, which impedes the realisation of these desires. No Chicago Boys would



have arrived with their noxious neoliberal agenda to experiment in the laboratory of a military regime. Popular mobilisations would have exposed the illegitimate desire of the capitalist class to impose austerity on the people in the name of economic growth. As Allende's gov-

ernment expanded its agenda, driven by a decentralised government and by popular mobilisation, the "just desires" of the people might have eclipsed the narrow greed of capitalism.

If there had been no coup in Chile, there might not have been coups in

Peru (1975) and Argentina (1976). Without these coups, perhaps the military dictatorships in Bolivia, Brazil, and Paraguay would have withdrawn in the face of popular agitation, inspired by Chile's example.

Perhaps, in this context, the close relationship between Chile's Salvador Allende and Cuba's Fidel Castro would have broken Washington's illegal blockade of revolutionary Cuba. Perhaps the promises made at the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) meeting in Santiago in 1972 might have been realised, among them the enactment of a robust New International Economic Order (NIEO) in 1974 that would have set aside the imperial privileges of the Dollar-Wall Street complex and its attendant agencies, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Perhaps the just economic order that was being put in place in Chile would have been expanded to the world.

B

ut the coup did happen. The military dictatorship killed, disappeared, and sent into exile hundreds of thousands of people, setting in motion a dynamic of repression that has been difficult for Chile to reverse despite the return to democracy in 1990. From being a laboratory for socialism, Chile – under the tight grip of the military – became a laboratory for neoliberalism. Despite its relatively small population of roughly ten million (a tenth of the size of Brazil's population), the coup in Chile in 1973 had a global impact. At that time, the coup was not just seen as a coup against the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende, but as a coup against the Third World.

That is precisely the theme of the latest dossier from the Transcontinental Institute for Social Research, *The Coup Against the Third World: Chile, 1973*, produced in col-

laboration with Instituto de Ciencias Alejandro Lipschutz Centro de Pensamiento e Investigación Social y Política(ICAL).

“The coup against Allende’s government,” we write, “took place not only against its own policy of the nationalisation of copper, but also because Allende had offered leadership and an example to other developing countries that sought to implement the NIEO principles.”

At the third session of UNCTAD in Santiago (1972), Allende said that the mission of the conference was to replace “an obsolete and radically unjust economic and trade order with an equitable one that is based on a new concept of man and human dignity and to reformulate an international division of labour that is intolerable for the less advanced countries and that obstructs their progress while favouring only the affluent nations”.

This was exactly the dynamic that was derailed by the coup in Chile as well as by other manoeuvres of the imperialist bloc. Instead of promoting an order “based on a new concept of man and human dignity,” these manoeuvres resulted in the murder of hundreds of thousands of people’s advocates (among them leftists, trade unionists, peasant leaders, environmental justice campaigners, and women’s rights activists) and prolonged the destiny of hunger and illiteracy, poor housing and medical care, and the general

It was the bravery and sacrifice of people such as Tellier, Marín, and countless others, that brought the dictatorship of Pinochet and the Chicago Boys to an end

iorientation of a culture of despair and toxicity.

Two weeks before the fiftieth anniversary of the coup in Chile, Guillermo Teillier, the president of the Communist Party of Chile (PC), died. At his funeral, the party’s general secretary Lautaro Carmona Soto described how Tieillier with the coup’s cordite still in the air – went to work in Valdivia to protect and then build the party as part of the broader resistance to the coup regime. In 1974, Teillier was arrested in Santiago and subsequently held and tortured for two years in the Academia de Guerra Aérea. For another year and a half, Tiellier was held in concentration camps in Ritoque, Puchuncaví, and Tres Álamos. Released in 1976, he went into hiding and continued to build the party back to its fighting strength, joined the following year by PC leader Gladys Marín.

This was dangerous work, made

even more dangerous when Tellier took over as the leader of the party’s military commission, which managed the aid sent from Cuba to Chile and oversaw the creation and operations of the Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front (FPMR), the PC’s armed wing. Though attempts to assassinate Pinochet failed, broader work to build the movement for democracy succeeded. It was the bravery and sacrifice of people such as Tellier, Marín, and countless – and often nameless – others, that brought the dictatorship of Pinochet and the Chicago Boys to an end in 1990.

The 1973 coup in Chile destroyed lives and suspended a process of great promise. Today, that promise must be revived. **CT**

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GAGGED: Julian Assange.

Peter Oborne

UK PRESS PREFERENCES TO SERVE POWER, NOT MEDIA FREEDOM

We might have expected British journalists to have turned the Julian Assange case into a cause celebre for press freedom and free speech. Not at all. Most of the mainstream media are silent or hostile, and are acting as instruments of the state

Just over ten years ago, Lord Justice Leveson proposed tougher legislation of UK newspapers amidst general horror that journalists had hacked the phone of murdered schoolgirl Millie Dowler. His proposals were greeted with fury.

In the *Daily Mail* Richard Littlejohn said they meant the “suppression of free speech.” This was, added Littlejohn, the “classic hallmark of a fascist regime.”

Mike Harris for the *Daily Telegraph* warned that “three centuries of press freedom will be consigned

to the dustbin of history, with investigative journalism almost impossible and shackles imposed on our much-loved local press”.

Every title from the Murdoch press, Associated Newspapers and the Telegraph – the hegemonic groups which account for approximately 75 percent of mainstream newspaper readership – denounced the Leveson reforms.

Meanwhile they united to launch a concerted campaign – the so-called free speech network – to block them.

It was one of the most effective campaigns in modern times.

Behind the scenes, politicians

were nobbyled. Deals were struck. Leveson Two – the section of the enquiry which would have examined links between politicians, the police and press – was blocked.

Let's contrast the campaign against Leveson with British media coverage of the US attempt to extradite Julian Assange.

As I write, Assange rots in a cell in high security Belmarsh prison, where he has been held for years. Any day now could see the

WikiLeaks publisher sent to the United States for trial on trumped up espionage charges – then dumped in a US jail for the rest of his life.

The consequences of such a judgement could not be more grim for free speech. Any story which depends on obtaining documents from US government sources will become impossibly dangerous.

Break another Watergate scandal? Forget it. No British journalist would dare to handle the material, let alone publish it. Any journalists involved could find themselves subject to extradition.

The more serious the story, and the more it needed to be published, the greater the danger.

Let's spell this out. Julian Assange is by far the most important case involving free speech this century. No wonder the late Daniel Ellsberg, who exposed so many of the US lies about the Vietnam war, gave such powerful testimony for Assange before his death in June this year.

Ellsberg, the principled former marine who leaked the so-called Pentagon papers, said that he felt a "great identification" with Assange.

So you would have expected British journalists and newspaper editors to have turned the Assange case into a cause celebre for media freedom.

Wrong.

The Assange story has been treated by much of the British media like an embarrassing family secret. As I discovered when I carried out a survey of recent press reporting.

The *Times* claims to be Britain's foremost paper of record. There have been a handful of news stories such as "Assange not allowed to attend Vivienne Westwood's funeral" and no opinion piece since the start of 2021.

That one wasn't friendly. Written by James Ball, a former WikiLeaks staffer, the headline announced: "Assange is no hero. I should know –

You would have expected journalists and newspaper editors to have turned the Assange case into a cause celebre for media freedom

I lived with him and his awful gang."

There has been a comparable lack of reporting in the *Telegraph*. Not much in the *Financial Times*. Ditto the *Sunday Times* – the paper once edited by the formidable investigative editor Harold Evans – and the *Sunday Telegraph*.

Richard Littlejohn, the columnist for the *Daily Mail* who absurdly compared the Leveson proposals to fascism, mocked Assange in a contemptible article as he emerged from incarceration at the Ecuadorian embassy in London: claiming that "he stank the place to high heaven."

The *New Statesman* is a sad case. Once a beacon of the liberal left, a hatchet job on Assange by Suzanne Moore in April 2019 set the tone.

"Wikileaks was the future once," wrote Moore. "Remember? We were all excited about the vast info dumps revealing horrific war crimes and the killings of civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan. Then it became something else. It became him, and he did not care if the information he was releasing was helping Trump or Putin, outing gay men in Saudi Arabia, identifying informants or rape victims. Their names were out there and they were at risk."

To think that the *New Statesman* was once a supporter of press freedom, human rights and the radical left. Or that its editor Jason Cowley, occupies the same chair as Kingsley Martin or Anthony Howard.

To be fair to Suzanne Moore she did state that it was wrong to extradite Assange.

Not so the *Economist*, which actually supports extradition. The paper argued in April 2019 that "the central charge – computer hacking – is an indefensible violation of the law. Neither journalists nor activists, like Mr Assange, have carte blanche to break the law in exercising their First Amendment rights. They are entitled to publish freely; not to break and enter, physically or digitally, to do so."

In preparation for this piece I have repeatedly approached the magazine's spokesperson asking if its position has changed. There have been no replies to my emails. Until the *Economist* publishes an editorial to the contrary, we must assume that the paper still supports extradition.

Even those titles which oppose extradition tend to do so superficially. They fail to highlight the full horror of Julian Assange's ongoing incarceration in Belmarsh. That the CIA plotted to assassinate Assange.

Or the magnitude and horror of what he revealed about the US-led war on terror.

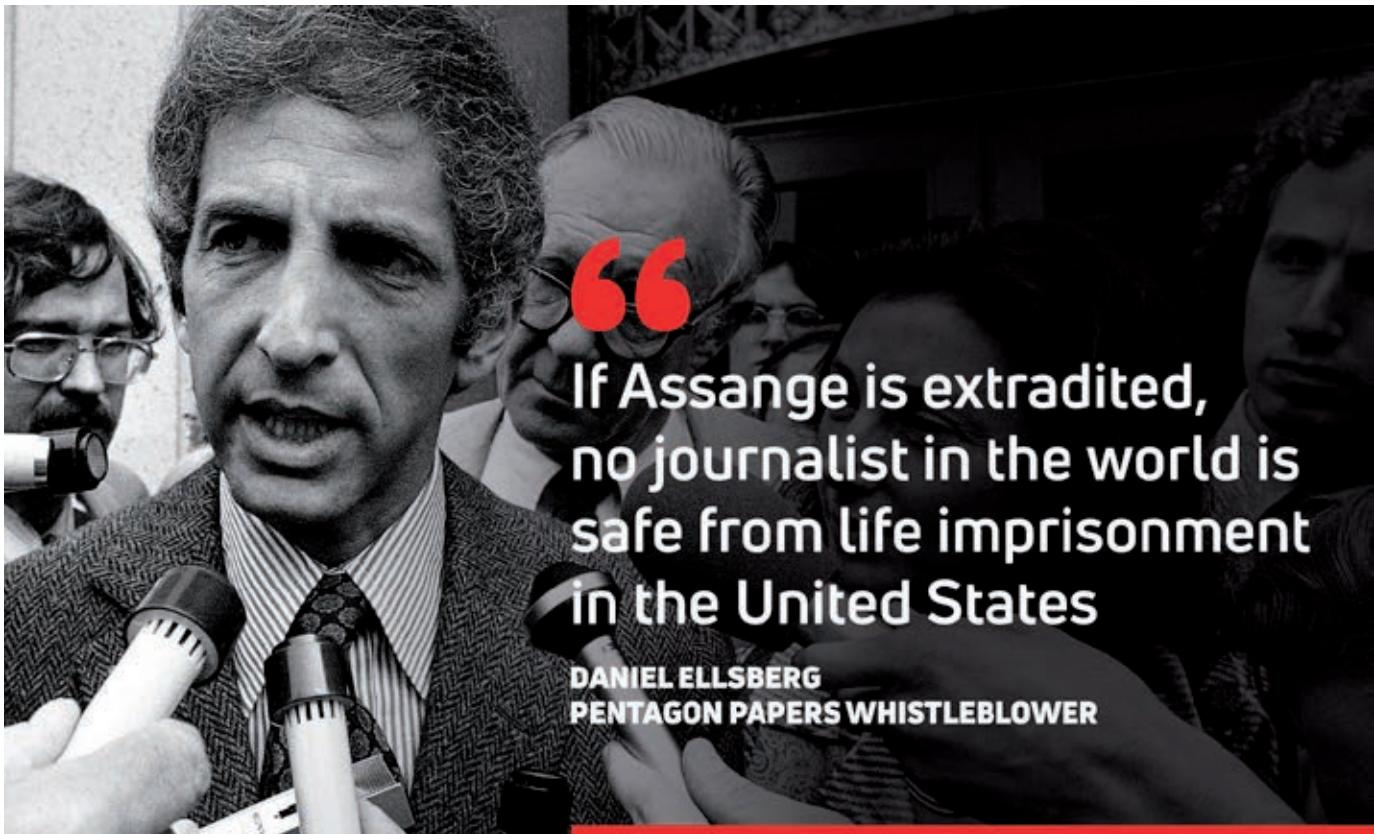
Such as the video of US helicopter gunmen laughing as they shot at and killed 12 unarmed civilians in Iraq – including a Reuters photographer and his assistant. The US refused even to discipline the perpetrators.

The core revelation that civilian casualties in Iraq were far higher than the US had admitted. The systematic abuse at Guantanamo Bay. That 150 innocent inmates were held for years without charge.

And so on.

No titles have properly reported the story, and virtually all of those that have, are from outside the mainstream media.

Only a handful of reporters regularly attended Assange's four-



If Assange is extradited,
no journalist in the world is
safe from life imprisonment
in the United States

DANIEL ELLSBERG
PENTAGON PAPERS WHISTLEBLOWER

week hearing three years ago at the Old Bailey: one from the specialist agency Central Court News, another from the Press Association; and court reporter James Doleman filing daily reports for *Bridges for Media Freedom*. There was a reporter from the *Morning Star*.

A BBC representative attended every day but appears not to have filed anything at all.

The former British ambassador Craig Murray, sitting in the public gallery with the Assange family, filed a series of brilliant daily reports. No British paper provided anything comparable.

The Assange case proves the argument made by Noam Chomsky that mainstream media should be understood as an instrument of state and corporate power.

I rang up the one figure from the mainstream media who has broken

The case proves Noam Chomsky's argument that mainstream media should be understood as an instrument of state and corporate power

from this paradigm: Peter Hitchens has used his *Daily Mail* column (credit to *Mail* editor Ted Verity) to make the case against extradition. “It could happen any day now”, he warned in August.

“After yet another brief, unsuccessful court hearing, a column of vans and police cars roars out of Belmarsh prison in London and hurries to Heathrow, where a manacled, stooped and blinking prisoner is handed over to American officials and bundled aboard a plane bound for Washington DC.”

Hitchens added: “He faces absurd

charges of spying, when he never spied. His crime was to embarrass the US government by selectively releasing information that Washington had tried and failed to keep secret. I do not think this is a crime, here or there.”

Hitchens named several British columnists. “Charles Moore. Danny Finkelstein. Matthew Parris. Janice Turner. These are all people I respect greatly, people who are prepared to say difficult or unpopular things. They believe in liberty under the law. I would love to see their voices raised in favour of Assange. I just don’t think that they’ve made the connection. It’s not too late for them to do so.”

CT
Research by Nicholas Brookes.

Peter Oborne is a journalist and author. His latest book is *The Fate of Abraham: Why the West is Wrong about Islam*. This article was first published at www.declassifieduk.org.

Joe Allen

THE COMING WAR ON HUMANITY

An excerpt from Joe Allen's new book,
Dark Aeon, Transhumanism and the War Against Humanity

Transhumanism is the great merger of humankind with the Machine. At this stage in history, it consists of billions using smartphones. Going forward, we'll be hardwiring our brains to artificial intelligence systems. Transhumanists are always talking about the smartphone-to-implant progression – and so am I, but for very different reasons. Running parallel to this deranged effort is genetic engineering. Instead of getting an mRNA shot that produces reams of synthetic protein, you'll get custom shots to upgrade your DNA. It's like a facelift for your cellular nuclei. That's another progression they can't stop talking about – and neither can I.

In posthuman versions, it all culminates with the bits and bytes of your personality being digitised and transferred to an e-ghost who goes on evolving in endless virtual space, even after your body dies. Somewhere along the way, they foresee some genius inventing a "godlike" artificial intelligence who assumes the role of a

God they believe never existed. Ultimately, transhumanism is a spiritual orientation – not toward the transcendent Creator, but rather toward the created Machine. Think of it as a Disneyland ride where instead of praying for it to end, you pray to the animatronic muppets chattering around you in the hopes of becoming one of them.

My professional life was spent touring with the music Machine. The first few concert tours were around the US. By the time the pandemic shut down our jobs, I'd been all over the world. Some call me Joebot – others call me Joe Rigger. The term "roadie" is politically incorrect, so don't go there. As a house

rigger, you climb high steel to hang the suspension system's motors. You walk beams a hundred feet in the air and climb angle iron like an ape. As a tour rigger, you travel with the Machine from arena to arena, directing one team of army ants on the floor and another team of high steel apes overhead. The primary goal is to hang forty-plus tons of lights, sound, video, and automation, and

ensure nothing falls down, especially not you. I learned a lot about engineering safety. I learned more about social psychology. And I learned even more about social engineering.

Up above are the stage lights. Down below are what Sigmund Freud would call "prosthetic gods." These are tiny mortals transformed by technology. The same sensory Machine will turn various starving artists into rock stars, rap stars, country stars, cyborg stars, cagefighting stars, political stars, slutpop starlets, or superstar televangelists. Entertainment technology is not "neutral." No technology ever is. Lights, sound, and video have certain tendencies and embedded values, a limited range of possibilities, out of which comes a deep transformation – not only of the stars themselves, but of the crowds on the arena floor. Mass entertainment is a seductive form of social engineering. The arena is a thundering Temple of the Future™.

From the beginning, the Machine and I have had a love/hate relationship. Its intricacies are mesmerizing. And that's the problem.

"Open the temple door, HAL"

So long as we're telling stories here, you should know my academic life was spent studying religion and science – the latter being the fastest

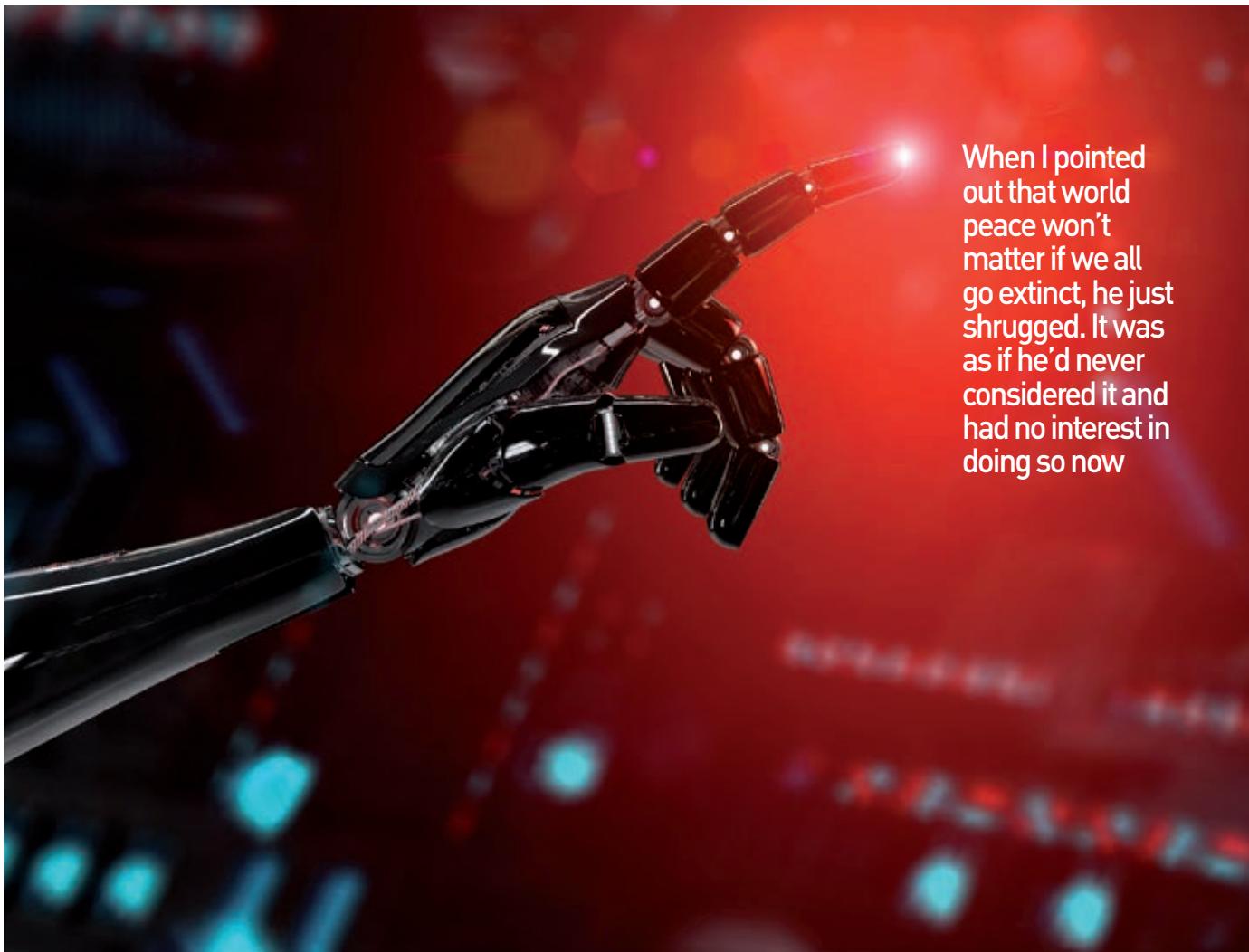


Dark Aeon

Joe Allen

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When I pointed out that world peace won't matter if we all go extinct, he just shrugged. It was as if he'd never considered it and had no interest in doing so now

growing world religion. Two experiences really hit me. There's a legendary medical facility at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville called "the body farm." In one of my undergrad science labs, we visited the facility to inspect a cadaver. It had been there since the nineties, so the man's bones were yellow and his skin looked like beef jerky. I'd been reading books on transhumanism, so the first thing I noticed was the steel plate screwed onto his skull, the primitive pacemaker attached to his heart, and the metal hinge that had replaced his knee. In life, the man had been a cyborg pioneer. His withered ghost still haunts my mind, some twenty years later.

In 2015, I moved from Portland,

Ore. to pursue a graduate degree at Boston University. Their School of Theology has a specialised track dedicated to the scientific study of religion. My adviser was Wesley Wildman, a genius mathematician turned unorthodox theologian. Soon after my arrival, he founded the Center for Mind and Culture (CMAC), a multi-million dollar think tank in Kenmore Square. Appropriately, it's just around the corner from the Lourdes Chapel and across the way from the WHOOP Unite wearable biosensor company. It sits at the intersection of healing and enhancement. Among the many projects then conducted at CMAC was the agent-based simulation of religious social systems. Im-

agine the video game SimCity with a million psychologically complex characters powered by artificial intelligence. If you let your profane imagination go wild, you can see these bots praying to their creator. In base reality, that would be the programmers and designers.

One of CMAC's visiting fellows was Justin Lane, an AI expert who was finishing his PhD at Oxford. He became my close friend and mentor. Everything I know about the nuts and bolts of artificial intelligence began with him. Anything stupid I write from here on is not his fault.

Much of my on-foot research in Boston was conducted at a Latin Mass cathedral, a Sikh gurdwara, and Harvard's Museum of Natural

History. My thesis fieldwork centred on various locations run by L'Arche, a Catholic organisation whose caregivers live with people suffering from intellectual disabilities. But I also spent a fair amount of time at the Center for Mind and Culture, trying to understand what my egghead colleagues were up to. They had a massive computer system in a storage closet. Its server racks hummed as the AIs trained on vast amounts of social, psychological, biological, and religious data. For big projects, the center also had a direct transatlantic connection to a supercomputer housed at Oxford. The purpose is to model religious behaviour in order to test scientific theories and use that information to craft more effective public policy.

C MAC's simulation projects range from religious terrorism to public health, particularly vaccine uptake. The entire premise troubled me then, as it troubles me now. Every one of the scientists, programmers, and scholars working on these projects is a good person. They're advancing their own careers, sure, but their primary motivation is to make the world a better place. Of that, I am absolutely certain. Therein lies the paradox. As with the scientific study of religion itself – which seeks to quantify the human soul and calculate its mysteries – modelling religion in silico is a blasphemous attempt to capture the Spirit in the Machine. It's also considerably useful.

My biases are what they are, but that paradox of good people constructing a digital abomination didn't sit right. It kept nagging me, even after I left academia to do more arena tours overseas. Beginning with a circle around the US, we worked our way from Europe and Oceania over to Thailand and Indonesia. I spent my down time in Christian cathedrals, Buddhist and Hindu temples, and Islamic

On television, my then-girlfriend and I witnessed the narrative shift from "It's racist to avoid Chinatown" to "If we can save just one life"

mosques. On my last night in Jakarta, I stumbled into a random hostel and wound up sleeping in some kind of low-rent plastic space pod with sickly blue lights and a sliding bay door. Things only got weird from there. Let me tell you one more story.

A rigger on the War Room

When the Covid panic broke out, I was living in Great Barrington, Mass. It's a quiet town in the Berkshires filled with ski bunnies, cosmopolitan transplants, and vaccine-hesitant Anthroposophists. To my chagrin, the plague masks were pulled on one by one. The concert industry was vaporised in a flash, taking my livelihood with it. On television, my then-girlfriend and I witnessed the narrative shift from "It's racist to avoid Chinatown" to "If we can save just one life."

Houses of worship were shuttered. Spy drones were deployed over US cities to police social distancing. Contact-tracing apps were used to track people's movements. Bill Gates issued directives on cable news, smirking in that stupid sweater. As the novelist Philip K. Dick might say, the Black Iron Prison had closed its gates.

One night, my close friend – known only as the Deerhunter – insisted I watch an uncut PBS interview. For two hours, I listened to Steve Bannon explain the crisis of the West to Michael Kirk. It was like watching Hermes dance on the head of a dumbfounded temple ma-

gician. It was absolutely brilliant. My next thought was I had to get hold of this guy. Surely, he could tell me how a bad flu had made the whole world lose its ever-loving mind. But you don't just look up Stephen K. Bannon in the phone book. The internet was no help, either. He had a new show about war or something, but there was no contact info on the website. I considered taking in an episode or two, but I've never had a taste for politics.

So I put Bannon out of my mind, and went back to watching America descend into Chinese-style technocracy. I packed up a survival bunker on wheels and started moving cross-country, bearing witness to my nation's descent into mask fights and race riots. Little did I know, I'd sent a psychic signal out into the ether. Something like that, anyway. The universe is a strange place.

Exactly one year later, March 2021, I saw a broadcast of Bannon's *War Room: Pandemic* for the first time. The reason was that out of the blue, their producer had invited me on to discuss transhumanism. To my amazement, Steve had read my article on digital immortality at *The Federalist*. It was part of my ongoing series about technology. Unlike most conservatives, or most people in general, Steve could see techno-dystopia looming on the horizon. Even his detractors revere his preternatural gift for spotting tectonic cultural shifts. Due to a momentary lapse of judgment, he saw something in me, too. That fateful War Room appearance was my first time ever on air, and honestly, it was maybe the third or fourth time I'd ever used Skype. At that point, I'd even scrapped my smartphone.

Two days later, Bannon asked me if I'd like to come on full time to cover transhumanism. I asked him to give me a week to think about it. The concert industry appeared to be opening up, and for me, that's where

the real money was. I composed a draft email to one of my old production managers. To my surprise, he suddenly emailed me before I ever hit send. We hadn't spoken in a year. It seemed like an omen. He offered me a spot as head rigger for a tour scheduled for Europe and Israel, then back for a loop around the US and Canada. Therefore, I would need to get the vaxx. There were ways around it, of course, but recent headlines indicated stiff fines and possible jail time.

My decision was basically made for me by another strange coincidence two days later. By that time, I was living in a tiny apartment in Missoula, Montana, waiting for the world to thaw out. My next door neighbour was an eccentric German biologist who worked in a lab at the local university. After six months of casual banter, usually about his fieldwork in nearby forests, we finally went out for coffee to have a real discussion about his work. I listened in abject horror as he told me about the biodigital experiments his team was conducting on animals. They had fitted various insects with electrodes to make flying remote-controlled zombies. Far worse, they had implanted brain chips into a few deer for the same purpose. It wasn't a foolproof mechanism, but he was able to stimulate them to turn left or right, and stop in their tracks.

This sort of thing has been done for decades, going back to the famous bulls implanted by Jose Delgado, but I'd never met anyone who actually worked on it. My neighbour's next career move, he hoped, was to move on to human subjects. His lab's data was already being sold to the brain chip company Blackrock Neurotech, and he had recently pitched a contract to Neuralink. My untouched coffee sat there getting cold.

As our conversation meandered, the topic turned to toxic university

Most of this book was written in an attic above a piano-playing Anthroposophist, and I swear, there's some kind of juju in the air

speech codes and the stifling effect of political correctness. Or rather, that was my take on the matter. He was all for it. Despite his conviction that climate change meant humanity wouldn't survive another two hundred years, he was certain that we'd soon do away with racism, sexism, and homophobia. Although an atheist, he was from a Muslim background, so the Israel-Palestine situation really got his blood boiling.

When I pointed out that world peace won't matter if we all go extinct, he just shrugged. It was as if he'd never considered it and had no interest in doing so now. Rolling my eyes, I argued that human beings are instinctively tribal. Global homogeneity a silly pipe dream. He looked at me with a sheepish grin. "One day, we may use our implants for this."

That night, I called Bannon to take the job. I've never been more certain about a decision in my life, and I have never looked back.

It's 2023 now and things are moving fast. If tech accelerationists have their way, everything we know and love will be broken. It's their dream versus ours. Speaking of, I've been having the damnedest dreams lately. Most of this book was written in an attic above a piano-playing Anthroposophist, and I swear, there's some kind of juju in the air. This is what I jotted down:

"I'm climbing a giant tree, careful to avoid the highest branches. They look flimsy. A group of children is climbing up behind me. Suddenly,

a gigantic Elon Musk climbs over me, smiling and laughing. He goes straight for the most precarious limb. As the children cheer, the entire tree shudders. It's about to topple over and take us all down."

There are multiple ways to interpret any dream. To me, it is either a projection of your hopes, a projection of your fears, a lot of random noise, or a clear, albeit symbolic signal of actual realities in the past, present, or future. Many dreams contain all four blended together. A fellow rigger would probably say this dream was an expression of me being a weak ass climber. To which I would say, try me. A transhumanist might say the same, but my response would be more introspective. I have my own interpretation, as do you by now.

Dark Aeon: Transhumanism and the War Against Humanity is a book about dreams of the future. It's a map of ethereal worlds where humans are destined to become god-like immortals and summon far greater gods through the Machine, tempting the possibility of human extinction. Each one is based in actual science and nascent technology, yet all of them strain the limits of credulity. Every reader will have their own interpretation. Some will see the inevitable. Others will scoff at such delusions of grandeur. Neither are assured. Our future is still wide open. But you don't need a coat of many colours to know that, should any of these dreams come true, humanity is hurtling into a dark aeon.

Powerful people are prepared to chase these dreams at our expense. Knowing this, we must make our own plans.

CT

Joe Allen – a long-time ColdType contributor – writes about race, robots, and religion. Presently, he lives in the western shadow of the Rocky Mountains. Read his weekly newsletter at www.JOEBO.TXYZ.

Trevor Grundy

LOOK BACK IN ANGER

Remembering one of the 20th-century's most obnoxious betrayals of public trust by the CIA and MI6

Encounter, the international cultural-political monthly, was published from 1953 to 1991. Seventy years after its foundation, it is best remembered because of stunning revelations that, for the first 14 years of its existence, it was funded by the CIA (via the Congress for Cultural Freedom or CCF) and the British Foreign Office (via its covert propaganda unit, the International Research Department or IRD). Trevor Grundy highlights aspects of one of the last century's great betrayals of public trust

Super-spook Kim Philby knew a thing or two about hiding your real identity and intentions behind the façade of a smiling mask.

Writing in a manual for would-be British spies and agents in 1943, the most successful Soviet agent ever employed by the British Foreign Office said, "The reader of propaganda should never be allowed even to suspect that he is reading propaganda."

Had Philby got the top job at M16 (that was on the cards in the early 1950s) I doubt any of us would have heard of the Cambridge Spies. I also doubt that many of us would have found out that one of the English-speaking world's most influential cultural magazines was set-up, financed and distributed by people working for the CIA in America and M16 in Britain.

What fun Kim Philby and his Cambridge University pals would have had spooking for the Soviets while making sure an anti-Soviet magazine, which attracted some of the world's best known anti-Stalinist leftists, thrived and expanded.

On the one hand, the West would be seen as the champion of the world's freedom-seeking oppressed while, on the other, the names of all significant anti-Communists would be known by the magazine's editors who, of course, would never pass

them on to anyone else!

But as poet Robert Burns reminds us – "The best laid schemes of mice and men/Gang aft awry."

Or as the former world heavyweight boxing champion, Mike Tyson, said less poetically, "Everyone has a plan until you hit them in the mouth."

Encounter was launched in October 1953. Describing itself as a monthly Anglo-American journal of culture and politics, it was sponsored by the Paris-based Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), an organisation of centre-left artists and intellectuals founded in 1950.





The aim of CCF was to counter, on behalf of the non-Communist world, the overtures and influence spreading from the Soviet Union which in 1950 was still ruled by Stalin.

Three years later, in March 1953, he was dead and for a while the world breathed more easily. Communism without Stalin was a dream come true for liberal leftists around the world.

The choice of the first two *Encounter* co-editors raised no eyebrows for they were men of impeccable liberal credentials – the American Irving Kristol and the English poet, Stephen Spender. The former edited political articles, while the latter, with his contacts in the world of literature, looked after the rest of the magazine.

At the time, Spender, who was 44, was one of England's leading men of letters, a friend of some of the century's literary greats, including T.S. Eliot, Christopher Isherwood, Louis MacNeice, C. Day Lewis and a host of others.

Between 1953-1958, Kristol was seen as a leading American liberal. Few people realised he was building the foundation upon which he stood for the rest of his life when he became known as the godfather of neo-conservatism.

Jokers said the magazine was like a pantomime horse: the front half devoted to heavy politics, the back handed over to books ancient and modern, reviews of poems, plays, paintings and snippets from Asi-

atic religions, little known in post-Christian Europe.

During his short time as a Communist in the 1930s, Spender had served on the anti-Franco side of the Spanish Civil War. He later contributed to the 1949 essay collection *The God That Failed*, with other authors including Louis Fischer, Andre Gide, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone and Richard Wright all of whom also wrote for *Encounter* magazine.

From the start, Koestler and Silone became two of its most regular contributors, drawing in readers who admired them and their enlightened views.

Spender's range of contacts during the first fourteen years of the magazine's existence (1953-1967) brought in some of the world's best-known poets, short-story writers, novelists, critics and journalists from both sides of the Iron Curtain.

Contributors also included prominent historians including Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper, who went on to authenticate the phoney *Hitler Diaries*, and who levelled attacks on historians who saw the world through their own and not his eyes – men including AJP Taylor (author of *The Origins of the Second World War*) and Professor Arnold Toynbee (author of the 10-volume *Study of History*).

Although *Encounter* provoked controversy, with some British commentators arguing the magazine took an excessively deferential stand towards USA foreign policy, it was seen by most readers as a publication of value which reflected, and sometimes led, their advanced centre-left opinions.

Thanks to this galaxy of glittering artistic stars, the early 1960s proved to be the high-water mark to this great cultural magazine's time on the world newsstand. In 1963 it pub-

lished a 65-page anthology called *New Voices in Russian Writing*. Articles by Russians were shaped by W.H. Auden, Robert Conquest, Stanley Kunitz and Richard Wilbur, the issue also containing essays and poems by a collection of new of post-Stalinist artists, including Andrei Voznesensky and Yevgeny Yevtushenko (most famous for his poem *Babi Yar*).

The magazine's true sponsors must have thought it would go on like that for years to come.

Pity about the whistle-blowers.

Rodri Lewis writing in *Prospect* (July 2, 2022) tells us that on February 14, 1967 the *New York Times* published a front-page story saying that the National Student Association had taken money from the Langley-USA based CIA in exchange for steering its members towards an anti-Soviet position.

Over the next two months, there were revelations in that newspaper about the CIA's cultural-political activities. When two of the magazine's founding co-editors Frank Kermode and Stephen Spender learned what was going on, with the CIA using its money and power to "persuade" civic organisations in USA and everywhere else to commit themselves to Western democracy and opposition to the Soviet Union, both men went into a state of shock.

What bothered them most was that they had been lied to by two of their co-editors, Melvin Lasky and Michael Josselson, who was also the executive director of the CCF.

The publishing arm of the British Foreign Office was run by the International Research Department (IRD). It was an anti-communist propaganda department which supplied articles, reports, information to leading anti-communist writers and politicians. Regular writers in

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Encounter's first editors, Irving Kristol and poet Stephen Spender.

cluded George Orwell, Arthur Koestler and Robert Conquest (and loads of others).

On March 29, 1967, Kermode wrote to Lasky demanding to know the exact date of when he learned of a CIA/MI6 connection.

On April 3, Lasky visited Kermode in Bristol, England, and the two men talked for several hours., before Lasky admitted that he had known about the CIA/MI6 connection for a number of years. Josselson had told Lasky all about it but Lasky did not tell Kermode or Spender because he claimed he wanted to protect them from what he called "the burden of knowing."

Kermode and Spender insisted on meeting the *Encounter* trustees. A meeting was scheduled for April 20. However, before that took place the two Britons came up with a plan to solve the problem. It would, they ar-

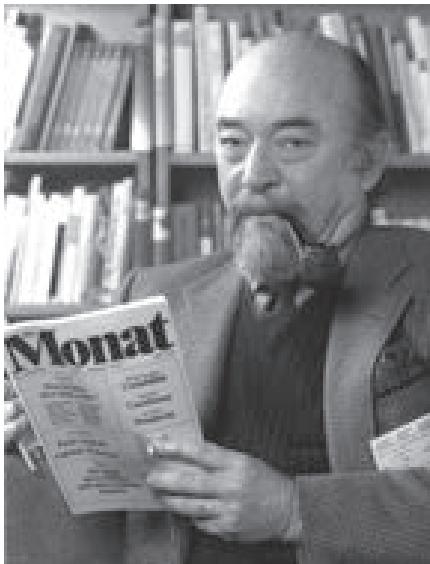
gued, be best if Lasky resigned and left them to run *Encounter* – ideally with a professional managing editor to handle day-to-day affairs.

That way, they would keep their jobs and salaries and run thing their way without interferences. The April 20 meeting was heated and Lasky accused Spender of hypocrisy for getting heated about CIA /MI6 revelations when his own salary had been paid for years by a wing of MI6, the British IRD. Spender stormed out, abruptly ending the meeting.

Lasky was on the point of resigning but decided to stay on and another meeting was scheduled for May 5 in the offices of the mass-circulation newspaper the *Daily Mirror*, whose proprietor was Cecil King, chairman of the International Publishing Corporation (IPC).

The CCF had passed ownership of *Encounter* to King in 1964 with the intention of protecting the magazine from suggestions that it was effectively run by the CIA and M16. It was a cosy arrangement because King had extremely close links with intelligence agencies in America and Britain. At that time, IPC was the biggest publishing empire in the world, while King was also a director of the Bank of England.

Encounter published its final issue in September 1990 a year before the largely peaceful demise of communist rule in the Soviet Union



Encounter co-editor Melvin Lasky.

Readers were re-assured that the CIA and MI6 would have nothing more to do with *Encounter*, and that it was now in “safe hands” – the hands of Cecil King, a nephew of the late Lord Rothermere whose *Daily Mail* had supported Oswald Mosley when he formed the British Union of Fascists (BUF) in October 1932.

In his acclaimed book *Blackshirt – Sir Oswald Mosley and British Fascism* (Penguin Books, 2006) the historian Stephen Dorril, an experienced MI6 watcher, writes that in 1967 Cecil King was anxious to use his the *Daily Mirror* (circulation 5,282,137 that year) to get rid of Labour leader Harold Wilson and push Britain towards a leading role in a new set-up – the nation of Europe.

Mosley’s post-war slogan when he was head of Union Movement was Europe a Nation/ Africa the Empire.

Dorril writes that King wanted a strong man to take charge and that he turned towards Mosley.

Dorril says: “King suggested that the *Mirror* serialise Mosley’s autobiography (*My Life*, Nelson, 1968) and wanted to take him to lunch. Hugh Cudlipp (editor of the *Daily Mirror*) thought the idea ‘abhorrent’. Cecil King wanted advice to sound out Mosley as the head of a

The front page features a large headline "ENOUGH IS ENOUGH" in bold capital letters. Below it is a smaller headline "By Cecil H. King". A column of text follows, mentioning the results of local elections and the Dudley by-election. A portrait of Cecil King is shown on the right. At the bottom left is a small box with the word "DECLINE".

The front page that ended Cecil King's reign as head of IPC, publisher of Britain's Daily Mirror newspaper.

military-backed government. Lord Mountbatten, the cousin of Queen Elizabeth II and the country's highest-ranking military officer, was his next choice.

King met Mosley many times and lunched with him at the Ritz in London, telling friends and newspaper colleagues that Mosley was the most dynamic politician to emerge after the First World War. Cecil King with his “safe hands” was the man who would guarantee transparency and objectivity at *Encounter*.

Encounter published its final issue in September 1990 after the collapse of communism rule in the European satellites and a year before the largely peaceful demise of communist rule in the Soviet Union. The magazine’s end was brought about due to its increasing debts.

It wound up the following year.

In 1968 it was also revealed that the most popular and widely read literary magazine in Africa, a monthly *Transition*, founded by 22-year-old Rajat Neogy, was financed by the CCF. *Transition* attracted many of Africa’s top writers and poets at a time when the Cold War raged

throughout the world’s largest and hungriest continent.

Neogy, a Ugandan of Indian descent, was educated in Britain and the USA. He said he knew nothing about the literary journal’s association with the CIA.

The magazine was shut down in Uganda on the order of the socialist-minded President Milton Obote. It moved to post-Kwame Nkrumah’s Ghana in 1969 and to Nigeria in 1973.

In 1990, the magazine was given an editorial and financial facelift when it fell under the auspices of the WED Du Bois Institute and the Hutchins Centre of African and African American Research at Harvard University <https://transitionmagazine.fas.harvard.edu/our-story/>

Neogy died in San Francisco 57. He lived in USA during the last 20 years of his life.

But so much is hidden away and will remain that way until all the key players in a series of sordid media dramas are dead.

So, it’s PhDs by the dozen awaiting African historians with the courage and the ability to reveal just how many of their continent’s magazines (many of them printed in London and edited by uncritical, socialist-minded Europeans in the 1960s and 1970s) were financed by people other than readers and advertisers.

What we do know is that a safety curtain fell on the stage of *Encounter* in 1991 and its fall coincided with the destruction of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Iron Curtain and the end of the Cold War. **CT**

Trevor Grundy is a British journalist who lived and worked in Central, Eastern and Southern Africa from 1966-1996. He is the author of two books about British fascism – *Memoir of a Fascist Childhood* (William Heinemann, 1998) and *Love, Hate and the Leader* (Routledge, 2023). His website is www.trevorgrundy.news.

David Cromwell & David Edwards

DISAPPEARING DOWN THE MEDIA MEMORY HOLE

There is a wide chasm between our leaders' professed concern for human rights, peace and democracy, and the realpolitik of empire, exploitation and control

A key function of state-corporate media is to keep the public pacified, ignorant and ill-equipped to disrupt establishment power. Knowledge that sheds light on how the world operates politically and economically is kept to a minimum by the mainstream media. George Orwell's famous 'memory hole' from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* signifies the phenomenon brilliantly. Winston Smith's work for the Ministry of Truth requires that he destroys documents that contradict state propaganda:

"When one knew that any document was due for destruction, or even when one saw a scrap of waste paper lying about, it was an automatic action to lift the flap of the nearest memory hole and drop it in, whereupon it would be whirled away on a current of warm air to the enormous furnaces which were hidden somewhere in the recesses of the building." (Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 1949, Penguin edition, 1982, p. 34)

The interests of power, hinging on the domination of an ignorant population, are robustly maintained:

"In this way every prediction made by the Party could be shown by documentary evidence to have been correct, nor was any item of news, or any expression of opinion, which conflicted with the needs of

the moment, ever allowed to remain on record. All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and reinscribed exactly as often as was necessary. In no case would it have been possible, once the deed was done, to prove that any falsification had taken place." (Ibid., p. 36)

As the Party slogan puts it: "Who controls the past, controls the future: who controls the present controls the past." (Ibid., p. 31)

In today's fictional democracies,, the workings of propaganda are more subtle. Notably, there is a yawning chasm between the rhetoric of leaders' professed concern for human rights, peace and democracy, and the realpolitik of empire, exploitation and control.

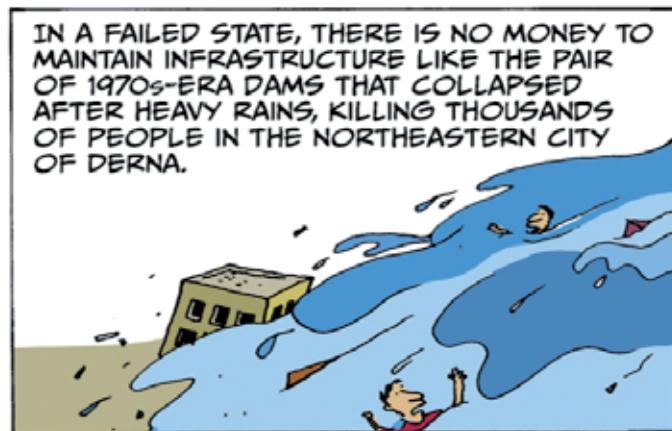
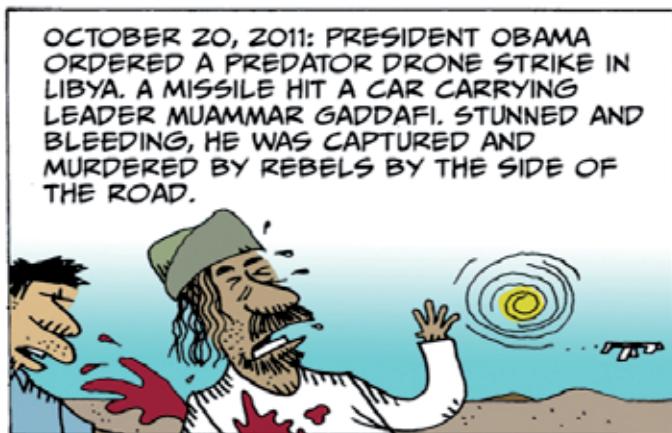
As the DeclassifiedUK website observed earlier this year, the UK has planned or executed over 40 attempts to remove foreign governments in 27 countries since the end of the Second World War. These have involved the intelligence agencies, covert and overt military interventions and assassinations. The British-led coup in Iran 70 years ago is perhaps the best-known example; but it was no anomaly.

If we broaden the scope to British military interventions around the world since 1945, there are as many as 83 examples. These range from brutal colonial wars and covert

operations to efforts to prop up favoured governments or to deter civil unrest, including British Guiana (now Guyana) in 1953, Egypt in the 1950s, Iraq in 2003 and Libya in 2011 (more on this below).

The criminal history of the US in terms of overthrowing foreign governments, or attempting to do so, was thoroughly documented by William Blum, author of *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions since World War II and Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*. These multiple invasions, coups and wars are routinely sold to the public as "humanitarian interventions" by Western leaders and their propaganda allies of the 'mainstream' media.

Tony Blair, the arch British war criminal, is largely treated by the UK political and media classes as a wise elder statesman on domestic and world affairs. It sums up the way this country is run by a corrupt and blood-soaked establishment. Proving the point, the *Financial Times* recently tweeted: "Sir Tony Blair is back. Once vilified as a 'war criminal' by some in Labour, his influence within the party is growing again under Sir Keir Starmer. The *FT* speaks to the former UK premier: <https://on.ft>.



com/3PDkIpE

You've got to love the *FT*'s insistence on using 'Sir', as though that bestows some measure of respectability on a man who waged devastating wars of first resort in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Costs of War project, based at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, estimates that the total death toll in post-9/11 wars – including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen – could be at least 4.5-4.7-million. Blair is one of the Western leaders who shares complicity for this appalling death toll. That fact has been essentially thrown down the memory hole by propaganda outlets who welcome him with open arms.

Former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Wesley Clark once explained how, following the 9/11 attacks, the US planned to "take out" seven countries in five years: Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Su-

dan and Iran. It is remarkable that this testimony, and compelling footage, has never been deemed credible evidence by mainstream media.

The notion that Blair was "once vilified" as a war criminal – and let's drop those quotation marks around "war criminal" – as though that is no longer the case is ludicrous. In any case, what does the carefully selected word "vilify" actually mean? According to the online Merriam-Webster dictionary, it can mean two things:

- 1: to utter slanderous and abusive statements against: defame;
- 2: to lower in estimation or importance.

The *FT* would presumably like to implant in readers' minds the idea that Blair has been unjustly accused of being a war criminal; that the suggestion is a slander. But Blair, along with Bush and the Cheney gang, was one of the chief accomplices behind

the mass terrorist attack on Iraq in 2003. It was the "supreme international crime," judged by the standards of the Nuremberg trials held after the Second World War.

The accompanying *FT* photograph of a supposedly statesman-like 'Sir' Tony Blair was overlaid with a telling quote: "[Britain's] a country that is in a mess. We are not in good shape."

Unmentioned is that Blair had a large part to play in creating today's mess in Britain. Other than his great crimes in foreign affairs, he is an ardent supporter of the destructive economic system blandly titled "neoliberalism." He continued along the path laid down by Tory leader Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. Indeed, when Thatcher was once asked what she regarded as her greatest achievement, she replied: "Tony Blair and New Labour."

As for Blair, he has described

Thatcher in glowing terms as “a towering political figure” whose legacy will be felt worldwide. He added: “I always thought my job was to build on some of the things she had done rather than reverse them.”

The current Labour leader, Sir Keir Starmer – another “Sir” and stalwart of the establishment – is unashamedly casting himself as a Blairite figure. They have even appeared in public together to “bask in each other’s reflected glory,” as one political sketch writer noted.

Jonathan Cook observed of Blair: “It says everything that Sir Keir Starmer, the UK’s former director of public prosecutions, is actively seeking to rehabilitate him.

“That’s the same Starmer who helped smear his leftwing predecessor, Jeremy Corbyn.”

The ‘unprovoked’ invasion of Ukraine

The mass-media memory hole is proving invaluable in protecting the public from uncomfortable truths about Ukraine. Western leaders’ expression of concern for Ukraine is cover for their desire to see Russian leader Vladimir Putin removed from power and Russia “weakened,” as US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin admitted earlier this year. Austin was previously a board member of Raytheon Technologies, a military contractor, stepping down with a cool sum of \$2.7-million to join the Biden administration: yet another example of the “revolving door” between government and the “defence” sector.

Australian political analyst Caitlin Johnstone noted that: “Arguably the single most egregious display of war propaganda in the 21st-century occurred last year, when the entire western political/media class began uniformly bleating the word ‘unprovoked’ in reference to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.”

Pointing out that the West “pro-

Many western foreign policy experts spent years warning that western actions would provoke a war in Ukraine

voked} Russia is not the same as saying that the Russian invasion of Ukraine was justified. In fact, we were clear in our first media alert following the invasion: “Russia’s attack is a textbook example of ‘the supreme crime,’ the waging of a war of aggression.”

As Noam Chomsky pointed out, the 2003 invasion of Iraq was totally unprovoked, but: “nobody ever called it ‘the unprovoked invasion of Iraq.’ In fact, I don’t know if the term was ever used; if it was, it was very marginal. Now you look it up on Google, and hundreds of thousands of hits. Every article that comes out has to talk about the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. Why? Because they know perfectly well it was provoked. That doesn’t justify it, but it was massively provoked.”

Bryce Greene, a media analyst with US-based Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR), observed that US policy makers regarded a war in Ukraine as a desirable objective: “One 2019 study from the RAND Corporation – a think tank with close ties to the Pentagon – suggested that an effective way to overextend and unbalance Russia would be to increase military support for Ukraine, arguing that this could lead to a Russian invasion.”

The rationale was outlined in a *Wall Street Journal* opinion piece by John Deni of the Atlantic Council, a US think tank with close links to the White House and the arms industry, headlined “The Strategic Case for Risking War in Ukraine.”

Greene summarised the logic: “Provoking a war would allow the US to impose sanctions and fight a proxy war that would grind Russia down. Additionally, the anti-Russian sentiment that resulted from a war would strengthen NATO’s resolve.”

Greene added: “The consensus among policymakers in Washington is to push for endless conflict, no matter how many Ukrainians die in the process. As long as Russia loses men and material, the effect on Ukraine is irrelevant. Ukrainian victory was never the goal.”

As Johnstone emphasised in her analysis: “It’s just a well-documented fact that the US and its allies provoked this war in a whole host of ways, from NATO expansion to backing regime change in Kyiv to playing along with aggressions against Donbass separatists to pouring weapons into Ukraine. There’s also an abundance of evidence that the US and its allies sabotaged a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine in the early weeks of the war in order to keep this conflict going as long as possible to hurt Russian interests.”

She continued: “We know that western actions provoked the war in Ukraine because many western foreign policy experts spent years warning that western actions would provoke a war in Ukraine.”

But you will search in vain for substantive reporting of such salient facts and relevant history – see also this piece by FAIR – in mainstream news media.

A recent interview with the influential US economist and public policy analyst Jeffrey Sachs, former director of The Earth Institute at Columbia University, highlighted just how serious these media omissions are in trying to understand what is going on in Ukraine. In a superb 30-minute exposition, Sachs presented vital truths, not least that: “I think the defining feature of Ameri-

can foreign policy is arrogance. And they can't listen. They cannot hear red lines of any other country. They don't believe they exist. The only red lines are American red lines."

He was referring here to Russia's red-line plea to the West not to continue expanding NATO right up to its borders; something, as mentioned above, Western foreign policy experts have been warning about for more than three decades. Would Washington ever allow a Russian sphere of influence to extend to US borders, with Mexico and Canada under the "evil spell" of the Kremlin? Of course not.

Sachs added: "It's pretty clear in early 2014 that regime change [in Ukraine] – and a typical kind of US covert regime change operation – was underway. And I say typical because scholarly studies have shown that, just during the Cold War period alone, there were 64 US covert regime change operations. It's astounding."

What is also astounding, but entirely predictable, is that any such discussion is impermissible in "respectable" circles.

Sachs described how the US reassured Ukraine after the Minsk II agreement in 2015, which was intended to bring peace to the Donbas region of Ukraine: "Don't worry about a thing. We've got your back. You're going to join NATO."

The role of Biden, then US Vice-President and now President, was to insist that: "Ukraine will be part of NATO. We will increase armaments [to Ukraine]."

On 17 December 2021, Putin drafted a security agreement between Russia and the United States. Sachs read it and concluded that it was "absolutely negotiable," adding: "Not everything is going to be accepted, but the core of this is NATO should stop the enlargement so we don't have a war."

Sachs, who has long had high-lev-

Inconvenient facts are disappeared – and we are bombarded with wall-to-wall propaganda about Russia's "unprovoked" invasion of Ukraine

el contacts within successive US administrations, then described an exchange he had over the telephone with the White House. "This war is avoidable," he said. "Avoid this war, you don't want a war on your watch."

But the White House was emphatic it would give no commitment to stop enlargement. Instead: "No, no! NATO has an open-door policy [i.e. any country can supposedly join NATO.]"

Sachs responded: "That's a path to war and you know it. You've got to negotiate."

Click. The White House hung up.

Sachs told his interviewer: "These people do not understand anything about diplomacy. Anything about reality. Their own diplomats have been telling them for 30 years this is a path to war."

Sachs also related how Ukraine's leader Volodymyr Zelensky was so taken aback when the Russian invasion began on 24 February 2022, that he started saying publicly, within just a few days, that Ukraine could be neutral; in other words, not join NATO. This was the essence of what Russia was seeking. But the Americans shut down that discussion, as Sachs went on to explain.

By March 2022, Ukrainian and Russian officials were holding negotiations in Turkey. Meanwhile, Naftali Bennett, who was then Israel's Prime Minister, was making progress in mediating between Zelensky and Putin, as he described during a long interview on his YouTube channel. But, ultimately,

the US blocked the peace efforts.

Sachs paraphrased Bennett's explanation as to why: "They [the US] wanted to look tough to China. They were worried that this could look weak to China."

Incredible! The US's primary concern is to look strong to China, its chief rival in world affairs. This recalls the motivation behind the US dropping atomic bombs on Japan at the end of the Second World War as a show of might to the Soviet Union.

Infamously, Boris Johnson, then the British PM, travelled to Ukraine in April 2022, presumably under US directive, telling Zelensky not to negotiate with Russia.

If we had truly democratic, impartial news media, all these facts would be widespread across national news outlets. BBC News correspondents would continually remind viewers and listeners how the West provoked Russia, then blocked peace efforts. Instead, the memory hole is doing its job – inconvenient facts are disappeared – and we are bombarded with wall-to-wall propaganda about Russia's "unprovoked" invasion of Ukraine.

Libya: A propaganda masterclass

The memory-hole phenomenon is a huge factor in media coverage of Libya which, as we wrote last month, has suffered terribly in recent flooding and the collapse of two dams. The city of Derna was washed into the sea after 40cm of rain fell in twenty-four hours, leaving 20,000 people dead.

But vital recent history has been almost wholly buried by state-corporate media. In 2011, NATO's attack on Libya essentially destroyed the state and killed an estimated 40,000 people. The nation, once one of Africa's most advanced countries for health care and education, became a failed state, with the collapse of essential services, the re-emergence of

slave markets and raging civil war.

The massive bombing, heavily involving the UK and France, had been enthusiastically championed by Western politicians and state-corporate media, including BBC News, as a “humanitarian intervention” to get rid of an “autocratic dictator,” Colonel Muammar Gaddafi.

The tipping point was the alleged threat of a massacre by Gaddafi’s forces in Benghazi. A senior government official serving under then Prime Minister, David Cameron, stated: “There was a very strong feeling at the top of this government that Benghazi could very easily become the Srebrenica of our watch. The generation that has lived through Bosnia is not going to be the ‘pull up the drawbridge’ generation.”

The reference was to the massacre of 8,000 Bosnian Muslims at Srebrenica in July 1995 by Bosnian Serb forces. The threat of something similar happening in Benghazi was a relentless theme across the airwaves and newspaper front pages. The *Guardian*, in line with the rest of the supposed “spectrum” of British newspapers, promoted Cameron as a world-straddling statesman. The Arab Spring had “transformed the prime minister from a reluctant to a passionate interventionist.” The paper dutifully helped his cause with sycophantic pieces such as the bizarrely titled, “David Cameron’s Libyan war: why the PM felt Gaddafi had to be stopped.”

In August 2011, serial *Guardian* propagandist Andrew Rawnsley responded to NATO’s overthrow of the Libyan government: “Libyans now have a chance to take the path of freedom, peace and prosperity, a chance they would have been denied were we to have walked on by when Muammar Gaddafi was planning his rivers of blood. Britain and her allies broadly got it right in Libya.”

The BBC’s John Humphrys opined that victory had delivered “a sort of

Hillary Clinton intended to exploit the removal of Gaddafi as part of her corporate-funded bid to become US president

moral glow.” (BBC Radio 4 Today, 21 October 2011)

There are myriad other examples from the *Guardian* and the rest of the MSM. The pathology of this propaganda blitz was starkly exposed by a 2016 report into the Libya war by the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee.

The report summarised: “The result was political and economic collapse, inter-militia and inter-tribal warfare, humanitarian and migrant crises, widespread human rights violations, the spread of Gaddafi regime weapons across the region and the growth of ISIL in North Africa.”

As for the alleged threat of a massacre by Gaddafi’s forces in Benghazi, the repeated rationale for the intervention, the report “commented: ‘the proposition that Muammar Gaddafi would have ordered the massacre of civilians in Benghazi was not supported by the available evidence ... Gaddafi’s 40-year record of appalling human rights abuses *did not* include large-scale attacks on Libyan civilians.’ (Our emphasis)

More on this, and the propaganda blitz that enabled NATO’s attack on Libya, can be found in our 2016 media alert, *The Great Libya War Fraud*.

Behind the rhetoric about removing a dictator was, of course, the underlying factor of oil; as it so often is in the West’s imperial wars. In 2011, Real News interviewed Kevin G. Hall, the national economics correspondent for McClatchy Newspapers, who had studied WikiLeaks

material on Libya.

Hall said: “As a matter of fact, we went through 251,000 [leaked] documents ... Of those, a full 10 percent of them, a full 10 percent of those documents, reference in some way, shape, or form oil.” (“WikiLeaks reveals US wanted to keep Russia out of Libyan oil,” The Real News, 11 May 2011)

Hall concluded: “It is all about oil.”

In 2022, Declassified UK reported that: “British oil giants BP and Shell are returning to the oil-rich north African country just over a decade after the UK plunged it into chaos in its 2011 military intervention, which the British government never admitted was a war for oil.”

There were additional ‘benefits’ to the West. As WikiLeaks co-founder Julian Assange explained in an interview with John Pilger, Hillary Clinton intended to exploit the removal of Gaddafi as part of her corporate-funded bid to become US president. Clinton was then US Secretary of State under President Barack Obama: “Libya’s war was, more than anyone else’s, Hillary Clinton’s war ... who was the person who was championing it? Hillary Clinton. That’s documented throughout her emails [leaked emails published by WikiLeaks].”

Assange added: “She perceived the removal of Gaddafi, and the overthrow of the Libyan state, something that she would use to run in the election for President.”

You may recall Clinton’s gleeful response to the brutal murder of Gaddafi: “We came, we saw, he died.”

Also, as Assange pointed out, the destruction of the Libyan state generated a catastrophe of terrorism and a refugee crisis, with many drowning in their attempts to cross the Mediterranean to Europe:

“Jihadists moved in. ISIS moved in. That led to the European refugee and migrant crisis. Because, not only did you have people flee-

ing Libya, people then fleeing Syria, destabilisation of other African countries as the result of arms flows, the Libyan state itself was no longer able to control movement of people through it.... [Libya] had been effectively the cork in the bottle of Africa. So, all problems, economic problems, civil war in Africa – people previously fleeing those problems didn't end up in Europe."

Very little of the above vital history and context to the recent catastrophic flooding in Libya is included in current mainstream news reporting. At best, there is token mention. At worst, there is deeply deceitful and cynical rewriting of history.

A report on the Sky News website went about as far as is permissible in detailing the reality: "Libyans are worn down by years and years of poor governance many of which date back to 2011 and the NATO-backed ousting of the country's autocratic dictator Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, during the period which became known as the Arab Spring.

Gaddafi was killed and the country dived into instability with rival armed militias vying for power and territory."

An article for the BBC News Africa section gave a briefer hint of the awful truth: "Libya has been beset by chaos since forces backed by the West's NATO military alliance overthrew long-serving ruler Col Muammar Gaddafi in October 2011."

This was the only mention in the article of Western responsibility for the disaster. The propaganda censorship was highlighted when the article was posted by the BBC Africa Twitter/X account. So many readers pointed out the glaring omissions that a Twitter/X warning of sorts appeared under the BBC's tweet: "Readers added context they thought people might want to know."

Then: "Due to NATO intervention in Libya, several problems such as the lack of a unified government, the

Crucial context was also blatantly flushed down the media's memory hole: NATO had deliberately destroyed Libya's water infrastructure in 2011

re-emergence of slave markets and collapse of welfare services have made the country unable to cope with natural disasters."

If such "context" – actually, vital missing information – were to regularly appear under BBC tweets because of reader intervention, it would be a considerable public service; and a major embarrassment for the self-declared "world's leading public service broadcaster."

A major reason for the appalling death toll in the Libyan city of Derna was that two dams had collapsed, sending 30 million cubic metres of water into the city in "tsunami-like waves." These dams were built in the 1970s to protect the local population. A Turkish firm had been contracted in 2007 to maintain the dams. This work stopped after NATO's 2011 bombing campaign. The Turkish firm left the country, their machinery was stolen and all work on the dams ended. This was mentioned briefly in a recent *Guardian* article, but NATO's culpability was downplayed and it certainly did not generate the huge headlines across the MSM that it warranted.

Further crucial context was also blatantly flushed down the media's memory hole: NATO had deliberately destroyed Libya's water infrastructure in 2011. Investigative journalist Nafeez Ahmed reported in 2015: "The military targeting of civilian infrastructure, especially of water supplies, is a war crime under the Geneva Conventions. Yet this is precisely what NATO did in

Libya, while blaming the damage on Gaddafi himself."

Ros Atkins, who has acquired a huge profile as an expert "explainer," with the moniker "BBC News Analysis Editor," narrated a video for the "BBC News website "on the floods in Libya – and the years of crisis there too." Once again, NATO's appalling role in the 2011 destruction of the country was glossed over. The BBC's "explanation" explained virtually nothing.

Meanwhile, the *Guardian* ran a wretched editorial which is surely one of the worst Orwellian rewritings of history it has ever published: "Vast fossil fuel reserves and regional security objectives have encouraged foreign powers to meddle in Libya."

As noted above, that was emphatically not the story in 2011 when the *Guardian* propagandised tirelessly for "intervention." The editorial continued: "Libyans have good reason to feel that they have been failed by the international community as well as their own leaders."

In fact, they were also failed by *Guardian* editors, senior staff, columnists and reporters who did so much to sell "Cameron's war" on Libya. Nowhere in the editorial is NATO even mentioned.

And beneath this appalling, power-serving screed was a risible claim of reasons for supporting the *Guardian*: "Our fearless, investigative journalism is a scrutinising force at a time when the rich and powerful are getting away with more and more, in Europe and beyond."

This assertion is an audacious reversal of truth from one of the worst perpetrators of memory-hole journalism in the Western world. **CT**

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are co-editors of *Media Lens*,
the UK media watchdog. This
article was first published at
www.medialens.org.

Philip Kraske

NEOCONS TO THE RESCUE AS UKRAINE COLLAPSES

A satirical peek inside the White House as Russian forces close in on Kiev

December, 2023, and a cloud has appeared in the neocon sky: the Russians are advancing towards Kiev, and the few Ukrainian soldiers left can only destroy bridges to slow them down or send drones against Moscow banks to destroy their pension plans.

As Russian troops pass through villages, old women throw rocks. Two teenagers have emptied cans of light-blue and then yellow paint onto a passing tank; the video, of course, has made the evening news from New York to Tokyo, and much commentary exalts the never-give-up pluck of Ukrainians.

There are rumours of a putsch in Kiev, however, and to add insult to injury, extra Marines have had to surround the American Embassy because crowds are showing up, the quiet ones desperate to get American visas, but the noisy ones – and they are legion – to bang on pots and pans to protest the US getting them into this mess. Media reports dutifully call them “victims of Putin’s disinformation.”

Something must be done. The neocons have spent 100-billion taxpayer dollars and all America’s political capital on the Ukraine War. But neocons do not do defeat. A meeting with the president is called to turn this hiccup into victory.

It is evening in Washington, and Victoria Nuland, Jake Sullivan, and Tony Blinken file into the Oval Office and sit down on parallel sofas. Nuland has brought a jar of cookies which she places on the coffee table. The President turns on a television, which shows the line of heavily-dressed people, some with sleeping children, sitting outside the embassy, waiting to enter. The protesters have disappeared.

“Well!” he says with relief, plopping down in an armchair. “That doesn’t look so bad. Those protesters must have shrunk away, embarrassed after all we’ve done for them.”

Nobody mentions that it’s 2 am in Kiev.

“So what have you got for me?” says Biden, adding with a wave at the silent TV, “Don’t get discouraged by this. Freedom always wins out. Hey, I was thinking: what if we blow up another Russian pipeline? You know, send them a message: ‘This is unacceptable.’”

Blinken: “Really, what we need, first and foremost, sir, is to create a new reality.”

Sullivan sighs. “Tony, can we please not get into reality? Reality exists. It’s like air; you don’t change it or invent it.”

Beside him on the sofa, Nuland jabs Blinken in the ribs.

“We think, sir, the situation calls for a stronger” – he glances at Sullivan – “calibration. If we send in troops now, we can probably – no, surely – hold the Russians well short of Kiev.”

“American boys in harm’s way? No. I’ve said that from the get-go: we will not enter the war. No way.”

“Then we are looking at the Russians in Maidan Square within a week, sir,” says Sullivan.

Biden: “Freedom will out, you just have to have faith.”

Sullivan: “We all love freedom, sir, but think of a Russian flag pulled up a flagpole in Maidan. The visuals are going to be terrible.”

This gets Biden’s attention. “Oh. Yeah. The visuals.” He takes his water glass from the table and sips. “We sure got hung out to dry by visuals in Baghdad. You see those crowds running alongside the transport plane?”

“You mean –” begins Blinken.

“Yes sir,” says Sullivan, with a poisoned look at Blinken.

Finally, Nuland speaks up; until now, she has been eating cookies. “That’s why, Mr. President, in view of the visuals, we must move in American troops.”

Biden: “You really think so, Victoria? I’ve said a hundred times, no more troops in Kabul. That’s a bad place to ...”

Nuland interrupts him. “Yes, but ‘no more troops’?



What is ‘no more troops’? That’s a very ambiguous phrase, Mr. President. I mean, ‘no more troops’ for what? It’s just a question of how you frame those troops.”

Biden nods uncertainly. “Framing. Framing – yeah, that’s important.”

Nuland: “We’re not ‘intervening in Ukraine’ or ‘taking over the war from Ukraine.’ We just say our troops are defending Kiev – first our embassy, which is under siege, then the city, for example at the request of the mayor.”

“Or just those people waiting outside the embassy,” adds Blinken on an inspiration. “Those people depend on us and us alone not to be put up against the embassy wall and shot by Putin’s men.”

Biden: “Yeah, ya gotta defend freedom.”

Nuland: “We can call it ‘a limited military operation.’”

“Madam Acting Deputy Secretary,” says Sullivan, using her full title, “that sounds way too much like ‘Special Military Operation.’”

“So what?” says Biden, puzzled.

Nuland: “Ah. Point taken. We can call it ...”

Biden: “I know! We’ll call it ‘Operation Defending Freedom.’”

Nuland: “Excellent, Mr. President! Wonderful!” She offers him a cookie from the jar. “Here you go. Fresh out of the Kagan oven: oatmeal-raisin.”

Blinken frowns uncomfortably. “The EU will raise hell, though. They will absolutely not go in for ...”

“Oh, fuck the EU. They’re such a lot of wussies.”

“Yeah, ya gotta defend freedom,” Biden mushes around his cookie. “But what’s the plan then, Victoria? You send in our boys, they defend, ah, ah, Kiev. Fine. Doable. What then? Negotiate Ukraine’s surrender? No. Freedom never surrenders.”

“Absolutely not. Nobody’s going to surrender,” Nuland says patiently. “The point is to get our uniforms into the country. But we tell everyone that the troops are only there to defend the local population while Ukraine negotiates peace with Russia. ‘Defend’ – that’s the key word. Defend, defend, defend. Nobody can argue with defense, not if the other guy’s attacking.”

"Yeah, the Gulf War. That went pretty well, didn't it?" Biden says. "Wait ... didn't it?" "Splendidly, Mr. President," Nuland assures him

"Yeah, ya gotta defend freedom," says Biden. "Can I get another cookie? Jeepers, they're good." He eats another. "And when the negotiations end, our boys'll leave?"

Nuland smiles. "In theory, yes."

"And in fact?"

"In fact they are there for 'Ukraine, Chapter Two: America comes to the rescue.'"

Sullivan: "That's the part that – I don't know...."

"Do you have another way of getting at the Russians?" Nuland asks sharply. "You're the one who's been itching to go head-to-head with the Chinese for the past year, though I don't know why. You don't seriously believe that a China-Russia alliance can be beaten, do you? Between them and the African continent that's swaying their way, they've got control over two-thirds of the world's population and resources. Where's your classical political theory?"

"I'm a lawyer," Sullivan says lamely.

"And I have a BA in Russian Studies. Now, either we take out Russia before we take on China, or we kick back, open the cookie jar, and accept China as the new Big Man on Campus. Are you here for that? I can't believe you're that kind of fool, Jake."

"That was uncalled for."

"I'm a little lost here, Victoria," says Biden. He holds up his half-eaten cookie, "Maybe it's because of these great cookies, I don't know. Is this, like, I don't know, some kind of plan?"

"Yes. We ring Kiev with troops, the Russian army stops a hundred miles away, and the locals every day pelt their soldiers with everything from tomatoes to pitchforks. Great visuals there. Meanwhile, in the peace negotiations, Zelensky – if we keep him – tells Lavrov to his astonishment that his demands haven't changed: get out of Crimea and the new Russian territories. In exchange, we'll give you a sweetheart ten-year deal on your naval base in Sevastopol. The Russians can't believe it. They renew their attack, but this time they're up against Americans."

"Russians attacking our boys?" cries Biden.

"Right! See, Jake? The President gets it right from the start: Russians attacking our boys! Members of Congress will fall all over each other to give you permission to fight back. Then we take out a few of their ships in the Black Sea, declare a no-fly zone and take out a few of their planes, they retaliate, and, voilà! Now we're at war with Russia."

Biden frowns. "War with Russia? I don't know if the American people will accept that."

Nuland bites into another cookie, muttering something that sounds like "Fuck them too." When she's ready, she says, "No, Americans will not accept a war with Russia, of course not. That's why we tell them we're at war with Putin."

Blinken grabs a cookie and stuffs it whole into his mouth.

Sullivan says sourly, "Oh sure, Victoria: explain to us how we're at war with Putin without being at war with Russia."

"Easy. We take a page from Putin's playbook: Operation Defending Freedom's objective is limited – limited to pushing Putin out of Ukraine. Russia? We won't shoot so much as a spitball at Russian territory."

Sullivan: "Right. Limited, like 'Special Military Operation'."

"But 'Operation Defending Freedom' sounds so much better, doesn't it?" Nuland says. "The key point is, we're doing it like Vietnam: in stages. First we're there to protect our people at the embassy, then Kiev, then we're there only as long as the negotiations continue, then we're outraged over Russian retaliation, and then all we want to do is push that monster Putin out of Ukraine – but not attack Russia itself. Absolutely not: we have no bone to pick with poor ordinary oppressed Russians, who if they want to rise up and overthrow him, we'll be there to help. Like the President says, 'You gotta defend freedom.'"

Biden: "Damn right. Freedom's gotta be defended again and again. Still ... going to war with Russia. Man, there's a pain in the butt if I ever saw one." He looks around, grinning. "Get it? Who ever saw a pain in the butt, right?"

The other three dutifully laugh.

B

Blinken: "You just have to think of it this way, sir: end of the day, this is like the Gulf War, pushing Iraq out of Kuwait. When a dictatorship invades its neighbour, we free nations of the world must band together to throw out the invaders. With a little finagling, I'll bet I can even get the Europeans on board with that one."

"Just twist their fucking arms off, Tony," Nuland mutters.

"Yeah, the Gulf War. That went pretty well, didn't it?" Biden says. "Wait ... didn't it?"

"Splendidly, Mr. President," Nuland assures him. "And best of all, we probably don't even need our troops to reach

"Fuck Putin. He doesn't make reality. We make it. Sometimes, like in Ukraine, it just needs a little tweaking, that's all"

the eastern border of Ukraine. We inflict a few bad defeats on the Russian army – the Ukrainians have proven what a bunch of pushovers they are – and Putin will be discredited and removed in a coup, and by Election Day next year their new Boris Yeltsin will be taking dictation from us. You'll walk all over Donald Trump – again." She snatches another cookie out of the jar, shooting Sullivan a sharp glance. "And then we take on China."

Blinken applauds. "Either that, or the Russian elite will be at each other's throats. The country will be in total disarray, and the army will collapse into civil war."

"I'm happy either way," Nuland says, snapping off another bite of oatmeal-raisin. "All the same, Jake, how are your people doing with the first-strike project? It's always good to have that in our back pocket."

Sullivan shrugs. "I have umpteen staffs across a dozen agencies working on it; Defense is doing the same. Right now, best they can give me is a 75 percent chance of success. It's those new Borei-class subs that have everybody pulling their hair: use jet propulsion instead of propellers; whales can't hear 'em coming. I told them I want 85 percent sure before I even mention to the

President about going first strike."

Biden has dozed off and now awakes with a start. "Yeah, a first strike. That's what I was saying. Hey, you don't think Putin would do something nuclear about all this, do you?" he asks Nuland.

"Fuck Putin. He doesn't make reality. We make it. Sometimes, like in Ukraine, it just needs a little tweaking, that's all. But all that notwithstanding" – she turns to Sullivan – "75 percent, heck, that's not bad."

Biden grins. "What a great team I have. C'mon, guys, take a few cookies on your way. Jill made 'em specially for this meeting – buck us up a little." He looks around uncertainly. "We have finished, haven't we?"

Nuland: "More than finished, sir."

Blinken: "Reality has been righted."

Sullivan: "Ukrainian freedom will be defended at any cost."

Biden: "Yeah, freedom. That's something ya gotta defend."

CT

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John & Nisha Whitehead

A NATION OF SNITCHES

How the Department of Homeland Security is grooming Americans to report on each other

"There were relatively few secret police, and most were just processing the information coming in. I had found a shocking fact. It wasn't the secret police who were doing this wide-scale surveillance and hiding on every street corner. It was the ordinary German people who were informing on their neighbours." – Professor Robert Gellately, author of *Backing Hitler*

Are you among the 41 percent of Americans who regularly attend church or some other religious service?

Do you believe the economy is about to collapse and the government will soon declare martial law?

Do you display an unusual number of political and/or ideological bumper stickers on your car?

Are you among the 44 percent of Americans who live in a household with a gun? If so, are you concerned that the government may be plotting to confiscate your firearms?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, you may be an anti-government extremist (aka domestic terrorist) in the eyes of the government and flagged for heightened surveillance and preemptive intervention.

Let that sink in a moment.

If you believe in and exercise your rights under the Constitution (namely, your right to speak freely,

worship freely, associate with like-minded individuals who share your political views, criticise the government, own a weapon, demand a warrant before being questioned or searched, or any other activity viewed as potentially anti-government, racist, bigoted, anarchic or sovereign), you have just been promoted to the top of the government's terrorism watch list.

I assure you I'm not making this stuff up.

So what is the government doing about these so-called American "extremists"?

The government is grooming the American people to spy on each other as part of its Center for Prevention Programmes and Partnerships, or CP3 programme.

According to journalist Leo Hohmann, the government is handing out \$20-million in grants to police, mental health networks, universities, churches and school districts to enlist their help in identifying Americans who might be political dissidents or potential "extremists."

As Hohmann explains, "Whether it's Covid and vaccines, the war in Ukraine, immigration, the Second Amendment, LGBTQ ideology and child-gender confusion, the integrity of our elections, or the issue of protecting life in the womb, you are

no longer allowed to hold dissenting opinions and voice them publicly in America. If you do, your own government will take note and consider you a potential 'violent extremist' and terrorist."

Cue the dawning of the Snitch State.

This new era of snitch surveillance is the lovechild of the government's post-9/11 "See Something, Say Something" programmes combined with the self-righteousness of a politically correct, hyper-vigilant, technologically-wired age.

For more than two decades, the Department of Homeland Security has plastered its "See Something, Say Something" campaign on the walls of metro stations, on billboards, on coffee cup sleeves, at the Super Bowl, even on television monitors in the Statue of Liberty. Colleges, universities and even football teams and sporting arenas have lined up for grants to participate in the programme.

The government has even designated September 25 as National "If You See Something, Say Something" Awareness Day.

If you see something suspicious, says the DHS, say something about it to the police, call it in to a government hotline, or report it using a convenient app on your smart phone.

This DHS slogan is nothing more than the government's way of indoctr-



trinating “we the people” into the mindset that we’re an extension of the government and, as such, have a patriotic duty to be suspicious of, spy on, and turn in our fellow citizens.

This is what is commonly referred to as community policing.

Yet while community policing and federal programmes such as “See Something, Say Something” are sold to the public as patriotic attempts to be on guard against those who would harm us, they are little more than totalitarian tactics dressed up and repackaged for a more modern audience as well-intentioned ap-

peals to law and order and security.

The police state could not ask for a better citizenry than one that carries out its own policing.

After all, the police can’t be everywhere. So how do you police a nation when your population outnumbers your army of soldiers? How do you carry out surveillance on a nation when there aren’t enough cameras, let alone viewers, to monitor every square inch of the country 24/7? How do you not only track but analyse the transactions, interactions and movements of every person within the United States?

The answer is simpler than it

seems: You persuade the citizenry to be your eyes and ears. You hype them up on colour-coded “Terror alerts,” keep them in the dark about the distinctions between actual threats and staged “training” drills so that all crises seem real, desensitise them to the sight of militarised police walking their streets, acclimatise them to being surveilled “for their own good,” and then indoctrinate them into thinking that they are the only ones who can save the nation from another 9/11.

Consequently, we now live in a society in which a person can be accused of any number of crimes

without knowing what exactly he has done. He might be apprehended in the middle of the night by a roving band of SWAT police. He might find himself on a no-fly list, unable to travel for reasons undisclosed. He might have his phones or internet tapped based upon a secret order handed down by a secret court, with no recourse to discover why he was targeted.

This Kafkaesque nightmare has become America's reality.

This is how you turn a people into extensions of the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent police state, and in the process turn a citizenry against each other.

It's a brilliant ploy, with the added bonus that while the citizenry remains focused on and distrustful of each other and shadowy forces from outside the country, they're incapable of focusing on more definable threats that fall closer to home – namely, the government and its cabal of Constitution-destroying agencies and corporate partners.

Community policing did not come about as a feel-good, empowering response to individuals trying to "take back" their communities from crime syndicates and drug lords.

Rather, "Community-Oriented Policing" or COPS (short for Community Partnerships, Organizational Transformation, and Problem Solving) is a Department of Justice programme designed to foster partnerships between police agencies and members of the community.

To this end, the Justice Department identifies five distinct "partners" in the community policing scheme: law enforcement and other government agencies, community members and groups, nonprofits, churches and service providers, private businesses and the media.

Together, these groups are sup-



These programmes are not, in fact, making America any safer while turning us into a legalistic, intolerant, squealing, bystander nation

posed to "identify" community concerns, "engage" the community in achieving specific goals, serve as "powerful" partners with the government, and add their "considerable resources" to the government's already massive arsenal of technology and intelligence. The mainstream media's role, long recognised as being a mouthpiece for the government, is formally recognised as "publicizing" services from government or community agencies or new laws or codes that will be enforced, as well as shaping public perceptions of the police, crime problems, and fear of crime.

Inevitably, this begs the question: if there's nothing wrong with community engagement, if the police can't be everywhere at once, if surveillance cameras do little to actually prevent crime, and if we need to "take back our communities" from the crime syndicates and drug lords, then what's wrong with community policing and "See Something, Say Something"?

What's wrong is that these programmes are not, in fact, making America any safer while turning us into a legalistic, intolerant, squealing, bystander nation.

We are now the unwitting victims of an interconnected, tightly woven, technologically evolving web of real-time, warrantless, wall-to-wall, widening mass surveillance dragnet comprised of fusion centres, red flag laws, behavioural threat assessments, terror watch lists, facial recognition, snitch tip lines, biometric scanners, pre-crime programmes, DNA databases, data mining, pre-cognitive technology and contact tracing apps, to name just a few.

This is how the government keeps us under control and in its crosshairs.

By the time you combine the DHS's "See Something, Say Something" with CP3 and community policing, which has gone global in the guise of the Strong Cities Network programme, you've got a formula for enabling the government to not only flag distinct "anti-government" segments of the population but locking down the entire nation.

Under the guise of fighting violent extremism "in all of its forms and manifestations" in cities and communities across the world, the Strong Cities Network programme works with the UN and the federal government to train local police agencies across America in how to identify, fight and prevent extremism, as well as address intolerance within their communities, using all of the resources at their disposal.

What this programme is really all about, however, is community policing on a global scale with the objective being to prevent violent extremism by targeting its source: racism, bigotry, hatred, intolerance, etc. In other words, police will identify, monitor and deter individuals who

could be construed as potential extremist “threats,” violent or otherwise, before they can become actual threats.

The government’s war on extremists has been sold to Americans in much the same way that the USA Patriot Act was sold to Americans: as a means of combatting terrorists who seek to destroy America.

However, as we now know, the USA Patriot Act was used as a front to advance the surveillance state, allowing the government to establish a far-reaching domestic spying programme that has turned every American citizen into a criminal suspect.

Similarly, the concern with the government’s ongoing anti-extremism programme is that it will, in many cases, be utilised to render otherwise lawful, nonviolent activities as potentially extremist.

Keep in mind that the government agencies involved in ferreting out American “extremists” will carry out their objectives – to identify and deter potential extremists – in concert with fusion centres, data collection agencies, behavioural scientists, corporations, social media, and community organisers and by relying on cutting-edge technology for surveillance, facial recognition, predictive policing, biometrics, and behavioural epigenetics (in which life experiences alter one’s genetic makeup).

This is pre-crime on an ideological scale and it’s been a long time coming.

For example, in 2009, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) released two reports, one on “Rightwing Extremism,” which broadly defines rightwing extremists as individuals and groups “that are mainly antigovernment, rejecting federal authority in favour of state or local authority, or rejecting government authority entirely,” and one on “Leftwing Extrem-



Anyone seen as opposing the government – whether they’re Left, Right or somewhere in between – can be labelled an extremist

ism,” which labelled environmental and animal rights activist groups as extremists.

These reports, which use the words terrorist and extremist interchangeably, indicate that for the government, anyone seen as opposing the government – whether they’re Left, Right or somewhere in between – can be labelled an extremist.

Fast forward a few years, and you have the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which each successive presidential administration has continually re-upped, that allows the military to take you out of your home, lock you up with no access to friends, family or the courts if you’re seen as an extremist.

Now connect the dots, from the 2009 Extremism reports to the NDAA and the far-reaching data fusion centres that collect and share surveillance data be-

tween local, state and federal police agencies.

Add in tens of thousands of armed, surveillance drones that will soon blanket American skies, facial recognition technology that identifies and tracks you wherever you go and whatever you do. And then to complete the circle, toss in the real-time crime centres which are attempting to “predict” crimes and identify criminals before they happen based on widespread surveillance, complex mathematical algorithms and prognostication programmes.

If you can’t read the writing on the wall, you need to pay better attention.

As I point out in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* and in its fictional counterpart *The Erik Blair Diaries*, unless we can put the brakes on this dramatic expansion and globalization of the government’s powers, we’re not going to recognise this country five, ten – even 20 – years from now.

As long as “we the people” continue to allow the government to trample our rights in the so-called name of national security, things will get worse, not better.

It’s already worse.

CT

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IN THE AIR: UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak talks to journalists as he heads to G7 in Japan in May.

George Monbiot

UNSPEAKABLE

How our lives came to be dominated by a few dozen plutocrats
and their thousands of concierges

t was one of the abiding mysteries of public life. How did Piers Morgan rise so far? I see him as a buffoon, a bully, a windbag. Yet, despite scandals that would have killed most people's careers, he rose like a methane bubble in a slurry lagoon, occupying some of the most prestigious and lucrative positions in the media.

Last month, reflecting on the life and abuses of the plutocrat Mohamed Al Fayed, *Private Eye* magazine produced an explanation. It came from Morgan himself, writing about Fayed in 1999. "I've always made it a strict rule in life to ingratiate myself with three categories of people: newspaper owners, potential newspaper owners and billionaires. And since Mohamed

Al Fayed is a billionaire and would love to own a newspaper, sucking up to him seems an extremely sensible move."

The strategy is not unusual. But voicing it is. Morgan expressed the unspoken rule of public life out loud. If you want to get ahead, grovel to billionaires, especially those who own the media. The obvious coda to the rule is: "because they are the people with real power".

Plenty of rules are broken without consequence. You can appear on the BBC while hiding your financial interests, breaking its editorial guidelines, as long as you are channelling the demands of the very rich. You can breach parliamentary rules without punishment – by lying, or by failing to update your

register of interests, or by taking a second job without clearance when your ministerial career ends – as long as you remain a loyal servant of big money.

But Morgan's Rule is the one that must not be broken. If you are a political party and you want a sniff at power, if you are a commentator who wants to appear on the BBC, you must observe it. Otherwise you will be vilified or excluded.

Morgan and journalists like him are members of the concierge class, which provides a wide range of services to economic power. Some of them, such as editors of the billionaire media and the junktanks of London's Tufton Street, specialise in translating the outrageous demands of oligarchs and corpo-

rations into what looks like political common sense, or in attacking plutocrats' critics or transferring blame for their impacts on to immigrants, the Labour party and other customary scapegoats.

Some of them specialise in reputation-laundering: brokering deals between grim plutocrats and cultural institutions – universities, museums, opera houses, charities – which, in return for lavish donations, will name faculties, professorships, galleries, funds and prizes after their sponsors, transforming violent kleptocrats into pillars of society.

Others, including lawyers, accountants, bankers and wealth managers, specialise in hiding and washing their money, buying them special visas, or suing and hounding their critics. This is why organised crime loves London. It takes advantage of both England's ultra-permissive financial laws and its ultra-repressive libel laws.

The government is always ready to help. In 2021, while Rishi Sunak was chancellor of the exchequer, lawyers acting for Yevgeny Prigozhin, the late brutal chief of Russia's Wagner mercenary group, applied to the Treasury for permission to override the sanctions against him, so that he could sue the investigative journalist Eliot Higgins. Sunak's Treasury granted the special licences they requested and even approved sanctions-busting flights to St Petersburg so they could plan their legal attack.

In this way a few dozen people, assisted by thousands of concierges, can dominate our lives. The system we call democracy is a mere patina, sticky and dimpled, on the surface of oligarchic power.

There are many ways in which economic power translates into political power, and none of them are good for us. The most obvious is campaign finance: the sponsor-

The system we call democracy is a mere patina, sticky and dimpled, on the surface of oligarchic power

ship not only of political parties but of entire systems of political thought and action. These transactions muscle the interests of society out of politicians' minds. Some of them are enormous. Last year, the US website The Lever exposed a \$1.3-billion (£1-billion) transfer of money from a little-known billionaire, Barre Seid, to a new political advocacy group run by an ultraconservative. How can mere citizens compete?

Financial power also ensures that the rules supposed to stop economic crime and the laundering of its proceeds contain loopholes wide enough for a superyacht to sail through. For the past few months, members of the House of Lords have been battling to remove the obvious get-out clauses from the economic crime bill passing through parliament. The government has thwarted it at every turn. In a recent debate, the Conservative peer Lord Agnew – the very opposite of a radical firebrand – complained that “the government continue to say one thing and then do something different”.

Sunak's administration, run by an oligarch for oligarchs, produces heart-thumping assurances that it will close the loopholes, then subtly tweaks the legislation to keep them open.

Money's might ensures that its environmental impacts are unrestrained. Recently, I was told about a multimillionaire who had intend-

ed to fly in his private jet to a luxury resort, only to change his mind at the last minute and decide to go to a different place, with a shorter landing strip. The plane was too heavy to land there, so it sat on the tarmac and burnt off \$15,000 of fuel before setting out.

Sunak treats the UK as a flyover state, travelling by helicopter and private jet to places he could easily reach by train. Kylie Jenner and Floyd Mayweather zip about on private flights of less than 20 minutes. Each of them negates the efforts of thousands of ordinary mortals to live within the limits of a habitable planet.

But these specific impacts fail to capture the aggregate effect: the remarkable way in which society comes to reflect the demands of the ultra-rich.

Almost everyone in public life accepts the same set of preposterous beliefs. That economic growth can continue indefinitely on a finite planet; that the unhindered acquisition of enormous fortunes by a few is acceptable, even commendable; that they should be allowed to own as much natural wealth as their money permits; that there's nothing objectionable about a few offshore billionaires owning the media and setting the political agenda; that anyone who disputes such notions has no place in civil society. We are free to speak, up to but not beyond this point: the point on which everything hangs.

Morgan's maxim is not just the unspoken rule. It is also the unspeakable truth. Everyone knows it, hardly any will mention it. It underpins our august institutions, our legal codes, our manners and mores. It is the great silence we need to break.

George Monbiot is a *Guardian* columnist. His website is www.monbiot.com.

CT

Joshua Frank

RESOURCE WARS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

The US and China face off again – this time over climate change

It's an ocean of conflict and ecological decline. Despite its vast size – 1.3 million square miles – the South China Sea has become a microcosm of the geopolitical tensions between East and West, where territorial struggles over abundant natural resources may one day lead to environmental collapse.

While the threat of a devastating military conflict between China and the United States in the region still looms, the South China Sea has already experienced irreparable damage. Decades of over-harvesting have, for instance, had a disastrous impact on that sea's once-flourishing fish. The tuna, mackerel, and shark populations have fallen to 50 percent of their 1960s levels. Biologically critical coral reef atolls, struggling to survive rising ocean temperatures, are also being buried under sand and silt as the Chinese military lays claim to and builds on the disputed Spratly Islands, an archipelago of 14 small isles and 113 reefs in that sea. Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam have also laid claim to many of the same islands.

Perhaps no one should be surprised since oil and gas deposits are plentiful in the South China Sea. The US government estimates that 11-billion barrels of oil and 190-tril-

lion cubic feet of natural gas are ready to be extracted from its floor. Such fossil-fuel reserves, some believe, are helping to – yes, how can anyone not use the word? – fuel the turmoil increasingly engulfing the region.

This year, the Washington-based Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative reported that several countries are pursuing new oil and gas development projects in those contested waters, which, the organisation notes, could become a "flashpoint in the disputes." Between 2018 and 2021, there were numerous standoffs between China, Vietnam, and other Southeast Asian countries over drilling operations there, and fears are building that even more severe confrontations lie ahead.

The United States, of course, lays the blame for all of this on China, claiming its aggressive island-reclamation projects violate international law and "militarize an already tense and contested area." Yet the US is also playing a significant part in raising tensions in the region by agreeing to supply Australia with nuclear-powered submarines as part of its Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) security pact. The goal, no doubt, is to restrain Chinese

activity with the threat of Western military might. "Next steps could include basing US nuclear-capable platforms – such as strategic bombers – in Australia as well as cooperation on hypersonic missiles, cyber operations, [and] quantum computing," writes Derek Grossman for the Rand Corporation, the "paramilitary academy" of American defence policy. (And, in fact, the US is evidently preparing to deploy the first nuclear-capable B-52s to that country soon.)

In August, in partnership with Australia and the Philippines (where Washington is getting ready to occupy bases ever closer to China), US Marines practised retaking an "island" supposedly captured by hostile forces. In that exercise, 1,760 Australian and Filipino soldiers and 120 US Marines conducted mock beach landings and air assault manoeuvres in Rizal, a small town in western Palawan province in the Philippines, which does indeed face the South China Sea.

"A whole lot of damage can be done to Australia before any potential adversary sets foot on our shores and maintaining the rules-based order in Southeast Asia, maintaining the collective security of Southeast Asia, is fundamental to maintaining the national security of our country," said Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles of



US Navy

READY FOR A FIGHT: The guided-missile destroyer USS Ralph Johnson steams near the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.

the joint military drills.

Like AUKUS itself, those war games were intended to send a message: China beware. The resources of the South China Sea aren't for the taking.

But here's a question to consider: Is all this international sabre-rattling only about fossil fuels? Trade routes through the area are also vital to the Chinese economy, while its fisheries account for 15 percent of the reported global wild fish catch. Yet neither its well-used shipping routes, necessary as they are to the flow of goods globally, nor those fisheries fully explain the ever-heightening controversy over the region. Having exploited that sea's wild fisheries for decades, China is now becoming a global leader in fish farming, which already accounts for

72 percent of the country's domestic fish production. It's also increasingly true that fossil fuels have a distinct shelf life. But is it possible that another set of natural resources, arguably more crucial to the economic future of the global superpowers, could be adding to the growing territorial furore over who possesses the goods in the South China Sea?

You could call it a race to the bottom, with China leading the charge. In December 2022, that country unveiled its Ocean Drilling Ship, a deep sea mining (DSM) vessel the size of a battle cruiser set to be operational by 2024. Instead of weaponry, however, the ship is equipped with advanced excavation equipment capable of

drilling at depths of 32,000 feet. On land, the Chinese already hold a virtual monopoly on metals considered vital to "green" energy development, including cobalt, copper, and lithium. Currently, the Chinese control 60 percent of the world's supply of such "green" metals and are now eyeing the abundant resources that exist beneath the ocean's floor as well. By some estimates, that seabed may contain 1,000 times more rare earth elements than those below dry ground.

It's difficult to believe that devastating the ocean's depths in search of minerals for electric batteries and other technologies could offer a sustainable way to fend off climate change. In the process, after all, such undersea mining is likely to have a catastrophic impact, including destroying biodiversity. Right

now, it's impossible to gauge just what sort of damage will be inflicted by such operations, since deep-sea mining is exempt from environmental impact assessments. (How convenient for those who will argue about how crucial they will be to producing a greener, more sustainable future.)

The UN's High Seas Treaty, ratified in March 2023, failed to include environmental rules regulating such practices after China blocked any discussion of a possible moratorium on seabed harvesting. As of 2022, China holds five exploration contracts issued by the UN's International Seabed Authority (ISA), allowing the Chinese to conduct tests and sample contents on the ocean floor. While that UN body can divvy up such contracts, they have no power to regulate the industry itself, nor the personnel to do so. This has scientists worried that unfettered deep-sea mining could cause irreparable damage, including killing sea creatures and destroying delicate habitats.

"We've only scratched the surface of understanding the deep ocean," said Dr. Andrew Chin, a scientific adviser to the Australian-based Save Our Seas Foundation.

"Science is just starting to appreciate that the deep sea is not an empty void but is brimming with wonderful and unique life forms. Deep sea ecosystems form an interconnected realm with mid and surface waters through the movement of species, energy flows, and currents. Not only will the nodule mining result in the loss of these species and damage deep sea beds for thousands of years, it will potentially result in negative consequences for the rest of the ocean and the people who depend on its health."

Others are concerned that the ISA, even if it had the authority to regulate the budding industry, wouldn't do it all that well. "Not only

The South China Sea, according to Chinese researchers, holds large reserves of "strategically important" precious metals

does the ISA favour the interests of mining companies over the advice of scientists, but its processes for EIA [environmental impact assessment] approvals are questionable," says Dr. Helen Rosenbaum of the Deep-Sea Mining Campaign.

This brings us back to the South China Sea, which, according to Chinese researchers, holds large reserves of "strategically important" precious metals. China has already been fervently scouting for deposits of the polymetallic nodules that hold a number of metals used in virtually all green technologies.

"Learning the distribution of polymetallic nodules will help us to choose a site for experimenting with collection, which is one of the main goals of the mission," said Wu Changbin, general commander of the Jiaolong, a submarine that discovered just such polymetallic nodules in the South China Sea.

Unsurprisingly, the US, lagging behind China in acquiring minerals for green technologies, has been keeping close tabs on the competition. In 2017, a Navy P3-Orion spy plane conducted repeated flyovers of a Chinese research vessel near the island of Guam. Scientists on the ship were allegedly mapping the area and planting monitoring devices for future deep-sea exploration.

The story is much the same in the South China Sea, where the US has conducted numerous surveillance

operations to follow Chinese activities there. In May, an Air Force RC-135 surveillance plane was intercepted by a Chinese J-16 jet fighter, causing an international uproar. Without providing any justification for why a US spy plane was there in the first place, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken quickly pointed the finger at China's recklessness. "[The] Chinese pilot took dangerous action in approaching the plane very, very closely," claimed Blinken. "There have been a series of these actions directed not just at us, but in other countries in recent months."

While these quarrels no doubt have much to do with control over fossil fuels, oil, and natural gas aren't the only resources in the region that are vital to the forthcoming exploits of both countries.

Across the globe, oil and coal are increasingly becoming things of the past. A report released in June 2023 by the International Energy Agency (IEA) suggested that renewables were "set to soar by 107 gigawatts (GW), the largest absolute increase ever, to more than 440 GW in 2023." The natural resources supplying this global surge in renewables, like copper and lithium, are becoming the popular new version of fossil fuels. Markets are favouring the phase-out of climate-warming energy sources, which is why China and the United States are forging ahead with mining critical minerals for renewables – not because they care about the future of the planet but because green energy is becoming profitable.

China's foray into the global capitalist system and the ruins left in its wake are easy enough to track. In the late 1970s, China's leaders liberalised the country's markets and opened the floodgates on foreign investment, making it – at an average clip of 9.5 percent per year – one of the fastest-growing economies ever. The World Bank described China's

financial boom as “the fastest sustained expansion by a major economy in history.” It’s no surprise, then, that energy consumption exploded along with its economic gains.

Like many of its global competitors, China’s economy still relies heavily on carbon-intensive fossil fuels, especially coal, but an ever-growing portion of its energy portfolio is made up of renewable energy. Steel-making and vehicle manufacturing now account for 66 percent of China’s energy use, transportation 9 percent, and residential use 13 percent. And while coal is still fueling that economic engine in a major way – China uses more coal than the rest of the world combined – the country has also become a (if not the) world leader in renewables, investing an estimated \$545-billion in new technologies in 2022 alone.

While China uses more energy than any other country, Americans consume significantly more than two times that of the Chinese on an individual basis (73,677 kilowatts versus 28,072 as of 2023). And while the US uses more energy per person, it also gets less of its energy from renewables.

As of 2022, the US government estimated that only 13.1 percent of the country’s primary energy was produced through renewable sources. Even so, the energy transition in the US is happening and, while natural gas has largely replaced coal, renewables are making considerable inroads. In fact, the Inflation Reduction Act, signed into law by President Biden in early 2022, earmarked \$430-billion in government investment and tax credits for green-energy development.

The World Economic Forum estimates that three-billion tons of metals and fine minerals will be needed for the world’s energy transition

It should be no surprise, that countries like China and the USA are likely to battle over access to the finite natural resources vital to the world’s energy transition

if we are to reach zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050 – and that number will undoubtedly only grow in the decades ahead. Of course, investors love to cash in and the forthcoming explosion in the mining of green metals on land and in the world’s waters will surely be a windfall for Wall Street and its equivalents globally. BloombergNEF (BNEF), which covers global markets, claims that the demand for key metals and minerals for the energy transition will grow at least five-fold over the next 30 years, which represents something like a \$10-trillion opportunity. At stake is the mining of critical minerals like lithium and traditional metals like copper, which will be used in power generation, electrical grids, energy storage, and transportation.

“[T]he energy transition could lead to a super-cycle for the metals and mining industry,” says Yuchen Huo, a mining analyst for BNEF. “This cycle will be driven by massive expansions in clean energy technologies, which would spur demand growth for both critical minerals and traditional metals.”

It should be no surprise, then, that countries like China and the United States are likely to battle (perhaps all too literally) over access to the finite natural resources vital to the world’s energy transition. Capitalism depends on it. From Africa to the South China Sea, nations are scouring the globe for new, profitable energy ventures. In the Pacific Ocean, which covers 30 percent

of the Earth’s surface, the hunt for polymetallic nodules is prompting island governments to open their waters to excavation in a significant way. The Cook Islands has typically issued licenses to explore its nearby ocean’s depths. Kiribati, Nauru, and Tonga have funded missions to investigate deposits in the Clarion Clipperton Zone, a 1.7-million square mile area stretching between the island of Kiribati and Mexico.

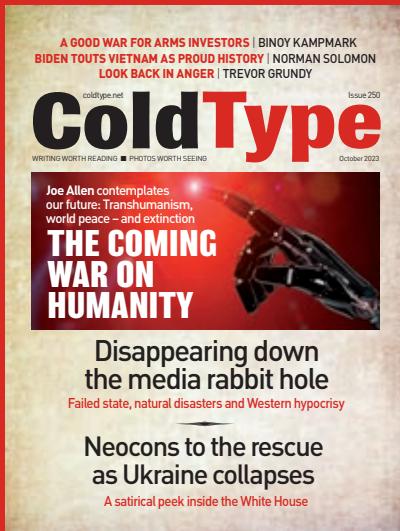
“This [deep sea] exploration frenzy is occurring in the absence of regulatory regimes or conservation areas to protect the unique and little-known ecosystems of the deep sea,” contends Dr. Rosenbaum of the Deep-Sea Mining Campaign. “The health and environmental impacts of deep-sea mining will be widespread... The sea is a dynamic and interconnected environment. The impacts of even a single mine will not be contained to the deep sea.”

According to those who want to mine our way out of the climate crisis, such highly sought-after metals and minerals will remain crucial to weaning the world off dirty fossil fuels. Yet, count on one thing: they will come at a grave cost – not only geopolitically but environmentally, too – and perhaps nowhere will such impacts be felt more devastatingly than in the world’s fragile seas, including the South China Sea where major armed powers are already facing off in an unnerving fashion, with the toll on both those waters and the rest of us still to be discovered.

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