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First Brexit . . . Now Trump!
WHATEVER NEXT?

CONTRIBUTORS: DIANA JOHNSTONE PETER CERTO JONATHAN COOK BETHAN PRIDMORE
TONY SUTTON W. STEPHEN GILBERT MARK HURWITT JOHN FEFFER THOMAS S. HARRINGTON



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Editor: Tony Sutton – editor@coldtype.net

Orgreave: Justice denied, justice delayed

The UK government has turned down demands for a public enquiry into police violence on the picket lines, but it's not yet over, writes **Granville Williams**



Giant posters were erected on Yorkshire roads demanding justice for Orgreave strikers.

The Home Secretary's reasons for her decision not to hold a public inquiry into police actions during Britain's 1984-85 miners' strike were met with an angry, derisory response

On October 31, Amber Rudd, Britain's Home Secretary in Theresa May's post-Brexit Tory government, made a statement to the House of Commons about events at the Orgreave Coking Plant, near Rotherham in South Yorkshire, on June 18, 1984, where striking mine workers were attacked by masses of police officers: "I have now concluded that there is not a sufficient basis for me to instigate either a statutory inquiry or an independent review."

Her reasons for the decision – there were no deaths or wrongful convictions, any investigation would be "hampered by the passage of time," and, anyway, "the polic-

ing landscape has changed fundamentally since 1984" – met with an angry, derisory response. The impeccably Conservative Yorkshire Post had a front-page denouncing Amber Rudd's decision and an editorial titled: "Orgreave – the fight will go on. Home Secretary must think again."

It was a bitter blow to the campaigners who set up the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign (OTJC) just four years before, but one which they were prepared for. Three different news releases were drafted in anticipation of Amber Rudd's decision: one welcomed a full public inquiry, another cautiously gave critical support to a more limited review, while a third anticipated the

STILL FIGHTING

What happened at Orgreave, however, goes right to the heart of the way Margaret Thatcher mobilised the forces of the state to defeat the miners; and any inquiry into Orgreave would inevitably raise questions about the role of Tory politicians at the time

decision she announced.

The OTJC has built up an impressive list of media contacts eager to cover its activities and the news release went out to them immediately. The OTJC Secretary, Barbara Jackson, said, “This decision is deeply disappointing and completely unacceptable. It is 32 years since 95 miners were arrested at Orgreave.

“Now, some of those miners are dead and the surviving ones face the prospect of several more years before we can get truth and justice. However we are determined people and the OTJC will continue to build wide support for a public inquiry. We will not give up.”

We also called a news conference in the magnificent National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) Hall in Barnsley, South Yorkshire for, the walls of the hall draped with the banners of the NUM branch banners for the pits which are now all closed. The media response was remarkable, all the national TV news channels sending reporting teams, joined by other national, regional and local media, to capture the mood of defiance displayed by former miners and their supporters. “The campaign has no intention of collapsing or folding. The gloves are now off,” said Jackson.

Didn't ask for documents

So what went wrong? Why did Theresa May encourage the OTJC to submit the evidence for an inquiry at a meeting she held with the organisation in July 2015 when she was Home Secretary? Why did the new Home Secretary Amber Rudd encourage hope after her meeting with the OTJC in September. We now know that the two Home Secretaries didn't spend that time asking the Independent Police Complaints Commission for the material they had acquired for their June 2015 report or South Yorkshire Police (SYP), or for their archives on Orgreave. Indeed, the Home Office has refused to say which documents Rudd and her officials considered.

The picture is clearer now. Comparisons between the disaster in which 93 Liverpool football fans were killed at Hillsborough and Orgreave are, in some respects, misleading. The Hillsborough disaster involved the dysfunctional South Yorkshire police force and the Sheffield Wednesday football club, which neglected safety issues at their ground with terrible consequences. Theresa May could comfortably allow the inquests and scrutiny of the South Yorkshire police to proceed, and be supportive of the Hillsborough bereaved families. What happened at Orgreave, however, goes right to the heart of the way Margaret Thatcher mobilised the forces of the state to defeat the miners; and any inquiry into Orgreave would inevitably raise questions about the role of Tory politicians at the time, some of them still alive, as well as the policing of the strike.

This much we know about Orgreave, through eyewitness accounts, film, photographs, video recordings, and the release of Cabinet papers and documents in the Thatcher Foundation. There had been picketing at Orgreave since the end of May, 1984 but on 18 June the NUM mobilised 5,000 pickets from across the UK to prevent access to the works by strike-breaking lorries that collected coke for use at the British Steel Corporation mill in Scunthorpe.

The police had clearly made extensive preparations and on that day they deployed around 6,000 officers from 18 different forces, equipped with riot gear and supported by police dogs and 42 mounted police officers. Charles Moore, the former Daily Telegraph editor, devotes a chapter to the 1984-85 miners' strike in the second volume of the authorised biography of Margaret Thatcher, *Everything She Wants*. “Orgreave,” he writes, “proved that, in enormous confrontations, the police now had the numbers, the equipment and the will to prevail.” But his account skirts over how the police prevailed.

The ITN early evening report on June 18, 1984, carried an account of the events at Or-

greave which was in sharp contrast to the BBC's the same evening.

The report, and the images that accompanied it, made it clear that some of the worst violence was administered by heavily-armed riot police on anyone they could catch. These actions by the police were not spontaneous, but were part of a planned operation. The images that followed, in contrast to the BBC's, which omitted any reference to the extraordinary scenes of police violence, showed a policeman repeatedly clubbing a fallen man. An arrested man being frog-marched behind police lines yells to the ITN camera crew, "You want to get in there and see what they are doing." The report concluded that miners who went to help their fellow workers were being truncheoned, and the direction in which they were running demonstrated that the "horrific violence" attributed to them was carried out in defence of fellow miners who were under attack from the police.

The BBC's early evening news that day was completely different. Behind the newsreader, Moira Stewart, a single violent image was projected: a man taking a running kick at a policeman. The film clip of the miner attacking the police was shown again and again on BBC news programmes over the following week but it had been edited. The man was actually running back to defend one of his mates whom the police were attacking.

The scene-setting introduction for the story stated: "Over 5,000 pickets at Orgreave fought a pitched battle with over 2,000 policemen. Mr Scargill, who had been directing operations on a two way radio, was found sitting on a kerb looking stunned after policemen with riot shields had run by under a hail of stones. He believes he was hit by a riot shield. A senior police officer says he saw him slip off a bank and hit his head on a sleeper, but does not know whether he had already been injured."

John Thorne's report for the BBC followed, presenting three themes: the mili-



Front page of the Sun newspaper blamed the strikers for the violence.

tary style planning of the operation by Arthur Scargill; doubt about whether the head injuries he sustained were actually inflicted by the police; and the essentially defensive and reactive nature of the police role in the conflict. The violence at Orgreave was presented unequivocally as picket violence, Thorne stating, "The attacks on individual policemen were horrific. The police commanders said it was a miracle that no-one was killed."

Press blamed strikers

Of course, most of the next day's national newspapers followed the BBC version of events at Orgreave. The front page of The Sun had the bold banner headline CHARGE with the subheading, Mounties rout miners. Bullet points listed Scargill's Toll of Shame

The ITN news report, and the images that accompanied it, made it clear that some of the worst violence was administered by heavily-armed riot police on anyone they could catch

STILL FIGHTING

An inquiry would reveal much more about a number of issues that day and afterwards, in terms of policing, arrests, charges against the miners and the fabrication of evidence. It would also have to dig into the political interventions by the Thatcher government, as well as its covert operations, one of which, many believe, was the confrontation at Orgreave

(41 police injured, 82 pickets held, 28 pickets hurt), and the report by Jim Oldfield stated “mounted police made an amazing cavalry charge on picketing miners yesterday. The officers faced a hate barrage of bricks, bottles and spears as they broke up a bloody riot.”

“There was a riot,” the civil liberties group Liberty observed later, “but it was a police riot.” George Moores, the chair of South Yorkshire Police Committee at the time, said: “No-one was stopped from going to Orgreave. They wanted to get them all together and have a real go at them ... The government engineered that confrontation. The crime should be laid at their door. Their message to the police was ‘Go in and hit them hard.’ The use of dogs and horses was terrifying. They wanted Orgreave to be a media spectacle and then blame the violence on pickets.” The plan worked.

Political interventions

An inquiry would reveal much more about a number of issues that day and afterwards, in terms of policing, arrests, charges against the miners and the fabrication of evidence. But it would also have to dig into the political interventions by the Thatcher government, as well as its covert operations, one of which, many believe, was the confrontation at Orgreave. This would inevitably require access to documents which are unlikely to be released for decades unless there is an independent public inquiry.

OTJC activists are angry at the way May and Rudd have behaved, and leaks from the Home Secretary’s office after the OTJC met her in early September show a cynical process of media manipulation. She wanted to test the water before she made any decision. The Times published a report on September 15, citing “Whitehall sources,” saying Rudd was set to announce an official inquiry. That unleashed a savage wave of criticism in the right-wing press (Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph and the Times) the following day, with Lord Tebbit, a key Cabinet member during the

miners’ strike wheeled out to denounce plans for an Orgreave “show trial,” while others denounced a “costly and unnecessary official inquiry.” What was dramatically revealed 32 years after Orgreave was the enduring class consciousness that drove the Thatcher government in its battle with the miners. Orgreave, for those Tory diehards who had savaged Amber Rudd’s possible inquiry, was the exorcism for two defeats of the previous Heath government by the miners: first at another coke depot, at Saltley in East Birmingham, when 15,000 engineering workers downed tools and marched to Saltley. The Chief Constable was forced to close the gates to the depot on February 10, 1972. Then, in 1974, during another miners’ strike, Heath called a general election in response and lost. So, any inquiry in to Orgreave would intrude into a Tory no-go area.

Amber Rudd pulled back after that the vituperative media response – she realised she was setting herself up for a media mauling if she supported even a limited inquiry.

But the decision to block an inquiry has had a dramatic impact. Tactically, Rudd could have offered the OTJC something, but by dismissing the evidence outright and rejecting an inquiry, she has now galvanised the group into a new round of campaigning and won it even more public support.

The mood of the OTJC at its packed monthly meeting on November 8 in Doncaster, South Yorkshire was defiant and determined as a range of campaigning ideas were agreed. The gloves are well and truly off for a bruising next round of campaigning.

CT

*Granville Williams is a founding member of the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign and the editor of Pit Props: Music, International Solidarity and the 1984-85 Miners’ Strike – www.cpbj.org.uk – He is also the chair of the planning group for the event, *With Banners Held High*, to be held at Unity+ Works, Wakefield, West Yorkshire on March 4, 2017*



First Brexit . . . Now Trump!

WHATEVER NEXT?

Wow, we thought we'd seen it all back in June when Britain's then-PM David Cameron held a disastrous referendum on whether or not his country should remain a member of the European Economic Community. The referendum, which – unexpectedly – favoured separation, was seen as a disaster by the country's media and liberal intelligentsia, who had failed to spot the rapidly-souring anger of the increasingly marginalised citizens in job- and industry-depleted areas north of the economic boom towns of the South-East. How could these silly people vote against their own best interests, they bleated pathetically after the vote, as the wily Conservatives elected a new leader, Theresa May, who saw the writing on the wall, and vowed to release her people from the vassalage of Brussels as soon as possible.

You'd expect, after Brexit and other populist uprisings, that the US media might just recognise similar symptoms – loss of jobs, loss of homes, fear of immigrants – on their side of the pond, and prepare for the off-chance that a similar fate might be in store during its presidential election. But no, for the most part, they devoted their energy to attacking misogynist interloper Donald Trump, while ignoring the flawed qualifications of their heroine, Hillary Clinton, whom they elevated to glass-ceiling destroyer: the first-ever woman president. That both her and Obama's records in government were seriously deficient seemed irrelevant and easy to bury as they pumped out the rhetoric. The result echoes that of Cameron's Britain: nasty and brutish, a country split right down the middle by hatred and envy. And no solution in sight. – **Tony Sutton, Editor**



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● DIANA JOHNSTONE

Trump v. Clinton: Dingdong, the witch is dead

Voters were appalled by Hillary's lies and corruption

“There’s no place like home.” That’s the lesson. Even when home is Kansas. The real meaning of this election is not, as bitterly disappointed Hillary supporters still maintain with tears in their eyes and fear in their throats, a victory for racism and sexism.

The real meaning of this upset is that Wall Street’s globalisation project has been rejected by the citizens of its homeland.

This has major implications for the European nations that have

been dragged along into this ruinous project.

Hillary Clinton was the candidate of the military industrial complex and international finance capital. She designed herself to be the figurehead of those forces, as queen of regime change. She aspired to be the one to remake the world in the image Wall Street dictates. It was a project enthusiastically and expensively supported by the one percent who profit from arms contracts and the trade deals they write themselves for their own interests.

To distract from the genuine significance of her candidacy, the Clinton campaign appealed to the desire for respectability of educated city dwellers, portraying Trump supporters as racist yokels motivated by a hateful desire to scapegoat minorities as revenge for their own inadequacies. They were “deplorables,” and you wouldn’t want to be one of them, would you?

Trump was sexist, because he referred to certain women as “bimbos.” Elizabeth Warren called him out for this, on a platform where Hillary sat listening, mouth wide open in delight – she who had referred to husband Bill’s girlfriends as “bimbo eruptions.” Sleaze and hypocrisy drowned out policy discussions. The worst the Clinton campaign could come up with was an 11-year-old locker room exchange – just words, hardly comparable to Bill’s chronic actions.

Still, millions who were taken in



by the Clinton campaign line are devastated, terrified, convinced that the only reason Trump won was the “racism” and “sexism” of that lower caste in globalized society: white heterosexual working class males.

But no, Virginia, there were other reasons to vote for Trump. Racism and sexism are surely low on the list. Trump voters were scandalised by Hillary’s lies and corruption. Many of them would have voted for Bernie Sanders if they had the choice., but that choice was taken away from them by Democratic Party manipulators who were sold on their own advertising campaign to elect “the first woman president.” A brand new product on the presidential election market! Be the first to vote for a woman president! New, improved!

Bernie’s success already showed that millions of people didn’t want that woman. But the Democratic Party manipulators and their oligarch sponsors went right ahead with their plans to force Hillary Clinton on an unwilling nation. They brought this defeat on themselves.

Contrary to what you could believe by reading the New York Times, there were even intellectuals who voted for Trump, or at least refused to vote for Hillary, for the simple reason that Trump appears less likely to lead the world into its third and final Great War. He said things giving that impression, but such statements were ignored by mainstream media as they worked overtime to inflate the ogre image. No war with Russia? You must be a Putin puppet!

Trump voters had several reasons to vote for Trump other than “racism.” Most of all, they want their

jobs back, jobs that have vanished thanks to the neoliberal policy of transferring manufacturing jobs to places with low wages.

But racism is the only motive recognised by the globalised elite for rejecting globalisation. British citizens who voted to leave the European Union in order to recover their traditional democracy were also stigmatised as “racist” and “xenophobe.” Opposition to racism and xenophobia is the natural moral defence of a project of global governance that deprives ordinary citizens of any important power of decision.

This extraordinarily vicious campaign has brought out and aggravated sharp divisions within the United States. The division between city and countryside is most evident on the electoral maps. But these real divisions are exacerbated by a campaign that portrayed Don-

ald Trump as a racist madman, a new Hitler about to bring fascism to America. The anti-racism of this campaign, denouncing “hate,” has actually spawned hate.

No, Virginia, Trump is not Hitler: he is the Wizard of Oz. He is a showman who pulled off an amazing trick thanks to the drastic moral and intellectual decline of the American political system.

He is neither as dangerous as his opponents fear, nor as able to “make American great again” as his supporters hope. He is the Lesser Evil. What will become of him in Washington is anybody’s guess. **CT**

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Diana Johnstone is the author of *Fools’ Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO, and Western Delusions*. Her new book is *Queen of Chaos: the Misadventures of Hillary Clinton*. She can be reached at diana.johnstone@wanadoo.fr

● PETER CERTO

America’s dark underbelly is now its face

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 Trump transgressed standards of decency

**A**n election that might have marked the ascension of America’s first woman president has instead proven historic for an altogether different reason. Namely, that Americans voted for the unabashedly anti-democratic alternative offered by her rival.

And they did it despite his almost cartoonish shortcomings.

Trump didn’t just offend pious liberals with his hard line on immigration, disdain for democratic norms, and disinterest in policy. He transgressed standards of decency across all political persuasions.

He bragged about sexually assaulting women. He disparaged injured war veterans. He was endorsed by the KKK. And now he’s



America's voice on the world stage.

How could that happen? Here's one theory you might have heard:

After years of seeing their jobs outsourced, their incomes slashed, and their suffering ignored, the white working class threw in their lot with the candidate who cast aside political niceties and vowed to make their communities great again.

It's a nice story – I even used to buy a version of it myself. But while Trump surely did clean up with white voters, the evidence simply doesn't support the idea that they were as hard-up as the story goes.

For instance, Pollster Nate Silver found during the GOP primary that Trump supporters pulled in a median income of \$72,000 a year – some \$10,000 more than the national median for white households. And while many did come from areas with lower social mobility, they were less likely to live in the stricken manufacturing communities Trump liked to use as backdrops for his rallies. So if it wasn't the economy, was it Hillary? Clinton was clearly unpopular, in many cases for defensible reasons. She was cozy with Wall Street. She backed poorly chosen wars. Apparently people didn't like the way she emailed.

But when you consider that we chose to give the nuclear codes to a man whose own aides refused to trust with a Twitter account over a former secretary of state, it hardly seems like Trump voters were soberly comparing the two candidates.

Instead, Vox writers Zach Beauchamp and Dylan Matthews pored through scores of studies and found a much more robust explanation – and it isn't pretty. It's what pollsters

gently call “racial resentment.”

That is, Trump's core supporters were far more likely than other Republicans to hold negative views of African Americans, Latinos, and Muslims. They overwhelmingly favoured the mass deportation of immigrants. And they were the most likely Republicans to agree that it would be “bad for the country” if whites comprised a smaller share of the population.

What's more, another study found, racially resentful voters flocked to the GOP candidate regardless of their views about the economy. Their views on race drew them to Trump, not their job prospects. Scores of other data back this up. Despite years of job growth and the biggest one-year bump in middle-class incomes in modern history, another researcher found, Republicans' views of both African Americans and Latinos nosedived during the Obama years.

Not even a slowdown in immi-

gration itself staunched the venom. Net migration between the US and Mexico fell to zero during the Obama years, yet Trump still launched his campaign with an infamous tirade against Mexican “rapists” and “murderers.”

None of that is to accuse all Trump voters of racism. But even if the bulk of them were just Republicans following their nominee, the social science strongly suggests that one of our major parties has been captured by whites so anxious about the changing face of America that they were willing to vote alongside the Klan. That fringe has turned mainstream. The Trump years to come may herald any number of horrors, but the scariest part may be what we've learned about ourselves. **CT**

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*Peter Certo is the editorial manager of the Institute for Policy Studies and the editor of [www. OtherWords.org](http://www.OtherWords.org) where this was first published.*

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● JONATHAN COOK

# American liberals unleashed the monster

Blame Clinton and the Democrat leadership for the defeat

The earth has been shifting under our feet for a while, but all liberals want to do is desperately cling to the status quo like a life-raft. Middle-class Britons are still hyperventilating about Brexit, and now middle-class America is trembling at the

prospect of Donald Trump in the White House.

And, of course, middle-class Americans are blaming everyone but themselves. Typifying this blinkered self-righteousness was a column written the day before news of Trump's success, from the Guard-



ian journalist Jonathan Freedland, Britain's unofficial stenographer to power and Washington fanboy. He blamed everyone but Hillary Clinton for her difficult path to what he then assumed was the White House.

Well, here is some news for Freedland and American liberals. The reason Trump is heading to the Oval Office is because the Democratic party rigged the primaries to ensure that a candidate who could have beaten Trump, Bernie Sanders, did not get on the ticket. You want to blame someone, blame Clinton and the rotten-to-the-core Democratic party leadership.

But no, liberals won't be listening because they are too busy blaming Julian Assange and Wikileaks for exposing the truth about the Democratic leadership set out in the Clinton campaign emails – and Russia for supposedly stealing them.

Blame lies squarely, too, with Barack Obama, the great black hope who spent eight years proving how wedded he was to neoliberal orthodoxy at home and a neoconservative agenda abroad.

While liberals praised him to the heavens, he poured the last US treasure into propping up a failed banking system, bankrupting the country to fill the pockets of a tiny, already fabulously wealthy, elite. The plutocrats then recycled vast sums to lobbyists and representatives in Congress to buy control there and make sure the voice of ordinary Americans counted for even less than it did before.

Obama also continued the futile “war on terror,” turning the world into one giant battlefield that made every day a payday for the arms industry. The US has been dropping bombs on jihadists and civil-



Caricature by DonkeyHotey/Flickr  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/donkeyhotey/29781964843>

ians alike, while supplying the very same jihadists with arms to kill yet more civilians.

And all the while, have liberals been campaigning against the military-industrial complex that stole their political system? No, of course not. They have been worrying about the mass migrations of refugees – those fleeing the very resource wars their leaders stoked.

Then there is the liberal media that served as a loyal chorus to Clinton, trying to persuade us that she would make a model president, and to ignore what was in plain sight: that Clinton is even more in the pocket of the bankers and arms dealers than Obama (if that were possible) and would wage more, not less war.

Do I sound a little like Trump as I rant against liberals? Yes, I do. And while you are busy dismissing me as a closet Trump supporter, you can continue your furious refusal to examine the reasons why a truly progressive position appears so similar to a far-right one like Trump's.

Because real progressives are as frustrated and angry about the status quo as are the poor, vulnerable and disillusioned who turned

to Trump. And they had no choice but to vote for Trump because there was no one aside from him in the presidential race articulating anything that approximated the truth.

Sanders was ousted by Clinton and her corrupt coterie. Jill Stein of the Greens was made invisible by a corrupt electoral system. It was either vote for Clinton and the putrid status quo, or vote for Trump and a possibility for change.

Yes, Trump is very bad. He is as much a product of the plutocracy that is now America as Clinton. He, like Clinton, will do nothing to fix the most important issue facing humankind: runaway climate change. He is a climate denier, she is a climate evader.

But unlike Clinton, Trump understood the rising popular anger at the “system,” and he was articulate enough to express it – all it took was a howl of pain.

Trump isn't the antithesis of liberal America. You liberals created him. You unleashed this monster. It is you in the mirror. You stayed silent, you took no stand while your country was stolen from you. In fact, you did worse: you enthusiastically voted time after time for those who did the stealing.

Now the path is clear and the route fast. The precipice is ahead, and American liberals are firmly in the driving seat.

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



● TONY SUTTON

# Protestors learn a lesson about irony

Progressive mobs take a leaf from Trump’s playbook

Frustrated supporters of Hillary Clinton proved that irony is not dead when they stormed through major US cities after the election, demanding the overthrow of her vanquisher Donald Trump. Why, weren’t these the same people who, just a few weeks earlier, had been incensed when Trump declared, at the time of the third presidential debate, that he might not accept the result of polling if Clinton defeated him?

And weren’t these good liberal folk appalled by the suggestion that Trump supporters might take to the streets in a wave of vindictiveness if he lost? Indeed, they were.

Huffington Post’s Julia Craven was one of those who warned of the anger that might be unleashed if Trump refused to accept the result: “The idea isn’t so far-fetched. Trump rally attendees have physically and verbally abused protestors. Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke encouraged his fellow Trump supporters to take up pitchforks and torches following claims of a rigged election. And attacks on Clinton are even more vicious. In July, one Trump supporter said Clinton should be executed via firing squad. Trump himself suggested Clinton should be shot during a campaign rally in August.”

But, within hours of the election



Caricature by DonkeyHotey/Flickr <https://www.flickr.com/photos/donkeyhotey/27435136410>

result, it was Clinton supporters who took to the streets, demanding the vote be overturned, while the website Change.org petitioned for the result to be annulled and the presidency handed to Clinton. Strangely, there was little sign of anger at these antics in the mainstream media.

We know the US has few qualms about overthrowing those pesky foreign governments that have the audacity not to do as they are commanded. Now it seems much of the American electorate believes that what Washington believes is good for the world is also good for them: bring on the next colour revolution – this time at home.

Bemused alternative media columnist Paul Craig Roberts neatly cut through the hypocrisy when he asked, “Who are the anti-Trump protestors besmirching the name of progressives . . . by refusing to accept the outcome of the presiden-

tial election? They look like, and are acting worse than, the ‘white trash’ they are denouncing.

“Remember how upset progressives were when Trump said he might not accept the election result if there was evidence that the vote was rigged? Now progressives are doing what they damned Trump for saying he *might do* under certain conditions.”

And, across the Atlantic, commentator Vash12 asked, in a note on the Guardian newspaper’s website, written in response to a vicious anti-Trump screed by columnist Jonathan Freedland on November 12, “How is it Trump’s fault that his critics are going on riots and protests before he even had the chance to do anything at all.”

Those of us who seek a world in which people matter as much as big business, and where taking care of the world’s poor is more important than killing them, should recall that moment eight years ago when we hailed the victory of Barack Obama. We cheered not only because he was the first black US president, but also because he offered us *hope* that he would make the world a better place. He failed dismally: his murderous military sorties – nourished by Hillary Clinton – created the world’s greatest refugee problem since the end of World War II and ignited a new Cold War with Russia.

Perhaps, if we agree that Obama is not as *good* a president as we had hoped, we can also accept that Trump might just turn out not to be as *bad* as we fear. If, however, he does become the monster some people predict, his fate should be decided at the ballot box, not at the hands of an angry mob. **CT**

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*Tony Sutton is the editor of ColdType.*



● BETHAN PRIDMORE

# Taking it to the streets

The election was barely over when demonstrations against the president-elect began. These photographs were taken by journalism student and activist Bethan Pridmore, at a No to Racism/ No to Trump protest rally at the US embassy in London just hours after the result was announced.





● W. STEPHEN GILBERT

# Trump will delete the Obama presidency

His win is an unexpected boost for Britain's Jeremy Corbyn

That Donald J Trump is the president-elect is, I fear, all the fault of Barack Obama. An American TV profile of Trump a few weeks ago credibly pinpointed Obama's brilliantly funny speech five years ago at the Washington correspondents' dinner as the moment that Trump decided to run for the presidency.

Obama mocked Trump mercilessly, as he was royally entitled to do, because Trump had doggedly kept the nonsensical "birther" con-

trovery going. The TV programme proposed that Trump found Obama's public mockery deeply humiliating and vowed to have his revenge. And indeed he will, for his first acts will be to dismantle the works of Obama: the climate change agreement signed in Paris that went into effect four days before the US election, the nuclear deal with Iran, the sanctions on Russia, free trade deals in general, the détente with Cuba, the already pitifully slender controls on gun ownership, the

refugee programme, the H-2A visa programme for foreign nationals, the equality gains made by the LG-BTQI community, the guarantee of Planned Parenthood that Obama signed into law the week of the election, and, especially, the Affordable Care Act, commonly known as Obamacare. Effectively, he will delete the Obama presidency.

But Trump is surely not an ideologue. Whether it's abortion or free trade or the Middle East or health care, no public statement he makes may be depended upon to be definitive – he has come at these issues from every direction. He has been a Democrat, a Republican, an independent and "none of the above." So anyone who voted for him imagining that he was articulating a reliable plan of action will be sorely disappointed.

Indeed, it may be the very area of supposed expertise that persuaded so many to vote for him that lets him down.

Calvin Coolidge declared that "the chief business of the American people is business" and the fact that Trump was perceived as a businessman commended him to many. But what kind of businessman is he?

For ordinary people, the notion of bankruptcy is too frightening to contemplate. Trump has filed four times in the last quarter-century for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The Trump Taj Mahal casino in Atlantic City opened in 1991 and within a year was \$3-billion in debt, a third of that Trump's personal liability. He was obliged to offload his airline and his yacht as well as half his stake in the company. The three subsequent bankruptcies were less personally painful.

But the history of reckless spec-

● MARK HURWITT

## Ignoring the Traditional Democratic Party base





ulation is clear. This is the kind of businessman in whom the discontented have put their trust, a man who calls himself “smart” for avoiding tax for a decade and more. Will he see the need to be unaccustomedly meticulous when in charge of the nation’s finances or will a compliant Capitol Hill wink at executive chicanery and impetuosity?

And yet maybe Trump is more aware of the great responsibility he has taken on than we imagine. Watching the press coverage of Obama and Trump in the Oval Office, I was struck by the body language. Both men sit forward, forearms on thighs, but while Obama is physically relaxed and owns the room, Trump suggests a schoolboy up before the head. Obama speaks carefully, pausing to find the exact word; it’s a demonstration of practised diplomacy. Trump gushes, comes out with typically perplexing phrases (“high-flying assets?”) and over-compensates.

The C-span coverage cuts out just before he calls Obama “a very good man, a very good man.” Obama has said nothing that contradicts his assessment of Trump expressed on the campaign trail, he has simply but scrupulously observed the niceties. Trump heedlessly shows himself to be unreliable either as a candidate or as a president-elect; perhaps both.

Still, we shouldn’t despair altogether. What has happened is an unexpected boost for Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of Britain Parliamentary opposition. After all, anybody deploying the term “unelectable” is now readily answered. The power of exciting crowds of people who thought themselves previously disenfranchised has been dramati-

cally demonstrated. And the implications for the political mainstream in both Washington and Westminster and their sense of entitlement and superiority will not be lost on those with any small degree of self-awareness.

As for the American presidency, that will come good as the wheel turns. The Democrats will surely win

back the White House in 2020, ending the dispiriting administration of President Pence who, like Gerald Ford, will come to be remembered solely for pardoning his predecessor.

CT

*W Stephen Gilbert is the London-based author of Jeremy Corbyn – Accidental Hero*

● JOHN FEFFER

## It can't happen here (but it just did)

Trump has transferred some of Europe’s ugliness to the US

In the typical time travel story, an enterprising person from the future goes back to 1922 to assassinate young Adolf Hitler, or to 1963 to interrupt Lee Harvey Oswald in the Texas School Book Depository in Dallas.

This time, however, the smarter denizens of the future world didn’t save us from the horrors of the present.

Instead, Donald Trump somehow got control of the time machine and used it for the opposite purpose. He brought in voters from the past who remembered (or misremembered) a more prosperous, more homogenous, more imperially confident America. He also transported in a few denizens of the Jim Crow South and Nazi Germany to dust off their ugly anachronisms and rally the alt-right.

More than 59-million people elected Trump president. In this

election, the past just trumped the future.

The ugliness has been percolating in Europe for some time now. It wasn’t just Brexit, Britain’s unexpected rejection of the European Union. It was the election of militant populists throughout Eastern Europe – Viktor Orban in Hungary, Robert Fico in Slovakia, the party of Jaroslaw Kaczynski in Poland. It was the electoral surge of the National Front in France and the Alternative fur Deutschland in Germany. It was the backlash against immigrants, social welfare programs, and “lazy Mediterraneans – but also against bankers and Brussels bureaucrats.

The cosmopolitan class had overreached in Europe. Successful urban and liberal elites who supported economic, political, and social policies that left behind large segments of the populace thought that they’d established an irrevers-



ible consensus on the trajectory of their countries and the European Union. They'd gone transnational without realizing that large numbers of their compatriots were still quite stubbornly and exclusively national.

I didn't think it could happen here. Or, rather, I didn't think it would happen here quite yet.

Donald Trump was such a flawed politician that I didn't think he could survive all of his self-inflicted wounds. I worried more about 2020, when a more capable politician could serve as a mouthpiece for all those who haven't benefitted from the elite-driven economic policies of both liberals and conservatives.

But this is America. We have a sweet tooth for old white male blowhards, from Rush Limbaugh all the way back to Cotton Math-er.

It's tempting to see our pre-2016 America through the lens of Weimar Germany, when a cosmopolitan German elite created the most liberal society the country had ever seen. That is, until this liberal society came up against the Nazis who, supported by a mob of resentful, provincial Germans, pushed the rewind button all the way back to the savage Middle Ages.

Perhaps Trump will usher in a fascist era and prove Sinclair Lewis prescient in his 1935 novel *It Can't Happen Here*. He has certainly assembled quite a few capable players – Newt Gingrich, John Bolton, Mike

Flynn, Rudy Giuliani – who can unshackle the jackboot army. The alt-right is celebrating his election as a victory for white power.

But Trump has used his time machine to revisit a different point in the past. Before November 8, we were living in a pre-1914 era. That was a time of unprecedented globalisation. And then, because of a reactionary backlash that started in Europe, the world was suddenly aflame with nationalism. The level of global trade wouldn't recover for another six decades. Only the hor-



Caricature by DonkeyHotey/Flickr  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/donkeyhotey/30618079500>

rors of World War II would spur the creation of the United Nations and the return of some semblance of internationalism.

The question now is whether the world can pull together at this moment, as we all stand on the precipice – of aggressive nationalism, of ugly prejudice, of climate change, of despair. In my novel *Splinterlands*, I've gamed out the dystopian scenario. It was designed to be a wake-up call. It wasn't supposed to be a non-fiction account of our current

moment. But even if the past has returned to bite us in the butt and the present looks pretty grim, the future remains ours to change.

It's raining here in the DC area as I write this column on the morning after the election. The weather was perfect yesterday – sunny skies, moderate temperature. That's when I wrote my first column about the election, which is now in the recycle bin. Now the clouds hang low, and the heavens are crying at our predicament.

That's what literary critics call the "pathetic fallacy," attributing human characteristics to the inanimate world. It's the mark of a poor literary stylist.

But think of all the pathetic fallacies that have sheltered us over the last few months. Virtually all the polls indicated a Clinton victory. Virtually all the newspapers endorsed Clinton. Virtually the entire entertainment industry turned its back on Trump. A huge segment of the Republican Party elite refused to support their anointed candidate.

They, we, I was wrong. It can happen here just as it has happened in Europe. Donald Trump was an object in our rear-view mirror who was a great deal closer than he appeared. Now that he has sped out in front and cut us off, how can we and the world avoid a catastrophic pile-up?

**CT**

*John Feffer is the director of Foreign Policy In Focus Policy In Focus – [www.fpif.org](http://www.fpif.org) – where this was first published.*



● THOMAS S. HARRINGTON

## An open letter to American liberals

I won't shed tears for Clinton, I'll save them for her victims

I would love to share, my liberal friend, in your sense of incredulity about the election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States. I would love to stand with you in the sense of woundedness that, while certainly painful up front, carries with it the secondary compensation of a warm and nurturing solidarity. I would love to sit with you and fulminate in righteous anger about the unparalleled vulgarity and cruelty of Trump and his followers.

As much as I'd like to do these things, I won't. Why?

Because I know you, perhaps better than you even dare to know yourself. I know you well because I have watched you with great and detailed care over the last three decades and have learned, sadly, that you are as much if not more about image and self-regard as any of the laudable values you claim to represent.

I have watched as you accommodated yourself to most of the retrograde social forces you claim to abhor. I have seen you be almost completely silent before the world's greatest evil – unprovoked war – going so far as to embrace as your presidential candidate this year a person who cold-bloodedly carried out the complete destruction of Libya, a real country with

real people who love their children like you and me, in order – as the Podesta emails make clear – to further her personal political ambitions.

I watched as you stood silent before this same person's perverse on-camera celebration of the murder by way of a bayonet thrust to the anus of the leader of that once sovereign country, and before the tens of thousand of deaths, and hundreds of thousands of refugees, that war provoked.

I watched during the last eight years as you sought refuge in the evanescent qualities of skin colour and smooth speechmaking so as to not to confront the fact that your "liberal" president was almost totally lacking in actionable convictions regarding the values you claim to be about.

I watched as you didn't say a peep as he bailed out bankers, pursued whistleblowers and deported desperate and downtrodden immigrants in heretofore unimaginable numbers.

And I didn't hear the slightest complaint (unlike those supposedly stupid and primitive libertarians) as he arrogated to himself the right to kill American citizens in cold blood as he and he alone deemed fit.

I monitored you as you not

only completely normalized Israel's methodical erasure of the Palestinian people and their culture, but made cheering enthusiastically for this campaign of savagery the ultimate litmus test for social and political respectability within your ranks.

I watched as you breezily dispatched the memories of the millions of innocent people destroyed by US military aggression around the world and damaged police brutality here at home in order to slavishly imitate the unceasing orgy of uniform worship set in motion by the right and its media auxiliaries in the wake of September 11, 2001.

In short, since 1992, I have watched as you have transformed a current of social thought once rooted in that most basic an necessary human sentiment – empathy – into a badge of cultural and educational superiority. And because feeling good about yourself was much more important to you than actually helping the afflicted, you signed off, in greater or lesser measure to almost all of the life-sapping and dignity-robbing measures of the authoritarian right.

And now you want me to share in your sense of shock and incredulity? No, thanks, I'll save my tears for all of the people, ideas and programs you heedlessly abandoned along the road to this day. **CT**

*Thomas S. Harrington is a professor of Hispanic Studies at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, and the author of the recently published book, *Livin' la Vida Barroca: American Culture in a Time of Imperial Orthodoxies*. This commentary was originally published at [www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org)*

# The Mediterranean has become a graveyard

Nicole Coulson reports on the human toll of Europe's crackdown on refugees

**CNN calculated that refugees crossing the Mediterranean are 90 times more likely to die than an American will die of gunshot wounds**

With little mention in the media, a grim milestone was passed off the southern shores of Europe last month. With the death toll of refugees in the Mediterranean Sea already surpassing all of last year, 2016 has become the deadliest year on record for those fleeing the violence, poverty and horror of their home countries in the hope of finding a better life in Europe.

By the beginning of November, 3,940 refugees have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean this year, according to the International Organization for Migration. By comparison, the IOM counted 3,771 refugee fatalities in the Mediterranean in the whole of 2015.

As one European government after another has tightened its borders and increased legal and physical repression – and after a European Union deal with the authoritarian government of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan designed to stem the flow of refugees – far fewer people have been able to make the crossing this year. So far, some 332,000 refugees have reached Europe via the Mediterranean in 2016, compared to more than a million over all of last year.

But those who are crossing are facing increasingly perilous conditions. According to the UN High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), one person out of every 88 who

attempts to cross the Mediterranean dies at sea. In 2015, that number was one out of every 269 people. To put the statistics in perspective, CNN calculated that refugees crossing the Mediterranean are 90 times more likely to die than an American will die of gunshot wounds.

“This is the worst we have ever seen,” UNHCR spokesperson William Spindler said at a press conference in late October.

With governments clamping down on other routes, more refugees are now attempting to cross the central Mediterranean between Libya and Italy – and the death toll there is even higher: one death for every 47 arrivals, according to Spindler: on October 21 and 22, rescuers pulled 5,700 refugees from the Mediterranean.

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That so many people choose to risk crossing is evidence of just how intolerable life has become for so many millions. This much is obvious to anyone who sees the reality in the Mediterranean – such as the volunteers working with search-and-rescue teams who were profiled in an August CNN article by Moni Basu.

Nick Romaniuk said he was moved to volunteer after seeing the suffering in a refugee camp in Greece – like the “Yazidi boy in a Sesame Street shirt who’d been thrown into a fire by ISIS fighters and bore scars up and down his arms.”



Fleeing to safety: Boat people in the Mediterranean.

Photo: CNN screenshot

**EU leaders, including supposedly refugee-friendly leaders like Germany's Angela Merkel, have responded instead with quotas, caps and border restrictions, especially in a climate in which the far right has grown by exploiting fears of refugees**

The CNN article describes a rescue crew coming upon a rubber raft with 108 men, women and children and the “sour stench of human misery” – sweat, urine, vomit and blood – clinging to it. “If [Romaniuk’s] English compatriots who spew hate toward migrants could be here now, he thinks, they too would jump in the water to save someone,” CNN wrote.

Basu’s article continues: One man wears nothing but underwear. Another has on a gray North Face puffer jacket intended for winter slopes. Most are barefoot, their ebony legs powdered with a white mixture of dust and encrusted sea salt. They carry few possessions – a toothbrush tucked in a chest pocket, a plastic pouch containing photos of loved ones left behind. . . . One man from Guinea says smugglers beat his legs with an iron bar.

In a separate report, Stefano Argenziano of Doctors Without Borders referenced the many horrors occurring daily: “It’s a tragedy, but sadly one cannot say that this was an exceptional day in the Mediterranean.”

For refugees to venture out to sea in such conditions, Argenziano told reporters, “is a headlong rush to the cemetery.”

Yet this is what leaders of European Union governments consider to be a “success.” EU operations in the Mediterranean are increasingly focused on security and preven-

tion as opposed to aid and rescue, leaving volunteer and non-governmental organisations to bear much of the burden.

Overall, the legal and physical barriers enacted across the EU have cut down on the flow of refugees landing on the continent – but the intense clampdown has left those desperate enough to attempt the crossing into more and more dangerous situations.

This is why, as Doctors Without Borders’ Agrienzano told reporters last month, the deaths and despair in the Mediterranean are “a policy-made crisis” – in which rescue and aid workers “feel powerless to stop the loss of life.”

There is a simple solution that could stop the deaths: Governments, especially the most developed Western nations whose economic and imperial policies helped destabilise the Middle East and impoverish millions of people, could let the refugees in. But EU leaders, including supposedly refugee-friendly leaders like Germany’s Angela Merkel, have responded instead with quotas, caps and border restrictions, especially in a climate in which the far right has grown by exploiting fears of refugees – especially Muslims – who are supposedly pouring across borders and “scrounging” off limited public resources.

This has left many of the refugees who do make it to the EU in a kind of limbo – unable to settle permanently in the countries

## LOST AT SEA

**After the refugee camp was razed to the ground, Britain's Daily Mail newspaper sneered, "Au revoir, and good riddance: A wasteland is all that remains of the Calais Jungle camp"**

of their choice, while also being used as a convenient scapegoat, not only by the far right, but by mainstream politicians.

Late last month, the French government, led by President François Hollande and his Socialist Party, ordered the clearing of the refugee camp known as the "Jungle" in the northern city of Calais.

Long a place where refugees hoping to gain entry into the UK – located north across the English Channel – had settled, the camp was notorious for its squalid, overcrowded conditions in the heart of one of the wealthiest EU countries.

After the camp was razed to the ground, Britain's Daily Mail newspaper sneered, "Au revoir, and good riddance: A wasteland is all that remains of the Calais Jungle camp." For his part, Hollande vowed that "we could not tolerate the camp and we will not tolerate any others."

But destroying the camp – which was further damaged by fires during the evacuation – has done nothing to solve the problem of refugees left in limbo. Most outrageously, an estimated 1,500 unaccompanied refugee children who had been living in the camp have since been transferred to a holding camp in the same area, where they are being housed in temporary containers – while British officials squabble over whether any will be allowed into the country from France.

The Independent's Charlotte England compared the new situation for these children to the novel *Lord of the Flies* – "with 1,500 children left unsupervised, sleeping in bare containers and free to roam the adjacent camp site, close to heavy machinery being used to dismantle and remove the wreckage."

Not only has drinking water been turned off, but volunteers told England that these most vulnerable children aren't being provided with food by the government – leaving aid workers to pick up the slack where they can. Many of the children have no shoes or blankets and are sleeping in freezing-cold

conditions, and the containers are reportedly housing as many as 12 children each.

British officials deserve special scorn for the suffering of these children. The government has been especially slow to admit refugee children – taking in just 274 since mid-October, mostly those with relatives already living in the UK.

Some British right-wingers have even suggested that child refugees have their teeth checked, like livestock, for proof of their age – an especially ugly twist on the myth that refugees are faking their status to get access to supposedly "generous" welfare benefits.

"Maybe we could pull out any gold fillings while we're at it and get their first month's rent covered," the *Mirror's* Brian Reade angrily wrote. "If the teeth tests are inconclusive (as dental experts say they will be), why not slice them in half and count the rings?"

As Reade wrote in conclusion: "They're taking us for fools, say those using dental checks as a screen for letting none of them in. But they're not. They're simply taking us for one of the richest countries in the world with a long history of helping refugees, which is now roundly criticised for its pitiful response to this current crisis."

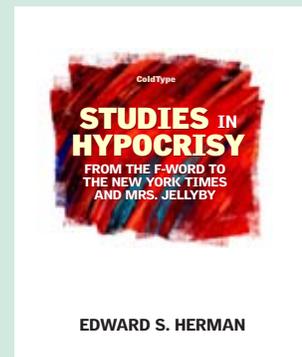
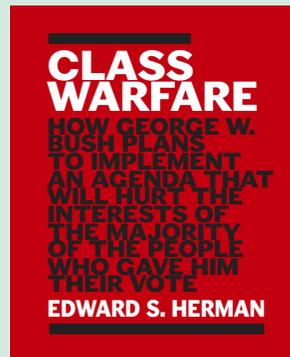
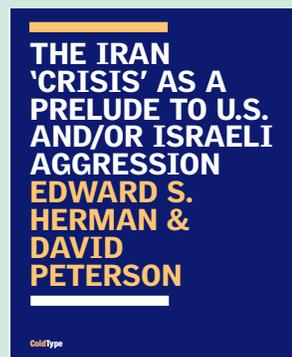
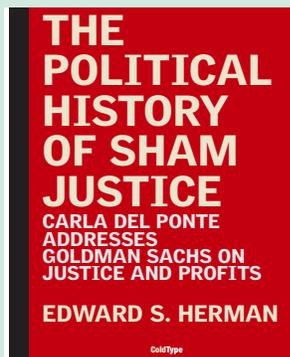
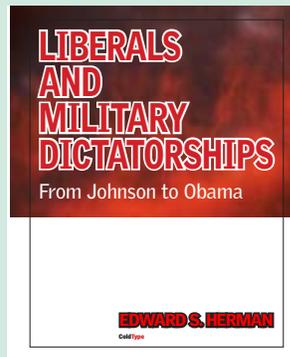
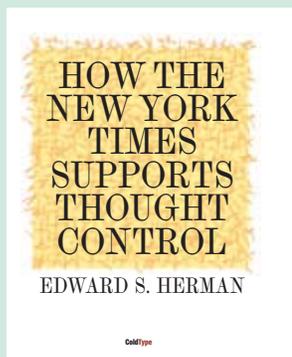
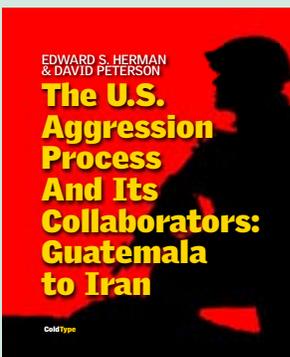
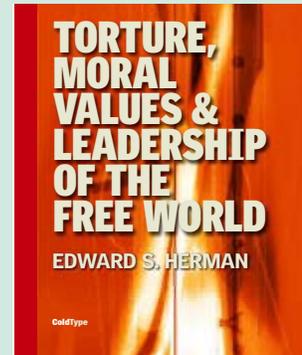
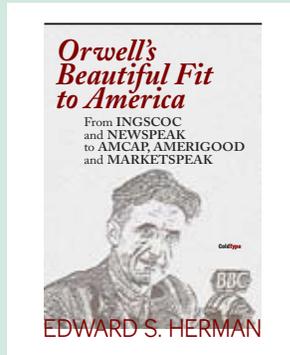
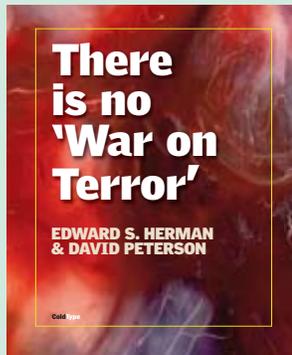
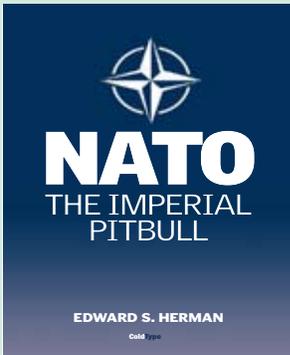
Of course, it's not enough to only discuss the rights of child refugees. Refugees of all ages should be entitled to safety, dignity and a decent life, whether in the EU, the US or another country.

Those Western nations – above all, the US – whose economic and military policies have exacerbated the world's worst refugee crisis since the Second World War should be especially responsible for providing a home and resources. Our slogan, shouted again and again, must be: Open the doors and let them in. **CT**

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*Nicole Carson is a writer for Socialist Worker. This article was originally published at [www.socialistworker.org](http://www.socialistworker.org)*

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# One-way street

A High Court judgment on air pollution is an opportunity to rethink the British transport system, writes **George Monbiot**

**Air pollution has been described by the World Health Organisation as a public health emergency, yet it's treated in most countries as a public health afterthought**

The government's defeat in the High Court last week was devastating – but I'm not talking about the Brexit judgement. The environmental lawyers ClientEarth sued it over air pollution for the second time, and for the second time won. After trying every trick in the book to continue poisoning the British population, the government will now have to take action.

This will mostly consist of designating more clean air zones, in which diesel engines will be restricted. After 18 years of promoting diesel, that's quite a reversal. In several city centres, we will be entitled to inhale the attar of roses and essence of orange blossom that wafts out of petrol engines. Outside the clean air zones, you are politely requested to die quietly.

I'm not dissing the judgement – far from it. Air pollution has been described by the World Health Organisation as a public health emergency, yet it's treated in most countries as a public health afterthought. Pollution is linked to heart attacks, strokes, lung and bladder cancers, low birth weight, poor memory and attention in children, low verbal IQ, faster cognitive decline among elderly people and the earlier onset of dementia. In the UK it is believed to cause between 40,000 and 50,000 deaths a year; in London, it may kill more people than smoking does.

If as many service men and women were killed in Britain's wars, politicians and editors of every hue would be outraged. But preventing these deaths means confronting both the car industry and the sacred freedoms of the motorist, so those with power treat them as sad but unavoidable collateral damage.

Let me give you an idea of how seriously the government takes this issue. Diesel cars would produce even more pollution were it not for their diesel particulate filters (DPFs). A car from which a DPF has been removed cannot be legally driven, but some people resent them, believing they affect performance. On eBay at the moment, 190 British traders are selling DPF delete kits, whose purpose is to thwart, bypass or remove the filters. That these kits are on open sale suggests there has been no meaningful effort to stop this practice.

## Measuring pollution

When governments take an issue seriously, they seek to quantify it. When they couldn't give a tinker's cuss, they scarcely bother to collect data. Assessing the health risks of pollution means measuring the level of exposure. This varies from one street to the next. One estimate suggests that 3000 schools in Britain are likely to suffer pollution levels above the legal limit. Yet the government lists just 155 monitoring sites across

the country. In the West Midlands, where 5 million people live, there are six. There are 10 in London and one apiece in Edinburgh, Bristol, Doncaster and several other cities. In most British towns, there are none.

But while the judgement will force the government to pay more attention, its response is certain to be both piecemeal and faint. There is no sustained political pressure for anything better. The report on air quality published by a House of Commons committee earlier this year is remarkable for the contrast between the ferocity of its criticism and the feebleness of the changes it proposes.

For example, it proposes a car scrappage scheme, but only for people who want to swap their old bangers for new bangers. Yet the same report points out that 75% of the particulate emissions vehicles produce come from their tyres, brakes and erosion of the road surface. In other words, every motor vehicle, including electric cars, can damage your health. So why not pay people to replace their old cars with no car at all, by issuing the incentive in the form of public transport tokens?

### Two wheels better

Bicycles are mentioned only in passing. But given that over half the car journeys in this country are less than five miles, that cycle provision is cheap by comparison to other transport options and that Britain suffers from an epidemic of unfitnes, why not aim to make the bicycle our primary means of transport? Sorry – this is a one-way street. Significantly reducing the cars on the road appears to be unthinkable.

It's not as if local pollution is the only harm that cars inflict. The materials required to build them ensure that all vehicles contribute to climate change and wider environmental damage. The noise they produce is a major cause of stress. While the police are quick to respond to complaints about anti-social neighbours and loud music, most forces are utterly

useless at enforcing vehicle noise limits. YouTube is awash with videos explaining how to make your car louder or how to remove the baffles from your Harley-Davidson, some of which have been watched hundreds of thousands of times. On eBay you can buy "loud pipes" for your Harley, which can bring the roar up to 100dB – enough to damage hearing.

In some parts of the country, as I found when I lived in mid-Wales, doctoring your car's exhaust appears almost to be a test of manhood. On the rare occasions when police have sought to enforce noise limits, they've discovered that modified exhausts can produce 107dB – equivalent to a pneumatic drill. I can testify that a convoy of these cars speeding past your house 20 times in one night is not a formula for peace of mind.

A study in Bristol shows how cars slash the social fabric like so many knives. On streets with light traffic, people tend to know more of their neighbours, have richer relationships with them and allow their children to be more independent than on streets with heavy traffic. Cars kill community. The death of community kills well-being.

As for what happens to us when we sit behind the wheel, it would be surprising if this did not change the way we behave and the way we think. When we drive, society becomes an obstacle to be wished away. Cars, I believe, encourage the extreme individualism that often makes a sense of common purpose hard to achieve.

I don't deny the freedom and convenience they offer, but while everyone is happy to acknowledge this, we seem almost incapable of recognising the downside, except in the narrowest terms. The High Court ruling gives us a chance to ask the big questions, urgent but scarcely visited, that surround this issue. Let's not blow it. **CT**

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**George Monbiot's latest book, *How Did We Get Into This Mess?*, is published by Verso. His web site is [www.monbiot.com](http://www.monbiot.com)**

**While the police are quick to respond to complaints about anti-social neighbours and loud music, most forces are utterly useless at enforcing vehicle noise limits**

# CHECKMATE





## Truth in advertising?

I'm not sure how to read these images. "Better to be slapped with the truth than kissed with a lie," says a slogan carried by a marcher in Brussels, Belgium, at the annual international Million Mask March protests against capitalism and austerity. And then I see a couple of protestors locked in a firm embrace, kissing as passionately as is possible beneath their Guy Fawkes masks. Hmm, in the circumstances, I think I'd forego the scratchy intimacy and settle for that free hug!

– Tony Sutton / Photos by Red Cathedral

See Red Cathedral's photostream at: [www.flickr.com/photos/redcathedral](http://www.flickr.com/photos/redcathedral)

# You've been sold a myth about sports drinks

If casual runners avoided these sugar-laden drinks and drank water instead, they'd be slimmer and faster, writes **Alberto Dolci**

**One of industry's greatest successes was to pass off the idea that the body's natural thirst system is not a perfect mechanism for detecting and responding to dehydration**

From eight glasses of water a day to protein shakes, we're bombarded with messages about we should drink and when, especially during exercise. But these drinking dogmas are relatively new. For example, in the 1970s, marathon runners were discouraged from drinking fluids for fear that it would slow them down.

Now we're obsessed with staying hydrated when we exercise, not just with water but with specialist drinks that claim to do a better job of preventing dehydration and even improve athletic performance. Yet the evidence for these drinks' benefits is limited. They might even be bad for your health in some instances. So how did sports drinks come to be seen as so important?

Much of the focus on hydration can be traced back to the boom in road running, which began with the New York marathon in the '70s. Sports and drinks manufacturers spotted a growing market and launched specialist products for would-be athletes. The first experimental batch of Gatorade sports drink cost £28 to produce but has spawned an industry with sales of around £260-million a year in the UK alone. And consumption is increasing steadily, making it the fastest-growing sector in the UK soft drinks market in recent years. What started life as a mixture of simple kitchen food stuffs has become an "essential piece of sporting equipment."

The key behind this huge rise in sports drinks lies in the coupling of science with creative marketing. An investigation by the British Medical Journal has found that drinks companies started sponsoring scientists to carry out research on hydration, which spawned a whole new area of science. These same scientists advise influential sports medicine organisations, developing guidelines that have filtered down to health advice from bodies such as the European Food Safety Authority and the International Olympic Committee. Such advice has helped spread fear about the dangers of dehydration.

One of industry's greatest successes was to pass off the idea that the body's natural thirst system is not a perfect mechanism for detecting and responding to dehydration. These include claims that: "The human thirst mechanism is an inaccurate short-term indicator of fluid needs . . . Unfortunately, there is no clear physiological signal that dehydration is occurring."

As a result, healthcare organisations routinely give advice to ignore your natural thirst mechanism. Diabetes UK, for example, advises: "Drink small amounts frequently, even if you are not thirsty – approximately 150 ml of fluid every 15 minutes – because dehydration dramatically affects performance."

Drinks manufacturers claim that the so-

dium in sports drinks make you feel thirstier, encouraging you to consume a higher volume of liquid compared to drinking water. They also claim these drinks enable you to retain more liquid once you've consumed it, based on the observation that the carbohydrates found in the drinks aid water absorption from the small intestine.

This implies that your thirst mechanism needs enhancing to encourage you to drink enough. But research shows natural thirst is a more reliable trigger. A review of research on time trial cyclists concluded that relying on thirst to gauge the need for fluid replacement was the best strategy. This "meta-analysis" showed for the first time that drinking according to how thirsty you are will maximise your endurance performance.

On top of this, many of the claims about sports drinks are often repeated without reference to any evidence. A British Medical Journal review screened 1,035 web pages on sports drinks and identified 431 claims they enhanced athletic performance for a total of 104 different products. More than half the sites did not provide any references – and of the references that were given, they were unable to systematically identify strengths and weaknesses. Of the remaining half, 84% referred to studies judged to be at high risk of bias, only three were judged high quality and none referred to systematic reviews, which give the strongest form of evidence.

One of the key problems with many of the studies into the benefits of sports drinks is that they recruit highly trained volunteers who sustain exercise at high intensity for long periods. But the vast majority of sports drink users train for very few hours per week or exercise at a relatively low intensity (for example walking instead of running during a race). This means the current evidence is not of sufficient quality to inform the public about benefits deriving from sport drinks.

Even more importantly, as sports drinks rise in popularity among children, they may be contributing to obesity levels. A 500ml bottle of a sports drink typically contains



**ENERGETIC GROWTH:** The first experimental batch of Gatorade sports drink cost £28 to produce but has spawned an industry with sales of around £260-million a year in the UK alone.

Photo: Jeff Taylor (via Flickr.com)

around 20g of sugar (about five teaspoons' worth) and so represents a large amount of calories entering the body. But endorsements by elite athletes and claims of hydration benefits have meant sports drinks have shrugged off unhealthy associations in many people's eyes. One study found more than a quarter of American parents believe that sports drinks are healthy for children.

That's not to say hydration research into different drinks isn't useful. For example, it could help identify which drinks help the body retain fluids in the longer term. This would be of real benefit in situations where athletes have limited access to fluids or can't take frequent toilet breaks.

But the current evidence is not good enough to inform the public about the benefits and harms of sports products. What we can be almost sure about is that sports drink are not helping turn casual runners into Olympic athletes. In fact, if they avoided these sugar-laden drinks they would be probably be slimmer and so faster.

**CT**

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*Alberto Dolci is lecturer in exercise and environmental physiology and exercise immunology at the University of Westminster. This article originally appeared at [www.theconversation.com](http://www.theconversation.com)*

**A review of research on time trial cyclists concluded that relying on thirst to gauge the need for fluid replacement was the best strategy. This "meta-analysis" showed for the first time that drinking according to how thirsty you are will maximise your endurance performance**

# Yemen: the responsibility to protect profits

If Britain cares enough about civilian suffering in Kosovo, Libya and Syria to go to war, how can it not do something about Saudi Arabia while potential war crimes are investigated? ask **David Edwards** and **David Cromwell**

**A key task of the corporate media is to pretend that politics is something more than a charade. The truth is hinted at in BBC political programmes that open with jovial, bombastic, comical music, as if introducing some kind of music hall farce**

At first sight, compassion appears to loom large in mainstream politics and media. When the American and British governments target countries such as Serbia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, “compassion” is always at or near the top of the agenda.

Time and again, the cry from the political system is: “We Must Do Something!” “We” must save Afghan women from the “Medieval” Taliban. “We” must save Kuwaiti newborns flung from their incubators by Iraqi stormtroopers. “We” must save Iraqi civilians from Saddam’s shredding machines. “We” must save civilians in Kosovo from Milosevic’s “final solution.”

As for the suffering civilians of Aleppo in Syria, hard-right MPs like Andrew Mitchell demand, not merely that “we” save them, not merely that “we” engage in war to save them, but that “we” must confront Russia, shoot down their planes if necessary, and risk actual thermonuclear war – complete self-destruction – to save them:

“If that means confronting Russian air power defensively, on behalf of the innocent people on the ground who we are trying to protect, then we should do that.”

State-corporate propaganda is full of “shoulds,” all rooted in “our” alleged “responsibility to protect.” Why “us?” Why not Sweden or Iceland? Because “we” care. “We” just care more.

A key task of the corporate media is to pretend this is something more than a charade. The truth is hinted at in BBC political programmes that open with jovial, bombastic, comical music, as if introducing some kind of music hall farce. The cast is currently led by foreign secretary Boris Johnson, a P.G. Wodehouse character reimagined by Stephen King. After chuckling about how “There is no other country that comes close to [Britain’s] record of belligerence” in invading or conquering 178 out of 200 countries existing today, Johnson opined: “As our American friends instinctively understand, it is the existence of strong and well-resourced British Armed Forces that gives this country the ability to express and affirm our values overseas: of freedom, democracy, tolerance, pluralism.”

As Johnson doubtless understands, this was a near-exact reversal of the truth. He noted in 2014 of the 2003 Iraq invasion: “It looks to me as though the Americans were motivated by a general strategic desire to control one of the biggest oil exporters in the world . . .”

If politicians are clearly bluffers, corporate journalists are selected because they powerfully echo and enhance the alleged need for compassionate “intervention.” The likes of David Aaronovitch, Nick Cohen, John Rentoul, Jonathan Freedland and Oliver Kamm earn their salaries by appearing to tear their

hair out in outrage at the crimes of official enemies and at the “useful idiocy” of the perennial, naysaying “leftists.” Aaronovitch of the Times has supported just about every opportunity to wage war, whether under Labour or the Tories, for decades. In March 1999, in an article titled, “It’s because we’re rich that we must impose peace for others,” Aaronovitch commented: “Given a choice, do we really think that the suffering civilians of Sierra Leone would object to a military presence by the British?” (Aaronovitch, *The Independent*, March 25, 1999)

In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks on the United States, he wrote of Afghanistan: “For a fair-minded progressive the call should not be Stop the War. That slogan is now irrelevant and harmful. The requirement is surely to win the peace . . .

“So on Sunday, instead of listening to the same old tired stuff about cowboys with rockets and selective horror stories from Mazar; instead of marching along with mouth open and ears closed (however comforting that can be); instead of indulging yourself in a cosmic whinge, why not do something that might help the people of Afghanistan?” (Aaronovitch, ‘Stop trying to stop the war, Start trying to win the peace,’ *The Independent*, November 16, 2001)

The message is always the same: we understand you’re sincere, but sometimes you have to drop your reflexive “anti-Americanism,” drop your blinkered adherence to “principled opposition” and live in the real world. You can’t just sit on your hands, you can’t just righteously preach – you have to act!

This is the shtick of the corporate war-monger and it is repeated over and over again. It appears to be the key function that determines whether a commentator is granted job-for-life privileges at newspapers like the Guardian, the Times and the Telegraph.

But the point is that compassion – the kind rooted in an understanding that all suffering is equal, the kind that feels even

more responsibility for suffering caused by our own government – is not partial, it does not defer to power. It doesn’t fall silent when “we” are committing crimes. Quite the reverse.

### **The Yemen Motion**

On October 26, Emily Thornberry, Labour shadow foreign secretary, placed the following motion before the House of Commons:

“That this House supports efforts to bring about a cessation of hostilities and provide humanitarian relief in Yemen, and notes that the country is now on the brink of famine; condemns the reported bombings of civilian areas that have exacerbated this crisis; believes that a full independent UN-led investigation must be established into alleged violations of international humanitarian law in the conflict in Yemen; and calls on the Government to suspend its support for the Saudi Arabia-led coalition forces in Yemen until it has been determined whether they have been responsible for any such violations.”

Yemen truly is facing disaster. The Guardian reports: “There are 370,000 children enduring severe malnutrition that weakens their immune system, according to Unicef, and 1.5 million are going hungry. Food shortages are a long-term problem, but they have got worse in recent months. Half of children under five are stunted because of chronic malnutrition.”

Oxfam’s humanitarian policy adviser, Richard Stanforth, said: “Everything is stacked against the people on the brink of starvation in Yemen.”

Martha Mundy, a professor emeritus at the London School of Economics, comments: “The [Saudi-led] coalition was and is targeting intentionally food production, not simply agriculture in the fields.”

Mundy adds: “According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2.8 percent of Yemen’s land is cultivated. To hit that small amount of agricultural land, you have to target it.”

**The message is always the same: we understand you’re sincere, but sometimes you have to drop your reflexive “anti-Americanism,” drop your blinkered adherence to “principled opposition” and live in the real world**

## DOUBLE STANDARDS

**Investigative journalist Peter Osborne writes: "To sum up . . . the British parliament sent the green light to Saudi Arabia and its allies to carry on bombing, maiming and killing. I have reported politics from Westminster for almost 25 years and can recall few more shocking parliamentary events"**

Saudi Arabia's blockade has worsened the crisis. A World Food Program official warned: "An entire generation could be crippled by hunger." At least 14-million Yemenis, more than half of the country's population, are going hungry.

More than one-third of all Saudi-led air raids on Yemen have hit civilian sites, such as schools, hospitals, markets, mosques and economic infrastructure.

A minimum of 10,000 civilians have been killed or wounded in the US-backed war, according to the UN humanitarian coordinator, an average of 13 civilian casualties a day. At least 2.8-million Yemenis, including more than 400,000 families, have been forced to flee their homes because of the violence. In October, a Saudi bombing raid killed 140 people and wounded 525 at a funeral. At least four medical facilities operated by the humanitarian group Doctors Without Borders have been bombed by the coalition in the past year. British-manufactured cluster bombs have been found in Yemeni villages, all but confirming the banned weapons are being used. The United Nations has repeatedly reported that the Saudi-led coalition is responsible for nearly two-thirds of civilian deaths.

The Obama regime has done more than \$110-billion in arms deals with the Saudi tyranny. As we noted in a recent media alert, the British regime agreed to £3.3-billion of arms exports to Saudi Arabia in the first year of the country's war on Yemen, including £2.2-billion-worth of equipment such as drones, helicopters, and other aircraft. The Saudis have been sold £1.1-billion-worth of bombs, missiles, grenades, and countermeasures, and armoured vehicles and tanks worth £430,000.

In a leaked draft report the Committee on Arms Exports Control, which comprises 16 MPs from four parties, said it was likely British weapons had been used to violate international law: "The weight of evidence of violations of international humanitarian law by the Saudi-led coalition is now so

great, that it is very difficult to continue to support Saudi Arabia."

The Independent reports: "Since 2010 Britain has also sold arms to 39 of the 51 countries ranked 'not free' on the Freedom House 'Freedom in the world' report, and 22 of the 30 countries on the UK Government's own human rights watch list."

As for Thornberry's motion, more than 100 Labour MPs – almost half the Labour Party – failed to support it. As a result, it was defeated by 283 votes to just 193, a majority of 90.

Labour MP John Woodcock had dismissed the motion in advance as mere "gesture politics." In justifying his stance, he even welcomed the involvement of UK personnel in the Saudi bombing campaign: "the support we are giving is largely to help train pilots in targeting practices that reduce civilian casualties."

As revealed by Campaign Against Arms Trade, Woodcock attended a dinner in February, 2015, in support of the arms trade as a guest of BAE. As the chairman of Labour's backbench defence committee, he is an ardent supporter of Trident, describing the announcement that Labour would support it as a "very thoughtful birthday present."

Investigative journalist Peter Osborne writes: "To sum up . . . the British parliament sent the green light to Saudi Arabia and its allies to carry on bombing, maiming and killing. I have reported politics from Westminster for almost 25 years and can recall few more shocking parliamentary events.

"Shocking – but not surprising. The Yemen vote demonstrates something that has been apparent ever since the vote on 18 March 2003 to support the invasion of Iraq: the party of war holds a majority in the Commons.

"It comprises virtually all of the Conservative Party and the Blairite wing of Labour."

Since the rejection of the motion, "Do something!" crusaders such as Aaronovitch, Freedland and Cohen have printed

not a word about “our” “responsibility to protect” civilian life in Yemen.

In the entire UK mainstream press, we found a single opinion piece, in the Guardian, condemning the vote under the title, “The Labour rebels who didn’t back the Yemen vote have blood on their hands.” A curiously vague Guardian leader commented merely of the Yemen motion: “Though admirable, it could change government policy only indirectly, by contributing to moral pressure.”

Apart from that, the only other mention was in passing in a comment piece on the Yemen disaster in the Telegraph.

No corporate journalist raised the ques-

tion that cried out to be asked: if Britain cares enough about civilian suffering in Kosovo, Libya and Syria to actually go to war, then how can it not merely suspend support for Saudi Arabia while potential war crimes are investigated?

Literally no journalist made the point that the vote makes a complete nonsense of the UK’s famed enthusiasm for “responsibility to protect.” The warmongers’ silence tells us their “compassion” is a tool of realpolitik, nothing more.

CT

David Edwards and David Cromwell are co-editors of Medialens, the UK media watchdog – www.medialens.org

The vote makes a complete nonsense of the UK’s famed enthusiasm for “responsibility to protect”

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# CONFRONTATION AT

A PHOTO ESSAY BY RICHARD BLUECLOUD CASTANEDA



# STANDING ROCK



Enveloped in a clouds of tear gas fumes, a protestor stands defiant against the riot cops.



Armed and dangerous: Rio cop prepares for action against unarmed protestors at Standing Rock.

Sioux Water Protectors fighting the \$3.7-billion Dakota Access Pipeline faced a second brutal stand-off with riot police after building a wooden pedestrian bridge over the Cantapeta Creek in North Dakota on November 2, to get to ancestral burial grounds they say are being damaged by the pipeline construction.

After pulling apart the bridge with boats, the heavily armed cops repelled protestors as they swam and used their own boats to cross the creek.

The bitterly-contested Dakota Access Pipeline is being built to carry domestic crude oil across four states, and it is feared that tribal lands will be destroyed and precious water sources will be damaged by any oil leaks.

141 protestors were arrested on October 27 after police used rubber bullets, concussion grenades, Tasers and armed military vehicles to crush another protest at the pipeline site.



**Above:**  
Blessing the makeshift  
bridge built to take water  
Protectors to tribal burial  
grounds across Cantapeta  
Creek

**Right:**  
Crossing the wooden  
bridge, arms full of planks  
to make it stronger and  
safer.



## IN THE PICTURE



**ABOVE:**  
Heavily armed cops stand on the far side of Cantapeta creek awaiting the first attempts by protestors to get across.

**Left:**  
A cop boat demolishes the bridge.



**Above:**  
After their bridge was demolished, Water Protectors swam and used small boats to cross the creek, where they were sprayed with clouds of teargas.

**Right: make love, not war!**



## IN THE PICTURE



**Above:**  
Treating a teargas  
victim.

**Left:**  
Drumming up support  
for the protestors from  
the other side of Can-  
tapeta Creek.

Special thanks to  
Greenpeace USA  
[www.greenpeace.org](http://www.greenpeace.org)

# Tehran, USA

One veteran's war on Islamophobia, by **Nate Terani**

**As I heard voices chanting "Death to America!" I remember wondering if I would survive to see my parents again**

I'm not an immigrant, but my grandparents are. More than 50 years ago, they arrived in New York City from Iran. I grew up mainly in central New Jersey, an American kid playing little league for the Raritan Red Sox and soccer for the Raritan Rovers. In 1985, I travelled with my family to our ancestral land. I was only eight, but old enough to understand that the Iranians had lost their liberty and freedom. I saw the abject despair of a people who, in a desperate attempt to bring about change, had ushered in nationalist tyrants led by Ayatollah Khomeini.

What I witnessed during that year in Iran changed the course of my life. In 1996, at age 19, wanting to help preserve the blessings of liberty and freedom we enjoy in America, I enlisted in the US Navy. Now, with the rise of Donald Trump and his nationalist alt-right movement, I've come to feel that the values I sought to protect are in jeopardy.

In Iran, theocratic fundamentalists sowed division and hatred of outsiders – of Westerners, Christians, and other religious minorities. Here in America, the right wing seems to have stolen passages directly from their playbook as it spreads hatred of immigrants, particularly Muslim ones. This form of nationalistic bigotry – Islamophobia – threatens the heart of our nation. When I chose to serve in the military, I did so to protect what I viewed as our sacred foundation-

al values of liberty, equality, and democracy. Now, 20 years later, I've joined forces with fellow veterans to again fight for those sacred values, this time right here at home.

## **"Death to America!"**

As a child, I sat in my class at the international school one sunny morning and heard in the distance the faint sounds of gunfire and rising chants of "Death to America!" That day would define the rest of my life.

It was Tehran, the capital of Iran, in 1985. I was attending a unique school for bilingual students who had been born in Western nations. It had become the last refuge in that city with any tolerance for Western teaching, but that also made it a target for military fundamentalists. As the gunfire drew closer, I heard boots pounding the marble tiles outside, marching into our building, and thundering down the corridor toward my classroom. As I heard voices chanting "Death to America!" I remember wondering if I would survive to see my parents again.

In a flash of green and black uniforms, those soldiers rushed into our classroom, grabbed us by our shirt collars, and yelled at us to get outside. We were then packed into the school's courtyard where a soldier pointed his rifle at our group and commanded us to look up. Almost in unison, my classmates and I raised our eyes and saw the flags of our many nations being

torn down and dangled from the balcony, then set ablaze and tossed, still burning, into the courtyard. As those flags floated to the ground in flames, the soldiers fired their guns in the air. Shouting, they ordered us – if we ever wanted to see our families again – to swear allegiance to the Grand Ayatollah Khomeini and trample on the remains of the burning symbols of our home countries. I scanned the smoke that was filling the courtyard for my friends and classmates and, horrified, watched them capitulate and begin to chant, “Death to America!” as they stomped on our sacred symbols.

I was so angry that, young as I was, I began to plead with them to come to their senses. No one paid the slightest attention to an eight year old and yet, for the first time in my life, I felt something like righteous indignation. I suspect that, born and raised in America, I was already imbued with such a sense of privilege that I just couldn’t fathom the immense danger I was in. Certainly, I was acting in ways no native Iranian would have found reasonable.

Across the smoke-filled courtyard, I saw a soldier coming at me and knew he meant to force me to submit. I spotted an American flag still burning, dropped to my knees, and grabbed the charred pieces from underneath a classmate’s feet. As the soldier closed in on me, I ducked and ran, still clutching my charred pieces of flag into a crowd of civilians who had gathered to witness the commotion. The events of that day would come to define all that I have ever stood for – or against.

### **“Camel jockey,” “Ayatollah,” and “Gandhi”**

My parents and I soon returned to the United States and I entered third grade. More than anything, I just wanted to be normal, to fit in and be accepted by my peers. Unfortunately, my first name, Nader (which I changed to Nate upon joining the Navy), and my swarthy Middle Eastern appearance, were little help on that score, eliciting regular jibes from my classmates. Even at

that young age, they had already mastered a veritable thesaurus of ethnic defamation, including “camel jockey,” “sand-nigger,” “raghead,” “ayatollah,” and ironically, “Gandhi” (which I now take as a compliment). My classmates regularly sought to “otherise” me in those years, as if I were a lesser American because of my faith and ethnicity.

Yet I remember that tingling in my chest when I first donned my Cub Scout uniform – all because of the American flag patch on its shoulder. Something felt so good about wearing it, a feeling I still had when I joined the military. It seems that the flag I tried to rescue in Tehran was stapled to my heart, or that’s how I felt anyway as I wore my country’s uniform.

When I took my oath of enlistment in the US Navy, I gave my mom a camera and asked her to take some photos, but she was so overwhelmed with pride and joy that she cried throughout the ceremony and managed to snap only a few images of the carpet. She cried even harder when I was selected to serve as the first Muslim-American member of the US Navy Presidential Ceremonial Honour Guard. On that day, I was proud, too, and all the taunts of those bullies of my childhood seemed finally silenced.

Being tormented because of my ethnicity and religion in those early years had another effect on me. It caused me to become unusually sensitive to the nature of other people. Somehow, I grasped that, if it weren’t for a fear of the unknown, there was an inherent goodness and frail humanity lurking in many of the kids who bullied and harassed me. Often, I discovered, those same bullies could be tremendously kind to their families, friends, or even strangers. I realized, then, that if, despite everything, I could lay myself bare and trust them enough to reach out in kindness, I might in turn gain their trust and they might then see me, too, and stop operating from such a place of fear and hate.

Through patience, humour, and under-

**As the soldier closed in on me, I ducked and ran, still clutching my charred pieces of American flag into a crowd of civilians who had gathered to witness the commotion**

## TURNING POINTS

**By the time I completed my military service in 2006, I had begun to understand that our policies in the Middle East, similarly disturbed, seemed in pursuit of little more than perpetual warfare**

standing, I was able to offer myself as the embodiment of my people and somehow defang the “otherness” of so much that Americans found scary. To this day, I have friends from elementary school, middle school, high school, and the military who tell me that I am the only Muslim they have ever known and that, had they not met me, their perspective on Islam would have been wholly subject to the prevailing fear-based narrative that has poisoned this country since September 11, 2001.

In 1998, I became special assistant to the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy and then, in 1999, I was recruited to serve at the Defense Intelligence Agency. In August 2000, I transferred to the Naval Reserve.

In the wake of 9/11, I began to observe how so many of my fellow Americans were adopting a fundamentalist “us vs. them” attitude towards Muslims and Islam. I suddenly found myself in an America where the scattered insults I had endured as a child took on an overarching and sinister meaning and form, where they became something like an ideology and way of life.

By the time I completed my military service in 2006, I had begun to understand that our policies in the Middle East, similarly disturbed, seemed in pursuit of little more than perpetual warfare. That, in turn, was made possible by the creation of a new enemy: Islam – or rather of a portrait, painted by the powers-that-be, of Islam as a terror religion, as a hooded villain lurking out there somewhere in the desert, waiting to destroy us. I knew that attempting to dispel, through the patient approach of my childhood, the kind of Islamophobia that now had the country by the throat was not going to be enough. Post-9/11 attacks on Muslims in the US and elsewhere were not merely childish taunts.

For the first time in my life, in a country gripped by fear, I believed I was witnessing a shift, en masse, toward an American fundamentalism and ultra-nationalism that reflected a wanton lack of reason, not to mention fact. As a boy in Iran, I had witnessed

the dark destination down which such a path could take a country. Now, it seemed to me, in America’s quest to escape the very demons we had sown by our own misadventures in the Middle East, and forsaking the hallmarks of our founding, we risked becoming everything we sought to defeat.

### **The boy in the schoolyard grown up**

On February 10, 2015, three young American students, Yusor Abu-Salha, Razan Abu-Salha, and Deah Shaddy Barakat, were executed at an apartment complex in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The killer was a gun-crazy white man filled with hate and described by his own daughter as “a monster.” Those assassinations struck a special chord of sorrow and loss in me. My mom and I cried and prayed together for those students and their families.

The incident in Chapel Hill also awoke in me some version of the righteous indignation I had felt so many years earlier in that smoke-filled courtyard in Iran. I would be damned if I stood by while kids in my country were murdered simply because of their faith. It violated every word of the oath I had taken when I joined the military and desecrated every value I held in my heart as a sacred tenet of our nation. White nationalists and bigots had, by then, thrown down the gauntlet for so much of this, using Islamophobia to trigger targeted assassinations in the United States. This was terrorism, pure and simple, inspired by hate-speakers here at home.

At that moment, I reached out to fellow veterans who, I thought, might be willing to help – and it’s true what they say about soul mates being irrevocably drawn to each other. When I contacted Veterans For Peace, an organization dedicated to exposing the costs of war and militarism, I found the leadership well aware of the inherent dangers of Islamophobia and of the need to confront this new enemy. So Executive Director Michael McPhearson formed a committee of vets from around the country to

decide how those of us who had donned uniforms to defend this land could best battle the phenomenon – and I, of course, joined it.

From that committee emerged Veterans Challenge Islamophobia (VCI). It now has organizers in Arizona, Georgia, New Jersey, and Texas, and that's just a beginning. Totally nonpartisan, VCI focuses on politicians of any party who engage in hate speech. We've met with leaders of American Muslim communities, sat with them through Ramadan, and attended their Iftar dinners to break our fasts together. In the wake of the Orlando shooting, we at VCI also mobilized to fight back against attempts to pit the Muslim community against the LG-BTQ+ community.

Our group was born of the belief that, as American military veterans, we had a responsibility to call out bigotry, hatred, and the perpetuation of endless warfare. We want the American Muslim community to know that they have allies, and that those allies are indeed veterans as well. We stand with them and for them and, for those of us who are Muslim, among them.

Nationalism and xenophobia have no place in American life, and I, for my part, don't think Donald Trump or anyone like him should be able to peddle Islamophobia in an attempt to undermine our national unity. Without Islamophobia, there no longer exists a "clash of civilizations." Without Islamophobia, whatever the problems

in the world may be, there is no longer an "us vs. them" and it's possible to begin re-imagining a world of something other than perpetual war.

As of now, this remains the struggle of my life, for despite my intense love for America, some of my countrymen increasingly see American Muslims as the "other," the enemy.

My Mom taught me as a boy that the only thing that mattered was what was in my heart. Now, with her in mind and as a representative of VCI, when I meet fellow Americans I always remember my childhood experiences with my bullying peers. And I still lay myself bare, as I did then. I give trust to gain trust, but always knowing that these days this isn't just a matter of niceties. It's a question of life or death. It's part of a battle for the soul of our nation.

In many ways, I still consider myself that boy in the school courtyard in Tehran trying to rescue charred pieces of that flag from those trampling feet. It's just that now I'm doing it in my own country. **CT**

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***Nate Terani** is a veteran of the US Navy and served in military intelligence with the Defense Intelligence Agency. He is currently a member of the leadership team at Common Defense PAC and regional campaign organizer with Veterans Challenge Islamophobia. He is a featured columnist with the Arizona Muslim Voice newspaper. This article first appeared at [www.tomdispatch.com](http://www.tomdispatch.com)*

**Our group was born of the belief that, as American military veterans, we had a responsibility to call out bigotry, hatred, and the perpetuation of endless warfare**

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# A collection of thoughts on US foreign policy

William Blum shares some snippets on the empire's march to World War III

**President Obama classified Russia as one of the three threats to the world along with the Islamic State and the ebola virus**

Louis XVI needed a revolution, Napoleon needed two historic military defeats, the Spanish Empire in the New World needed multiple revolutions, the Russian Czar needed a communist revolution, the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires needed World War I, Nazi Germany needed World War II, Imperial Japan needed two atomic bombs, the Portuguese Empire in Africa needed a military coup at home, the Soviet Empire needed Mikhail Gorbachev . . . What will the American Empire need?

“I don't believe anyone will consciously launch World War III. The situation now is more like the eve of World War I, when great powers were armed and ready to go when an incident set things off. Ever since Gorbachev naively ended the Cold War, the hugely over-armed United States has been actively surrounding Russia with weapons systems, aggressive military exercises, NATO expansion. At the same time, in recent years the demonisation of Vladimir Putin has reached war propaganda levels. Russians have every reason to believe that the United States is preparing for war against them, and are certain to take defensive measures. This mixture of excessive military preparations and propaganda against an “evil enemy” make it very easy for some trivial incident to blow it all up.” – Diana Johnstone, author

of “Queen of Chaos: The Misadventures of Hillary Clinton”

In September 2013 President Obama stood before the United Nations General Assembly and declared, “I believe America is exceptional.” The following year at the UN, the president classified Russia as one of the three threats to the world along with the Islamic State and the ebola virus. On March 9, 2015 President Barack Obama declared Venezuela “an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.”

Vladimir Putin, speaking at the UN in 2015, addressing the United States re its foreign policy: “Do you realise what you have done?” Since the end of World War 2, the United States has:

- Attempted to overthrow more than 50 foreign governments, most of which were democratically-elected.
- Dropped bombs on the people of more than 30 countries.
- Attempted to assassinate more than 50 foreign leaders.
- Attempted to suppress a populist or nationalist movement in 20 countries.
- Grossly interfered in democratic elections in at least 30 countries.\*

Plus ... although not easily quantified ... has been more involved in the practice of

torture than any other country in the world ... for over a century ... not just performing the actual torture, but teaching it, providing the manuals, and furnishing the equipment. – See chapter 18 of William Blum, *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*.

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On October 28, 2016 Russia was voted off the UN Human Rights Council. At the same time Saudi Arabia won a second term, uncontested. Does anyone know George Orwell's email address?

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A million refugees from Washington's warfare are currently over-running Europe. They're running from Afghanistan and Iraq; from Libya and Somalia; from Syria and Pakistan.

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"The Plan is for the United States to rule the world. The overt theme is unilateralism, but it is ultimately a story of domination. It calls for the United States to maintain its overwhelming superiority and prevent new rivals from rising up to challenge it on the world stage. It calls for dominion over friends and enemies alike. It says not that the United States must be more powerful, or most powerful, but that it must be absolutely powerful." – Vice-President Dick Cheney, West Point lecture, June 2002

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Two flew over the cuckoo's nest: "We are, as a matter of empirical fact and undeniable history, the greatest force for good the world has ever known. ... security and freedom for millions of people around the globe have depended on America's military, economic, political, and diplomatic might." – Dick Cheney and Liz Cheney, "Why the world needs a powerful America" (2015)

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State Dept spokesperson Mark Toner: "Assad must go, even if Syria goes with him."

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Many of the moves the Obama administration has made in terms of its Cuba policy are in lockstep with Bill Clinton's, as expressed in the recommendations of a 1999 task force

report from the Council on Foreign Relations. The report asserted that "no change in policy should have the primary effect of consolidating, or appearing to legitimise, the political status quo on the island."

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A successful American regime change operation in Syria would cut across definite interests of the Russian state. These include the likely use of Syria as a new pipeline route to bring gas from Qatar to the European market, thereby undercutting Gazprom, Russia's largest corporation and biggest exporter. Assad's refusal to consider such a route played no small role in Qatar's pouring billions of dollars in arms and funds into the Syrian civil war on behalf of anti-Assad forces.

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"War with Russia will be nuclear. Washington has prepared for it. Washington has abandoned the ABM treaty, created what it thinks is an ABM shield, and changed its war doctrine to permit US nuclear first strike. All of this is obviously directed at Russia, and the Russian government knows it. How long will Russia sit there waiting for Washington's first strike?" – Paul Craig Roberts, 2014

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Iran signed the nuclear accords with the United States earlier this year by agreeing to stop what it never was doing. Any Iranian nuclear ambition, real or imagined, is of course a result of American hostility towards Iran, and not the other way around.

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If the European Union was an independent and rational government it would absolutely forbid any member country from stockpiling American nuclear weapons or hosting a US anti-ballistic missile site or any other military base anywhere close to Russia's borders.

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Full Spectrum Dominance, a term the Pentagon loves to use to refer to total control of the planet: land, sea, air, space, outer space and cyberspace. Can you imagine any other country speaking this way? **CT**

**Iran signed the nuclear accords with the United States earlier this year by agreeing to stop what it never was doing**

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**William Blum**  
is the author of *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*, *Rogue State: a guide to the World's Only Super Power*, *West-Bloc Dissident: a Cold War Political Memoir*, and *America's Deadliest Export – Democracy: The Truth About US Foreign Policy and Everything Else*

# US threat to Irish neutrality

Ireland free itself from the British empire in 1922. Now there's concern over the US military's use of Shannon Airport, writes **Conn M. Hallinan**

**Irish peace activists and members of the Irish parliament, or Oireachtas Eireann, charge that an agreement between the Irish government and Washington to allow the transiting of troops and aircraft through Shannon not only violates Irish neutrality it violates international law**

*"We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and infeasible." – Proclamation of Easter Week 1916*

Controlling their own destiny has always been a bit of a preoccupation for the Irish, in large part because for 735 years someone else was in charge. From the Norman invasion in 1169 to the establishment of the Free State in 1922, Ireland's political and economic life was not its own to determine. Its young men were shipped off to fight England's colonial battles half a world away, at Isandlwana, Dum Dum, Omdurman and Kut. Almost 50,000 died in World War I, choking on gas at Ypres, clinging desperately to a beachhead at Gallipoli, or marching into German machine guns at the Somme.

When the Irish finally cast off their colonial yoke, they pledged never again to be cannon fodder in other nation's wars, a pledge that has now been undermined by the US. Once again, a powerful nation—with the acquiescence of the Dublin government—has put the Irish in harm's way.

The flashpoint for this is Shannon Airport, located in County Clare on Ireland's west coast. Since the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attack on Washington and New York, some 2.5 million US troops have passed through

the airport on their way to Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. The Shannon hub has become so important to the US that it hosts a permanent US staff officer to direct traffic. It is, in the words of the peace organization Shannonwatch, "a US forward operating base."

The airport has also been tied to dozens of CIA "rendition" flights, where prisoners seized in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan were shipped to various "black sites" in Europe, Asia, and Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

Irish peace activists and members of the Irish parliament, or Oireachtas Eireann, charge that an agreement between the Irish government and Washington to allow the transiting of troops and aircraft through Shannon not only violates Irish neutrality it violates international law.

"The logistical support for the US military and CIA at Shannon is a contravention of Ireland's neutrality," says John Lannon of the peace group Shannonwatch, and has "contributed to death, torture, starvation, forced displacement and a range of other human rights abuses."

Ireland is not a member of NATO, and it is considered officially neutral. But "neutral" in Ireland can be a slippery term. The government claims that Ireland is "militarily neutral"—it doesn't belong to any military alliances—but not "politically neutral."

But the term militarily neutral "does

not exist in international law,” says Karen Devine, an expert on neutrality at the City of Dublin’s School of Law & Government. “The decision to aid belligerents in war is . . . incompatible with Article 2 of the Fifth Hague Convention on the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in Case of War on Land.” Devine argues that “the Irish government’s decision to permit the transit of hundreds of thousands of US soldiers through Shannon Airport on their way to the Iraq War in 2003 violated international law on neutrality and set it apart from European neutrals who refused such permission.”

Article 2 of the Convention states, “Belligerents are forbidden to move troops or convoys of either munitions or war supplies across the territory of a neutral power.”

Ireland has not ratified the Hague Convention but according to British international law expert Iain Scobbie, the country is still bound by international law because Article 29 of the Irish Constitution states, “Ireland accepts the generally recognized principle of international law as its rule of conduct in relations with other states.”

The UN Security Council did not endorse the wars in Afghanistan or Iraq, making both conflicts technically illegal. Then UN General Secretary Kofi Annan said that the invasions “were not in conformity with the UN Charter. From our point of view, from the Charter’s point of view,” the invasions were “illegal.”

Shannonwatch’s Lannon says the agreement also violates the 1952 Air Navigation Foreign Military Aircraft Order that requires that “aircraft must be unarmed, carry no arms, ammunition and explosives, and must not engage in intelligence gathering and that the flights in question must not form part of a military exercises or operations.”

The Dublin government claims all US aircraft adhere to the 1952 order, although it refuses to inspect aircraft or allow any independent inspection. According to re-

tired Irish Army Captain Tom Clonan, the Irish Times security analyst, the soldiers are armed but leave their weapons on board the transports—generally Hercules C-130s—while they stretch their legs after the long cross Atlantic flight. Airport employees have also seen soldiers with their weapons.

The Irish government also says that it has been assured that no rendition flights have flown through Shannon, but Shannonwatch activists have tracked flights in and out of the airport. As for “assurances,” Washington “assured” the British government that no rendition flights used British airports, but in 2008 then Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband told Parliament that such flights did use the United Kingdom controlled island of Diego Garcia.

Investigative journalist’s Mark Danner’s book *Spiral* chronicles the grotesque nature of some of the “enhanced interrogation” techniques inflicted on those prisoners. The rendition program violated the 1987 UN Convention Against Torture, which Ireland is a party to.

Roslyn Fuller, Dublin-based scholar and author of *Beasts and Gods: How Democracy Changed Its Meaning And Lost Its Way*, says terror suspects were taken to sites where “in an appalling re-run of the Spanish Inquisition tactics, [they were] routinely tortured and mistreated in an attempt to obtain confessions and other information.”

Fuller points out that Article 11 of the Hague Convention requires that troops belonging to a “belligerent” army must be interned. “In other words, any country that would like to call itself neutral is obligated to prevent warring parties from moving troops through its territory and to gently scoop up anyone attempting to contravene this principle.”

Besides violating international law, Ireland is harvesting “the bitter fruits of the Iraq and Afghan wars” and NATO’s military intervention in Libya, charges MP Richard Boyd Barrett of the People Before Profit Party and chair of the Irish Anti-War Move-

**Roslyn Fuller, Dublin-based scholar and author, says terror suspects were taken to sites where “in an appalling re-run of the Spanish Inquisition tactics, [they were] routinely tortured and mistreated in an attempt to obtain confessions and other information”**

## BUSH'S LEGACY

**Of course Ireland is not alone in putting itself in harm's way. The US has more than 800 bases worldwide, bases that might well be targeted in a nuclear war with China or Russia**

ment. “The grotesque images of children and families washed up on Europe’s shores, desperate refugees, risking and losing their lives,” he says, “are the direct result of disastrous wars waged by the US, the UK and other major western powers over the last 12 years.”

The Irish government, says Barrett, has “colluded with war crimes and actions for which we are now witnessing the most terrible consequences.”

The government has waived all traffic control costs on military flights, costing Dublin about \$45 million from 2003 to 2015. Ireland is currently running one of the highest per capita debts in Europe and has applied austerity measures that have reduced pensions and severely cut social services, health programs and education. Other neutral European countries, like Finland, Austria and Switzerland charge the US military fees for using their airspace.

Shannon might also make Ireland collateral damage in the war on terror, according to the Irish Times’ Clonan. Irish citizens are now seen as a “hostile party,” and British Muslim cleric Anjem Choudary has named Shannon a “legitimate target,” according to Irish journalist Danielle Ryan.

The Dublin government has generally avoided open discussion of the issue, and when it comes up, ministers tend to get evasive. In response to the charge that Shannon hosted rendition flights, then Minister of Foreign Affairs Dermot Ahern said, “If anyone has evidence of any of these flights please give me a call and I will have it investigated.” But even though Amnesty International produced flights logs for 50 rendition landings at Shannon, the government did nothing. Investigations by the Council on Europe and European Parliament also confirmed rendition flights through Shannon.

Peace activists charge that attempts to raise the issue in the Irish parliament have met with a combination of stonewalling and half-truths. Apparently kissing the Blarney Stone is not just for tourists.

The government’s position finds little support among the electorate. Depending on how the questions are asked, polls indicate that between 55 and 58 percent of the Irish oppose allowing US transports to land at Shannon, and between 57 to 76 percent want to add a neutrality clause to the constitution.

The “forward base” status of Shannon puts the west of Ireland in the crosshairs in the event of a war with Russia. While that might seem far-fetched, in 2015 NATO held 14 military manoeuvres directed at Russia, and relations between NATO, the US and Moscow are at their lowest point since the height of the Cold War.

Of course Ireland is not alone in putting itself in harm’s way. The US has more than 800 bases worldwide, bases that might well be targeted in a nuclear war with China or Russia. Local populations have little say over the construction of these bases, but they would be the first casualties in a conflict.

For centuries Ireland was colonialism’s laboratory. The policies used to enchain its people—religious division and ethnic hatred—were tested out and then shipped off to India, Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria and Guyana, and Irish soldiers populate colonial graveyards on all four continents, now, once again, Ireland has been drawn into a conflict that is has no stake in.

Not that the Irish have taken this lying down. Scores of activists have invaded Shannon to block military flights and, on occasion, to attack aircraft with axes and hammers. “Pit stop of death” was one slogan peace demonstrators painted on a hanger at the airport.

That resistance harkens back to the 1916 Easter Rebellion’s proclamation that ends with the words that ring as true today as they did a century ago: “In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.” **CT**

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

# The perils of writing about toilets in India

**Lyndal Reynolds** meets a remarkable young woman who writes about corruption and exploitation in places where other journalists dare not venture

Journalist Stella Paul was midway through an interview about toilets when she found herself, and the women she was speaking to, under attack from four angry men.

“This man, he comes and he just grabs this woman by her hair and he starts dragging her on the ground and kicking her at the same time,” Paul told me.

She remembers thinking, “what is happening,” as another three men followed, beating the women, including Paul who was hit in the face. “They are blindly just beating this woman.”

“Why? Because how dare you talk about getting a toilet when you are untouchable, you are Dalit.”

The attack took place while Paul – a 2016 recipient of the International Women’s Media Foundation Courage in Journalism Award and IPS news contributor – was researching a story about women forced into dual slavery in illegal mines in South-East, India. The women Paul was interviewing had been forced to work unpaid in the mines, but were trying to escape, some of them were attending school, and they had now found out they were potentially going to have their own toilet under a government sanitation scheme.

“They employ the poorest of the people, and they bring in a lot of women from the untouchable section – Dalit – and the

extremely marginalised classes in India. “It was revealed that the whole industry was illegal – no licence taken from the government – and they were taking out iron ore and selling it to China.

“The whole day they force them to work in the mine and at night they force themselves on these women, they force them to serve them sexually. “So it’s dual slavery, they don’t get paid, and they have to allow these men to sleep with them and their daughters.”

Paul, who comes from North-Eastern India, travels her home country talking to some of the poorest people, unearthing stories of unbelievable exploitation and corruption in places where other journalists often think not to look. She often spends her time listening to the stories of untouchables – people who other Indians don’t consider worthy of having opinions.

“When you are untouchable, your life is no better than a dog’s life. Your job is to go there and defecate in the open, because that is how you have always done and that is how you will always do.

“Honestly I don’t feel anybody will tell these stories of these women of dual slavery, of (the) little changes that they are making in the face of huge threats.

“I don’t see these stories anywhere, I don’t think anybody will tell them and how can I not tell their stories? So that’s my

**The women Paul was interviewing had been forced to work unpaid in the mines, but were trying to escape**

## THE UNTOUCHABLES

More than 500 million people in India, almost half of the total population, still defecate in the open



Paul interviews Dalit women in Hamirpur - a district in Northern India. All of these women have been abandoned by their husbands who fled to escape drought.

Photo: Stella Paul / IPS.

choice to go there and tell it.”

But Paul believes that although her kind of journalism often comes with little recognition she is also constantly rewarded.

“Once you start going there, meeting these people you can never become a bitter cynical skeptical person who will look down on poor people,” she says.

Listening to these stories has helped her grow in empathy and become a better person, she says. “That is the best bonus of being a journalist, that there is this huge growth potential, internal growth.”

Yet by listening to the disenfranchised, Paul often finds herself getting into trouble, as was the case when her interviews with the women about toilets uncovered local corruption.

“It was a positive story on how a section of these women is now coming out of (slavery). I was there in a village and there was a group of women (telling me) they have started going to school . . . they are going to rebuild their lives.”

Yet by daring to talk about having their own toilets the women had stepped into

dangerous territory. The government of India had allotted funds to the state as part of an anti-defecation drive.

More than 500-million people in India, almost half of the total population, still defecate in the open. According to UNICEF open defecation is a serious threat to public health and an underlying reason why 188,000 children under five die from diarrhoea every year in India.

“There is a lot of money that is coming in and these men, the local government, they are actually stealing this money,” said Paul.

This is why the women talking to Paul about toilets was met with violence. After getting punched again while rescuing a girl she had asked to take photos for her, Paul marched straight to the office of a senior local official. But the commissioner sat behind a transparent window clearly unoccupied while his receptionist told Paul he was too busy to see her.

Paul didn't give up, returning the next day. “We finally got to meet him, but what I wanted was not to complain about what happened to me but to interview him about

the sanitation project because I wanted to get my story first.” she said.

The commissioner pretended not to understand Paul’s English or Hindi.

“Finally he gave me one sentence and I could complete my story.”

Paul herself comes from a part of India officially designated as a “disturbed region.”

“My home province is in the North Eastern part of India, which borders China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. The army has a special power act and under a law they are legally authorised to go and take special action against people there. Therefore security forces (can go) to anybody’s home without a warrant at any time of the night or the day.

“There is rampant gender violence there committed by the army. Very few male reporters actually report that – it’s the women reporters who report these things.”

Paul says that even in apparently peaceful parts of India, gender violence “is rampant” and “women reporters are specifically targeted.”

“A guy reporter never has to worry about being touched inappropriately, groped, assaulted, molested or raped.”

She says that reporting on development issues like gender violence or gender inequality is difficult because a lot of people, including government officials, don’t believe these issues are important.

“Without these issues being solved there is no real progress, no real development so we have to report on them, but then there are people who believe that these issues do not matter which makes you feel very lonely.”

Paul herself almost did not survive childhood because she was born a girl. When she was two, and sick with diphtheria, part of her family did not see it as worth treating her, because she was a girl. She survived because her mother fought to save her.

Preference for male sons has led to a ratio of 919 girls to every 1000 boys in India, according to the 2011 census.

Courage in journalism often focuses on reporting on war zones, but reporting on gender violence is also a form of war reporting, Chi Yvonne Leina, a journalist from Cameroon and Africa Lead at World Pulse told IPS.

“Violence against women is the longest most continuous and the most dangerous war we are having on earth.”

“Stories such as those Stella tells – people don’t necessarily know until they dig through in the community,” said Leina.

But this digging can lead to negative reactions, says Leina.

“When you are attacking a culture, you are alone . . . when soldiers go to war they are going in numbers, but when you, as a reporter, are in face of a culture coming against the culture alone, you are alone against a whole community. Anything can happen and maybe you can disappear. Where I come from journalists disappear, they don’t die, they disappear.”

Paul has received threats, both anonymous and to her face that she, too, will be made to disappear. While reporting on brick kilns using child labour in her home state a man grabbed her phone and threw it in the river. “He said: ‘Do you see that phone; it didn’t take seconds to disappear in the river. We make people disappear just like that,’ and then he was snapping his fingers,” Paul said.

Paul is one of three 2016 recipients of the Courage in Journalism Award, alongside Janine di Giovanni, Middle East editor of Newsweek and Mabel Cáceres editor-in-chief of El Búho Magazine. The awards were presented at ceremonies held in New York and Los Angeles in late October. Reeyot Alemu, of Ethiopia the 2012 recipient of the award was also honoured at the ceremony – she was previously unable to attend after being jailed for 1963 days. **CT**

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*Lyndal Reynolds* wrote this story for the International Press Service (IPS) at [www.ipsnews.net](http://www.ipsnews.net)

**Reporting on development issues like gender violence or gender inequality is difficult because a lot of people, including government officials, don’t believe these issues are important**

# Fear: The new normal for Paris

A year since terror attacks, Paris is a city afraid and divided, says **Joseph Downing**

**Parisians have expressed shock at the growing frequency of evacuations due to suspicious packages and vehicles – these were not widespread before the recent wave of attacks**

It has been a year since the attacks on November 13, 2015, chilled all Parisians – Muslim, Christian, Jewish and secular alike – to the core. In coordinated attacks on a football match and a music concert, 130 innocent civilians lost their lives, and hundreds more were injured. The immediate impacts were obvious: police began a manhunt for suspects which would lead all the way to Brussels, and French President François Hollande imposed a nationwide state of emergency which remains in place to this day.

Further atrocities have occurred across France, from Rouen in the north to Nice in the south. But Paris has been the symbolic and geographical centre of such attacks – and they have transformed the city in ways which are still coming to light.

Paris is a global hub for business, arts, diplomacy and culture, and the wider region is home to more than 12-million people. As with other large cities that have experienced terror attacks, such as London and New York, life simply had to go on. But it is not the same as before. Parisians have had to settle into a bizarre “new normal,” where daily routines are interrupted by unfamiliar sights, sounds and inconveniences.

Perhaps the most obvious change has been the introduction of the huge security programme, “Operation Sentinelle:” a major military deployment in civilian

areas to complement France’s “Plan Vigipirate” terror alert system. As a result of these measures, Paris has seen the largest deployment of military personnel since the second world war.

Of the 10,000 soldiers deployed nationally, more than 6,500 are based in the Paris metropolitan area. Parisians have had to adjust to the sight of military uniforms patrolling subway stations, museums, major streets and religious sites. While these troops were deployed to support police and reassure civilians, they have also served as a constant reminder that life has not fully returned to normal.

If anything, the atmosphere of the city has grown tense, and residents have become jumpy. Parisians have expressed shock at the growing frequency of evacuations due to suspicious packages and vehicles – these were not widespread before the recent wave of attacks. This sense of unease has manifested in unexpected ways.

## **Safe schools**

One of the more disturbing new measures has been the decision to allow Parisian high school students to smoke on school premises. This behaviour has been banned since the early 1990s, but schools are anxious to prevent groups of students gathered outside high school gates from

becoming targets.

Students have also been briefed on what to do in the event of a terrorist attack or incursion into school territory. During a recent research trip for a new project in France, the parents of Parisian school children have told me that their children were instructed to hide under their desks and remain silent, if the alarm is raised that a heavily armed terrorist is rampaging through their high school. This has deeply shocked them.

The lycée holds a special space in French life, as a place for children to experiment with their identities, have teen romances and grow up. This securitisation of school spaces curtails the sense of innocence which once accompanied education in France. Of course, there are inequalities between the prestigious institutions on the left bank, and the crumbling, ineffective schools in the poorer Parisian suburbs where I have done much of my research. And indeed, bullying is a terrible problem right across the spectrum.

But these measures mark a significant shift in the way parents, teachers and students regard the lycée: they have gone from seeing it a safe space, to a target for political violence. The students, however, are apparently not as concerned by this as their parents. Many simply haven't experienced less troubled times: for them, this is normal.

### On the periphery

The suburbs on the outskirts of Paris have changed just as much as the centre. While extra security has been deployed to reassure residents in Paris proper, the interventions in areas such as Saint Denis in the north, and Vitry to the south, have had a rather different effect.

The communities which live in these areas tend to be poorer, and have higher numbers of migrants, than the rest of the city. In the wake of the Paris attacks, they have experienced an intensification of

longstanding difficulties, where those of north and West African origin are denied jobs, treated with suspicion, and subject to outright hostility.

While reports suggest that these sites of poverty and high numbers of migrants are the origin of the recent wave of attacks, the overwhelming majority of residents – whether Muslim or not – have no sympathy for terrorism. Yet these same communities have overwhelmingly been targeted with extra-judicial powers: individuals have been wrongly confined to house arrest, detained in prison and had their lives and business ruined as a result. One shop keeper was detained because someone known to associate with extremists was a regular customer at his shop.

Sadly, there have been several moments when this hostility has tipped over into civilian life. For instance, earlier this year two Muslim women were ejected from a cafe by the owner, who was filmed telling them that “all terrorists are Muslim, and all Muslims are terrorists.” Around France, the “burkini ban” has further fuelled anti-Islamic sentiment, with some claiming the garment expresses an “allegiance to terrorist movements.”

Both sides of Paris – a city of unparalleled inequality and marginalisation across Western Europe – are suffering from the effects of this “new normal”. Civilians, politicians and scholars must know that the way to over these attacks is not to “protect” one side of the city from another. The memory of the Muslim victims of terrorism in France, and those further afield in throughout Europe, the Middle East and Asia, remind us that we all need protection from the small number of people seeking to bring violence and bloodshed into our daily lives. **CT**

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*Joseph Downing is guest lecturer at the European Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science. This article first appeared at [www.theconversation.com](http://www.theconversation.com)*

**Both sides of Paris – a city of unparalleled inequality and marginalisation across Western Europe – are suffering from the effects of this “new normal”**

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