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FEASTING ON WEIGHT-LOSS PROFITS | Sonali Kolhatkar

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Issue 258

ColdType

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June 2024



PARTICIPANTS IN GENOCIDE

In obedience to Israel, the Western political and media class is isolating itself from public opinion on Gaza in ways hard to believe / **CRAIG MURRAY** – PAGE 14



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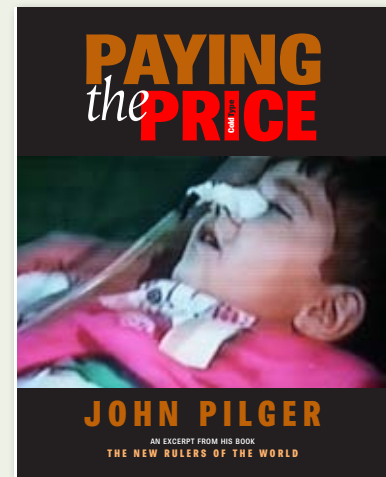
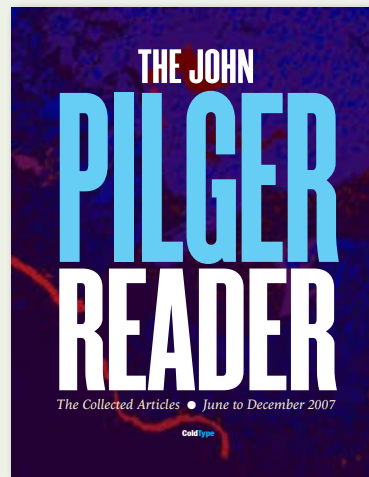
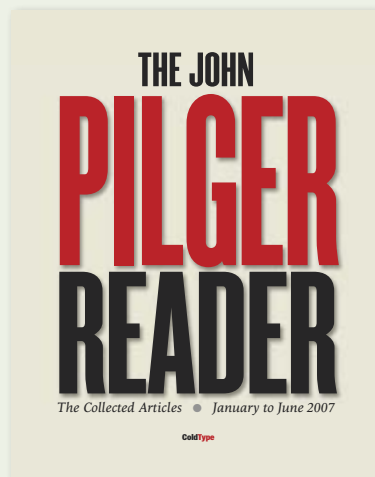
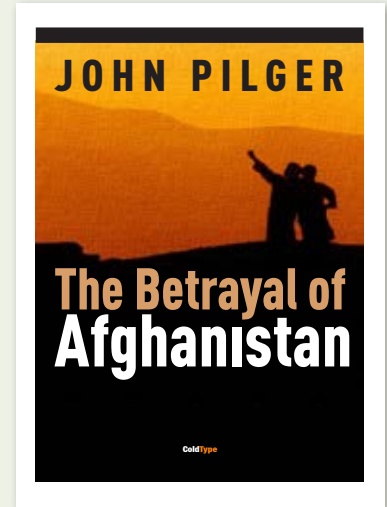
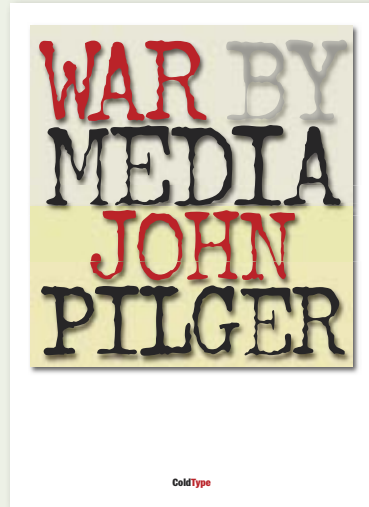
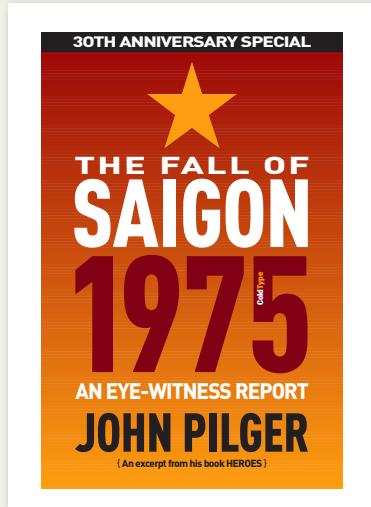


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INSIGHTS



► SONALI KOLHATKAR

Drug companies feast on weight-loss profits

Manufacturers of the new weight-loss drugs that have taken the nation by storm are salivating at the prospect of how best to extract profits from people. What Americans eat, how they diet and exercise, what nutritional supplements they take, the sugar content of their sodas, the high fructose corn syrup in their processed foods, and the price of their diabetes medication have long been objects of endless gambling on Wall Street. Now, with drugs like Mounjaro, Wegovy, and Ozempic in the mix, new vistas of corporate exploitation have opened up. Companies are

eager to figure out how best to milk people who might be losing their taste for the plentiful calories that food producers got them hooked on in the first place.

It's not a conspiracy theory that food addiction is a tool of corporate profiteering. Consider that tobacco companies, upon being regulated out of the business of addictive smoking, turned their sights onto addictive eating. The *Washington Post's* health columnist, Anahad O'Connor wrote, "In America, the steepest increase in the prevalence of hyper-palatable foods occurred between 1988 and 2001 – the

era when Philip Morris and R.J. Reynolds owned the world's leading food companies." Further, "the foods that they sold were far more likely to be hyper-palatable than similar foods not owned by tobacco companies."

Many of these ultra-processed foods are specially marketed to children, which in turn can change their brain chemistry to desire those foods for life. According to a paper published in *Science Daily*, "The current obesity epidemic is due, in part, to hormonal responses to changes in food quality: in particular, high-glycemic load foods, which fundamentally change metabolism."

Today we would be appalled at the idea of marketing tobacco to children, but the same companies pushed addictive foods onto kids, and even though Big Tobacco is no longer in the business of food, its practices remain widespread.

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The harmful impacts of unhealthy foods also fall disproportionately along racial lines, with aggressive marketing aimed at communities of colour. Black children, in particular, are subjected to significantly greater advertising of high-calorie addictive foods than their white peers.

As obesity rates have risen in the US, there is an all-too-familiar blame game that individualises the harm being caused by a capitalist system that thrives off of addiction. Doctors warn people struggling to manage their weight that they must simply restrict their intake of calories while expending more calories through rigorous exercise. High-profile reality shows such as *The Biggest Loser* have cemented the narrative that obesity is the result of individuals not being able to manage their urges to eat. And American pop culture's obsession with increasingly unattainable thinness generates shame spirals among individuals and further fuels the idea that people are fat simply because they are too weak to control themselves. Meanwhile, there are few, if any, government regulations on unhealthy foods in the US.

There's a similar analogy to be found in personal finance. American culture is steeped in the myth of a meritocracy where people struggling to make ends meet are blamed for simply not being good managers of money and where well-meaning budgeting guides are offered without the broader context of rising inequality, suppressed wages, bloated student debt, and inflation.

The causes of both, obesity and wealth inequality, are systemic,

while the solutions being offered are individualised, often spawning lucrative industries of their own.

Alongside the aggressive marketing of hyper-palatable foods is a massively profitable weight-loss industry that preys upon individual shame to the tune of more than \$60-billion a year. In fact, some of the same companies pushing high-calorie foods are in the business of weight loss.

With the advent of the new revolutionary weight-loss drugs, watching the industry reconfigure itself is fascinating. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, "Since drugs such as Mounjaro, Wegovy, and Ozempic became sensations last year, Wall Street has rushed to work out just



how disruptive the drugs, called GLP-1s, might be." By "disruptive," the *Journal* is referring to a discouraging trend in food industry profits. If weight-loss drugs curb appetite, who will buy enough Krispy Kreme donuts to keep the sugar-peddling company in business? That's a big worry for corporate CEOs and shareholders.

Another story in the *Journal* lamented the impact of these drugs on the weight-loss industry "which long pushed calorie-counting and willpower," and are now "grappling with the surging popularity of new drugs." If weight-loss drugs curb appetite without expensive gym memberships, supplements, and

programmes like WeightWatchers, will the traditional weight-loss industry go out of business?

Today, the manufacturers of weight-loss drugs are clear winners in the changing landscape of food consumption and weight, charging tens of thousands of dollars for a year's supply, and ensuring that only the wealthy have access to the thinness that our culture celebrates. Not only do the high price tags keep these drugs out of the hands of low-income people struggling to manage their weight, but also out of the hands of diabetics whom the drugs were originally meant for.

The capitalist maxim of higher demand fuelling higher prices is very much at work here. If Ozempic for example, could have a price tag of only \$57 a year its manufacturer Novo Nordisk would still reap a profit. Instead, it is being sold in the US for a whopping \$11,600 a year simply because the company can charge an arm and a leg, ensuring that the drugs remain in the hands of the wealthy while tidying up a nice profit for Novo Nordisk's shareholders.

Eventually, however, the prices will come down once the elite market for the drugs saturates. And drug manufacturers are already busy ensuring their future market share by pushing doctors to prescribe the drugs widely. One obesity expert named Dr. Lee Kaplan, who received \$1.4-million from Novo Nordisk, told his fellow physicians, "We are going to have to use these medications...for as long as the body wants to have obesity." What he didn't say out loud was that there will be obesity for as long as food manufacturers market and sell junk foods.

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Ultimately, our individual appetites and waistlines are pawns in the highly lucrative game of profit extraction that private companies and industries play. It is in the interest of drug manufacturers that Americans remain hooked on hyper-palatable high-calorie foods so that a market exists for their weight-loss drugs. The ultra-processed food industry is becoming symbiotic with the weight-loss drug industry. The former ensures we

eat poorly and the latter is there to feed off our shame. **CT**

Sonali Kolhatkar is the founder, host and executive producer of “Rising Up With Sonali,” a television and radio show that airs on Free Speech TV (Dish Network, DirecTV, Roku) and Pacifica stations KPFF, KPFA, and affiliates.

This article was produced by Economy for All, a project of the Independent Media Institute.

March saw the highest number of British spy flights over Gaza with 44 missions.

The new information comes amid speculation that the International Criminal Court (ICC) is set to issue arrest warrants for Benjamin Netanyahu and his ministers. British officials could also face prosecution for complicity in war crimes, including defence secretary Grant Shapps.

All the British spy flights have taken off from RAF Akrotiri, the UK’s sprawling air base on Cyprus, and have been in the air for around six hours.

Gaza sits around 30 minutes flight time from the base so it is likely the RAF has gathered around 1,000 hours of surveillance footage over Gaza.

A British spy flight was in the air on Monday April 1 when three Britons were killed in an Israeli strike on aid workers in Gaza.

John Chapman, 57, James Henderson, 33, and James Kirby, 47, were among seven World Central Kitchen workers killed in the targeted assassination.

On that Monday, a UK spy plane departed Akrotiri at 5pm local time and arrived back at the base at 10:49pm. The Israeli airstrikes are believed to have taken place soon after 10.30pm.

Israel has not released its full footage from the incident.

A UK spy plane has also landed in Israel. On February 13, a British Shadow R1 plane flew from Akrotiri to Beersheba, Israel, arriving at 12.15pm local time. It stayed for two hours before flying back to the UK base on Cyprus.

The purpose of the visit is unclear, but Beersheba, an Israeli city in the Negev desert, is home to the

Royal Air Force



A British Shadow R1 spy plane in flight

► MATT KENNARD

UK spy planes fly 200 missions over Gaza

The Royal Air Force (RAF) has flown 200 surveillance flights over Gaza since December, it can be revealed.

The UK government refused to give any details about the flights which began on December 3 but De-

classified has independently constructed a timeline.

The extraordinary number of missions over the past five months works out at well over a flight per day and continues as Israel invades the supposedly “safe” southern city of Rafah.

INSIGHTS

Israeli Air Force's Nevatim base. This base has been the central node the US has used to deliver bombs and other weapons to Israel for its attack on Gaza.

The UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) announced on 2 December that it would begin surveillance flights over Gaza "in support of the ongoing hostage rescue activity".

"The safety of British nationals is our utmost priority," the department said. "Surveillance aircraft will be unarmed, do not have a combat role, and will be tasked solely to locate hostages".

It added: "Only information relating to hostage rescue will be passed to the relevant authorities responsible for hostage rescue."

In a debate shortly after this announcement, Shapps was asked by five different MPs whether he would share footage from the flights with the ICC, if it showed evidence of war crimes. Each time he gave an evasive answer. Last week, when asked again by another MP, the MoD appeared to deny that any footage had been shared with the court. It also refused to comment on whether the aircraft had filmed mass graves being built at Nasser and al-Shifa hospitals.

Defence minister Leo Docherty would only say: "The unarmed UK reconnaissance aircraft are employed solely for the purpose of locating the remaining hostages."

But the extraordinary number of flights, and the fact that they started nearly two months after the hostages were taken, raises suspicions that the UK is not collecting intelligence solely for this purpose.

Israeli forces are also on the ground in Gaza, and notoriously have wide-ranging surveillance capabilities in the territory. It is un-

clear what Britain's R1s can add to the hostage rescue mission.

Foreign secretary David Cameron confirmed in January that Hamas holds just two British nationals among its remaining 132 hostages.

They are understood to be Nadav Popplewell and another unnamed individual. Their families have urged Israel to reach a deal with Hamas to secure their release.

Early in May Hamas agreed to a ceasefire that would have seen hostages freed, but Benjamin Netanyahu refused to back the deal.

The Shadow R1 is known as an intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) aircraft.

It is operated by the UK military's No.14 Squadron, which is based at RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire,

in the east of England.

The UK military recently awarded a £110-million contract to the plane's manufacturer, US weapons company Raytheon, to update the aircraft and increase the British fleet from six to eight.

British R1 planes flying over Gaza have also made frequent trips to Italy for reasons that remain unclear.

Five planes have departed for Bari, while other planes landed in Brindisi, Naples and Rome. The R1 vehicles have also been doing nearly daily flights around RAF Akrotiri, which appear to be practice runs. **CT**

***Matt Kennard** is chief investigator at Declassified UK. He was a fellow and then director at the Centre for Investigative Journalism in London. Follow him on Twitter @kennardmatt*

➤ BINOY KAMPMARK

The brutal sentencing of a whistleblower

Sometimes, it's best not to leave the issue of justice to the judges. They do what they must: consult the statutes, test the rivers of power, and hope that their ruling will not be subject to appeal. David McBride, the man who revealed that Australia's special forces in Afghanistan had dimmed and muddled before exhaustion, committed atrocities and faced a compromised chain of command, was condemned on May 14 to a prison term of five years and eight months.

Without McBride's feats, there would have been no Afghan Files published by the ABC. The Brereton Inquiry, established to investigate alleged war crimes, would most likely have never been launched. (That notable document subsequently identified 39 instances of alleged unlawful killings of Afghan civilians by members of the special forces.)

In an affidavit, McBride explained how he wished Australians to realise that "Afghan civilians were being murdered and that Australian

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military leaders were at the very least turning the other way and at worst tacitly approving this behaviour”. Furthermore “soldiers were being improperly prosecuted as a smokescreen to cover [the leadership’s] inaction and failure to hold reprehensible conduct to account.”

For taking and disclosing 235 documents from defence offices mainly located in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), the former military lawyer was charged with five national security offences. He also found Australia’s whistleblowing laws feeble and fundamentally useless. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013 (Cth) provided no immunity from prosecution, a fact aided by grave warnings from the Australian government that vital evidence would be excluded from court deliberation on national security grounds.

Through the process, the Attorney-General, Mark Dreyfus, could have intervened under Section 71 of the Judiciary Act 1903 (Cth), vesting the top legal officer in the country with powers to drop prosecutions against individuals charged with “an indictable offence against the laws of the Commonwealth”. Dreyfus refused, arguing that such powers were only exercised in “very unusual and exceptional circumstances”.

At trial, chief counsel Trish McDonald SC, representing the government, made the astonishing claim that McBride had an absolute



David McBride: Jailed after revealing details of atrocities committed by Australian special forces in Afghanistan

duty to obey orders flowing from the oath sworn to the sovereign. No public interest test could modify such a duty, a claim that would have surprised anyone familiar with the Nuremberg War Crimes trials held in the aftermath of the Second World War. “A soldier does not serve the sovereign by promising to do whatever the soldier thinks is in the public interest, even if contrary to the laws made by parliament.” To justify such a specious argument, authorities from the 19th century were consulted: “There is nothing so dangerous to the civil establishment of the state as an undisciplined or reactionary army.”

ACT Justice David Mossop tended to agree, declaring that, “There is no aspect of duty that allows the accused to act in the public interest contrary to a lawful order”. A valiant effort was subsequently made by McBride’s counsel, Steven Odgers SC, to test the matter in the ACT Court of Appeal. Chief Justice Lucy McCallum heard the following submission from Odgers: “His only real argument is that what he did was the right thing. There was

an order: don’t disclose this stuff, but he bled, and did the right thing, to use his language, and the question is does the fact that he’s in breach of orders mean that he’s in breach of his duty, so that he’s got no defence?” The answer from the Chief Justice was curt: Mossop’s ruling was “not obviously wrong.”

With few options, a guilty plea was entered to three charges. Left at the mercy of Justice Mossop, the punitive sentence shocked many of McBride’s supporters.

The judge thought McBride of “good character” but possessed by a mania “with the correctness of his own opinions”. He suffered from a “misguided self-belief” and “was unable to operate within the legal framework that his duty required him to do”.

The judge was cognisant of the Commonwealth’s concerns that disclosing such documents would damage Australia’s standing with “foreign partners”, making them less inclined to share information. He also rebuked McBride for copying the documents and storing them insecurely, leaving them vulnerable to access from foreign powers. For all that, none of the identifiable risks had eventuated, and the Australian Defence Force had “taken no steps” to investigate the matter.

This brutal flaying of McBride largely centres on clouding his personal reasons. In a long tradition of mistreating whistleblowers, questions are asked as to why he decided to reveal the documents to the press. Motivation has been muddled with effect and affect. The better question, asks Peter Greste, ex-

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ecutive director of the Alliance for Journalists' Freedom, is not examining the reasons for exposing such material but the revelations they disclose. That, he argues, is where the public interest lies. Unfortunately, in Australia, tests of public interest all too often morph into a weapon fashioned to fanatically defend government secrecy.

All that is left now is for McBride's defence team to appeal on the crucial subject of duty, something so curiously rigid in Australian legal doctrine. "We think it's an issue of national importance, indeed international importance, that a western nation has such a narrow definition of duty," argued his defence lawyer, Mark Davis.

John Kiriakou, formerly of the

Central Intelligence Agency, was the only figure to be convicted, not of torture inflicted by his colleagues during the clownishly named War on Terror, but of exposing its practice. McBride is the only one to be convicted in the context of alleged Australian war crimes in Afghanistan, not for their commission, but for furnishing documentation exposing them, including the connivance of a sullied leadership. The world of whistleblowing abounds with its sick ironies. **CT**

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tary interventionism. As South Vietnam was clearly losing its struggle against North Vietnam and the NLF in the early 1960s, the US response was to send in more "trainers" while also supporting a coup against the Diem government in 1963. The coup only exacerbated corruption and instability in South Vietnam and the "trainers" could do nothing to halt the slide, hence the decision by President Johnson in 1965 to commit US combat troops, a decision of great folly, a decision Johnson had said he wouldn't make since he wasn't about to send American boys to fight a war that the Vietnamese should fight for themselves.

So, when the Biden administration promises there'll be no US troops on the ground in Ukraine, remember the Johnson administration made that same promise about Vietnam in an election year (1964), and quickly broke it after LBJ easily won the election.

"As Russia advances": Might this not be a good time to foster diplomacy before Ukrainian units are forced to retreat further? Why continue to wage such an awful war when Ukraine has so little chance of achieving victory?

When its wars and military adventures go poorly, the top option reached for on that proverbial "table" by US officials is to escalate militarily. The option that's reached for as a last resort, if at all, is diplomacy.

In the escalatory cycle of America's wars overseas, it so often starts with US meddling, foreign assistance mainly in the form of weapons and military training, followed by more weapons and trainers as events turn south, and ultimately the commitment of US troops un-

➤ WILLIAM J. ASTORE

Mission creep hits Russia-Ukraine war

A recent headline from the *New York Times* shows mission creep for NATO in the "Russia-Ukraine War: As Russia Advances, NATO Considers Sending Trainers Into Ukraine".

The move could draw the United States and Europe more directly into the war. The Biden administration continues to say there will be no American troops on the ground.

Recall that when Russia invaded Ukraine in its "special military operation," the initial response from the US and Nato was to provide defensive weaponry like anti-tank missiles and shoulder-launched SAMs.

How quickly that escalated! US aid to Ukraine is now approaching \$175-billion (both provided and promised by Congress) and included offensive weaponry, everything from long-range missiles to main battle tanks to combat aircraft. Even so, Ukrainian forces, attrited by Russia and its superior resources in manpower and especially in artillery shells, are losing this war. Hence the headline above about Nato sending "trainers" into Ukraine.

Of course, trainers are already there in Ukraine, so I suppose the headline means MORE trainers, and more openly. It's the illogic of mili-

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til the loss can no longer be denied. Then the loss is typically spun as a “win” for our brave troops, who gave their all for freedom, even as those at home who tried to stop the war and save lives are attacked for allegedly stabbing our troops in the back.

We’ve seen this movie before, and its ending is never pretty. **CT**

William J. Astore is a retired lieutenant colonel (USAF). He taught history for fifteen years at military and civilian schools. He writes at www.bracingviews.com.

requested the police to attack their students, but to no avail.

The court application noted: “On May 4, 2024, McGill representatives met with high-ranking representatives of the SPVM at their headquarters on St-Urbain street, to inform the SPVM that it believed the Encampment was illegal, as per comments made by the Court in the judgment rendered on May 1st, 2024, and to reiterate McGill’s concerns regarding the safety, security and public health risks at the Encampment.

“During this meeting, the SPVM informed McGill that an intervention would not occur in the short term, as their criteria for a police intervention were not met at that time. The SPVM suggested that McGill seek to resolve the situation peacefully over an undefined period of time, principally through dialogue with the Encampment participants.”

The McGill administration is remarkably hostile to Palestine advocacy. They refused to meet student hunger strikers calling for corporate divestment and severing ties to Israeli universities even after two were hospitalised last month.

In November the administration announced it would terminate its Memorandum of Agreement with the Students’ Society of McGill University (SSMU), which regulates fees, use of name and other matters between the university and union after undergraduates voted overwhelmingly for the Policy Against Genocide in Palestine. In the largest referendum turnout in SSMU history, 78.7 percent of undergraduates called on the administration to sever ties with

TV screenshot



Pro-Palestinian protesters camp out at McGill University in the heart of downtown Montreal

► YVES ENGLER

University told: Listen to the cops, talk to students

Even the Montreal police think the McGill University administration is too extreme in its anti-Palestinianism.

In an embarrassing setback Quebec Superior Court judge Marc St-Pierre recently rejected McGill’s request for an emergency injunction to dismantle the student divestment

encampment on its lower field, which is unused, but exceptionally well situated in downtown Montreal. The university sought a court ruling to force the Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM) to intervene with force against the three-week-old encampment. In their application to the court McGill announced that they had repeatedly

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“any corporations, institutions or individuals complicit in genocide, settler-colonialism, apartheid, or ethnic cleansing against Palestinians.”

Eighteen months earlier they also threatened to terminate their Memorandum of Agreement with SSMU when 71 percent of undergraduates supported a Palestine Solidarity Policy that called for boycotting “corporations and institutions complicit in settler-colonial apartheid against Palestinians.”

In response rock legend Roger Waters, author Yann Martel, former MP Libby Davies, author Chris Hedges and 200 others signed a public letter criticising the administration’s threats as anti-democratic and anti-Palestinian. On the eve of his 2022 performance at Montreal’s Bell Centre, Waters

participated in a well publicised online rally critical of McGill’s administration.

Over the past decade the administration has repeatedly intervened to undercut Palestine solidarity. In 2016, for instance, they blitzed students to vote against an online confirmation poll after an in-person SSMU General Assembly supported an Israel divestment motion.

The administration has engaged in other forms of anti-Palestinianism. Its representatives have repeatedly travelled to Israel and participated in events put on by the explicitly racist Jewish National Fund, which systematically discriminates against Palestinian citizens of Israel. In 2018 they gave arch anti-Palestinian

activist Hillel Neuer, head of UN Watch, an honorary degree.

The Montréal university has also had a series of accords with Tel Aviv University, which recently signed a \$4-million, three-year deal with the military to train hundreds of soldiers, as detailed in an October 972 Magazine article headlined “It’ll turn campus into an army base: Tel Aviv University (TAU) to host soldiers’ program”.

McGill also has ties to Technion, which is the Israeli university with the greatest ties to the military. “Technion has all but enlisted itself in the Israeli armed forces”, noted a pamphlet by New Yorkers Against the Cornell-Technion Partnership. Technion, for instance, developed a remote-controlled bulldozer, which the IDF uses to demolish Palestinian homes.

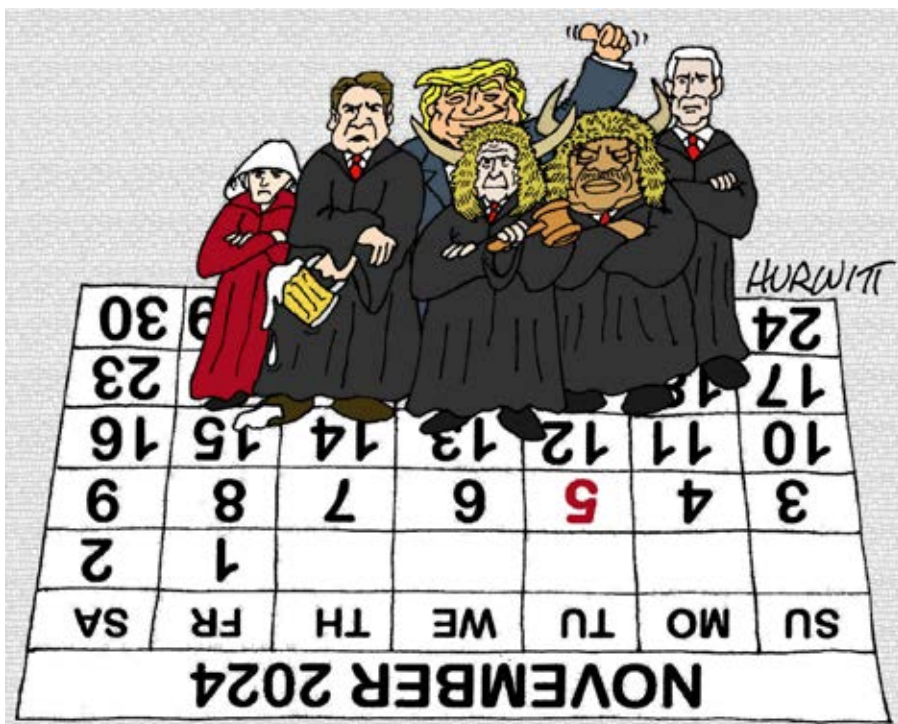
Two days after the court rejected their emergency injunction McGill announced it would seek a new court order to dismantle an encampment with over 100 tents (a previous injunction requested by a Zionist lawyer also failed). Instead of negotiating with protesters whose demands have broad support among the university community, the administration wants to force the police to intervene.

In response, students campers chant “Genocide isn’t funny, students over donor money” and “Disclose, Divest we will not stop we will not rest.”

Perhaps the McGill admin should listen to the cops. Talk to the students. Negotiate. Compromise. Settle peacefully. **CT**

Yves Engler is a Montreal-based activist and author. His latest book is Canada’s Long Fight Against Democracy (with Owen Schalk)

HURWITT'S EYE / MARK HURWITT



INSIGHTS

► IN PASSING

Israel's Netanyahu is right, for once

There is one thing we should all be able to agree with Benjamin Netanyahu on: Any comparison between Israel's war crimes and those of Hamas is, as the Israeli prime minister put it, "absurd and false" and a "distortion of reality".

Here's why:

- Israeli war crimes have been ongoing for more than seven decades, long predating Hamas' creation.

- Israel has kept the Palestinians of Gaza caged into a concentration camp for the past 17 years, denying them connection to the outside world and the essentials of life. Hamas managed to besiege a small part of Israel for one day, on October 7.

- For every Israeli killed by Hamas on October 7, Israel has slaughtered at least 35 times that number of Palestinians. Similar kill-ratios grossly skewed in Israel's favour have been true for decades.

- Israel has killed more than 15,000 Palestinian children since October – and many tens of thousands more Palestinian children are missing under rubble, maimed or orphaned. By early April, Israel had killed a further 114 children in the West Bank and injured 725 more. Hamas killed a total of 33 Israeli children on October 7.

- Israel has laid waste to Gaza's entire health sector. It has bombed its hospitals, and killed, beaten and kidnapped many hundreds of medical personnel. Hamas has not attacked one Israeli hospital.

- Israel has killed more than 100 journalists in Gaza and more than 250 aid workers. It has also

kidnapped a further 40 journalists. Most are presumed to have been taken to a secret detention facility where torture is rife. Hamas is reported to have killed one Israeli journalist on October 7, and no known aid workers.

- Israel is actively starving Gaza's population by denying it food, water and aid. That is a power – a genocidal one – Hamas could only ever dream of.

- Israel has been forcibly removing Palestinians from their lands for more than 76 years to build illegal Jewish settlements in their place. Hamas has not been able to ethnically cleanse a single Israeli, nor build a single Palestinian settlement on Israeli land.

- Some 750,000 Palestinians are reported to have been taken hostage and jailed by Israel since 1967 – an unwelcome rite of passage for Palestinian men and boys and one in which torture is routine and military trials ensure a near-100% conviction rate. Until October 7, Hamas had only ever managed to take hostage a handful of the Israeli soldiers whose job is to oppress Palestinians.

- And, while Hamas is designated a terrorist organisation by western states, those same western states laud Israel, fund and arm it, and provide it with diplomatic cover, even as the World Court rules that a plausible case has been made it is committing a genocide in Gaza.

Yes, Netanyahu is right. There is no comparison at all. **CT**

Jonathan Cook is an award-winning British journalist, who was based in Nazareth, Israel, for 20 years before returning to the UK in 2021



Participants in genocide

In obedience to Israel, the Western political and media class is isolating itself from public opinion on Gaza in ways hard to believe. Here are a few examples

Incredibly the Israeli genocide in Gaza is now reaching new heights of violence. Casualty figures are not coming in, as the attacks are so bad that bodies cannot be recovered, medics cannot travel and there are almost no medical facilities operational now anyway.

We now see that the Western injunctions not to attack Rafah were a smokescreen of lies to mask complicity. The final pocket of Gaza is being ruthlessly ethnically cleansed and its infrastructure will be destroyed like all the rest.

It is striking that this is accompanied by an absolutely shameless doubling down of support for Israel by the Western political and media classes.

Any thought that their isolation from the vast breadth of public opinion would give them pause, must be abandoned. Their Zionist lobby paymasters have jerked the chain, and rather than rowing back, we are seeing a redoubling of their efforts to suppress dissent and obscure the truth.

Some of this shameless distortion is so dissonant with the alleged

norms of Western society it is almost impossible to believe it is happening. Here are a few examples.

ONE – Dr. Ghassan Abu Sitta is a highly respected reconstructive surgeon who continued to work heroically and tirelessly in Al Shifa hospital, carrying out operation after operation, mostly on women and children, as the hospital was shelled, strafed and machine gunned around him.

He was already a surgeon of great distinction, based in Glasgow where he is now rector of Glasgow University.

When Germany banned him from entering to address the conference on Palestine from which Yanis Varoufakis and others were also barred,

Their Zionist lobby paymasters have jerked the chain, and rather than rowing back, we are seeing a redoubling of their efforts to obscure the truth

it appeared perhaps as a one-off action as part of Germany's extreme and panicked reaction to pro-Palestinian expression.

We have come to understand that Germany has a vicious hatred of Palestinians, remarkably based on the psychological trauma of inherited guilt from the Holocaust. While this is a muddled national psychosis that is plainly immoral and wrong-headed, at least it is possible to have some understanding of how it occurred.

But it then turned out that the travel ban slapped on Dr. Abu Sitta by Germany had a Schengen-wide effect as he was also banned from France. That appeared again to be something that was almost a technical accident as regards the rest of Europe.

But the Western political establishment then banned him from the Netherlands, and this time the Dutch government made it clear that it supports the ban, and is not just caught by a Schengen restriction.

[On May 14, the ICJ overturned the Schengen-wide travel ban on Abbu Sittu, *Middle East Eye reports.*]

So the major governments of the



European Union tried to forbid a distinguished surgeon from giving first-hand medical evidence of the genocide taking place. I cannot think of anything that more sharply exposes the willingness of the Western political class to abandon the most basic tenets of supposed “Western democracy” in the interests of Israel.

TWO – The willingness of the United States to use extreme violence against pro-Palestinian students on college campuses is another demonstration of the same abandonment of the pretence of democracy when it comes to Israel.

It also illustrates what has come to be a serious generational divide in Western public opinion, with young people very strongly motivated to oppose the genocide (which is

Keir Starmer's Genocide Party is an example of the success of the Israeli lobby in buying up both sides of the aisle

not to say that older people are pro-genocide, just that they are more split, particularly in the US).

This is being followed up with yet more crazed pro-Israeli legislation in the United States, seeking to designate anti-genocide and pro-Palestinian expression on campuses as anti-Semitic and thus illegal.

In many ways this typifies the reaction of the ruling class across the West. Their reaction to suddenly being exposed as the paid servants of an Israel which no longer has pop-

ular support and now causes public revulsion, is simply to attempt to ban free expression and make it specifically illegal to disagree with them.

THREE – The British Labour Party has gone even madder. Keir Starmer's Genocide Party is an outstanding example of the success of the Israeli lobby in buying up both sides of the aisle and controlling the entire neoliberal uniparty that poses as the repository of democratic “choice” in the West.

Starmer had been doing his best to conceal his explicitly expressed “unequivocal support for Israel” lately, and to row back from his straightforward assertion that Israel has the right to cut off food and water from the population of Gaza.

There had been a fake shift, from

refusing to countenance the word “ceasefire” to supporting a temporary ceasefire or a “sustainable” ceasefire – the latter being code for a ceasefire after Israel had achieved all its ethnic cleansing objectives.

But then David Lammy, the UK’s shadow secretary of state for foreign affairs, blew this out of the water with an address to US Republican senators in which he made the totally bonkers assertion that Nelson Mandela would have opposed the college protests for Palestine. Lammy is one of the ultimate examples of the politician whose voice is bought. But this was a move far beyond the pale.

FOUR – Even today, the Western media continues to spout Israeli propaganda at mains pressure. The *Guardian*, despite the thousands and thousands of dead women and children we have seen on our mobile phones this past seven months, continues to pretend that the genocidal attack is on “ Hamas militants.”

The bombing and shelling of civilians in tents is still described as “clashes.” This propaganda really does not wash any more, though it may reinforce the morale of hardened Zionists. Everybody else has seen through it months ago. Yet still they persist.

FIVE – The endgame is becoming apparent. The United States is completing its floating harbour for Gaza, and Israel has gained control of the Rafah crossing into Egypt, giving the US and Israel total control of entry points into Gaza.

Israel has announced that the Rafah crossing is to be handed over to a US mercenary force. The US can then say it is complying with US President Joe Biden’s pledge not to put US forces’ boots on the ground in Gaza, while actually taking control.

The US has justified the Israeli attack on Rafah as a “limited military



Protesters hold effigies of Labour Party leaders Keir Starmer, David Lammy and Angela Raynor at London’s rally against arming Israel on May 18

operation,” thus claiming it does not violate Biden’s purported “red line,” even though Israel has ordered over a million displaced people in Rafah to evacuate again, to nowhere.

The only possible conclusion from all of this is to reinforce my analysis that the Zionist political and media classes in the West, including Biden, Starmer, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, French President Emmanuel Macron, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, are active and willing participants in a programme of

genocide.

They had numerous opportunities to turn back. We all saw what was happening months ago.

The endgame remains the processing of the remaining Palestinian population out of Gaza through the US-controlled points of the Rafah crossing and the floating harbour, primarily into camps in the Sinai desert. The Western powers are doubling down on their genocide and on their colonial project.

I see nothing whatsoever that indicates they can have any other long-term objective in mind than the complete Israeli annexation of Gaza minus its civilian population. What do you see? **CT**

This propaganda really does not wash any more, though it may reinforce the morale of hardened Zionists. Everybody else has seen through it months ago

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ISRAEL'S USE
OF AI-DRIVEN
WARFARE

AUTOMATING GENOCIDE



VISUALIZING **PALESTINE** SOURCES bit.ly/vp-Algenocide FEB 2024 

► JONATHAN COOK

The message from Israel's torture chambers is directed at all of us

'Black sites' are about reminding those who have been colonised and enslaved that resistance is futile

On a misty November morning 21 years ago, I was desperately trying to remain camouflaged. Concealed in the foliage of an orange grove in Israel's rural Galilee, I hurriedly took photos of a drab concrete building not marked on any map.

Even the original road sign identifying the site as Facility 1391 had been removed after a local *Haaretz* newspaper investigation revealed it housed a secret prison.

I was the first foreign journalist to track down Facility 1391, most of it hidden within a heavily fortified complex built in the 1930s to suppress resistance to British rule in Palestine.

For decades, Israel had secretly held mostly Arab foreign nationals captive at the site, unknown to the Israeli courts, the Red Cross and human rights groups. Many were Lebanese citizens kidnapped during Israel's 18-year occupation of southern

Lebanon. But there were also Jordanians, Syrians, Egyptians and Iranians.

This site would soon be known as a "black site," a term popularised by Washington's invasion of Iraq that year. Drawing on techniques refined by Israel at Facility 1391, the US would, in the coming months and years, torture Iraqis and others at Abu Ghraib and Camp X-Ray in Guantanamo.

No one knew how many captives were held in Israel's Facility 1391, how long they had been there or if there were more such prisons.

However, the first testimonies from inmates revealed horrifying conditions. For most of the time, they were kept in a state of sensory deprivation, made to wear blacked-out goggles, except for when being tortured. In one case that later came to court, a Lebanese captive had been sodomised with a baton by "Major George," the facility's torturer-in-chief.



Major George would go on to become head of Israeli police relations with the Palestinian population of Jerusalem.

It was difficult not to recall Facility 1391 last month, as CNN published an investigation into a new Israeli secret prison, Sde Teiman.

This prison was set up months ago to process not foreign nationals but thousands of Palestinian men and boys, victims of Israel's occupation, seized from the streets of Gaza and the West Bank since Hamas carried out a one-day attack on October 7. Some 1,150 Israelis were killed and 250 were dragged back into Gaza as hostages.

As with Facility 1391, revelations of the horrors taking place at Israel's new black site have garnered barely any attention from the western media establishment.

CNN, known for excising Israeli atrocities from its coverage on the orders of executives, should be applauded for finally doing what west-



ern media often falsely claims is its role: holding power to account.

Headlined “Strapped down, blindfolded, held in diapers,” the lengthy article details the degrading, brutal conditions Palestinians kidnapped from Gaza and the West Bank are being subjected to.

The number of Palestinians passing through the secretive detention camp, located in the Negev desert, is unknown. But satellite photos show the site is rapidly expanding, presumably to accommodate ever more “prisoners”.

Some Palestinians who have emerged, utterly broken from this incarceration system – where the world saw men and boys being paraded zip-tied, near-naked and blindfolded in Gaza’s streets and stadiums back in November and December – began telling of their experiences months ago.

Predictably, the western media largely ignored the testimonies.

Even when staff from Sde Teiman

started coming forward weeks ago to divulge horror stories, western outlets collectively yawned – apart from CNN.

This pattern of failure has been noted in the pages of *Middle East Eye* for months.

For example, the western media establishment has studiously averted their gaze from Israeli reports that a proportion of those killed on October 7 were not victims of Hamas but of the Israeli army’s notorious “Hannibal procedure,” a protocol to kill fellow Israelis rather than let them be taken captive.

Western journalists still mostly avoid highlighting the fact that Israel is actively starving the entire population of Gaza of food and water, an unquestionable crime against humanity. Instead, journalists echo their own governments by labelling this Israeli-induced famine a “hu-

manitarian crisis,” as if it were an unfortunate natural disaster.

The media also obscures the fact that western powers, especially the US and UK, are directly assisting Israel in its mass starvation of Gaza’s population – both by denying funding to the UN’s main relief agency, Unrwa, and by refusing to put any significant pressure on Israel to allow in aid.

Echoing the Biden administration, the media still hesitates to call Israel’s actions in Gaza what they are, preferring an occasional mealy-mouthed assessment that Israel “may be at risk” of committing war crimes. None point to the bigger picture that all of these individual “possible” war crimes indisputably amount to genocide.

That obfuscation has become even harder to maintain with the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) applying for arrest warrants for suspected war crimes and crimes against humanity commit-

ted by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, along with three Hamas leaders.

Nonetheless, the media have stressed Israel's and the Biden administration's indignation at the court rather than the substance of its charges, including the allegation that Israel is exterminating Palestinians in Gaza through planned starvation.

The media avoids clarity on these topics because clarity would be inconvenient. Why? Because the western media's purpose is to create a narrative that serves western governments in pursuing their overarching foreign policy goals in the oil-rich Middle East, not ending the boundless suffering in Gaza or holding Israel to account for its crimes.

As a handful of whistleblowers revealed to CNN, Palestinians are incarcerated for weeks on end in Sde Teiman as they are tortured – both through formal interrogations and through the conditions they are held in. They are forced to sit blindfolded outdoors on a thin mattress through the desert heat of the day and sleep in the cold of the desert night. Continuously cuffed, they are forced to remain motionless and silent. At night, dogs are set on them. Anyone who speaks or moves risks being savagely beaten till bones are broken.

People's hands and legs are tightly zip-tied for so long that, according to the report, some have needed limbs amputated.

As one Israeli whistleblower recounted to CNN, none of these abuses are about intelligence gathering. "They were done out of revenge," he admitted. The inmates are punching bags for the Israeli soldiers and guards.

But this is about more than simple

The destruction of the enclave's health sector is another glaring crime against humanity the western media has carefully avoided identifying

vengeance. Understanding what is happening at Sde Teiman provides a clearer picture of what is happening on a far bigger, even more industrial scale in Gaza.

Especially revealing are the conditions in a field hospital at the detention camp, housing Palestinians either maimed in Israel's savage destruction of Gaza or injured by beatings from Israeli soldiers.

They are handcuffed to gurneys in row after row, blindfolded and naked apart from an adult nappy. They are not allowed to speak.

There they lie day after day, night after night, in a state of utter sensory deprivation, with nothing to distract from their wounds and pain. In the midst of this, Israeli medical interns can use their exposed, vulnerable flesh as a canvas for experimentation.

According to one whistleblower, the detention centre has quickly gained a reputation for being "a paradise for interns."

There, they are allowed to use Palestinians as little more than lab rats and encouraged to carry out medical procedures they are not qualified to perform.

A whistleblower told CNN: "I was asked to learn how to do things on the patients, performing minor medical procedures that are totally outside my expertise."

Such procedures were frequently done without anaesthesia. Unlike doctors in Gaza, Israeli doctors have ready access to painkillers. It is a

choice not to use them.

With western media so readily colluding in the dehumanisation of Palestinians, it is important to remember who these "prisoners" are.

Israel wishes us to believe it is targeting Hamas and those it "arrests" – the widely accepted euphemism, used by CNN in this article, for those Israel takes hostage – are Palestinians suspected of ties to the militant group.

However, one of the most significant testimonies of abuse from Sde Teiman reported by CNN comes from Dr Mohammed al-Ran, the grey-haired head of surgery at Gaza's now-destroyed Indonesian hospital.

He was "arrested" – kidnapped – by Israel in December and taken to Sde Teiman. There is no suggestion al-Ran was engaged in armed combat against invading Israeli troops or was associated with Hamas in any other way. He was seized, along with other medical staff, while working a three-day shift at another medical centre, the al-Ahli al-Arabi Baptist Hospital.

He had been forced to flee the Indonesian hospital after it was bombed by Israel and staff there were severely beaten.

Untold numbers of medical personnel have been murdered or disappeared by Israel during its systematic attacks on Gaza's hospitals. The destruction of the enclave's health sector is another glaring crime against humanity the western media has carefully avoided identifying.

The contrast with the media's unrelenting certainty about Russia's war crimes in Ukraine a short time ago is stark indeed.

Human rights groups are desperately trying to track down these Palestinian hostages with habeas corpus writs, just as they earlier tried to find the foreign nationals held captive in Facility 1391. The

Israeli courts have been wilfully obstructive.

In one test case, the Israeli human rights group HaMoked, which was central to identifying Facility 1391, has been petitioning Israel's supreme court – whose judges include some living in illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank – to find a Palestinian X-ray technician missing since February.

He was seized by Israeli troops at Nasser Hospital in southern Gaza. The suspicion is that he is being held in Sde Teiman.

According to HaMoked, more than 1,300 Palestinians from Gaza are missing, presumed to be in Israeli detention, including 29 women.

Another surgeon, Dr Adnan al-Bursh, is known to be among more than two dozen Palestinians who have died in mysterious circumstances in Israeli captivity. He was most likely tortured to death or possibly killed in a failed medical procedure.

In further proof that this wave of violence against prisoners is entirely unrelated to suspicions that they belong to Hamas or participated in the October 7 attack, details emerged last weekend of relentless and savage abuses of the most prominent Palestinian prisoner held by Israel.

Marwan Barghouti, from the Palestinian National Liberation Movement led by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas – Hamas's arch-opponents – has been locked up for the past 22 years. Sometimes referred to as the "Palestinian Mandela", Barghouti is considered a potential future leader of the Palestinian people.

According to fellow inmates and human rights groups, Barghouti is barely recognisable after a series of beatings, one of which has left him struggling to see out of his right eye.

The western media have focused on the suffering of the Israeli hostages still held in Gaza, though that much of that suffering derives from Israel's actions

He is reported to be in constant pain from a suspected dislocated shoulder resulting from one assault, an injury that has not been treated.

According to his Israeli lawyer, he has been dragged across the floor handcuffed and naked in front of other inmates at Ayalon Prison.

Barghouti has lost significant weight due to the severe food restrictions imposed on all Palestinian prisoners since October and has been denied access to books, newspapers and television.

Tal Steiner, of the Israeli human rights group the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, told the Guardian that Barghouti was being subjected to "unprecedented" abuses and that such torture had become "standard" for the 8,750 Palestinians known to have been jailed since October.

The government minister overseeing Israel's prison service, Itamar Ben Gvir, belongs to the avowedly fascist party Jewish Power, whose ideological roots in Kahanism explicitly regard Palestinians as little more than vermin.

The western media have focused endlessly on the suffering of the 100 or more Israeli hostages still held in Gaza, though it remains unmentioned that much of that suffering derives from Israel's actions.

The hostages, like the Palestinians of Gaza, are under Israel's rain of bombs. And like Palestinians, they face sustained food shortages caused by Israel's aid blockade.

The indiscriminate violence against Gaza affects both hostages and Palestinians alike.

But based on reports by CNN and Israeli media, it seems likely that many of the thousands of Palestinians kidnapped by Israel since October are facing a far crueller fate than the Israeli hostages in Gaza.

Hamas is invested in keeping the Israeli hostages as safe as possible because they are valuable bargaining chips for getting the Israeli army out of Gaza and freeing Palestinians from torture sites like Sde Teiman.

Israel faces no such pressures. As the occupying power and Washington's favourite client state, it can inflict any punishment it chooses on Palestinians with little repercussion.

That is another facet of the past seven months that the media refuse to acknowledge.

Meanwhile, western publics are smeared if they try to name Israel's crimes as genocide or articulate how the genocide is unfolding. This echoes the suspicions of an overwhelming majority of judges at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) back in January and is implied by the ICC chief prosecutor's application for arrest warrants this week.

The West's recent, perverse and self-serving redefinition of anti-semitism – a victory for pro-Israel lobby groups – equates Jew hatred with criticism of Israel more so than actually hating Jews.

Under the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's new definition, it is antisemitic to draw a parallel between Israel's actions and the genocide with which westerners are most familiar: the Holocaust.

Conveniently for Israel, western establishments can now disavow an all-too-obvious lesson of history and human psychology: the victims of abuse are quite capable of committing such abuses themselves.

CNN's reconstruction of the field

hospital at Sde Teiman shows dehumanised Palestinians – bound, blindfolded and naked – in rows of gurneys ready to be experimented on. Why would that not evoke, for western audiences, memories of Josef Mengele, the notorious Nazi doctor who viewed concentration camp inmates as less than human, mere fodder for his experiments?

What echoes should westerners feel watching Jewish extremists from Israel’s illegal settlements ambush aid trucks heading to Gaza, smash up the supplies desperately needed by a starving population, burn the trucks and beat the drivers – all while Israeli soldiers and police stand by, allowing the destruction to take place?

How might it be wrong – anti-semitic, no less – to ponder whether a similar brutal, genocidal racism drove extremists in Germany in 1938 when they rampaged against Jews on Kristallnacht?

And what about those who have compared tiny Gaza to a concentration camp during Israel’s 17-year siege by land, air and water, with engaged Palestinians deprived of basic freedoms and the essentials of life? Or those who now call Gaza a death camp as Israel starves the population?

Are such assessments really evidence of Jew hatred? Or are they proof that these observers have understood well the lessons of history and the Holocaust? The systematic degrading and abuse of a people should always be viewed as a crime against our shared humanity.

The moral duty facing us all is to stop such atrocities, not to withhold judgement and mutely watch them play out to their logical conclusion.

The current horrors Israel is inflicting on the inmates of Sde Teiman and, on an even bigger scale, on the

The complicity of western establishments in Israel's genocide is not an anomaly. It does not derive from misunderstanding or confusion

Palestinians in the Gaza death camp, are about much more than simple vengeance for 7 October.

Sde Teiman is the small torture chamber, mirroring the much bigger torture chamber of Gaza itself, where bombs and starvation are achieving precisely the same ends.

Until seven months ago, Israel’s goal was to keep the Palestinians a subjugated, enslaved, hopeless people, confined to a series of concentration camps in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. They were expected to remain mute in their suffering and invisible to the outside world.

Over the long term, it was assumed that Palestinians would prefer to flee their immiseration in these permanently occupied, colonised lands.

The slave revolt of 7 October – brutal and ugly as such revolts have been throughout history – was a devastating shock. Not just to an Israel wedded to its racist, hands-on colonial project of subjugating the Palestinian people. It was also a shock to the West’s wider colonial project, into which Israel is so tightly integrated.

In Washington’s “rules-based order”, the only meaningful rule is that what Washington and its clients want, they get. The planet, its resources and peoples are viewed as little more than playthings by the world’s superpower-in-chief.

Revolts to this order – wheth-

er advanced by Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen or the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Iran – cannot be allowed to become a model. The “rules-based order” must be restored with a savagery necessary to teach the colonised and enslaved their place.

That was the message of Washington’s own black sites needed in its futile “war on terror”, from Abu Ghraib to Guantanamo – sites that drew on Israel’s experiences of “breaking” inmates at Facility 1391.

The complicity of western establishments in Israel’s current genocide is not an anomaly. It does not derive from a misunderstanding or confusion. The western political and media class see the genocide in Gaza as clearly as the rest of us. But for them, it is justified, required even. The colonised and oppressed must be taught that resistance is futile.

Sde Teiman, like the Gaza death camp, is serving its purpose. It is there to break the human spirit. It is there to turn the Palestinians into willing collaborators in their own destruction as a people, in their own ethnic cleansing.

And a subliminal message is being directed at the western public at the same time: this could also be your fate if you do not join in cheerleading Israel’s atrocities in Gaza. **CT**

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Seeing through the banality of propaganda

It's amazing how stupid Israeli propaganda has become. Bombing kids and hospitals is self-defense. A blatant ethnic cleansing campaign is actually a war. A few western Zionist Jews saying they feel unsafe on campus is a more urgent concern than an active genocide. Sometimes it feels like they're experimenting on us, just to see how dumb of a narrative they can get people to swallow.

"Let's tell them Hamas just attacked Israelis completely unprovoked, like totally out of nowhere. Act like Israel was just sitting there minding its own business and a bunch of terrorists attacked them because they're evil and hate Jews."

"What? Come on man, they'll never buy that. The entire Israel-Palestine conflict is public record!"

"They'll buy it. Just slyly suggest it on the news over and over again in a confident, authoritative tone and it'll go right in."

Actually, a lot of the breathtakingly stupid things the empire asks us to believe aren't even believed by the people who voice them. Who believed it was ridiculous to suggest that Israel might attack a Palestinian hospital and lie about it? Who believes there's a terrifying antisemitism epidemic in our society? Luckily, they appear to have ramped up the stupid faster than they could get away with this time. More and more people are waking up to their lies, and the eyes that are snapping open in 2024 are going to remain open to empire propaganda for the rest of their days.

So many westerners say they support Israel and also support a two-state solution, which is a nonsensical position when Israel is aggressively opposed to a two-state solution. If you actually support the cre-

ation of a Palestinian state you are directly at odds with every meaningful power structure in Israel. It's like saying you support Biden but want him to lose the election. It's like saying you support unions but also support aggressive union busting. It's an entirely self-contradictory position that can only be reconciled without cognitive dissonance if you don't really care about a two-state solution.

The correct thing to do when someone tries to tell you that opposing an active genocide is discriminatory against Jews is to laugh uproariously and then ignore everything else they say for the rest of their lives.



Jewish Zionists are like "Excuse me, it's actually against my religion for you to oppose genocide. You need to stop religiously persecuting me with peace activism."

US intelligence estimates that Israel has only killed 30-35 percent of Hamas fighters in Gaza so far, and that Hamas has meanwhile been recruiting thousands of new fighters in the wake of Israel's onslaught.

After more than seven months of unfathomable horror, Israel has come nowhere remotely close to accomplishing its stated goals in Gaza. Israel must therefore necessarily either (a) inflict much, much, much more horror upon Gaza for a very, very long time, or (b) revise its official goals.

And of course there's also option (c), which is that Israel has been lying about its stated goals this entire time and is actually accomplishing exactly what it set out to accomplish.

– Caitlin Johnstone

www.caitlinjohnstone.com.au

How the UK media buried surgeon's Gaza testimony

Rather than exposing Prof Maynard's harrowing details of Israeli atrocities in Gaza, they shield Western governments and their allies from public scrutiny

Propaganda by omission is a dominant feature of the mainstream news media. Indeed, it is a requirement. Rather than serving the public interest by fully exposing the brutal machinations of power, state-corporate media shield Western governments and their allies from scrutiny and focus the public's attention on the crimes of Official Enemies.

Israel's genocidal attack on Gaza is but the latest example. Consider the dearth of media coverage given to the compelling and shocking testimony provided by leading British surgeon, Professor Nick Maynard, who works as a consultant gastrointestinal surgeon at Oxford University Hospital.

Maynard left Gaza just before Israel took control of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt on May 7. He had been operating on Palestinian patients for two weeks and he gave a very disturbing account of what he had observed.

The first topic he highlighted was "the direct targeting of healthcare workers" by the Israeli military, describing how "hundreds have been killed" and "hundreds have been abducted." Maynard had personally worked with one young doctor and one young nurse who had been abducted and held in captivity for

45 days and 60 days, respectively. They both gave him "very graphic and stark descriptions of their daily torture at the hands of the Israeli defence force." He described the experience of hearing their stories as "extremely harrowing."

Maynard had also been to Gaza over Christmas and New Year where he worked at Al-Aqsa hospital. He "spent the whole two weeks operating all the time on major explosive injuries to the abdomen and to the chest. And it was really nonstop.}

His visit was unexpectedly cut short in early January when the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) ordered the medical staff, along with the hospital's 600 patients, to evacuate the hospital. A few British newspaper reports that included accounts by Maynard and colleagues were published at the time on the nightmare of working in "one of 'Gaza's last functioning hospitals'" (*Daily Mirror*, January 18, 2024), "The single worst thing I've seen" (*Daily Telegraph*, January 12, 2024), and "British surgeon haunted by Gaza horrors pledges to go back" (*The Times*, February 4, 2024).

In March, the *Guardian* reported that a delegation of American and British doctors had arrived in Washington DC to tell the Biden administration that the Israeli mili-

tary was systematically destroying Gaza's health infrastructure in order to drive Palestinians out of their homes. Maynard was quoted, accusing the IDF of committing "appalling atrocities," although the article did not address these in depth.

He said: "The IDF are systematically targeting healthcare facilities, healthcare personnel and really dismantling the whole healthcare system."

He continued: "It's not just about targeting the buildings, it's about systematically destroying the infrastructure of the hospitals. Destroying the oxygen tanks at the al-Shifa hospital, deliberately destroying the CT scanners and making it much more difficult to rebuild that infrastructure. If it was just targeting Hamas militants, why are they deliberately destroying the infrastructure of these institutions?"

According to Maynard, Israel's strategy of targeting hospitals and healthcare facilities is intended to drive the Palestinians from their homes: "It persuades the local population to leave. If a hospital has been dismantled, if the locals see there is no medical care available and see the disrupted infrastructure, it's yet another factor that drives them south." [At that time, Israel had designated the south of Gaza a 'safe zone' for Palestinians to seek refuge.]



Prof Nick Maynard (right): “Surgeons I know have been executed ... Bodies have been discovered who have been handcuffed with their hands tied behind their backs”

In an interview with Nick Ferrari of London-based LBC radio on April 2, Maynard made further shocking revelations. The timing of the interview was linked to the IDF having just destroyed another hospital, Al-Shifa, where Maynard had also previously worked. Around 400 Palestinians had reportedly been killed in a brutal two-week attack by Israeli forces.

Maynard told Ferrari: “Every single part of the hospital has been destroyed. The whole infrastructure of the hospital has been destroyed. When I spoke to Marwan [a Palestinian colleague] yesterday, he told me there were 107 patients, 60 medical staff. God only knows what has happened to them. I think we’ve

seen some of the pictures. Surgeons I know have been executed in the last 48 hours there. Bodies have been discovered in the last 12-24 hours who had been handcuffed, with their hands behind their back.”

He added: “And so, there is no doubt at all, that multiple healthcare workers have been executed there in the last few days.”

Ferrari then asked: “You believe executed by whom, doctor?”

Maynard: “By the Israeli Defence Force.”

Ferrari: “Why would they seek to execute surgeons and medical professionals?”

Maynard: “Well, they’ve been doing it since October the 7th. Over 450 healthcare workers have been

killed. Friends of mine that I’ve worked with over the years. Many have been abducted as well, and nothing has been heard of them since. So, there is no doubt in my mind that – I can bear witness to this from my time at Al-Aqsa hospital and from talking to people that there has been direct targeting of the healthcare system in Gaza, direct targeting of hospitals and multiple killings of healthcare workers.”

Maynard also made clear that neither he, nor any of his colleagues, ever saw evidence of Hamas using hospitals or healthcare facilities as bases for their operations, despite numerous Israeli claims to the contrary.

Mainstream media showed mini-

mal interest in this highly credible testimony from a British surgeon on Israel's deliberate targeting of healthcare workers, including actual execution of surgeons. As far as we can see, there is nothing about Maynard's testimony exposing these executions on the BBC News website.

An article on the Guardian website on April 7 did cover Maynard's testimony about targeting of healthcare workers and infrastructure, but made no mention of his statement that Palestinian surgeons had been executed by Israeli soldiers. Nor was it mentioned anywhere else in the entirety of the British national press.

The *Telegraph* carried an interview with Maynard on January 12 in which he said: "There can be certainly no doubt in my mind from what I've recently witnessed that [Israel] are directly targeting healthcare structures with a view to completely disabling the healthcare system in Gaza."

The *Telegraph* appears not to have reported Maynard's subsequent claim that he personally knew surgeons who have since been executed by Israeli soldiers. On 13 May, International Nurses Day, the Gaza Health Ministry announced that at least 500 medical personnel had been killed by Israel since October 7. Dr Omar Abdel-Mannan, a paediatric neurologist and co-founder of Healthcare Workers for Palestine, said that the only way Israel could "justify" these killings would be if they see these healthcare workers not as humans, but as "human animals." As readers may recall, Israeli defence minister Yoav Gallant infamously described his Palestinian enemies as "human animals."

Of his most recent trip, Maynard said that: "the very strong narrative of the patients I was treating over the last two weeks were those with terrible infective complications as



Nick Maynard/MAP

Prof Maynard with a colleague in Al-Aqsa hospital in central Gaza

a direct result of malnutrition, and this was very stark indeed."

He gave a graphic insight into the hellish conditions: "And I operated on many patients in the last two weeks who had awful complications from their abdominal surgery related to inadequate nutrition, and particularly those with [the] abdominal wall breaking down. So, literally their intestines end up hanging outside. And the intestinal repairs that have been carried out to deal with the damage to the bowels leaking, so their bowel contents leaking out from different parts of the abdomen, covering their bodies, covering their beds."

He drew particular attention to: "the lack of resources to deal with these inadequate numbers of colostomy bags, wound management devices and nutritional support."

Maynard explained the consequences for patients: "They get this vicious cycle of malnutrition, infection, wounds breaking down, more infection, more malnutrition. So, it's devastating and we will see far more of that over the coming months."

He gave examples of two young female patients he had treated: Tala

who was 16 and Lama who was 18, both of whom had survivable injuries. Tragically, they both died "as a direct result of malnutrition."

This was yet more shocking and credible testimony from an experienced British consultant surgeon. It should have been headline news across the British press and broadcasting outlets. But searches of the Lexis-Nexis database of newspapers, together with Google searches, reveal minimal mainstream coverage: one article in the *Independent*.

If this had been evidence against "Putin's Russia" or "Assad's Syria," it would have generated huge headlines, in-depth reporting and anguished commentary across all major news media. Once again, we see the insidiously corrupt phenomenon of propaganda by omission.

It is noteworthy that, last November, the BBC News website did feature Maynard, "who's been travelling to the Gaza Strip and West Bank for more than a decade." Six months ago, he was once again on "standby to go and work in operating theatres with the charity Medical Aid for Palestinians". With remarkable courage, he told the BBC:

“I think there is fear, apprehension, not knowing what one would find, but I think the other motives for doing so... are so powerful that they outweigh everything else. I consider it a huge privilege to be in a position to help these people who need help more than most of us can possibly understand.”

Now that Maynard has returned from Gaza with horrific accounts, not least of the murder of healthcare workers by the Israeli military, the BBC appears not in the least interested. When we pointed this out via X (formerly Twitter), directly challenging John Neal, editor of BBC News at One, Six and Ten, and Paul Royall, executive editor of the BBC News Channel, the public response was huge. Our social media outreach is routinely suppressed by the deliberately obscure algorithms of Facebook and X. But this particular tweet spread widely by our standards, being shared 740 times at the time of writing. Shamefully, there has been no response from the BBC.

In the meantime, BBC News persists in labelling the Gaza genocide as the “Israel-Gaza war.” The day after it was reported that almost half a million Palestinians had fled Rafah in the south of Gaza, despite having previously been designated a “safe zone” by Israel, as discussed above, the BBC failed to follow up on the story.

One was presumably supposed to imagine that this huge number of people was no longer in danger: at risk of being bombed or dying under Israeli-imposed hunger, malnutrition and disease.

That same week, the BBC News website had as many as four “Live” feeds running simultaneously. Not one of them focused on the Israeli-inflicted horrors in Gaza. This is truly remarkable. Has there been a BBC directive from senior management not to give too much attention to Israel’s genocide of Palestinians?

To the invisible government of rulers who operate behind the scenes – the architects of the Deep State – we are puppets on a string

Where are the BBC whistleblowers who can let the public know what’s going inside the corporation?

A vanishingly rare exception appeared on 24 October 2023, when BBC correspondent Rami Ruhayem – a former journalist for the Associated Press, who has worked as a journalist and producer for BBC Arabic and the BBC World Service since 2005 – sent a letter to the BBC’s Director-General, Tim Davie:

“Dear Tim,

“I am writing to raise the gravest possible concerns about the coverage of the BBC, especially on English outlets, of the current fighting between Israel and Palestinian factions.

“It appears to me that information that is highly significant and relevant is either entirely missing or not being given due prominence in coverage.”

The emphasis now is emphatically on “missing”. It seems the global student and other protests have prompted the BBC to attempt to limit public dissent.

By contrast, BBC journalists can be quick to respond when they feel they have been subjected to unjust criticism. On May 13, we retweeted a clip from Saul Staniforth, a media activist with a large following on X, about Israel banning Al Jazeera. Staniforth had included a quote from Sebastian Usher, a BBC News Middle East analyst: “Al Jazeera – I think many people, if they DO watch it, WOULD see it as some kind of propaganda.”

We asked: “And how do you think

many people see BBC News?”

Clearly piqued, Usher contacted us the following day to say that his quote had been taken out of context. He said it was a direct response during a live interview to a question on the likely reaction by Israelis to the closing of Al Jazeera. He considered Staniforth’s tweet and our follow-up seriously misleading and the exact opposite of the tenor of his reporting on the issue.

We asked him which words he had used to express solidarity with Al Jazeera, or to speak out for press freedom and free speech. He declined to provide such a statement, saying that as a BBC journalist he was unable to do so in a public forum. Usher added that in his reporting he stressed that Al Jazeera sees its mission as righting what it believes is imbalance on Gaza reporting in international media by giving more space to Palestinian voices and voices on the ground.

We were happy to include the points he had made, which we did via Facebook and X. Usher responded to our very reasonable response with a grudging “Ok.”

It is worth noting that Usher strongly objected to being “quoted out of context” while working for a media organisation clearly trying to suppress public outrage at an ongoing genocide by reducing coverage.

Moreover, the essential observation we made stands: many people at home and abroad regard BBC News as an outlet of western propaganda. Its abject performance during the Gaza genocide – “the Israel-Gaza war,” as the state-mandated broadcaster puts it – is ample proof. **CT**

David Cromwell & David Edwards are co-editors of *Media Lens*, the UK media watchdog.

This article was first published at the organisation’s web site, www.medialens.org

75 years of Israel's ethnic cleansing

Zionist forces drove out hundreds of thousands of Palestinians 75 years ago to create their state. Here's my father's story

This piece was published by the Baltimore Sun on May 31, 1998 – 25 years ago. It's about the Nakba or Catastrophe – the massacres and forced expulsions of Palestinians which enabled the creation of the modern state of Israel, though I didn't use that term. It's notable that Israel at 75 seems to be getting lots less attention than Israel at 50 did. My dad died in 2017.

It was the most loving fax I've ever received. I had just come back to the office from asking Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a few questions at a news conference during his visit to Washington in January. I was astonished to learn that my dad, in Jordan, saw it on CNN International. "You were fantastic," he wrote me.

I was thinking of dad – and the fact that he and 700,000 other Palestinians were forced from their homes in 1948 – as I asked the Israeli leader if it was time that Israel acknowledged this wrong. The most he conceded was that the Palestinian people have indeed suffered – because of their own bad leadership.

When Netanyahu returned to the United States this month, the Israeli prime minister rejected the paltry pullback from 13 percent of the

West Bank that the Clinton administration favours. Netanyahu's position denies the Palestinian leadership even the slightest face-saving deal. In fact, if Israel gets its way, the Palestinians will be subjugated to "Bantustans," living in dense population areas and having limited control of the areas surrounding them. Israel wants to continue to control the population flow from various cities as well as most of the land and the water resources in the West Bank. As Netanyahu stalls for time, he confiscates more Palestinian land, heaps more injustice on an injured people and sows the seeds of more Palestinian resentment.

The inability of the Clinton administration to make any sort of progress prompted the French and the Egyptians to call for an international peace conference. That could put the issue of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict where it was 50 years ago: in the hands of the United Nations.

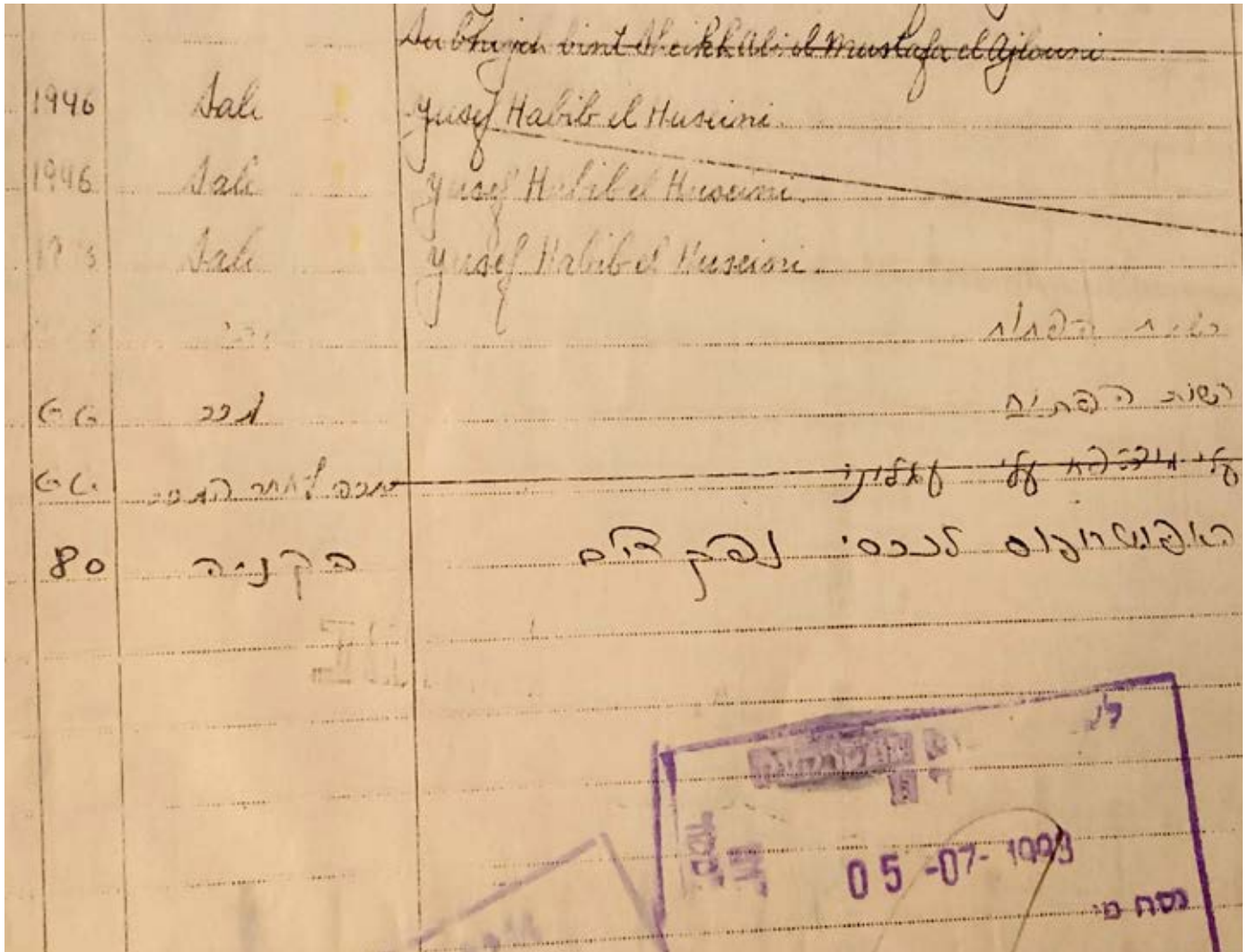
When I talked to dad on his birthday – April 9 – it was a low-key conversation. Neither of us mentioned that it was 50 years to the day after the massacre of Dir Yassin, a village near Jerusalem, by pro-Israeli forces. My father witnessed another massacre in Eilaboun, a village in the Galilee. The last time I was in the Middle East, I visited the

towns and villages where my father was in 1948, and he put some flesh on events that he had hinted at for years.

One evening, we walked around Terra Sancta College, where my father was a boarder at the end of the British mandate, in a largely Jewish part of Jerusalem. On a similar evening in 1947, he was puzzled when he heard jubilation and dancing in the streets. Another student said that the United Nations apparently made a decision that the Jews liked. The United Nations had voted to partition Palestine. They had good reason to celebrate. The Jewish state was allocated 56 percent of Palestine, even though Jews owned only 6 percent of the land and made up one-third of the population – and most of them were mandate-era immigrants.

We visited Tiberias, where my dad was born. We saw the lovely stone house he was raised in, now empty, overlooking the Sea of Galilee. I had visions of its becoming a museum for what happened in 1948 – before it is demolished to make room for another hotel. Despite my prodding, my dad, hardly a shy man, did not want to try entering the house.

My dad told me of his earliest memories of his father, who was vice mayor of Tiberias, gerrymander-



Land records with my grandfather's name – "Yusef Habib el Hussein" – in English, crossed out as the owner, and the "Israeli Authority of Construction" written in Hebrew

dering election maps. But a Christian, no matter how adept at dividing districts, could not secure re-election without substantial Jewish and Muslim support. There certainly were prejudices, but the intermingling of the faiths contradicts the "ancient hatreds" mantra we hear so often. Two of my uncles were nursed by neighbours because my grandmother had trouble lactating. One had a Muslim wet nurse, another was breast-fed by a Jewish neighbour.

We went to a lawyer's office, and he showed us the land records with my grandfather's name, "Yousef Habib Hussein" in English, crossed

out as the owner, and the "Israeli Authority of Construction" written in Hebrew. My father's claim to ownership, though completely documented, has been denied by Israeli authorities because they regard him as "absentee" and thus not a legitimate inheritor. Never mind that he was driven out at gunpoint. Meanwhile, the World Jewish Restitution Organization is recovering Jewish property confiscated by the Nazis.

Tiberias fell to Israeli forces 50 years ago. It was then that my dad and his younger brother went to

the small village of Eilaboun, where they had relatives. Today, my extended family members there are educated, but they retain a simplicity I haven't experienced elsewhere. They are technically Israeli citizens, but since they are not Jewish, they're third-class citizens. They and other Christians and Muslims cannot buy or lease land that the Israelis confiscated from my family – controlled by quasi-governmental organizations such as the Jewish National Fund.

The "who is a Jew" debate matters only because Jews in Israel are granted rights that others, like my relatives, are denied because of their religion – Christianity. Yet we

are constantly told that Israel is a democracy. They do not dare go to picnics on Independence Holiday for fear of attacks from Jewish extremists – this after my relatives have been Israelis for 50 years.

Dad showed me the square where the massacre at Eilaboun took place. On Oct. 30, 1948, most everyone from the village was in the church as the Arab irregulars were withdrawing. The bombing from the Israeli forces came closer and closer until, finally, a loud voice in the village yard adjacent to the church said in broken Arabic, “He who wants to live, let him come out.” They rushed outside with hands held high. The Israeli soldiers occasionally shot those coming out of the church, killing some, wounding others. The priest, with a white flag in hand, watched in horror.

Fourteen civilians from the village were put on a truck and led the convoy going north – to Lebanon. They were told that they were at the front in case of land mines. The Israelis proceeded to force the rest of the people, young and old, to walk. When they wanted people to stop, the Israeli soldiers would fire, sometimes into the crowd. A 3-year-old girl was shot in the arm as her mother was carrying her. My dad, then 16, jumped on top of his 10-year-old brother, who was very frail because of rheumatic fever – figuring that only one body would be exposed. When his father later found out about this, it was the only time my dad saw Grandpa cry.

People walked all day with no food. When a truck with some bread came by and people rushed toward it, soldiers shot at them, killing a 50-year-old man, Samaan Shufani, who was standing next to my dad moments earlier. Later, the Israeli soldiers took all the money from the men, strip-searched them and threatened to kill 10 men if the women didn’t hand over 100 Palestinian pounds. My Aunt Julia came

The year 1948 resonates for Palestinians not just because it was a catastrophic time but also because the removal of Palestinians from their land has never stopped

through – as she would years later, having saved several of my grandfather’s letters. The village later repaid her.

The 14 men on the truck included some distant (by my standards) relatives, and they were taken back to Eilaboun – and shot in the town square. The other villagers were thrown on the Lebanese border. These were all relatively fortunate. My father was lucky because an uncle who was an officer in the Jordanian army took him in so he could continue his studies in Terra Sancta College, which had moved to Amman. Other Eilabounites made their way back to their village. The Israelis turned a blind eye to this, apparently in part because the church had protested the massacre of the 14 villagers.

Hundreds of thousands of other Palestinians are to this day in refugee camps in southern Lebanon – periodically getting bombed by Israel. As we drove around Galilee, we stopped at the village of Lubyia. Or rather, all that remains of it. It is one of 418 villages razed by the Israelis after they drove out the 2,000 inhabitants. All you can see are hints of rows of stones tracing the foundations of homes.

As Elie Wiesel and others condemn ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina, they refuse to acknowledge that Israel has done

something similar. ABC’s Ted Koppel has falsely claimed that the Palestinians left voluntarily in 1948. Michael Lerner of the liberal Jewish magazine *Tikkun* has disavowed Jewish culpability in driving Palestinians from their homes. Early in the movie “Schindler’s List,” a Jew is shown pleading with the Nazis, saying that their seizure of his property violates the Geneva Convention. But Israel violates the same laws as it continues to confiscate Palestinian land.

The year 1948 resonates for Palestinians not just because it was a catastrophic time but also because the removal of Palestinians from their land has never stopped.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Arab-Israeli citizens lived under suffocating military mandates. Similarly, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have contended for decades with Israeli military occupation, government schemes (permits, checkpoints, closures) that, by design or accident, pressure them into leaving. Another mass exodus took place in the 1967 war, and Israel continued expelling political leaders and others into the 1990s. Continued closures and checkpoints by Israeli authorities economically strangle the Palestinians, pressuring them into leaving.

The Israelis use the threat of another mass expulsion to coerce the Palestinians into accepting the starkly unequal terms of the Oslo Accords. Better to be subservient but keep a stake in your home, goes the reasoning of some Palestinians.

What is needed is to get rid of the myths. What is needed is a Truth and Reconciliation Commission similar to the one in South Africa. Real peace can come only through facing the past. **CT**

Sam Hussein is the former media director for the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

RAFAH, MAY 26, 2024



Twitter

**Words cannot
describe ...**

► CHRIS HEDGES

Slow motion execution of Julian Assange

The ruling by the High Court in London permitting Julian Assange to appeal his extradition order leaves him languishing in precarious health in a high-security prison. That is the point

The decision by the High Court in London to grant Julian Assange the right to appeal the order to extradite him to the United States may prove to be a Pyrrhic victory. It does not mean Julian will elude extradition. It does not mean the court has ruled, as it should, that he is a journalist whose only “crime” was providing evidence of war crimes and lies by the US government to the public. It does not mean he will be released from the high-security HMS Belmarsh prison where, as Nils Melzer, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, after visiting Julian there, said he was undergoing a “slow motion execution.”

It does not mean that journalism is any less imperilled. Editors and publishers of five international media outlets – the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, *Le Monde*, *El Pais* and *Der Spiegel* – which published stories based on documents released by WikiLeaks, have urged that the US charges be dropped and Julian be released. None of these media executives were charged with espionage. It does not dismiss the ludicrous ploy by the US government to extradite an Australian citizen whose publication is not based

in the US and charge him under the Espionage Act. It continues the long Dickensian farce that mocks the most basic concepts of due process.

This ruling is based on the grounds that the US government did not offer sufficient assurances that Julian would be granted the same First Amendment protections afforded to a US citizen, should he stand trial. The appeal process is one more legal hurdle in the persecution of a journalist who should not only be free, but feted and honoured as the most courageous of our generation.

Yes, Assange can file an appeal. But this means another year, perhaps longer, in harsh prison conditions as his physical and psychological health deteriorates. He has spent over five years in HMS Belmarsh without be-

The legal irregularities, including the recording of his meetings with attorneys on behalf of the CIA, should have seen the case thrown out of court

ing charged. He spent seven years in the Ecuadorian Embassy because the UK and Swedish governments refused to guarantee that he wouldn't be extradited to the US, even though he agreed to return to Sweden to aid a preliminary investigation that was eventually dropped.

The judicial lynching of Julian was never about justice. The plethora of legal irregularities, including the recording of his meetings with attorneys by the Spanish security firm UC Global at the embassy on behalf of the CIA, alone should have seen the case thrown out of court as it eviscerates attorney-client privilege.

The US has charged Julian with 17 acts under the Espionage Act and one count of computer misuse, for an alleged conspiracy to take possession of and then publish national defense information. If found guilty on all of these charges he faces 175 years in a US prison.

The extradition request is based on the 2010 release by WikiLeaks of the Iraq and Afghanistan war logs – hundreds of thousands of classified documents, leaked to the site by Chelsea Manning, then an Army intelligence analyst, which exposed numerous US war crimes including video images of the gunning down



The two High Court judges, Dame Victoria Sharp and Justice Jeremy Johnson, rejected most of Julian's grounds of appeal in March

of two Reuters journalists and 10 other unarmed civilians in the Collateral Murder video, the routine torture of Iraqi prisoners, the covering up of thousands of civilian deaths and the killing of nearly 700 civilians that had approached too closely to US checkpoints.

In February, lawyers for Julian submitted nine separate grounds for a possible appeal.

A two-day hearing in March, which I attended, was Julian's last chance to request an appeal of the extradition decision made in 2022 by the then British home secretary, Priti Patel, and of many of the rulings of District Judge Baraitser in 2021.

The two High Court judges, Dame Victoria Sharp and Justice Jeremy Johnson, in March rejected most of Julian's grounds of appeal. These included his lawyers' contention that the UK-US extradition treaty bars extradition for political offenses; that the extradition request was made for the purpose of prosecuting him for his political opinions; that extradition would amount to retroactive application of the law – because it was not foresee-

Boynton

able that a century-old espionage law would be used against a foreign publisher; and that he would not receive a fair trial in the Eastern District of Virginia. The judges also refused to hear new evidence that the CIA plotted to kidnap and assassinate Julian, concluding – both perversely and incorrectly – that the CIA only considered these options because they believed Julian was planning to flee to Russia.

But the two judges determined on May 20 that it is “arguable” that a US court might not grant Julian protection under the First Amendment, violating his rights to free speech as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights.

The judges in March asked the US to provide written assurances that Julian would be protected under the First Amendment and that he would be exempt from a death penalty verdict. The US assured the court that Julian would not be subjected to the death penalty, which Julian’s lawyers ultimately accepted. But the Department of Justice was unable to provide an assurance that Julian could mount a First Amendment defence in a US court. Such a decision is made in a US federal court, their lawyers explained.

Assistant US Attorney Gordon Kromberg, who is prosecuting Julian, has argued that only US citizens are guaranteed First Amendment rights in US courts. Kromberg has stated that what Julian published was “not in the public interest” and that the US was not seeking his extradition on political grounds.

Free speech is a key issue. If Julian is granted First Amendment rights in a US court it will be very difficult for the US to build a criminal case against him, since other news organisations, including the *New York Times* and the *Guardian*, published



The 12 years of detention have been accompanied by a lack of sunlight and exercise, unrelenting threats, pressure, isolation, anxiety and constant stress. The goal is to destroy him

the material he released.

The extradition request is based on the contention that Julian is not a journalist and not protected under the First Amendment.

Julian committed the empire’s greatest sin – he exposed it as a criminal enterprise. He documented its lies, routine violation of human rights, wanton killing of innocent civilians, rampant corruption and war crimes. Republican or Democrat, Conservative or Labour, Trump or Biden – it does not matter. Those who manage the empire use the same dirty playbook.

The publication of classified documents is not a crime in the United States, but if Julian is extradited and convicted, it will become one.

Julian is in precarious physical and psychological health. His physical and psychological deterioration has resulted in a minor stroke, hallucinations and depression. He takes antidepressant medication and the antipsychotic quetiapine. He has been observed pacing his cell until he collapses, punching himself in the face and banging

his head against the wall. He has spent weeks in the medical wing of Belmarsh, nicknamed “hell wing.” Prison authorities found “half of a razor blade” hidden under his socks. He has repeatedly called the suicide hotline run by the Samaritans because he thought about killing himself “hundreds of times a day.”

These slow-motion executioners have not yet completed their work. Toussaint L’Ouverture, who led the Haitian independence movement, the only successful slave revolt in human history, was physically destroyed in the same manner. He was locked by the French in an unheated and cramped prison cell and left to die of exhaustion, malnutrition, apoplexy, pneumonia and probably tuberculosis.

Prolonged imprisonment, which the granting of this appeal perpetuates, is the point. The 12 years Julian has been detained – seven in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London and over five in high-security Belmarsh Prison – have been accompanied by a lack of sunlight and exercise, as well as unrelenting threats, pressure, prolonged isolation, anxiety and constant stress. The goal is to destroy him.

We must free Julian. We must keep him out of the hands of the US government. Given all he did for us, we owe him an unrelenting fight.

If there is no freedom of speech for Julian, there will be no freedom of speech for us. **CT**

Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who was a foreign correspondent for 15 years with the New York Times, where he served as Middle East bureau chief and Balkan bureau chief. He previously worked overseas for the Dallas Morning News, the Christian Science Monitor and NPR. He is host of the Chris Hedges Report – www.chrishedges.substack.co.



GEORGE MONBIOT

The underground economy of politics

Secret funding, offshore donors, control by the ultra-rich.
Sorry, this is not democracy

There's a sensible rule in British politics: it should not be funded by foreign donors. Democracy is meaningless if a country isn't run at the behest of its people. But the rule is riddled with loopholes. Those who have done the most to keep them open are those who most loudly assert their patriotism. Noisy "patriots" are always the first to sell us out to offshore capital.

Here are some of the tricks they use. One is the "unincorporated association." This refers to groups that don't have to open business bank accounts, file financial state-

ments, register with any official body or even give themselves a name. They're as transparent as the Berlin Wall on a cloudy day. Astonishingly, these associations are a legal channel for campaign finance in the United Kingdom.

The Good Law Project has calculated that these groups have shovelled £5.3-million into the major political parties since 2022. We have no means of knowing where most of this money came from before it passed through these associations. Here's how it works.

In principle, an unincorporated association must register with the

Electoral Commission if it passes more than £37,270 to political parties in the course of a year. But donations don't count towards this total unless they each exceed £500. So a donor could schedule a payment of £499 to an unincorporated association every minute of every day, amounting to millions of pounds, and the association would neither have to register with the commission nor report such gifts – or even keep a record of them. It's an open invitation to "impermissible donors."

The Tories are the worst offenders, taking £3-million of the

£5.3-million. Money passed through these channels has long been directed towards marginal Conservative seats. This means that surprising or narrow Tory victories have been facilitated by funds whose origins no one can see. Ten years ago, Labour railed against the use of these channels. Since 2022, it has used them to amass £1.2-million.

The next loophole is the use of corporate subsidiaries. As long as the subsidiary making a donation is UK-registered and operating in some capacity in the country, it doesn't matter where the parent company is based.

An example is the UK subsidiary of a company operated from Dubai, registered in the British Virgin Islands and owned by an Indian food tycoon that gave more than £220,000 to the UK Conservative party. It may be legal. But in what sense is it not a foreign donation?

Of course, the dividing line between foreign and British money is never entirely clear. Even if a company operates only in this country, this doesn't prevent its foreign owners exercising influence by using it as a funding vehicle. Allowing corporations to donate seems as wrong as allowing unincorporated associations to do so.

After all, the UK, as the Tory MP David Davis has observed, is "the global capital of dirty money." Why would those who control this money not wish to flex their political muscle? What's to stop organised crime and foreign kleptocrats buying influence?

To give one example, it is hard to explain why a large portion of the lucrative waste disposal industry has been ceded to organised crime in the UK while successive governments look the other way. Might they have been, in effect, legally bribed? Thanks to our opaque funding rules, it's impossible to say.

If, despite the loopholes, there's

still a problem with a donor's status, there is always a workaround. As the *Guardian's* investigative journalist Tom Burgis has shown, when the multimillionaire Mohamed Amersi first offered to donate to the Tories, there was a hitch – he was not yet listed on the UK's electoral register. No problem. A Conservative official requested: "The donation must please come from Nadia's account." So the legally recognised donor of £200,000 was Amersi's companion, Nadia Rodicheva, who was registered to vote here.

However, the thank you letter the Conservatives sent was addressed to Amersi, as was the bank receipt for the payment. Later, when Amersi, by then a registered UK voter, totted up the funds he had given to the party, he included the money that was declared as a donation from Rodicheva.

Last year, MPs sought an amendment to close the loopholes enabling foreign donations. Conservative MPs were whipped, forcing them to vote it down. Whenever there's a choice between country and party, the Conservatives, those patriotic stalwarts, choose party.

The next issue is more complicated. It's entirely right that citizens of the United Kingdom should play a full and active role in our political life, regardless of how long they have lived here. The problem is that some people born overseas have a far better chance of becoming citizens than others. If you are very rich, a red carpet awaits. If you are very poor, it's razor wire and border guards. The way citizenship is allocated therefore favours a certain politics: the politics that serves the very rich.

The £5-million the Conservatives have received from Mohamed Mansour, a naturalised UK citizen who

was previously a government minister in Hosni Mubarak's dictatorship in Egypt, is entirely legal. But it feels profoundly wrong that a former minister of a foreign government should fund a UK political party.

Mansour calls the UK a "second home." One might question the extent to which he has embraced us. Last year the *Sunday Times* reported that he had agreed to a multimillion-pound settlement with HMRC after his company, Unatrac, was investigated in a "diverted profit tax case". Consider that one of his family companies continued operating in Russia for more than a year after the invasion of Ukraine, despite the UK government's call for divestment. Nevertheless, in December 2022 he was appointed the Conservative party's senior treasurer, and in March this year he was given a knighthood on Rishi Sunak's recommendation. A Downing Street source stated that Mansour was being honoured for his charitable works.

In any case, there's nothing fair about a system in which a few people, whether born here or not, can buy political influence. In my view, the only equitable system is one in which everyone can pay the same small fixed fee for membership of a political party, and no further private funding can be taken. Otherwise, democracy gives way to plutocracy.

But this and other essential reforms are nowhere on the political agenda. Far from it. Those who claim to defend our interests against "foreign interference" and "assaults on our sovereignty" are the very people who ensure we remain prey to them. **CT**

George Monbiot is a columnist for the Guardian where this was first published. His website is www.monbiot.com.

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➤ JOHN EGLIN

Maths revolution led to casino gambling craze

Why does the house win? The law of large numbers: After 100 spins, they will have won half of the players' money. After 200 spins, they'll have won all of it

The first commercial gambling operations emerged, coincidentally or not, at the same time as the study of mathematical probability in the mid-1600s.

By the early 1700s, commercial gambling operations were widespread in European cities such as London and Paris. But in many of the games that were offered, players faced steep odds.

Then, in 1713, the brothers Johann and Jacob Bernoulli proved their “Golden Theorem,” known now as the law of large numbers or long averages.

But gambling entrepreneurs were slow to embrace this theorem, which showed how it could actually be an advantage for the house to have a smaller edge over a larger one.

In my book *The Gambling Century: Commercial Gaming in Britain from Restoration to Regency*, I explain how it took government efforts to ban and regulate betting for gambling operators to finally understand just how much money could be made off a miniscule house edge.

The illusion of even odds in games that were the ancestors of roulette and blackjack proved immensely profitable, sparking a “probability revolution” that transformed gambling in Britain and beyond.

The law of large numbers refers to events governed by chance.

When you flip a coin, for example, you have a 50 percent – or “even money” – chance of getting heads or tails. Were you to flip a coin 10 times, it's quite possible that heads will turn up seven times and tails three times. But after 100, or 1000, or 10,000 flips, the ratio of “heads” to “tails” will be closer and closer to the mathematical “mean of probability” – that is, half heads and half tails.

This principle was popularised by writers such as Abraham De Moivre, who applied them to games of chance. De Moivre explained how, over

time, someone with even the smallest statistical “edge” would eventually win almost all of the money that was staked.

This is what happens in roulette. The game has 36 numbers, 18 of which are red and 18 of which are black. However, there are also two green house numbers – “0” and “00” – which, if the ball lands on them, means that the house can take everyone's wager. This gives the house a small edge.

Imagine 10 players with \$100 apiece. Half of them bet \$10 on red and the other half bet \$10 on black. Assuming that the wheel strictly aligns with the mean of probability, the house will break even for 18 of 19 spins. But on the 19th spin, the ball will land on one of the green “house numbers,” allowing the house to collect all the money staked from all bettors.

After 100 spins, the house will have won half of the players' money. After 200 spins, they'll have won all of it.

Even with a single house number – the single 0 on the roulette wheels introduced in Monte Carlo by the casino entrepreneur Louis Blanc – the house would win everything after 400 spins.

This eventuality, as De Moivre put it, “will seem almost incredible given the smallness of the odds.”





As De Moivre anticipated, gamblers and gambling operators were slow to adopt these findings.

De Moivre's complex mathematical equations were over the heads of gamblers who hadn't mastered simple arithmetic.

Gambling operators didn't initially buy into the Golden Theorem, either, seeing it as unproven and therefore risky.

Instead, they played it safe by promoting games with long odds.

One was the Royal Oak Lottery, a game played with a polyhedral die with 32 faces, like a soccer ball. Players could bet on individual numbers or combinations of two or four numbers, giving them, at best, 7-to-1 odds of winning.

Faro was another popular game of chance in which the house, or "bank" as it was then known, gave players the opportunity to defer collecting their winnings for chances

at larger payouts at increasingly steep odds.

These games – and others played against a bank – were highly profitable to gambling entrepreneurs, who operated out of taverns, coffeehouses and other similar venues. "Keeping a common gaming house" was illegal, but with the law riddled with loopholes, enforcement was lax and uneven. Public outcry against the Royal Oak Lottery was such that the Lottery Act of 1699 banned it. A series of laws enacted in the 1730s and 1740s classified faro and other games as illegal lotteries, on the grounds that the odds of winning or losing were not readily apparent to players.

Early writers on probability had asserted that the "house advantage" did not have to be very large for a

gambling operation to profit enormously. The government's effort to ban games of chance now obliged gaming operators to put the law of long averages into practice.

Further statutes outlawed games of chance played with dice, cards, wheels or any other device featuring "numbers or figures."

None of these measures deterred gambling operators from the pursuit of profit.

Since this language did not explicitly include letters, the game of EO, standing for "even odd," was introduced in the mid 1740s, after the last of these gambling statutes was enacted. It was played on a wheel with 40 slots, all but two of which were marked either "E" or "O." As in roulette, an ivory ball was rolled along the edge of the wheel as it was spun. If the ball landed in one of the two blank "bar holes," the house would automatically win, similar to the "0"

and “00” in roulette.

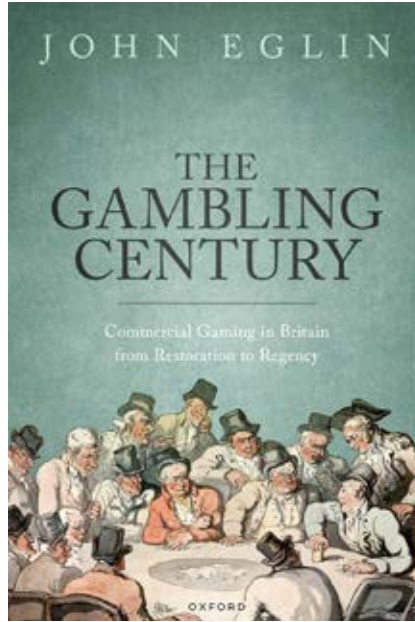
EO’s defenders could argue that it was not an unlawful lottery because the odds of winning or losing were now readily apparent to players and appeared to be virtually equal. The key, of course, is that the bar holes ensured they weren’t truly equal.

Although this logic might not stand up in court, overburdened law enforcement was happy for a reason to look the other way. EO proliferated; legislation to outlaw it was proposed in 1782 but failed.

Gambling operators may have even realised that evening the odds drew more players, who, in turn, staked more.

After EO appeared in Britain, gambling operations both there and on the continent of Europe introduced “even money” betting options into both new and established games.

For example, the game of biribi, which was popular in France throughout the 18th-century, involved players betting on numbers



The Gambling Century, by John Eglin, is published by Oxford University Press. US \$35

from 1 to 72, which were shown on a betting cloth. Numbered beads would then be drawn from a bag to determine the win.

In one iteration from around 1720, players could bet on individual numbers, on vertical columns of six num-

bers, or other options that promised large payouts against steeper odds.

By the end of the 18th-century, however, one biribi cloth featured even money options: Players could bet on any number between 36 and 70 being drawn, or on any number between 1 and 35. Players could also select red or black numbers, making it a likely inspiration for roulette.

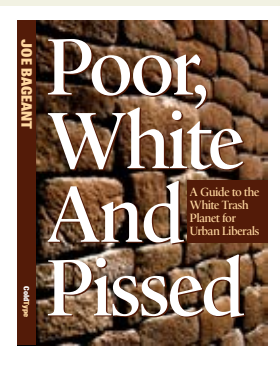
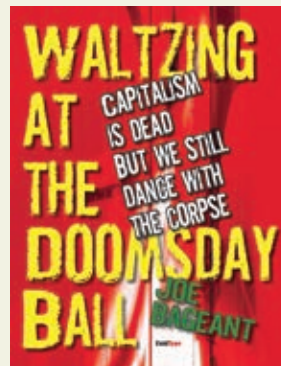
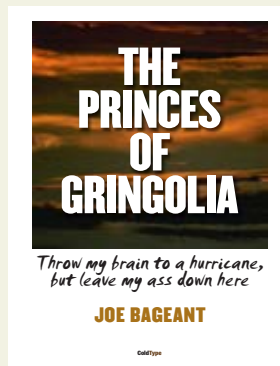
In Britain, the Victorian ethos of morality and respectability eventually won out. Parliament outlawed games of chance played for money in public or private in 1845, restrictions that were not lifted until 1960.

By 1845, however, British gamblers could travel by steamship and train to one of the many European resorts cropping up across the continent, where the probability revolution had transformed casino gambling into the formidable business enterprise it is today. **CT**

John Eglin is Professor of History at the University of Montana. This article was first published at www.theconversation.com

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The toughest job the super-rich face? Trying to justify their good fortune

The evidence suggests that tax cuts hurt the economy – because they prevent the government from investing in the future and helping those who need it most

Once upon a time, back in the middle of the 20th-century, the smallest theatre on Broadway could have comfortably accommodated a get-together of all the New Yorkers worth at least \$100-million. Not anymore. Broadway's landmark Helen Hayes Theater holds a mere 597 seats. The number of "centi-millionaires" who currently call the City of New York home: 744.

New York currently hosts, researchers at the London-based Henley & Partners have just reported, more centi-millionaires than any other city on Earth. And if hosting centi-millionaires ever became an Olympic sport, the Henley stats show, the USA would be bringing home gold, silver, and bronze.

The San Francisco Bay Area – now teeming with 675 centi-millionaires – rates as the world's second-most-popular home to fortunes worth over \$100-million. Los Angeles sits third with 496.

Our world's most stout defenders of grand fortunes, for their part, find these stats a mite inconvenient.

Why this unease? The presence of all these super rich in New York, the Bay Area, and Los Angeles under-

cuts a key claim of our don't-tax-the-rich set. That claim: If confronted with any substantial tax rate, people of major means will simply pack up and relocate in places that better appreciate how selflessly noble deep pockets can be.

In other words, claim fans of grand fortune, lawmakers inclined to significantly tax the rich are playing a foolish game they cannot possibly win. But the rich who live in New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles all face state and local taxes considerably higher than the rich who live in most all other major metropolitan areas. Yet these rich haven't yet picked up and moved elsewhere.

Norway has become just the latest political jurisdiction to go through a don't-dare-tax-the-rich debate. Norway's current Labor Party-backed government has proposed expanding an existing "exit tax" on the nation's rich who choose to emigrate. These rich, if this change goes through, will start owing taxes on any substantial capital gains they haven't yet realised before their exit.

This move has horrified cheer-

leaders for Norway's deepest pockets. The Norwegian Alliance for Startup and Tech, a high-tech lobby group, says this added tax liability is going to make it "a lot harder" for Norway to attract talent and capital.

Norway's super-rich, the Alliance believes, "will flee to Switzerland" to avoid the new exit levy.

Mark Thomas, a British business consultant and business school professor, would beg to differ. The author of *The Complete CEO and 99%*, Thomas has just dealt the standard case for not taxing the rich a convincing counter.

Yes, Thomas acknowledges, some rich have indeed exited their home societies in search of greener lower-tax pastures; and the holder of Britain's biggest private fortune, the billionaire Jim Ratcliffe, did move to tax-haven Monaco to avoid the equivalent of over \$5-billion in taxes. But no parade of Britain's rich has followed in Ratcliffe's path. Year in and year out, London continues to rate as one of the world's best places to live for people of means. Monaco doesn't appear in the top 100.

"If you care about quality of life," notes Thomas, swapping London for Monaco "makes no sense."

What about the argument that

nations with taxes high enough to drive their rich away will lose out on the investments these rich would be making if they stayed home? If these nations “print” more money to make up for those lost investments, this argument continues, they’ll simply unleash horrible inflation.

Governments, of course, print money all the time. But they can’t, Thomas notes, “print” construction workers or doctors and nurses. If we want to devote more resources to better housing and health care, “we must free up real resources from less vital tasks” – like the luxuries the rich so crave. Those non-essential luxuries consume the resources “needed to deliver things that are essential for society.”

“We should not be afraid of any exodus” of the rich, Thomas concludes. “We should simply shrug” at that prospect.

“Penalising” the rich with high tax rates, the rich people-friendly counter, will only end up leaving economies sputtering and everyone in them worse off. High taxes, they insist, mean low economic growth. But America’s best economic years over the last century, Thomas points out, have come when the United States was taxing the nation’s highest income brackets at rates over 80 percent.

“If anything,” Thomas adds, “the evidence suggests that tax cuts hurt the economy – because they prevent

Governments, of course, print money all the time. But they can’t, Thomas notes, “print” construction workers or doctors and nurses

the government from investing in the future and helping those who need it most.”

Fans of grand fortune have always struggled to refute that evidence. In the end, sooner or later, they find themselves parroting some version of the oldest rationale for letting the riches of the rich just be. Our richest, this rationale goes, deserve their good fortune. Their brilliance entitles them to it.

One certifiably brilliant billionaire, James Simons, just happened to kick the bucket earlier this month at age 86. This award-winning mathematician helped forge break-

through in fields ranging from autism to the origins of the universe. He also just happened to launch the hedge fund that would become “one of the most profitable investment firms in history.”

Simons had little patience for those who ascribed his mega-billion fortune to his brilliance.

“One can predict the course of a comet more easily than one can predict the course of Citigroup’s stock,” he noted at one point. At another: “In this business it’s easy to confuse luck with brains.”

“Luck is largely responsible for my reputation for genius,” Simons summed up at still another moment. “I don’t walk into the office in the morning and say, ‘Am I smart today?’ I walk in and wonder, ‘Am I lucky today?’”

Simons, as perceptive as he could be, never quite understood that entire societies can actually change their luck. They can work to become more equal. **CT**

*Sam Pizzigati, an Institute for Policy Studies associate fellow, co-edits Inequality.org. His latest books include *The Case for a Maximum Wage* and *The Rich Don’t Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class, 1900-1970**



We're not safe from the government's Peeping Toms

A populace that stops thinking for themselves is easily led, manipulated and controlled through propaganda, brainwashing, mind control, or fear-mongering

“The privacy and dignity of our citizens is being whittled away by sometimes imperceptible steps. Taken individually, each step may be of little consequence. But when viewed as a whole, there begins to emerge a society quite unlike any we have seen – a society in which government may intrude into the secret regions of man’s life at will.” – Justice William O. Douglas

The spirit of the Constitution, drafted by men who chafed against the heavy-handed tyranny of an imperial ruler, would suggest that one’s home is a fortress, safe from almost every kind of intrusion.

Unfortunately, a collective assault by the government’s cabal of legislators, litigators, judges and militarised police has all but succeeded in reducing that fortress – and the Fourth Amendment alongside it – to a crumbling pile of rubble.

We are no longer safe in our homes, not from the menace of a

government and its army of Peeping Toms who are waging war on the last stronghold of privacy left to us as a free people.

The weapons of this particular war on the privacy and sanctity of our homes are being wielded by the government and its army of bureaucratized, corporatized, militarized mercenaries.

Government agents – with or without a warrant, with or without probable cause that criminal activity is afoot, and with or without the consent of the homeowner – are now justified in mounting virtual home invasions using surveillance technology – with or without the blessing of the courts – to invade one’s home with wiretaps, thermal imaging, surveillance cameras, aerial drones, and other monitoring devices.

Just recently, in fact, the Michigan Supreme Court gave the government the green light to use warrantless



aerial drone surveillance to snoop on citizens at home and spy on their private property.

While the courts have given police significant leeway at times when it comes to physical intrusions into the privacy of one’s home (the toehold entry, the battering ram, the SWAT raid, the knock-and-talk conversation, etc.), the menace of such virtual intrusions on our Fourth Amendment rights has barely begun to be litigated, legislated and debated.

Consequently, we now find ourselves in the unenviable position of being monitored, managed, corralled and controlled by technologies that answer to government and corporate rulers.

Indeed, almost anything goes



when it comes to all the ways in which the government can now invade your home and lay siege to your property.

Consider that on any given day, the average American going about his daily business will be monitored, surveilled, spied on and tracked in more than 20 different ways, by both government and corporate eyes and ears.

A byproduct of this surveillance age in which we live, whether you're walking through a store, driving your car, checking email, or talking to friends and family on the phone, you can be sure that some government agency is listening in and tracking your behaviour.

This doesn't even begin to touch on the corporate trackers that mon-

itor your purchases, web browsing, Facebook posts and other activities taking place in the cyber sphere.

Stingray devices mounted on police cars to warrantlessly track cell phones, Doppler radar devices that can detect human breathing and movement within in a home, license plate readers that can record up to 1800 license plates per minute, sidewalk and "public space" cameras coupled with facial recognition and behaviour-sensing technology that lay the groundwork for police "pre-crime" programs, police body cameras that turn police officers into roving surveillance cameras, the internet of things: all of these technologies (and more) add up to a society in which there's little room for indiscretions, imperfections, or

acts of independence – especially not when the government can listen in on your phone calls, read your emails, monitor your driving habits, track your movements, scrutinize your purchases and peer through the walls of your home.

Without our realising it, the American Police State passed the baton off to a fully-fledged Surveillance State that gives the illusion of freedom while functioning all the while like an electronic prison: controlled, watchful, inflexible, punitive, deadly and inescapable.

Nowhere to run and nowhere to hide: this is the mantra of the architects of the Surveillance State and

their corporate collaborators.

Government eyes see your every move: what you read, how much you spend, where you go, with whom you interact, when you wake up in the morning, what you're watching on television and reading on the internet.

Every move you make is being monitored, mined for data, crunched, and tabulated in order to amass a profile of who you are, what makes you tick, and how best to control you when and if it becomes necessary to bring you in line.

Cue the dawning of the Age of the Internet of Things (IoT), in which internet-connected "things" monitor your home, your health and your habits in order to keep your pantry stocked, your utilities regulated and your life under control and relatively worry-free.

The key word here, however, is control.

In the not-too-distant future, "just about every device you have – and even products like chairs, that you don't normally expect to see technology in – will be connected and talking to each other."

By the end of 2018, "there were an estimated 22 billion internet of things connected devices in use around the world... Forecasts suggest that by 2030 around 50 billion of these IoT devices will be in use around the world, creating a massive web of interconnected devices spanning everything from smartphones to kitchen appliances."

As the technologies powering these devices have become increasingly sophisticated, they have also become increasingly widespread, encompassing everything from toothbrushes and lightbulbs to cars, smart meters and medical equipment.

It is estimated that 127 new IoT devices are connected to the web every second.

These Internet-connected tech-

Once technology is able to access and act on your thoughts, not even your innermost thoughts will be safe from the Thought Police

no gadgets include smart light bulbs that discourage burglars by making your house look occupied, smart thermostats that regulate the temperature of your home based on your activities, and smart doorbells that let you see who is at your front door without leaving the comfort of your couch.

Nest, Google's suite of smart home products, has been at the forefront of the "connected" industry, with such technologically savvy conveniences as a smart lock that tells your thermostat who is home, what temperatures they like, and when your home is unoccupied; a home phone service system that interacts with your connected devices to "learn when you come and go" and alert you if your kids don't come home; and a sleep system that will monitor when you fall asleep, when you wake up, and keep the house noises and temperature in a sleep-conducive state.

The aim of these internet-connected devices, as Nest proclaims, is to make "your house a more thoughtful and conscious home." For example, your car can signal ahead that you're on your way home, while Hue lights can flash on and off to get your attention if Nest Protect senses something's wrong. Your coffeemaker, relying on data from fitness and sleep sensors, will brew a stronger pot of coffee for you if you've had a restless night.

Yet given the speed and trajectory at which these technologies are developing, it won't be long before these devices become government informants, reporting independently on anything you might do that runs afoul of the Nanny State.

Moreover, it's not just our homes and personal devices that are being reordered and reimaged in this connected age: it's our workplaces, our health systems, our government, our bodies and our innermost thoughts that are being plugged into a matrix over which we have no real control.

It is expected that by 2030, we will all experience The Internet of Senses (IoS), enabled by Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), 5G, and automation. The Internet of Senses relies on connected technology interacting with our senses of sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch by way of the brain as the user interface. As journalist Susan Fourtane explains:

Many predict that by 2030, the lines between thinking and doing will blur. Fifty-nine percent of consumers believe that we will be able to see map routes on VR glasses by simply thinking of a destination... By 2030, technology is set to respond to our thoughts, and even share them with others... Using the brain as an interface could mean the end of keyboards, mice, game controllers, and ultimately user interfaces for any digital device. The user needs to only think about the commands, and they will just happen. Smartphones could even function without touch screens.

Once technology is able to access and act on your thoughts, not even your innermost thoughts will be safe from the Thought Police.

Thus far, the public response to concerns about government surveillance has amounted to a collective shrug. Yet when the govern-

ment sees all and knows all and has an abundance of laws to render even the most seemingly upstanding citizen a criminal and lawbreaker, then the old adage that you've got nothing to worry about if you've got nothing to hide no longer applies.

To our detriment, we are fast approaching a world without the Fourth Amendment, where the lines between private and public property are so blurred that private property is reduced to little more than something the government can use to control, manipulate and harass you to suit its own purposes, and you the homeowner and citizen have been reduced to little more than a tenant or serf in bondage to an inflexible landlord.

When people talk about privacy, they mistakenly assume it protects only that which is hidden behind a wall or under one's clothing. The courts have fostered this misunderstanding with their constantly shifting delineation of what constitutes an "expectation of privacy." And technology has furthered muddied the waters.

However, privacy is so much more than what you do or say behind locked doors. It is a way of living one's life firm in the belief that you are the master of your life, and bar-

When people talk about privacy, they mistakenly assume it protects only that which is hidden behind a wall or under one's clothing

ring any immediate danger to another person (which is far different from the carefully crafted threats to national security the government uses to justify its actions), it's no one's business what you read, what you say, where you go, whom you spend your time with, and how you spend your money.

As Glenn Greenwald notes:

"The way things are supposed to work is that we're supposed to know virtually everything about what [government officials] do: that's why they're called public servants. They're supposed to know virtually nothing about what we do: that's why we're called private individuals. This dynamic – the hallmark of a healthy and free society – has been radically reversed. Now, they know everything about what we do, and are constantly building systems to know more. Meanwhile, we know less and less about what they

do, as they build walls of secrecy behind which they function. That's the imbalance that needs to come to an end. No democracy can be healthy and functional if the most consequential acts of those who wield political power are completely unknown to those to whom they are supposed to be accountable."

As I make clear in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* and in its fictional counterpart *The Erik Blair Diaries*, none of this will change, no matter which party controls Congress or the White House, because despite all of the work being done to help us buy into the fantasy that things will change if we just elect the right candidate, we'll still be prisoners of the electronic concentration camp. **CT**

John W. Whitehead is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His most recent books are the 'Battlefield America: The War on the American People,' 'A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State,' and a dystopian fiction novel, 'The Erik Blair Diaries'. Whitehead can be contacted at staff@rutherford.org. Nisha Whitehead is the Executive Director of The Rutherford Institute. Information about The Rutherford Institute is available at www.rutherford.org

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► VIJAY PRASHAD

US assembles its squad against China

Emerging new US-led Squad security partnership switches out India for a more pliant and eager Philippines

In early April, the navies of four countries – Australia, Japan, the Philippines, and the United States – held a maritime exercise in the South China Sea. Australia’s Warramunga, Japan’s Akebono, the Philippines’ Antonio Luna, and the United States’ Mobile worked together in these waters to strengthen their joint abilities and – as they said in a joint statement – to “uphold the right to freedom of navigation and overflight and respect for maritime rights under international law.” A few weeks later, between April 22 and May 8, ships from the Philippines and the United States operated alongside Australian and French naval troops for Exercise Balikatan 2024.

For this Balikatan (“shoulder-to-shoulder”), over 16,000 troops participated in an area of the South China Sea that is outside the territorial waters of the Philippines.

Alongside the navies of these nations, the Coast Guard of the Philippines took part in Exercise Balikatan. This is significant because it is the boats of the Coast Guard that most often encounter Chinese ships in these international waters, part of which are disputed between China and the Philippines. Although the official documents of these exercises do not mention China by name, they are certainly designed as part

of the increasing military activity driven by the United States along China’s maritime border.

During the Balikatan exercise, the navy vessels from the Philippines and the United States jointly attacked and sank the decommissioned Philippine Navy BRP Lake Caliraya.

The ship – which was made in China – had been donated to the navy by the Philippine National Oil Company in 2014. The fact that it was the only ship in the Philippines’ navy that was made in China did not go unnoticed within China. Colonel Francel Margareth Padilla-Taborlupa, a spokesperson of the armed forces of the Philippines, said that this was “purely coincidental.”

During Balikatan, the defense ministers of the four main nations met in Honolulu, Hawaii to discuss the political implications of these military exercises off the coast of China.

Australia’s Richard Marles, Japan’s Kihara Minoru, the Philippines’ Gilberto Teodoro, and the United States’ Lloyd Austin met for their second meeting to discuss their collaboration in the region that they call the Indo-Pacific. It was at the edges of this meeting that the public relations teams of these ministers began to float the term “Squad” to refer to these four

countries. While they did not formally announce the creation of a new bloc in East Asia, this new nickname intends to provide a de facto announcement of its existence.

In 2007, the leaders of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States met in Manila (Philippines) to establish the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (or Quad) while their militaries conducted Exercise Malabar in the Philippines Sea. The Quad did not initially include the Philippines, whose President at the time – Gloria Arroyo – was trying to improve relations between her country and China.

The Quad did not develop because Australia’s Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was unhappy with Washington’s growing belligerence towards Beijing. It revived in 2017, once more in Manila, with a more forthright agenda to work against China’s Belt and Road ambitions in the region (which US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson called “predatory economics”).

Over the past two years, the United States has been frustrated with India’s discomfort with the kind of pressure campaign that the US has been mounting against China and Russia. India refused to stop buying



FS Vendemiaire, USS Harpers Ferry, and BRP Ramon Alcaraz conducts "division tactics" during the recent multilateral Balikatan joint maritime exercise

discounted Russian energy, which was a pragmatic decision during an election period (although India's purchase of Russian energy has declined over time).

When asked if India will consider being a NATO+ member, India's foreign minister S. Jaishankar said that India does not share the "NATO mentality." India's reluctance to join in the full-throated New Cold War against China annoyed the US government, which therefore decided to set aside the Quad and assemble the Squad with the more pliant and eager government of Philippines president Bongbong Marcos.

It is important to note, however, that in April India delivered a batch of supersonic BrahMos cruise missiles to the Philippines (sold for \$375-million and produced by a joint venture between arms manufacturers in India and Russia). That these missiles might be part of the new pressure campaign against China

is not something buried in the fine print of the deal.

Since its "pivot to Asia," the United States has sought to provoke China. The US trade war that began in 2018 largely fizzled out due to China's Belt and Road Initiative and its attempt to build the advanced production lines to circumvent US trade restrictions (for instance, when the US tried to prevent China from importing semiconductor chips, the Chinese developed their own manufacturing capacity).

The US attempt to make Taiwan into the frontline of its pressure campaign has not borne fruit either. The inauguration of Taiwan's new president Lai Ching-te on May 20 brings to the helm a man who is not interested in pushing for Taiwan's independence; only six percent of Taiwan's population favours

unification with China or independence, with the rest of the population satisfied with the status quo. Unable to create the necessary provocation over Taiwan, the United States has moved its gunsights to the Philippines.

While the Philippines and China dispute the status of several islands in the waters between them, these disagreements are not sufficient to drive either country to war.

In April 2024, former president of the Philippines Rodrigo Duterte recalled that when he was president (2016-2022), "there was no quarrel. We can return to normalcy. I hope that we can stop the ruckus over there because the Americans are the ones pushing the Philippine government to go out there and find a quarrel and eventually maybe start a war."

In March, President Marcos said he is "not poking the bear" and does not want to "provoke" China. However, the formation of the Squad two months later does indicate that the Philippines has now replaced Taiwan as the frontline state for US provocations against China.

China's vice chair of its Central Military Commission, Zhang Youxia, warned against "gunboat muscles." "Reality has shown," he said, "that those who make deliberate provocations, stoke tensions, or support one side against another for selfish gains will ultimately only hurt themselves." **CT**

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