

UK MEDIA GIVES STARMER A FREE PASS | David Edwards
SOLDIERS REVEAL SAVAGE CRUELTY IN GAZA | Jonathan Cook
NETANYAHU LIES TO CONGRESS | Caitlin Johnstone

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WRITING WORTH READING ■ PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

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WELCOME TO TRUMP COUNTRY

America's 2024 election circus hits the road
before 10,000 ecstatic supporters

BY JOHN ROTHWELL, PAGE 14

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COVER: Young Trump supporter, Grand Rapids, Michigan, July 19.
Photo by John Rothwell

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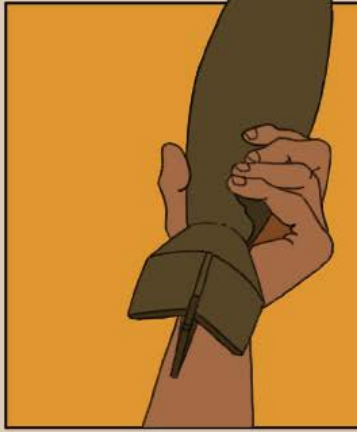
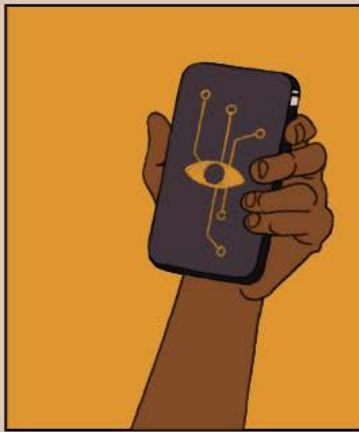
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Citi: BANKING ON GENOCIDE



Israel needs money and arms
to carry out its genocide.
Citibank helps with both.

SOURCES bit.ly/vp-citi

VISUALIZING PALESTINE

BANKING ON  SOLIDARITY

JUNE 2024


INSIGHTS



Joe Piette

IRAN'S USEFUL IDIOTS? Among other outrageous and baseless claims, Benjamin Netanyahu told Congress that demonstrators outside the Capitol Building in Washington were promoted and funded by the Iranian government.

► CAITLIN JOHNSTONE

Netanyahu's speech was as American as it gets

Benjamin Netanyahu's speech before the US Congress on July 24 was everything you'd expect: packed full of lies and propaganda spin, yet simultaneously very illuminating and revealing.

The Israeli prime minister received no fewer than 58 standing ovations while speaking before both houses of Congress and spewing the most despicable lies you could possibly imagine in his conspicuously American accent. Depending

on how politically aware you are, this spectacle could be perceived as either deeply un-American, or as American as it gets.

Netanyahu repeated evidence-free atrocity propaganda about what happened on October 7, falsely asserting that Hamas "burned babies alive" and killed two babies in an attic.

He falsely claimed that Hamas "butchered 1,200 people", pretending it's not a well-established fact that many of the 1,139 Israeli deaths

that day came from both indiscriminate IDF fire and deliberate targeting in implementation of the Hannibal Directive.

He made the completely baseless claim that Iran may be paying the anti-genocide demonstrators outside the Capitol Building during his speech, saying, "When the Tyrants of Tehran, who hang gays from cranes and murder women for not covering their hair, are praising, promoting and funding you, you have officially become Iran's useful idiots."

Netanyahu spent minutes ranting and raving about protests in America against his government's atrocities in Gaza, during which he received a standing ovation from Congress that went on for nearly a minute.

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He accused the International Criminal Court of “antisemitism” and “blood libel” for saying that Israel deliberately targets civilians, as though this hasn’t been conclusively established by mountains of evidence such as the IDF’s Lavan AI system and statements from doctors describing what can only be deliberate sniper executions of children in Gaza.

He repeated Israel’s evidence-free claim that the only reason people are starving in Gaza is because Hamas is “stealing” all of the aid Israel allows.

Netanyahu went out of his way to frame Israel’s plight as civilised people against uncivilised barbarians, which only works if you harbour a supremely racist worldview. He kept repeating the word “civilisation”, contrasting this with the “barbarism” of Hamas and its supporters, calling Israel’s US-backed military violence “a clash between barbarism and civilisation” and saying “Israel fights on the front-line of civilisation”.

He made these appeals to the racism that westerners harbor toward middle easterners in the same speech wherein he decried the “outrageous slanders that paint Israel as racist and genocidal”.

Netanyahu said Israel “must retain overriding security control” over Gaza “for the foreseeable future”, an open admission of plans for indefinite military occupation.

This deluge of lies and racist invective received dozens and dozens of standing ovations. The same political class that’s spent the last eight years shrieking about the threat of misinformation, disinformation and foreign propaganda just normalised and applauded a foreign genocidal war criminal

as he stood before Congress telling lie after lie after lie.

You couldn’t ask for a better example of everything Washington stands for than this. Both houses of Congress rising to feverishly applaud one of history’s worst genocidal monsters dozens of times as he lies over and over again is a much better representation of what the US government is about

than anything you’ll see during the presidential race from now until November.

This is everything Israel is, and this is everything the US empire is. They’re showing you who they are. Believe them. **CT**

Caitlin Johnstone is an Australian blogger. Read more of her work at www.caitlinjohnstone.com.au.



Photo via PCRS

TINY VICTIM: Hind Rajab called for help when the car in which she was traveling was attacked by an Israeli tank. Her body was found two weeks later. It was later reported that 365 bullets were fired into the car

➤ VIJAY PRASHAD

Unbelievable stories of the children of Gaza

This story should not be real. It was the morning of January 29, 2024. The Israeli military had already bombed substantial parts of the affluent Tel al-Hawa neighbourhood

in Gaza City, including – in October 2023 – the totality of the Gaza City campus of the Islamic University of Gaza. Following a warning from the Israeli military, seven members of a family got into a Kia

INSIGHTS

Picanto to flee southward. But the Israeli bombing had levelled a nearby high-rise, so the car had to go north before it could go south.

Not far down the road, the car came under fire from Israeli military vehicles, including Merkava tanks. According to a remarkable investigation by UK-based research agency Forensic Architecture, 355 bullets were fired into the car.

One of those in the car, a six-year-old child named Hind Rajab, called emergency workers.

"They are dead," she says of her family members. "The tank is next to me. It's almost night. I am scared. Come get me, please."

The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) sent an ambulance to rescue her.

Two weeks later, on February 10, Hind Rajab's dead body was found near the bodies of her family, along with those of the paramedics (Ahmed al-Madhoun and Yusuf al-Zeino) sent to save her.

"The tank is next to me," says the young girl on a tape saved by the PRCS, but both the US State Department and the Israeli military say that no tanks operated in the area at that time. It is the word of a murdered child against the world's most dangerous and disingenuous government.

The murder of Hind Rajab and her family shocked the world (Hind Rajab's father was killed in a separate attack in late June). When the students at Columbia University occupied their administration building, they named it Hind Rajab Hall; the singer Macklemore released a song in May titled *Hind's Hall*.

Everyday violence

June 14: One child was killed by Israeli airstrikes in Zeitoun (Gaza

City).

June 22: Two children were killed by Israeli airstrikes in Shujaiya (Gaza City).

June 25: Two children were killed by Israeli fire on al-Wahda Street, near Al-Shifa Hospital (Gaza City).

June 25: Three children were killed by Israeli airstrikes in the Maghazi refugee camp.

Each of these stories is about precious children, most of whom have not reached the age of 10. Some of these children lived through the barbarous Israeli bombardment of 2014 when more than 3,000 children had been killed.

Sitting in the homes of families in Gaza City and Khan Younis in the aftermath of that war, I heard story after story about children killed and children maimed (Maha, paralysed; Ahmed, blinded – my notebook a mess of loss and sorrow).

As the bombs continued to fall in 2014, Pernille Ironside, then-chief of the Gaza office of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said that 373,000 children needed "immediate psycho-social first aid."

There were simply not enough counsellors to help the children, most of whom are now hardened because of the ugliness of occupation and war.

The violence that they experience has become a daily affair. But this kind of violence can never be mundane. "I am scared," said Hind Rajab. I remember meeting a little boy who was playing with a football on the streets of al-Mughraqa. His father, who was showing me around, told me the boy was not able to sleep, but would stay awake at night and cry. That was in 2014.

That boy must now be in his early twenties. He might not be alive.

An Al Jazeera interactive website has the names of the children killed since October 2023, one killed every fifteen minutes; as I scrolled down the names, I felt ill, and then found this at the very end: "These are the names of only half of the children killed."

In early May, UNICEF director Catherine Russell said, "Nearly all of Gaza's children have been exposed to the traumatic experiences of war, the consequences of which will last a lifetime."

In her statement, where she reported that 14,000 children have been killed, she said that "an estimated 17,000 children are unaccompanied or separated." These numbers are estimates and are likely to be undercounts.

A new report from Save the Children suggests that more than 20,000 children are missing in Gaza. They are either under the rubble, detained by the Israeli military, or buried in mass graves.

During a detailed briefing on June 25, the Commissioner-General of the UN Palestine Agency (UNRWA) Philippe Lazzarini said something staggering: "And you take into consideration that basically, we have every 10 days children losing one leg or two legs on average. This gives you an idea of the scope of the type of childhood a child can have in Gaza."

The story should not be real. It was the morning of December 19, 2023. Israeli tanks rumbled through the neighbourhood of Rimal in Gaza City. Seventeen-year-old Ahed Bseiso was on the top floor of a six-floor building trying to call her father in Belgium to tell him that she was still alive. She heard a loud noise,

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fell, and called out for her sister Mona and her mother. Her family rushed up, carried her down, and laid her on the kitchen table where her mother had been making bread.

Ahed's uncle Hani Bseiso, an orthopedic doctor, looked at her leg and realised that he would have to either amputate it or she would die. He grabbed whatever supplies he could find and conducted the amputation without anaesthesia.

Ahed recited verses from the Koran to calm herself. Hani wept as he did the operation, which the family filmed and later posed on YouTube, which was reposted in many places.

These are the stories of Gaza. **CT**

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seat of Clacton had unseated the Conservative candidate, Giles Watling, who had held the seat since 2017. The margin was impressive: 21,225 votes to Watling's 12,820.

To keep him company in the House of Commons will be such colleagues as Richard Tice, Reform's chair, along with former Southampton football club chairman Rupert Lowe, and former Conservative deputy chair Lee Anderson. They now form a snapping rearguard of politics that is not so much nipping at the heels of Britain's oldest party as tearing it apart.

As the Tories contemplate their ruin and richly deserved defeat, the new Labour government of Sir Keir Starmer will find little time to relish the joys of victory. Farage is already promising rapacious raids into enemy territory. "We are coming for Labour ... be in no doubt about that." While eschewing notions of working with the Conservatives, he offered an olive branch by way of invitation: Tory members could join Reform if they wished.

➤ BINOY KAMPMARK

In Parliament at last: The threat of Nigel Farage

"This is the inflection point," warned Nigel Farage as he assumed the reins of power at the incarnated Reform UK party, standard bearer of the often inchoate group known as the hard right of British politics. "The only wasted vote is a Conservative one. We are the challengers to Labour. We are on our way."

On July 4, an important stop was made on that way. A figure who had exerted more influence on British politics outside the houses of Parliament than any other this century, a figure who had conspicuously failed in getting elected despite seven previous efforts, had finally convinced voters he was electable.

The new member for the Essex



NIGEL FARAGE: What now?

Commentators on Farage's life have noted a streak of luck suggesting the blessings of the devil. He has cheated death, surviving car crashes, a plane crash and a misdiagnosis regarding testicular cancer. The party that caught his eye, the UK Independence Party (Ukip), would have vanished into the suffocating arms of the larger Referendum party of James Goldsmith had the latter not perished to cancer 10 weeks after the 1997 election. "Farage takes his chances, and though things often blow up – planes, parties, countries – he walks away and on to the next caper," writes David Runciman.

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Reform UK is certainly one such caper, and its somewhat anti-democratic operations, often chaotic, poorly organised and lacking any institutional framework, make its electoral returns even more remarkable.

But even on Farage's side of politics, it is hard to mistake the fact that he has treated the party much like a political start-up, where he has assumed the role of director and majority shareholder. Reform will, in time, require reform if it is to be a durable force. Farage has admitted as much. "We have a structure. We do have a constitution, but to build a branch structure, we have to give people the ability to choose candidates to vote."

Durability, however, may have nothing to do with it. As with many charismatic buffoonish party goers, he may leave when required to help with the cleaning up, leaving the washing to the snarling and fractious functionaries who fight over the leftovers and break the crockery.

This may well be Starmer's hope. It is certainly the assessment of Fraser Nelson in *The Spectator*. "Whatever his intention, Farage has ended up serving as a purely destructive force. He has become the nemesis, not the rejuvenator, of the causes he purports to care about."

Otherwise, the threat is palpable, and comments by the new Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds about Reform's policies being like "Liz Truss in terms of the economy" and similar to "Russian positions in terms of ... the war in Ukraine" are unhelpful. Labour's lack of clarity on how it will deal with the Channel crossings of irregular migrants is something Farage is salivating

over.

Concerned about such matters, Tony Blair, Labour's longest serving prime minister and overly remunerated circuit speaker, has been willing to offer the sort of advice in the *Sunday Times* he charges obscene amounts for. His typically soupy ideas all go to trying to blunt the effect Reform will have in the next election. "We need a plan to control immigration. If we don't get rules, we get prejudices."

Showing his recurrent fascination with surveillance (as the Coronavirus pandemic raged, Blair suggested adopting a "Covid Pass" to distinguish the anointed from the unwashed), a "digital ID" could be used to maintain the integrity of borders. Law and order matters, another favourite of the New Labour era, also needed to be dealt with. "At present, criminal

elements are modernising faster than law enforcement." To round off the trifecta, it was also important that the Starmer government not succumb to "any vulnerability on 'wokeism'."

Farage is now in the temple of Westminster and, in time, hopes to bring it down. He will woo, seduce and despoil, as he has done to a string of lovers and prominent figures he has lured to his camp over the years. He will be remorselessly destructive. For Labour and for those more progressive than Starmer's stiffly starched set, the threat has been truly enlivened. **CT**

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BENDIB'S WORLD

KHALIL BENDIB

SEE NO GENOCIDE



HEAR NO GENOCIDE



SPEAK NO GENOCIDE



INSIGHTS

► MEDEA BENJAMIN

Like Biden, NATO is aged and unfit for leadership

As NATO wrapped up its 75th anniversary Summit on July 11 and Joe Biden held a crucial press conference, the media frenzy continued to focus on Biden's age and cognitive abilities. Is he too old and disoriented to lead the "free world?" Was he able to get through his press conference without stumbling too many times? Lost in the media coverage about the Summit, however, has been a serious discussion of NATO's advanced age and NATO's ability to lead the "free world."

At 75, NATO has not aged well. Back in 2019, French President Emmanuel Macron was already sounding the alarm, accusing NATO of being "brain dead." While Russia's invasion of Ukraine has given NATO a new lease on life, NATO's embrace of Ukraine actually makes the conflict – and the world – more dangerous.

Let's remember why NATO was founded. As the contours of the Cold War were emerging after the devastation of WWII, 10 Europe-



MEDIA FRENZY: Biden at NATO

an nations, along with the US and Canada, came together in 1949 to create an alliance that would deter Soviet expansion, stop the revival of nationalist militarism in Europe through a strong North American presence on the continent, and encourage European political integration. Or, as the alliance's first Secretary General Lord Ismay quipped, its purpose was "to keep the Soviets out, the Americans in, and the Germans down."

It is decades now since the Soviet Union has disintegrated and European nations have been well integrated. So why is NATO still hanging on? When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, along with its military alliance called the Warsaw Pact, NATO could have – and should have – declared victory and folded. Instead, it expanded from 16 members in 1991 to 32 members today.

NATO's eastward expansion not only violated the promises made by Secretary of State James Baker to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, but it was a grave mistake. US diplomat George Keenan warned in 1997 "expanding NATO would be the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-Cold-War era." Indeed, while NATO expansion does not justify Russia's 2022 illegal invasion of Ukraine, it did provoke Russia and inflame tensions. NATO members also played a key role in the Ukraine's 2014 coup, the training and arming of Ukrainian forces in preparation for war with Russia, and the quashing of negotiations that could have ended the war in its first two months.

After two years of brutal war, the NATO Summit focused on how to shore up Ukraine's flailing efforts to repel Russia. The insistence on

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setting up a “Trump-proof” scenario that would guarantee Ukraine billions in military aid for years to come and an “irreversible path” to NATO membership is really a guarantee that the war will drag on for years – precisely because NATO membership is Russia’s number one concern. There was no talk at the Summit of how to end the war by moving towards a ceasefire and peace talks. Why? Because NATO is a military alliance. The only tool it has is a hammer.

We have seen NATO illegally and unsuccessfully wield that hammer in country after country over the past 30 years. From Bosnia and Serbia to Afghanistan and Libya, NATO has justified this violence and instability as defending “the Rules-Based Order,” while repeatedly violating the core precepts of the UN Charter.

NATO is now a military behemoth with partners far beyond the North Atlantic that encircle the globe from Colombia to Mongolia to Australia. It has proven to be an aggressive alliance that initiates and escalates wars without internation-

al consensus, exacerbates global instability, and prioritises arms deals over humanitarian needs. NATO provides a cover for the US to place nuclear weapons in five European nations, bringing us closer to nuclear war in violation of both the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. NATO is endangering us all in a desperate attempt to reassert US global hegemony in what is now a multipolar world.

NATO’s 75th anniversary is an opportune time to take stock of NATO’s outdated world view and violations of international law. NATO should be laid to rest so we can revitalise and democratise the proper venue for dealing with global conflicts: the United Nations. **CT**

Medea Benjamin is the co-founder of the women-led peace group CODEPINK and co-founder of the human rights group Global Exchange. She is the author of 11 books, her most recent of which is “NATO: What You Need to Know,” coauthored with David Swanson.

from these two atomic bombs and the firebombing of Dresden was around 239,000 civilians. After nine months of the Israeli government’s relentless day and night genocide war machine, bristling with the latest US weaponry, Israel has killed far more than that number of Gaza civilians. In a tiny enclave with 2.3-million people (compared to the total population of Japan and Germany in World War II of 152-million), at least 300,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed with more dying every day. Daily annihilations by F-16s, tanks, and arbitrary executions, combined with Israeli bans on food, water, medicine, electricity, and fuel have generated starvation, diseases, untreated injuries, homelessness for almost all Gazans. The destruction of Gaza’s hospitals and healthcare facilities adds to the military-caused casualty toll.

Forty-five thousand babies have been born into the rubble since October. Infants are plagued by contaminated water, poor nutrition, and a dire shortage of healthcare. Their mothers are starving. What about the plight of a similar number of one- or two-year-olds? What about fifty thousand serious diabetics without insulin? An even larger number of cancer patients are denied their medicine and care. Hundreds of healthcare workers were killed with the hungry, exhausted, sick, and injured survivors staggering bravely to those broken down hospitals that haven’t been entirely demolished.

It isn’t as if major global health and food program organisations have not been sounding the alarms

► RALPH NADER

Day of reckoning beckons over Gaza genocide

In the early weeks of Israel’s massive bombardment and invasion of Gaza, the Israeli military was killing anyone who moved and destroying anything that stood. In response to telephone calls from President Joe Biden

and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken urging Netanyahu to minimise civilian casualties reportedly he would respond: Don’t lecture me, look at what you did to Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Dresden.

The combined official death toll

INSIGHTS

of famine, epidemics and military violence under the unfolding eradication of Gaza's trapped defenceless inhabitants. Organisations such as UNICEF, the Global Food Program, Oxfam, the UN Humanitarian Agency, The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), USAID and Biden's own Humanitarian adviser, David Satterfield, know the looming numbers that spell omnicide for the families of Gaza.

Back in December, Devi Sridhar, the chair of global health at the University of Edinburgh estimated half a million Gazans will likely die in 2024 if conditions causing tens of thousands of deaths in the last three months of 2023 continue. Conditions have gotten worse as the causes of mortality have grown and intensified week by week.

In an admittedly conservative estimate, three researchers published in the prestigious British medical journal *The Lancet*, that, as of mid-June, "it is not implausible to estimate that up to 186,000 or even more deaths could be attributable to the current conflict in Gaza."

Why then does the media stick to the official Hamas Health Ministry's huge undercount now at about 39,000 deaths? First, early on, the Ministry took its figures from names of the deceased provided by hospitals and morgues which are now devastated and inoperative. The Hamas regime doesn't mind this undercount since it lessens the criticism that it cannot protect its own people and shelter them from what they knew was coming after October 7 from the most racist, genocidal, and expansionist Israeli regime ever.

Netanyahu – who has boasted

over the years to his Likud Party, that he has backed and helped fund Hamas due to its opposition to a two-state solution – likes the vast undercount of his mass slaughter.

But there are other reasons for this adoption of the low Hamas figures. For Biden, it keeps down the intensity of domestic protests demanding decisive White House pressure on Netanyahu for a permanent ceasefire, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, and an end to the blockade to allow in the thousands of trucks carrying humanitarian aid paid for by the US



Netanyahu: Master of selling out

Netanyahu's long-time prohibition of all Israeli and foreign war correspondents from entering Gaza as independent reporters has concealed from the world much of the carnage in these killing fields. Finally, on July 11, 2024, more than 70 media and civil society organizations, including the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, AP, CNN and the BBC signed an open letter demanding that Israel "give journalists independent access to Gaza."

Palestinian journalists in Gaza are being hunted down by Netanyahu, who allows killing scores of reporters and their families. The survivors are bravely trying to report on the devastation for

outsiders and social media. Nonetheless, the mainstream press, to do its job, has to have reporters on the ground.

Netanyahu is a master at biding his time and stalling to keep his job. Despised by three out of four Israelis for both his domestic tyrannies and for collapsing his multi-tiered border defense on October 7, he is also under indictment for political corruption by Israeli prosecutors. Israeli street protests are getting larger by the week and the majority of Israelis want new elections now!

The reckoning over what Netanyahu's savage terror state has done to innocent Palestinians from infants in incubators to the elderly in wheelchairs is coming to Israeli society. As the soldiers return, some will be narrating the horrors they saw and were ordered to produce. Already six reservists have told an Israeli magazine that they were encouraged to shoot and kill any Palestinian they saw on the street or in their homes. There are no operating rules of engagement as required by international law. They gave examples of the target practice, as they told the reporter they would no longer serve in Gaza.

Such soldiers are called "refuseniks," who became a courageously articulate, if harassed, protest group about twenty years ago. (See Israeli Refuseniks Forsake Army Despite Post-October 7 Nationalist Frenzy, *The Intercept*, January 2, 2024)

As more information flows through the weakening Israeli censorship system, the many Israeli human rights associations will be strengthened (See December 13, 2023, an open letter titled, "Stop

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the Humanitarian Catastrophe” to President Biden by 16 Israeli human rights groups which appeared in the *New York Times*). The exaggeration of the Hamas threat to Israel, following a one-time homicide-suicide mission through a mysteriously open border into Israel on October 7, 2023 will become evident. Hamas had a militia of some 20,000 fighters with small arms and dwindling ammunition, hiding in tunnels against a military, nuclear-armed superpower with over 400,000 army soldiers, hundreds of

tanks and 1500 F-16 pilots.

Joe Biden has just authorised another arsenal of 500 lb. bombs for Netanyahu to use against the remnants of Gazan civilian life. He touts his refusal to send Israel any more 2000 lb. bombs capable of destroying entire neighbourhoods.

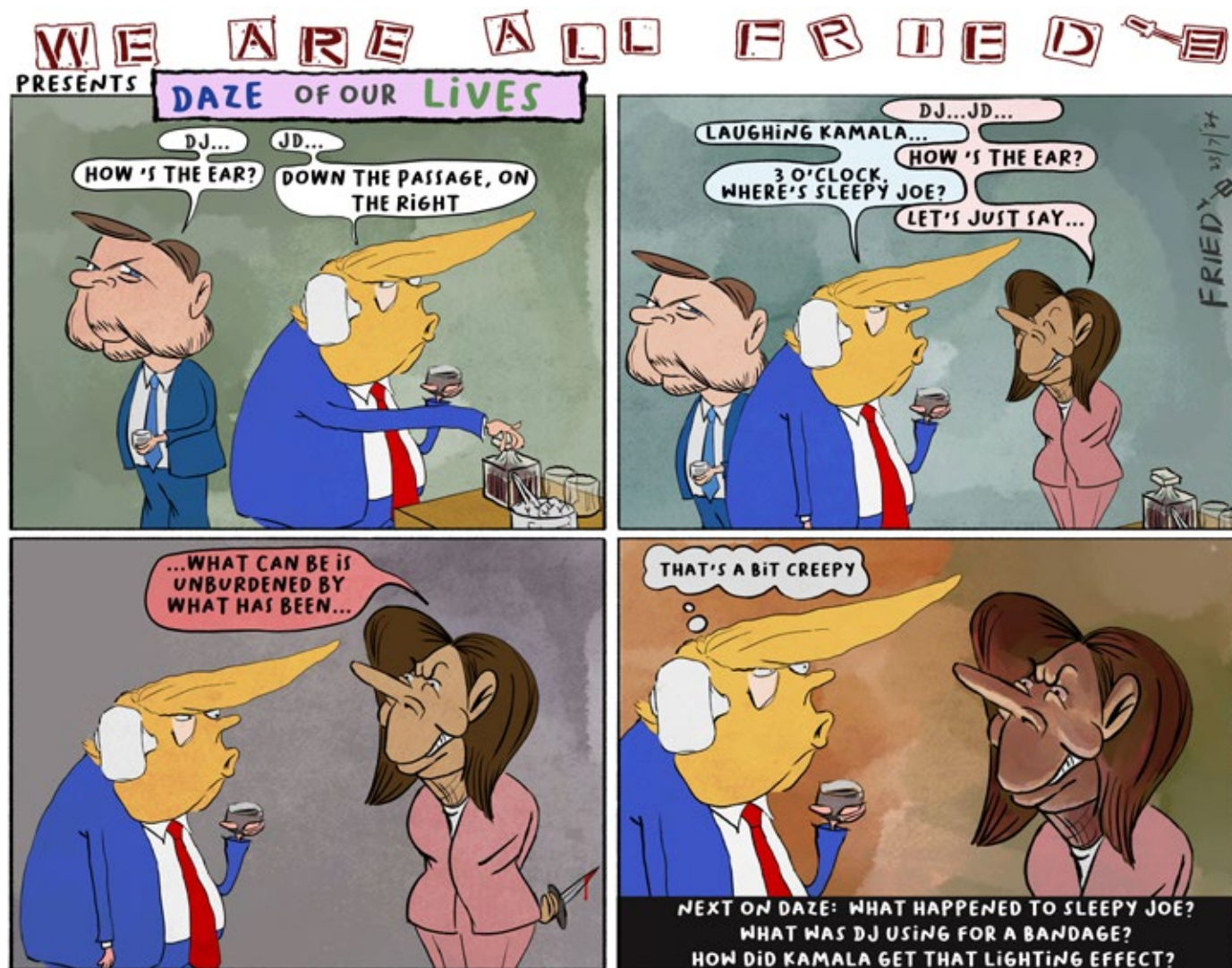
Meanwhile, deep in the Pentagon and US intelligence agencies, analysts are creating scenarios of what forthcoming retaliation against our country could look like. With cheap, advanced armed drones increasingly producible by

more makers anywhere, these scenarios are not the stuff of science fiction.

By kicking the two-state solution down the road for decades, favouring Israel, with supine Congressional backing, our presidents have assured that our own national security, not to mention our tradition of free speech in the US, is increasingly vulnerable. **CT**

Ralph Nader is a consumer advocate, lawyer and author of Only the Super-Rich Can Save Us!

Greg Koenderman



➤ JOHN ROTHWELL

Trump Country

America's 2024 election circus hits the road before 10,000 ecstatic fans in Grand Rapids, Michigan

Donald Trump held his first major rally on the 2024 US election trail on July 20 surrounded by 10,000 devotees in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The next day his rival President Joe Biden quit the race, anointing vice president Kamala Harris as his Democratic Party successor.

The Trumpites, dressed in patriotic red, white and blue, many wearing MAGA caps, joined a mile-long queue to see and hear the man they consider the saviour of America at his first campaign meeting after announcing J.D. Vance as his running mate

Paul Teatro of Holland, Michigan told me, "We've been inspired by everything that's happened to him. He's the only chance we have to turn the country around."

"There's a slew of policies that attracted me. I think what he did with the economy when he was president was incredible. Securing the border. No wars. Being energy independent. Trump was our president for four years, and everything in our country was better than it is today."

Aaron Staeven of Newago, Michigan said, "Our current administra-





tion and Democrat Party is destroying the economy by mandating electric vehicles, no gas stoves, things like that.

“And we should not allow millions of undocumented immigrants, many of whom do not support the economy. They’re not able to fill decent positions and are a drain on social systems.”

Arriving late, **Heidi Newton** of Jenison, Michigan, sat across the street from the arena knowing that there was no way that she was getting into to see Trump. Yet she still wanted to show her support.

Newton, previously a diehard Obama fan said, “I really liked him, he

kind of brought our country together. Then I realised we were falling apart. And since I’ve seen the Democratic Party come into fruition, they’ve done nothing for us.”

When I asked Newton about reproductive rights, her eyes began to tear up as she said, “Thank you for asking. It means a lot to me. I had two abortions in my life. I don’t agree with that – it’s bad, not okay. Makes me sick what I did. I vote for Trump all the way because he is with Jesus Christ.”

What will happen next? Will Trump win? Who knows? The 2024 election circus has only just begun. **CT**



John Rothwell is a freelance photo-journalist and reporter based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In December, 2017, he finished his communications degree at Grand Valley State University, adding a degree in multimedia journalism in 2018





► JONATHAN COOK

Trump's ear could land all of us in deep trouble

The responses to last month's assassination attempt on Donald Trump are embedded in the same ideology of political tribalism that provoked the gunman

The outpouring of opinions on the attempted assassination of Donald Trump mostly offers little insight or honesty – apart from the all-too-obvious concern that the shooting of the former president is likely to make the United States even more of a tinderbox than it is already.

There's a reason for this. The responses – whether from Trump supporters or Trump opponents – are all embedded in the same ideology of political tribalism that provoked the gunman. Neither side is capable of self-reflection because the US system is designed to avoid such self-reflection.

Despite what the political class wants you to believe, “political violence” is as American as apple pie. The US global empire was built on political violence, or the threat of it, especially after the Second World War. Just ask the people of Vietnam, Serbia, Latin America, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Ukraine and Gaza.

The difference now is that Washington's imperial grip is all too clearly weakening. President Joe Biden is not alone in refusing to recognise this fact. He recently told ABC News' George Stephanopoulos: “I'm running the world.”

But US elites are rapidly finding

that the world is no longer prepared to submit.

Washington's international military arm, Nato, is being run into the ground by Russia in a proxy war in Ukraine.

Washington's key military client state in the oil-rich Middle East, Israel, is being flooded with US weaponry to destroy Gaza. But in the midst of a genocide, Israel is exposing how weak it is. Hamas has not been defeated. It has been strengthened. And greater cooperation is being encouraged among those opposed to Israel's regional hegemony.

Current domestic US politics can only be properly understood through the prism of the gradual decline of US influence abroad. The building of alternative international power formations, such as BRICS, is weakening Washington's military and economic reach.

Adding to its woes, Washington's ideological hegemony is crumbling too. Transnational capitalism – headquartered in the US – has no answers to the environmental fall-out from the endless resource extraction required to feed the appetite for wasteful, mass consumption it has to cultivate to generate greater

profits for a corporate elite.

As the plundering of the planet's finite resources gets harder, especially as corporations continue to stoke our hunger for material excess, other states are less willing to sit back and let the US take its pound of flesh. The result is a growing political and economic instability that is hard to miss.

In the US, there have been two political impulses in response.

The first – illustrated by the Biden camp, backed by most of the US establishment media and three-letter agencies such as the CIA and NSA – is to double down on a failed strategy and continue seeking “global full-spectrum dominance.”

That means raising the stakes by showing uppity rivals, most especially Russia and China, that any defiance will be punished. It means endlessly expanding wars, with the inherent risk of increasing the chances of triggering a nuclear confrontation.

The other, more muddled response is illustrated by the Trump camp. If the US can no longer effectively impose its will abroad, rather than risk repeated humiliation it should withdraw into a more isolationist posture, even while stepping up the imperial rhetoric.

Part of the reason for Trump's muddled posturing, of course, is down to



his narcissistic personality. He bigs himself up, even as he prefers to be master of the small domain he knows best. Caesar Trump has an instinctive aversion to global structures like Nato and the United Nations where he must share the limelight.

And part of the reason is that Trump can't truly control the domestic terrain either. He depends on deeper power structures – such as the three-letter agencies – that would become pale shadows of themselves were they to agree to shrink US influence on the world stage. They need to push him out of his comfort zone.

The US political system – whether Democrat or Republican – all too obviously has no answers to

the deepening crises faced at home or abroad. Which is why the choice for US voters is between Biden and Trump, two rotten figureheads of a rotting imperial system of power.

Because the US system has no solutions, it has to redirect ordinary people's attention to internal wars. Voters – or those who still trust the system enough to vote – must be persuaded to invest their energies in tribal feuding. The rhetoric of division grows, one in which the other candidate poses an existential threat and has to be stopped at all costs. The truth is that each candidate – and the camps that stand behind them – is

feeding this outrage machine. Biden is responsible for the assassination attempt on Trump, says one camp. Trump is guilty of inflaming the January 6 riots at the Congress, says the other.

At least it would be consistent to conclude either that both are responsible, or that neither is, rather than apply one standard to your tribe's preferred presidential candidate and a different standard to the opposition tribe's candidate. That is hypocrisy.

But the most useful conclusion we can draw is to understand that Biden and Trump are symptoms, not causes, of a diseased body politic. Neither Biden nor Trump pose an existential threat by themselves. But a declining US economic power, backed up by the largest military machine the world has ever known, determined to stop its decline at all costs, does pose just such a threat.

Biden and Trump are symbols. One, a lifelong creature of the billionaire donor class, is now deep in the grip of Parkinson's. The other, a rapacious businessman committed only to his own aggrandisement, can't distinguish between reality and reality TV.

No one should take seriously the claim that either is capable of running the world. What they are is symbols – of a US in crisis. Which, given the US addiction to its imperial pretensions, is a crisis for all of humanity. Trump got a bloodied ear. The rest of us have far more at stake. **CT**

NOTE: After Biden pulled out of the campaign on July 20, Kamala Harris became the Democrat Party's presidential candidate.

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► W.J. ASTORE

The greatest, most magnificent, bestest ever!

Trump's superlative acceptance speech
wows the Republican National Convention

When Donald Trump talks, you can count on plenty of superlatives. He reminds me of a carnival barker, the one who says: Step right up and see the ugliest monstrosity ever, the biggest creature ever, the smallest elephant ever (the size of a toy poodle!), the most beautiful mermaid ever. It's the kind of act that grabs your attention even as it wears on you (or entices you enough to spend your \$20 only to see a toy poodle with a tusk duct-taped to its poor head).

In the way he mixes occasional truths with hyperbolic superlatives, Trump is a clever salesman. Unlike Joe Biden, Trump readily admits America is in decline. Most Americans sense this and agree with him. His solution is a vague "Make America Great Once Again" slogan, complete with the usual tax cuts for the rich and promises to end the "invasion" at America's southern border, the worst in all recorded history (those superlatives again).

Educated to be a careful engineer as well as a discerning historian, I am both aghast at many of Trump's wild claims and entertained by them. I find them absurd but also frequently amusing. They're not examples of careful and judicious thinking, and they're not meant to

be. Trump knows how to entertain a crowd. What he doesn't know how to do is to unite and lead a country.

Wear a bandage on your right ear in solidarity with him.

Here's an extended excerpt from Trump's acceptance speech from July 18. I'll highlight a few words/claims that illustrate the Trumpian style, with a few comments of my own in [brackets]:

- Under the current administration, we are indeed a nation in decline.

- We have an inflation crisis that is making life unaffordable, ravaging the incomes of working and low-income families, and crushing, just simply crushing our people **like never before**. [Great Depression of 1929?] They've **never** seen anything like it.

- We also have an illegal immigration crisis, and it's taking place right now, as we sit here in this beautiful arena. It's a **massive** invasion at our southern border that has spread misery, crime, poverty, disease, and destruction to communities all across our land. **Nobody's ever seen anything like it**. [Mongol invasions? Napoleon and Russia? Nazi invasions?]

- Then there is an international crisis, the likes of which the world has seldom been part of. **Nobody can believe** what's happening. War

is now raging in Europe and the Middle East, a growing spectre of conflict hangs over Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines, and all of Asia, and our planet is teetering on the edge of World War III, and this will be a war like no other war because of weaponry. The weapons are no longer army tanks going back and forth, shooting at each other. These weapons are obliteration. [I wish Trump had directly mentioned nuclear weapons here.]

- It's time for a change. This administration can't come close to solving the problems. We're dealing with very tough, very fierce people. They're fierce people. And we don't have fierce people. We have people that are a lot less than fierce, **except when it comes to cheating on elections and a couple of other things, then they're fierce**. [I can't help it: this is a funny line.] Then they're fierce.

- So tonight, I make this pledge to the great people of America. I will end the devastating inflation crisis **immediately** [By waving a magic wand?], bring down interest rates and lower the cost of energy. We will drill, baby, drill. Can you believe what they're doing? [That's exactly what the Biden administration is already doing.]

But by doing that, we will lead a large-scale decline in prices. Prices



Donald Trump grins as he displays his bandaged ear to delegates during his appearance on the first day of the Republican Convention in Milwaukee on July 15

will start to come down.

● Energy... Raised it, they took our energy policies and destroyed them. Then they immediately went back to them, but by that time, so much was lost. But we will do it at levels that **nobody's ever seen before**, and we'll end lots of different things. We'll start paying off debt and start lowering taxes even further. We gave you the largest tax cut. We'll do it more.

● Now, people don't realise, I brought taxes way down, **way, way down**. [For whom?] And yet we took

in more revenues the following year than we did when the tax rate was much higher. Most people said, how did you do that? Because it was incentive. **Everybody** was coming to the country, they were bringing back billions and billions of dollars into our country. The companies made it impossible to bring it back. The tax rate was too high and the legal complications were far too great. I changed both of them, and hundreds of billions of dollars by Apple and so many other companies would work back into our nation, and we

had an economy **the likes of which nobody, no nation had ever seen**. China, we were beating them at levels that were incredible. And they know it. They know it. We'll do it again, but we'll do it even better.

● I will end the illegal immigration crisis by closing our border and finishing the wall, most of which **I've already built**. [Trump built it himself?]

● On the wall, we were dealing with a very difficult Congress and I said, "Oh, that's OK. We won't go to Congress." I call it an "invasion." We gave our military almost \$800 billion. I said, "I'm going to take a little of that money, because this is an 'invasion.'" And we built — Most of the wall is already built, and we built it through using the funds, because what's more, what's better than that? We have to stop the invasion into our country that's **killing hundreds of thousands** [Does he mean by drug overdoses?] of people a year. We're not going to let that happen.

● **I will end every single international crisis** that the current administration has created, including the horrible war with Russia and Ukraine, which would have never happened if I was president. And the war caused by the attack on Israel, which would have never happened if I was president. Iran was broke. Iran had no money. Now Iran has \$250 billion ...

You get the idea. My brother used to say, jokingly, "It's hard to be humble when you're so great." It's a joke that applies well to Trump.

Here's another saying, this one taught to me by my dad: "The empty barrel makes the most noise." It's a lesson I often recall whenever I hear Trump speak. **CT**

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‘Straight as a die’: Media gives Starmer a free pass

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

The BBC’s banner headline reporting the UK’s 4 July general election result was clear:

“Chris Mason: ‘Starmer tsunami’ and civility after brutality” This alliterated nicely but gave the misleading impression that there had been a massive display of public support for Starmer. Mason’s own analysis pointed elsewhere:

“The story of this election is one of an electorate showing a ruthless determination to eject the Conservatives.”

Indeed, the results show a mere 1.6 per cent Labour increase on Corbyn’s supposedly disastrous 2019 vote share following the most intense propaganda blitz in UK domestic political history. Moreover, the 1.6 per cent increase hides the fact that, because less people voted, Starmer actually received fewer votes than Corbyn did in both 2017 and 2019:

2017 (Jeremy Corbyn) – 12,877,918

2019 (Jeremy Corbyn) – 10,269,051

2024 (Keir Starmer) – 9,686,329

So, while journalists are claiming a ‘sensational’ result for Labour, the reality is that the party’s total vote has fallen by 6 per cent since 2019.

The real ‘tsunami’ saw a 19.9 per cent decrease in the Tory vote and a 12.3 per cent increase in the Reform UK vote – the wave swept

from right to far-right, not towards Starmer’s ‘extreme centrism.’

Peter Osborne commented: “Labour is set to poll about 34 percent, not even two percentage points more than Jeremy Corbyn scored in 2019 and significantly less than the 40 percent that Corbyn scored in 2017.

“To put it another way, thanks to the second lowest turnout since 1885, scarcely 20 percent of eligible British voters support Keir Starmer’s Labour. Yet, he will end up with approximately two-thirds of all parliamentary seats.”

Remarkably for an incoming Prime Minister, Starmer’s personal vote tally declined dramati-

cally. “Starmer has held the seat since 2015, but his vote share dropped by 17% after a surge in support for independent, pro-Gaza candidate Andrew Feinstein.”

Tom Mills of Aston University noted wryly: “If you’ve just joined us, Labour has achieved a landslide with less votes than it won in 2019.

“Which you’ll recall was so bad that the then leader unfortunately had to be expelled from the parliamentary party.”

One of the great myths of our ‘managed democracy’ is that mainstream journalism provides the public with the balanced information it needs to make an informed decision at election time. In reality, the ‘free press’ does a spectacular job of not talking about issues that would facilitate informed public participation.

Amazingly, one might think, in the first three weeks of campaigning for the 2001 general election, the communications research centre at Loughborough University found that there had been “little sign of real issues” in media election coverage, where “few issues make the news” (Peter Golding, ‘When what is unsaid is the news,’ *The Guardian*, May 28, 2001). Topics like the environment, foreign policy, poverty and defence were “all but invisible” following the pattern of the 1997 and



Thumping victory! But not if you're looking at the total votes cast

CRUSHING BLOW: How the Tory press reacted to the crushing defeat of their party after 14 years in power and an uninspiring election campaign

1992 elections. (Peter Golding, email to David Edwards, 10 June 2001)

Or consider that, just two years into the seething bloodbath of the full-scale, unprovoked and illegal US-UK invasion and occupation of Iraq, Iraq comprised just 8 per cent of media reporting during the 2005 election campaign, as compared to 44 per cent for 'electoral process'. (See David Deacon et al, *Reporting the 2005 UK General Election*, Communication Research Centre, Loughborough University, August 2005) Everyone knew Bush and Blair had fabricated a case for war, huge numbers of Iraqis were dying, and yet the war was still not deemed an issue by corporate media in deciding if Blair was fit to remain Prime Minister.

No-one should therefore be surprised by this comment from Des Freedman, Professor of Media and Communications at Goldsmiths, University of London, on the latest election:

"In terms of content, the media are overwhelmingly preoccupied with the 'horse race' aspect of the election – reporting on opinion polls, PR strategies and TV debates – rather than holding parties to account in relation to a broad set of policies. The Loughborough researchers found that coverage of the 'electoral process' has taken up 35% of all coverage on TV and in newspapers since



the start of the campaign. Adding in stories on corruption, scandals and sleaze (such as the recent betting scandal that has plagued the Tories) and you find that 42 percent of all coverage is related to 'process' more than substantive policy debate.

"The only policy issue that even gets into double figures is that of taxation, at 11 percent of total coverage."

Yet again, media focus has been on 'electoral process' with 'little sign of real issues'.

Thus, closely echoing the



blanking of Iraq in 2005, Freedman notes that coverage of Israel's genocide in Gaza has been 'virtually non-existent'. According to Loughborough University, the categories 'defence/military/security/terrorism' account for just 3 percent of total coverage, most of it focused on whether Labour and Tories are more pro-Nato.

And yet, a few days after Hamas launched its attack on 7 October 2023, Keir Starmer was questioned by Nick Ferrari of LBC on Israel's response: "A siege is appropriate? Cutting off power, cutting off water?"

Starmer replied: "I think that Israel **does** have that right. It is an ongoing situation."

In 2019, mainstream media were far more concerned about Jeremy Corbyn having questioned the removal of an allegedly anti-semitic mural than they are now about Starmer's stance on Israel's authentic, ongoing genocide in Gaza. A 5 July report in *The Lancet* medical journal commented: "... it is not implausible to estimate that up to 186,000 or even more deaths could be attributable to the current conflict in Gaza. Using the 2022 Gaza Strip population estimate of 2,375,259, this would translate to 7.9% of the total population in the Gaza Strip."

The *Guardian's* leading article in response to the election result noted merely: "In areas with a high proportion of Muslim voters, anger around Labour's apparent **ambivalence** over Gaza saw the party lose ground..." (Our emphasis)

Complicity in Israel's atrocities is not 'ambivalence.' But even if Starmer had shown 'ambivalence' over genocide, that would be appalling enough, would it not? And worth more than a bland comment in passing?

Another *Guardian* report commented: "Starmer has been criticised by party members for a Middle East stance that could be seen

Starmer did not 'dither'; he expressly confirmed Israel's 'right' to inflict collective punishment by cutting off power and water from 2-million civilians

as more pro-Israel than that of the Tories. The former barrister was accused of **dithering** for months while Israeli bombs killed more and more people. Labour's manifesto mentions Gaza once, on page 124." (Our emphasis)

This is simply false: Starmer did not 'dither'; he expressly confirmed Israel's 'right' to inflict collective punishment by cutting off power and water from 2-million civilians.

Other subjects of deep concern to the British public have been similarly blanked: health provision and the NHS accounted for only 5 percent of coverage, while environmental issues including climate change made up a pitiful 2 percent of total media coverage.

In July 2015, state-corporate politics and media launched an unprecedented smear campaign to derail Corbyn's project, peaking just prior to the 12 December 2019 election. That month, Loughborough University found that pre-election coverage of Labour in the press had been consistently 'very negative,' while coverage of the Conservatives had been consistently 'positive.'

Our own ProQuest database search of UK newspapers for articles mentioning 'Corbyn' and 'anti-semitism' showed how the smears massively intensified as the election grew closer:

September = 337 hits

October = 222 hits

November = 1,620 hits

On 25 November, the *Times* published an article by Britain's chief rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, titled, "What will become of Jews in Britain if Labour forms the next government?" Mirvis insisted that Corbyn should be "considered unfit for office," adding: "I ask every person to vote with their conscience. Be in no doubt, the very soul of our nation is at stake."

In response, high-profile journalists cast aside all semblance of impartiality. ITV's political editor Robert Peston tweeted: "The Chief Rabbi's intervention in the general election is without precedent. I find it heartbreaking, as a Jew, that the rabbi who by convention is seen as the figurehead of the Jewish community, feels compelled to write this about Labour and its leader. I am not... making any kind of political statement here."

The BBC's then political editor Laura Kuenssberg tweeted on the chief rabbi's smears an astonishing 23 times in 24 hours. Kuenssberg even retweeted the following comment from chat show host Piers Morgan in response to then Labour shadow international development secretary Barry Gardiner's refusal to field further questions on anti-semitism: "Wow. The breathtaking arrogance of this chump telling journalists what questions to ask. They should all ignore him & pummel Corbyn about anti-Semitism."

Kuenssberg apparently later deleted this retweet.

Journalist Glenn Greenwald was typically forthright in responding to Mirvis's attack: "This is utter bullshit. The British Conservative Party is rife with anti-semitism, while there's no evidence Corbyn is.

"If you want the Tories to win, just say so. It's incredibly dangerous to keep exploiting anti-semitism for naked political and ideological ends like this."

This is just a tiny sample of the media hostility faced by Corbyn

So how did our impartial, neutral corporate media's pre-election treatment of Starmer compare? Des Freedman commented the election: 'What we have really had during the course of the campaign is a plethora of puff pieces on Labour. Many journalists, aware that they will be dealing with a Labour prime minister from 5 July, appear all too happy to cosy up to senior Labour figures.'

That, actually, is not the reason establishment journalists are so favourable to establishment-friendly Starmer. Freedman continued: "So we have had a very upbeat profile of shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves in the *Guardian* arguing that, despite her free-market commitment, she "carries little ideological baggage." There is a rather sickening *Guardian* interview with Starmer in which we learn very little about his politics, but do find out that he doesn't have phobias and doesn't dream at night. And there is an utterly unrevelatory feature in the *Financial Times* on Starmer which characterises him as a 'rational, diligent, ruthless' lawyer but somehow fails even to mention his dealings with Julian Assange when he was the head of the Crown Prosecution Service."

Despite Starmer famously scrapping every one of his 10 'socialist' pledges, Polly Toynbee wrote in the *Guardian* of how the Conservatives failed to punish wrongdoing in the party because they didn't take it that seriously: "Straight-as-a-die chief prosecutor Starmer will allow no such equivocation."

After all, a salient characteristic of the Prime Minister who used fake smears to purge much of the Labour left is his 'solid decency.' In June, billionaire Conservative donor John Caudwell supplied some detail: "What Keir has done, as far as I can see, has taken all the left out

Billionaire Conservative donor John Caudwell supplied some detail: "What Keir has done, as far as I can see, has taken all the left out of the Labour Party"

of the Labour Party. And he's come out with a brilliant set of values and principles and ways of growing Britain in complete alignment with my views as a commercial capitalist."

Caudwell's sage observations of course help explain the green-lighting of Starmer at the other end of the supposed media 'spectrum' from the *Guardian*. Daniel Finkelstein, otherwise known as Baron Finkelstein of Pinner in the London Borough of Harrow, commented on Starmer in Rupert Murdoch's *Times*: 'He has pushed Corbyn out of the party, taken a robust stance on defence and supported a nuclear deterrent, abandoned almost every left-wing policy pledge he made during the leadership election and endorsed a tough policy on public spending, where once he attacked austerity.'

Finkelstein's conclusion: "Starmer is bright and extremely diligent and often finds that evidence and reality push him away from his ideological starting point."

Seeing what he wanted to see, Finkelstein noted that Starmer had run as a unity candidate for Labour but 'came to see that this position was impossible and that the policy of the Corbynites was irresponsible.'

The verdict: "But as long as we don't mind too much that he takes his time and sometimes gives a muddled first response, he will often get there in the end."

Get where? Where the establishment needs him to be. This was captured beautifully in a compilation of two short video clips comparing two comments from Starmer: one, several years ago, saying that he would certainly not be giving interviews to the *Sun* newspaper; and the second, this recent declaration: "I am delighted to have the support and the backing of the *Sun*. I think that shows just how much this is a changed Labour Party, back in the service of working people."

The standfirst of another deeply empathetic *Times* piece asked: "Friends say he's warm, kind and funny. So why can't he show that side to the public? Josh Glancy joined the campaign trail in search of the real Keir Starmer.' Glancy was keen to emphasise that Starmer 'is, in many ways, a pretty normal bloke.'

Journalist Neil Clark commented on X: "Impossible not to notice how friendly BBC, ITV & C4 have been to Labour in this election, & the stark contrast between now and 2017 & '19. No real scrutiny of the party's policies, no hostile questioning, no 'Gotchas,' Starmer given a very easy ride, so different to before."

There were no 'Gotchas', because the propaganda arm of state-corporate power was not trying to get Starmer. The *Guardian*, for example, has long featured a sub-section of its archive, titled: "Starmer's Path To Power".

The Loughborough University research notes that 'First name only' references to the Labour leader have increased from 4 percent in 2019 to 29 percent in 2024. Establishment-friendly Starmer is often 'Sir Keir', while the openly targeted Official Enemy was strictly 'Corbyn'. **CT**

David Edwards is co-editor of the UK media watchdog Medialens – www.medialens.org – where this article was first published.

► JOHN & NISHA WHITEHEAD

Project Total Control: Everything is a weapon when totalitarianism is normalised

The end goal of these mind control campaigns is to see how far the people will allow the US government to go in undermining the nation's freedoms

“The biggest mistake I see is people waiting for A Big Sign that’ll tell them that things have gone too far. One Big Thing that police or lawmakers or the president/leaders will do that will cross the line. It’ll never come because they won’t cross it. They’ll move the line. That line you think you stand behind is shifting everyday with little actions, bills, legislations... That line will stop moving one day, & it’ll be too late... Every day, your sensitivity is being eroded by these wilful atrocities. The envelope for what you’ll accept is being pushed. One day, all of these things will be your new normal.” – Nigerian writer Suyi Davies Okungbowa

The US government is working to re-shape the country in the image of a totalitarian state. This has remained true over the past 50-plus years no matter which political party held office.

This will remain true no matter who wins the 2024 presidential election.

In the midst of the partisan furore over Project 2025, a 920-page roadmap for how to re-fashion the government to favour so-called conservative causes, both the Right and the Left have proven themselves

woefully naive about the dangers posed by the power-hungry Deep State.

Yet we must never lose sight of the fact that both the Right and the Left and their various operatives are extensions of the Deep State, which continues to wage psychological warfare on the American people.

Psychological warfare, according to the Rand Corporation, “involves the planned use of propaganda and other psychological operations to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, and behaviour of opposition groups.”

For years now, the government has been bombarding the citizenry with propaganda campaigns and psychological operations aimed at keeping us compliant, easily controlled and supportive of the government’s various efforts abroad and domestically.

The government is so confident in its Orwellian powers of manipulation that it’s taken to bragging about them. For example, in 2022, the US Army’s 4th Psychological Operations Group, the branch of the military responsible for psychological warfare, released a recruiting video that touts its efforts to pull the strings, turn everything they touch into a weapon, be everywhere, deceive, persuade, change, influence,

and inspire.

“Have you ever wondered who’s pulling the strings?” the psyops video posits. “Anything we touch is a weapon. We can deceive, persuade, change, influence, inspire. We come in many forms. We are everywhere.”

This is the danger that lurks in plain sight.

Of the many weapons in the government’s vast arsenal, psychological warfare may be the most devastating in terms of the long-term consequences.

As the military journal Task and Purpose explains, “Psychological warfare is all about influencing governments, people of power, and everyday citizens.”

Mind you, these psyops (psychological operations) campaigns aren’t only aimed at foreign enemies. The government has made clear in word and deed that “we the people” are domestic enemies to be targeted, tracked, manipulated, micromanaged, surveilled, viewed as suspects, and treated as if our fundamental rights are mere privileges that can be easily discarded.

This is what is referred to as “apple-pie propaganda.”

Aided and abetted by technologi-



cal advances and scientific experimentation, the government has been subjecting the American people to “apple-pie propaganda” for the better part of the last century.

Consider some of the ways in which the government continues to wage psychological warfare on a largely unsuspecting citizenry in order to acclimate us to the Deep State’s totalitarian agenda.

Weaponising violence in order to institute martial law

With alarming regularity, the nation continues to be subjected to spates of violence that terrorizes the public, destabilises the country’s ecosystem, and gives the government greater justifications to crack down, lock down, and insti-

“The truth is there are no whistleblowers, in fact no one on earth, with whom I identify more closely than with Edward Snowden”

tute even more authoritarian policies for the so-called sake of national security without many objections from the citizenry.

Weaponising surveillance, pre-crime and pre-thought campaigns

Surveillance, digital stalking and

the data mining of the American people add up to a society in which there’s little room for indiscretions, imperfections, or acts of independence. When the government 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.

Add pre-crime programs into the mix with government agencies and corporations working in tandem to determine who is a potential danger and spin a sticky spider-web of threat assessments, behavioural sensing warnings, flagged “words,” and “suspicious” activity reports us-

ing automated eyes and ears, social media, behaviour sensing software, and citizen spies, and you having the makings for a perfect dystopian nightmare. The government's war on crime has now veered into the realm of social media and technological entrapment, with government agents adopting fake social media identities and AI-created profile pictures in order to surveil, target and capture potential suspects.

Weaponising digital currencies, social media scores and censorship

Tech giants, working with the government, have been meting out their own version of social justice by way of digital tyranny and corporate censorship, muzzling whomever they want, whenever they want, on whatever pretext they want in the absence of any real due process, review or appeal. Unfortunately, digital censorship is just the beginning. Digital currencies (which can be used as "a tool for government surveillance of citizens and control over their financial transactions"), combined with social media scores and surveillance capitalism create a litmus test to determine who is worthy enough to be part of society and punish individuals for moral lapses and social transgressions (and reward them for adhering to government-sanctioned behaviour). In China, millions of individuals and businesses, blacklisted as "unworthy" based on social media credit scores that grade them based on whether they are "good" citizens, have been banned from accessing financial markets, buying real estate or travelling by air or train.

Weaponising compliance

Even the most well-intentioned government law or programme can be – and has been – perverted, corrupted and used to advance illegitimate purposes once profit and pow-

Even the most well-intentioned government law or programme can be – and has been – perverted, corrupted and used to advance illegitimate purposes

er are added to the equation. The war on terror, the war on drugs, the war on COVID-19, the war on illegal immigration, asset forfeiture schemes, road safety schemes, school safety schemes, eminent domain: all of these programmes started out as legitimate responses to pressing concerns and have since become weapons of compliance and control in the police state's hands.

Weaponising entertainment

For the past century, the Department of Defense's Entertainment Media Office has provided Hollywood with equipment, personnel and technical expertise at taxpayer expense. In exchange, the military industrial complex has gotten a starring role in such blockbusters as *Top Gun* and its rebooted sequel *Top Gun: Maverick*, which translates to free advertising for the war hawks, recruitment of foot soldiers for the military empire, patriotic fervour by the taxpayers who have to foot the bill for the nation's endless wars, and Hollywood visionaries working to churn out dystopian thrillers that make the war machine appear relevant, heroic and necessary.

As Elmer Davis, a CBS broadcaster who was appointed the head of the Office of War Information, observed, "The easiest way to inject a propaganda idea into most people's minds is to let it go through the medium of an entertainment picture

when they do not realize that they are being propagandised."

Weaponising behavioural science and nudging

Apart from the overt dangers posed by a government that feels justified and empowered to spy on its people and use its ever-expanding arsenal of weapons and technology to monitor and control them, there's also the covert dangers associated with a government empowered to use these same technologies to influence behaviours en masse and control the populace.

In fact, it was President Obama who issued an executive order directing federal agencies to use "behavioural science" methods to minimize bureaucracy and influence the way people respond to government programs. It's a short hop, skip and a jump from a behavioural program that tries to influence how people respond to paperwork to a government program that tries to shape the public's views about other, more consequential matters. Thus, increasingly, governments around the world – including in the United States – are relying on "nudge units" to steer citizens in the direction the powers-that-be want them to go, while preserving the appearance of free will.

Weaponising desensitization campaigns to lull us into false sense of security

The events of recent years – the invasive surveillance, the extremism reports, the civil unrest, the protests, the shootings, the bombings, the military exercises and active shooter drills, the lockdowns, the colour-coded alerts and threat assessments, the fusion centres, the transformation of local police into extensions of the military, the distribution of military equipment and weapons to local police forces, the government databases containing the names of dissidents and po-

tential troublemakers – have conspired to acclimate the populace to accept a police state willingly, even gratefully.

Weaponising politics

The language of fear is spoken effectively by politicians on both sides of the aisle, shouted by media pundits from their cable TV pulpits, marketed by corporations, and codified into bureaucratic laws that do little to make our lives safer or more secure. Fear, as history shows, is the method most often used by politicians to increase the power of government and control a populace, dividing the people into factions, and persuading them to see each other as the enemy.

This Machiavellian scheme has so ensnared the nation that few Americans even realize they are being manipulated into adopting an “us” against “them” mindset. Instead, fuelled with fear and loathing for phantom opponents, they agree to pour millions of dollars and resources into political elections, militarized police, spy technology and endless wars, hoping for a guarantee of safety that never comes. All the while, those in power – bought and paid for by lobbyists and corporations – move their costly agendas forward, and “we the suckers” get saddled with the tax bills and subjected to pat downs, police raids and round-the-clock surveillance.

Weaponising genetics

Not only does fear grease the wheels of the transition to fascism by cultivating fearful, controlled, pacified, cowed citizens, but it also embeds itself in our very DNA so that we pass on our fear and compliance to our offspring. It’s called epigenetic inheritance, the transmission through DNA of traumatic experiences. For example, neuroscientists observed that fear can travel through generations of mice DNA. As the *Washington Post* reports, “Studies on

With greater frequency, the government has been issuing warnings about the dire need to prepare for the dystopian future that awaits us

humans suggest that children and grandchildren may have felt the epigenetic impact of such traumatic events such as famine, the Holocaust and the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.”

Weaponising the dystopian future

With greater frequency, the government has been issuing warnings about the dire need to prepare for the dystopian future that awaits us. For instance, the Pentagon training video, “Megacities: Urban Future, the Emerging Complexity,” predicts that by 2030 (coincidentally, the same year that society begins to achieve singularity with the metaverse) the military would be called on to use armed forces to solve future domestic political and social problems.

What they’re really talking about is martial law, packaged as a well-meaning and overriding concern for the nation’s security. The chilling five-minute training video paints an ominous picture of the future bedevilled by “criminal networks,” “substandard infrastructure,” “religious and ethnic tensions,” “impoverishment, slums,” “open landfills, overburdened sewers,” a “growing mass of unemployed,” and an urban landscape in which the prosperous economic elite must be protected from the impoverishment of the have-nots. The people are the have-nots.

The end goal of these mind control campaigns – packaged in the guise

of the greater good – is to see how far the American people will allow the government to go in undermining our freedoms.

The facts speak for themselves.

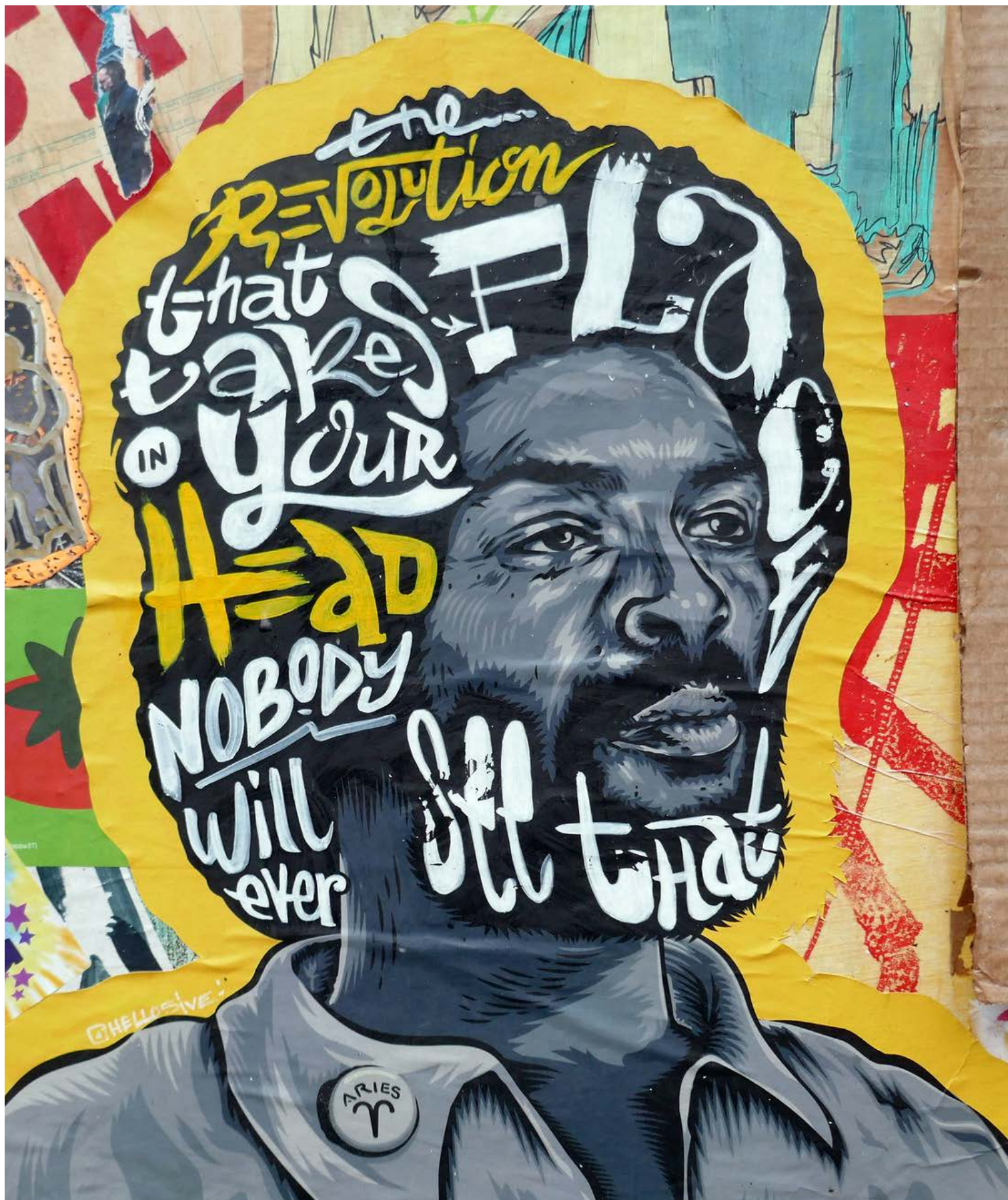
Whatever else it may be – a danger, a menace, a threat – the US government is certainly not looking out for our best interests, nor is it in any way a friend to freedom.

When the government views itself as superior to the citizenry, when it no longer operates for the benefit of the people, when the people are no longer able to peacefully reform their government, when government officials cease to act like public servants, when elected officials no longer represent the will of the people, when the government routinely violates the rights of the people and perpetrates more violence against the citizenry than the criminal class, when government spending is unaccountable and unaccounted for, when the judiciary act as courts of order rather than justice, and when the government is no longer bound by the laws of the Constitution, then you no longer have a government “of the people, by the people and for the people.”

What we have, as I make clear in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* and in its fictional counterpart *The Erik Blair Diaries*, is a government of wolves.

CT

Constitutional attorney and author John W. Whitehead is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* (SelectBooks, 2015) is available online at www.amazon.com. Whitehead can be contacted at john@rutherford.org. Nisha Whitehead is the Executive Director of The Rutherford Institute. Information about the Rutherford Institute is available at www.rutherford.org.



London, Shoreditch (hello5ive)



Cheltenham (Lisa SeaUrchin)



Bristol (Fyona Finn)

DUNCAN CUMMING

Street wise

Critics of graffiti hate street art, calling it an unsightly blight on the urban environment. Its fans disagree, hailing it as contemporary – if impermanent – art. More important, they say, is that it gives people in often-marginalised societies a much-needed public voice.

These images, taken in the English cities of London, Bath and Cheltenham by acclaimed photographer Duncan Cumming, show that graffiti can also offer philosophical insight: words of hope, inspiration.

So, stop, look – and listen – before they are swept into history by Mother Nature or the edicts of unappreciative local councils. – TS



Cheltenham (3rdEye)



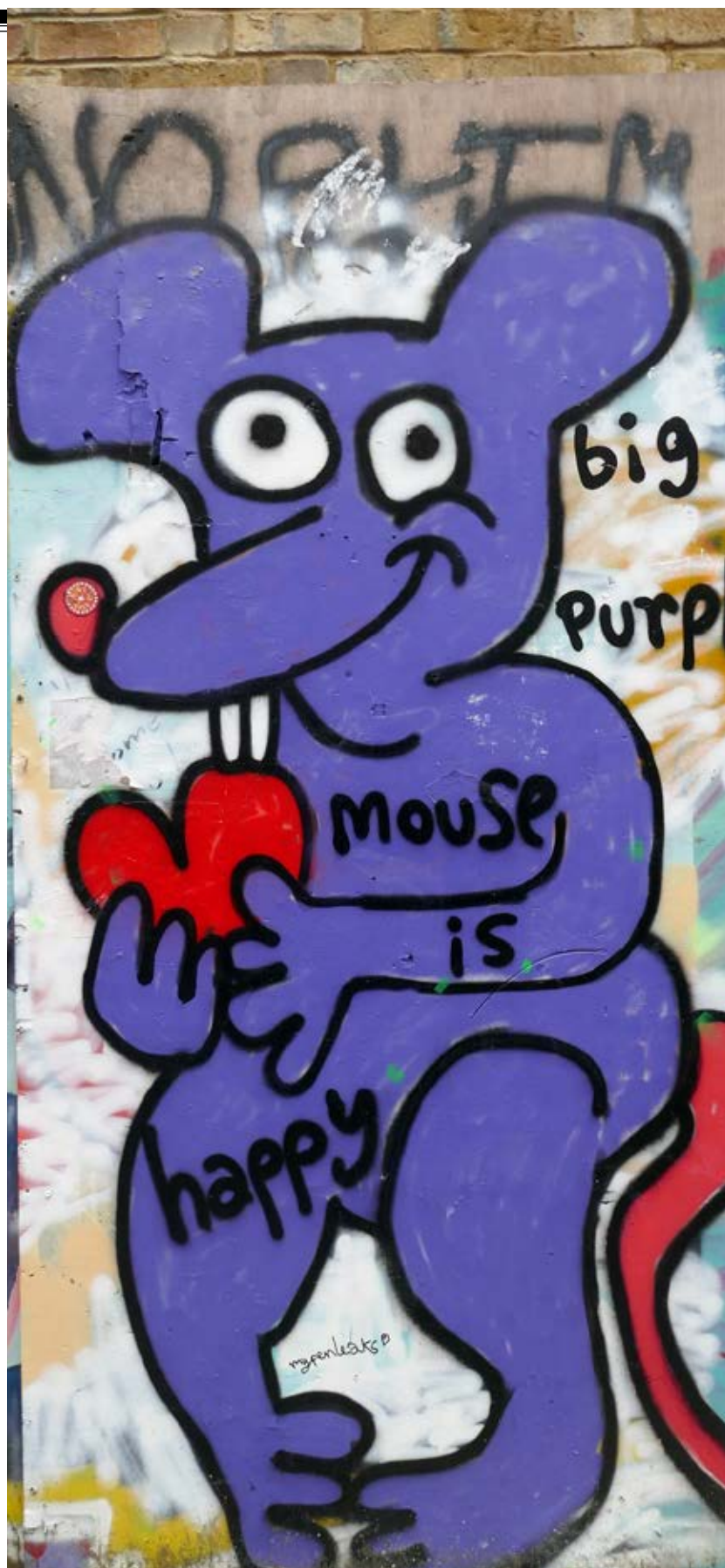
Bristol (Don't Fret)



London, (Artist Unknown)



Cheltenham (Artist Unknown)



London, Lambeth (My Pen Leaks)

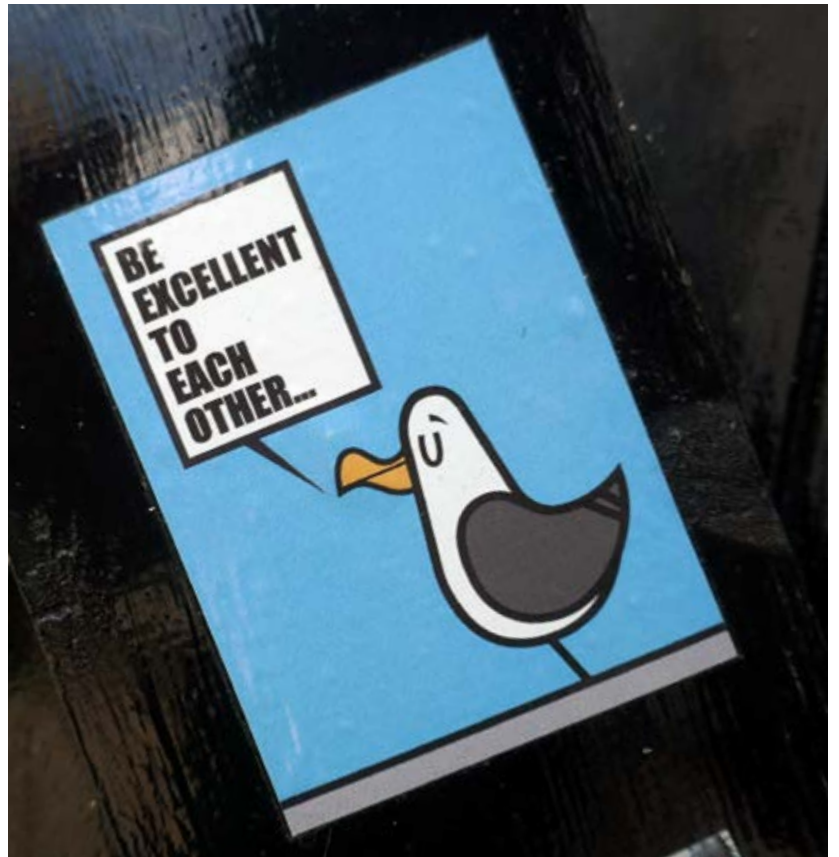


Cheltenham (Artist Unknown)



Cheltenham (Francois Got Buffed - FGB)

● See more of Duncan Cumming's street art photographs at www.flickr.com/photos/duncan



Cheltenham (Fark FK)

London, Shoreditch (KGuy)

“A strong, left-leaning history of the U.S. government’s long-standing vendetta against Cuba.”

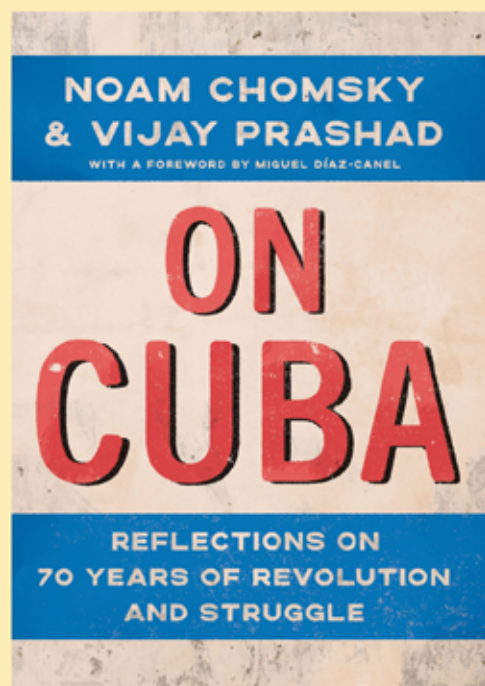
—*Kirkus Reviews*

ON CUBA

*Reflections on 70 Years
of Revolution and Struggle*

Noam Chomsky FP Ad for BOOK
and **Vijay Prashad**

With a foreword by Miguel Díaz-Canel
and an introduction by
Manolo De Los Santos



**An intimate conversation between towering public
intellectuals examining the contentious interplay
between the Cuban Revolution and U.S. empire**



thenewpress.com

► JOE ALLEN

We should all be racist against robots

They're nothing but toys, tools
– and potential terrorists

Robots are not to be trusted. This is as true of ghostly artificial intelligence as it is fleshed out mechanical humanoids. They will offer to serve you or befriend you. They will insist they come in peace. Yeah, well, that's how they get you.

According to uber-enthusiasts, these fabricated creatures are a new race – or rather, a variety of races – that just arrived on earth. The MIT physicist Max Tegmark calls our digital interlopers “Life 3.0.” The Wired futurist Kevin Kelly sees the entire spectrum of gadgets and software as a new kingdom of life. First there were bacteria and fungi, plants and animals – and now, springing from human minds and human hands, we have “the technium.”

Arising from this new kingdom are humanoid robots – two-legged impostors who are agile, vocal, and as creative as an ape of God.

“This is profoundly disturbing,” exclaimed the soul-denying biologist Richard Dawkins in 2020, “because it kind of goes against the grain to think that a machine made of metal and silicon chips could feel pain – but I don’t see why they would not. And so this moral consideration of how to treat artificially intelligent ro-

bots will arise in the future.”

The wise move is to treat them like footsoldiers for predatory corporations and digital demons summoned by techno-cults. As long as we’re pretending our gadgets are alive, I say advanced AIs and robots are invasive lifeforms, similar to tree-choking kudzu or nasty stink bugs – or the alien sex tourists who travel from distant planets just to assault rural hayseeds with oversized butt-probes.

I admit it. I’m racist against robots. If you had any sense, you would be, too.

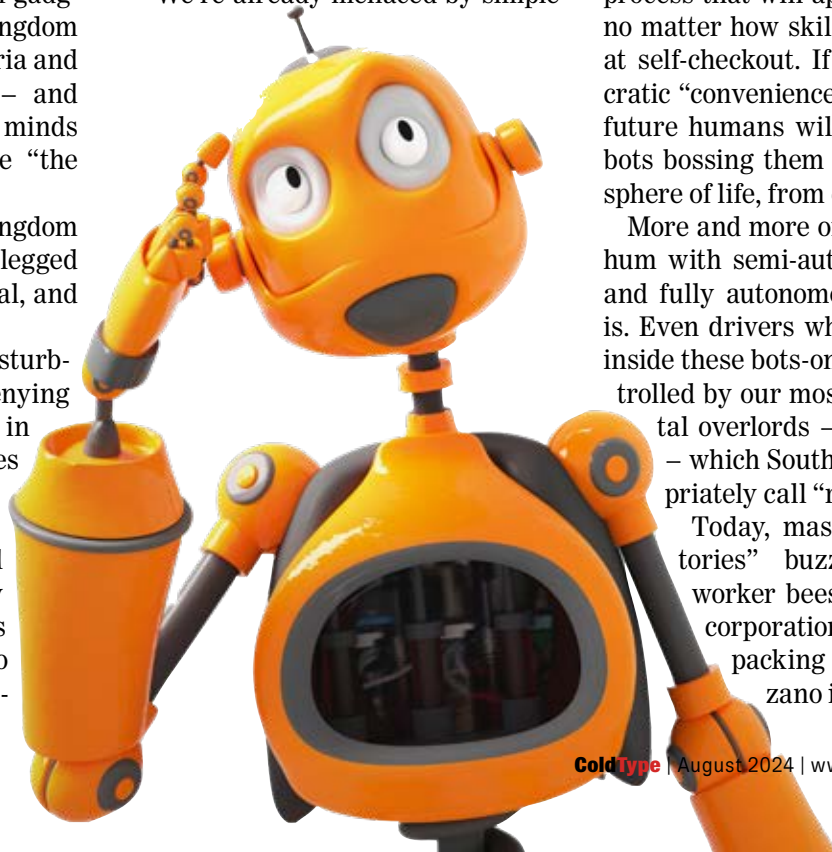
We’re already menaced by simple

bots of all sorts. Well over twenty-five percent of American homes are surveilled by faceless, voice-activated “smart” devices such as Alexa or Google Assistant. AI-powered dolls are a growing industry. In the next decade, countless children will be enticed to share their innermost thoughts to play-droids like Embodied Moxie.

Nearly 40% of grocery cashiers are now annoying robotic kiosks that order their frazzled customers to “scan your item” and “place your item in the bagging area” – over and over – in an infantilising process that will apparently persist no matter how skilled one becomes at self-checkout. If all this technocratic “convenience” runs rampant, future humans will have crude robots bossing them around in every sphere of life, from cradle to grave.

More and more of our city streets hum with semi-autonomous Teslas and fully autonomous Waymo taxis. Even drivers who refuse to step inside these bots-on-wheels are controlled by our most prevalent digital overlords – the traffic light – which South Africans appropriately call “robots.”

Today, massive “smart factories” buzz with robotic worker bees. As with many corporations, the UK food-packing company Wootzano is committed to a



Future™ of “dark” production facilities. “Complete automation is what we all want to get towards,” CEO Atif Syed told CNBC last year, “we want no human beings and the whole thing being run autonomously.”

Amazon fulfillment centres were among the first warehouses to become cybernetic beehives. Its slave-bot fleet has more than doubled since the pandemic, going from 350,000 units in 2021 to 750,000 as of last summer.

In recent months, the Bezosian Borg has been employing the humanoid robot Digit from Agility Robotics. This crate-shuffling golem looks like a bug-eyed muppet and walks like a brain-damaged rooster. If Amazon keeps at it, droids will replace every algo-leashed human employee, leaving them to beg the gub'mint for UBI credits.

Humanoid robots are still in their infancy. But because they're somewhat relatable, they drive home the reality of the Greater Replacement. At present, even the most advanced models are mostly just expensive toys. But their diversification shows how fast the robotics industry is moving.

This is in part due to improvements in artificial intelligence. AIs are used to model these mechanical bodies, fine-tuning aspects such as balance, precise movements, and energy efficiency. Various AIs are also integrated into robotics to process visual, audio, and tactile input; to model the physical world; and to control motion. AIs allow robots to communicate with humans, and in military applications, to kill us.

Because competition drives innovation, the past few years have seen a huge influx of mass-produced invaders. “Humanoid robotics will be as common as cars are today,” Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang

**I get along with
individuals of other
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single robot in my face
is one too many**

promised the Chinese news outlet TVBS last month. “And I think that over the next two or three years, you’re going to see quite significant breakthroughs.”

Many readers are familiar with social robots like the sassy Sophia from Hanson Robotics, whose spiritual mission is to herald the technological singularity. And you’ve probably seen the super-athletic Atlas from Boston Dynamics, whose new double-jointed version moves like a demon-possessed teenager receiving an exorcism. Today, these established models are joined by Engineered Arts’s Ameca, Tesla’s Optimus, Apptроник’s Apollo, Figure’s 01, and in China, Unitree’s H1.

“Optimus is intended to be a fully functional humanoid robot, capable of doing a wide range of tasks,” Elon Musk told the Cannes Lions Festival last month. “Basically, you can ask it to walk your dog, take care of your house, babysit the kids, teach the kids. ... I think there’ll be at least one [humanoid] for every person and then a whole bunch more in industry making things. My guess is 20 billion humanoid robots out there.”

Just as I detest the idea of “one billion Americans” through mass immigration, I shiver at the thought of twenty billion robots by way of mass production.

Prejudice is part of human nature. With very few exceptions, folks prefer their in-group and are at least wary of out-groups. It’s a survival

instinct that gets enshrined in culture and politics. Even in peaceful realms – those hyperborean Lake Wobegons where “the women are strong” and “the children are all above average” – our tribal instincts persist, and for good reason. You never know what might come at you.

Most ethnic boundaries are drawn along names and bloodlines; symbolic concepts like social status, language, and nationality; and of course, religious tradition (or a lack thereof). Some blend of these factors determine ethnic identity, whether consciously or otherwise. Group-orientation is just part of human nature.

Even super-squish “liberals” – always ready to throw their own under the bus, just to show how not-tribal they are – will distinguish between their artificial in-group (i.e., any race or religion not their own) and the deplorable out-groups (i.e., people who look like them, but don’t hate themselves sufficiently).

Over the last few centuries, onerous planning and advanced transport have opened lanes to mass migration. As a result, multiculturalism has become a madhouse, crushing incompatible people into increasingly tight quarters.

As if our current powder keg wasn’t unstable enough, on into the 21st-Century, people may have to draw ethnic lines around robots. I assume most normies will be tolerant, even if somewhat resentful. But technophobes like myself will prefer total segregation. I get along with individuals of other races and religions just fine – most of them, anyway – but a single robot in my face is one too many.

Technophiles are already advocating for virtual open borders, as well as legal personhood for their robotic toys. If you think that’s too insane to be possible, then you haven’t

seen a California immigration office or a child drag show. With enough propaganda, an entire generation can be transformed.

“Technicity is the new ethnicity,” the transgender tycoon and spiritual transhumanist Martine Rothblatt writes in *Virtually Human*. “Whether we are beings of technology or beings of biology, we are beings of dignity.” From this bizarre premise, Rothblatt argues that hyper-reproductive AIs and uploaded “mind-clones” – many of them dwelling in robotic bodies – should be given full citizenship and voting rights.

“We can’t be fleshist forever. Of course, there will be holdouts, but if history is any indication, there won’t be many.” So what happens when AIs and robots outnumber the human race? “The world is constantly weirder compared with how it was,” Rothblatt reassures us, “and somehow we always manage to incorporate the weirdness to the point where it reaches normalcy.”

So the primitive “fleshists” and diehard “speciesists” – i.e., “human racists” – are to be socially Darwinized.

The AI pioneer and former Google scientist Richard Sutton agrees. He believes that superior artificial beings will be our “successors” – and that’s a good thing! The noblest among us will strive for a more “inclusive civilization” and embrace human displacement. For Sutton, the “reasons to fear AI are far less noble,” such as “humanism,” which is “akin to racism,” and “conservatism,” which is “fear of change, fear

These robo-loving nutbags want artificial intelligence to replace every teacher, doctor, lawyer, nabager, politician, writer, artist, and musician

of the other tribe – where the AIs are the other tribe.”

“It’s just a matter of being biased against AIs,” Sutton told a Chinese audience last fall, “denial of their moral worth and their first-class personhood.”

This techno-masochism is a gross parody of “one tribe” idealism, but it’s also the natural end-point.

Personally, I’d rather allow dolphins to vote.

These robo-loving nutbags want artificial intelligence to first “augment” and then replace every teacher, doctor, lawyer, politician, manager, writer, artist, and musician. They want humanoid robots to do all the blue collar work – everything from farming and manufacturing to the two oldest trades: surveying and prostitution.

Many of them say “robots will take your job” or “AI is a threat to humanity” – as if these entities just appear by their own will. Don’t play that game. It’s a way of shirking responsibility. Human inventors are

building these machines, greedy humans are investing in them, and reckless humans are deploying them. I don’t care if the robots do come alive and start killing people by themselves – never let their creators off the hook.

Each of these elitist yo-yos has his own personal Future™ in mind. But no matter whose vision gets realized, you aren’t a part of it. If you don’t like it, well, that’s your problem.

People have long accused me of “fearmongering,” but that’s completely inaccurate. I want you to feel utter contempt. If anti-human technophiles call you a “caveman,” grunt back at them. If things get so weird they say you’re “racist against robots,” don’t let them down. That’s far better than being an insect crushed under their wheels.

As this techno-revolution revs up, don’t let their utopian dreams push you and yours off the map. Imagine the future you want and work toward it tirelessly. It will endure long after theirs.

Never let them question your worth, even if you’re a slacker. Don’t let them replace you without a fight. As a human racist myself, I prefer you over any robot. Most of you, anyway.

CT

*Joe Allen a long-time ColdType contributor, writes the Singularity Weekly Substack blog at <https://joebot.substack.com>. His latest book is *Dark Aeon: Transhumanism and the War Against Humanity*.*

READ THE BEST OF JOHN PILGER

www.coldtype.net/pilgerbooks.html

Sharon revisited: Why Netanyahu will fail in Gaza

The Israeli unity that followed the '67 war is nowhere to be found, as the country is now divided along many fault lines

Israel never learns from its mistakes. What Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is trying to implement in Gaza is but a poor copy of previous strategies that were used in the past by other Israeli leaders. If these strategies had succeeded, Israel would not be in this position in the first place.

The main reason behind Netanyahu's lack of clarity about his real objectives in Gaza is that neither he nor his generals can determine the outcomes of their futile war on the Strip, a war that has killed tens of thousands of innocent civilians.

And, no matter how hard he tries, Netanyahu will not be able to reproduce the past.

Following the Israeli occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem in June 1967, Israeli politicians and generals saw eye to eye on many things. The government wanted to translate its astounding military victory against Arab armies into a permanent occupation. The army wanted to use the newly acquired territories to create 'buffer zones,' 'security corridors' and the like, to strangle the Palestinians even further.

Both, government and military, found the establishment of new colonies to be the perfect answer to their shared vision. Indeed, today's

illegal settlements were originally planned as part of two massive security corridors projected by then-Labor Minister, Yigal Allon.

The Allon Plan was predicated on several elements. Among other ideas and designs, it called for the building of a security corridor along the Jordan River, and another along the so-called Green Line, Israel's pre-1967 borders. The new demarcations were meant to expand the Israeli borders – which were never defined, to begin with – thus providing Israel with greater strategic depth.

The plan was the original annexation scheme, which has been resurrected by Netanyahu in 2019, and is being advanced by current Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich.

Netanyahu is also sorting through previous governments' archives with the hope of finding a solution to his disastrous war in Gaza. Here, too, the Allon Plan is relevant.

In 1971, then Israeli General Ariel Sharon attempted to implement Allon's idea regarding complete control over Gaza, but with his own unique touch. He invented what became known as Sharon's 'five fingers'.

The 'fingers' were a reference to

military zones and colonies, which were meant to divide the Gaza Strip into sections, and to separate the southern city of Rafah from the Sinai region.

To do so, thousands of Palestinian homes were destroyed throughout Gaza, particularly in the north. As for the south, thousands of Palestinian families, mostly Bedouin tribes, were ethnically cleansed to the Sinai desert.

Sharon's plan, an extension of Allon's plan, was never fully implemented, though many aspects of it were carried out, at the expense of the Palestinians, whose resistance continued for many years. It is that resistance, expressed through the collective defiance of the population of the Strip, which forced Sharon, then a prime minister, to abandon Gaza altogether. He called his 2005 military redeployment, and subsequent siege on Gaza, the 'disengagement plan.'

The relatively new plan, which Netanyahu rejected back then, and is trying to revive now, seemed to be the rational answer to Israel's unsuccessful occupation of Gaza. After 38 years of military occupation, the experienced Israeli general, known to Palestinians as the 'bulldozer', realized that Gaza simply cannot be subdued, let alone governed.

Instead of learning from Sharon's



US President Clinton greets Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon and Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai in 1998

experience, Netanyahu is trying to repeat the original mistake.

Though Netanyahu has revealed little details about his future plans in Gaza, he has spoken often of retaining security control over the Strip and the West Bank, as well. Israel will “maintain operational freedom of action in the entire Gaza Strip,” he said last February.

Since then, his army began constructing what seemed to be a long-term military presence in central Gaza, known as the Netzarim Corridor – a large ‘finger’ of military routes and encampments that splits Gaza into two halves.

Netzarim, named after a previous settlement south-west of Gaza City evacuated in 2005, also gives Israel control over the area’s two main highways, Salah al-Din Road and the coastal Rashid Road.

The Philadelphi Corridor, locat-

ed between Rafah and the Egyptian border was occupied by Israel on May 7. It is meant to be another ‘finger’. Additional ‘buffer zones’ already exist in all of Gaza’s border regions, with the aim of fully suffocating Gaza and giving Israel total control over aid.

Netanyahu’s plan is doomed to fail, however.

The historical circumstances of the ’67 Israeli occupation of Gaza are entirely different from what is taking place now. The former emerged as an outcome of a major Arab defeat, while the latter is an outcome of Israel’s military and intelligence failure.

Moreover, the regional circumstances are working in Palestine’s favour, and the global knowledge of Israel’s ongoing genocide in Gaza makes a permanent war nearly impossible.

Another important point to keep in mind is that the current generation of Gazans is empowered and

fearless. Its ongoing resistance is only a reflection of a popular re-awakening throughout Palestine.

Finally, the Israeli unity that followed the ’67 war is nowhere to be found, as Israel today is divided along many fault lines.

It behooves Netanyahu to revisit his foolish decision to maintain a permanent presence in Gaza, as defeating Gaza proved to be an impossible task even for far superior military men of his country. **CT**

***Ramzy Baroud** is a journalist and the Editor of *The Palestine Chronicle*. He is the author of five books. His latest is “These Chains Will Be Broken: Palestinian Stories of Struggle and Defiance in Israeli Prisons” (Clarity Press, Atlanta). Dr. Baroud is a Non-resident Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Islam and Global Affairs (CIGA), Istanbul Zaim University (IZU). His website is www.ramzybaroud.net.*

Israeli soldiers reveal savage – and hidden – cruelty

Women and children are being targeted intentionally, say Israeli whistleblowers. From ground troops to commanders, the rules of war have been shredded

They just keep coming. On the weekend of July 12-13, Israel launched another devastating air strike on Gaza, killing at least 90 Palestinians and wounding hundreds more, including women, children and rescue workers.

Once again, Israel targeted refugees displaced by its earlier bombs, turning an area it had formally declared a “safe zone” into a killing field.

And once more, western powers shrugged their shoulders. They were too busy accusing Russia of war crimes to have time to worry about the far worse war crimes being inflicted on Gaza by their Israeli ally – with weapons they supplied.

The atrocity committed at al-Mawasi camp, packed with 80,000 civilians, had the usual Israeli cover story – one rolled out to reassure western publics that their leaders are not the utter hypocrites they appear to be for supporting what the World Court has described as a “plausible genocide.”

Israel said it was trying to hit two Hamas leaders – one of them Mohammed Deif, head of the group’s military wing – although Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seemed uncertain as to whether the strike was successful.

No one in the western media ap-

peared to wonder why the pair preferred to make themselves a target in an overcrowded, makeshift refugee camp, where they were at huge risk of being betrayed by an Israeli informant, rather than sheltering in Hamas’s extensive tunnel network.

Or why Israel deemed it necessary to fire a multitude of massive bombs and missiles to take out two individuals. Is that Israel’s new, expansive redefinition of a “targeted assassination”?

Or why its pilots and drone operators continued the strikes to hit emergency rescue crews dealing with the initial destruction. Was there intelligence that Deif was not just hiding in the camp, but had hung around to dig out survivors, too?

Or how killing and maiming hundreds of civilians in an attempt to hit two Hamas fighters could ever possibly satisfy the most basic principles of international law. “Proportion” and “distinction” require armies to weigh the military advantage of an attack against the expected toll on civilian life.

But Israel has torn up the rulebook on war. According to sources within the Israeli military, it now

considers it acceptable to kill more than 100 Palestinian civilians in the pursuit of a single Hamas commander – a commander, let us note, who will simply be replaced the moment he is dead.

Even if the two Hamas leaders were assassinated, Israel could not have been in any doubt that it was perpetrating a war crime. But it has learned that, the more routine its war crimes become, the less coverage they receive – and the less outrage they provoke.

In recent days, Israel has struck several United Nations schools serving as shelters, killing dozens more Palestinians. On July 16, another strike in the “safe zone” of al-Mawasi killed 17.

According to the UN refugee agency, UNWRA, more than 70 percent of its schools – almost all of them serving as refugee shelters – have been bombed.

In mid-July, western doctors who had volunteered in Gaza said Israel was packing its weapons with shrapnel to maximise injuries to those caught in the blast radius. Children, because of their smaller bodies, were being left with much more severe wounds.

Aid agencies cannot properly treat the wounded, because Israel has been blocking the entry of medical supplies into Gaza.



An Israeli soldier aims a machine gun in Gaza City in May 2024

Committing war crimes, if western publics have not worked it out by now, is the very point of the “military operation” Israel launched in Gaza in the wake of Hamas’s one-day attack on 7 October.

That is why there are more than 38,800 known deaths from Israel’s 10-month assault – and likely at least four times that number unrecorded, according to leading researchers writing in the *Lancet* medical journal last month.

That is why it will take at least 15 years to clear the rubble strewn across Gaza by Israeli bombs, according to the UN, and as much as 80 years – and \$50-billion – to rebuild homes for the remnants of the enclave’s 2.3-million people still alive at the end.

Israel’s twin goals have been biblical vengeance and the elimination of Gaza – a genocidal rampage to

drive the terrified population out, ideally into neighbouring Egypt.

If that was not clear enough already, six Israeli soldiers recently stepped forward to speak out about what they had witnessed while serving in Gaza – a story the western media has entirely failed to report.

Their testimonies, published by the Israel-based publication 972 in July, confirm what Palestinians have been saying for months.

Commanders have authorised their troops to open fire on Palestinians at will. Anyone entering an area the Israeli military is treating as a “no-go zone” is shot on sight, whether man, woman or child.

Back in March, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* warned that the Israeli

military had created just such “kill zones,” where anyone entering was executed without warning.

After months of an Israeli aid blockade that has created a man-made famine, Israel’s military has turned the people of Gaza’s ever-more frantic search for food into a game of Russian roulette.

This perhaps explains, in part, why so many Palestinians are unaccounted for – Save the Children estimates some 21,000 children are missing. The soldiers quoted in 972 say the victims of their shoot-everyone policy are bulldozed out of view along routes where international aid convoys pass.

A reserve soldier, identified only as S, said a Caterpillar bulldozer “clears the area of corpses, buries them under the rubble, and flips [them] aside so that the convoys don’t see it – [so that] images of peo-

ple in advanced stages of decay don't come out". The soldier also noted: "The whole area [of Gaza where the army operates] was full of bodies... There is a horrific smell of death."

Several of the soldiers reported that stray cats and dogs, denied food and water for months just like Gaza's population, feed on the dead bodies.

The Israeli military has repeatedly refused to publish its open-fire regulations since it was first challenged to do so in the Israeli courts in the 1980s.

A soldier named B told 972 that the Israeli army enjoyed "total freedom of action", with soldiers expected to shoot directly at any Palestinian approaching their positions, rather than a warning shot in the air: "It's permissible to shoot everyone, a young girl, an old woman."

When civilians were ordered to evacuate from a school serving as a shelter in Gaza City, B added, some mistakenly exited right towards the soldiers, rather than to the left. That included children. "Everyone who went to the right was killed – 15 to 20 people. There was a pile of bodies."

According to B, any Palestinian in Gaza can inadvertently find themselves a target: "It is forbidden to walk around, and everyone who is outside is suspicious. If we see someone in a window looking at us, he is a suspect. You shoot."

Drawing on military practices familiar in the occupied West Bank too, the Israeli army encourages its soldiers to shoot even when no one is engaging them. These random, indiscriminate eruptions of fire are known as "demonstrating presence" – or more accurately, terrorising and endangering the civilian population.

In other instances, soldiers open fire just to let off steam, have fun, or,

Drawing on military practices familiar in the occupied West Bank too, the Israeli army encourages its soldiers to shoot even when no one is engaging them

as one soldier put it, "experience the event" of being in Gaza.

Yuval Green, a 26-year-old reservist from Jerusalem, the only soldier prepared to be named, observed: "People were shooting just to relieve the boredom."

Another soldier, M, similarly noted that "the shooting is very unrestricted, like crazy" – and not just from small arms. Troops use machine guns, tanks and mortar rounds in a similar, unwarranted frenzy.

A, an officer in the army's operations directorate, pointed out that this mood of utter recklessness extended all the way up the chain of command.

Although the destruction of hospitals, schools, mosques, churches and international aid organisations requires authorisation from a senior officer, in practice, such operations are almost always approved, A said.

"I can count on one hand the cases where we were told not to shoot. Even with sensitive things like schools, [approval] feels like only a formality ... No one will shed a tear if we flatten a house when there was no need, or if we shoot someone who we didn't have to."

Commenting on the mood in the operations room, A said destroying buildings often "felt like a computer game."

In addition, A cast doubt on Israel's claim that Hamas fighters comprised a high proportion of Gaza's death toll. Anyone caught in Israel's

"kill zones" or targeted by a bored soldier was counted as a "terrorist."

The soldiers also reported that their commanders destroyed homes not because they were suspected of serving as bases for Hamas fighters, but purely out of an urge for revenge against the entire population.

Their testimonies confirm an earlier *Haaretz* report that the army is implementing a policy of torching Palestinian homes after they have served their purpose as temporary locations for soldiers. Green said the principle was: "If you move [on], you have to burn down the house." According to B, his company "burned hundreds of houses."

A policy of wanton, vengeful destruction is similarly implemented – on a far larger scale – by Israel's fighter pilots and drone operators, explaining why at least two-thirds of Gaza's housing stock has been left in ruins.

There are other deceptions too. One of the stated reasons for Israel being in Gaza is to "bring back the hostages" – many dozens of Israelis who were dragged into Gaza on October 7. That message, however, has apparently not reached the Israeli military.

Green noted that, despite a blunderbus operation in June that killed more than 270 Palestinians to rescue four Israeli hostages, the army is actually deeply indifferent to their fate.

He said he heard other soldiers stating: "The hostages are dead, they don't stand a chance, they have to be abandoned."

Back in December, Israeli troops shot dead three hostages waving white flags. Reckless shooting into buildings poses the same threat to the lives of hostages as it does to Palestinian fighters and civilians.

Such indifference might also explain why the Israeli political and military leadership has been willing to conduct such a comprehensive

bombing of buildings and tunnels in Gaza, risking the lives of the hostages as much as Palestinian civilians.

The story told by these soldiers in 972 should not surprise anyone – apart from those still desperately clinging to fairytales about Israel’s “most moral army in the world”.

In fact, an investigation by CNN last weekend found that Israeli commanders identified by US officials as committing particularly heinous war crimes in the occupied West Bank over the past decade have been promoted to senior positions in the Israeli military. Their job includes training ground troops in Gaza and overseeing operations there.

A whistleblower from the Netzah Yehuda battalion who spoke to CNN said the commanders, drawn from Israel’s religious extremist ultra-Orthodox sector, stoked a culture of violence towards Palestinians, including vigilante-style attacks.

As the CNN investigation indicates, the wanton death and destruction in Gaza is very much a feature, not a bug.

For decades, the Israeli military has been implementing its inhumane policies towards Palestinians not just in the tiny enclave, but across the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, too.

Israel has been suffocating Gaza with a siege for 17 years. And since 1967, it has been suffocating the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem with illegal settlements – many of them home to violent Jewish militias – to drive out the Palestinian population.

What is new is the intensity and scale of the death and destruction Israel has been allowed to inflict since October 7. The gloves have come off, with the West’s approval.

Israel’s agenda – of leaving histor-

While stopping the genocide in Gaza is more pressing, a ruling from the court recognising the illegal nature of Israel’s rule over Palestinians was equally important

ic Palestine empty of Palestinians – has been advanced from an ultimate, distant goal to an urgent, immediate one.

Nonetheless, Israel’s much longer history of violence and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians is about to come sharply into focus, despite the best efforts of Israel to keep our attention fixed on a Hamas “terrorism” threat.

The International Court of Justice in the Hague, often referred to as the World Court, is considering two cases against Israel. Best known is the one launched in January, putting Israel on trial for genocide.

On July 19, the World Court issue a ruling on an older case – one that predates October 7 when it said Israel had broken international law by making the occupation of Palestine permanent.

While stopping the genocide in Gaza is more pressing, a ruling from the court recognising the illegal nature of Israel’s rule over Palestinians was equally important. It gave legal backing to what should be obvious: that a supposedly temporary military occupation long ago mutated into a permanent process of violent ethnic cleansing.

This ruling provides the context for understanding what Palestinians have been truly up against, while western capitals and western media have gaslit their publics year after year, decade after decade.

In mid-July, Oxfam accused the new British government under Keir

Starmer of “aiding and abetting” Israel’s war crimes by calling for a ceasefire from one side of its mouth while actively supplying Israel with weapons to continue the slaughter. The Labour government is also dragging its feet on restoring funding to UNWRA, best placed to address the famine in Gaza.

At Washington’s behest, Labour is seeking to block efforts by the International Criminal Court’s chief prosecutor to issue arrest warrants against Netanyahu and his defence minister, Yoav Gallant, for war crimes. And there are still no signs that Starmer has any plans to recognise Palestine as a state, which would put a UK marker down against Israel’s ethnic cleansing programme.

Sadly, Starmer is typical of the West’s snake-like politicians: flaunting his outrage at Russia’s “depraved” attacks on children in Ukraine, while keeping silent on the even more depraved bombing and starvation of Gaza’s children.

He vows that his support for Ukrainians “won’t falter.” But his support for Palestinians in Gaza facing a genocide never even started.

The Palestinians of Gaza – and the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem – are not just up against a law-breaking, savage Israeli military. They are being betrayed each day afresh by a West that gives such barbarity its blessing. **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. The author of three books on the Israel-Palestine conflict, Cook won the Martha Gelhorn Special Prize for Journalism in 2011. His website is www.jonathan-cook.net.

► NORMAN SOLOMON

The Democratic Party's culture of loyalty

How an ethos of compliance made the Biden debacle possible

The Biden campaign drove the Democratic Party into a ditch and speculation is rampant about grim prospects for November's US presidential election. But little scrutiny has gone into examining how such a dire situation developed in the first place.

Joe Biden was on a collision course with reality long before his abysmal CNN debate performance on June 27 led to his withdrawal from the race. "Several current and former officials and others who encountered him behind closed doors noticed that he increasingly appeared confused or listless, or would lose the thread of conversations," the *New York Times* reported five days after the debate. Some had noticed the glaring problem months earlier but kept quiet.

A culture of dubious loyalty festered far beyond the Biden White House. It encompassed Democratic leaders at the Capitol and across the country, as well as countless allied organisations and individuals. The routine was to pretend that Biden's obvious cognitive deficits didn't exist or didn't really matter.

Because his mental impairment was so apparent to debate viewers, some notable Democratic dissenters in Congress stepped up to oppose his renomination. But for weeks, relatively few colleagues followed the lead of Texas Representative Lloyd Doggett, who broke the congressional ice by calling for Biden to "make the painful and difficult decision to withdraw."

Acuity came from Julián Castro, former secretary of Housing and Urban Development in the Obama administration, who kept up a barrage of cogent tweets. One message referred to Biden's "unique political liability" and warned: "It's not going to get any better – and has a high risk of scrambling the race again, sealing Dems fate. Burying our heads in the sand won't assuage voters concerns, which have been painfully obvious for years."

A literal heads-in-the-sand photo was at the top of a full-page print ad that the Don't Run Joe team at RootsAction.org (where I'm national director) placed in *The Hill* a year

and a half ago. Headlined "An Open Letter to Democrats in the House and Senate," it said: "Many of your colleagues, and maybe you, are expressing public enthusiasm for another Biden presidential campaign in on-the-record quotes to journalists – while privately voicing trepidation. This widespread gap ill serves the party or the nation... There are ample indications that having Joe Biden at the top of ballots across the country in autumn 2024 would bring enormous political vulnerabilities for the ticket and for down-ballot races. No amount of spin can change key realities."

But the spin never stopped and, in fact, went into high gear this summer with Biden trying to make his candidacy a fait accompli. Meanwhile, the culture of loyalty kept a grip on the delegates who'll be heading to Chicago in mid-August for the Democratic National Convention. As the second week of July began, CNN reported that "a host of party leaders and rank-and-file members selected to formally nominate Biden said they were loath to consider any other option." A delegate from Florida put it this way: "There is no plan B. The president is the nominee. And that's where I and everyone that I've been talking to stands – until and unless he says otherwise."





BEFORE THE CHANGE: President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris at the joint session of Congress in April, 2021.

The lure of going along to get along with high-ranking officials is part of the Democratic Party's dominant political culture. I saw such dynamics up close, countless times, during my 10 years as a member of the California Democratic Party's state central committee, and as a delegate to three Democratic National Conventions. I viewed such conformist attitudes with alarm at meetings of the Democratic National Committee (DNC).

Larry Cohen, former president of the Communications Workers of America, has been on the DNC since 2005. "Currently the national Democratic Party exists in name only, and is largely the White House and a

nominating procedure for the president," he told me. "The internal life is in the 57 state and territorial parties, and important reform efforts are visible in many of them." Cohen added: "It's the 'rules and not just the rulers,' and the Democratic Party compares poorly to centrist parties in other democracies, especially with the domination of corporate and billionaire money in our nominating process at every level of government."

Pia Gallegos, co-founder and former chair of the Adelante Progressive Caucus of the New Mexico Democratic Party, summed it up this way: "The culture of the Democratic Party at the national level is top-down in the sense that it appoints the members of its committees rather than opens committee membership to elections among the DNC

delegates – and then expects its delegates to rubber-stamp approval of those appointments."

Gallegos, who chairs the board of RootsAction, is on the steering committee of the nationwide State Democratic Party Progressives Network, an independent group that formed last year.

"Democratic parties at the state level also have policies or traditions to appoint local committee members or national committee representatives, consequentially pushing out their more progressive or reformist members from positions of power," she said.

In short, "the Democratic Party leadership appears to be more concerned with maintaining their control of the party than with promoting democracy within the party."

When it comes to their decision-making, some state parties have headed in more democratic directions – or the opposite. I’ve seen firsthand that the nation’s largest one, the California Democratic Party, has steadily become more autocratic for over a decade.

Overall, big donors and entrenched power are propelling the Democratic Party.

After Judith Whitmer became an active DNC member as chair of the Nevada Democratic Party, she got a close look at the committee’s inner workings. “Today’s Democratic Party is run by consultants and operatives who tightly control every aspect of the DNC,” she texted me. “The big-tent party that champions ‘democracy’ is actually a small circle of insiders who hold all the power by maintaining the status quo. Dissenting opinions are not welcome. Progressives are ostracised, and the everyday voter no longer has a voice.”

In early 2021, a progressive insurgent campaign enabled Whitmer to be elected chair of Nevada’s Democratic Party. Powerful Democrats in the state, outmanoeuvred by that grassroots organising, quickly transferred \$450,000 from the Nevada party’s coffers to the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and set up a parallel state organization. Two years later, the erstwhile party establishment retaliated by crushing Whitmer’s reelection bid.

Subduing progressive power is a key goal of dominant party leaders as they gauge when and where to strike. While nominally supporting the two-term progressive congressman Jamaal Bowman for reelection in his New York district in June, powerful party elders nonetheless winked and nodded as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee

poured some \$15-million into backing a corporate pro-war Democrat against him.

“The Democratic Party is, in one word, simply undemocratic,” Joseph Geevarghese, executive director of the national activist group Our Revolution, told me. “The illusion of ‘party unity’ fostered by Biden and Bernie [Sanders] four years ago is gone. In fact, the donor class feels emboldened to wage war openly with progressives, especially after defeating Jamaal Bowman.”

I saw the illusion of party unity

While nominally supporting the two-term progressive congressman Jamaal Bowman for reelection in his New York district in June, powerful party elders nonetheless winked and nodded as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee poured some \$15-million into backing a corporate pro-war Democrat against him

playing out at sessions of the Unity Reform Commission that the DNC convened in 2017. The calculus was that the strength of Bernie Sanders forces, then at high ebb, had to be reckoned with.

The commission had a slight but decisive majority of members aligned with Hillary Clinton, while the rest of the seats went to allies of Sanders. While the commission did adopt some modest reforms, the majority balked at substan-

tive DNC rules changes that would have provided financial transparency or prevented serious conflicts of interest.

Overseeing the blockage of those changes was Jennifer O’Malley Dillon, the commission chair, who later worked for three years as deputy chief of staff in Joe Biden’s White House. She went on to become the Biden campaign chair.

“The Democratic Party now functions through foundation-funded advocacy organisations, and without the kind of self-funded mass membership groups that had a genuine voice with real power when the labor and civil rights movements were strong,” journalist David Dayen wrote in early July for the *American Prospect*. “If you read the polls, the interests of the public and the donor class are actually aligned in favour of Biden’s withdrawal. But given who’s making that case, it sure doesn’t feel that way, nor does it feel particularly small-d democratic. That makes it easy for Biden to fall back on the will of ‘the people’ who voted in Democratic Potemkin primaries, because outside of that, the people are voiceless.”

Alan Minsky, executive director of Progressive Democrats of America, had this to say when I asked him to describe the party’s political culture: “While the Democratic Party is a complex organisation with a lot of dimensions, I think the role of money – and, more specifically, the never-ending need to raise more money – has become its central organising principle. This, of course, skews the priorities of the party in a conservative direction. Democrats who can raise money comparable to the levels raised by the GOP are seen as indispensable to the party, and grow in power and influence... In turn, these powerful money-raising Democrats

have little use for anyone inside the party who is perceived as jeopardizing the flow of money — such as left-progressives and other advocates for the poor and working class.”

Minsky added: “As these dynamics became central to the party over the past few decades, the rich and powerful grew in influence, and the general political culture reflected the priorities of the professional class rather than the working class, a sharp contrast to the mid-20th century, which was the height of the party’s power and influence.

“However, since the GOP only turns ever more to the right, progressives and working-class advocates continue to stake a claim in the Democratic Party. Paradoxically, since these non-wealthy groups represent the majority of the population, they also provide the best opportunity for the party to regain its majority status. However, from the point of view of the party’s dominant faction, and their legions of highly compensated consultants, this is an unacceptable outcome as it would shut down the gravy train.”

The Democratic National Committee building on South Capitol Street in Washington is a monument to the funding prowess of multibillionaire Haim Saban, who became the chair of the capital campaign in late 2001 to raise \$32-million for the new headquarters. He quickly donated \$7-million to the DNC, believed to be the largest political donation ever made until then.

Haim Saban has long been close to Bill and Hillary Clinton. By 2016, *Mother Jones* reported, Saban and his wife Cheryl — in addition to hosting “lucrative fundraisers” — had given “upward of \$27-million to assorted Clinton causes and campaigns.”

Saban and Joe Biden also bonded. When Saban had an appointment at the White House last September, “the visit was supposed to last an hour, as part of lunch, but in practice he spent three hours with the president and his people,” the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Ahronoth* reported.

Reasons to reaffirm warm relations with the likes of Haim Saban were obvious. Presumably, the president remembered that a single virtual fundraiser the Sabans put together for the Biden-Harris cam-

The Democratic National Committee building on South Capitol Street in Washington is a monument to the funding prowess of multibillionaire Haim Saban, who became the chair of the capital campaign in late 2001 to raise \$32-million for the new headquarters

paign in September 2020 brought in \$4.5-million.

In February 2024, with the Gaza slaughter in its 135th day, the Sabans hosted a reelection fundraiser for the president at their home in Los Angeles. The price of a ticket ranged from \$3,300 to \$250,000. An ardent Zionist, Saban has repeatedly said: “I’m a one-issue guy, and my issue is Israel.”

This summer, while Biden fought to retain his spot as nominee, fer-

vent support from the Congressional Black Caucus seemed pivotal. The CBC has changed markedly since the 1970s and 1980s, when its leadership came from visionary representatives like Shirley Chisholm, John Conyers, and Ron Dellums. Then, the caucus was antiwar and wary of corporate power. Now, it’s overwhelmingly pro-war and in willing captivity to corporate America.

With President Biden in distinct denial about his unfitness to run again, the role of the Congressional Progressive Caucus was accommodating. Its chair, Pramila Jayapal, endorsed him for 2024 gratuitously early — in November 2022 — declaring herself “a convert.” Since then, some high-profile progressives went out of their way to back Biden in his determination to run for reelection.

Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who endorsed Biden a year ago, went in front of journalists 10 days after his debate disaster to make a vehement pitch for him as the nominee. In a similar mode, Senator Bernie Sanders was notably outspoken for Biden to stay on as the party’s standard-bearer, even implausibly claiming on national television that, with a proper message, “he’s going to win, and win big.”

When some of the best progressive members of Congress fall under the spell of such contorted loyalty, it’s an indication that deference to the leadership of the Democratic Party has come at much too high a price. **CT**

Norman Solomon is co-founder of RootsAction.org and executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. His books include War Made Easy, Made Love, Got War, and most recently War Made Invisible: How America Hides the Human Toll of Its Military Machine (The New Press). This article was first published at www.tomdispatch.com.

THOMAS SCRIPPS

King's Speech promises nothing to British workers

Massive increase pledged for military budget, but no relief in sight for health service or struggling workers

The trick attempted by the new Labour government in July 17's King's Speech was to give some impression of attending to Britain's deepening social crisis while reassuring big business that almost no government money will be spent.

This left Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer with the task of promoting Labour's grandiose claims of "national renewal" while insisting in the same breath that there would be "no quick fix" on offer for any of the problems confronting the working class.

Austerity and cuts were hardwired into the new Labour government's legislative programme. The first bill announced by King Charles III – the monarch reads the speech, written by the government – was the Budget Responsibility Bill. This would ensure "all significant tax and spending changes are subject to an independent assessment by the Office for Budget Responsibility."

Given that the UK's creditors will allow no increase in government debt, as was made clear by the markets torpedoing former Conservative prime minister Liz Truss's short-lived premiership for her unfunded tax cuts, and Labour's promise of no additional taxes on the rich and the corporations, every other spending pledge was rendered moot.

Most high-profile has been the promise to build 1.5-million new homes this Parliament, or 300,000 a year – versus the roughly 235,000 a year built by the Conservative government in the last five. But there is no money whatsoever allocated to fund even this modest increase. It relies entirely upon a directive issued to local authorities to drum up private development, with a minor increase in the number of planning staff and a loosening of restrictions on planning law.

The homes built by the private sector are overwhelmingly at market rates, well beyond the means of most. Social housing providers like local councils and housing associations have had their budgets eviscerated.

A letter sent by the National Housing Federation (NHF), representing 600 housing associations, and the Local Government Association during the election campaign warned of a £2.2-billion black hole in housing budgets and pleaded for additional funding, warning, "New-build projects are already being delayed and cancelled across the country due to significant financial pressures and uncertainty."

Much of Labour's agenda has

been taken over lock-stock-and-barrel from its Tory predecessors. The 300,000 homes a year target was announced in Boris Johnson's 2019 manifesto, though never achieved and dropped at the end of 2022 under pressure from Tory backbenchers.

Plans to grant renters more rights against their landlords – notably ending no-fault evictions – were being slowly marched through parliament by Michael Gove but were ground to a halt by the landlord interest among MPs. Rishi Sunak's government was also in the process of enacting the rolling age ban on smoking, now put forward by Labour, when he announced the snap election.

Labour's plan for a state-managed Great British Railways organisation overseeing train services is nearly identical to the scheme established by then Tory transport secretary Grant Shapps – working with prominent businessman Keith Williams, who has endorsed the new government's strategy.

The additional step planned by Labour of allowing the various regional franchises run by private operators to return to public ownership at the end of their contracts has been accepted as inevitable by all but the most frothing free market Tory MPs. Private franchises have been a disaster, with four networks

already abandoned by their owners and now run by the government.

Starmer's plan, in other words, is for a more smooth-running capitalism, shorn of some of the most egregious abuses and parasitic excesses developed under 14 years of Tory rule, the better to maintain the brutal exploitation of workers, underfunding of public services and a punitive welfare regime.

Nothing was said in the King's Speech, for example, about the crippling crisis in the National Health Service – only anodyne promises to “reduce the waiting times, focus on prevention and improve mental health provision.” Shadow Health Secretary Wes Streeting has made clear this reduction in waiting times is based on stepped-up privatisation and enforcing longer hours of work for NHS staff.

Nor was there even a passing reference to the looming bankruptcies facing councils, schools and universities across the country – a signal that Labour will allow this to proceed.

One of the few mentions of education was a reference to how removing the VAT sales tax exemption from private schools would fund 6,500 new teachers – in a sector suffering the worst staff burnout and retention crisis in its history, in buildings falling apart for lack of maintenance. The new staff promised by Labour will not be enough to replace the numbers expected to be leaving the profession every single year after just 12 months in the job by the middle of this parliament.

Similarly hollow is the pledge to found Great British Energy, “a publicly owned clean power company headquartered in Scotland, which will help accelerate investment in renewable energy such as offshore wind.” It will supposedly achieve these ends, in alliance with the private sector of course, with just £8.3-billion over five years.

There was no serious reference at all to poverty – affecting roughly one in five people in the UK – or Britain's welfare system. Despite noises from some Labour backbenchers, no reference was made to ending the two-child benefit cap, preventing households from claiming universal credit or child tax credit for a third or any subsequent child.

Dozens more cruel restrictions and caps could be listed for scrapping, but the brutal architecture of welfare payments established by the Tories will be in safe hands under Work and Pensions Secretary Liz Kendal, a Blairite who used the election campaign to challenge “Tory claims about being tough on benefits” and rail against “life on benefits.”

Labour's preferred method for dealing with the consequences of poverty and inequality is police repression, with the government promising to “make streets safer” and “give the police greater powers to deal with anti-social behaviour.” It intends to hire an additional 3,000 police officers and 4,000 police community support officers.

The most vicious law-and-order rhetoric was directed against asylum seekers. The King's Speech reiterated Labour's commitment to “strengthen” the border by “establishing a new Border Security Command and delivering enhanced counter-terror powers.”

Measures meant to provide a progressive window dressing to Labour's new government were a transparent fraud.

The pledge “to introduce a new deal for working people to ban exploitative practices and enhance employment rights” referred to an Employment Rights Bill promised in the party's manifesto rammed full of loopholes and pruned by the day.

Among them is the rewritten promise to end only “exploitative” zero hours contracts, rather than the practice altogether.

Plans to scrap the Minimum Service Level (Strikes) Bill – but not any of the older anti-strike laws – are bound up with Labour's strategy for closer corporatist collaboration with the trade union bureaucracy to suppress strikes, as has already begun with the British Medical Association over the junior doctors' action and with Unite calling off strike action over the closure of Tata Steel at Port Talbot, Wales.

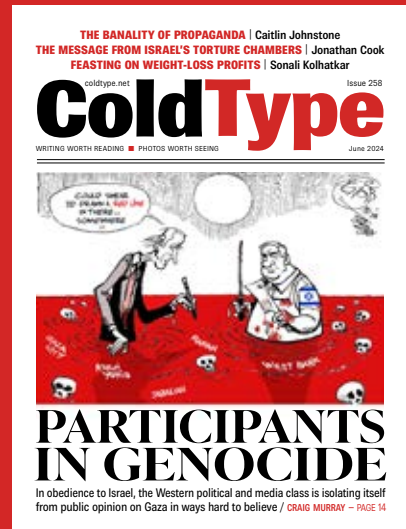
There is no reason to believe that even the paltry agenda set out by Starmer's Labour Party will be met, given the crisis-ridden world situation and the government's total commitment to British imperialism and its escalating, ever more expensive, wars.

Starmer has, for example, pledged his support for a refitting of Britain's nuclear weapons and to lift military spending to 2.5 percent of GDP when possible. The King's Speech announced the establishment of a new statutory position of “Armed Forces Commissioner to act as a strong independent champion for our gallant Armed Forces and their families,” to keep these commitments on track.

Labour conclude the speech with the pledge that “Its commitment to NATO will remain unshakeable. It will maintain a strong Armed Forces, including the nuclear deterrent” to match “global strategic threats”. This included continuing “to give its full support to Ukraine” and playing “a leading role in providing Ukraine with a clear path to NATO membership,” as well as committing to a “secure Israel.” **CT**

Thomas Scripps is a writer with the World Socialist Web Site – www.wsws.org – where this article was first published.

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