

JOHN DUGARD | YES, IT IS APARTHEID  
JASON LEOPOLD | THE PRESIDENT'S MISSING TESTICLES  
NORM STAMPER | WAR ON THE FAMILY DOG

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DECEMBER 2011

# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING ISSUE 61

REMEMBRANCE DAY, SLAUGHTER  
AND INTERNATIONAL HYPOCRISY  
BY **FELICITY ARBUTHNOT**



THE  
SCREAM  
FOR  
PEACE



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# ColdType

DECEMBER 2011 / ISSUE 61

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Another year. Another war! That seems to be the mantra of the United States and its Nato allies which, having brought about regime change in Libya, have turned their military sights on Syria and Iran.

So smug have they become that they can't even be bothered to change the pre-war propaganda, filling the complacent and complicit media with stories that echo with *deja vu* – Saddam's 'nuclear threat' has morphed into Mahmoud's 'nuclear threat'; Iraq's 'slaughtered' babies became Libya's 'aerial slaughter' of civilians, both of which had be avenged, no matter how many innocents died in the process.

Never have the words of British philosopher Bertrand Russell, delivered days after the start of World War I in 1914, been more apt: "*All this madness, all this rage, all this flaming death of our civilisation and our hopes, has been brought about because a set of official gentlemen, living luxurious lives, mostly stupid, and all without imagination or heart, have chosen that it should occur rather than that any one of them should suffer some infinitesimal rebuff to his country's pride.*"

Tony Sutton, Editor

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# The scream for peace

Felicity Arbuthnot reflects on Remembrance Day, slaughter and international hypocrisy

*Did you really believe, when they told  
you the cause,  
Did you really believe that this war  
would end wars?  
Well the suffering, the sorrow, the glory,  
the shame,  
The killing and dying it was all done  
in vain  
Oh Willy McBride it all happened  
again -  
And again, and again, and again,  
and again."*

– *The Green Fields of France,*  
Eric Bogle

**A**cross the world the fanfare commemorating the “day the guns fell silent” has been trumpeted (literally, in many places) as having special resonance: 11/11/11: a once-in-a-century event.

Hypocrisy does not come more astounding than this mindless celebration. There has not been a single bloodless year since the end of World War I in 1918. More often than not, the US, Britain and European countries have been involved in each of those wars.

Remembrance Sunday in London brought the usual pomp and triumphalism, a military band opening the ceremonies with the national anthem. “Rule Britannia.”

Meanwhile, Iraqi widows – created by UK

and US forces – wonder how to feed their children and resort in increasing numbers to prostitution (widows received a state pension under Saddam Hussein’s rule), and US- and UK-occupied Afghanistan, one of the poorest countries on earth, plunges into deeper poverty.

The contrast is nauseating.

The Queen was the first to lay a wreath at the Cenotaph, the central London memorial to the 1914-1918 war, male members of the royal family as resplendent as third world dictators in their military uniforms.

Her grandson, Prince Harry, was absent. In Arizona, he was training to fly an Apache helicopter, playing with live rounds for the first time, practising killing Afghans: One of the most privileged people on earth preparing to slice and dice (that is what the Apache weapons do) the poorest.

Did the dead his grandmother was honouring with her wreath of poppies – 50 to 70 million in the second world war and 15 million in the first world war and 50 to 70 million in the second - die for this massive act of self-serving hypocrisy?

In June last year, on an official visit to New York, Harry visited the Emergency Operation Center at UNICEF’s headquarters, which “... works across the world to provide life-saving support to children. In all emergencies it is the children that are hardest hit (whether) in natural disasters or

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**Betrayal, whether of the dead or the living, runs in the veins of the British establishment**  
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conflict, they are the most vulnerable”, he was informed by the Emergency Center’s director. And Harry was briefed on UNICEF’s emergency supplies, including the “school in a box”, supplies and materials for up to 80 students to be used after schools have been destroyed.

Just a year later, he is training to potentially destroy the schools and kill the kids in them. Collateral damage.

Did the dead his grandmother was honouring with her wreath of poppies – 50 to 70 million in the second world war and 15 million in the first world war and 50 to 70 million in the second - die for this massive act of self-serving hypocrisy? She, her family and her government should hang their heads in shame.

As three Muslim countries lie in ruins, their dead uncounted, and with a growing list of others facing the same fate, a group called “Muslims Against Crusades” has been banned by Home Secretary, Theresa May. They planned a protest to mark Remembrance Sunday. Last year they burned two poppies, now they are designated terrorists. Their actions may be tasteless but their grievance is justifiable. But no matter. They burned poppies, and they are banned. Allied soldiers burn people, and they are lauded.

Betrayal, whether of the dead or the living, runs in the veins of the British establishment.

On 11th November, speaking at a service at a British base in Afghanistan, Defence Minister Philip Hammond said, “The ceremonies that we will have across Britain on Remembrance Sunday are not just about the war dead from the first and second world wars, or even conflicts we’ve had since. This is about the ongoing sacrifice that people here are making on a daily, weekly basis, that they all live with every day.

“They get up and go out with the possibility that they may be killed or injured in a combat situation, and that makes this ceremony here especially poignant.

“(Afghanistan) is now the only place in the world where British troops are in active daily danger and lives are being lost, and I think it is a way of showing the value that we at home place on the sacrifice and the dedication and the commitment that people there are showing.” (The *Guardian*, November 11, 2011.)

The same day, the *Daily Telegraph* revealed an internal Ministry of Defence memo, sent to senior commanders in Afghanistan showing an upcoming 16,500 army redundancies, of which, “2,500 wounded soldiers, including 350 who have lost limbs, will not be exempt .... Six British soldiers have suffered double amputations in the last month and another, a triple amputation.”

Then, at a ceremony in London’s Trafalgar Square, Prime Minister David Cameron said, in a recorded message, “We stand together to honour the incredible courage and sacrifice of generations of British servicemen and women, who have given their lives to protect the freedom that we enjoy today.

“From the trenches of the first world war to the deserts of Afghanistan, our armed forces have proved time and again that they are the bravest of the brave and the very best of what it means to be British. We can never fully repay the debt we owe them.”

In the wreath-laying ceremony, Defence Minister Hammond’s attached message read, “In grateful memory of those who have given their lives in the service of their nation”.

.....  
**Filled with stones**

The previous day he committed to: “stand up for the military” – meaningless mumble from this Coalition of Blood. Just a short time earlier, it was revealed that body parts of US soldiers, who had served and died in Iraq and Afghanistan had been thrown into land fill. In Britain, one coffin from Iraq was reported to contain stones. So much for the

words of reverence.

Last year CND Cymru (Wales) had a simple plea for the traditional two minutes' silence on November 11 and on Remembrance Sunday:

“Let this silence, be a scream for peace.”

This year, when their National Secretary Jill Gough, joined with “Occupy Cardiff”, their address was:

“On Remembrance Day we remember the wars where the lives of the 99% were sacrificed by the 1% in pursuit of money and power: There is everything right about remembering the dead who die in futile wars. There is everything wrong about using the past dead to justify current wars.

“We stand with the World War Two generation who built the Welfare State now under threat, who had bitter memories of the previous war where soldiers were promised they would return to ‘homes fit for heroes’ but instead returned to hunger, the dole queue and the ‘means test’.

“We recall the ‘winter soldiers’ who crossed a river of fire from unthinkingly obeying orders to becoming active agents of social change – soldiers of conscience such as Siegfried Sassoon who hurled his medals into the River Mersey to protest World War One and Joe Glenton, the first serving British soldier to go to jail rather than return to Afghanistan.

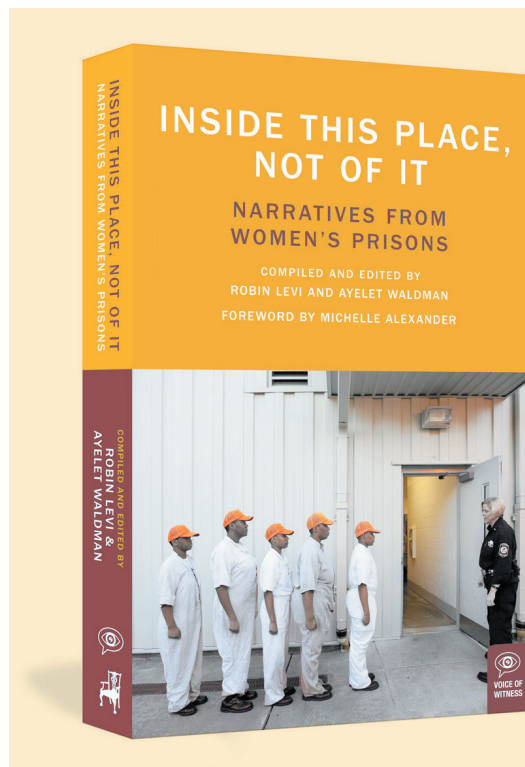
“In America, war veterans have been on the frontline of our movement. Our thoughts today are with Scott Olsen, an American Iraq War Veteran now in a critical condition in hospital after police brutality at an Occupy Oakland protest.

“On Remembrance Day we remember that one day of war in Afghanistan could fund 100,000 nurses.”

Are any politicians – on either side of the Atlantic – listening? **CT**

*Felicity Arbuthnot is a journalist and political activist based in London*

**In the US body parts of soldiers who had served in Iraq and Afghanistan, far from being treated with reverence, had been chucked in to land fill**



# INSIDE THIS PLACE, NOT OF IT

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# Yes, it is apartheid

John Dugard delivered the following note to the Russell Tribunal on Palestine

.....  
**There is no competent court of law which is able to pronounce on Israel's conduct or to hold it accountable**  
.....

*At its Cape Town hearings on 5-6 November, The Russell Tribunal on Palestine determined that "Israel subjects the Palestinian people to an institutionalised regime of domination amounting to apartheid as defined under international law." In his presentation to the tribunal, John Dugard, South African Professor of International Law and Former Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Palestinian Occupied Territories, explains why he believes the Tribunal has a role to play in advancing accountability in the Middle East, and why he believes that Israel practices apartheid*

Israel has violated many fundamental rules of international law. It has seized Palestinian land by constructing settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, and by building a security wall within Palestinian territory. It has violated the basic human rights of Palestinians through a repressive regime of occupation which disregards the rules contained in international human rights covenants and international humanitarian law instruments. It has refused to recognise its responsibility for several million Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and the diaspora.

There is, however, no international court of law capable of assessing Israel's responsibility or holding it accountable for its wrongs. The International Court of Justice

has given an excellent advisory opinion on the subject but the United Nations is powerless to implement it in the face of US opposition. The International Criminal Court has been requested to investigate Israel's conduct in the course of Operation Cast Lead but for nearly three years the prosecutor of the ICC has refused to respond to this request – probably because of US and EU opposition. Domestic courts have been precluded from holding Israeli politicians and soldiers accountable for their crimes in the exercise of universal jurisdiction by government intervention. There is, therefore, no competent court of law which is able to pronounce on Israel's conduct or to hold it accountable.

International public opinion, outraged at the failure to hold Israel accountable for its crimes, therefore has no available judicial remedy. This is where the Russell Tribunal for Palestine comes in. It seeks to give expression to international public opinion by examining Israel's actions through the medium of a process resembling that of a court of law. Witnesses testify on the illegality of Israel's conduct before a jury of distinguished persons representing public opinion in many countries.

The Cape Town session of the Russell Tribunal will focus on the question of whether or not Israel's policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory constitute

the crime of apartheid within the meaning of the 1973 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid. Lawyers will present arguments about the scope of this Convention and witnesses will testify about apartheid in South Africa and Israel's practices in the occupied territory. Comparisons will be made. Resemblances will be examined.

My testimony will focus on resemblances between the South African and Israeli systems based on my personal knowledge and experience of apartheid and Israel's conduct in occupied Palestine. I will make no attempt to compare apartheid with the treatment of Arab Israelis within Israel itself. I claim no expertise on this subject.

In my testimony I will first establish my expertise and then turn to what I believe to be resemblances or similarities in the two systems.

**My Life in South Africa**

I spent most of my adult life in South Africa as a witness to apartheid. I opposed apartheid, as an ordinary citizen, advocate, scholar and NGO leader. I had wide experience and knowledge of the three pillars of the apartheid state – racial discrimination, repression and territorial fragmentation.

Writing prolifically on apartheid, I published a major work on the subject – *Human Rights and the South African Legal Order* (1978) – which provides the most comprehensive account of the apartheid legal system published to-date. In the book I examined the injustices of apartheid and compared apartheid with international human rights standards.

I participated actively in the work of NGOs opposed to apartheid, such as the South African Institute of Race Relations and Lawyers for Human Rights. From 1978 to 1990 I was Director of the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALs) attached to the University of the Witwatersrand, which engaged in advocacy and litigation in the field

of human rights. As an advocate I represented famous opponents of apartheid, such as Robert Sobukwe and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and the unknown victims of the system; I lead lawyers' campaigns against the eviction of black persons from neighbourhoods set aside for exclusive white occupation by the Group Areas Act, and against the notorious "pass laws", which made it an offence for blacks to be in so-called "white areas" without the correct documentation. These campaigns took the form of free legal defence to all those arrested, which made the systems unmanageable. Through the Centre for Applied Legal Studies I engaged in legal challenges to the implementation of the security laws and emergency laws, which allowed detention without trial and house arrest and, in practice, torture. I also challenged the establishment of Bantustans in my writings, in the courts and on public platforms. If I was an expert on anything, it was on the law of apartheid.

I have visited Israel and Palestine regularly after 1982. In 1984 I made a comparative study of Israeli and South African attitudes towards international law and in 1988 I participated in a conference organised by Al Haq in East Jerusalem during the First Intifada. The Quakers asked me in 1992 to review a legal aid project in East Jerusalem during which I travelled widely in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In 2001 I was appointed as Chair of a Commission of Enquiry established by the Commission on Human Rights to investigate human rights violations during the Second Intifada. In 2001 I was appointed as Special Rapporteur to the Commission on Human Rights (later Human Rights Council) on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). In this capacity I visited the OPT twice a year and reported to the Commission and the Third Committee of the General Assembly both in writing and orally. My 2003 report, which alerted the international community to Israel's de facto annexation of Palestinian

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**Both regimes were/are characterised by discrimination, repression and territorial fragmentation. The main difference is that the apartheid regime was more honest; apartheid laws were legislated openly in Parliament and were clear for all to see ...**  
.....

land under the guise of the “Wall”, led to the request for an advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice and was cited extensively by the Court in its 2004 Advisory Opinion. My mandate expired in 2008. In February 2009, however, I led a Fact-Finding Mission established by the League of Arab States to investigate and report on violations of human rights and humanitarian law in the course of Israel’s “Operation Cast Lead” against Gaza.

From my first visit to Israel/Palestine I was struck by the similarities between apartheid in South Africa, and the practices and policies of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. These similarities became more obvious as I became better informed about the situation. As Special Rapporteur I deliberately refrained from making such comparisons until 2005 as I feared that they would prevent many governments in the West from taking my reports seriously. However, after 2005 I decided that I could not in good conscience refrain from making such comparisons.

.....  
**Personal Observations**

Of course the apartheid and occupation regimes are very different in that apartheid South Africa practised discrimination against its own people; it sought to fragment the country into white South Africa and black Bantustans in order to avoid having to extend the franchise to black South Africans. Its security laws were used to repress opposition to apartheid brutally. Israel, on the other hand, is an occupying power which controls a foreign territory and its people under a regime the nature of which is recognised by international humanitarian law as one of belligerent occupation. In practice, though, there is little difference. Both regimes were/are characterised by discrimination, repression and territorial fragmentation. The main difference is that the apartheid regime was more honest; apartheid laws were legislated openly in Parlia-

ment and were clear for all to see, whereas the laws governing Palestinians in the OPT are contained largely in obscure military decrees and inherited emergency regulations that are virtually inaccessible. Crude, racist signs indicated which amenities were reserved for exclusive white use in apartheid South Africa. In the OPT there are no such signs but the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) ensure the exclusive rights of settlers to many areas. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of “road apartheid”. The good roads in the West Bank are reserved for exclusive settler use with no sign to indicate such reservation, but the IDF ensures that Palestinians do not use these highways. (Incidentally, it should be stressed that apartheid in South Africa never extended to roads!)

In my work as Commissioner (2001) and Special Rapporteur (2001 – 2008) I saw every aspect of the occupation of the OPT; my position was very privileged. Driven and guided by a Palestinian driver and accompanied by Palestinian community leaders and UN experts I travelled widely in the West Bank and Gaza, visiting every town, many villages, farms, schools, hospitals, universities and factories. Over the years I also visited settlements such as Ariel, Ma’ale Adummim, Betar Illit and Kirya Arba, which resemble the South African luxury suburbs of Sandton and Constantia with their fine homes, supermarkets, schools and hospitals.

I witnessed the humiliating check points, with long lines of Palestinians waiting patiently in the sun and rain for IDF soldiers to scrutinise their travel documents. Inevitably this brought back memories of the long lines in the “pass offices” of apartheid and of the treatment of black South Africans by police officers and bureaucrats. I visited houses that had been destroyed by the IDF for “administrative reasons” (that is, they were built without a permit from the Israeli occupying power, when permits to build are virtually never granted). Memories of hous-



es demolished in apartheid South Africa in once “black areas” set aside for exclusive white occupation came flooding back. I visited most of the Wall that stretches down the west side of Palestine and I visited farms that had been confiscated by the construction of the Wall and spoke to farmers who had lost their livelihoods. I also spoke to factory owners whose premises had been destroyed by the IDF as “collateral damage” in IDF raids, and fishermen in Gaza not permitted to fish for “security” reasons.

In 2003, I visited Jenin, shortly after it had been devastated by the IDF, and saw houses bulldozed to the ground. I saw the damage caused to the infrastructure of Rafah by Caterpillar bulldozers built especially for the purpose of destroying roads and houses; I spoke to families in a refugee camp near Nablus whose houses had been raided and vandalised by Israeli soldiers using vicious dogs; I spoke to young and old who had been tortured by the IDF; and I visited hospitals to see those who had been wounded by the IDF. I visited schools that had been rampaged through by the IDF with crude anti-Palestinian graffiti written on the walls; I spoke to traumatised children whose friends had been killed by random IDF fire and who were being counselled by psychologists; I was exposed to assaults by settlers in Hebron and I visited communities south of Hebron which lived in fear of the same illegal settlers. I saw olive trees destroyed by settlers and travelled through the Jordan Valley viewing destroyed Bedouin camps (which again reminded me of the destruction of “black spots” in apartheid South Africa) and check points designed to serve the interests of the settlers. I met with members of the IDF at check points and “border” crossings and experienced a strong sense of déjà vu; I had seen their sort before in a previous life.

When visiting Palestine, I stayed in occupied East Jerusalem. There I saw Israeli settlements in the heart of the Old City and visited homes that had been destroyed by

Israel or designated for destruction (for example, in Silwan). I spoke to families that had been separated by the administrative mysteries of the Israeli occupation which allowed some Palestinians to live in Jerusalem but confined others to the West Bank. I recalled the laws of apartheid which separated families in this way.

I had first-hand experience of the “territorial fragmentation” of Palestine – that is seizure, confiscation and appropriation of Palestinian land by Israel. I explored the land de facto annexed by Israel between the Green Line (the generally-accepted border of 1948/9 between Israel and Palestine) and the Wall; I saw and visited the sprawling settlements which have seized wide tracts of Palestinian land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem; and I saw the large areas of land declared as Israeli military zones in the Jordan Valley and elsewhere.

All I will say about my investigations in Gaza in February 2009, shortly after Operation Cast Lead, is that I believe that the Gaza Strip remains occupied and Operation Cast Lead was a policing operation designed to punish collectively a rebellious occupied people – a view shared by the so-called Goldstone Report commissioned by the Human Rights Council. I was appalled and saddened by what I saw. I have no doubt that it was an act of collective punishment in which the IDF intentionally attacked civilians and civilian targets. The evidence provided no other explanation.

A final comment based on my personal experience. There was a positive element to the apartheid regime, albeit motivated by the ideology of separate development, which aimed to make the Bantustans viable states. Although not in law obliged to do so, the apartheid regime built schools, hospitals and good roads for black South Africans. It established industries in the Bantustans to provide employment for blacks. Israel fails even to do this for the Palestinians. Although in law, under the 1949 Geneva Conventions, it is obliged to cater for the

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Israel's practices in the OPT do resemble those of apartheid. Although there are differences, these differences are outweighed by the similarities  
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material needs of the occupied people, it leaves this responsibility to foreign donors and international agencies. Israel practises the worst kind of colonialism in the OPT. Land and water are exploited by an aggressive settler community that has no interest in the welfare of the Palestinian people; all with the blessing of the government of the state of Israel.

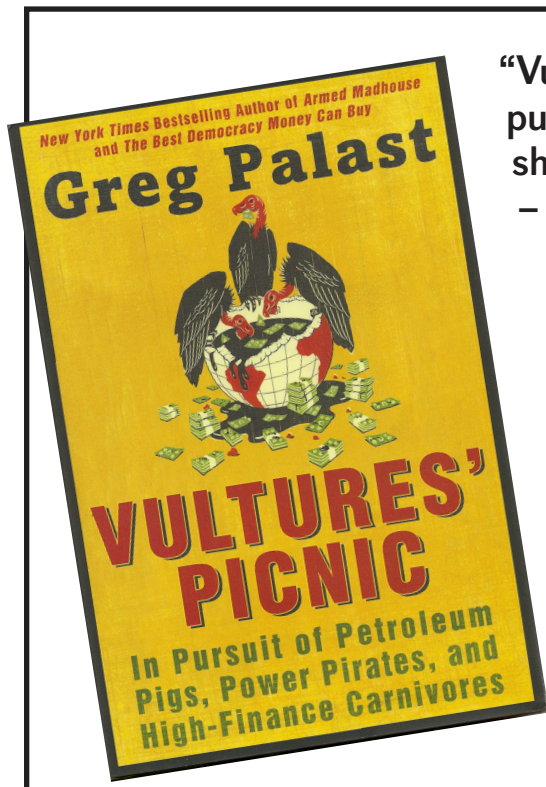
Israel's practices in the OPT do resemble those of apartheid. Although there are differences, these differences are outweighed by the similarities. Which is/was worse: apartheid or Israel's occupation of Palestine? It would be wrong for me to judge. As a white South African I could not share the full pain and humiliation of apartheid with my fellow black South Africans. I understood their anger and frustration and I tried to identify with it and oppose the system which relegated them to the status of sub-humans. Likewise, I cannot fully feel the pain and humiliation that Palestinians experience under Israel's occupation. But I

look at the system to which they are subjected and I feel the same sense of anger that I experienced in apartheid South Africa.

At the Russell Tribunal lawyers and jurors will examine, debate and consider the question of whether or not Israel's conduct in the OPT falls within the conduct criminalised by the 1973 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid. This is important for determining Israel's accountability. But, for me, there is a bigger question that confronts the moral judgment of the people of the world, and particularly those of the West. How can those – Jews and gentiles – who so vigorously opposed apartheid on moral grounds refuse to oppose a similar system imposed by Israel on the Palestinian people?

**CT**

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*John Duggard is Chair of Independent Fact-Finding Committee on Gaza; and Former Special Rapporteur to the Human Rights Council on Human Rights in Palestine.*



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– Nomi Prins, former MD, Goldman Sachs

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# The president's missing testicles

**Jason Leopold** meets the former chief prosecutor at Guantanamo, who wonders what happened to Barack Obama after he became president

**M**orris Davis speaks bluntly about some of President Barack Obama's policy decisions. "There's a pair of testicles somewhere between the Capital Building and the White House that fell off the president after Election Day [2008]," said Davis, an Air Force colonel who spent two years as the chief prosecutor of Guantanamo military commissions said, during an interview at his Washington, DC, office over the summer and in email correspondence over the past several months. "He got his butt kicked. Not just with Guantanamo but with national security in general. I'm sure there are a few areas here and there where there have been 'change,' but to me it seems like a third Bush term when it comes to national security."

Davis is "hugely disappointed" that Obama reneged on a campaign promise to reject military commissions for "war on terror" detainees, which human rights advocates and defense attorneys have condemned as unconstitutional.

The first military commission initiated by the Obama administration got underway earlier last month with the arraignment of Abd Rahim al-Nashiri, the alleged mastermind of the October 2000 bombing of the USS Cole, who is facing terrorism and murder charges. If convicted, Nashiri, one of three so-called high-value detainees that

the Bush administration admitted was subjected to the drowning technique known as waterboarding and other brutal torture methods at CIA black site prisons, could be executed.

George W. Bush signed an executive order authorizing military commissions trials for terrorist suspects captured after 9/11 ten years ago. Davis, recalling a speech Obama gave during an August 2007 campaign stop at the Wilson Center in Washington, said it seemed Obama was on track to make good on his campaign promise of halting the discredited tribunals.

"I will reject a legal framework that does not work," candidate Obama said. "I have faith in America's courts and I have faith in our [Judge Advocate Generals] ... As president, I will close Guantanamo, reject the Military Commissions Act and adhere to the Geneva Conventions ... Our Constitution and our Uniform Code of Military Justice provide a framework for dealing with the terrorists ... Our Constitution works. We will again set an example for the world that the law is not subject to the whims of stubborn rulers and that justice is not arbitrary."

Davis shakes his head.

"What happened to that guy?" Obama "has now embraced and kissed on the lips the whole Bush concept [of military commissions]. He failed to keep a single prom-

.....  
"To me it seems like a third Bush term when it comes to national security"  
.....

.....  
**While Davis is one of the most visible and verbal critics, he's not the only military prosecutor who has been outspoken about Obama and Bush's detainee policies**  
.....

ise he made in that speech.”

A White House spokesman declined to comment for this story.

In the past, administration officials, including Attorney General Eric Holder, have blamed Democrats and Republicans in Congress for thwarting the government's efforts to prosecute terrorist suspects in federal courts by withholding funding to hold trials. While that is true in the case of self-professed 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and his co-conspirators, it does not explain the decision Obama made in May 2009 – four months after he was sworn in as president – to resurrect military commissions.

What is clear is that Obama succumbed to pressure from Defense Department officials and Republicans in Congress, notably Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina), to hold the tribunals. Moreover, when Obama announced the return of military commissions he had just endured a month of blistering attacks from Republicans and former Vice President Dick Cheney for releasing the infamous “torture memos” drafted by Bush administration lawyers John Yoo and Jay Bybee.

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**Criticism Leads to Firing**

Davis resigned in protest as Guantanamo's chief prosecutor in October 2007, because he said Bush administration officials politicized the high-profile military commissions cases of alleged 9/11 conspirators and al-Qaeda members he was gearing up to prosecute. Turning his back on military commissions ended his military career. He was denied a meritorious service award because he was told he served dishonorably by speaking out about the tribunals.

Davis continued to publicly oppose the military commission process and he also criticized the Obama administration for refusing to hold accountable key Bush officials who implemented a policy authorizing the torture of “war on terror” detainees.

But, as Davis discovered, it's no safer criticizing a Democratic administration's policies than it was when a Republican was in the White House.

Indeed, two years ago, Davis was fired from the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service (CRS), where he began working in December 2008 as the assistant director of the defense, trade and foreign affairs division, after he wrote an op-ed in November 2009 for the *Wall Street Journal* and a letter to the editor published in the *Washington Post* that were highly critical of military commissions and the decision the Obama administration made to sidestep federal courts in favor of the flawed tribunals for some alleged terrorists.

CRS Director Daniel Mulhollan, who fired Davis, said he “failed to adhere to the CRS policy on Outside Speaking and Writing,” showing “poor judgment and discretion ... not consistent with ‘acceptable service.’”

Davis sued Mulhollan and the Library of Congress, which oversees CRS, claiming they violated his First Amendment rights. A hearing in the case was held last month. Davis said he's “optimistic that by 2018 I will be reinstated to my former position.”

“On Veteran's Day, it [was] two years since I wrote the *Wall Street Journal* op-ed and we're not even at the discovery stage yet,” Davis said.

While Davis is one of the most visible and verbal critics, he's not the only military prosecutor who has been outspoken about Obama and Bush's detainee policies.

Lt. Col. Darrell Vandeveld is a former military commissions prosecutor who also resigned in protest. In 2009, after Obama embraced the legal framework he rejected as a presidential candidate, Vandeveld testified before Congress, stating, “the military commission system is broken beyond repair.”

“The military commissions cannot be fixed, because their very creation – and the only reason to prefer military commissions over federal criminal courts for the Guantanamo detainees – can now be clearly seen

as an artifice, a contrivance, to try to obtain prosecutions based on evidence that would not be admissible in any civilian or military prosecution anywhere in our nation," Vandeveld said.

Davis said, "Obama knows what the right thing to do is."

"But let's face it, this is all about politics," Davis said. "Nobody is going to get reelected in 2012 campaigning on standing up for the rights of detainees. Nobody wants to be seen as being soft on terrorism."

One of the fundamental questions that has yet to be answered in the debate over the merits of military commissions, Davis noted, is what is the source of the rights for the detainees facing trial?

"If it's the Constitution, then a military commission is deficient and it would require a court-martial or a trial in federal court to pass constitutional muster," Davis said. "If the basis is in the Geneva Conventions, then a military commission – one run by the military without political interference – could meet the requirement."

But, Davis said, after a decade "failure and fumbling, it's no longer a question of whether we could do military commissions or could keep Gitmo open; the question is should we?"

"I think Gitmo and military commissions have become too toxic in the public psyche to ever regain credibility," he said. "I believe we need to abandon both and rely on our traditional prisons and traditional courts."

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**"Nuremberg of Our Times"**

That's a radical departure from Davis's previous stance as one of the leading advocates of military commissions.

"I did at one time have tremendous confidence in the military commissions and the people who were selected to preside over the process," Davis said. "But it was politicized by the Bush administration who had no respect for the rule of law."

Davis said he "answered a service-wide

call for volunteers" sent out by the Bush administration in early 2002 for military lawyers to handle terrorist cases at Guantanamo because "I was concerned about what I was seeing" and that he "initially volunteered to be chief defense counsel" for detainees.

"The law was clearly being undermined by the Bush administration," Davis said. "All of a sudden 9/11 comes along and we do everything we can to avoid the law. For example, picking Guantanamo to hold detainees was thought of as the perfect law-free site. I knew it was a hugely unpopular effort defending terrorists in the wake of this terrible atrocity but I felt it was important that somebody was on hand to do it right."

The job of chief defense counsel, however, went to Col. Will Gunn, who is now the general counsel for the Veterans Administration. Still, Davis said when he accepted the position of Guantanamo's chief prosecutor three years later he brought with him "the same attitude that we needed to do this right."

But Davis was quickly put into his place.

He recalls being told by Pentagon General Counsel William "Jim" Haynes during a meeting in Haynes' office in the summer of 2005 that "these trials are going to be the Nuremberg of our times."

"I told Haynes, 'at Nuremberg not everyone was convicted,'" Davis said. "There were some acquittals."

Davis said Haynes' "eyes got big and he leaned back in his chair."

"Acquittals!" Haynes said, according to Davis, "we can't have acquittals! We have been holding these guys for years. How are we going to explain to world we have been holding these guys for this long if we don't have convictions? We have to have convictions!"

Davis said it was then that he understood "the mindset of the Bush administration was that we had to through the motions of having trials and ensure there was a preordained outcome."

Haynes, now the chief counsel for Chev-

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**The military commissions rules passed by Congress in 2009 prohibits the use of evidence obtained through torture and hearsay**  
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ron Corp., did Davis not return phone calls or emails seeking comment.

Under Obama, a “preordained outcome” is still the expectation for terror suspects facing a military commission as evidenced by the fact the administration has signaled that Nashiri could still be detained even if he were acquitted.

Brig. Gen. Mark Martins is the new chief prosecutor at Guantanamo. Davis noted he is the sixth chief prosecutor in eight years. During that time, there have only been six trials.

“I don’t know Brig. Gen. Martins, but it usually doesn’t bode well when a team is on its sixth quarterback in eight years,” Davis said. “Who knows, perhaps the sixth time is the charm.”

In an effort to sell its revamped version of military commissions to the public, the Pentagon unveiled a new \$500,000 military commissions web site last month, which boasts the banner, “Fairness – Transparency – Justice.”

“There was a time when the world might have believed the slogan, but that was years ago,” Davis said. “Now, the [Department of Defense] may as well throw in a box meal and call it dinner theater.”

Davis added that the administration’s claims of “fairness” were undercut when it released the rules for Nashiri’s trial only two days before it was set to begin.

“In April 2010, on the eve of [Canadian detainee Omar] Khadr’s [war crimes] trial, the Defense Department published the Manual for Military Commissions,” Davis said. “To some, it was like the NFL saying ‘oh, by the way, here’s the rule book for the game’ after the players were already lined up for the kickoff and just waiting for the whistle to blow. At least this time they managed to publish their new rules two days before Nashiri’s trial.”

Looking back over the past decade, Davis said, there has been a “presidential military order, two acts of Congress, a DoD directive signed by the Secretary of Defense, seven

military commission orders signed by the Secretary of Defense or Deputy Secretary of Defense, 15 commissions instructions signed by Haynes, three appointing authority instructions, 19 presiding officer memorandums, two Manuals for Military Commissions, two Regulations for Trial by Military Commission, a Military Commission Trial Judiciary Rules of Court, and Rules of Practice for the Court of Military Commission Review with two amendments.”

“Now Nashiri goes to court under rules that have again been modified,” Davis continued. “Each time whoever is in charge says this time it’s fair. I think it’s a problem that’s inherent when you begin with the premise that the whole operation is outside the reach of any law. It takes some craft lawyering to try to slap a veneer of fairness on that.”

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**“One of the Dirtiest Cases” of Torture**

During his tenure, Davis butted heads with Haynes and appointees in the Office of Military Commissions over their insistence that he use evidence obtained through torture in cases he was working on, which he said he refused to do and which ultimately led to his resignation.

“I was told ‘President Bush says we don’t torture so what makes you think you have the authority to say we do?’” Davis said, recalling a conversation he had with Brigadier Gen. Thomas W. Hartmann, who he said ordered him to use evidence obtained from torture in military commissions. Davis would not identify the cases.

The military commission’s rules, passed by Congress in 2009, prohibit the use of evidence obtained through torture and hearsay, but the fact that Nashiri was tortured by CIA interrogators will likely be used to challenge the government’s evidence against him.

Davis said in his review of detainee files he saw documented evidence of torture.

“Pretty much every document I saw laid

out what was taking place” during interrogations, Davis said. “I don’t recall seeing any document that didn’t detail the [interrogation] methods being used.”

Davis said he also discovered that at least one detainee was “disappeared.” When he inquired about the detainee’s whereabouts with a Guantanamo intelligence official he was told he did not have a “need to know.”

A Defense Department spokesperson did not return calls for comment.

Davis said one of the “dirtiest cases” he saw and was personally involved in was that of alleged 20th 9/11 hijacker Mohamed al-Qahtani.

“I never got to meet him,” Davis said. “But there was another lawyer who was in the office a lot longer than me who did and he said, [interrogators] fucked with him so bad he’s crazy as a shithouse rat.’ This guy did not want to touch the Qahtani case. He thought Qahtani was pushed past the point of being mentally competent.”

Emails released several years ago by the FBI under the Freedom of Information Act describe Qahtani’s torture, which took place at Guantanamo and was sanctioned by former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

In January 2009, Susan Crawford, the retired judge and a close confidant of Dick Cheney, who, until last year, was the convening authority for military commissions at Guantanamo, said al-Qahtani’s interrogation met the legal definition of torture and, as a result, she would not allow a war crimes tribunal against him to proceed.

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**Obama’s Crimes**

Davis, now the executive director of the Crimes of War Education Project, a nonprofit organization that seeks to raise awareness of the laws of armed conflict worldwide, said the admission by Crawford should have immediately led to an investigation under the Convention Against Torture. But “the Obama administration was whistling by the graveyard on that one and pretended like

nothing happened.”

“We’re a party to the Convention Against Torture and clearly we tortured people,” Davis said, angrily. “There is an affirmative duty under the convention to investigate and prosecute. It doesn’t say when it’s convenient or when you get around to it or if it’s not politically detrimental to your administration. It says it’s a duty. And it also says, in addition to prosecuting people that were tortured the person that is the victim has to have a right to compensation and the Obama administration refuses to investigate and prosecute the allegations of torture. But when the victims go to court to try and get civil remedies they’re entitled to under the Convention Against Torture the Obama administration asserts the state secrets privilege to knock them out of court.”

Davis said former Vice President Dick Cheney, his daughter Liz Cheney and the vice president’s former counsel, David Addington, “did a very effective job pandering to fear by claiming the detainees we’re still holding are the ‘worst of the worst.’ That’s the narrative that was sold.”

“They painted this picture that I think the public to this day still buys and as a result a large section of the population says ‘screw them, keep them at Guantanamo,’” Davis said. “It’s unfortunate, but 99 percent of the public could care less about these issues.”

Davis said he’s not sure, at this point, if the country would be prepared “if one day somebody in this administration decided to launch an investigation and prosecution of the Bush officials who implemented these [torture and detention] policies.”

“But I’ll tell you this, if we’re not going to do it then we need to repudiate the ratification of the Convention Against Torture and stop being hypocrites,” Davis said. “Here you have an administration lecturing countries like Iran and Libya on human rights. How do you, with a straight face, lecture other people when we do the exact same thing? We’re great at preaching but not

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**Susan Crawford, the retired judge and a close confidant of Dick Cheney, said al-Qahtani’s interrogation met the legal definition of torture and, as a result, she would not allow a war crimes tribunal against him to proceed**

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## OBAMA'S FAILINGS

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**Davis referred to Khadr as a "terrorist" and "murderer" during a news conference**  
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practicing.”

Obama established a “terrible precedent” by stating publicly that he was only interested in looking “forward,” a decision that has “undermined whatever moral authority we had left,” Davis said.

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**Inconsistencies**

Although Davis appears to be an advocate for the detainees who have been tortured while in custody of the US government, his comments over the years have been inconsistent.

Most notably, in 2006, Davis remarked that the sympathetic portrayal of Canadian Omar Khadr by the then-teenager’s defense counsel was “nauseating,” and he dismissed as a defense strategy allegations at the time that Khadr had been tortured physically and psychologically. Davis referred to Khadr as a “terrorist” and “murderer” during a news conference and told the media at the time that members of al-Qaeda and the terrorist organization’s sympathizers were taught to lie about being tortured in order to win public sympathy.

Khadr, whose war crimes charges Davis had personally approved, was the first “child soldier” to be prosecuted by military commission since World War II. Khadr was a teenager when he was captured in Afghanistan in July 2002 and charged with killing a US medic after he tossed a grenade at him.

In a plea deal hammered out with military prosecutors last year, Khadr pleaded guilty to five terrorism-related charges including murder in violation of the laws of war.

Furthermore, just four months before he resigned as chief prosecutor, Davis had praised military commissions, stating in an op-ed published in the *New York Times*, “Guantanamo Bay is a clean, safe and humane place for enemy combatants, and the Military Commissions Act provides a fair process to adjudicate the guilt or innocence of those alleged to have committed crimes.”

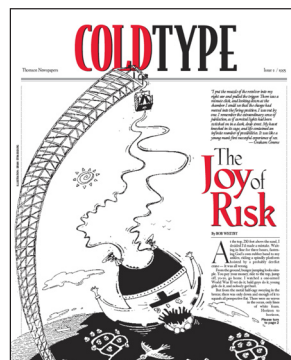
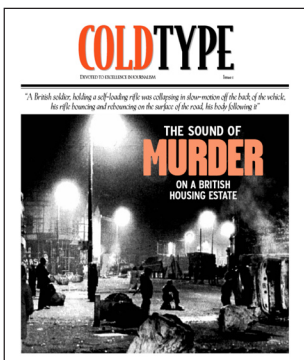
Davis said he’s well aware comments he had previously made about “certain detainees” and the military commissions process do not jibe with the statements he has made since he decided to publicly criticize the Bush and Obama administrations.

“People ask me all the time, ‘were you lying then?’ My answer is ‘no.’ That’s what I believed at the time.”

Now, Davis said he believes the rest of world will be “skeptical of our claim that the military commissions have suddenly gone from woeful to wonderful.”

“So much for change you can believe in or for that matter change you’d even notice.” **CT**

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*Jason Leopold, the author of “News Junkie,” is a senior editor at Truthout.org, where this essay first appeared*



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# Collusion, confusion and control

**John Pilger** on the alliance of the media with the rich and powerful

*Britain's recent phone hacking scandal has exposed the grubby links between mass media, politicians and the police. For many people the scandal confirmed a view of the mainstream media as little more than a tool of the rich and powerful. John Pilger explored the role of the news industry at a meeting, organised by media workers in London last month. This is an edited extract of his speech*

**A**fter Hackgate, it's likely that Rupert Murdoch's empire will disintegrate, certainly when the old man dies, and that's very good news. But Hackgate was a sideshow to a rampant collusion so engrained across the mainstream media that it almost never speaks its name.

The undeclared role of our "free media" is to minimise the culpability of our governments. At worst it is to cheer them on, to beat their drums, to dehumanise their enemies.

We journalists love the idea of worthy and unworthy victims. British and American soldiers are always worthy victims, no matter what they've done or why they've done it.

In Libya the revolutionaries, our revolutionaries, are worthy victims. But the people in the city of Sirte were unworthy victims. They were pro-Gaddafi, we were told.

So it was OK to rain down fragmentation bombs on them and Hellfire missiles to suck the air out of the lungs of their children. Untold numbers of men, women and children

were killed and maimed by us.

How did the BBC report it? The city, said a BBC reporter, should be left as a memorial to Gaddafi's victims. Consider the intellectual and moral contortion required to make that statement. That Gaddafi's crimes pale against the crimes of our government is unmentionable. The slaughter in Fallujah in Iraq was unmentionable, too. Thousands were killed. Yet almost nothing of the truth of that massacre appeared in the BBC, ITV or any of the main news.

The American human rights lawyer Richard Falk wrote that, "People in the West are encouraged to see the world through a self-righteous, one-way moral/legal screen [with] positive images of Western values and an innocence portrayed as threatened, validating a campaign of unrestricted political violence."

I've been a witness to much of this violence. I've glimpsed the overthrow of some of the 50 governments dispatched by the United States, with British support, many of them democracies.

In Latin America I've seen those tortured by forces approved and backed by our governments. Colonel Gaddafi had the approval and backing of the British government to torture people we didn't like.

But we, the benevolent ones, are seldom reported as the instigators of this violence, this terrorism that is far greater than anything that Al Qaida could produce.

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**British and American soldiers are always worthy victims, no matter what they've done or why they've done it**  
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**Wikileaks released a 2,000-page document from the Ministry of Defence about how to prevent leaks – which was leaked**  
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Murdoch's appearance in parliament was great theatre. But why wasn't he asked about the invasion of Iraq? Why wasn't he asked about phone calls he made to Tony Blair in March 2003, each followed by warmongering front pages in the Murdoch press?

Murdoch's TV channels and newspapers have supported state violence for most of my career. But Murdoch is not a bad apple.

Consider two studies of the BBC's coverage of the run-up to the invasion of Iraq by the University of Wales and Media Tenor. They were barely reported.

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**Government's propaganda**

They found that the BBC's coverage overwhelmingly reflected the Blair government's propaganda, such as the lies about weapons of mass destruction. Less than two percent of BBC reporting in this critical period allowed dissenting voices, even though a majority of the British public opposed the invasion. That's less than the most jingoistic American networks.

On 9 April 2003, BBC political editor Andrew Marr stood outside 10 Downing Street.

He declared, "Tony Blair said that we would be able to take Baghdad without a bloodbath. He has been proved conclusively right. And it would be entirely ungracious, even for his critics, not to acknowledge that tonight he stands as a larger man and a stronger prime minister."

Researchers at John Hopkins University estimate that more than a million people died as a result of the invasion. Their work was first reported in the *Lancet* in 2006 and the mainstream media sought to discredit it. Why? Because we destroyed the lives of a million people and yet have little idea of the sheer scale of this crime committed in our name.

Last year I interviewed Dan Rather, America's most famous TV news editor. He and others believe that had journalists challenged and exposed the lies of Bush and Blair, the invasion of Iraq might not have happened.

And perhaps those million people would be alive today.

My point is that the trail of blood leads not only to Murdoch, because the most important propagandists are seldom the least credible. It also leads to those who enjoy more public respect, like broadcasting. A Wikileaks cable from the US embassy described the extent of the understanding between the BBC and powerful politicians.

This is the US ambassador advising secretary of state Hillary Clinton: "I hope you can take some time out to tape an interview with leading British journalist Andrew Marr.

"It would be a powerful way for you to set out our priorities for Afghanistan/Pakistan. Marr is a congenial interviewer who will offer maximum impact for your investment of time."

Another Wikileaks document describes a different kind of journalist. It's a 2,000-page document from the Ministry of Defence about how to prevent leaks – which was leaked. It said there are three main threads to the ministry's view of the world. They are Russian spies, terrorists, and by far the greatest threat – independent investigative journalists.

No greater compliment can be bestowed on those who do their job independently and fearlessly. I believe an historic shift is taking place and that social democracy is being drained of its life-force and replaced by corporatism. The convergence of the main political parties is part of this momentous change.

Dissent is being criminalised on both sides of the Atlantic. And alongside it all is the mainstream media. Reading the Wikileaks cables, what's clear is that the aim of great power is to eliminate the distinction between journalism and information control.

But the craft of journalism has seen the best of traditions. And these have survived, from Tom Paine right up to Robert Fisk. In other words we were never meant to be the agents of power. We were always meant to be the agents of people. **CT**

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*John Pilger has just received the top prize in the annual awards of the Grierson Trust for his documentary films in London*

# This is what revolution looks like

The Occupation movement has been evicted from its city camps, writes **Chris Hedges**, but the revolution has only just begun

**W**elcome to the revolution. Our elites have exposed their hand. They have nothing to offer. They can destroy but they cannot build. They can repress but they cannot lead. They can steal but they cannot share. They can talk but they cannot speak. They are as dead and useless to us as the water-soaked books, tents, sleeping bags, suitcases, food boxes and clothes that were tossed by sanitation workers into garbage trucks in New York City. They have no ideas, no plans and no vision for the future.

Our decaying corporate regime has strutted in Portland, Oakland and New York with their baton-wielding cops into a fool's paradise. They think they can clean up "the mess" – always employing the language of personal hygiene and public security – by making us disappear. They think we will all go home and accept their corporate nation, a nation where crime and government policy have become indistinguishable, where nothing in America, including the ordinary citizen, is deemed by those in power worth protecting or preserving, where corporate oligarchs awash in hundreds of millions of dollars are permitted to loot and pillage the last shreds of collective wealth, human capital and natural resources, a nation where the poor do not eat and workers do not work, a nation where the sick die and children go hungry, a nation where the consent

of the governed and the voice of the people is a cruel joke.

Get back into your cages, they are telling us. Return to watching the lies, absurdities, trivia and celebrity gossip we feed you in 24-hour cycles on television. Invest your emotional energy in the vast system of popular entertainment. Run up your credit card debt. Pay your loans. Be thankful for the scraps we toss. Chant back to us our phrases about democracy, greatness and freedom. Vote in our rigged political theater. Send your young men and women to fight and die in useless, unwinnable wars that provide corporations with huge profits. Stand by mutely as our bipartisan congressional super committee, either through consensus or cynical dysfunction, plunges you into a society without basic social services including unemployment benefits. Pay for the crimes of Wall Street.

The rogues' gallery of Wall Street crooks, such as Lloyd Blankfein at Goldman Sachs, Howard Milstein at New York Private Bank & Trust, the media tycoon Rupert Murdoch, the Koch brothers and Jamie Dimon at JP-Morgan Chase & Co., no doubt think it's over. They think it is back to the business of harvesting what is left of America to swell their personal and corporate fortunes. But they no longer have any concept of what is happening around them. They are as mystified and clueless about these uprisings as

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**Run up your credit card debt. Pay your loans. Be thankful for the scraps we toss. Chant back to us our phrases about democracy, greatness and freedom. Vote in our rigged political theater**  
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**Once the foot  
soldiers no longer  
obey orders, the  
old regime swiftly  
crumbles**  
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the courtiers at Versailles or in the Forbidden City who never understood until the very end that their world was collapsing. The billionaire mayor of New York, enriched by a deregulated Wall Street, is unable to grasp why people would spend two months sleeping in an open park and marching on banks. He says he understands that the Occupy protests are “cathartic” and “entertaining,” as if demonstrating against the pain of being homeless and unemployed is a form of therapy or diversion, but that it is time to let the adults handle the affairs of state. Democratic and Republican mayors, along with their parties, have sold us out. But for them this is the beginning of the end.

The historian Crane Brinton in his book *Anatomy of a Revolution* laid out the common route to revolution. The preconditions for successful revolution, Brinton argued, are discontent that affects nearly all social classes, widespread feelings of entrapment and despair, unfulfilled expectations, a unified solidarity in opposition to a tiny power elite, a refusal by scholars and thinkers to continue to defend the actions of the ruling class, an inability of government to respond to the basic needs of citizens, a steady loss of will within the power elite itself and defections from the inner circle, a crippling isolation that leaves the power elite without any allies or outside support and, finally, a financial crisis. Our corporate elite, as far as Brinton was concerned, has amply fulfilled these preconditions. But it is Brinton’s next observation that is most worth remembering. Revolutions always begin, he wrote, by making impossible demands that if the government met would mean the end of the old configurations of power. The second stage, the one we have entered now, is the unsuccessful attempt by the power elite to quell the unrest and discontent through physical acts of repression.

I have seen my share of revolts, insurgencies and revolutions, from the guerrilla conflicts in the 1980s in Central America to the civil wars in Algeria, the Sudan and Yemen,

to the Palestinian uprising to the revolutions in East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Romania as well as the wars in the former Yugoslavia. George Orwell wrote that all tyrannies rule through fraud and force, but that once the fraud is exposed they must rely exclusively on force. We have now entered the era of naked force. The vast million-person bureaucracy of the internal security and surveillance state will not be used to stop terrorism but to try and stop us.

Despotic regimes in the end collapse internally. Once the foot soldiers who are ordered to carry out acts of repression, such as the clearing of parks or arresting or even shooting demonstrators, no longer obey orders, the old regime swiftly crumbles. When the aging East German dictator Erich Honecker was unable to get paratroopers to fire on protesting crowds in Leipzig, the regime was finished. The same refusal to employ violence doomed the communist governments in Prague and Bucharest. I watched in December 1989 as the army general that the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu had depended on to crush protests condemned him to death on Christmas Day. Tunisia’s Ben Ali and Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak lost power once they could no longer count on the security forces to fire into crowds.

The process of defection among the ruling class and security forces is slow and often imperceptible. These defections are advanced through a rigid adherence to nonviolence, a refusal to respond to police provocation and a verbal respect for the blue-uniformed police, no matter how awful they can be while wading into a crowd and using batons as battering rams against human bodies. The resignations of Oakland Mayor Jean Quan’s deputy, Sharon Cornu, and the mayor’s legal adviser and longtime friend, Dan Siegel, in protest over the clearing of the Oakland encampment are some of the first cracks in the edifice. “Support Occupy Oakland, not the 1% and its government facilitators,” Siegel tweeted after his resignation.

There were times when I entered the ring as a boxer and knew, as did the spectators, that I was woefully mismatched. Ringers, experienced boxers in need of a tune up or a little practice, would go to the clubs where semi-pros fought, lie about their long professional fight records, and toy with us. Those fights became about something other than winning. They became about dignity and self-respect. You fought to say something about who you were as a human being. These bouts were punishing, physically brutal and demoralizing. You would get knocked down and stagger back up. You would reel backwards from a blow that felt like a cement block.

You would taste the saltiness of your blood on your lips. Your vision would blur. Your ribs, the back of your neck and your abdomen would ache. Your legs would feel like lead. But the longer you held on, the

more the crowd in the club turned in your favor. No one, even you, thought you could win. But then, every once in a while, the ringer would get overconfident. He would get careless. He would become a victim of his own hubris. And you would find deep within yourself some new burst of energy, some untapped strength and, with the fury of the dispossessed, bring him down. I have not put on a pair of boxing gloves for 30 years. But I felt this twinge of euphoria again in my stomach, this utter certainty that the impossible is possible, this realization that the mighty will fall **CT**

*Chris Hedges writes a regular column for Truthdig.com, where this essay was first published. Hedges graduated from Harvard Divinity School and was for nearly two decades a foreign correspondent for The New York Times.*

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 You would taste the saltiness of your blood on your lips. Your vision would blur ... But the longer you held on, the more the crowd in the club turned in your favor  
 .....

## HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt



# There's rebellion in the air

## Dave Lindorff slams Quan's Q and Bloomberg's Bullshit as mayors justify strong arm tactics against Occupation activists

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**If public safety were seriously an issue, as Quan, Bloomberg and other mayors have tried to claim, police would have been told not to direct vagrants and people with mental problems from around the city to head for Zuccotti Square, as New York's Police Department was caught doing**  
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**T**he scripted excuses provided by mayors around the country to justify their police-state tactics in rousting peaceful occupation movement activists from their park-based demonstrations now stand exposed as utter nonsense, and, given their uncanny similarity in wording, can be clearly seen as having been drawn up for them by some hidden hands in Washington. The same can be said of the brutal tactics used.

If Mayor Jean Quan in Oakland, or Mayor Mike Bloomberg in New York, had been genuinely concerned about the health and well-being of the people in the encampments in their cities, they would not have dispatched police suited up in riot gear and armed with pepper spray and big clubs into the camps in the dead of night, as each did, and as other mayors are doing. They would not have used tear gas and guns firing projectiles like so called "bean bags" and rubber coated bullets, as police in Oakland reportedly did on several occasions -- weapons that can cause severe injury and even death on occasion, especially when fired at close range.

They would not have stormed encampments that are known to have pregnant women, children and even babies living in them. Rather, they would have come in during broad daylight, peacefully, and accompanied by health inspectors and other

personnel who could to try to help solve any problems.

In Bloomberg's case, if he really cared about the safety and well-being of the protesters, he would have long ago had the city set up a bank of port-a-potties near Zuccotti Park, so protesters could relieve themselves without having to foul the streets. And he would certainly not have barred demonstrators from setting up tents, forcing people, in increasingly harsh weather, including one heavy unseasonal snowstorm, to survive under plastic tarps laid on the cold flagstones over their sleeping bags

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**Vagrants redirected**

If public safety were seriously an issue, as Quan, Bloomberg and the other mayors have also tried to claim, police would have been told not to direct vagrants and people with mental problems from around the city to head for Zuccotti Square, as New York's Police Department was caught doing. Instead of acting like thugs and an occupying force penning in demonstrators, police would have worked out a coordinated system with demonstrators to help protect those in the park from any sexual predators or mentally unbalanced persons who might have entered the park to cause trouble.

Actually, the regions in and around the encampments have never been safer than

they are now with all those demonstrators on hand. Take Center City in Philadelphia. The area on Dilworth Plaza and around City Hall has always been a scary place to find one's self alone at night because so few people actually live there, making lone pedestrians up on the street or down in the tunnels of the train station or subways easy targets for muggers, rapists and thieves.

The same is certainly also true of downtown Oakland and of New York's financial district. If there have been crimes committed by people in the encampments, they are few and far between and mostly minor, and it is almost a certainty that overall crime and especially violent crime is down significantly in the areas where the protests are being staged.

There can be no real justification for the growing number of paramilitary police assaults against the occupation camps.

**Worried elites**

These coordinated assaults on the Occupation Movement are clearly happening not for the reasons stated, but because the ruling elites, particularly the powerful bankers and financiers on Wall Street, and the Obama administration in Washington, are frightened by the growing popularity of the protests, by the movement's rapid spread to cities across the country, large and small, and to the resonance that chants like "We're the 99 percent!" and "Banks got bailouts! We got sold out!" are having among the general population of the United States.

Bloomberg and Quan, and the mayors of other cities from Atlanta to Dallas to Portland to Seattle and back to Boston who have been unleashing their police forces on peaceful protesters in their jurisdictions, have been doing the movement a great favor by brutally attacking protesters' right to demonstrate and present their grievances. The corporate media, which at first tried to ignore the occupations, have had to cover the assaults -- even if they misreport them. And

the images of idealistic young people being thrown on the ground, hammered with batons, and sprayed in the face with pepper spray, are deeply upsetting to most ordinary people. Workers are increasingly angered and aroused, and many are touched by the support for their struggles being manifested by the young student demonstrators.

And importantly, the enemy of the public is being given a face.

No longer is it just a bunch of unidentified and overly aggressive cops. Now it's clear that it is the mayors, and whoever it is in the background who is giving them their marching orders, who are instructing the cops to go in and bust heads.

Mayor Bloomberg -- a man reportedly worth \$19.5 billion, up a staggering \$1.5 billion over the last year while other Americans are becoming poorer -- is in fact the perfect symbol of what is wrong with today's America. Having this greedy "one percent" issue the marching orders to the police in New York makes it absolutely clear what this repression is about.

With this wave of assaults, the Occupation Movement is being forced to shift gears -- to move out of the cramped spaces to which it has been confined and to become an uprising for economic justice, instead of just an occupation as an act of protest. Zuccotti has been reoccupied, but the movement is busting out of the police barricades that surround the square.

Perhaps a group of young musicians standing on a street corner at 66th and Broadway just off Lincoln Square in New York City, doing a "mic check" routine at 11 pm the evening after the police assault on Zuccotti Plaza, said it best with their sign, which read: "Nostalgia for the Student Protests of the Past Dies Here!"

The '60s are over. It's the '10s now and rebellion is in the air. **CT**

*Dave Lindorff runs the blog [www.thiscantbehappening.net](http://www.thiscantbehappening.net) where this essay was first published.*

.....  
**The images of idealistic young people being thrown on the ground, hammered with batons, and sprayed in the face with pepper spray, are deeply upsetting to most ordinary people**  
 .....

# Ass kicking and explaining

William Rivers Pitt has a story for the ignorant and uninitiated about what the Occupy movement stands for and why it is not defeated

.....  
I'm going to slap  
the next person  
who comes out  
with the pat  
line, "They don't  
have a message!  
They need a  
message! They're  
nothing without a  
message!"  
.....

*They say it's hard to speak  
They feel so strong to say we are weak  
But through the eyes the love of our people  
They've got to repay.  
We come from Trench Town  
We come from Trench Town  
Trench - Trench Town  
They say, "Can anything good  
Come out of Trench Town?"  
- Bob Marley*

Let's get a few things straight right from the jump.

First of all, despite all the gleeful obituaries that have been appearing across the scabrous landscape of the "mainstream" news media, the Occupy movement is not, in fact, over. Mayor Michael Bloomberg may have sent in cops like thieves in the night to dispossess peaceful protesters and destroy books in New York City, but there are hundreds of Occupy camps still standing from one side of this nation to the other. As for the seedcorn New York protest, well ... if you're one who opposes what they've been doing, you can cross your fingers and toes to your heart's delight in the hope that matters are settled in the Big Apple, but you best be prepared for disappointment, because those people have set their caps to accomplish what they endeavored to do back in September, and they are far, far more organized and deter-

mined than people like you seem capable of apprehending.

A setback like this only adds fuel to the fire. We're talking about people who are so committed to the ideals of the Occupy movement that they abandoned the soft conveniences of modern existence - walls, a roof, a bed, plumbing, locks on the doors and the soothing babble of cable TV - to sleep in a park surrounded by strangers for almost two months. Raise your hand if you've ever gone camping for two full months, anywhere. It has been hot, it has been cold, it has rained, it has snowed, and, oh yeah, there was the ever-present threat of catching a billy club over the head or a face full of NYPD mace for their trouble. You think they're going away after enduring all that?

Ha.

Second, I'm going to slap the next person who comes out with the pat line, "They don't have a message! They need a message! They're nothing without a message!" Um, cluebag, they are the message. The Occupy movement has created modern-day Hoovervilles from sea to shining sea to point out the simple fact that things have gone badly wrong in these United States, that the American Dream of even minimal upward mobility and the promise of a better future for our children were sold for pennies on the dollar to the bastards and whores who have perverted this democracy



past the point of recognition. It's a fantastic bit of irony, a towering example of cognitive dissonance, that the same people who attack the Occupy movement are also the ones packing guns to Tea Party protests because they think the country is headed in the wrong direction. What in the name of Jesus H. Christ do they think the right direction is? 99% of us are getting screwed, and the Occupy movement has been the most eloquent firebreak against that heedless, moneygrubbing trend.

**Graft, greed and theft**

I'll make it simple: Wall Street has occupied American politics and stolen America's bright future in an orgy of graft and theft, so America has occupied Wall Street - along with every Main Street in every city and town you can think of - in order to try and set things right. Got it? It is pretty simple, folks. Two plus two does, in fact, equal four. The only reasons people refuse to see this thing, simply, for what it is come down to willful stupidity, stubborn partisanship, money, or a combination of the three.

Third, anyone who claims that the Occupy movement has not accomplished anything can kiss my whole entire ass. The upward mobility of our hard-earned money into the coffers of the rich and powerful has been going on since the disaster known as the "Reagan Revolution." The politicians bought by the cash-fat elite have appointed judges to every level of the state and federal judicial systems, and the serial corporate-favoring rulings handed down by these robed criminals have given this grand theft the imprimatur of legality, but it ain't legal, and it ain't right. One look at the Supreme Court's Citizen's United decision, and the after-effects of same, can tell you that. Hell, Mitt Romney actually got up with his bare face hanging out the other day to make the very modern American argument that corporations are, in fact, people ... non-existent multi-billionaire people protected from even

the most minimal legal oversight or scrutiny, to be sure, but people all the same.

Is that the country you want to live in? I don't, and neither do the Occupy protesters, and what they have accomplished over these last two months is to finally, finally, finally draw major national attention to the deranged way we go about things here in America. In the immortal words of a fantastic Occupy protest sign, "I'll believe corporations are people when Texas executes one." For the first time in modern memory, people in America, along with their elected representatives and the "mainstream" media that covers it all, have had their noses rubbed in the awful yawning gap between the Haves and the Have Nots, and the manner in which this doomed system of thievery-as-governance actually operates. Those who try to tell you the Occupy movement has no message are the very people who see the message with perfect clarity, and it scares the tar out of them, so they have made a point of saying black is white in order to muddy the waters. Don't believe it. In your gut, you know better.

No one, but no one, has explained it all better than Chris Hedges:

"The banks and Wall Street, which have erected the corporate state to serve their interests at our expense, caused the financial crisis. The bankers and their lobbyists crafted tax havens that account for up to \$1 trillion in tax revenue lost every decade. They rewrote tax laws so the nation's most profitable corporations, including Bank of America, could avoid paying any federal taxes. They engaged in massive fraud and deception that wiped out an estimated \$40 trillion in global wealth. The banks are the ones that should be made to pay for the financial collapse.

"The big banks and corporations are parasites. They greedily devour the entrails of the nation in a quest for profit, thrusting us all into serfdom and polluting and poisoning the ecosystem that sustains the human species. They have gobbled up more than a

**Wall Street has occupied American politics and stolen America's bright future in an orgy of graft and theft, so America has occupied Wall Street - along with every Main Street in every city and town you can think of - in order to try and set things right**

Any and all who say the Occupy movement is meaningless in comparison to the civil rights struggle or the fight against the war in Vietnam are, quite simply, flat wrong. Worse than that, you know you're wrong

trillion dollars from the Department of Treasury and the Federal Reserve and created tiny enclaves of wealth and privilege where corporate managers replicate the decadence of the Forbidden City and Versailles.

Those outside the gates, however, struggle to find work and watch helplessly as food and commodity prices rocket upward ... And no one in the Congress, the Obama White House, the courts or the press, all beholden to corporate money, will step in to stop or denounce the assault on families. Our ruling elite, including Barack Obama, are courtiers, shameless hedonists of power, who kneel before Wall Street and daily sell us out. The top corporate plutocrats are pulling down \$900,000 an hour while one in four children depends on food stamps to eat.

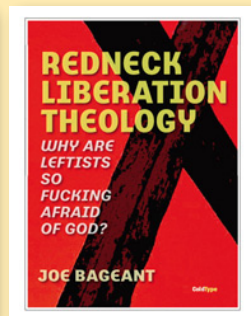
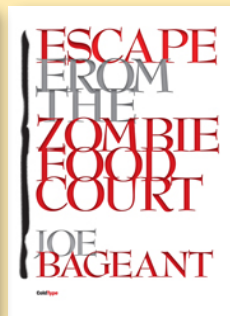
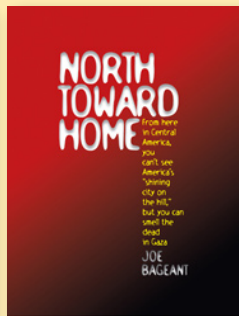
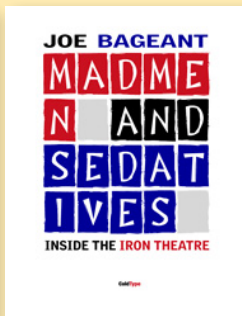
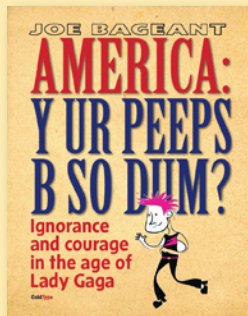
Finally, any and all who say the Occupy movement is meaningless in comparison to the civil rights struggle or the fight against the war in Vietnam are, quite simply, flat wrong. Worse than that, you know you're

wrong. This is not to discredit or discount those great, noble and entirely just efforts in any way, shape or form. But to claim the Occupy movement is beneath those efforts not only misses the point by miles, but viciously undercuts the very fabric of those efforts. This fight is about race, and class, and justice, and what happens to a nation when it becomes addicted to war and the profits earned for a few by the delivery of death. The Occupy movement is the culmination of every great struggle, in this century and the last, against a powerful few who would have us return to the days of aristocracy and penury.

Like Rosa Parks, the Occupy movement sat down where it supposedly didn't belong and said, "I'm not moving," until what is wrong is set right once and for all. **CT**

*William Rivers Pitt writes for the blog [www.truthout.org](http://www.truthout.org), where this essay was first published*

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# I didn't mourn Steve Jobs

Apple is good at separating consumers from their money, but the price its workers pay is much greater, writes **Michael I. Niman**

I know I'm skating on thin ice. Writing about the FBI, CIA, NSA, or any of the other spook agencies? No problem. But mention the deceased Steve Jobs as anything other than saintly or god-like and you've crossed over the line. Spinning his departure as anything other than a tragic loss for humanity is treason against our species.

But we've got to stop drinking this Kool-Aid. It was a true testimony to the omnipotence of corporate culture when a critical mass of Occupy Wall Street protestors zombied up in a moment of silence to mourn the one-percenter who planted his own revenue stream in so many of their pockets.

It's now been more than a month since Jobs was finally humbled by burial: Can we clear the tears from our glazed eyes and talk about this?

Steve Jobs made his fortune by transitioning Apple from a computer manufacturer into an electronics design and marketing company that "outsourced" the actual production of its products to Asian sweatshops. This is the Nike model. Get rid of the clunky, capital-intensive accoutrements of 20th-century industrialism, such as factories that need maintenance and workers who demand a living wage. Instead of building products, Jobs concentrated on building a brand – a super brand with a cult-like following. With this brand in hand, Apple was

able to contract out to faceless suppliers who squeezed their slim profit margin from an over-worked and underpaid workforce.

Under Jobs's watch, city-sized factories sprung up in China, pumping out iPods, iPhones, iPads, iMacs, and Macbooks by the dozens of millions. The largest producer of iBling is a Taiwanese company by the name of Foxconn that fulfills most of its Apple orders at two massive factories in China. Its Longhua, Shenzhen complex employs as many as 450,000 workers and covers a footprint of more than one square mile. Its Chengdu factory was built in just 70 days, opening in October 2010 in order to meet the demand for second-generation iPads, and is able to pump out 40 million units per year. Chengdu workers, according to a Hong Kong human rights group, stand on their feet for up to 14 hours a day working at repetitive, mind-and body-numbing tasks.

These Foxconn plants are walled compounds where employees eat, sleep, and work, with restaurants, grocery stores, banks, clinics, gymnasiums, and even a company-run TV station located onsite. Workers mostly live, eight to 10 to a room, in company-owned dormitories, suffering a quasi-military management regimen. When iPhone sales took off in 2009, the company, according to one human rights agency investigation, forced the workforce to labor as many as 120 hours per month overtime

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**Apple was able to contract out to faceless suppliers who squeezed their slim profit margin from an over-worked and underpaid workforce**  
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**To hold Jobs accountable for what he represents means having to think about our own complicity in fueling the iDeath industries. So we'll mourn Jobs and ignore the victims of the suicide clusters in the Apple supply line**  
.....

in order to keep Apple stores in the US and Europe stocked. As a result, Apple's profits defied Wall Street's bear market, with a seemingly endless supply of its popular products.

At the same time, Foxconn's production line workers started jumping to their deaths. In response, the company festooned some of its most depressing dormitories with anti-suicide netting, and, according to the *Huffington Post*, made new hires sign an anti-suicide pledge.

So yeah, I'm dumbfounded by all the mourning. Sure, Jobs was a visionary, but his vision was a dark one. To face up to that, however, means having to come to terms with the nasty realities of our own fetishistic consumerism. All of this iShit has to come from somewhere. And that somewhere is Chengdu and Shenzhen.

Dig deeper and you'll find raw materials sourced from deadly, low-bidding mines across Africa. You'll find mine tailings poisoning communities just as you'll find iWorkers on assembly lines poisoned by solvents and crippled by hyper-paced repetitive movements.

To hold Jobs accountable for what he represents means having to think about our own complicity in fueling the iDeath industries. So we'll mourn Jobs and ignore the victims of the suicide clusters in the Apple supply line.

Sure, Apple has a code of ethics. So do the public relations and advertising industries. It works like this: Apple contracts out to have products produced at impossible prices. Journalists and human rights activists catch Apple suppliers violating said code. Apple condemns the supplier's practice, even going as far as cutting contracts with some smaller, nonessential vendors. In high-profile cases, Jobs himself made cameo media appearances to righteously condemn his own contractors.

But the problem was never rogue suppliers violating Apple's ethics. The problem was Jobs's business model, which guaran-

teed that suppliers would engage in a cost-cutting race to the bottom. And this model, no matter how many workers jumped from dormitory roofs in Shenzhen, was never up for debate. Apple, with its distinctively unique, popular, high-profit product line and devoted customer base, was well situated to make a break from the sweatshop model – but under Jobs's leadership, it instead chose to expand morally repugnant outsourcing practices.

.....  
**Living in an iWorld**

Even if Apple's iGoods were somehow produced sustainably in safe factories where workers earned living wages, I still wouldn't have mourned his passing. The inventions he shepherded to market have certainly changed the world. But has that really been a good thing? The Apple model is the antithesis of the open-source movement celebrated by the anarcho-techie set. Apple hardware is usually mated to proprietary software and peripherals. In some cases, running non-proprietary software, as in breaking free of Steve Jobs's vision of how you as a consumer should behave, violates your Apple hardware warranty.

Apple gizmos traffic your desires to Apple-owned stores. Its iTunes store now dominates the global music industry, dictating terms to musicians and music labels who want access to Apple's near-monopoly platform. Its iPhone App Store can festoon your iPhone screen with a plethora of corporate brands, but also acts as a gatekeeper, locking other applications out of the booming iMarket. Details on Apple's predatory market practices fill books and court documents. It's not technological innovation alone that explains Apple's market dominance in tablets, phones, and music players. As with their predatory production model, Apple, under Jobs's leadership, has been ruthless in its quest to dominate markets, and in turn, consumers. From where I sit, I can only see unbridled greed.

While technology users quickly develop dependence on their new gadgets, Apple users often develop an additional dependence on the brand, whose product logic and software often make transitioning to a competing platform cumbersome and even intimidating.

Under Jobs's leadership, Apple developed partnerships with other mega-brands. Magazines, for example, now tout special features such as videos that are exclusively available online for their subscribers – but more and more, the catch is you can only view your bonus on your Apple iPad, much like products in stores want to “talk” to your iPhone. What this all adds up to is one corporation with an increasing presence in every aspect of your life – and a diminish-

ing number of options to circumvent that inevitable relationship.

Apple, under Jobs's tutelage, has used this presence very effectively to separate consumers from their money. Buying an Apple product is not a one-time purchase. Rather, it's a sort of conversion to a consumer sect, the beginning of a relationship that will maintain an enduring flow of money from you to Apple.

This is Steve Jobs's legacy. It is truly brilliant. And yes, your iPhone is very impressive. I still don't get the mourning. **CT**

*Dr. Michael I. Niman is a professor of journalism and media studies at Buffalo State College. His previous columns are archived at [www.mediastudy.com](http://www.mediastudy.com)*

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**The catch is you can only view your bonus on your Apple iPad, much like products in stores want to “talk” to your iPhone**  
 .....



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# Oo-rah!

**Fred Reed** shatters the myth that soldiers are heroes. They're merely nationally certified hit-men killing everyone they are told to kill

.....  
**Men live primed to form martial herds and rush mindlessly upon other herds, waving slogans, arguments, forty-yard passes from scrimmage, swords, naval artillery, or white phosphorous**  
.....

**I** read frequently among the lesser neuronal of the supposed honor of soldiers, of the military virtues of courage, loyalty, and uprightness – that in an age of moral decomposition only the military adhere to principles, and that our troops in places like Afghanistan nobly make sacrifices to preserve our freedoms and democracy. Is not all of this nonsense?

Honor? A soldier is just a nationally certified hit-man, perfectly amoral. When he joins the military he agrees to kill anyone he is told to kill, regardless of whether he has previously heard of the country in which he will kill them or whether the residents pose any threat to him or his. How is this honorable? It is cause for lifelong shame.

It is curious that so many soldiers think that they are Christians. Christianity is incompatible with military service.

The explanation of course lies in the soldier's moral compartmentalisation. Within his own tribe or pack, he is the soul of moral propriety – doesn't knock over convenience stores, kick his dog, or beat his children; speaks courteously, observes personal hygiene, and works tirelessly for the public good in the event of natural disasters. A steely gaze with little behind it and a firm handshake amplify the appearance of probity.

In conflict with foreigners, he will burn, bomb, rape and torture indiscriminately. His is the behavior of feral dogs, which humans

closely resemble.

Sacrifice? GIs do not make sacrifices. They are sacrificed, sacrificed for big egos, big contracts, for the shareholders of military industries, for pasty patriots in salons who never wore boots. They fight not for love of country but to stay alive, and from fear of the punishments meted out to deserters. If you doubt this, tell the men in Afghanistan that they may come home on the next plane without penalty, and see how many stay. Troops are as manipulated as roosters in a cock fight, forced to choose between combat and the pot.

Always, to understand the bloody absurdity of the military, bear in mind the primitive, overriding instinct of mankind to form packs and fight other packs. It is the only drive that can at times take precedence over sex. Thus we have tribes, football teams, Crips and Bloods, religious wars, rabid political parties, and patriotism, this latter being far the worst. Men in particular live primed to form martial herds and rush mindlessly upon other herds, waving slogans, arguments, forty-yard passes from scrimmage, swords, naval artillery, or white phosphorous. Dogs. Ants. Soldiers. Humanity.

Nowadays a high moral pretext for war will be contrived, embodying saccharine goodness and nauseous piety. We kill them to make them free, butcher their families because they must be democratic. The race has accumulated just enough fragile decency to want

a noble pretext before burning children. Yet the pack's hostility to outsiders remains the primary drive behind wars, with reasons hung on later like Christmas ornaments.

Most profoundly, wars are not about anything. They are just wars. Aggression trumps substance. Note that in politics, the content of debate often matters less than the visceral pleasure of antipathy as, for example, when greens and capitalists exchange irrational insults like savages working themselves up for battle. The posturing is just foreplay.

Armies, and nations, have to have enemies. Since our instincts seem wired more for single combat, for bar fights more than for sprawling industrial wars, soldiers invariably seek the atavistic adrenal satisfactions of a quick and smashing victory. They are almost always wildly optimistic about the likely outcome. Thus the belief in decisive battles, cakewalks and such, even when experience counsels that there won't be one. The military wants to fall upon the bastards, any bastards, and give them what for, to settle things once and for all in brutal, exhilarating, simple combat. Agincourt, Picket's charge, Themistocles in the Saronic Gulf, that sort of thing.

If you don't think that exhilaration is a factor in military affairs, you have never watched night flight ops with a carrier battle group, Tomcats trapping ker-wham!, the rising howl of huge engines, thirty-knot wind whipping across the flight deck, the smell of burnt kerosene, the focused dance of men cooperating in something complex and dangerous in the wilds of the Pacific. It is a drug. This is much of why we have wars.

And it is why the Pentagon is repeatedly surprised when after the swoosh and scream of the jets over Kabul, or Quang Tri, or Baghdad, angry men with rifles creep from their holes and begin killing and there follows a losing uncomprehended disaster of ten years. Practicality matters less than the spirit of the thing.

Armies of the First World have made this hormonal miscalculation time and again: The French in Vietnam, the Americans in Viet-

nam, the Russians in Afghanistan, the French in Algeria, the Israelis in Lebanon, the Americans in Iraq, the Americans in Afghanistan. Militaries don't learn. They can't.

They can't learn because soldiering is directed as much at maintaining a desired mental state as at practicality. A thick layer of romance has always lain over matters martial. The rush of a low-level pop-and-drop bombing run in an F16, the legions wintering on the Rhine-Danube line, pennants, charges, the poetry and intensity of it all. "Oo-rah!" "Death from Above!" "The most dangerous thing in the world is a Marine with his rifle." "Crush their skulls and eat their faces." Feel-good slogans, suitable for children of eleven.

Those who train and arm the soldiers are less delusional. Behind the curtains the butcher's trade is an ugly one.

In my days of covering the military, I remember efforts to invent blood-red plastic shrapnel that would not show up on x-rays, to make it difficult for the enemy to save his wounded. A tac-nuke manual spoke of how to keep soldiers fighting after being lethally irradiated by a nuclear explosion. Shortly they will die, puking and stumbling, but how does one get a bit more combat out of them? This manual used the evocative phrase, "terrain alteration."

While soldiers quickly come to hate their assigned enemies, as do fighting cocks, they also know that what they are doing will not play well back home.

The entrail-dripping gut-shot, a woman keening over a mound of red mush that is no longer precisely her child – these could interfere with the flow of contracts. Consequently militaries try furiously to suppress photographs of those they torture and mutilate, to package routine atrocities as "isolated incidents," to keep pictures of garishly altered soldiers off the pages of newspapers.

The extreme sensitivity suggests moral uneasiness, oo-rah or not. During Vietnam, the damning photos poured out. The controlled press of today poses no similar problem.

If this is honor, I'll pass. Oo.rah. **CT**

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**Most profoundly, wars are not about anything. They are just wars. Aggression trumps substance**

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**Fred Reed** has worked on staff for *Army Times*, *The Washingtonian*, *Soldier of Fortune*, *Federal Computer Week*, and *The Washington Times*. His web site is [www.fredoneverything.net](http://www.fredoneverything.net)

# George Washington, the Pentagon and the CIA

Sherwood Ross discusses the biggest, costliest, most overgrown warfare machine ever created, that is poised to attack any point on the planet

.....  
Since World War II, America has become the new Rome, only larger, grander, greedier ... an Empire on which the sun and the moon never set and which operates in the dark cloak of secrecy  
.....

When George Washington left office, he warned Americans to beware of “those overgrown military establishments which, under any form of government, are inauspicious to liberty

Inauspicious to liberty! What a polite way of saying overgrown militaries are destroyers of liberty. Please note: Washington said those words 160 years before President Eisenhower’s celebrated warning against the military-industrial complex. It may even be that as Eisenhower was stuck for a model for a farewell speech he wisely looked back on what Washington said.

But what have we got today if not the biggest, the costliest, and the most overgrown warfare machine ever created ... tightening its grip on the entire world ... poised to attack any point on the planet by land, sea, air, and, as we shall see, even from outer space.

Since World War II, America has become the new Rome, only larger, grander, greedier ... an Empire on which the sun and the moon never set and which operates in the dark cloak of secrecy; an Empire that has its boots on the ground on every continent; an Empire that spends more for war than peace, an Empire whose atomic arsenals can destroy the planet; an Empire that directs vast armies and navies that dwarf all the forces of its potential enemies combined; an Empire whose spy apparatus snoops on the entire

human race; an Empire that dominates the globe from 1,000 bases on its own soil and hundreds more overseas from Diego Garcia to Okinawa; an Empire of secret, military prisons and torture chambers; an Empire where prisoners have no rights and can rot for decades behind bars with no trial; an Empire that is the planet’s No. 1 arms peddler; and an Empire that is hated by millions because it supports despotic regimes that deny them their freedoms; an empire, in short, that is run from the Pentagon today and is the exact opposite of everything George Washington ever hoped for.

If you doubt this, read *House of War*, subtitled *The Pentagon and the Disastrous Rise of American Power*, by James Carroll. The book is. Carroll declares, “The Pentagon is now the dead center of an open-ended martial enterprise that no longer pretends to be defense.”

If you still doubt, read *The New American Militarism* by Professor Andrew Bacevich of Boston University. He writes, if America persists in global primacy and impressing its values on the world, “America will surely share the fate of all those who in ages past have looked to war and military power to fulfill their destiny. We will rob future generations of their rightful inheritance. We will wreak havoc abroad. We will endanger our security at home. We will risk the forfeiture of all that we prize.”

If you doubt we have become just the op-



posite of what George Washington wanted, read what former President Jimmy Carter says about the Pentagon deploying weapons in space: “The ABM Treaty prohibited space-based weapons but our government’s abandonment of the treaty in 2002 opened the door to this extremely destabilizing project. The new Defense Department doctrine defines our goal as “freedom to attack” as well as to defend from space. The goal is to strike any target on earth within 45 minutes.” Carter writes that one Air Force scheme is called “Rods from God.” This plan calls for hurling cylinders of heavy metal from space at 7200 miles per hour that would strike a target “with the destructive force of a small nuclear weapon.”

If you think President Carter exaggerates, read Noam Chomsky’s book *Imperial Ambitions*. Chomsky writes, “The Air Force Space Command ... said the US is going to move from ‘control’ of space to ‘ownership of space.” This means “no potential challenge to US control of space will be tolerated. If anyone challenges us, we’ll destroy them.” Chomsky says this means “putting platforms in space for ... nuclear and laser weapons, which can be launched instantaneously, without warning, anywhere in the world. It means hypersonic drones that will keep the whole world under photo surveillance with high-resolution devices that can tell you if a car is driving across the street in Ankara ... meaning the whole world is under surveillance.”

Not even in George Orwell’s “1984” was Big Brother watching everybody in the world the way Uncle Sam is now watching you, yes you, and you and you and you and you and you. We have come so far from what George Washington wanted that many rulers of America could be tried as war criminals. In his book, *Rogue State* Washington investigative reporter Bill Blum indicts a number of recent presidents and public officials starting with Bill Clinton, “for his merciless bombing of Yugoslavia for 78 days and nights in 1999, and also for his “illegal and lethal bombings

of Somalia, Bosnia, Sudan and Afghanistan.”

Blum goes on to indict General Wesley Clark for his role in the bombing of Yugoslavia. He indicts the first President George H.W. Bush “for the death of more than a million innocent Iraqi citizens, the result of his 40 days of bombing in 1991,” including the deliberate ruination of the public water supply. Blum indicts former General Colin Powell for his role in the attacks on Panama as well as Iraq.

Blum indicts Caspar Weinberger, the Reagan era defense secretary, for the bombing of Libya in 1986. Blum indicts Lt. Colonel Oliver North for his role in planning the illegal invasion of Grenada and his support of the Contras’ attacks on Nicaragua.

Blum indicts President Gerald Ford for his role in helping Indonesia suppress the people of East Timor. And as for the second Bush regime’s war crimes in Afghanistan and Iraq. Blum indicts Bush, his Vice President Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, their deputy secretary of defense; Condoleezza Rice, national security advisor, and many others.

And what would George Washington make of President Barack Obama? It was Washington who led his ragged army of shoeless patriots to depose a king with tyrannical powers over them. But there in the Oval Office, like a god on the throne, sits President Obama raining down death and destruction from the heavens on all those he suspects of actions against America. No court orders. No trials. No lawyers. No juries. No justice. Just the will of the king, King Obama, the former lowly CIA employee, now the powerful chief of operations of its global crimes, and those of the Pentagon as well. What would George Washington, the president who warned of “those overgrown military establishments,” have thought of America today? You tell me at [sherwoodross10@gmail.com](mailto:sherwoodross10@gmail.com). Good night to every one of you. **CT**

*Sherwood Ross runs a public relations firm for good causes and contributes articles regularly from his Anti-War News Service*

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**There in the Oval Office, like a god on the throne, sits President Obama raining down death and destruction from the heavens on all those he suspects of actions against America**  
 .....

# War on the family dog

**Norm Stamper** on SWAT teams, flash-bang grenades and shooting the family pet: the shocking outcomes of police militarisation in the war on drugs

.....  
**After pounding on the door and announcing themselves, the cops waste no time. They smash open the door and charge into the unsuspecting family's home**  
.....

**I**n the forty years since Richard Nixon declared a “War on Drugs,” Americans’ perceptions of that war are finally beginning to shift.

Receding support for prohibition is happening in large part because of virally circulated news accounts and videos of law enforcement’s disturbingly harsh tactics in the drug war. My former colleagues are making clear that besides causing thousands of deaths worldwide and costing billions of taxpayer dollars, the drug war’s most serious collateral damage has been to undermine the role of civilian law enforcement in our free society.

In one of the most widely viewed videos, a tiny single-family home is descended upon by a Columbia, Missouri Police Department SWAT team. After pounding on the door and announcing themselves, the cops waste no time. They smash open the door and charge into the unsuspecting family’s home.

After what sounds like multiple explosions or gunshots, we hear the sound of a dog yelping sharply, as if in pain.

We then hear several more gunshots or explosions amid the general pandemonium.

The camera follows the heavily armed and armored officers inside. We watch as they order a woman and a small child, still woozy from being suddenly awakened, into their living room.

As they are forced onto the floor, a young male is brought into the room. He is hand-

cuffed and pushed against a wall.

“What did I do? What did I DO?” he shouts, as the woman and the child cower on the floor nearby.

We then learn the source of the dog’s pained cries.

“You shot my dog, you shot my DOG!” the man suddenly shouts. “Why did you do that? He was a good dog! He was probably trying to play with you!”

He, the woman and the child all break into pitiful sobs.

As of late October, just five months after it was posted, the Columbia police raid video has been viewed nearly two million times on YouTube. The clip quickly ricocheted across cyberspace, generating emotionally charged, outraged calls for the officers to be fired and prosecuted. Or subjected to the same kind of treatment that terrorized their fellow citizens.

Public indignation over the incident intensified when it was learned that the Columbia SWAT team was executing an eight-day-old search warrant, and that the only things seized were a pipe containing a small amount of marijuana residue. Since possession of small amounts of pot had long ago been essentially decriminalized in Columbia, the man was charged with simple possession of drug paraphernalia, a misdemeanor.

The reaction of Fox Business Network’s Andrew Napolitano was telling. In a segment about the raid that also found its way onto

YouTube, the retired New Jersey Superior Court judge says, “This was America – not East Germany, not Nazi Germany, but middle America!”

Yet as former Cato staffer Radley Balko, who wrote about the Columbia video, has noted, what’s most remarkable about the raid is that it wasn’t remarkable at all. The only thing that made it unusual was that it was videotaped and made public, thanks to a Freedom of Information Act request by the *Columbia Daily Tribune* newspaper.

There are more than 50,000 police paramilitary raids in the United States each year – more than 130 every day. Virtually all are for prosecution of drug warrants, the vast majority involving marijuana. Many jurisdictions use SWAT teams for execution of every search warrant for drugs.

Just like in Columbia, these drug raids are typically staged in the middle of the night by officers equipped similarly to those depicted in the video: Darth Vader–style Kevlar helmets and body armor, black uniforms, military boots, night vision goggles. The officers are armed with automatic weapons and are sometimes deployed from armored personnel carriers or rappelling from helicopters. Doors are smashed open with battering rams or are ripped from their hinges by ropes tied to vehicles. And, to further disorient those inside, officers are trained to use explosives – “flash-bang” grenades – upon entry. The slightest provocation, including any “furtive” moments on the part of the residents, often results in shots fired.

Since drug dealers sometimes use dogs to protect their stash, family pets are shot, kicked, or, in the recent case of a New York City raid, thrown out the window.

At least in Columbia, no human was injured or killed in the crossfire, and (unlike dozens of cases every year across the country), the SWAT team got the address right – even if the huge stash of drugs and money they thought they’d discover was nowhere to be found.

How did local police departments in a free

society ever reach this point?

Nixon’s use of the word “War” was no accident. From the outset, Washington’s approach to the problems of drug use and addiction has been overtly militaristic in nature.

“It’s a funny war when the ‘enemy’ is entitled to due process of law and a fair trial,” the nation’s first “Drug Czar,” William Bennett, told *Fortune* magazine. Never known for moderation, he later famously urged repeal of habeas corpus in drug cases and even went on to recommend public beheading of drug dealers.

The federal government has instituted policies that have encouraged local law enforcement agencies to increasingly blur the roles of soldiers and police.

**Paramilitary forces**

SWAT, a specialized paramilitary force used in especially dangerous situations – think armed robberies, barricaded suspects, hostages, the Columbine school shootings – had been in existence before the drug war. But today, their mission is almost exclusively the execution of search warrants in drug cases.

Criminologists Peter Kraska and Louis Cubellis have documented that, as of 1997, 90 percent of American cities with populations of greater than 50,000 had at least one paramilitary or SWAT unit, twice as many as the decade before.

In the post-9/11 era, paramilitary police units have been formed in such unlikely places as Butler, Missouri (population 4,201); Mt. Orab, Ohio (2,701) and Middleburg, Pennsylvania (1,363). Even college campuses like the University of Central Florida have their own campus police SWAT units, operating independently from state and local police departments or civil authorities.

The federal government has given local SWAT units access to highly sophisticated equipment, encouraging its use in an ever-more aggressive War on Drugs.

Beginning with the Military Cooperation

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**Since drug dealers sometimes use dogs to protect their stash, family pets are shot, kicked, or, in the recent case of a New York City raid, thrown out the window**  
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## SWAT'S THIS?

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**A police officer's job is to preserve the peace, to maintain public order on the streets of America's cities. A soldier's job is to fight wars on foreign soil. These are two profoundly different roles**  
.....

and Law Enforcement Act of 1981, the Pentagon gave local and state police access to surplus military equipment for purposes of drug interdiction. By 1997, local police departments around the country had stockpiled 1.2 million pieces of gear, including thousands of military-style M-16 automatic rifles, body armor, helmets, grenade launchers, night vision goggles, even armored personnel carriers and helicopters.

But the military equipment transfers to local police for drug enforcement were just the first step in Washington's intensification of the drug war.

Throughout the 1980s, Congress and the White House together eagerly chipped away at the Civil War-era Posse Comitatus Act, which for more than a century had forbidden use of the military for civilian law enforcement purposes.

Following Ronald Reagan's 1986 National Security Directive declaring drugs a threat to national security, Congress ordered the National Guard to aid state drug enforcement efforts. The effect has been to order the American military to search for marijuana plants.

By 2000, as the Cato Institute's Diane Cecilia Weber documented, Posse Comitatus had been all but repealed with respect to drug interdiction. The first President Bush went so far as to institute a program of "regional task forces" to facilitate civilian-military cooperation in areas of intelligence sharing, equipment transfers, and training of local police in advanced military assault tactics.

A police officer's job is to preserve the peace, to maintain public order on the streets of America's cities. A soldier's job is to fight wars on foreign soil. These are two profoundly different roles.

Tragically, the gradual evolution of local law enforcement into paramilitary units has, over a generation, dramatically changed the culture of police work – in ways the public increasingly and justifiably, finds objectionable.

The shock-and-awe drug enforcement tactics now employed almost a thousand times each week have needlessly injected a high risk

of violence into the prosecution of what are almost always non-violent, consensual crimes.

For the innocent bystanders who get caught up in them, the paramilitary raids impose a traumatic and lasting punishment where none is justified. Even for the perpetrators, the raids constitute a reversal of the presumption of innocence (and, as evidenced so vividly by the Columbia raid, a grotesquely disproportionate response to a minor – or non-existent – offense).

Fortunately, we are moving closer and closer to a tipping point in the effort to restore sanity to our drug laws and enforcement priorities.

For the first time since Gallup began tracking the issue 41 years ago, fully half of Americans now support legalization of marijuana, with the issue now receiving actual majority support (55 percent) on the west coast.

The changing public attitudes toward marijuana bode well for marijuana policy reform initiatives now being circulated in California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Ohio and Washington State, and for legislation now pending in several state houses to allow medicinal use.

More and more Americans are coming to realize the staggering human toll – in lives, dollars, and civil liberties – of the drug war. Some of these awakening Americans are police officers – a rapidly growing minority of cops who realize the harm these tactics have done to the people they've been hired to serve, the risks to their own safety and well-being, and the erosion of public confidence and respect for law enforcement this policy has caused.

We owe it to ourselves, and to those whose job is to help make our neighborhoods safe, to put an end to the drug war. **CT**

.....  
*Norm Stamper is former chief of the Seattle Police Department, and an advisory board member of NORML and Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP). He is the author of *Breaking Rank: A Top Cop's Exposé of the Dark Side of American Policing* (Nation Books, 2005).*

# The dream is over

Tom Engelhardt talks about another war America would like to forget

**H**ow about a moment of silence for the passing of the American Dream? M.R.I.C. (May it Rest in Carnage.)

No, I'm not talking about the old dream of opportunity that involved homeownership, a better job than your parents had, a decent pension, and all the rest of the package that's so yesterday, so underwater, so OWS. I'm talking about a far more recent dream, a truly audacious one that's similarly gone with the wind.

I'm talking about George W. Bush's American Dream. If people here remember the invasion of Iraq – and most Americans would undoubtedly prefer to forget it – what's recalled is kited intelligence, Saddam Hussein's nonexistent nuclear arsenal, dumb and even dumber decisions, a bloody civil war, dead Americans, crony corporations, a trillion or more taxpayer dollars flushed down the toilet ... well, you know the story. What few care to remember was that original dream – call it The Dream – and boy, was it a beaut!

It went something like this: Back in early 2003, the top officials of the Bush administration had no doubt that Saddam Hussein's Iraq, drained by years of war, no-fly zones, and sanctions, would be a pushover; that the US military, which they idolized and romanticized, would waltz to Baghdad. (The word one of their supporters used in the

*Washington Post* for the onrushing invasion was a “cakewalk.”) Nor did they doubt that those troops would be greeted as liberators, even saviors, by throngs of adoring, previously suppressed Shiites strewing flowers in their path. (No kidding, no exaggeration.)

How easy it would be then to install a “democratic” government in Baghdad – which meant their autocratic candidate Ahmad Chalabi – set up four or five strategically situated military mega-bases, exceedingly well-armed American small towns already on the drawing boards before the invasion began, and so dominate the oil heartlands of the planet in ways even the Brits, at the height of their empire, wouldn't have dreamed possible. (Yes, the neocons were then bragging that we would outdo the Roman and British empires rolled into one!)

As there would be no real resistance, the American invasion force could begin withdrawing as early as the fall of 2003, leaving perhaps 30,000 to 40,000 troops, the US Air Force, and various spooks and private contractors behind to garrison a grateful country ad infinitum (on what was then called “the South Korean model”). Iraq's state-run economy would be privatized and its oil resources thrown open to giant global energy companies, especially American ones, which would rebuild the industry and begin pumping millions of barrels of that country's vast reserves, thus undermining the

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**Iraq's state-run economy would be privatized and its oil resources thrown open to giant global energy companies, especially American ones**  
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**Bush's top officials  
had been fervent  
Cold Warriors  
in the days  
before the US  
became "the sole  
superpower," and  
they saw the new  
Russia stepping  
into those old  
Soviet boots**  
.....

OPEC cartel's control over the oil market.

And mind you, it would hardly cost a cent. Well, at its unlikely worst, maybe \$100 billion to \$200 billion, but as Iraq, in the phrase of then-Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, "floats on a sea of oil," most of it could undoubtedly be covered, in the end, by the Iraqis themselves.

Now, doesn't going down memory lane just take your breath away? And yet, Iraq was a bare beginning for Bush's dreamers, who clearly felt like so many proverbial kids in a candy shop (even if they acted like bulls in a china shop). Syria, caught in a strategic pincer between Israel and American Iraq, would naturally bow down; the Iranians, caught similarly between American Iraq and American Afghanistan, would go down big time, too – or simply be taken down Iraqi-style, and who would complain? (As the neocon quip of the moment went: "Everyone wants to go to Baghdad. Real men want to go to Tehran.")

And that wasn't all. Bush's top officials had been fervent Cold Warriors in the days before the US became "the sole superpower," and they saw the new Russia stepping into those old Soviet boots. Having taken down the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, they were already building a network of bases there, too. (Let a thousand Korean models bloom!) Next on the agenda would be rolling the Russians right out of their "near abroad," the former Soviet Socialist Republics, now independent states, of Central Asia.

What glory! Thanks to the unparalleled power of the US military, Washington would control the Greater Middle East from the Mediterranean to the Chinese border and would be beholden to no one when victory came. Great powers, phooey! They were talking about a Pax Americana on which the sun could never set. Meanwhile, there were so many other handy perks: the White House would be loosed from its constitutional bounds via a "unitary executive" and, success breeding success, a Pax Republicanana

would be established in the US for eons to come (with the Democratic – or as they said sneeringly, the "Democrat" – Party playing the role of Iran and going down in a similar fashion).

.....  
**An American nightmare**

When you wake up in a cold sweat, your heart pounding, from a dream that's turned truly sour, sometimes it's worth trying to remember it before it evaporates, leaving only a feeling of devastation behind.

So hold Bush's American Dream in your head for a few moments longer and consider the devastation that followed. Of Iraq, that multi-trillion-dollar war, what's left? An American expeditionary force, still 30,000-odd troops who were supposed to hunker down there forever, are instead packing their gear and heading "over the horizon." Those giant American towns – with their massive PXs, fast-food restaurants, gift shops, fire stations, and everything else – are soon to be ghost towns, likely as not looted and stripped by Iraqis.

Multi-billions of taxpayer dollars were, of course, sunk into those American ziggurats. Now, assumedly, they are goners except for the monster embassy-cum-citadel the Bush administration built in Baghdad for three-quarters of a billion dollars. It's to house part of a 17,000-person State Department "mission" to Iraq, including 5,000 armed mercenaries, all of whom are assumedly there to ensure that American folly is not utterly absent from that country even after "withdrawal."

Put any spin you want on that withdrawal, but this still represents a defeat of the first order, humiliation on a scale and in a time frame that would have been unimaginable in the invasion year of 2003. After all, the US military was ejected from Iraq by ... well, whom exactly?

Then, of course, there's Afghanistan, where the ultimate, inevitable departure has yet to happen, where another trillion-

dollar war is still going strong as if there were no holes in American pockets. The US is still taking casualties, still building up its massive base structure, still training an Afghan security force of perhaps 400,000 men in a county too poor to pay for a tenth of that (which means it's ours to fund forever and a day).

Washington still has its stimulus program in Kabul. Its diplomats and military officials shuttle in and out of Afghanistan and Pakistan in search of "reconciliation" with the Taliban, even as CIA drones pound the enemy across the Afghan border and anyone else in the vicinity. As once upon a time in Iraq, the military and the Pentagon still talk about progress being made, even while Washington's unease grows about a war that everyone is now officially willing to call "unwinnable."

In fact, it's remarkable how consistently things that are officially going so well are actually going so badly. Just the other day, for instance, despite the fact that the US is training up a storm, Major General Peter Fuller, running the training program for Afghan forces, was dismissed by war commander General John Allen for dissing Afghan President Hamid Karzai and his generals. He called them "isolated from reality."

Isolated from reality? Here's the US record on the subject: it's costing Washington (and so the American taxpayer) \$11.6 billion this year alone to train those security forces and yet, after years of such training, "not a single Afghan army battalion can operate without assistance from US or allied units."

You don't have to be a seer to know that this, too, represents a form of defeat, even if the enemy, as in Iraq, is an underwhelming set of ragtag minority insurgencies. Still, it's more or less a given that any American dreams for Afghanistan, like Britain's and Russia's before it, will be buried someday in the rubble of a devastated but resistant land, no matter what resources Washington chooses to continue to squander on the task.

This, simply put, is part of a larger land-

scape of imperial defeat.

**Cold sweats at dawn**

Yes, we've lost in Iraq and yes, we're losing in Afghanistan, but if you want a little geopolitical turn of the screw that captures the zeitgeist of the moment, check out one of the first statements of Almazbek Atambayev after his recent election as president of Kyrgyzstan, a country you've probably never spent a second thinking about.

Keep in mind that Bushian urge to roll back the Russians to the outskirts of Moscow. Kyrgyzstan is, of course, one of the former Central Asian SSRs of the Soviet Union, and under cover of the Afghan War, the US moved in, renting out a major air base at Manas airport near Bishtek, the capital. It became a significant resupply station for the war, but also an American military foothold in the region.

Now Atambayev has announced that the US will have to leave Manas when its lease is up in 2014. The last time a Kyrgyz president made such a threat, he was trying to extort an extra \$40 million in rent from the globe's richest power. This time, though, Atambayev has evidently weighed regional realities, taken a good hard look at his resurgent neighbor and the waning influence of Washington, and placed his bet – on the Russians. Consider it a telling little gauge of who is now being rolled back where.

Isolated from reality? How about the Obama administration and its generals? Of course, Washington officials prefer not to take all this in. They're willing to opt for isolation over reality. They prefer to talk about withdrawing troops from Iraq, but only to bolster the already powerful American garrisons throughout the Persian Gulf and so free the region, as our secretary of state put it, "from outside interference" by alien Iran. (Why, one wonders, is it even called the Persian Gulf, instead of the American Gulf?)

They prefer to talk about strengthening US power and bolstering its bases in the

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**It's remarkable how consistently things that are officially going so well are actually going so badly**  
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**Think of it all as a form of armed denial that, in the end, is likely to drive the US down**  
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Pacific so as to save Asia from ... America's largest creditor, the Chinese. They prefer to suggest that the US will be a greater, not a lesser, power in the years to come. They prefer to "reassure allies" and talk big – or big enough anyway.

Not too big, of course, not now that those American dreamers – or mad visionaries, if you prefer – are off making up to \$150,000 a pop giving inspirational speeches and raking in millions for churning out their memoirs. In their place, the Obama administration is stocked with dreamless managers who inherited an expanded imperial presidency, an American-garrisoned globe, and an emptying treasury. And they then chose, on each score, to play a recognizable version of the same game, though without the soaring confidence, deep faith in armed American exceptionalism or the military solutions that went with it (which they nonetheless continue to pursue doggedly), or even the vision of global energy flows that animated their predecessors. In a rapidly changing situation, they have proven incapable of asking any questions that would take them beyond what might be called the usual tactics (drones vs. counterinsurgency, say).

In this way, Washington, though visibly diminished, remains an airless and eerily familiar place. No one there could afford to ask, for instance, what a Middle East, being transformed before our eyes, might be like without its American shadow, without the bases and fleets and drones and all the operatives that go with them.

As a result, they simply keep on keeping on, especially with Bush's global war on terror and with the protection in financial tough times of the Pentagon (and so of the militarization of this country).

Think of it all as a form of armed denial that, in the end, is likely to drive the US down. It would be salutary for the denizens of Washington to begin to mouth the word "defeat." It's not yet, of course, a permissible part of the American vocabulary, though the more decorous "decline" – "the

relative decline of the United States as an international force" – has crept ever more comfortably into our lives since mid-decade. When it comes to decline, for instance, ordinary Americans are voting with the opinion poll version of their feet. In one recent poll, 69% of them declared the US to be in that state. (How they might answer a question about American defeat we don't know.)

If you are a critic of Washington, "defeat" is increasingly becoming an acceptable word, as long as you attach it to a specific war or event. But defeat outright? The full-scale thing? Not yet.

You can, of course, say many times over that the US remains, as it does, an immensely wealthy and powerful country; that it has the wherewithal to right itself and deal with the disasters of these last years, which it also undoubtedly does. But take a glance at Washington, Wall Street, and the coming 2012 elections, and tell me with a straight face that that will happen. Not likely.

.....  
**Different chant**

If you go on a march with the folks from Occupy Wall Street, you'll hear the young chanting, "This is what democracy looks like!" It's infectious. But here's another chant, hardly less appropriate, if distinctly grimmer: "This is what defeat looks like!" Admittedly, it's not as rhythmic, but it's something that the spreading Occupy Wall Street movement, and the un- and underemployed, and those whose houses are foreclosed or "underwater," and the millions of kids getting a subprime education and graduating, on average, more than \$25,000 in hock, and the increasing numbers of poor are coming to feel in their bones, even if they haven't put a name to it yet.

And events in the Greater Middle East played no small role in that. Think of it this way: if de-industrialization and financialization have, over the last decades, hollowed out the United States, so has the American way of war. It's the usually ignored third



part of the triad. When our wars finally fully come home, there's no telling what the scope of this imperial defeat will prove to be like.

Bush's American Dream was a kind of apotheosis of this country's global power as well as its crowning catastrophe, thanks to a crew of mad visionaries who mistook military might for global strength and acted accordingly. What they and their neocon allies had was the magic formula for turning the slow landing of a declining but still immensely powerful imperial state into a self-inflicted rout, even if who the victors are is less than clear.

Despite our panoply of bases around the world, despite an arsenal of weaponry beyond anything ever seen (and with more on its way), despite a national security budget the size of the Ritz, it's not too early to start etching something appropriately sepulchral onto the gravestone that will someday stand over the pretensions of the leaders of this country when they thought that they might truly rule the world.

I know my own nominee. Back in 2002, journalist Ron Suskind had a meeting with a "senior advisor" to George W. Bush and what that advisor told him seems appropriate for any such gravestone or future memorial to American defeat:

"The aide said that guys like me were 'in

what we call the reality-based community,' which he defined as people who 'believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality ... That's not the way the world really works anymore... We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality – judiciously, as you will – we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.'"

We're now, it seems, in a new era in which reality is making us. Many Americans – witness the Occupy Wall Street movement – are attempting to adjust, to imagine other ways of living in the world. Defeat has a bad rep, but sometimes it's just what the doctor ordered.

Still, reality is a bear, so if you just woke up in a cold sweat, feel free to call it a nightmare. **CT**

.....  
*Tom Engelhardt, co-founder of the American Empire Project and the author of *The American Way of War: How Bush's Wars Became Obama's* as well as *The End of Victory Culture*, runs the Nation Institute's *TomDispatch.com*. His latest book, *The United States of Fear* (Haymarket Books), is being published this month*

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**What they and their neocon allies had was the magic formula for turning the slow landing of a declining but still immensely powerful imperial state into a self-inflicted rout**  
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# A 51st state for armed drones

How can the military be prevented from taking control of one of the most unspoiled parts of the United States?, asks **David Swanson**

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**The US military is proceeding with this plan in violation of the public will, new state legislation on private property rights, an exceptionally strong federal court order, and a funding ban passed by the United States Congress**  
.....

**W**eaponized UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles), also known as drones, have their own caucus in Congress, and the Pentagon's plan is to give them their own state as well.

Under this plan, 7 million acres (or 11,000 square miles) of land in the southeast corner of Colorado, and 60 million acres of air space (or 94,000 square miles) over Colorado and New Mexico would be given over to special forces testing and training in the use of remote-controlled flying murder machines. The full state of Colorado is itself 104,000 square miles. Rhode Island is 1,000 square miles. Virginia, where I live, is 43,000 square miles.

The US military (including Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines) is proceeding with this plan in violation of the public will, new state legislation on private property rights, an exceptionally strong federal court order, and a funding ban passed by the United States Congress, and in the absence of any approved Environmental Impact Statement. Public pressure has successfully put the law on the right side of this issue, and the military is disregarding the law.

I spoke with Jean Aguerre, whose organization "Not 1 More Acre" is leading the pushback against this madness. Jean told me she grew up, during the 1960s, on the vast grasslands of southeast Colorado,

where the Comanche National Grasslands makes up part of a system of grasslands put in place to help the prairie recover from the dust bowl. The dust bowl, Aguerre says, was the worst environmental disaster in the United States until BP filled the Gulf of Mexico with oil. The dust bowl had been brought on by the government's policy of requiring homesteaders to plow the prairie. The recovery programs created large tracts of land, of 100,000 acres and more, owned by "generational ranchers," that is families that would hand the ranches off to their children.

Aguerre said she grew up on a ranch of incredible beauty and natural wealth, with a 165-million-year-old dinosaur track way and petroglyphs from 12,000 years back. Grasslands are the most threatened ecosystems in the world because they are so accessible, Aguerre says, and the only intact short grassland left in this country is the one being targeted for the "51st state."

.....  
**Looking for land**

Round One began in the 1980s. Fort Carson, an Army base in Colorado Springs, had been kept open after World War II and now began looking for more land. The people of the area were opposed. The US Congressman representing the area agreed to oppose any landgrab. But Senator Gary Hart took

the opposite position. As a result, during the early 1980s, the Army Corps of Engineers started telling ranchers to sell out or risk seeing their land condemned and taken from them.

The ranch next to Aguerre's is called Wine Glass Rourke. It was sold to a shill, as Aguerre describes the buyer. He ran the place into the ground with too many cattle, she says, and then sold it to the military, "And they were off and running!" With condemnations the military put together 250 thousand acres. Ranchers, along with their cattle, were moved off their own land by federal marshals. "We didn't know when we'd be next," Aguerre says of her own family.

Luckily for the people of Colorado and New Mexico, and all of us, Aguerre got involved in politics. She became a political director for Congressman Tim Werth who later became a US senator. Aguerre took him to see the Wine Glass Rourke ranch and told him "Let's take it back." Werth dedicated his staff to the effort for three years, resulting in the transfer to the Forest Service of 17,000 key acres.

The Army used its new land less than twice a year for maneuvers, but caused horrible environmental damage whenever it did. That was the case for about 30 years, until the activity of recent years made everything that came before look sensitive and sustainable.

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**Robotic warfare**

In the meantime, people like Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld were theorizing the transformation of the US military into a force for robotic warfare. Aguerre believes it was in 1996 that a decision was made that the military would need a robotic warfare center. Around 1999 the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement was created. This precedes the more specific Site Environmental Impact Statements. The US public, just like the public of any foreign nation

where new US bases are being planned, was told nothing.

In 2006, Aguerre was working in Oregon when friends started asking her to come home and help because something big was happening. An Army land expansion map had been leaked that showed plans for taking over 6.9 million acres, the whole southeast corner of the state. Aguerre thought she would come home for two weeks but has never left. An Environmental Impact Statement for the site was about to be released, and Aguerre knew that meant the project was pretty far along. She formed organizations and found a lawyer in Colorado Springs named Steve Harris to help. The two of them, she says, were absolutely dedicated to NEPA and FOIA. NEPA is the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. FOIA is the Freedom of Information Act of 1966. "NEPA is intended to prevent our government taking our world apart piece by piece without our knowing it," explains Aguerre.

Aguerre and others persuaded the area's county commissioners to vote against the military's plans in 2006, and the state legislature to pass a private property rights bill in January 2007 – a bill that required approval of such plans by the state legislature.

Ken Salazar was the military's hired servant. He had been Attorney General of Colorado from 1999 to 2005. He was a US Senator from 2005 to 2009. President Barack Obama has made him Secretary of the Interior. Around 2007, Jean Aguerre recounts, Salazar held a public meeting in Pueblo, Col., with about 300 ranchers packing the room. He turned his palms up to the ceiling and announced: "I will lift the golden curtain that falls at the end of El Paso county so that prosperity can flow onto the eastern plains." This meant that military spending was economically beneficial. Military expansion, people were being told, was good for them – even if it stole their families' land, and regardless of what momentum it created for the launching and continuing of wars.

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**The Army used its new land less than twice a year for maneuvers, but caused horrible environmental damage whenever it did**  
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**Aguerre says that in 2006 she knew of four countries that were manufacturing armed UAVs, and that now she knows of 56. So, the argument that drones keep “people” out of harm’s way (with people redefined to mean US citizens) doesn’t hold up very solidly**  
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“Instead of putting together frameworks for nonproliferation,” says Aguerre, “Ken Salazar worked to destroy the last intact short grass prairie because the money was too good.”

Senators Wayne Allard, who would join the military lobbyist company the Livingston Group within weeks of leaving the Senate, and Ken Salazar passed an authorization for taking land as part of the 2007 John Warner Defense Authorization Act. “None of the ranchers knew they were in line to be condemned for the second damn time,” says Aguerre.

John Salazar, Ken’s brother, at this time represented Colorado’s third congressional district, while Republican Marilyn Musgrave represented the fourth. Musgrave was persuaded by ranchers that there was no need for the government to take their land. Aguerre worked with Musgrave’s staff to draft a one-sentence funding ban. Aguerre and her allies then organized massive public pressure to recruit John Salazar as a Democratic co-sponsor. Ken Salazar failed in his effort to block this measure in the Senate. The ban passed both houses and became law, but it must be renewed every year.

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**Ignored court ruling**

In 2009, Aguerre and her allies won a federal court ruling throwing out the military’s Environmental Impact Statement with harsh and unequivocal language – “one of the strongest court orders under NEPA,” says Aguerre. By 2008, the military had begun using its land a lot more, and the court ruling did not stop them.

The funding ban, too, is not stopping increased activity. This past year, the funding ban was missing from a committee chairman’s markup in which it had appeared in previous years. Not 1 More Acre and its allies pressured Third-District Congressman Scott Tipton. People from all over the country phoned his office. They were told that as non-constituents their views did not matter.

Aguerre advised people to reply: “When you pick my pocket you don’t ask what district I’m from.” Tipton was won over, and the funding ban, for what it’s worth, remains for now.

Nonetheless, says Aguerre, the military is proceeding with and increasing trainings and environmental destruction daily.

Senators Mark Udall and Michael Bennet of Colorado and Tom Udall of New Mexico don’t receive high marks from Jean Aguerre. “Mark Udall on Armed Services and Michael Bennet on Agriculture sit with their thumbs in their pie. Udall has never once come to southeastern Colorado and looked young ranchers in the eye and said ‘this is why we need this military takeover of your lands.’”

Aguerre continues: “And Tom Udall puts out this pap the other day, mumbo jumbo about the Air Force. It’s not Air Force; it’s Special Operations. Aguerre said that her group and others are preparing a comment letter seeking legal standing to challenge the Air Force, and potentially to pry loose more information from the iron grip of our “transparent” government. Aguerre points out that the Air Force Special Operations Command Environmental Assessment was written by SAIC, a global military contractor that also makes voting machines.

“We found out that the state national guard is completely involved in UAV warfare,” says Aguerre. “So when your house floods and you don’t have the national guard there, they may be remotely piloting something somewhere else.”

Aguerre says that in 2006 she knew of four countries that were manufacturing armed UAVs, and that now she knows of 56. So, the argument that drones keep “people” out of harm’s way (with people redefined to mean US citizens) doesn’t hold up very solidly. We have also already had a suicide bomb attack on a drone piloting location and had drone pilots commit suicide, not to mention the risks of long-term blowback, the damage being done to the rule of law, and all the human beings killed and injured

from among the non-US 95% of humanity.

Aguerre asks scientists who love unarmed UAVs to consider the full effect of supporting such technology. I would ask environmentalists to consider the full effect of not resisting the destruction of what Not 1 More Acre describes as:

- unique bioregions of canyonlands, forested mesas, grasslands and riparian systems providing habitat for diverse flora and fauna found nowhere else on Earth and the largest block of native prairie remaining on the High Plains;
- restored Dust Bowl lands – Comanche, Kiowa and Rita Blanca National Grasslands – offering robust safe haven to threatened and endangered species of plants and animals, including rare insects and reptiles yet to be named;
- wild rivers and complex wetlands vital to native fish, migrating birds, unique wildlife and environmental health.

I would ask opponents of drone warfare to consider the likely impact of setting

aside 60 million acres of air space for testing drones.

“We cannot allow the sacrifice of our democracy to politicians who are bought by military contractors,” says Aguerre. “If they are able to get this 51st state for robotic warfare, I think the economy will be irretrievably lost. These are unbelievably beautiful and pristine lands. Our rural areas are where the genetically modified seeds are being planted, where the lands and mountains are being mined, and where the military is going to destroy an area the size of a state, because the rural people are so few. Gary Hart was able to attack the last short grass prairie without political cost.”

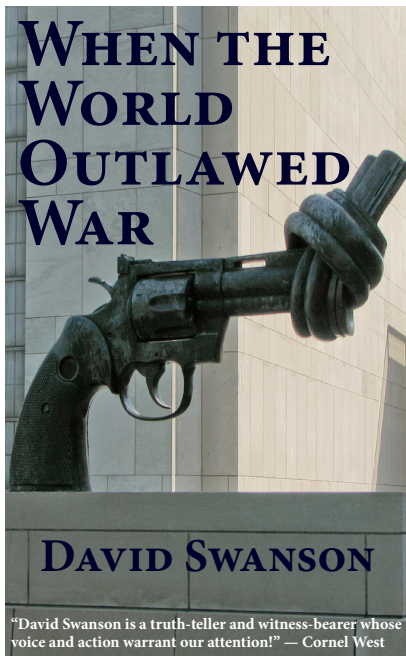
Why is there no political cost? Because “we can’t get the word out.”

Let’s help get the word out by sharing this link: <http://not1moreacre.org> **CT**

*David Swanson’s latest book is When The World Outlawed War (see below for ordering)*

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**I would ask opponents of drone warfare to consider the likely impact of setting aside 60 million acres of air space for testing drones**  
 .....

## Imagine if War Were Illegal — It Is!



In January 1929 the U.S. Senate ratified by a vote of 85 to 1 a treaty that is still on the books, still upheld by most of the world, still listed on the U.S. State Department’s website — a treaty that under Article VI of the U.S. Constitution is the “supreme law of the land.”

This treaty, the Kellogg-Briand Pact, bans all war. Bad wars and “good wars,” aggressive wars and “humanitarian wars” -- they are all illegal, having been legally abolished like duelling, blood feuds, and slavery before them.

The wisdom of the War Outlawry movement of the 1920s is revived in a new book by David Swanson. The full plan to outlaw war has never been followed through on. We have a duty to carry the campaign forward.

*“Swanson has done it again. This is a masterful account of how Americans and people around the world worked to abolish war as a legitimate act of state policy and won. Swanson’s account of the successful work of those who came before us to insist that war be outlawed compels us today to rethink the cost and morality of cynical or weary inaction in the face of our repeated resort to military threats and warfare to achieve policy goals.”* — Jeff Clements, Author of Corporations Are Not People.

[davidswanson.org/outlawry](http://davidswanson.org/outlawry)

# The corporate welfare state

Despite the crisis, it's still socialism for the 1%, capitalism for the rest of us, says **George Monbiot**

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**Channel 5 showed her supervising the refurbishment of her £45m home in London, in which she commissioned a £1m bathtub carved from Mexican crystal, an underground swimming pool complex, her own nightclub, a lift for her Ferrari, a bowling alley with crystal-studded balls and a spa and massage parlour for her five dogs**  
.....

In a British TV documentary series which ended its run last month, the heiress Tamara Ecclestone set out to prove that she isn't "a pointless, quite spoilt, really stupid, vacuous, empty human being". This endeavour was not wholly successful. Channel 5 showed her supervising the refurbishment of her £45m home in London, in which she commissioned a £1m bathtub carved from Mexican crystal, an underground swimming pool complex, her own nightclub, a lift for her Ferrari, a bowling alley with crystal-studded balls and a spa and massage parlour for her five dogs, to save her the trouble of taking them to Harrods to have their hair sprayed and their nails painted. But there was something the series didn't tell us: how much of this you helped to pay for.

In court last month, her father, the Formula One boss Bernie Ecclestone, revealed that the fact that his family's offshore trust, Bambino Holdings, was controlled by his ex-wife rather than himself could have saved him "in excess of £2bn" in tax. The name suggests the trust could have something to do with supporting his daughter's attempt to follow the teachings of St Francis of Assisi.

Ecclestone has also been adept at making use of the corporate welfare state: the transfer by the government of wealth and power from the rest of us to the 1%. After the mogul made a donation to Labour's election fund, Tony Blair demanded that Formula 1 be ex-

empted from the EU's ban on tobacco sponsorship. The government built a new dual carriageway to his racetrack at Silverstone.

In other countries his business has received massive state subsidies. Russia, for example, has recently agreed to build a circuit for Mr Ecclestone, and then charge itself \$280m for the privilege of letting him use it. Working in India in 2004, I came across the leaked minutes of a cabinet meeting in which the consultancy McKinsey insisted that the desperately poor state of Andhra Pradesh – where millions die of preventable diseases – cough up £50-75m a year to support Formula 1. The minutes also revealed the state's chief minister had lobbied the prime minister of India to exempt Ecclestone's business from the national ban on tobacco advertising.

Socialism for the rich, capitalism for the poor: that's how our economies work. Those at the bottom are subject to the rigours of the free market. Those at the top are as pampered and protected as Tamara Ecclestone's dogs.

Four days after her TV appearance, the Chancellor, George Osborne, decided at last to review the private finance initiative (PFI), under which the companies building public infrastructure made stupendous profits while the state retained the risks. But if you thought that Osborne's decision represented a wider shift in policy, you'll be sorely disappointed. Two days later he agreed to sell the state-owned bank Northern Rock to Richard Branson. Under the

deal, the state keeps the liabilities while Branson gets the assets: rather like PFI. The loss equates to £13 for every taxpayer.

Someone who will not suffer unduly from being touched for £13 is Matt Ridley. As chairman of Northern Rock, he was responsible, according to the Treasury select committee, for the “high-risk, reckless business strategy” which caused the first run on a British bank since 1878. Before he became chairman, a position he appears to have inherited from his father, Matt Ridley was one of this country’s fiercest exponents of laissez-faire capitalism. He described government as “a self-seeking flea on the backs of the more productive people of this world ... governments do not run countries, they parasitise them.”

The self-seeking parasite bailed out his catastrophic attempt to put his ideas into practice, to the tune of £27bn. What did the talented Mr Ridley learn from this experience? The square root of nothing. He went on to publish a book in which he excoriated the regulation of business by the state’s “parasitic bureaucracy” and claimed that the market system makes self-interest “thoroughly virtuous”.

Having done his best to bankrupt the blood-sucking state, he returned to his family seat at Blagdon Hall, set in 15 square miles of farmland, where the Ridleys live – non-parasitically of course – on rents from their tenants, hand-outs from the Common Agricultural Policy and fees from the estate’s opencast coal mines. No one has been uncouth enough to mention the idea that he might be surcharged for part of the £400m loss Northern Rock has inflicted on the parasitic taxpayer. It’s not the 1% who have to carry the costs of their cock-ups.

Even in the midst of this crisis, when the poor are being hammered on all sides, the government still seeks to transfer their meagre resources to the rich. Last month Vince Cable’s business department listed five employment rules that businesses might wish to challenge. Among them were the national minimum wage and statutory sick pay.

David Cameron recently opened negotia-

tions with Angela Merkel over the Eurozone crisis. His principal demands were that there should be no Robin Hood tax on financial transactions and that the working time directive, which prevents companies from exploiting their staff, should be renegotiated.

Just as instructive was what he did not discuss. In fact, as far as I can tell, none of the European leaders have yet mentioned it in their summits, even though it accounts for almost half the EU’s spending. It is of course the agricultural subsidy system, which now costs British taxpayers £3.6bn a year.

We like to imagine that this money supports wizened shepherds who tie up their trousers with bailer twine, but the major beneficiaries are people like the Ridleys. The more land you own, the more support you receive from the state. The Common Agricultural Policy is a massive state subsidy to the richest people in Europe: the aristocrats and plutocrats who possess the big holdings. British politicians pretend that it is protected only by the French. This is bunkum: in February a House of Commons committee demanded not only that the existing subsidy system be sustained but also that we should reinstate headage payments, encouraging farmers to produce food nobody wants.

Last month the *Guardian* exposed a system which looks like state-enforced slavery. To qualify for the £53 a week they receive in Job Seekers’ Allowance, young people are being forced to work without pay for up to eight weeks for companies such as Tesco, Poundland, Argos and Sainsbury’s. Some of the nation’s poorest people, in other words, are being obliged by the state to subsidise some of its richest businesses, by giving them their labour.

For the corporate welfare queens installing their crystal baths, there is no benefit cap, no obligation to work, in some cases no taxation. Limited liability, offshore secrecy regimes, deregulation and government handouts ensure that they bear none of the costs their class has inflicted on the rest of us. They live at our expense, while disparaging the lesser mortals who support them.

**CT**

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**Having done his best to bankrupt the blood-sucking state, he returned to his family seat at Blagdon Hall, set in 15 square miles of farmland, where the Ridleys live – non-parasitically of course – on rents from their tenants, hand-outs from the Common Agricultural Policy and fees from the estate’s opencast coal mines**

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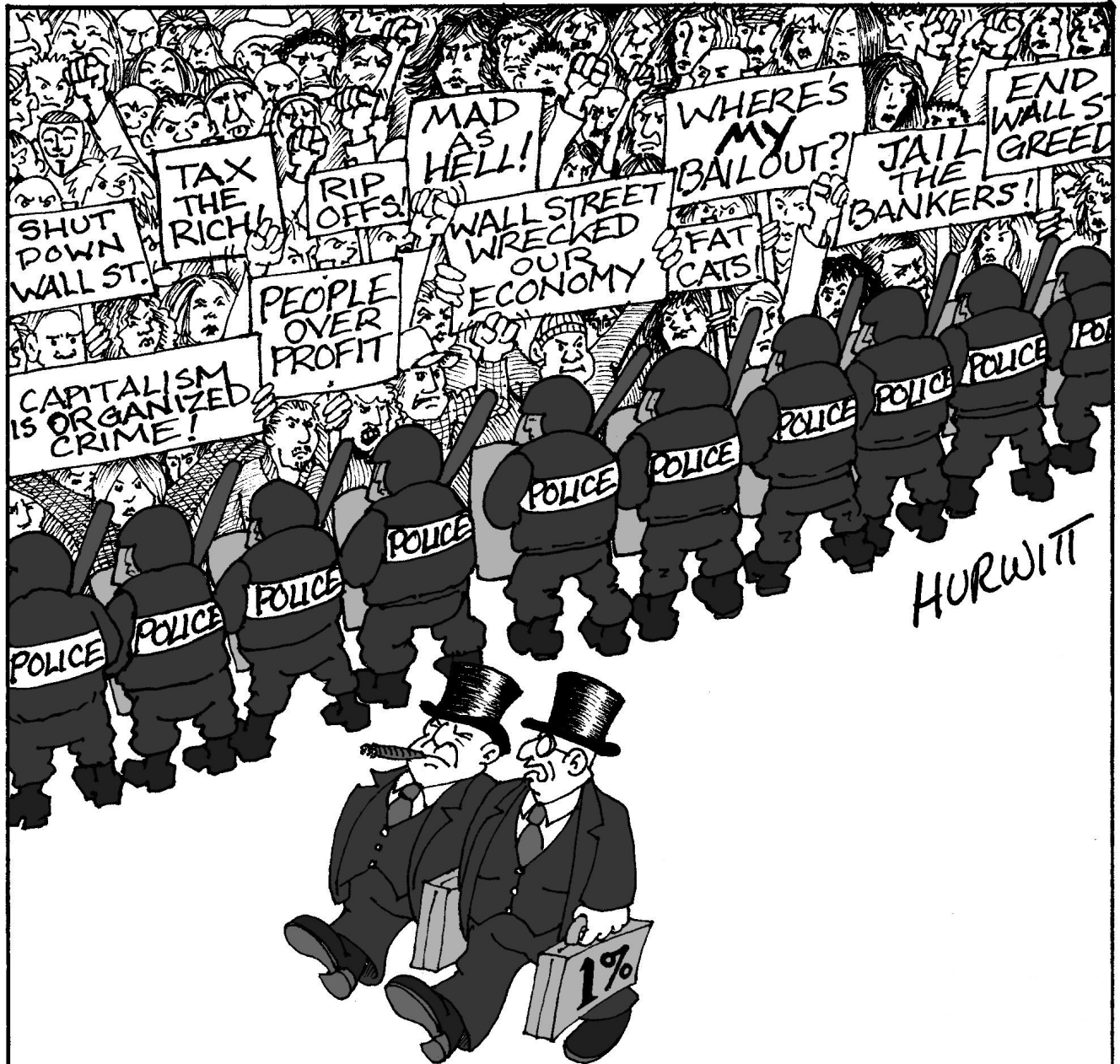
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**George Monbiot’s latest book is “Bring On The Apocalypse”. This piece first appeared in London’s *Guardian* newspaper.**

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HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt



“I’m just hoping we can keep this whole thing under control after the police find out we’re stealing their pensions!”



# The zombie zeitgeist

Glenn Ashton is preparing for a strange new spring

If you have not noticed that zombies are emerging everywhere, perhaps you are one of the undead. Many parts of the world are clearly in the throes of a zombie invasion.

While it may be easy to reject this as not being a hard, serious news story, zombies have been subjects on council meetings and have even been the subject of a warning by the respected US Centre for Disease Control. Zombies regularly go on walkabouts and even hold conventions. Zombies are everywhere from protests on the streets to children's games in your home. Perhaps even you are a zombie?

So what is it with zombies? Do they epitomise some new zeitgeist?

Before we get to the guts of the matter, so to speak, it's useful to understand the historical roots of zombie. While popular fiction portrays zombies as the living dead, their roots are somewhat earthier. The origin of the word "nzumbe" can be traced to Africa, specifically in the Angola / Congo area. Voodoo or voodoo is part of the traditional pantheistic religion practised across a vast swath, from Angola in the south to Ghana in the north west. Zombies are really magical acolytes, enslaved by shamans and wizards through practices linked to both good and bad magic.

The slave trade spread voodoo to the new world where variations are practiced in

many countries including Brazil, Cuba and perhaps most famously in Louisiana and Haiti. It is from these latter locations that zombies entered the popular imagination. In Haitian voodoo zombies are allegedly enslaved through the poison of the puffer fish (tetrodotoxin) and plant drugs like datura.

Beside references to zombies in western literature over the previous two centuries, they have become best known through cinema. The actor Bela Lugosi, famous for playing Dracula, popularised zombies in the movie "White Zombie" in the 1930's. More recently George Romero brought zombies front and centre in his cult movie "Night of the Living Dead" and its sequels. There have subsequently been hundreds of other zombie themed movies.

Modern versions of zombies are far more likely to have been infected by aliens or epidemics than by sorcerers. But what underlies our apparent attraction to zombies?

## In denial

We know that our world faces multiple crises – financial, environmental, social, religious and cultural. Most of us are, to greater or lesser degrees, in denial of these realities. Environmentalists continue to drive cars and travel by air. The obscenely rich continue to parasitically destroy the very economic structures upon which they depend.

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**Modern versions of zombies are far more likely to have been infected by aliens or epidemics than by sorcerers**  
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**Others gain solace through embracing Marx's opiate of the masses, religion, anticipating nirvana. Those prepared to steel themselves against reality may instead choose to believe establishment lies spread by dominant corporate media**  
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Ordinary people ignore the economic and political realities that erode social stability, blaming easy targets instead of the systemic problems. This is the first way the zombie meme has achieved contemporary social relevance; our collective denial is analogous to acting like zombies, lurching dully from one day to another.

There are several other deeper and more powerful arguments that the zombie trope is relevant and applicable to our present reality. Consider the technological advances of our civilisation: Taming the atom, for peace and war; using medical technology for good and bad, like germ and chemical warfare; changing life itself through genetic manipulation and engineering; engineering at the atomic scale with nanotechnology; the exponential power and speed of information technology.

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**Unchecked inequality**

The collective implications of these advances are almost beyond our ken, yet inequality increases, unchecked. Exploitation of our natural world, as well as of each other, appears integral to human behaviour.

While technology could enable us to enjoy the highest standards of living ever, it has the simultaneous potential to almost instantly revert us to the Stone Age through human or natural means. This results in underlying social tensions and expectations which induce massive stress, mental illness and depression.

In order to deal with these tensions we ingest vast amounts of medication. One in four mid-life US women take anti-depressants. So do more than 10% of children. Antidepressants blunt one's sense of reality. Are we just taking the edge off or are we medicating ourselves into zombies?

Legal and illegal recreational drugs are even more widely used than prescription medicines to alter our sense of reality. Alcohol and acid, antidepressants and amphetamines are all consumed to escape a

humdrum and often depressing reality. The illegal use of prescription drugs is also a spiralling problem.

The more unequal a society, the higher the use of illicit drugs. Brazil, USA and South Africa are each cases in point. On the one hand excessive drug and alcohol consumption distracts the poor from the reality of under- and unemployment juxtaposed against consistently flaunted wealth. On the other it blunts the sense of responsibility of the wealthy.

Substance abuse cannot be trivialised. It may be triggered by underlying problems but the reality is that both legal and illegal drugs effectively induce zombie states in a significant proportion of the population. It is either a case of remaining in drug induced denial or living in anticipation of the next opportunity to take the edges off reality. What better metaphor for this than zombies? Or is our reality rather more literal than metaphorical?

Others gain solace through embracing Marx's opiate of the masses, religion, anticipating nirvana. Those prepared to steel themselves against reality may instead choose to believe establishment lies spread by dominant corporate media. Surely anybody remaining in denial of the dismal reality of economies built on war and exploitation are virtual, if not actual zombies?

At an insidious level each of us is trapped in a web of conflicting, media-fed lies. These reinforce the received wisdom, inculcated in most industrial societies from school going age, that we are powerless to change the way things are.

Political power is not retained so much through elections as by misleading zombified populations, reciting the mantras of brother leaders. From Ahmadinejad to Zuma, are there any honest leaders left out there, or is it just easier to remain clueless, in denial? Are we not just apathetic zombies in ignoring the excesses of corporate CEO's and their political henchmen – our modern shamans?

South Africa's Julius Malema provides an excellent case in point. Here is a youth leader who promises the world – economic liberation, nationalisation of the mines, land and employment for all. His message is uncritically accepted by acolytes whose present reality is so dismal that any alternative is an improvement.

This political shaman, oozing capitalist excess, gloatingly exhorts followers to lurch toward a populist revolution tailored to his agenda, not theirs. What better example of the zombie zeitgeist than a liberation leader in Armani jacket and bloated ego sized watch, who jets off to lavish bashes on tropical islands for R&R after exhausting economic liberation marches? Malema echoes his role model, Robert Mugabe, zombie shaman extraordinaire.

Malema differs little from the conservative “tea party” right wing in the USA, who utter polemic to downsize government and not tax the rich, who are themselves responsible for instigating the entire sorry sideshow. Demagoguery of all stripes is founded on illusory promises. Roll on, zombie revolutions.

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**Witchdoctor Fox**

Conservative momentum is maintained by the misleading positions perpetuated by Murdoch's Fox News Network, playing the role of witch- rather than spin-doctors. The tea party zombies naively consider themselves beneficiaries rather than fall guys.

And so it goes. Berlusconi controls zombie Italy through his media. The Murdoch *News of the World* revelations in the UK was but a momentary peek behind the veil. Disinformation pays better than reality.

When Communism collapsed in Poland less than a third of residents believed anything the media published. The capitalist message is better funded, researched and more addictive to impressionable, zombie minds than the tired old Soviet propaganda.

These examples illustrate why those still able to perceive Plato's shadows on the wall of the cave have chosen the symbol of zombie to protest our illusory reality. We are enslaved by the powerful. Rejection of our reality makes portrayal of ourselves as zombies a potent protest. When zombie studies enters the academic curriculum, the metaphor must have flesh on its bones.

We are taught, and would like to believe, that social structures have changed radically since feudalism, where the one percenters of the royalty and nobility controlled the wealth and power, energetically abetted by institutional religion. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Despite the knowledge and information revolution, we may as well be zombies. We work unquestioningly for those we despise, who exploit and benefit from our virtual enslavement. Wage slaves, office serfs or zombies – is there any real difference? Surely there are few better synecdoches than the zombie to symbolise our present enslavement to a system which benefits few and disadvantages the majority?

The Zombies amongst the Occupy Wall Street protestors, or shuffling in their thousands through Brighton or anywhere else, jar us, serve as reminders. An awareness of self-destructive behaviour and patterns inculcates us. Surrounded by zombies we are less likely to fall victim ourselves.

Zombies are not the enemy. Instead, it is the masters, the wizards and the witchdoctors of spin who use every means to maintain their control. Zombies clearly resonate with the zeitgeist of our dystopian reality. The real question we need to ask is whether the popularity of zombies is only a manifestation of a zombie zeitgeist, or does it perhaps herald the arrival of a zombie spring, with zombies rising up against their masters? **CT**

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*Glenn Ashton is a writer and researcher working in civil society. Some of his work can be viewed at [www.ekogaia.org](http://www.ekogaia.org).*

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**When Communism collapsed in Poland less than a third of residents believed anything the media published. The capitalist message is better funded, researched and more addictive to impressionable, zombie minds than the tired old Soviet propaganda**  
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# The IAEA, Iran and Fantasyland

David Cromwell wonders how the media became so servile

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**Informed scepticism in the corporate media has been muted or non-existent - the image of Iran as a 'nuclear threat' has yet again been imposed on the public mind**  
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In November, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) released its much-trailed report “presenting new evidence”, said the BBC, “suggesting that Iran is secretly working to obtain a nuclear weapon.”

Relying on “evidence provided by more than 10 member states as well as its own information”, the IAEA said Iran had carried out activities “relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device”.

Having looked deeply into the claims, veteran journalist Seymour Hersh commented this week in an interview with Democracy Now!:

“But you mentioned Iraq. It’s just this — almost the same sort of — I don’t know if you want to call it a “psychosis,” but it’s some sort of a fantasy land being built up here, as it was with Iraq, the same sort of — no lessons learned, obviously.”

Indeed, informed scepticism in the corporate media has been muted or non-existent - the image of Iran as a “nuclear threat” has yet again been imposed on the public mind. Any reasonable news reader and viewer would find it extremely difficult to question the emphatic declarations offered right across the media “spectrum”.

Thus, a Guardian editorial asserted: “It really is time to drop the pretence that Iran can be deflected from its nuclear path.”

Two days earlier, the Guardian’s diplo-

matic editor, Julian Borger, anticipated the report’s publication on his “Global Security Blog” with a piece titled “Iran ‘on threshold of nuclear weapon’”. The accompanying photograph helpfully depicted a giant mushroom cloud during a 1954 nuclear test over Bikini Atoll. His article was linked prominently from the home page of the Guardian website.

In a later article, Borger gave prominence to a quote from an unnamed “source close to the IAEA”:

“What is striking is the totality and breadth of the information [in the IAEA report]. Virtually every component of war-head research has been pursued by Iran.”

Presumably all-too-aware of increased public scepticism in the wake of Iraq, the anonymous source continued in the Guardian:

“The agency has very, very, high confidence in its analysis. It did not want to make a mistake, and it was aware it had a very high threshold of credibility to meet. So it would not be published unless they had that high level of confidence.”

In similar vein, a New York Times report opened with:

“United Nations weapons inspectors have amassed a trove of new evidence that they say makes a ‘credible’ case that ‘Iran has carried out activities relevant to the development of a nuclear device,’ and that the

project may still be under way.”

The Daily Telegraph declared its version of the truth unequivocally in a leader titled “Iran’s nuclear menace”. It noted that the IAEA report “has for the first time acknowledged that Tehran is conducting secret experiments whose sole purpose is the development of weapons.”

Presumably drawing on clairvoyant powers, the editors added:

“Indeed, the IAEA has known for years that Tehran was building an atomic weapon, but has been reluctant to say so.”

The title of an editorial (November 10, 2011) in The Times was similarly categorical and damning: “Deadly Deceit; Iran’s bellicose duplicity is definitively exposed by an IAEA report”:

“Tehran’s decade-long nuclear programme is obviously not intended purely for generating electricity. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has confirmed this week that it has credible evidence that Iran has worked on the development of nuclear weapons.”

The editorial stamped this with the required emphasis:

“This will sound, and is, a statement of such banality that it ought not to need saying.”

And then continued without a shred of uncertainty:

“The IAEA report is extensive and understated. Founded on intelligence sources from ten countries, it explains in detail how Iran has established a programme to develop the technologies for a nuclear weapon. Its findings are entirely consistent with all that has been known and exposed before. Indeed, the IAEA is late in stating them.”

For anyone relying solely on corporate news media coverage, the case against Iran was closed. All that remained was to decide the necessary course of international action: ramped-up “diplomacy”, international sanctions and perhaps – the threat was left “lying on the table” – war.

What is so breathtaking is that the appar-

ent consensus on Iran, like the case against Iraq, is a fraud.

### **Burying The Cable – WikiLeaks And IAEA Chief Yukiya Amano**

One of the stunning omissions in corporate media coverage of the IAEA report are the WikiLeaks disclosures concerning IAEA chief, Yukiya Amano. According to a US Embassy cable from a US diplomat in Vienna, where the IAEA is based, Amano described himself as “solidly in the U.S. court on every key strategic decision, from high-level personnel appointments to the handling of Iran’s alleged nuclear weapons program.”

Amano’s predecessor as IAEA chief was Mohammed ElBaradei who had refused to bow before US war-mongering, and who was later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. As ElBaradei came to the end of his term in 2009, the Americans sensed an opportunity to work with someone more compliant. They lobbied successfully on Amano’s behalf. Following his election as IAEA chief, a US cable reported on a meeting with him:

“This meeting, Amano’s first bilateral review since his election, illustrates the very high degree of convergence between his priorities and our own agenda at the IAEA. The coming transition period provides a further window for us to shape Amano’s thinking before his agenda collides with the IAEA Secretariat bureaucracy.”

This “very high degree of convergence” would presumably be useful in hyping the alleged “nuclear threat” of Iran.

A US mission cable from Vienna commented that Amano was “DG [Director-General] of all states, but in agreement with us.”

The Guardian reported the Amano cable in a blog back in November 2010, but not in the paper itself. Our newspaper database search revealed that not a single UK national newspaper has mentioned the WikiLeaks cable revealing that Amano is “solidly in the

For anyone relying solely on corporate news media coverage, the case against Iran was closed. All that remained was to decide the necessary course of international action: ramped-up ‘diplomacy’, international sanctions and perhaps – the threat was left ‘lying on the table’ – war

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**Rather than report this vital evidence from WikiLeaks, the British media have either tried to silence or vilify its founder, Julian Assange. This is a truly damning indictment of the 'free press'**  
.....

U.S. court” in coverage of the latest IAEA report. The sole exception we could find anywhere in the UK print media was an article in the *New Statesman* by Mehdi Hasan.

Rather than report this vital evidence from WikiLeaks, the British media have either tried to silence or vilify its founder, Julian Assange. This is a truly damning indictment of the “free press”.

By contrast, Seymour Hersh is a rare voice of rationality exposing this latest propaganda hype. On *Democracy Now!*, Hersh commented of former US Vice-President Dick Cheney:

“Cheney kept on having the Joint Special Operations Force Command, JSOC — they would send teams inside Iran. They would work with various dissident groups — the Azeris, the Kurds, even Jundallah, which is a very fanatic Sunni opposition group — and they would do everything they could to try and find evidence of an undeclared underground facility.

“We monitored everything. We have incredible surveillance. In those days, what we did then, we can even do better now. And some of the stuff is very technical, very classified, but I can tell you, there’s not much you can do in Iran right now without us finding out something about it. They found nothing. Nothing. No evidence of any weaponization. In other words, no evidence of a facility to build the bomb. They have facilities to enrich, but not separate facilities for building a bomb. This is simply a fact. We haven’t found it, if it does exist. It’s still a fantasy.”

Hersh said that Iran did look “at the idea of getting a bomb or getting to the point where maybe they could make one. They did do that, but they stopped in ’03. That’s still the American consensus. The Israelis will tell you privately, ‘Yes, we agree.’”

He described the new IAEA report as “not a scientific report, it’s a political document”, noting that “Amano has pledged his fealty to America.”

Amano had been “a marginal candidate”

for the position of IAEA chief but the US wanted him in place:

“We supported him very much. Six ballots. He was considered weak by everybody, but we pushed to get him in. We did get him in. He responded by thanking us and saying he shares our views. He shares our views on Iran... it was just an expression of love. He’s going to do what we wanted.”

In a blog on *The New Yorker* website, Hersh added that one of the classified US Embassy cables from Vienna described Amano as being “ready for prime time.” The cable also noted that Amano’s “willingness to speak candidly with U.S. interlocutors on his strategy ... bodes well for our future relationship.”

In his *Democracy Now!* interview, Hersh pointed out that his blog piece was thoroughly researched and checked by *The New Yorker*, and that it included expert testimony shunned by the major newspapers:

“These are different voices than you’re seeing in the papers. I sometimes get offended by the same voices we see in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. We don’t see people with different points of view... And I get emails, like crazy, from people on the inside saying, ‘Way to go.’ I’m talking about inside the IAEA. It’s an organization that doesn’t deal with the press, but internally, they’re very bothered by the direction Amano is taking them.”

Hersh cited Robert Kelley, a retired IAEA director and nuclear engineer who previously spent more than thirty years with the US Department of Energy’s nuclear-weapons programme:

“He noted that hundreds of pages of material appears to come from a single source: a laptop computer, allegedly supplied to the I.A.E.A. by a Western intelligence agency, whose provenance could not be established. Those materials, and others, ‘were old news,’ Kelley said, and known to many journalists. ‘I wonder why this same stuff is now considered ‘new information’ by the same reporters.’”

An assessment of the IAEA report was published by the Arms Control Association (ACA), a non-profit organisation campaigning for effective arms control. Greg Thielmann, a former US State Department and Senate Intelligence Committee analyst who was one of the authors of the ACA assessment, told Hersh:

“There is troubling evidence suggesting that studies are still going on, but there is nothing that indicates that Iran is really building a bomb. Those who want to drum up support for a bombing attack on Iran sort of aggressively misrepresented the report.”

#### **The BBC “Notes” Privately That There Are Dissenting Views**

On November 9, 2011, a BBC news piece carried a side bar “analysis” by James Reynolds, the BBC’s Iran correspondent. I wrote to him the same day:

“I hope you’re safe and well there. In your analysis which is included in the BBC News article ‘UN nuclear agency IAEA: Iran ‘studying nuclear weapons’, you note that:

“‘The agency stresses that the evidence it presents in its report is credible and well-sourced.’

“You then add:

“‘Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has dismissed the IAEA as puppet of the United States. His government has already declared that its findings are baseless and inauthentic.’

“You attribute such views to Iran, an officially-declared enemy of the West. A more balanced approach might be to report that a US Embassy Cable published last year revealed that Yukiya Amano, the IAEA director general, is ‘solidly in the U.S. court on every key strategic decision’.

“And according to a recent New York Times report: ‘the Obama administration, acutely aware of how what happened in Iraq undercut American credibility, is deliberately taking a back seat, eager to make the conclusions entirely the I.A.E.A.’s, even as

it continues to press for more international sanctions against Iran.’

“Shouldn’t these crucial facts be noted in your analysis?

“The NYT report continues:

“‘When the director of the agency, Yukiya Amano, came to the White House 11 days ago to meet top officials of the National Security Council about the coming report, the administration declined to even confirm he had ever walked into the building.’

“Isn’t all this relevant in assessing the context, realpolitik and implications of the IAEA report? Can you not find critical commentators outside the Iranian government whom you can quote?

“Given the stakes involved, would you perhaps consider addressing the above points in your analysis in future, please?

“Many thanks.”

Rather than address any of the above points, Reynolds emailed back:

“thanks for your message. I appreciate your comments and insight.” (Email, November 9, 2011)

Just over a week later, a new BBC piece appeared in which the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany claimed to have “deep and increasing concern” over Iran’s nuclear programme. I emailed Reynolds again (November 18, 2011):

“Have you considered interviewing sceptical and informed commentators?

“For example, you could approach the experienced investigative journalist Gareth Porter. He says that the recent IAEA report’s ‘dubious intelligence [is being] used as pretext for tougher sanctions’:

“Porter’s analysis is backed up by Robert Kelley, a nuclear engineer who has carried out IAEA inspections. Kelley believes that ‘the report misleads and manipulates facts in [an] attempt to prove a forgone conclusion.’

“He also says that the IAEA report ‘recycles old intelligence and is meant to bolster hard liners.’

“There is troubling evidence suggesting that studies are still going on, but there is nothing that indicates that Iran is really building a bomb. Those who want to drum up support for a bombing attack on Iran sort of aggressively misrepresented the report”

.....  
**Isn't this crucially relevant for public understanding of what is happening over Iran?**  
.....

"Shouldn't you also be including such important and informed views in your reporting for BBC News?"

Not hearing from him, we nudged Reynolds on November 21 when he again avoided addressing the points made:

"I received your message - thanks. I shall reflect on the points you raise.

"It is always important for me to hear from licence-fee payers - the lifeblood of the BBC." (James Reynolds, email, November 21, 2011)

I tried once more to elicit a response from the BBC's Iran correspondent that actually addressed the points put to him:

"I appreciate your reply.

"But with the resources of the BBC at your disposal, you surely cannot be unaware of the informed commentators and important points presented to you [in the previous emails]. It is notable that you do not appear to have included them in any of your BBC reports to date. Why not?

"Nor have you reported - although I may have missed it - that IAEA chief Yukiya Amano is regarded by the US, according to a WikiLeaks cable, as 'solidly in the U.S. court on every key strategic decision, from high-level personnel appointments to the handling of Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program.'

"Why remain silent about this astonishing fact? Isn't this crucially relevant for public understanding of what is happening over Iran? Perhaps there are editorial reasons that are making it difficult for you to properly report these vital issues?" (Email, November 22, 2011)

To no avail: the response was even more terse this time:

"points noted." (James Reynolds, email, November 22, 2011)

Curiously, "the lifeblood of the BBC" deserves no better than this.

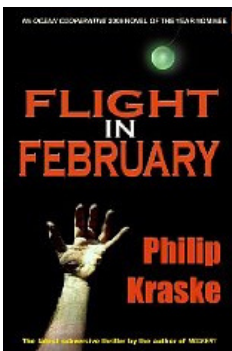
Can journalists really have forgotten the propaganda offensive that predated the March 19, 2003 invasion of Iraq - a tsunami of disinformation in which they were accomplices? Have they really learned nothing? What gives them the right to absolve themselves and to start with a clean slate now that Iran is the next hyped "threat"?

Surely now more than ever - as the spectre of yet another war in the Middle East looms, perhaps the greatest conflagration yet - it is vital that journalists should be wary of repeating propaganda claims over Iran.

**CT**

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*David Cromwell is co-editor of Media lens, the London media watchdog - [www.medialens.org](http://www.medialens.org)*

*"Kraske's command of plot, dialog and character is staggering. Whatever he puts his pen to, whether essay or fiction, makes for a great read." - ColdType*



## **FLIGHT IN FEBRUARY**

Did drug-trafficker Marcus Strenk escape from Minnesota's maximum-security prison during a blizzard - or die trying? Deputy Marshal Henry Scott believes that Strenk found a way past the highly sophisticated security system and made it to freedom. But the search Scott puts into gear is quickly spiked by Alec Barkley, the very FBI agent who had put Strenk in jail - spiked, that is, until Strenk's cheery note from outside arrives at the prison. Barkley puts every available agent on the manhunt. Henry Scott meanwhile examines Barkley's earlier espionage operation against Strenk's Mexican connections - and ends up stepping through the looking glass. ( Read the first chapter at <http://www.philipkraske.com/index.php?id=63> )

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# There's no room for smugness on Iran

Have we learned nothing over the past decade?, asks **Elizabeth Murray**

I remember thinking smugly to myself in late 2002/early 2003: “Those neo-cons will never be able to launch their much-desired war in Iraq; their lies are so blatant; their allegations are nonsense; and the world is against them.”

I felt so confident that reason and logic would win out. What a hard lesson the past eight years have been!

And so, while I'm pleased to see many voices of reason countering the latest warmongering on Iran with excellent articles and effective rebuttals in the media (Gideon Levy's recent piece in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz and the analysis of the latest International Atomic Energy Agency report by former IAEA inspector Robert Kelley, to name two), I know that warmongers never let facts – or public opinion – get in the way of their goals.

I have learned from bitter experience that they will create their own facts to paper over the truth as needed.

In the months leading up to the March 2003 attack on Iraq, I was the senior Iraq media analyst at the US government's Open Source Center (then run by CIA, but now under the aegis of the Director of National Intelligence). My branch received a large number of taskings from senior government officials with regard to the content and nature of Iraqi media reporting.

The office that inundated our branch with the greatest number of taskings was that of then-Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, which barraged us with repeated requests to scour Iraqi media for evidence of an operational relationship between Saddam Hussein's Iraq and al-Qa'ida.

Exercising due diligence, we leveraged our network of overseas resources, and checked and double-checked with our highly capable field staff, even seeking out obscure newspapers from remote Iraqi provinces – and each time came up empty-handed.

And yet, the same tasking would resurface from Wolfowitz's office every few weeks, each time with greater urgency – the unspoken implication being that some evidence had to exist and we were simply not looking hard enough.

## Extreme pressure

I have since learned that US interrogators were subjected to the same shaming, and that the extreme pressure to come up with some link between Iraq and al-Qaeda was a key factor in the torture techniques approved for Guantanamo, Afghanistan and Iraq.

(As for the all-source analysts at CIA headquarters, the CIA ombudsman testi-

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**I have learned from bitter experience that they will create their own facts to paper over the truth as needed.**  
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**By 2006 – three years into the war – the Bush administration finally admitted it had no evidence of an Iraqi role in the 9/11 attacks. But the US continued its role in the destruction of that country, the facts notwithstanding**  
.....

fied to Congress that, in his 32 years as a substantive intelligence officer, he had never seen such severe “hammering” on analysts to come up with might be called “the missing link.”)

So I asked Wolfowitz’s office on more than one occasion to provide us with the original source of the allegation of an Iraq-al-Qaeda relationship as a means of helping us to corroborate it. We never received a response.

As it turned out, the countless hours that my office labored on this tasking – at great expense to US taxpayers, I might add, were an utter waste of time, since the allegations proved to be false – yet another fabrication designed to drum up public support for a post-9/11 attack on Iraq.

By 2006 – three years into the war – the Bush administration finally admitted it had no evidence of an Iraqi role in the 9/11 attacks. But the US continued its role in the destruction of that country, the facts notwithstanding.

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**A nation with Alzheimer’s?**

So, returning to the current Iran campaign: When well-placed former intelligence experts began poking holes in the report about a supposed Iranian assassination attempt against the Saudi ambassador to Washington a few weeks ago, it faded from the headlines. Enter a much-hyped IAEA report alleging that Iran is moving, maybe, toward nuclear weaponization.

We are now learning from highly credible experts that the IAEA report actually contains little, if any, new evidence to substantiate allegations about ongoing Iranian progress toward nuclear weaponization. The report mostly rehashes old material.

Will it matter if there is no reliable evidence that Iran has an active program for nuclear weaponization?

Or will the warmongers, with the indispensable help of the Fawning Corporate

Media (FCM), simply march inexorably onward in their campaign to drum up support for a military attack against Iran?

Have we learned nothing over the past decade? Or will people and governments across the globe – invigorated and inspired, perhaps, by the positive force of the global “Occupy” movements – stand up, push back, and finally topple the world’s purveyors of myth-based military attacks?

We can begin by rejecting violence – the violence of war, the violence of poverty, the violence of racism and oppression – a cycle which produces nothing but future episodes of violence.

As the “Occupy” movements have ably shown, it is possible to ignite social, political and economic change – even forcing a shift in the daily discourse of the FCM – through nonviolent resistance to injustice.

People of principle everywhere, from all walks of life – from civil servants to members of the armed services; from shift workers to white-collar “suits” ensconced in the glass-and-steel towers of the corporatocracy – can choose to resist the forces of violence every day in quiet, principled and nonviolent ways.

These daily acts of conscience can bring about a force for good that will serve the long-term interests of people everywhere (please see dontattackiran.org and october2011.org for examples).

The choice to act is a highly personal one, but the repercussions of that choice will be felt collectively, for generations to come. **CT**

.....  
*Elizabeth Murray served as Deputy National Intelligence Officer for the Near East in the National Intelligence Council before retiring after a 27-year career in the US government, where she specialized in Middle Eastern political and media analysis. She is a member of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).*

# The higher truth

William Blum on Libya, the rebels and the bloody results of American meddling in foreign affairs

“**W**e came, we saw, he died.” – US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, giggling, as she spoke of the depraved murder of Moammar Gaddafi

Imagine Osama bin Laden or some other Islamic leader speaking of 9-11: “We came, we saw, 3,000 died ... ha-ha.”

Clinton and her partners-in-crime in NATO can also have a good laugh at how they deceived the world. The destruction of Libya, the reduction of a modern welfare state to piles of rubble, to ghost towns, the murder of thousands ... this tragedy was the culmination of a series of falsehoods spread by the Libyan rebels, the Western powers, and Qatar (through its television station, al-Jazeera) – from the declared imminence of a “bloodbath” in rebel-held Benghazi if the West didn’t intervene to stories of government helicopter-gunships and airplanes spraying gunfire onto large numbers of civilians to tales of Viagra-induced mass rapes by Gaddafi’s army. (This last fable was proclaimed at the United Nations by the American Ambassador, as if young soldiers needed Viagra to get it up!)

The *New York Times* (March 22) observed:

“... the rebels feel no loyalty to the truth in shaping their propaganda, claiming non-existent battlefield victories, asserting they were still fighting in a key city days after it

fell to Qaddafi forces, and making vastly inflated claims of his barbaric behavior.”

The *Los Angeles Times* (April 7) added this about the rebels’ media operation:

“It’s not exactly fair and balanced media. In fact, as [its editor] helpfully pointed out, there are four inviolate rules of coverage on the two rebel radio stations, TV station and newspaper:

“No pro-[Qaddafi] reportage or commentary. No mention of a civil war. (The Libyan people, east and west, are unified in a war against a totalitarian regime.) No discussion of tribes or tribalism. (There is only one tribe: Libya.) No references to Al Qaeda or Islamic extremism. (That’s [Qaddafi’s] propaganda.) The Libyan government undoubtedly spouted its share of misinformation, but it was the rebels’ trail of lies, both of omission and commission, which was used by the UN Security Council to justify its vote for “humanitarian” intervention; followed in Act Three by unrelenting NATO/US bombs and drone missiles, day after day, week after week, month after month; you can’t get much more humanitarian than that. If the people of Libya prior to the NATO/US bombardment had been offered a referendum on it, can it be imagined that they would have endorsed it?

“In fact, it appears rather likely that a majority of Libyans supported Gaddafi. How

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**The destruction of Libya, the reduction of a modern welfare state to piles of rubble, to ghost towns, the murder of thousands ... this tragedy was the culmination of a series of falsehoods**  
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**Many of the rebels had a religious motive for opposing the government and played dominant roles within the rebel army; previously a number of them had fought against the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq**  
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else could the government have held off the most powerful military forces in the world for more than seven months? Before NATO and the US laid waste to the land, Libya had the highest life expectancy, lowest infant mortality, and highest UN Human Development Index in Africa. During the first few months of the civil war, giant rallies were held in support of the Libyan leader.”

If Gaddafi had been less oppressive of his political opposition over the years and had made some gestures of accommodation to them during the Arab Spring, the benevolent side of his regime might still be keeping him in power, although the world has plentiful evidence making it plain that the Western powers are not particularly concerned about political oppression except to use as an excuse for intervention when they want to; indeed, government files seized in Tripoli during the fighting show that the CIA and British intelligence worked with the Libyan government in tracking down dissidents, turning them over to Libya, and taking part in interrogations.

In any event, many of the rebels had a religious motive for opposing the government and played dominant roles within the rebel army; previously a number of them had fought against the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq. The new Libyan regime promptly announced that Islamic sharia law would be the “basic source” of legislation, and laws that contradict “the teachings of Islam” would be nullified; there would also be a reinstatement of polygamy; the Muslim holy book, the Quran, allows men up to four wives.

Thus, just as in Afghanistan in the 1980-90s, the United States has supported Islamic militants fighting against a secular government. The American government has imprisoned many people as “terrorists” in the United States for a lot less.

What began in Libya as “normal” civil war violence from both sides – repeated before and since by the governments of Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria without any

Western military intervention at all (the US actually continues to arm the Bahrain and Yemen regimes) – was transformed by the Western propaganda machine into a serious Gaddafi genocide of innocent Libyans. Addressing the validity of this very key issue is another video, “Humanitarian War in Libya: There is no evidence”. The main feature of the film is an interview with Soliman Bouchuiguir, Secretary-General, and one of the founders in 1989, of the Libyan League for Human Rights, perhaps the leading Libyan dissident group, in exile in Switzerland.

Bouchuiguir is asked several times if he can document various charges made against the Libyan leader. Where is the proof of the many rapes? The many other alleged atrocities? The more than 6,000 civilians alleged killed by Gaddafi’s planes? Again and again Bouchuiguir cites the National Transitional Council as the source. Yes, that’s the rebels who carried out the civil war in conjunction with the NATO/US forces. At other times Bouchuiguir speaks of “eyewitnesses”: “little girls, boys who were there, whose families we know personally”. After awhile, he declares that “there is no way” to document these things. This is probably true to some extent, but why, then, the UN Security Council resolution for a military intervention in Libya? Why almost eight months of bombing?

Bouchuiguir also mentions his organization’s working with the National Endowment for Democracy in their effort against Gaddafi, and one has to wonder if the man has any idea that the NED was founded to be a front for the CIA. Literally.

Another source of charges against Gaddafi and his sons has been the International Criminal Court. The Court’s Chief Prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, is shown in this film at a news conference discussing the same question of proof of the charges. He refers to an ICC document of 77 pages which he says contains the evidence. The film displays the document’s Table of Contents, which shows that pages 17-71 are not

available to the public; these pages, apparently the ones containing the testimony and evidence, are marked as “redacted”. In an appendix, the ICC report lists its news sources; these include Fox News, CNN, the CIA, Soliman Bouchuiguir, and the Libyan League for Human Rights. Earlier, the film had presented Bouchuiguir citing the ICC as one of his sources. The documentation is thus a closed circle.

Historical footnote: “Aerial bombing of civilians was pioneered by the Italians in Libya in 1911, perfected by the British in Iraq in 1920 and used by the French in 1925 to level whole quarters of Syrian cities. Home demolitions, collective punishment, summary execution, detention without trial, routine torture – these were the weapons of Europe’s takeover” in the Mideast.

.....  
**The worldwide eternal belief that American foreign policy has a good side**

On April 6, 2011 Moammar Gaddafi wrote a letter to President Obama, in which he said: “We have been hurt more morally than physically because of what had happened against us in both deeds and words by you. Despite all this you will always remain our son whatever happened. ... Our dear son, Excellency, Baraka Hussein Abu Oubama, your intervention in the name of the USA is a must, so that Nato would withdraw finally from the Libyan affair.”

Before the American invasion in March 2003, Iraq tried to negotiate a peace deal with the United States. Iraqi officials, including the chief of the Iraqi Intelligence Service, wanted Washington to know that Iraq no longer had weapons of mass destruction and offered to allow American troops and experts to conduct a search; they also offered full support for any US plan in the Arab-Israeli peace process, and to hand over a man accused of being involved in the World Trade Center bombing in 1993. If this is about oil, they added, they would also talk about US oil concessions. ... Then came

shock and awe!

In 2002, before the coup in Venezuela that briefly ousted Hugo Chávez, some of the plotters went to Washington to get a green light from the Bush administration. Chávez learned of this visit and was so distressed by it that he sent officials from his government to plead his own case in Washington. The success of this endeavor can be judged by the fact that the coup took place shortly thereafter.

In 1994, it was reported that the leader of the Zapatista rebels in Mexico, Subcommander Marcos, said that “he expects the United States to support the Zapatistas once US intelligence agencies are convinced the movement is not influenced by Cubans or Russians.” “Finally,” Marcos said, “they are going to conclude that this is a Mexican problem, with just and true causes.” Yet for many years, the United States provided the Mexican military with all the training and tools needed to crush the Zapatistas.

The Guatemalan foreign minister in 1954, Cheddi Jagan of British Guyana in 1961, and Maurice Bishop of Grenada in 1983 all made their appeals to Washington to be left in peace.<sup>11</sup> The governments of all three countries were overthrown by the United States.

In 1945 and 1946, Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh, a genuine admirer of America and the Declaration of Independence, wrote at least eight letters to President Harry Truman and the State Department asking for America’s help in winning Vietnamese independence from the French. He wrote that world peace was being endangered by French efforts to reconquer Indochina and he requested that “the four powers” (US, USSR, China, and Great Britain) intervene in order to mediate a fair settlement and bring the Indochinese issue before the United Nations.<sup>12</sup> Ho Chi Minh received no reply. He was, after all, some sort of communist.

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**America’s presstitutes**

Imagine that the vicious police attack of Oc-

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**Home demolitions, collective punishment, summary execution, detention without trial, routine torture – these were the weapons of Europe’s takeover” in the Mideast**  
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If I had been one of Leno's guests sitting there, I would have turned to the audience and said: "Listen people, under Gaddafi health care and education were completely free. Wouldn't you like to have that here?"  
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tober 25 on the Occupy Oakland encampment had taken place in Iran or Cuba or Venezuela or in any other ODE (Officially Designated Enemy) ... Page One Righteous Indignation with Shocking Photos. But here's the *Washington Post* the next day: A three-inch story on page three with a headline: "Protesters wearing out their welcome nationwide"; no mention of the Iraqi veteran left unconscious from a police projectile making contact with his head; as to photos: just one – an Oakland police officer petting a cat that was left behind by the protesters.

And here's TV comedian Jay Leno the same night as the police attack in Oakland: "They say Moammar Gaddafi may have been one of the richest men in the world ... 200 billion dollars. With all of the billions he had, he spent very little on education or health care for his country. So I guess he was a Republican."

The object of Leno's humor was of course the Republicans, but it served the cause of further demonizing Gaddafi and thus adding to the "justification" of America's murderous attack on Libya. If I had been one of Leno's guests sitting there, I would have turned to the audience and said: "Listen people, under Gaddafi health care and education were completely free. Wouldn't you like to have that here?"

I think that enough people in the audience would have applauded or shouted to force Leno to back off a bit from his indoctrinated, mindless remark.

And just for the record, the 200 billion dollars is not money found in Gaddafi's personal bank accounts anywhere in the world, but money belonging to the Libyan state. But why quibble? There's no business like

show business.

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**The Iraqi lullaby**

On February 17, 2003, a month before the US bombing of Iraq began, I posted to the Internet an essay entitled "What Do the Imperial Mafia Really Want?" concerning the expected war. Included in this were the words of Michael Ledeen, former Reagan official, then at the American Enterprise Institute, which was one of the leading drum-beaters for attacking Iraq:

"If we just let our own vision of the world go forth, and we embrace it entirely, and we don't try to be clever and piece together clever diplomatic solutions to this thing, but just wage a total war against these tyrants, I think we will do very well, and our children will sing great songs about us years from now."

After a year of the tragic farce that was the American intervention in Iraq I could not resist. I sent Mr. Ledeen an email reminding him of his words and saying simply: "I'd like to ask you what songs your children are singing these days." I received no reply.

Has there ever been an empire that didn't tell itself and the world that it was unlike all other empires, that its mission was not to plunder and control but to enlighten and liberate? **CT**

.....  
**William Blum** is the author of: *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2*; *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*; *West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir*; *Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire*. Signed copies may be purchased at [www.killinghope.org](http://www.killinghope.org)

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# And now, the reckoning ...

**Michael Meacher** wonders what will happen now that the bankers have taken over ailing European governments

**T**heir honeymoon will not be long. Greece's and Italy's new leaders Papademos and Monti have perhaps a month, perhaps much less, before the reality kicks in that switching to two so-called 'technocrats' – as though they were neutral administrators as opposed to finance politicians for the banks – changes very little. The issue is the figures, not the personalities. The real question is whether the conditions for the third Greek bailout of €130bn can be imposed on Greece without massive violence on the streets and in the factories, whether the immediately needed €8bn rescue loans can be obtained on acceptable terms to the Greek people, and whether a 2012 budget can be pushed through even tougher than the last 3 years, as well as a draconian new tax law enforced. The chances are against it, whether it's Papandreou or Papademos.

The Italian situation is in some respects worse still. It may well be masochistic to impose such pain on Greece when, with debts now at €320bn (160% of GDP) which are surely unrepayable, default is inevitable. But Re-drachmatisation, however painful the transition, would offer Greece the possibility of achieving real growth and a new start.

With Italy there is no such ready option. Repaying debts of €1.9 trillion opens up an unimaginably austere programme of

deficit reduction for which the do-nothing Berlusconi administration has in no way prepared the Italian people. A bailout of Italy on the other hand would be unsupported by the Eurozone alone and would require huge back-up by the IMF, which itself would be dependent on substantial recapitalisation by other major global economies which may not be forthcoming.

Another even more drastic scenario is beginning to emerge. For fear of Eurozone break-up, a sliding collapse of banks gathering pace, and an even deeper recession, countries in desperation (despite all the lessons of the 1930s) revert to protectionism, pull up the drawbridge on unfettered markets, and fall back from globalisation to salvage what they can of domestic industry and jobs.

It is only in such an ultimate crisis as this that the global grip of neoliberal capitalism will be broken. What is needed now is not just Plan B, but a fundamental reconfiguration of the relationship between the State and the markets and an equally fundamental re-drawing of the role and workings of finance within a democracy in which the power structure of banks, corporations, media and politics has drastically shifted. **CT**

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