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‘A load of tosh’

How the BBC abandons impartiality for 'showbiz news' and state propaganda

On January 22, BBC News at Ten carried a piece by “defence” correspondent Jonathan Beale reporting a speech by General Sir Nick Carter, the British Army’s Chief of General Staff. Carter gave his speech, pleading for more resources in the face of the Russian “threat,” at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), an establishment thinktank with close links to the military and corporate media.

4 Beale began his BBC News piece with a prologue of raw propaganda, delivered in an urgent and impassioned tone: “Russia’s building an increasingly modern and aggressive military. Already tested in battle in Syria, using weapons Britain would struggle to match – like long-range missiles. In Ukraine, they’ve been using unconventional warfare, electronic cyber and misinformation. And they’re even on manoeuvres on Europe’s doorstep, with large-scale exercises near Nato’s borders. Enough to worry the head of the British army who tonight gave this rare public warning.”

The essence of Carter’s “rare public warning” was that: “Russia was building an increasingly aggressive expeditionary force and the potential military threats to the UK ‘are now on Europe’s doorstep’ . . . the Kremlin already boasted an eye-watering quantity of capability’ – a level the UK would struggle to match . . . Britain ‘must take notice of what is going on around us’ or . . . the ability by the UK to take action will be ‘massively constrained’.”

Carter continued: “Rather like a chronic con-

tagious disease, it will creep up on us, and our ability to act will be markedly constrained – and we’ll be the losers of this competition.”

The army chief’s warning had been approved by the Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson.

On News at Ten, Beale’s reporting of the speech amplified the army chief’s message – in other words, the Defence Secretary’s stance – by deploying such key phrases as: “Increasingly aggressive,” “tested in battle,” “Britain would struggle to match,” “manoeuvres on Europe’s doorstep,” “near Nato’s borders.”

There was, of course, no mention of US/Nato encroachment towards Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union (contravening assurances given to Gorbachev), or the US bases and military exercises close to Russia’s borders as well as globally, or the long history of US threats and major crimes around the world. Nor was there any reference to Ukraine which has routinely been reported as an example of Russian “aggression.” John Pilger observes that the BBC along with others, including CNN, the New York Times and the Guardian: “played a critical role in conditioning their viewers to accept a new and dangerous cold war.”

“All have misrepresented events in Ukraine as a malign act by Russia when, in fact, the coup in Ukraine in 2014 was the work of the United States, aided by Germany and Nato.”

Beale’s credulous reporting of the army chief’s speech was an exemplar of “public broadcast” media whipping up fear to pro-



THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING . . . Military might on the streets of Moscow on May 9, 2011, for the 2011 Victory Day commemoration of the Soviet Union's World War II victory over Nazi Germany. Pavel Kazachkov, Flickr.com

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mote state interests. Later, standing outside the Ministry of Defence, Beale said: “This intervention by the head of the army is as much an appeal for more money for defence as it is a warning about the threat posed by Russia.”

And yet Beale had earlier dramatically highlighted the “worrying” facts, asserting they were “enough to worry the head of the British army” – in other words, that the army chief really was worried; not dissembling. Beale’s subsequent comment was a token, blink-and-you’ll-miss-it acknowledgement of the reality: that Carter’s speech was aimed at propping up UK military power.

Note that Beale’s “neutral” reporting was not about an “alleged threat posed by Russia;” simply the “threat posed by Russia.” This subtly insidious use of language occurs daily on “impartial” BBC News.

And, as ever, such a report would be incom-

plete without an establishment talking head from a “defence and security” think tank. Professor Michael Clarke, a senior RUSI fellow, was on hand to perform the required role. This was BBC News in standard establishment/state/military/corporate mode.

Beale was duly confronted by several people on Twitter about his promotion of UK state and military propaganda on the Russian “threat.” One Twitter user put to the BBC journalist: “The only thing the MSM [mainstream media] is good for is fake news, falsification and manipulation of truth & propaganda. Ask yourself for whose benefit?”

This is a reasonable starting point for a debate about the major news media. Beale did not distinguish himself with the quality of his response: “What a load of tosh.”

In contrast, Beale’s “opinion-free” response

CROMWELL & EDWARDS

to the army chief's propaganda speech was: "Coherent, detailed and impressive speech by @ArmyCGS @RUSI_org tonight making the case for investment in #defence. CDS [Chief of Defence Staff] in waiting?"

Imagine if the BBC man's observations had been reversed. It is, of course, completely unthinkable that a BBC reporter would respond to a major military or political speech with: "What a load of tosh."

It would be equally unthinkable for a BBC journalist to respond to a speech by, for example, Noam Chomsky with: "Coherent, detailed and impressive speech tonight exposing Western war propaganda."

And likewise, a dissident expert would never be invited to respond scornfully, or even sceptically, to a speech by the likes of Sir Nick Carter on the BBC's News At Ten.

Further examples are pumped out daily by this "globally respected" broadcaster. On January 8, Fiona Bruce introduced an item about Syria on BBC News at Ten with the phrase: "Syrian government forces, backed by Russia." Why does BBC News not regularly use the phrase, "Saudi government forces, backed by the United States and the UK" when reporting on bombs dropped on Yemen? The answer should be obvious.

On January 29, Huw Edwards announced on BBC News at Ten: "We talk exclusively to the head of the CIA about the threat from Russia."

Note the duplicitous wording once again. Not "alleged" threat or "claimed" threat, far less "hyped-up" threat. BBC correspondent Gordon Corera's "interview" of the CIA's Mike Pompeo was a travesty of journalism, with no meaningful challenge or context. That the US is regularly regarded by global public opinion as a major threat around the world was totally off the agenda. You will wait in vain for an exclusive interview on BBC News at Ten with a senior figure about the "threat from the United States."

Ironically, just the previous day, Piers Morgan had conducted a sycophantic ITV "interview" with Donald Trump. The object of the exercise was clearly to garner high viewer ratings, and thus boost advertising revenue; not to challenge the US president in any meaningful way.

Afterwards, the BBC's John Simpson, the epitome of "serious" BBC News journalism, mocked Morgan: "The art of the political interview, Piers, is to push your interviewee hard – not let them spout self-evident tosh. That's just showbiz"

But when it comes to a showbiz-style BBC News interview with the head of the CIA? A convenient silence.

When one of our readers, Steve Ennever, uploaded the BBC's CIA interview to YouTube, complete with Huw Edwards' introduction, it was swiftly removed – within an hour or so – under pretence of a "copyright claim." What is the publicly-funded BBC so afraid of? The clip of the interview does appear on the BBC News YouTube channel. But why should they have a monopoly on it? Are they actually fearful of public-interest media activism that focuses on BBC News clips?

It is notable that all the brave BBC News voices go quiet at times like this. As far as we could tell, there was not a single dissenting voice about the BBC "exclusive" interview plugging CIA propaganda. The conformity is remarkable and yet systemic.

The uncomfortable truth for the BBC is that the gap between showbiz and BBC "news" is narrow. In fact, there is a significant overlap. Worse than that, BBC News is all too often a conduit for propaganda that promotes wars, corporate interests, "patriotism," military pageantry, excessive consumerism and calamitous inaction on climate.

As we have previously noted, a persistent feature of BBC News reporting on Yemen, for instance, is that the UK's complicity in Saudi war crimes and Yemen's humanitarian disaster is buried. To take another example, this BBC News headline is permissible: "Taliban threaten 70 percent of Afghanistan, BBC finds."

But these are not: "US threatens 100 percent of Afghanistan, BBC finds."

'US threatens 100% of Iraq, BBC finds'

'Global opinion finds US a major world threat, BBC finds.'

And when the BBC takes a rare look at propaganda, it only does so in order to examine the propaganda of Official Enemies. Thus, BBC News will robustly critique Russian propaganda in a way it never does with the West's.

In summary, it does not take extensive observation to discern the general pattern of BBC News "journalism" on matters of great significance:

1. Western military or political leader says something.
2. BBC News provides headline coverage.
3. Policy "expert" from a right-wing or "centrist" think tank is quoted in support.
4. BBC correspondent provides supportive "analysis."
5. Token sceptical voice is briefly quoted. (Optional.)
6. Extensive follow-up; talking points on BBC programmes such as Newsnight, Daily Politics, etc.

When Eleanor Bradford, a former BBC Scotland health correspondent, rightly drew attention to the corporation failing women over the issue of pay equality, British historian Mark Curtis added an important corollary: "It's true. Why should women be paid less than men for conveying state propaganda under the guise of news? It's only fair they should receive same salaries as all male govt employees."

Curtis has published several books revealing the UK's real role in world affairs, based on diligent research of previously secret government records. He is currently releasing declassified documents that reveal the reality of post-WW2 British policy towards numerous countries, as opposed to the propaganda version of events that has filled books, newspapers, magazines, television and radio programmes, and even infected academia.

Curtis explains the rationale for his project: "The British public has little idea what has been done, and is being done, in their names.

"I want everyone to be able to see at least some of the documents that I have seen because they tell a much truer story of this country's

real role in the world than they will hear on the BBC or read in The Telegraph."

Curtis is addressing some of the most "ignored episodes" in British foreign policy – such as the UK's support for the Idi Amin coup in Uganda in 1971, and for the welcoming of the Pinochet military takeover in Chile, the covert operation to overthrow Sukarno in Indonesia in the late 1950s, and the covert UK war in Yemen in the 1960s.

Curtis notes that now-released internal files reveal that: "there is no interest in the human rights of the people that live in regions like the Middle East, Africa or Asia – British policy is all about geopolitics, promoting commercial interests and upholding Britain's power status."

Moreover, the files show that "the British public is largely viewed as a threat and they therefore shouldn't be allowed to know what is being done in their names . . . The danger is that the public might deflect elites from their policy course – this is unacceptable to Whitehall."

Curtis rightly points to the need to challenge traditional sources of "news" which keep the public ignorant of crucial facts and context. Non-mainstream sources should be encouraged and supported: "Social and alternative media is very encouraging – this is where people should be getting more and more of their information, bypassing mainstream sources."

Ironically, it was a "renegade producer" from the BBC who encouraged newspaper journalist John Pilger to start making documentaries. Charles Denton taught Pilger that: "facts and evidence told straight to the camera and to the audience could indeed be subversive."

Pilger encourages young journalists today to "make a difference" by breaking the silence surrounding the reality of Western foreign policies. He adds a warning: "The moment they [young journalists] accept, say, the BBC view of the world, that there are only two sides to an argument, and both those sides are on what we call the establishment side, then it's over." **CT**

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

THOMAS S. HARRINGTON

Poland takes charge of its own history

Country is right to point out that it was also a victim of World War II Nazi invasion

From everything I understand (and I am quite willing to be proved wrong on this), the current Polish government could perhaps best be described as proto-fascist, exhibiting a deep national strain of authoritarian integralism, undergirded by Catholicism, that has been developing since the nation's reconstitution as a state at the beginning of the 20th-century.

8 That said, I've got to take my hat off to them for the way they way they have recently stood up to Zionist attempts to use their country as a cardboard cut-out prop in those same Zionists' ongoing attempts to dictate how we all must view history.

You might recall that a few decades ago a group of Polish nuns who had set up shop at Auschwitz, which is on Polish national territory, were hounded out of their building by Zionists from all over the world who didn't want their Catholic-themed beseeching of the Almighty for peace to interfere with the Jewish-themed calls for "never again."

The message was clear: We control the discourse of past pain in these lands and even though these are Polish Catholic nuns praying in their home country for all souls we will not allow them to impinge upon our carefully constructed discourse of being the world's eternally pre-eminent sufferers of injustice. So, the nuns will have to go.

And, after a nicely constructed international campaign of imprecation against these dan-

gerous ladies praying for peace, off they went, kicked out of their own convent in their own country.

It has long been alleged by Zionists that numerous Poles were complicit in the destruction of Polish Jewry in Polish lands. I have no doubt this was true. But then again, I have no doubt that in almost every multicultural country characterised by fractious relations between competing religious ideas and competing ideas of civic unity, that happens to be invaded by a foreign power the majority will, in its fear and panic usually sacrifice the minority before it sacrifices its majority.

For example, I have no doubt, that were it invaded and occupied by a foreign country, Israel would quite willingly hand over the 20 percent of its population that is Arab before sacrificing members of its precious Jewish majority.

No mystery there. This is what scared people tend to do, especially in places, such as World War II Poland and today's Israel, where demonisation of the minority has been integral to the propping up of the majority national project.

Most minorities wronged by majorities decide at on point or another that it is healthier to get on with life, despite all the pain they have suffered. And, despite what our institutionalised modes of popular history have told us, wholesale depredations of "other" populations for no worthy reason are, sadly, quite common in our world.

THOMAS S. HARRINGTON

Just ask the families of the several million Libyans, Iraqis, Lebanese and Syrians killed, maimed or displaced in the last 15 years because a small group of crazies located in Washington and a few other capitals decided it was time to “remake” the Middle East.

But back to Poland. According to the current canons of public historicising about World War II, it is always and ever licit to speak of Polish collaboration in the killing of Europe’s Jews. As a corollary to this canonical truth, however, it is never licit for the Poles to in any way compare their suffering to that of the Jews who died in their land. In fact, to simply sustain that they were also huge victims of the Germans is widely discouraged in our media

No, their job, it seems, is to sit quietly and bow their heads whenever anyone wants to lecture them about their complicity in Jewish suffering, and whenever anyone suggests that they were essentially co-conspirators with the Nazis in the destruction of the Jews, that is, that they were essentially morally equal and in cahoots with the very people who invaded their country, raped their women, destroyed their civic culture and put MILLIONS OF THEM to death through planned execution.

You’d have to have the patience of Job to put up with such this institutionalised abridging of your own right to emote about your own past tragedies on your own terms.

Well, after 70 years, the Poles have finally said, Enough! They have responded to Zionist attempts at discourse control with efforts of their own, outlawing statements that suggest Polish complicity with the Nazis and attempts to describe German death camps built on their invaded soil as “Polish.”

These are, of course, puerile laws designed to fail, whose only lasting effect will be that of ramping up inter-group tensions. But that’s precisely why I am giving them kudos for doing so. In showing the absurdity of trying to control other peoples interpretations of the past, they are shining a big light on the pervasive and, until now, largely unchallenged attempts by

Zionists to do exactly this with Poles as well as a whole lot of other people.

I am hoping that the clash resulting from these Polish attempts to control the discourse of the past might help people reflect on the irritations, and more importantly the dangers, of institutionalised attempts to tell people what they can and cannot think, of what emotions they are free to indulge or not

I am sure we all have a memory of a certain kid who, during high school, was rigidly controlled by his parent in matters of sex and drinking who, when they went off to college, became irresponsibly wild in these two pursuits.

The Poles clearly feel their right to emote as they please according to their own lived or mythic realities has been artificially compromised for too long. And now they are reclaiming awkwardly and gracelessly. They have decided to poke their boundary-crossing tsk-tsker in the eye much in the way that people left out of the prosperity of our winner-take-all knowledge economy are taking relish in giving the shiv, so to speak, to the liberal cultural elites who love to tell them what to think on this or that issue of essentially personal morality.

Were the tsk-tskers willing to actually listen the people whose parameters of thought they’ve constantly tried to restrict with their various forms of discursive coercion, it would lower the tension levels for everyone in society.

Unfortunately, I don’t see it happening. From what I have seen the need to control others is a sort of addiction that can only be satisfied by seeking to establish ever great levels of control of others. When controllers receive well-articulated pedagogical lessons, such as the one the Poles have just gracelessly issued, to those who seek to control their country’s internal political discourse, they tend not only to not be able to listen, to respond with still greater levels of repressive pressure. **CT**

*Thomas S. Harrington is a professor of Iberian Studies at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut and the author of the recently released *Living la Vida Barroca: American Culture in a Time of Imperial Orthodoxies.**

RON FASSBENDER



ANGRY WORDS: Hand-made signs (above and right) convey a clear message to Theresa May's Conservative government.



10

London marches to save NHS

**Demonstrators protest underfunding, nursing shortages
and creeping privatisation of health services**

Thousands of demonstrators called for an end to cuts, underfunding and privatisation imposed on Britain's National Health Service by the ruling Conservative party at a massive London demonstration on February 3. The march, organised by the People's Assembly and Health Campaigns Together, was supported by the major trade unions and saw protesters parade beneath fiery banners through central London to No 10 Downing Street, home of Prime Minister Theresa May.

The marchers were driven by the words of

then Minister of Health Aneurin Bevan, who, in 1948, as his dream of creating the health service in post-war Britain became a reality, declared, "The NHS will last as long as there are folk left with the faith to fight for it."

Health professionals have long complained of underfunding by the government, with a shortage of 34,000 nurses, increasing wait times and privatisation of services. Sixty years after he made his call, Bevan's words have never been more true.

The struggle will continue.

CT



CHAOS AHEAD: Fashion legend Vivienne Westwood is a tireless campaigner on social issues.



YANKEES GO HOME: Demonstrator makes it clear that the UK doesn't need USA-type medical care.

RON FASSBENDER



12

ABOVE: This pensioner's message is stark and very, very clear.

RIGHT: Strange priorities – the government has committed billions to spend on nuclear "defence," but claims to be too poor to fund the health service.





TOP: Nye Bevan's message from 1948 must be remembered. Above and left: Placards tell the story – Save our hospitals, service cuts are killing us. . .

THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Ron Fassbender is a London-based photographer. His Flickr feed is www.flickr.com/theweekbull/albums

How serial killers capitalise on chaos

Serial killers are strategic and clever, usually choosing cities or towns in the midst of upheaval to commit their heinous crimes so they can fly under the radar

14

In 2017, the University of Wisconsin-Madison was ranked by the Princeton Review as the top party school in the United States, but it's also the focus of my recent true crime title, *Mad City*. That's because in the wake of the so-called Summer of Love in 1967 – from the late 1960s through to the mid-70s – the university was a much different kind of place. It was a period when anti-Vietnam War protests and inevitable counter-protests supplemented draft-card burnings. Sit-ins meant to waylay political visits and right-of-centre speakers were all at high tide.

Sound familiar?

The UW campus at the time was the epicentre of a particularly vitriolic brand of hyper-partisan tribalism as members of the Chicago Seven, and the more violent Weather Underground, were assembling in what was a progressive island in an ocean of old-fashioned – and often intolerant – dairyland social conservatism.

A homegrown group, known as the New Year's Gang, was allowed to fester and escalate unchecked. It went so far as to use an improvised car bomb to destroy the campus physics building to protest its use as a US Army think tank.

The blast killed a researcher in no way affiliated with any military work, and permanently maimed

three students and staff members.

The four men responsible for the bombing were rightly branded as terrorists and immediately placed on the FBI's most wanted list. Three members were ultimately arrested and the fourth was never seen or heard from again.

But amid the hunt for the New Year's Gang, as the university was teetering on a precipice of turmoil and rioting for the sake of rioting became a weekly occurrence, others showed up when no one was looking.

Beginning in 1967 with an odious medical resident named Niels Bjorn Jorgensen – who, I hypothesise in the book for the first time, had already murdered at least five people, including his own brother – UW-Madison emerged as a select destination for at least three serial killers. They posed as students, job applicants and innocuous passers-through.

During the next 15 years, seven women were murdered on or immediately adjacent to the UW-Madison campus in increasingly heinous ways. An eighth was later killed while leaving the campus in Stevens Point in the fall of 1984.

It's a record for consecutive sex slayings within a single university system that no one wants

The four men responsible for the bombing were rightly branded as terrorists and immediately placed on the FBI's most wanted list. Three members were ultimately arrested and the fourth was never seen or heard from again

MICHAEL ARNTFIELD

to advertise – not then and certainly not now. But the reality is that from freshman Christine Rothschild, strangled on campus the day before final exams in the spring of '67, to senior Donna Mraz, slashed and stabbed to death while walking past the varsity stadium in the summer of '82, opportunistic killers saw an embroiled campus.

And they surmised that the white noise of activism and political agitation was sure to obfuscate their presence.

They guessed right.

Gateway crimes, from peeping and prowling to stalking lecture halls and dorm rooms, all went unrecognised and were allowed to escalate amid a larger culture war where the campus police – and even the encompassing Madison city police – were effectively told to stand down and disengage. Again, a familiar refrain today.

In criminology, we refer to episodes like the 15-year UW phenomenon – from 1967 to 1982 – as place-specific crime. It's a concept, still only in its adolescence, that finally recognises that violent offenders are more strategic and logistically oriented than previously thought.

The concept describes how they proactively and discriminately select cities, and even places within those cities such as polarised college campuses, to carry out and just as quickly bury their crimes within a bigger haystack of mayhem, angst and misguided aggression.

It explains how and why specific physical environments not only impart some ritual or symbolic significance for the killers, but also how



Students march at the University of Wisconsin-Madison to protest the Vietnam War in January 1965. Wikipedia

Nearly 15 percent of all unsolved stranglings committed in the USA between 2003 and 2015 have occurred in the same 12-mile stretch in Chicago

they exploit police apathy and public disenfranchisement in those same select locales.

It is, after all, how and why Gordon Cummings, the so-called Blackout Ripper, used six days of night in London during the 1942 Nazi bombing raids to rape and murder four women.

It's how and why, as we've confirmed at the Murder Accountability

Project, nearly 15 percent of all unsolved stranglings committed in the United States between 2003 and 2015 have occurred in the same 12-mile stretch in Chicago.

They're murders committed for the most part by a single killer and occurring at the rate of two a year, but buried strategically among an average of 700 other murders annually. The killer – I call him the Millennium Strangler – knows

precisely what he's doing. He set up shop in Chicago for a reason. It's murder-by-numbers, by design.

When I wrote *Mad City* as a visiting scholar at Vanderbilt University in the winter of 2016, it was an otherwise untold story of how divisive campus politics and university administrators, addled by gelatinous vertebrae, enabled the murders of students, staff and local Madison residents by psychopaths hiding in plain sight.

I felt I might be dredging up a dark chapter in history that few would want to revisit.

But within only a matter of months, and following a surreal and tragicomic presidential election, I found it was Madison of 1967 all over

MICHAEL ARNTFIELD

again – everywhere in America, no less, as protests erupted in the streets and on college campuses, often violently.

It was no longer a story of the past. It had very quickly become a diagnosis of the present. It was the real and unvarnished State of the Union.

Parables about those who fail to learn from history aside, once the political dust settles, a tally will need to be taken of the terrible toll of current partisan turmoil.

Place-specific crime is a real thing; campus crime, especially campus murder, is equally real. A bill will come due.

We know that motivated predators, as they have before, may well be using these very distractions to install themselves in undetected fashion at universities across the country. The best indication of future behaviour is, of course, prior behaviour. Violent crime ebbs and flows in cycles – including serial crime.

At the Murder Accountability Project, we will

track and report on the campuses that, like UW-Madison, yield the highest death toll when all is said and done.

It will likely come as little surprise that the most politically divisive campuses, replete with partisan rhetoric and where entrusted administrators suffer from decision paralysis – just as UW-Madison once did – may eventually be revealed for the hunting grounds they are.

The term “safe space” is a misnomer. Try as one may, no spaces, much less a university campus, can ever be truly hermetically sealed. The more effort it takes to engineer these spaces, as it turns out, the greater the real danger.

Whether it's 1967 or 2018, campus predators will always know as much. **CT**

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BENDIB'S WORLD

Khalil Bendib

16



Competition of the superpowers

New 'defence' plan signals a dangerous turn in US foreign policy

The Trump administration's new National Defense Strategy is being touted as a sea change in US foreign policy, a shift from the "war on terrorism" to "great power competition," a line that would not be out of place in the years leading up to World War I. But is the shift really a major course change, or a re-statement of policies followed by the last four administrations?

The US has never taken its eyes off its big competitors.

It was President Bill Clinton who moved NATO eastwards, abrogating a 1991 agreement with the Russians not to recruit former members of the Warsaw Pact that is at the root of current tensions with Moscow. And, while the US and NATO point to Russia's annexation of the Crimea as a sign of a "revanchist" Moscow, it was NATO that set the precedent of altering borders when it dismembered Serbia to create Kosovo after the 1999 Yugoslav war.

It was President George W. Bush who designated China a "strategic competitor," and who tried to lure India into an anti-Chinese alliance by allowing New Delhi to violate the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Letting India purchase uranium on the international market – it was barred from doing so by refusing to sign the NPT – helped ignite the dangerous nuclear arms race with Pakistan in South Asia.

And it was President Barack Obama who further chilled relations with the Russians by backing the 2014 coup in the Ukraine, and whose

"Asia pivot" has led to tensions between Washington and Beijing.

So is jettisoning "terrorism" as the enemy in favour of "great powers" just old wine, new bottle? Not quite. For one thing the new emphasis has a decidedly more dangerous edge to it.

In speaking at Johns Hopkins, Defense Secretary James Mattis warned, "If you challenge us, it will be your longest and worst day," a remark aimed directly at Russia. NATO ally Britain went even further. Chief of the United Kingdom General Staff, Nick Carter, told the Defense and Security Forum that "our generation has become use to wars of choice since the end of the Cold War," but "we may not have a choice about conflict with Russia," adding "The parallels with 1914 are stark."

Certainly the verbiage about Russia and China is alarming. Russia is routinely described as "aggressive," "revisionist," and "expansionist." In a recent attack on China, US Defense Secretary Rex Tillerson described China's trade with Latin America as "imperial."

But in 1914 there were several powerful and evenly matched empires at odds. That is not the case today.

While Moscow is certainly capable of destroying the world with its nuclear weapons, Russia today bears little resemblance to 1914 Russia, or, for that matter, the Soviet Union.

The US and its allies currently spend more

than 12 times what Russia does on its armaments--\$840 billion to \$69 billion – and that figure vastly underestimates Washington’s actual military outlay. A great deal of US spending is not counted as “military,” including nuclear weapons, currently being modernized to the tune of \$1.5 trillion.

The balance between China and the US is more even, but the US outspends China almost three to one. Include Washington’s allies, Japan, Australia and South Korea, and that figure is almost four to one. In nuclear weapons, the ratio is vastly greater: 26 to 1 in favour of the US. Add NATO and the ratios are 28 to 1.

This is not to say that the military forces of Russia and China are irrelevant.

Russia’s intervention in the Syrian civil war helped turn the tide against the anti-Assad coalition put together by the US. But its economy is smaller than Italy’s, and its “aggression” is largely a response to NATO establishing a presence on Moscow’s doorstep.

China has two military goals: to secure its sea-borne energy supplies by building up its navy and to establish a buffer zone in the East and South China seas to keep potential enemies at arm’s length. To that end it has constructed smaller, more agile ships, and missiles capable of keeping US aircraft carriers out of range, a strategy called “area denial.” It has also modernized its military, cutting back on land-based forces and investing in air and sea assets. However, it spends less of its GDP on its military than does the US: 1.9 percent as opposed to 3.8 percent.

Beijing has been rather heavy-handed in establishing “area denial,” alienating many of its neighbours – Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Taiwan – by claiming most of the South China Sea and building bases in the Parcel and Spratly islands.

But China has been invaded several times, starting with the Opium Wars of 1839 and 1856, when Britain forced the Chinese to lift their ban

on importing the drug. Japan invaded in 1895 and 1937. If the Chinese are touchy about their coastline, one can hardly blame them.

China is, however, the US’s major competitor and the second largest economy in the world. It has replaced the US as Latin America’s largest trading partner and successfully outflanked Washington’s attempts to throttle its economic influence. When the US asked its key allies to boycott China’s new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, with the exception of Japan, they ignored Washington. However, commercial success is hardly “imperial.”

Is this a new Cold War, when the US attempted to surround and isolate the Soviet Union? There are parallels, but the Cold War was an ideological battle between two systems, socialism and capitalism. The fight today is over market access and economic domination. When Secretary of State Rex Tillerson warned Latin America about China and Russia, it wasn’t about “Communist subversion,” but trade.

There are other players behind this shift.

For one, the big arms manufacturers – Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, BAE Systems, Northrop Grumman, and General Dynamics – have lots of cash to hand out come election time.

“Great power competition” will be expensive, with lots of big-ticket items: aircraft carriers, submarines, surface ships, and an expanded air force.

This is not to say that the US has altered its foreign policy focus because of arms company lobbies, but they do have a seat at the table. And given that those companies have spread their operations to all 50 states, local political representatives and governors have a stake in keeping – and expanding – those high paying jobs.

Nor are the Republicans going to get much opposition on increased defense spending from the Democrats, many of whom are as hawkish

China has two military goals: to secure its sea-borne energy supplies by building up its navy and to establish a buffer zone in the East and South China seas to keep potential enemies at arm’s length

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as their colleagues across the aisle. Higher defense spending – coupled with the recent tax cut bill – will rule out funding many of the programs the Democrats hold dear. Of course, for the Republicans that dilemma is a major side benefit: cut taxes, increase defense spending, then dismantle social services, Social Security and Medicare in order to service the deficit.

And many of the Democrats are ahead of the curve when it comes to demonising the Russians. The Russian bug-a-boo has allowed the Party to shift the blame for Hillary Clinton's loss to Moscow's manipulation of the election, thus avoiding having to examine its own lack-luster campaign and unimaginative political program.

There are other actors pushing this new emphasis as well, including the Bush administration's neo-conservatives who launched the Iraq War. Their new target is Iran, even though inflating Iran to the level of a "great power" is laughable. Iran's military budget is \$12.3 billion. Saudi Arabia alone spends \$63.7 billion on defense, slightly less than Russia, which has five times the population and eight times the land area. In a clash between Iran and the US and its local allies, the disparity in military strength

would be a little more than 66 to 1.

However, in terms of disasters, even Iraq would pale before a war with Iran.

The most dangerous place in the world right now is the Korean Peninsula, where the Trump administration appears to be casting around for some kind of military demonstration that will not ignite a nuclear war. But how would China react to an attack that might put hostile troops on its southern border?

Piling onto Moscow may have consequences as well. Andrei Kostin, head of one of Russia's largest banks, VTB, told the Financial Times that adding more sanctions against Russia "would be like declaring war,"

The problem with designating "great powers" as your adversaries is that they might just take your word for it and respond accordingly. **CT**

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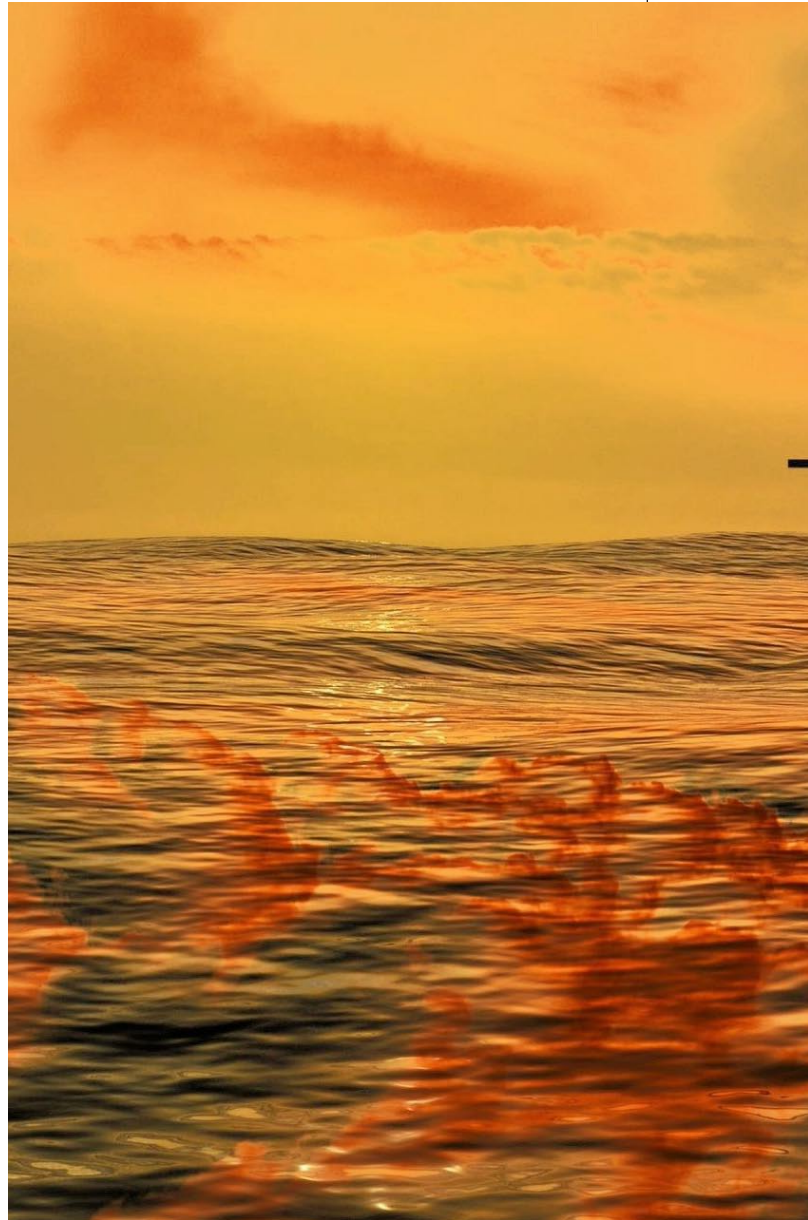
Militarising America's energy

How Donald Trump plans
to enlist fossil fuels in the struggle
for global dominance

20

The new US energy policy of the Trump era is, in some ways, the oldest energy policy on Earth. Every great power has sought to mobilise the energy resources at its command, whether those be slaves, wind-power, coal, or oil, to further its hegemonic ambitions. What makes the Trumpian variant – the unfettered exploitation of America's fossil-fuel reserves – unique lies only in the moment it's being applied and the likely devastation that will result, thanks not only to the 1950s-style polluting of America's air, waters, and urban environment, but to the devastating hand it will lend to a globally warming world.

Last month, if you listened to the chatter among elite power brokers at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, you would have heard a lot of bragging about the immense progress being made in renewable energy. "My government has planned a major campaign," said Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address to the group. "By 2022, we want to generate 175 gigawatts of renewable energy; in the last three years, we have already achieved 60 gigawatts, or around one-third of this target." Other world leaders also boasted of their achievements in speeding the installation of wind and solar energy. Even the energy minister of oil-rich Saudi Arabia, Khalid Al-Falih, announced plans for a \$30-billion to \$50-billion



investment in solar power. Only one major figure defied this trend: US Secretary of Energy Rick Perry. The United States, he insisted, is "blessed" with "a substantial ability to deliver the people of the globe a better quality of life through fossil fuels."

A better quality of life through fossil fuels? On this, he and his Trump administration colleagues now stand essentially alone on planet Earth. Virtually every other country has by now chosen – via the Paris climate accord and efforts like those under way in India – to speed

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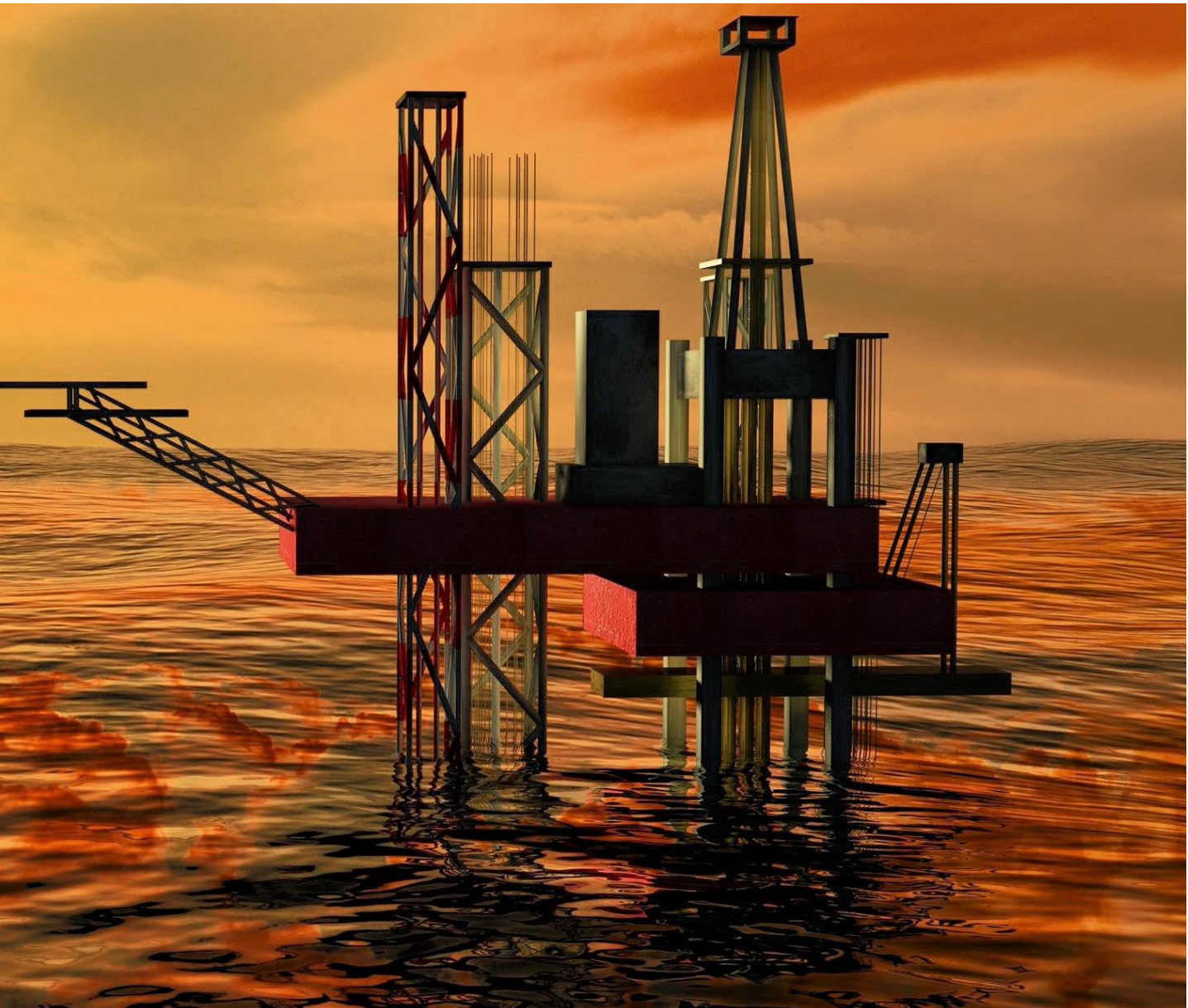


Photo: Leszek Glasner 123RF Stock Photo

the transition from a carbon-based energy economy to a renewable one.

A possible explanation for this: Donald Trump's indebtedness to the very fossil fuel interests that helped propel him into office. Think, for example, of his interior secretary's recent decision to open much of the Atlantic and Pacific coasts to offshore drilling (long sought by the oil and gas industry) or his administration's moves to lift restrictions on coal mining on federal lands (long favoured by the coal industry). Both were clearly acts of payback. Still, far more

than subservience to oil and coal barons lurks in Trump's energy policy (and Perry's words). From the White House perspective, the US is engaged in a momentous struggle for global power with rival nations and, it is claimed, the country's abundance of fossil fuels affords it a vital edge. The more of those fuels America produces and exports, the greater its stature in a competitive world system, which is precisely why maximizing such output has already become a major pillar of President Trump's national security policy.

He laid out his dystopian world vision (and that of the generals he's put in charge of what was once known as American "foreign policy") in a December 18 address announcing the release of the administration's new National Security Strategy (NSS) document. "Whether we like it or not," he asserted, "we are engaged in a new era of competition." The US faces "rogue regimes" like Iran and North Korea and "rival powers, Russia and China, that seek to challenge American influence, values, and wealth." In such an intensely competitive world, he added, "we will stand up for ourselves, and we will stand up for our country like we have never stood up before . . . Our rivals are tough. They're tenacious and committed to the long term. But so are we."

To Trump and his generals, we've been plunged into a world that bears little relation to the one faced by the last two administrations, when great-power conflict was rarely the focus of attention and civilian society remained largely insulated from the pressures of the country's never-ending wars. Today, they believe, the US can no longer afford to distinguish between "the homeland" and foreign battle zones when girding for years of struggle to come. "To succeed," the president concluded, "we must integrate every dimension of our national strength, and we must compete with every instrument of our national power."

And that's where, in the Trumpian worldview, energy enters the picture.

Energy Dominance

From the onset of his presidency, Donald Trump has made it clear that cheap and abundant domestic energy derived from fossil fuels was going to be the crucial factor in his total-mobilisation approach to global engagement. In his view and that of his advisers, it's the essential element in ensuring national economic vitality, military strength, and geopolitical clout, whatever damage it might cause to American life, the

global environment, or even the future of human life on this planet. The exploitation and wielding of fossil fuels now sits at the very heart of the Trumpian definition of national security, as the recently released NSS makes all too clear.

"Access to domestic sources of clean, affordable, and reliable energy underpins a prosperous, secure, and powerful America for decades to come," it states. "Unleashing these abundant energy resources – coal, natural gas, petroleum, renewables, and nuclear – stimulates the economy and builds a foundation for future growth."

So, yes, the document does pay lip service to the role of renewables, though no one should take that seriously given, for instance, the president's recent decision to place high tariffs on imported solar panels, an act likely to cripple the domestic solar-installation industry. What really matters to Trump are those domestic reserves of fossil fuels. Only by using them to gain

energy self-sufficiency, or what he trumpets not just as "energy independence" but total "energy dominance," can the US avoid becoming beholden to foreign powers and so protect its sovereignty. That's why he regularly hails the successes of the "shale revolution," the use of fracking technology to extract oil and gas from deeply buried shale formations. As he sees it, fracking to the max makes America that much less dependent on foreign imports.

Donald Trump has made it clear that cheap and abundant domestic energy derived from fossil fuels was going to be the crucial factor in his total-mobilisation approach to global engagement

It follows then that the ability to supply fossil fuels to other countries will be a source of geopolitical advantage, a reality made painfully clear early in this century when Russia exploited its status as a major supplier of natural gas to Ukraine, Belarus, and other former Soviet republics to try to extract political concessions from them. Donald Trump absorbed that lesson and incorporated it into his strategic playbook.

"Our country is blessed with extraordinary energy abundance," he declared at an "Unleashing American Energy Event" last June. "We are

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a top producer of petroleum and the number-one producer of natural gas . . . With these incredible resources, my administration will seek not only American energy independence that we've been looking for so long, but American energy dominance. And we're going to be an exporter . . .

We will be dominant. We will export American energy all over the world, all around the globe.”

In energy terms, what does dominant mean in practice? For President Trump and his cohorts, it means above all the “unleashing” of the country’s energy abundance by eliminating every imaginable regulatory impediment to the exploitation of domestic reserves of fossil fuels. After all, America possesses some of the largest reservoirs of oil, coal, and natural gas on the planet and, by applying every technological marvel at its disposal, can maximally extract those reserves to enhance national power.

“The truth is that we have near-limitless supplies of energy in our country,” he declared last June. All that stood in the way of exploiting them when he entered the Oval Office, he insisted, were environmental regulations imposed by the Obama administration. “We cannot have obstruction. Since my very first day in office, I have been moving at record pace to cancel these regulations and to eliminate the barriers to domestic energy production.” He then cited his approval of the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines, the cancellation of a moratorium on the leasing of federal lands for coal mining, the reversal of an Obama administration rule aimed at preventing methane leakage from natural gas production on federal lands, and the rollback of Obama’s Clean Power Plan, which (if implemented) would require sharp cuts in coal usage. And from the recent opening of the pristine Alaskan Arctic Refuge to that of those coastal waters to every kind of drilling, it’s never ended.

Closely related to such actions has been his repudiation of the Paris Agreement, because – as he saw it – that pact, too, stood in the way of his plan to “unleash” domestic energy in the pursuit of international power. By withdrawing from the agreement, he claimed to be preserving American “sovereignty,” while opening the path to a new kind of global energy dominance.

“We have so much more [energy] than we ever thought possible,” he asserted. “We are really in the driving seat. And you know what? We don’t want to let other countries take away our sovereignty and tell us what to do and how to do it. That’s not going to happen.”

Never mind that the Paris agreement in no way intruded on American sovereignty. It only obligated its partners – at this point, every country on Earth except the United States – to enact its own greenhouse gas emissions reduction measures aimed at preventing global temperatures from rising more than 2 degrees Celsius above their pre-industrial levels. (That is the biggest increase scientists believe the planet can absorb without experiencing truly catastrophic impacts like a 10-foot rise in global sea levels). In the Obama years, in its own self-designed blueprint for achieving this goal, the United States promised, among other things, to implement the Clean Power Plan to minimise the consumption of coal, itself already a dying industry. This, of course, represented an unacceptable impediment to Trump’s extract-everything policy.

The final step in the president’s strategy to become a major exporter involves facilitating the transport of fossil fuels to the country’s coastal areas for shipment abroad. In this way, he would also turn the government into a major global salesman of fossil fuels (as it already is, for instance, of American weaponry). To do so, he would expedite the approval of permits for the export of LNG, or liquefied natural gas, and even for some new types of “lower emissions” coal plants. The Department of the Treasury, he revealed in that June talk of his, “will address barriers to the financing of highly efficient, overseas coal energy plants.” In addition, he claimed that the Ukrainians tell us “they need millions and millions of metric tons [of coal] right now. There are many other places that need it, too. And we want to sell it to them, and to everyone else all over the globe who need[s] it.” He also announced the approval of expanded LNG exports from a new facility at Lake Charles, Louisiana, and of a new oil pipeline to Mexico, meant

to “further boost American energy exports, and that will go right under the [as yet unbuilt] wall.”

Such energy moves have generally been viewed as part of a pro-industry, anti-environmentalist agenda, which they certainly are, but each is also a component in an increasingly militarised strategy to enlist domestic energy in an epic struggle – at least in the minds of the president and his advisers – to ensure America’s global dominance.

Where all this is headed

Trump achieved many of these maximal-extraction objectives during his first year in office. Now, with fossil fuels uniquely imbedded in the country’s National Security Strategy, we have a clearer sense of what’s happening. First of all, along with the further funding of the US military (and of the “modernisation” of the country’s nuclear arsenal), Donald Trump and his generals are making fossil fuels a crucial ingredient for bulking up our national security. In that way, they will turn anything (or any group) standing in the way of the extraction and exploitation of oil, coal, and natural gas into obstructers of the national interest and, quite literally, of American national security.

In other words, the expansion of the fossil fuel industry and its exports has been transformed into a major component of American foreign and security policy. Of course, such developments and the exports that go with them do generate income and sustain some jobs, but in the Trumpian view they also boost the country’s geopolitical profile by encouraging foreign friends and partners to rely ever more heavily on us for their energy needs, rather than adversaries like Russia or Iran. “As a growing supplier of energy resources, technologies, and services around the world,” the NSS declares without a hint of irony, “the United States will help our allies and partners become more resilient against those that use energy to coerce.”

As the Trump administration moves forward on all this, the key battlefield will undoubtedly be the building and maintaining of energy infrastructure – the pipelines and railroads carrying

oil, gas, and coal from the American interior to processing and export facilities on the coasts. Because so many of the country’s large cities and population centres are on the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, or the Gulf of Mexico, and because the country has long depended on imports for much of its petroleum supply, a surprising share of existing energy infrastructure – refineries, LNG facilities, pumping stations, and the like – is already located along those same coasts. Yet much of the energy supply Trump seeks to exploit – the shale fields of Texas and North Dakota, the coal fields of Nebraska – is located in the interior of the country. For his strategy to succeed, such resource zones must be connected far more effectively to coastal facilities via a mammoth web of new pipelines and other transport infrastructure. All of this will cost vast sums of money and lead to intense clashes with environmentalists, Native peoples, farmers, ranchers, and others whose lands and way of life will be severely degraded when that kind of construction takes place, and who can be expected to resist.

For Trump, the road ahead is clear: do whatever it takes to install the infrastructure needed to deliver those fossil fuels abroad. Not surprisingly then, the National Security Strategy asserts that “we will streamline the Federal regulatory approval processes for energy infrastructure, from pipeline and export terminals to container shipments and gathering lines.” This is bound to provoke numerous conflicts with environmental groups and other inhabitants of what Naomi Klein, author of *This Changes Everything*, calls “Blockadia” – places like the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in North Dakota, where thousands of Native people and their supporters camped out last year in an ultimately unsuccessful effort to block construction of the Dakota Access pipeline. Given the administration’s insistence on linking energy extraction to US security, don’t for a moment imagine that attempts to protest such moves won’t be met with harsh treatment from federal law enforcement agencies.

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Building all of that infrastructure will also prove expensive, so expect President Trump to make pipeline construction integral to any infrastructure modernisation bill he sends to Congress, thereby securing taxpayer dollars for the effort. Indeed, the inclusion of pipeline construction and other kinds of energy build-out in any future infrastructure initiative is already a major objective of influential business groups like the American Petroleum Institute and the US Chamber of Commerce. Rebuilding roads and bridges is fine, commented Thomas Donohue, the Chamber's influential president, but "we're also living in the midst of an energy renaissance, yet we don't have the infrastructure to support it."

As a result, he added, we must "build the pipelines necessary to transport our abundant resources to market." Given the influence such corporate interests have over this White House and congressional Republicans, it's reasonable to assume that any bill on infrastructure revitalisation will be, at least in part, energy focused.

And keep in mind that for President Trump, with his thoroughly fossil-fuelled view of the world, this is just the beginning. Issues that may be viewed by others as environmental or even land-conservation matters will be seen by him and his associates as so many obstacles to national security and greatness. Facing what will almost certainly be a series of unparalleled potential environmental disasters, those who oppose him will also have to contest his view of the world and the role fossil fuels should play in it.

Selling more of them to foreign buyers, while attempting to stifle the development of renewables (and thereby ceding those true job-creating sectors of the economy to other countries) may be good for giant oil and coal corporations, but it

won't win America any friends abroad at a moment when climate change is becoming a growing concern for ever more people on this planet. With prolonged droughts, increasingly severe storms and hurricanes, and killer heat waves affecting ever-larger swaths of the planet, with sea levels rising and extreme weather becoming the norm, the urge for progress on climate change is only growing stronger, as is the demand for climate-friendly renewables.

Donald Trump and his administration of climate-change deniers are quite literally living in the wrong century. The militarisation of energy policy at this late date and the lodging of fossil fuels at the heart of national security policy may seem appealing to them, but it's an approach that's obviously doomed. On arrival, it is, in fact, already the definition of obsolescence.

Unfortunately, given the circumstances of this planet at the moment, it also threatens to doom the rest of us. The further we look into the future, the more likely international leadership will fall on the shoulders of those who can effectively and efficiently deliver renewables, not those who can provide climate-poisoning fossil fuels.

That being so, no one seeking global prestige would say at Davos or anywhere else that we are blessed with "a substantial ability to deliver the people of the globe a better quality of life through fossil fuels." **CT**

Expect President Trump to make pipeline construction integral to any infrastructure modernisation bill he sends to Congress, thereby securing taxpayer dollars for the effort

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Socialists march with USA on Venezuela

It's time for Canada's NDP to oppose efforts to topple country's democratically elected government

Has it become NDP policy to support US-backed coups in Latin America?

The Canadian social democratic party's foreign critic H el ene Laverdi ere has certainly remained silent regarding US leaders musing about a military coup or invasion of Venezuela and has openly supported asphyxiating the left-wing government through other means.

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At the start of this month, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson called for the military to oust President Nicol as Maduro. "In the history of Venezuela and South American countries, it is often times that the military is the agent of change when things are so bad and the leadership can no longer serve the people," Tillerson said in a speech, which included a quip about Maduro being sent to Cuba.

I found no criticism of Tillerson's speech by Laverdi ere. The 15-year Foreign Affairs diplomat also stayed mum when Donald Trump threatened to invade Venezuela in the summer. "We have many options for Venezuela including a possible military option if necessary," the US president said.

Laverdi ere has also failed to challenge Canadian sanctions on Venezuela, which followed a similar move by the US. In a move that probably violated the UN and OAS charters, in Sep-

tember the elected president, vice president and 38 other Venezuelan officials had their assets in Canada frozen and Canadians were barred from having financial relations with these individuals. Two months later, 19 Venezuelan officials were sanctioned under the just adopted Magnitsky Act, which Laverdi ere and the NDP backed. Nor did I find any criticism of Canada's role in the so-called Lima Group of anti-Venezue-

lan foreign ministers. Laverdi ere remained silent when foreign minister Chrystia Freeland organised a meeting of the Lima Group in Toronto four months ago.

In a move that probably violated the UN and OAS charters, the elected president, vice president and 38 other Venezuelan officials had their assets in Canada frozen

She also ignored Canada's role in directly financing an often-unsavory Venezuelan opposition. A specialist in social media and political transition, outgoing Canadian ambassador Ben Rowsell told the Ottawa Citizen in August: "We

established quite a significant internet presence inside Venezuela, so that we could then engage tens of thousands of Venezuelan citizens in a conversation on human rights. We became one of the most vocal embassies in speaking out on human rights issues and encouraging Venezuelans to speak out."

The NDP foreign critic also stayed mum when the federal government expelled Venezuelan diplomats' from Canada in December.

YVES ENGLER

Instead, Laverdière has repeatedly found cause to criticise Venezuela and call on Ottawa to do more to undermine Maduro's government. She publicised and spoke to the weirdly themed "Demonstration for human and democratic rights in Venezuela, in solidarity with Ukraine and Syria" and called Venezuela's vice-president "a drug lord" from whom "the American government has seized billions of dollars of his assets for drug trafficking."

Amidst opposition protests in the summer, Laverdière told CBC, "we would like to see the [Canadian] government be more active in . . . calling for the release of political prisoners, the holding of elections and respecting the National Assembly."

Laverdière's statement ignored the death and destruction caused by opposition protesters and the opposition's effort to hamstringing the government after it won control of the National Assembly in 2015.

At a foreign affairs committee meeting in June, Laverdière responded to an anti-Venezuela screed by saying "I share many of his concerns." Amongst a series of outrageous claims against the leftist government, Peter Kent told the committee: "As so many dictators have done over the centuries, Chávez blamed Venezuela's small but dynamic Jewish community for stealing the wealth of the country. His henchmen endorsed the Holocaust."

In June 2016, Laverdière put out a press release bemoaning "the erosion of democracy," and the need for Ottawa to "defend democracy in Venezuela." In it Laverdière said, "the OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro has invoked the Inter-American Democratic Charter regarding Venezuela, and Canada, as a member of the OAS, should support his efforts." But, the former Uruguayan Foreign Minister's actions as head of the OAS were highly controversial. They even prompted Almagro's past boss, former Uruguayan president José Mujica, to condemn his bias against the Venezuelan government.

Amidst three months of violent right wing protests at the start of 2014, then NDP Americas critic Laverdière presented a position to Cana-

da's House of Commons titled "human rights in Venezuela" and sponsored a Commons resolution (slightly re-worded and reintroduced two days later by then foreign critic Paul Dewar) asking, "the Government of Canada to urge Venezuelan authorities to proactively de-escalate the conflict, protect the human rights and democratic freedoms of Venezuelan citizens, release all those detained during the protests, immediately cease all government interference with peaceful protesters, and ensure that those people who perpetrated the violence be brought to justice and bear the full weight of the law."

After the opposition once again cried foul when they lost the 2013 presidential election, Laverdière accused the Stephen Harper government of being soft on Venezuela (only elections the right wing wins are fair, in the eyes of large swaths of the opposition and Laverdière). "Canada's silence is striking," she told Ipolitics. "They had views on President Chávez, but now they don't seem to actually care what's happening in the country."

In what may be the first ever resolution to an NDP convention calling for the removal of a party critic, the NDP Socialist Caucus submitted a motion to its convention titled "Hands Off Venezuela, Remove Héléne Laverdière as NDP Foreign Affairs Critic."

It notes: "Be It Resolved that the NDP actively oppose foreign interference in Venezuela, defend Venezuela's right to self-determination, reject alignment with US policy in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and beyond, and request the immediate removal of MP Héléne Laverdière as NDP Foreign Affairs Critic."

NDP members who oppose imperialism need to challenge Laverdière's support for Washington and Ottawa's efforts to topple Venezuela's elected government. **CT**

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PHILIP GIRALDI

Boycotting Israel is the right thing to do

Israel's war on free speech continues as Netanyahu boasts of his power to destroy and New Zealand singer is sued for cancelling tour

28

Tracking the consequences of Israel's apparent conviction that it should never be bound by the rules and conventions that constrain the behaviour of other countries sometimes leads one into dark places. The daily torments inflicted on the Palestinians is increasingly a horrific tale that has no apparent end, while Benjamin Netanyahu struts and boasts of his power to do more and even worse, openly calling for war with Lebanon, Syria and Iran on a world stage where no one seems willing to confront him.

I have chronicled how Israel does terrible damage to the United States, through inciting war, its financial demands, and its unparalleled ability to make Washington complicit in its war crimes and general inhumanity. But, as bad as it is, in some areas the worst is yet to come, as Israel and its hubristic leaders know no limits and fear no consequences, thanks to the uncritical support from the American Establishment, a large percentage of which is Jewish, that is unwilling to take a strong stand against Netanyahu and all his works.

Israel has been particularly successful at promoting its preferred narrative, together with sanctions for those who do not concur, in the English-speaking world and also in France, which has the largest Jewish population in Eu-

rope. The sanctions generally consist of legal penalties for those criticising Israel or questioning the accuracy of the accepted holocaust narrative, ie disputing that "six million died."

Those attacking Israeli government policies can be found guilty of antisemitism, which is now considered a hate crime in Britain. Under the new law, passed in December 2016, Britain became one of the first countries to use the definition of

antisemitism agreed upon earlier in the year at a conference of the Berlin-based International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

A statement from British Prime Minister Teresa May's office explained that the intention of the new definition was to "insure that culprits will not be able to get away with being antisemitic because the term is ill-defined, or because different organisations or bodies have different interpretations of it."

May went on to elaborate how the law "... means there will be one definition of anti-semitism – in essence, language or behaviour that displays hatred towards Jews because they are Jews – and anyone guilty of that will be called out on it." The Guardian, in covering the story, added that, "Police forces already use a version of the IHRA definition to help officers decide what could be considered antisemitism."

The British government's own definition re-

Those attacking Israeli government policies can be found guilty of antisemitism, which is now considered a hate crime in Britain



New Zealand singer Lorde "was almost certainly being punished for not performing in Israel" when she was not allowed to sing one of her own songs at the recent Grammys. Photo: Krists Lubhaers, Flickr.com

lies on guidance provided by the IHRA, which asserts that "Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews," and elaborated that it could be considered antisemitic to accuse Jews of being "more loyal to Israel or their religion than to their own nations, or to say the existence of Israel is intrinsically racist." In other words, even if many Jews are more loyal to Israel than to the countries they live in, and even though Israel is intrinsically racist, it is now illegal to say so in Great Britain.

The British government's subservience to Jewish and Israeli interests is nearly as enthusiastic as in the United States, though it is driven by the same sorts of things – Jewish money and Jewish power, particularly in the media. A majority of Conservative Party members of parliament have joined Conservative Friends of Israel and the Labour counterpart is also a force to be reckoned with on the political left.

Last November there was a major scandal when Britain's Overseas Development Minister Priti Patel was forced to resign after she held 14 "unofficial" meetings with Israeli government officials, including Netanyahu. The meetings were during a "vacation trip" in Israel arranged by a British Jew, Lord Polak, who functions as a lobbyist for the Jewish state. During her visit, Patel visited an Israeli military hospital in the occupied Golan Heights. When she returned to Britain, she began to work on the feasibility of sending UK aid money to the Israeli Army for its alleged humanitarian work. None of the meetings were reported to the British Foreign Ministry.

Here in the United States, the friends of Israel appear to believe that anyone who is unwilling to do business with Israel or even with the territories that it has illegally occupied should not be allowed to do business in any capacity with federal, state or even local governments. Constitutional guarantees of freedom of association for every American are apparently not valid if one particular highly favoured foreign country is involved.

Twenty-four states now have legislation sanc-

tioning those who criticise or boycott Israel. And one particular pending piece of federal legislation that is also continuing to make its way through the Senate would far exceed what is happening at the state level and would set a new standard for deference to Israeli interests on the part of the national government. It would criminalise any US citizen “engaged in interstate or foreign commerce” who supports a boycott of Israel or who even goes about “requesting the furnishing of information” regarding it, with penalties enforced through amendments of two existing laws, the Export Administration Act of 1979 and the Export-Import Act of 1945, that include potential fines of between \$250,000 and \$1-million and up to 20 years in prison

According to the Jewish Telegraph Agency, the Senate bill was drafted with the assistance of AIPAC. The legislation, which would almost certainly be overturned as unconstitutional if it ever does become law, is particularly dangerous and goes well beyond any previous pro-Israeli legislation as it essentially denies freedom of expression when the subject is Israel. Israel is particularly fearful of the Boycott, Divest and Sanctions movement because its non-violence is attractive to college students, including many young Jews, who would not otherwise get involved on the issue. Benjamin Netanyahu and his government clearly understand, correctly, that BDS can do more damage than any number of terrorist attacks, as it challenges the actual legitimacy of the Israeli government and its colonising activity in Palestine.

Israel has recently passed legislation criminalising anyone who supports BDS and has set up a semi-clandestine group called Kella Shlomo to counteract its message. The country’s education minister has called BDS supporters “enemy soldiers” and has compared them to Nazis. Netanyahu has also backed up the new law with a restriction on foreigners who support the BDS entering the country. This has included a number of American Jews who have been criti-

cal of Netanyahu, bringing home to them for the first time just how totalitarian “the Middle East’s only democracy” has actually become.

The British experience as well as a recent case involving New Zealand illustrate just how insensitive Israel is to the interests of other nations, and should serve as a warning to Americans of how Netanyahu and company are heedless of fundamental rights such as freedom of speech and association. Lorde, a prominent New Zealand singer, cancelled a planned tour to Israel based on her concerns about the mistreatment of the Palestinians. End of story? No. She was promptly lambasted by the usual suspects including Howard Stern and “America’s Rabbi” Shmuley Boteach and was then punished by the Grammys ceremony in New York City on February 8, where she was told that she would not be allowed to sing one of her own songs even though she was up for album of the year. She was the only finalist who was blocked in that fashion and no one in the media, predictably, linked the two events and recognised that she was almost certainly being punished for not performing in Israel.

Now Lorde is in the middle of a lawsuit initiated by the Israeli government supported a lawfare organization called Shurat HaDin.

In line with its own anti-boycott legislation, Israel now believes it has the right to sue anyone who supports BDS no matter what country they live in or where they may have indicated their support. In this case, Israel is intent on silencing New Zealanders who exercised their freedom of speech in New Zealand.

Shurat HaDin is no stranger to foreign courts, though it has lost more cases than it has won. In February 2015, a lawsuit initiated by it led to the conviction of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestine Liberation Organisation of liability for terrorist attacks in Israel between 2000 and 2004, even though there was no evidence

Lorde, a prominent New Zealand singer, cancelled a planned tour to Israel based on her concerns about the mistreatment of the Palestinians

PHILIP GIRALDI

demonstrating that there had been any direct involvement by either body. A New York federal jury and judge, always friendly to Israeli or Jewish litigants, awarded damages of \$218.5-million, but under a special feature of the Anti-Terrorism Act, the award was automatically tripled to \$655.5-million. Shurat HaDin states that it is “bankrupting terror.”

In the New Zealand case, two New Zealand women who used publicly accessible social media to convince Lorde to cancel her concert are being blamed by Shurat HaDin for the mental anguish of several Jewish concertgoers who apparently have been in a state of shock since the Lorde cancellation was confirmed. They are suing for “moral and emotional injury and the indignity,” and also for the New Zealanders having violated the anti-BDS legislation, “to give real consequences to those who selectively target Israel and seek to impose an unjust and illegal boycott against the Jewish state.”

Based on past experience, Shurat HaDin might even win the case inside Israel while finding that the ruling will not be accepted or enforceable in New Zealand as it is in violation of that country’s constitution. But the real intent is to intimidate critics and, as in some cases brought in the US, to force opponents to spend money on defence lawyers, making critics of Israel reluctant to go public or even willing to settle out of court.

Friends of Israel make sure that any criticism of the country they love above all others becomes toxic. Florida State Senator Randy Fine is, for example, currently demanding that Tampa and Miami cancel upcoming April concerts by Lorde to punish her for her “anti-Semitic boycott” of Israel. He is abusing his position as an elected public official to silence someone he doesn’t agree with out of deference to a racist foreign country that has nothing to do with the United States.

It is important for Americans to realise that Israel not only spies on the US, digs its paws deep into our Treasury, and perverts Washington’s Middle East policy, it is also attempting to

dictate what we the people can and cannot say. And Congress and much of the media are fully on board. This is absolutely insufferable and must be stopped. Groups like Shurat HaDin flying into New York to exploit friendly Manhattan judges and juries to advance Israel’s toxic agendas should be told to go home upon arrival.

Israel’s complete hypocrisy was highly visible in yet another news story this month. The Polish government has passed controversial legislation, subject to judicial review, to criminalise any claims that Poles were responsible for the Second World War prison camps that the Germans set up in their country. This has been strongly and vociferously opposed by Netanyahu, speaking for the Israeli government, which is apparently concerned that its claim on perpetual

and universal victimhood is being challenged. Washington is also, to no one’s surprise, lining up with Israel, threatening that the new law might damage bilateral relations with Warsaw.

Characteristically, no one in the US mainstream media, which is generally supportive of Bibi’s complaints, is noting that the proposed Polish legislation is not too dissimilar to any number of existing anti-free speech laws criminalising holocaust denial in Europe or criticism of Israel in the United

States. Nor is it different than some laws in Israel, including the criminalisation of anyone who speaks or writes in support of BDS. As usual, there is one standard for Jewish issues and Israelis and a quite different standard for everyone else.

CT

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Florida State Senator Randy Fine is currently demanding that Tampa and Miami cancel upcoming April concerts by Lorde to punish her for her “anti-Semitic boycott” of Israel

JOHN ESKOW

A trainload of fools

TV network news is playing a special game of three-card monte, in which the little ball is always in the same box

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Way back in the 1940s, before he went into the field of higher education – a less glamorous branch of the entertainment business – my father was a prodigy of stage magic. He was especially gifted at what’s called “close” magic – those in-your-face card tricks, disappearing coins, and other dazzling acts of prestidigitation (let’s keep that word from going extinct!) As a teenaged magician in New York City he even patented two of his own tricks, which were published in *The Linking Rings*, the trade journal for magicians; I remember that one of his illusions was called *The WOKSE Effect*, which involved letters appearing in a mirror to form the backwards spelling of the family name.

But, to paraphrase *The Buggles* 1980s hit, video killed the prestidigitation star: close magic, especially those tricks that depended on sleight-of-hand, couldn’t survive the brutal close-ups of television cameras. But long after my old man had abandoned smoky nightclubs for the leafy halls of academe and leaped into the bourgeoisie, he kept his hand in – quite literally. All the neighbourhood kids came over to our house to be awed by my father. He never stopped practicing his cardwork – deceptive shuffles, fans, and “forces” – making you pick one specific card from the deck of

52 when you’re absolutely, positively sure you chose it of your own free will. This kind of magic demands an exquisitely fine touch, which can only be maintained by constant practice.

Even when he’d become a college president, whenever my father sat down at presidential desk – to ponder weighty issues, to talk on the phone, whatever – he kept working a silver dollar

across the back of his knuckles, slowly, right to left and then back again, the tendon of each finger rising and falling in turn as the heavy coin rolled hypnotically from one knuckle-crevice to the next.

Though I became the guinea-pig for his latter-day prestidigitation, my father always kept faith with the magicians’ code, and never once told me how a trick was done. Maybe he secretly hoped I’d grow so desperate to acquire his secret knowledge that I would

plunge into the mysteries of his ancient *Linking Rings*, and by doing so join the ancient brotherhood.

In any case, he would always deflect my questions about his tricks with two simple bits of instruction. “One: remember that whatever I’m doing, it’s not actually magic. And two: never look where I’m trying to make you look.”

Much later, I realised he was teaching me les-

He would always deflect my questions about his tricks with two simple bits of instruction. “One: remember that whatever I’m doing, it’s not magic. And two: never look where I’m trying to make you look”

JOHN ESKOW

sons that extended far beyond magic. He was teaching me not to be A Mark.

If only dementia would loosen its death-grip on my father's brain for just a few hours, and he could give that second piece of advice to the glib rubes of the American media!

It's all about misdirection, Rachel!

Don't look where they're trying to make you look, Lawrence!

It's kind of hilarious – in a heart-breaking way – to see the smug grins on those pancaked faces as they report what they call “the news” – especially those well-fed, unlined faces on MSNBC. They're so proud – so knowing! They're the cognoscenti, the clear-eyed few who always pick the right card, who know which of the three-card-monte cups is hiding the little ball.

Yep! Can't fool us! It's the cup marked RUSSIA!

It reached one of a thousand summits of absurdity when Trump bowed to the MSNBC/neo-con pressure and bombed a Syrian airfield (killing 16 civilians, which they have never seen fit to mention) in order to show he really and truly hated those Commies (Joy Reid insists it's still a Red Leninist Hell!) Mentally gobsmacked by this break in the narrative, Lawrence O'Donnell speculated that . . . Putin had ordered Trump to do it!

Meanwhile, enjoying the blessings of this misdirection, the war merchants and the water-poisoners and all the other oppressors go about their dark work unobserved.

But MSNBC faces never change; they run breathless Breaking News updates about memos and meetings and dumb underlings doing dumb underling things, but there are never any real twists to their story. Whenever I chance to watch for ten minutes, a line from Dylan's epic song *Senor springs* to mind: “The last thing I saw before I stripped and kneeled/Was a trainload of fools bogged down in a magnetic field.” (Paren-

thetical note: that is an amazing couplet, enough to quash the Noble Prize debate, and I will climb up proudly on Ezra Pound's table in my cowboy boots and shout it out loud.)

They're always auditioning lousy new motos – remember “Lean Forward?” – how about this one: MSNBC: Proudly Bogged Down for The Rest of Time!

No matter the hour, day, or week, any time you tune in to Debbie Wasserman-Schultz's favourite network – vaguely hoping they might move on, say, to cover our racist prison system, or our continued genocide of Native Americans, or any of a dozen societal horrors that any ColdType reader can tick off in his/her sleep, and probably does – the Rachels and Joys and Aris will always be sitting there in the parlour car, blissfully un-

concerned with prison or Indians, paralysed but unaware of it, gazing out the windows slack-jawed and endlessly mistaking Dylan's magnetic waves for a fast-moving landscape of mountains and forests, as the ruling elite pipes in pre-recorded moving-train sounds to reinforce the illusion for them.

RUSSIA, whisper the moving train-wheels on the omnipresent soundtrack; RUSSIA . . . RUSSIA . . . RUSSIA . . . picking up speed now . . . RUSSIA-RUSSIA-RUSSIA – and instead of “whoo-whoo,” the whistle says “poo-ooo-tin!” Listen: it's entrancing, isn't it, Rachel?

I'm not the card mechanic my old man was, but I'd sure like to find that magnetic field, sneak onto the parlour car, and deal a few hands of high-stakes draw poker to the MSNBC faces: sophisticated as they think they are, in fact they've become The Ultimate Marks. **CT**

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BRIAN MITCHELL

War. What is it good for? Business!

Out of their own mouths: the inhumane, murderous ideology of capitalism

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The power and importance of original quotes cannot be stressed enough. It is most revealing and undeniable, especially to the incredulous, to let presidents, prime ministers and military leaders speak for themselves. I have always found that original quoted statements have the most powerful impact; far more than any dialogue from me or any journalist or academic could ever have.

Although some of the quotes may be dated, the ideology of capitalism remains more inhuman, predatory, warlike, not only murderous but more genocidal every day.

“The possibility of peace talks on Korea interrupted Wall Street’s recovery today and caused a fair sized set back.” – The Times March 26 1951.

“Peace if it really arrived would upset things. At present arms expenditure and aid to other countries are bolstering business.” – US News and

World Report Dec 31 1948.

“Peace would pull the props from beneath the entire economic structure.” – US News and World Report.

“We now live in a state of permanent war – a global arms industry, apparently the largest single international business, must have its products used up so more can be sold. There must be profits for the capitalists and jobs for the proles... Are we not still in Caligula’s Rome?” – David Watson, New Internationalist magazine.

“Just when people thought the boom might be tapering off, the war in Korea set off a new boom. It’s really a made-to-order situation to keep business at a high level.” – US News and World Report, summer 1950.

“The possibility of peace talks on Korea interrupted Wall Street’s recovery today and caused a fair sized set back.” – The Times March 26 1951.

“Peace would pull the props from beneath the entire economic structure.” – US News and World Report.

“The foreign policies of this country, Britain and France have now entered a truly agonising crisis. The cause is the



BRIAN MITCHELL

so-called peace offensive now being carried on by the masters of the Kremlin.” – Washington Post April 16 1951.

“The possibility of a temporary truce haunts United States policy planners.” – Business Week April 12 1951.

“Sudden peace could work havoc with business.” – New York Times May 20 1951.

“Military needs have now become the single dominant factor in American economic policy overseas.” – The Times Sept 17 1951.

“I made wars so that I could sell arms to both sides. ... I must have sold more arms than anyone else in the world.” – Greek born multi millionaire and Vickers arms dealer Basil Zaharoff, 1920s.

“In a lot of ways, World War Two was not hell for the US... the elimination of unemployment, the general increase in incomes, the boom in business...” “Economic Consequences of a Third World War.” Business Week, NY, April 24 1948.

“The coincidence between the boom and the conclusion of the Paris Treaties, and the obvious connection between the rise in share values... and France’s agreement to the rearmament of West Germany... the buyers expect that arms contracts... will lead to an increase in profits and thus to higher dividends. The stock exchange thus counts in advance on an arms boom and regards this development as guaranteed.” – Frankfurter Rundschau, Jan 3 1955.

“The Department of Defense is the behemoth... With an annual budget larger than the gross domestic product of Russia, it is an empire.” – The 9/11 Commission Report.

“The US taxpayer is now carrying a gigantic

burden. Nearly one-third of the nation’s budget goes to the military. ... 53 cents of every tax dollar goes to the military to pay for arms, salaries, facilities, overheads, and debts from Vietnam and other wars.” – Former CIA official and author John Stockwell.

“...a number of financial and industrial figures of World War II and several members of the government served the cause of money... While aiding the United States’ war effort, they also aided Nazi Germany’s. ... several of the greatest American corporate leaders were in league with Nazi corporations before and after Pearl Harbor, including I.G. Farben, the colossal Nazi industrial trust that created Auschwitz. ... The tycoons were linked by an ideology: the ideology of Business as Usual. Bound by identical reactionary ide-



as, the members sought a common future in fascist domination regardless of which world leader might further that ambition. ... [did the public know that] Standard

Oil of New Jersey [part of the Rockefeller oil empire] managers shipped the enemy’s fuel through neutral Switzerland and that the enemy was shipping Allied fuel? Suppose the public had discovered that the Chase Bank in Nazi-occupied Paris after Pearl Harbor was doing millions of dollars’ worth of business with the enemy with the full knowledge of the head office in Manhattan ... Or that Ford trucks were being built for the German occupation troops in France with authorisation from Dearborn, Michigan? Or that Colonel Sosthenes Behn, the head of the international American telephone conglomerate ITT, flew from New York to Madrid to Berne during the war to help improve Hitler’s communications systems and improve the robot bombs that devastated London? Or that ITT built the Focke Wulfs that dropped bombs on British and American troops? Or that crucial ball bearings were shipped to Nazi-associated customers in Latin America... when American forces were desperately short of them? Or that such arrangements were known about



BRIAN MITCHELL

in Washington and either sanctioned or deliberately ignored? ... In the summer of 1937, according to MI6 files in the Ministry of Defence, London, Bedaux met with the Duke of Windsor, Bedaux's close friend Errol Flynn [American actor], Rudolf Hess, and Martin Bormann [leading Nazis] in a secret encounter at the Hotel Meurice in Paris. At the meeting the Duke promised to help Hess contact the Duke of Hamilton, who had a direct link with Himmler and Kurt von Schroeder to the Schroeder Bank. . . . Hess was determined to insure an alliance with Great Britain... efforts were made by Hess to meet with Hamilton on several further occasions, which finally led to Hess's dramatic landing on the Hamilton estate in 1941." – Charles Higham, "Trading with the Enemy", detailing all the continuing tradings of the US and Britain with the Nazis throughout the Second World War.

"If there is no sufficient reason for war, the war party will make war on one pretext, then invent another... after the war is on." – US Senator Robert LaFollette.

"The essence of so-called war prosperity; it enriches some by what it takes from others. It is

not rising wealth but a shifting of wealth and income." – Ludwig von Mises.

"Wars are not paid for in wartime, the bill comes later." – Benjamin Franklin.

"War is never economically beneficial except for those in position to profit from war expenditures." – US Congressman Ron Paul.

"We must further expressly and exactly establish the point of view, no less necessary in practice, from which war is regarded as nothing but the continuation of state policy by other means." – Karl von Clausewitz, Prussian General, military writer.

"World capitalism has at the present time, ie, about the beginning of the 20th-century, reached the stage of imperialism . . . Imperialist wars, i.e., wars for the mastery of the world, for markets, for bank capital and for the strangulation of small nations, are inevitable under such a state of affairs." – Vladimir Ilych Lenin. **CT**

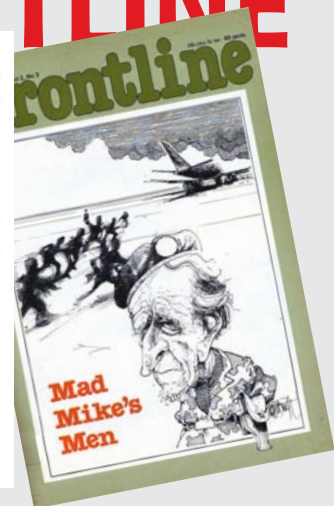
Brian Mitchell is a London-based author and journalist. He is a former trade union organiser and teacher.

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God is an algorithm

Why we're closer to a Black Mirror-style reality than we think

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Do we have free will, or are we controlled by a higher power? The capacity to act and determine one's own actions in an increasingly technologised world is the most prominent theme in the latest season of Netflix's *Black Mirror*. And the question writer Charlie Brooker addresses in his bleak sketches is as old as human consciousness itself.

Before the Industrial Revolution and the first sci-fi narrative (Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, 200 years old this year) warning us of the dangers of replacing an inscrutable ancient god with a scientific one, people tried to determine two opposing but closely related things: how much agency they had, and whether they could rely on miraculous help from above in a time of difficulty. For free will is both a burden and a blessing. While we are imperfect, our vision limited by our perception, surely God is omniscient, omnipotent and wise? When we're in trouble, he can save us and redeem our mistakes.

Isn't technology a better god than the previous god? In the past, people asked deities about weather patterns, love, luck, and everything else. Their predictions worked, at best, 50% per cent of the time. Now we have weather forecasts delivered to our mobiles, predictive dating apps and GPS trackers. Don't we all want to live in a world in which our fallible agency is replaced by technological perfection?

Brooker's answer to this question is a resounding "no". Technology is certainly a more efficient god since it has turned magic into reality, but the human issue of free will is still a big part of our relationship with it. Seeing how clever, precise, omniscient and infallible this new god is, we have decided to entrust it with a range of mundane tasks we previously used to perform ourselves: counting, translating, finding our way, even expressing emotions and, of course, shopping.

This is a tendency Brooker particularly despises. In his view, human laziness is what is

going to destroy civilisation. Brooker predicts a world in which the scope of action for free will – our error-prone but nevertheless important decision-making capacity – becomes so narrow that we forget how it feels to be human, how to feel pain and to make mistakes. Thanks to smart phones, tablets, Alexa and Google, we have cognitively unloaded anything requiring an effort or possessing a margin for error to artificial intelligence (AI). All these functions will now be taken care of by the god of technology, by the All-Seeing Algorithm.

Even the more optimistic episodes of the latest (fourth) season – Hang the DJ and Black Museum – show that the human desire for an all-controlling, all-knowing supreme being does, indeed, result in exactly this kind of supreme being, but not in a good way.

In Hang the DJ, we are shown a world in which finding a mate no longer involves going through a series of disappointments and bouts of happiness. An app finds a person’s perfect match while their “copies”, trapped within what is called “the system”, make mistakes and suffer broken hearts instead of their “originals” who are waiting for the result in real life.

Although the episode’s finale is unexpectedly uplifting and positive, its overall message is not: as people, we have gone too far in shielding ourselves from any errors in the decision-making process. We wanted more perfection and less agency, and that’s exactly what we got.

This perfection, however, comes at a price. In Arkangel, a mother implants into her baby daughter a tracking device which monitors her well-being and detects her location. The device also allows the mother to see the world through her daughter’s eyes and to blur out any disturbing information. However, the daughter fights for her right to make mistakes and to handle the unpleasantness of the world. Keen to break up the unhealthy attachment aided by technology, the girl ends up taking drugs and having sex. Instead of the flawless child, the mother is faced with a rebellious teenager who ends up beating up and leaving her over-protective parent.

Instead of being helpful and protective, technology becomes terrifying in Metalhead – a stark black-and-white vignette reminiscent of The Terminator – in which a sole female survivor is pursued by a robotic dog-like creature after a failed warehouse raid. The dog is autonomous, relentless and problem-solving. It does not make mistakes. Although the protagonist manages to outsmart the canine terminator on a number of occasions, in the end the technology is so powerful and ubiquitous that killing herself is her only escape.

Those hoping to survive the onslaught of technological precision must look for rare flaws in it. This is what happens in USS Callister – probably the best episode in the series. Copies of real people trapped inside a private version of a space video game attempt to escape from it through a wormhole which temporarily appears, only to find themselves in the commercial version of the same game. Although they have more agency, they are still not entirely free.

And again, in Crocodile, the technology does not fail, but the human being does, try as she might. The recently invented memory-retrieving device prevents Mia from concealing the murders she has committed. Interestingly enough, Brooker makes us sympathise with the murderer as we witness her struggle to evade the relentless power of technology. Her agency is thwarted by the device, leaving her with no chance of escape.

In all episodes, Brooker shows the inevitable end of human agency as daily routines are taken over by artificial intelligence. Technology leaves only a small margin for human error. This is an excellent god. It has realised so many of our dreams, but is it the god we wanted?

Perhaps we should trust ourselves more and rely less on unfailing and dependable technology. Surrendering to it means losing that vital element that makes us human: the ability to make mistakes and to grow by learning from them. **CT**

Helena Bassil-Mozorow is a lecturer in media and journalism at Glasgow Caledonian University. This article first appeared at www.theconversation.com

WILLIAM BLUM

Slant, bias and propaganda

'Fake news' is not the problem; the main issue with the media is, as it has always been, not what is published, but what is left out

The people who created Facebook and Google must be smart. They're billionaires, their companies are worth multi-multi billions, their programmes are used by billions around the world.

But all these smart people, because of Congressional pressure, have swallowed the stories about "fake news." Facebook hired a very large staff of people to read everything posted by users to weed out the fake stuff. That didn't last too long at all before the company announced that it wasn't "comfortable" deciding which news sources are the most trustworthy in a "world with so much division." We all could have told them that, couldn't we?

Facebook's previous efforts to ask its users to determine the accuracy of news did not turn out any better. Last year, the company launched a feature that allowed users to flag news stories they felt were inaccurate. The experiment was shuttered after nine months.

"Fake news," however, is not the problem. News found in the mainstream media is rarely fake; ie, actual lies made from whole cloth, totally manufactured. This was, however, a common practice of the CIA during the first Cold War. The Agency wrote editorials and phoney news stories to be knowingly published by Latin American media with no indication of CIA authorship or CIA payment to the particular media. The propaganda value of such a "news" item might be multiplied by being picked up by other CIA stations in Latin America who would

disseminate it through a CIA-owned news agency or a CIA-owned radio station. Some of these stories made their way back to the United States to be read or heard by unknowing North Americans.

Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction" in 2003 is another valid example of "fake news," but, like the CIA material, this was more a government invention than a media creation.

The main problem with the media today, as earlier, is what is left out of articles dealing with controversial issues. For example, the very common practice during the first Cold War of condemning the Soviet Union for taking over much of Eastern Europe after the Second World War. This takeover is certainly based on fact. But the condemnation is very much misapplied if no mention is made of the fact that Eastern Europe became communist because Hitler, with the approval of the West, used it as a highway to reach the Soviet Union to wipe out Bolshevism once and for all; the Russians in World Wars I and II lost about 40-million people because the West had twice used this highway to invade Russia. It should not be surprising that after World War II the Soviets were determined to close down the highway. It was not simply "communist expansion."

Or the case of Muammar Gaddafi. In the Western media he is invariably referred to as "the Libyan dictator." Period. And he certainly was a dictator. But he also did many marvellous things for the people of Libya (such as the high-

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est standard of living in Africa) and for the continent of Africa (like creating the African Union). Or the case of Vladimir Putin. The Western media never tires of reminding its audience that Putin was once a KGB lieutenant colonel – wink, wink, we all know what that means, chuckle, chuckle. But do they ever remind us with a wink or chuckle that US President George H.W. Bush was once – not merely a CIA officer, but the *fuck-ing* Director of the CIA!

Facebook chief executive Mark Zuckerberg now says: “We decided that having the community determine which sources are broadly trusted would be most objective;” “broadly trusted” sources being those that are “affirmed by a significant cross-section of users.”

Right, a significant cross-section of users: Will that include me? Highly unlikely. Broadly trusted sources: Will that include media like my Anti-Empire Report? Just as unlikely. Anything close? Maybe a single token leftist website amongst a large list, I’d guess. And a single token rightist website. Zuckerberg and his ilk probably think that the likes of NBC, NPR and CNN are very objective and are to be trusted when it comes to US foreign-policy issues or capitalism-vs-socialism issues.

On January 19, Google announced that it would cancel a two-month old experiment, called Knowledge Panel, that informed its users that a news article had been disputed by “independent fact-checking organizations.” Conservatives had complained that the feature unfairly targeted a right-leaning outlet.

Imagine that. It’s almost like people have political biases. Both Facebook and Google are still experimenting, trying to find a solution that I do not think exists. My solution is to leave it as it is. There’s no automated way to remove bias or slant or judgment from writing or from those persons assigned to evaluate such.

Fake news by omission – the Haiti example

“I’m happy to have a president that will bluntly

speak the truth in negotiations,” Eric Prince commented on Breitbart News. “If the president says some places are shitholes, he’s accurate.” Thus did Mr Eric Prince pay homage to Mr Donald Trump. Prince, of course, being the renowned founder of Blackwater, the private army which, in September 2007, opened fire in a crowded square in Baghdad, killing 17 Iraqi civilians and seriously wounding 20 more.

Speaking of Haiti and other “shitholes,” Prince declared: “It’s a sad characterisation of many of these places. It’s not based on race. It has nothing to do with race. It has to do with corrupt incompetent governments that abuse their citizens, and that results in completely absent infrastructure to include open sewers, and unclean water, and crime. It’s everything we don’t want in America.”

Like the US media, Prince failed to point out that on two occasions in the recent past when Haiti had a decent government, led by Jean-Bertrand Aristide, which was motivated to improve conditions, the United States was instrumental in nullifying its effect. This was in addition to fully supporting the Duvalier dictatorship for nearly 30 years before Aristide.

Aristide, a reformist priest, was elected to the presidency in 1991, but was ousted eight months later in a military coup. The 1993 Clinton White House thus found itself in the awkward position of having to pretend – because of all their rhetoric about “democracy” – that they supported the democratically-elected Aristide’s return to power from his exile in the US. After delaying his return for more than two years, Washington finally had its military restore Aristide to office, but only after obliging the priest to guarantee that he would not help the poor at the expense of the rich – literally! – and that he would stick closely to free-market economics. This meant that Haiti would continue to be the assembly plant of the Western Hemisphere, with its workers receiving starvation wages, literally! If Aristide had thoughts about breaking the agreement forced

He would always deflect my questions about his tricks with two simple bits of instruction. “One: remember that whatever I’m doing, it’s not magic. And two: never look where I’m trying to make you look”

upon him, he had only to look out his window – US troops were stationed in Haiti for the remainder of his term.

In 2004, with Aristide once again the elected president, the United States staged one of its most blatant coups ever. On February 28, 2004, American military and diplomatic personnel arrived at Aristide's home to inform him that his private American security agents must either leave immediately to return to the US or fight and die; that the remaining 25 of the American security agents hired by the Haitian government, who were to arrive the next day, had been blocked by the United States from coming; that foreign and Haitian rebels were nearby, heavily armed, determined and ready to kill thousands of people in a bloodbath. Aristide was pressured to sign a "letter of resignation" before he was flown into exile by the United States.

And then US Secretary of State Colin Powell, in the sincerest voice he could muster, told the world that Aristide "was not kidnaped. We did not force him onto the airplane. He went onto the airplane willingly. And that's the truth." Powell sounded as sincere as he had sounded a year earlier when he gave the UN a detailed (albeit imaginary) inventory of the chemical, biological and nuclear weapons in Iraq, shortly before the US invasion.

Jean-Bertrand Aristide was on record, by word and deed, as not being a great lover of globalisation or capitalism. This was not the kind of man the imperial mafia wanted in charge of the Western Hemisphere's assembly plant. It was only a matter of time before they took action.

It should be noted that the United States also kept progressives out of power in El Salvador, another of Trump's "shithole" countries.

Healthcare and socialism

Poor America. It can travel to other planets, create a military force powerful enough to conquer the world ten times over, invent the Internet and a thousand other things . . . but it can't provide medical care for all its people.

Now, three of the richest men in the world, the

heads of Amazon, Berkshire Hathaway, and JP Morgan Chase, which collectively employ more than a million people, have announced they are partnering to create an independent company aimed at reining in ever-increasing health-care costs for companies and employees alike. The three men will pursue this objective through a company whose initial focus will be on technology solutions that will provide US employees and their families with simplified, high-quality and transparent healthcare at a reasonable cost. Almost no details were made available on how they plan to do this, but I predict that whatever they do will fail. They have lots of models to emulate – in Canada, Europe, Cuba and elsewhere – but to an American nostril these examples all suffer from the same unpleasant odour, the smell of socialism.

I say this even though their announcement states that the new company will be "free from profit-making incentives and constraints." And Warren Buffet, head of Berkshire Hathaway, is cited on CNN as follows: "Warren Buffett says America is ready for single-payer health care. The billionaire investor tells PBS NewsHour that government-run health insurance 'probably is the best system' because it would control escalating costs. 'We are such a rich country. In a sense, we can afford to do it.'"

Of course, the US could have afforded to do it 50 years ago. I really hope that my cynicism is misplaced.

Driverless police cars

Yes, that's what they're thinking of next. Among other things these cars will be able to catch speeders and issue tickets. But here's the real test of the system's Artificial Intelligence – Can the police car be taught how to recognise a young black man, drive to within a few feet of him, and fire a gun at his head? **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; and Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire. His web site is www.williamblum.org

Revolt of the robots

We can still find meaning, purpose and pride, even though the workplace no longer offers those qualities

Why bother designing robots when you can reduce human beings to machines? Last week, Amazon acquired a patent for a wristband that can track the hand movements of workers. If this technology is developed, it could grant companies almost total control over their workforce.

A fortnight ago the Guardian interviewed a young man called Aaron Callaway, who works nights in an Amazon warehouse. He has to place 250 items an hour into the right carts. His work, he says, is so repetitive, antisocial and alienating that “I feel like I’ve lost who I was ... My main interaction is with the robots.” And this is before the wristbands might be deployed.

I see the terrible story of Don Lane, the DPD driver who collapsed and died from diabetes, as another instance of the same dehumanisation. After being fined £150 by the company for taking a day off to see his doctor, this “self-employed contractor” (who worked full-time for the company and wore its uniform) felt he could no longer keep his hospital appointments. As the philosopher Byung-Chul Han argues, in the gig economy, “every individual is master and slave in one ... class struggle has become an internal struggle with oneself.”

Everything work offered during the social democratic era – economic security, a sense of belonging, social life, a political focus – has been stripped away: alienation is now almost complete. Digital Taylorism, splitting interesting jobs into tasks of mind-robbing monotony, threatens

to degrade almost every form of labour. Workers are reduced to the crash dummies of the post-industrial age. The robots have arrived, and you are one of them.

So where do we find identity, meaning and purpose, a sense of autonomy, pride and utility? The answer, for many people, is volunteering. Over the past few weeks, I’ve spent a fair bit of time in the NHS, and I’ve realised that there are two public health systems in this country: the official one, performing daily miracles, and the voluntary network that supports it.

Everywhere I look, there are notices posted by people helping at the hospital, running support groups for other patients, raising money for research and equipment. Without this support, I suspect the official system would fall apart.

And so would many of the patients. Some fascinating research papers suggest that positive interactions with other people promote physical healing, reduce physical pain, and minimise anxiety and stress for patients about to have an operation. Support groups save lives. So do those who raise money for treatment and research.

Last week I spoke to two remarkable volunteers. Jeanne Chattoe started fundraising for Against Breast Cancer after her sister was diagnosed with the disease. Until that point, she had lived a quiet life, bringing up her children and working in her sister’s luggage shop. She soon discovered powers she never knew she

GEORGE MONBIOT

possessed. Before long, she started organising an annual fashion show which, across 13 years, raised almost £400,000. Then, lying awake one night, she had a great idea: why not decorate her home town pink once a year, recruiting the whole community to the cause? Witney in the Pink has now been running for 17 years, and all the shops participate: even the butchers dye their uniforms pink. The event raises at least £6000 a year.

“It’s changed my whole life,” Jeanne told me. “I eat, live and breathe against breast cancer ... I don’t know what I would have done without fundraising. Probably nothing. It’s given me a purpose.” She has acquired so much expertise organising these events that in 2009 Against Breast Cancer appointed her chair of its trustees, a position she still holds today.

After his transplant, Kieran Sandwell donated his old heart to the British Heart Foundation. Then he began thinking about how he could support its work. He told me he had “been on the work treadmill where I’ve not enjoyed my job for years, wondering what I’m doing.” He set off to walk the entire coastline of the UK, to raise money and awareness. He now has 2,800 miles behind him and 2000 ahead. “I’ve discovered that you can actually put your mind to anything. ... whatever I come across in my life I can probably cope with it. Nothing fazes me now.”

Like Jeanne, he has unlocked unexpected powers. “I didn’t know I had in me the ability just to be able to talk to anyone.” His trek has also ignited a love of nature. “I seem to have created this fluffy bubble: what happens to me every day is wonderful. ... I want to try to show people that there’s a better life out there.” For Jeanne and Kieran, volunteering has given them what work once promised: meaning, purpose, place, community. This, surely, is where hope lies.

So here’s my outrageous proposal: replace careers advice with volunteering advice. I’ve argued before that much of the careers advice offered by schools and universities is worse

than useless, shoving students headfirst into the machine, reinforcing the seductive power of life-destroying corporations. In fairness to the advisers, their job is becoming almost impossible anyway: the entire infrastructure of employment seems designed to eliminate fulfilling and fascinating work.

But while there is little chance of finding jobs that match students’ hopes and personalities and engage their capabilities, there is every chance of connecting them with good opportunities to volunteer. Perhaps it is time we saw volunteering as central to our identities and work as peripheral: something we have to do, but that no longer defines us. I would love to hear people reply, when asked what they do, “I volunteer at the food bank and run marathons. In my time off, I work for money.”

And there’s a side-effect. The world has been wrecked by people seeking status through their work. In many professions – such as fossil fuels, weapons manufacture, banking, advertising – your prestige rises with the harm you do. The greater your destruction of other people’s lives, the great-

er your contribution to shareholder value. But when you volunteer, the respect you gain rises with the good you do.

We should keep fighting for better jobs and better working conditions. But the battle against workplace technology is an unequal one. The real economic struggle now is for the redistribution of wealth generated by labour and machines, through universal basic income, the revival of the commons and other such policies. Until we achieve this, most people will have to take whatever work is on offer. But we cannot let it own us. **CT**

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*George Monbiot’s latest book, **How Did We Get Into This Mess?**, is published by Verso. This article was first published in the Guardian. Monbiot’s web site is www.monbiot.com*

The real economic struggle now is for the redistribution of wealth generated by labour and machines, through universal basic income, the revival of the commons and other such policies

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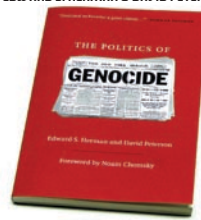
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NATO
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Contributors: Denis Beckett
Alison Stine | Ian Dunt
Justin Raimondo | Philip Kraske

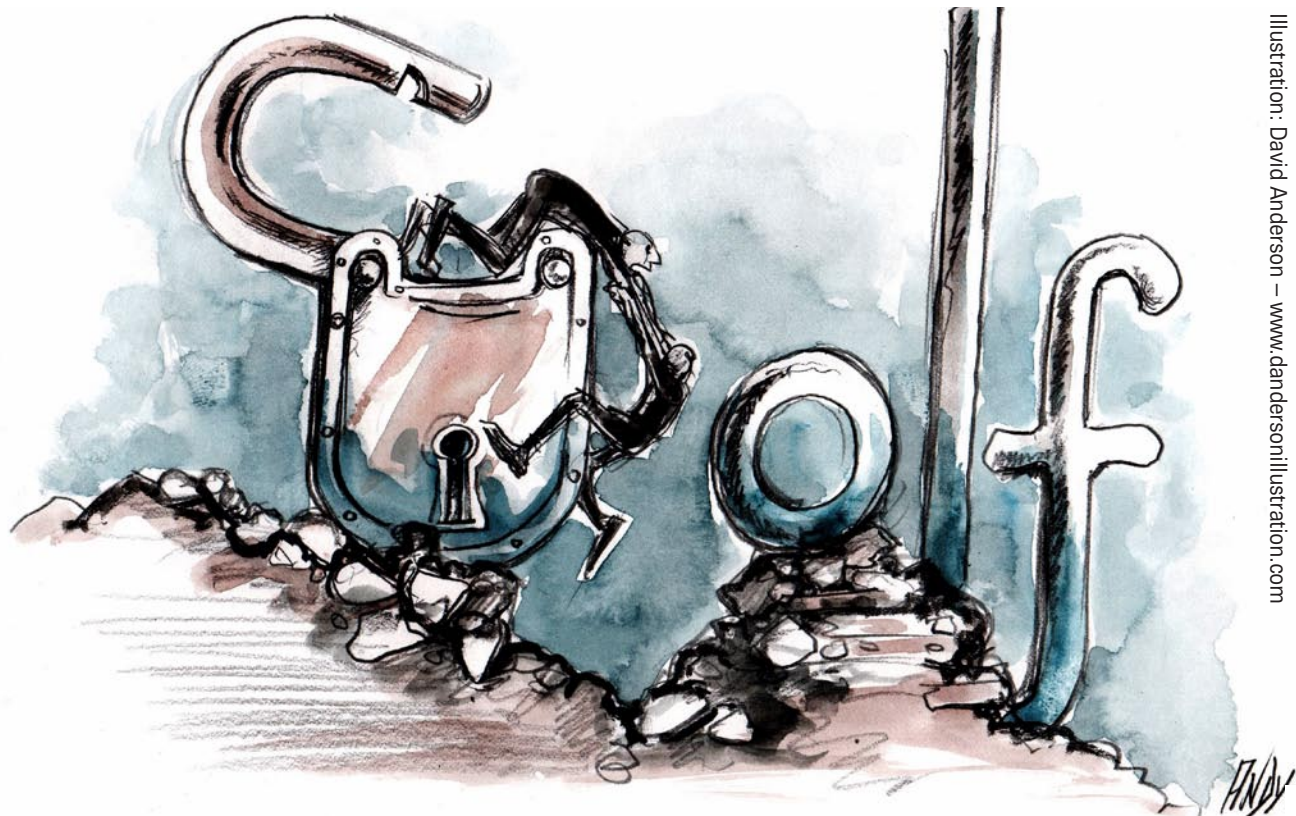


Illustration: David Anderson – www.dandersonillustration.com

Trapped on the golf course

No problem, Michael has the code for the main gate. Or not. **Denis Beckett** reports

When he was young, Michael worked for me for a while. His ID reckons he's young no longer, but he's the kind of guy who gets freer with every new candle on his birthday cake. I'm sure age conspires against his hips and eyesight etcetera, but its assaults on his spirit are puny. Which makes for entertaining companionship.

Michael's local golf course used to become a neighbourhood park in the evening but is now barred by grim cheese-grater fencing, thanks to muggers and dog-owners. That's 100 percent of muggers and 50 percent of dog-owners, the 50 percent who whip out their little packet and trowel when Fang lays his landmine in public but ignore it if nobody sees. (They pretend they didn't notice, too

engrossed in badmouthing people who discard cans and wrappers.)

When Michael suggested a dusk walk I queried it, but he was definite. No problem, he has a key to a workmen's gate. I'll be stunned at how verdant Johannesburg can be.

We approach by the workmen's gate, and verdant it is, a prince of parkland compared to the squashed and barren patch

Insights

of public park nearby. Golf courses and ratepayers have deep negotiations looming in the future.

We walk an exhilarating walk along a quaint babbling brook, one of many Joburg rivers whose public-property parts are either in underground pipes or ugly concrete slots. Time elapses, and distance grows.

When Michael remembers that the workmen's gate gets chained before nightfall, we scurry back through half-light. The gate is already chained, and is crowned by a clump of razor wire that would rip our hands to cocktail canapés.

No problem, says Michael. He has the code for the main gate, a kilometre or two away, an easy fairway walk.

Just that . . . oh dear, the fairway path seems to be locked. No problem, says Michael, we must just start with a sharpish descent to the riverbed. A few metres; nothing to it. Descending to the riverbed in the dark begins by feeling for footholds and ends in a cross-your-fingers-and-pray trouser-

shredding bumslide, skidding through thorns and crashing off rocks.

The river morphs into a stormwater drain. We mountaineer in pitch-dark over slabs of broken concrete and take a (short) one-handed swim, holding wallets and phones in the air. Then into an open sloop, with reassuring stars twinkling benignly in the heavens but rubble mountain underfoot. Worse, the walls are vertical and ground level is far out of reach above our heads.

Finally, rungs, grass . . . and the main gate. Hallelujah! A giant daunting slab of iron, to be true. It's a relief that Michael is completely confident of the code, 9191. He punches it in. The gate isn't listening. Michael says "Tsk, silly me, it's 1919." The gate stays put. We try 1999, 9111, 1199. . . The gate is impervious. Climbing it is not an option. This gate has escaped from an Alcatraz movie. If one of us could lift the other high enough, surviving the spiked top, there'd be broken bones coming down.

But . . . from Point A on Tree B we'd reach Tree C, which

crosses Wall D . . .

Michael makes it. I end suspended horizontally two metres above ground with a foot snared in branches. He hurries home for rescue equipment while I have leisure time to ponder gravity and blood flow and how I can keep my head up to torso level.

Then a voice speaks into my ear from inches below.

It's a gentle voice – Alpheus, nightwatchman. Rapport is established, followed by understanding.

Alpheus helps me to terra firma and laughs when he hears of the 9191 problem. He says "this gate not for electric, this gate for push." He gives the gate a hearty yank and it rolls open.

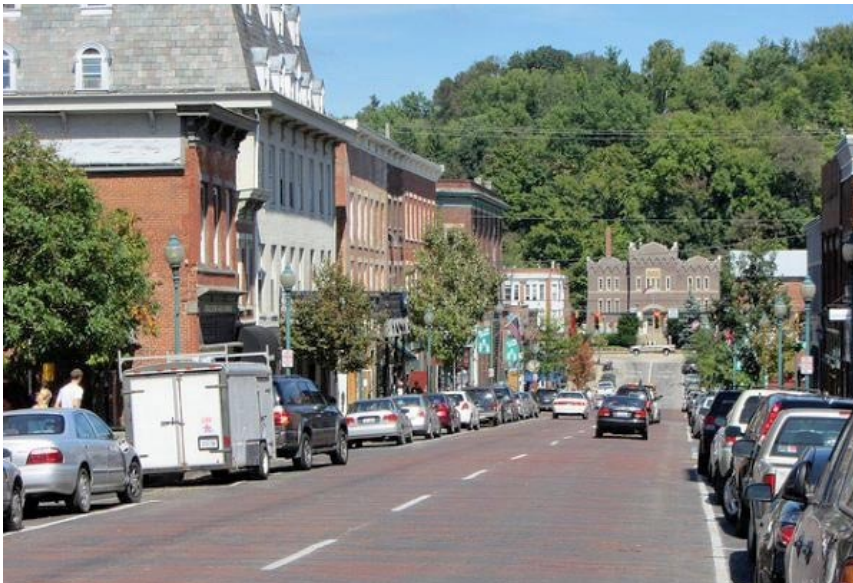
I get home soaked, scratched, bruised, and high. Thanks, Michael, for a re-run of teenagehood. Thanks, Alpheus, for a refresher in Africanness: Never assume the worst. Factor the likelihood of benign neglect into your calculations, and try pushing the gates. **CT**

Denis Beckett is an author and newspaper columnist in Johannesburg, South Africa.

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Dumping ground: Athens, Ohio.

Photo: David Wilson, Flickr.com

US dumps its fracking waste in my home town

My county is poor and remote. Fracking companies think they can abuse it, writes **Alison Stine**

My southeastern Ohio town in the Appalachian foothills is a small, rural place where the demolition derby is a hot ticket, Walmart is the biggest store, and people in the surrounding villages must often drive for 30 minutes to grocery shop.

We hold the unfortunate distinction of being the poorest county in the state: an area that is both stunning – with rolling hills, rocky cliffs, pastures, and ravines – and inaccessible, far from industry.

It's here, at the Hazel Ginsburg well, that fracking compa-

nies dump their waste. Trucks ship that sludge of toxic chemicals and undrinkable water across the country and inject it into my county's forgotten ground.

My step-grandmother, the daughter of a Kentucky miner, used to tell me stories of washing her clothes in polluted red water, downstream from mines. Coal companies exploited employees like her father, paying him in company scrip and keeping him poor and exploiting the land.

That kind of abuse continues. It's just changed shape. The Ginsburg well has a long his-

tory of violations, so many that the Ohio Department of Natural Resources ordered it shut.

It was not.

It's a pit well, which looks like an old swimming pool, covered by a tarp. No sign indicates the presence of chemicals, just a "no trespassing" sign. Allegedly, a guard will snap your picture if you stop or turn your car around. The well is located in a residential area, with houses – some with swing sets – just down the road.

In 2012, Madeline Ffitch was arrested there. Her arrest was part of an action by a local anti-fracking group, Appalachia Resist. The then 31-year-old's arms were locked into cement-filled plastic drums just before the gates, blocking the entrance.

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Two years later, Christine Hughes, co-founder of the local Village Bakery, was arrested protesting against another well site, as were seven others. My town called them "the Athens 8" and they were hailed as heroes.

Ffitch and her young family continue to protest wells, despite the attempts of the fracking industry to, according to her, "paint anyone who is organizing resistance around this stuff as outsiders or extremists." Her husband, Peter Gibbons-Ballew, was arrested in a peaceful protest in 2016, while Ffitch watched, their baby strapped to her chest.

Our local economy now

depends on tourism and farming. The long, humid growing season makes this part of Appalachia ideal for wild specialties such as pawpaws, black walnuts, and mushrooms. And many hunters stay here to be near our famous bucks.

By contaminating the environment, fracking wastewater wells threaten all these businesses. In 2015, tank trucks injected 4 million barrels of waste into my small county alone.

It's hard to get answers about what it's in that waste. But Jason Tremby, an engineering professor at Ohio University, is leading a local team to "clean" fracking wastewater using ultraviolet light, water softening techniques, and a high pressure reactor.

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a solution to the wells might come not from outside, but from people like ffitch, Hughes, and Tremby, working and living in Appalachia. People are used to doing things for themselves here – and used to the community helping the community.

I keep hoping more will be done to protect this place. "You want to forget it," begins the Appalachian-born Ruth Stone's poem "Garbage." But the fracking waste in the injection wells of Appalachia can't be forgotten forever.

It'll bubble up, one way or another, before long. **CT**

.....
Alison Stine's most recent book is a novella, The Protectors. A longer version of this piece was produced by the Economic Hardship Reporting Project.

It rarely cuts much ice in Britain, but that changed when the Telegraph broke the most underwhelming scoop of the year. Remain groups, it emerged, want to remain in the EU. They have hatched a secret plot so devious it involves nationwide advertising campaigns and large-scale concerts.

The paper reported – legitimately – that Soros was donating to Best for Britain, one of the anti-Brexit groups. But then it went firmly into the world of not-legitimate-at-all by presenting it as an undercover scheme. It seemed to uncritically repeat propaganda pushed by the Kremlin and authoritarian eastern European governments.

It was genuinely surprising to see a newspaper which used to be held in very high regard even by those who did not share its sympathies stoop so terribly low. But in a sense it wasn't surprising at all. The idea of an international elite secretly trying to thwart the people's will is core to the Brexit narrative.

It was there right at the start, with the Leave campaign's canny emphasis on the establishment credentials of Remain. It was there in Theresa May's attack on the "citizens of nowhere" – akin to the Soviet anti-semitic trope of "rootless cosmopolitans" – and the eagerly adopted binary opposition between the 'anywheres' and the 'somewheres', which strongly suggests a lack of loyalty to the nation state. It was there in the Daily Mail's attack

Underwhelming scoop of the year

Newspaper's Brexit propaganda attack has an unpleasant smell of antisemitism, writes **Ian Dunt**

In one sense, the ferocious focus on George Soros in the British press earlier this month felt alien. The right's obsession with the liberal financier is more common overseas, particularly in the proto-fascist governments of Poland and Hungary and among Trump supporters in the US. It is the preserve of the deranged and the degenerate.



BREXITEERS' ENEMY: George Soros

on judges as “enemies of the people” for demanding the kind of parliamentary sovereignty they supposedly campaigned for during the Brexit referendum. It is there is the constant background thrum of accusations about the ‘people’s will’ – as if all the nation voted one way, or all Leavers had identical visions of how they wanted Brexit to proceed.

It’s unlikely that any of the people involved in the Telegraph story, or any other paper’s coverage, are anti-semites. That’s not the point. The point is that they are straying, probably inadvertently, into the world of antisemitic tropes. When that happens, there should be two responses. The first is to hold the line, firmly, in case things deteriorate further. The second is to ask why this kind of area is being strayed into in the first place.

The truth is that those old tropes, which were weaponised by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union and are borrowed now by eastern European fascists, are just extreme versions of a kind of rhetoric which is already very popular in the Brexit press. It’s the rhetoric of a secretive elite, disconnected from the nation state, operating against the will of the people. It’s not so much that a new bout of anti-semitism has burst out in British politics. It’s that anti-semitic tropes fit so easily into the existing narrative.

We are now in the danger

area. Britain has entered a period in which the reality of Brexit becomes clear.

The recent release of regional Brexit damage assessments from the government showed just how punishing the effect of a hard Brexit would be on many of the poorer communities which voted Leave.

Even before that takes place, Theresa May is now boxed in by a European team enjoying the strategic advantages she herself offered them by triggering Article 50 before she was ready. It is an ugly spectacle to behold, for any Brit who takes pride in their country and its status in the world. This could all translate into a victory for Remain-

ers and other liberals, who pointed out the ruinous quality of the project ahead of time. Or it could create the material and political conditions for a form of right-wing populism which we have not previously seen in this country. The stakes of Brexit are much higher than just our departure from the European Union. **CT**

Ian Dunt is editor of www.politics.co.uk – where his article first appeared. He specialises in issues around immigration, civil liberties, democracy, free speech and social justice and appears regularly on the BBC, Sky and Al-Jazeera

America: Just another shit-hole

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When will we get our republic back?
wonders **Justin Raimondo**

The Deep State spying scandal rolls on, with more details coming out daily. Here’s a few of the most shocking developments so far:

- There was a second “dirty dossier” authored by the worst sleazebag in the Clinton camp, sent directly to the US State Department and from there via a convoluted route to the FBI. The dossier is said to be even sleazier than the Christopher Steele one. This was what went into the

application to the FISA court to spy on the Trump campaign.

- Michael Isikoff, former journalist, now just a receptacle for Deep State propaganda, was working with the DNC against Trump: his Yahoo piece was cited by the Obama administration in their application to spy on the Trump campaign.

- The Senate Judiciary Committee has issued a criminal referral to the Justice Department against “former” MI6 agent Christopher Steele for lying to

Insights

the Committee under oath.:

“It appears the FBI relied on admittedly uncorroborated information, funded by and obtained for Secretary Clinton’s presidential campaign, in order to conduct surveillance of an associate of the opposing presidential candidate. It did so based on Mr. Steele’s personal credibility and presumably having faith in his process of obtaining the information. But there is substantial evidence suggesting that Mr. Steele materially misled the FBI about a key aspect of his dossier efforts, one which bears on his credibility.”

- The Grassley-Graham (Judiciary Committee) memo corroborates and expands on the Nunes memo, showing that the FBI lied to the FISA court, fed false information to the court, and exposes Rep. Adam Schiff as a serial liar.

- Found among the FBI coup plotters’ text messages: we must prepare talking points for then FBI-Director James Comey because President Obama “wants to know everything we’re doing.” So the criminality goes straight up to the White House.

What’s interesting, in a disgusting way, is the reaction of the “left” and some “libertarians” to this truly scary development – the use of the Surveillance State to spy on and frame up political opponents. Listen to this podcast conducted by The Intercept’s Jeremy Scahill, who openly disdains the idea that anything untoward or illegal was going on with this kind of surveillance: he is joined by

Julian Sanchez, the Cato Institute’s “privacy” expert, who openly justifies the surveillance of “suspicious” Carter Page and tells us that there was basically nothing wrong with the Obama administration spying on the Trump campaign.

It’s left to Peter van Buren, a former State Department official, to ask both of these jerks: Isn’t there something unprecedented and wrong about the involvement of the FBI/CIA/NSA in a presidential election campaign? Of course, he doesn’t get an answer to his question from either of these two jokers, although Sanchez is implicitly endorsing such interference in his later comments on Page.

By the way, when I brought up these points to Scahill, he accused me of being – wait for it! – a “racist” (!). Yes, really: see here.

These people are so tiresome, and so obviously deluded, that answering them is really beside the point. We’ll slide into tyranny with them standing on the sidelines, proclaiming their own virtue, and sucking up to @pierre Omidyar – the rabidly anti-Trump anti-Russian warmonger who finances The Intercept – until the cows come home.

It’s depressing to contemplate, but I am heartened by the work being done by Peter van Buren, whose common sense commentary and objective view of the surveillance scandal mirrors my own: he, too, sees

that this isn’t about Trump. It’s about the future of our republic. It’s about not ceding power to a gaggle of unelected bureaucrats. It’s about preserving what’s left of our constitutional liberties. The Omidyars and the Kochs don’t get that: neither do their servants. Where is the American Civil Liberties Union on this issue? We haven’t heard a peep out of them.

During World War II, the ACLU and the “liberals” were all in favour of government repression: the internment of Japanese-Americans, the “Sedition Trial of 1944,” the groupthink and the censorship – it was all part of the “progressive” agenda. So don’t expect any help or encouragement from what passes for the “left” these days: they’re the enemy. We’re in this fight alone. And the stakes are high. The question is: will the US become just another shithole, with a secret police and a national security bureaucracy that holds the real power, with the ability to veto the democratic choices of the electorate? **CT**

*Justin Raimondo is the editorial director of Antiwar.com, and a senior fellow at the Randolph Bourne Institute. He is the author of *Reclaiming the American Right: The Lost Legacy of the Conservative Movement* [Center for Libertarian Studies, 1993; Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2000], and *An Enemy of the State: The Life of Murray N. Rothbard* [Prometheus Books, 2000]. This article was first published at www.antiwar.com*

Hammered by Facebook

A poem by Philip Kraske

Lately I've noted that my website's numbers,
 Have taken a dive to levels true humblers:
 The harrowing decline is 40 percent,
 And though my numbers don't quite pay
 the rent,
 My five weekly hits have now fallen to three,
 So two weekly folks get no fruit from my tree.

I dismissed the chance that my fruit had
 gone rot,
 Less-ardent fan raves the problem is not,
 So I looked at networks like Goog' and
 Facebook,
 And out my webpage I discovered they'd took,
 Without a warning as courtesy might deem,
 Just, "You're ketchup crud now, champ, ain't
 that a scream?"

So I called up Mark Z and asked him
 "What gives?"
 And he said my page leaks false news like
 three sieves,
 He said "What's all this hate about wars
 that we're winning,
 And nonsense 9-11 that you've been spinning?
 I'll grant you Don Trump ain't the greatest
 we've had,
 But check out that tax cut and tell me he's bad."

I told Mark that I could catch his drift clearer,
 If to his fortune my own were now nearer,
 But more to the point I replied that fake news
 Tended to be what big news corps called snooze:
 "Ain't nothin' left here, folks, it's all been seen,
 And pay no attention to that man behind screen."

Mark said, "Exactly! It's screen stuff we cut,
 Making news smooth without ifs, ands or but.
 We've got algorithm's to match every fact,
 So folks needn't argue about how events
 tracked.
 If CNN knights put it not on their show,
 Then it didn't happen; it's fully no-go."

I replied CNN didn't all news report,
 And he just stared, shocked, and gave
 this retort:
 "What are you saying, they don't give all
 the news?
 Tell me just one time there have been
 other views!"
 So I gave ten examples and he went imperious:
 "Websites like yours, Phil, can't be called
 serious."

Now from search engines my page you
 can't reach,
 As Facebook continues its
 campaign "counterspeech,"
 Mark says my prob' is with the program
 I'm not,
 To which I shot back that in hell I'd first rot.
 Still, before I go there I'd like to replace
 My two lost readers, if just to save face.

Philip Kraske lives in Madrid, Spain, where he teaches English on a freelance basis and does some translation. His four novels, of varied plots but centring on American politics and society, began to appear in 2009. His website is www.philipkraske.com

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