

FOOLING THEMSELVES. FOULING THE PLANET | SAM PIZZIGATI
ISRAEL REOPENS THE GAZA SLAUGHTERHOUSE | CHRIS HEDGES
WE ARE SPARTACUS | JOHN PILGER

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When a slogan is bigger news than murdering children

Life and fiction in 21st-century America

IN THE SHADOW OF WAR

Struggling for the hearts and minds of humanity

Walt Disney and Salvador Allende are still fighting for our souls



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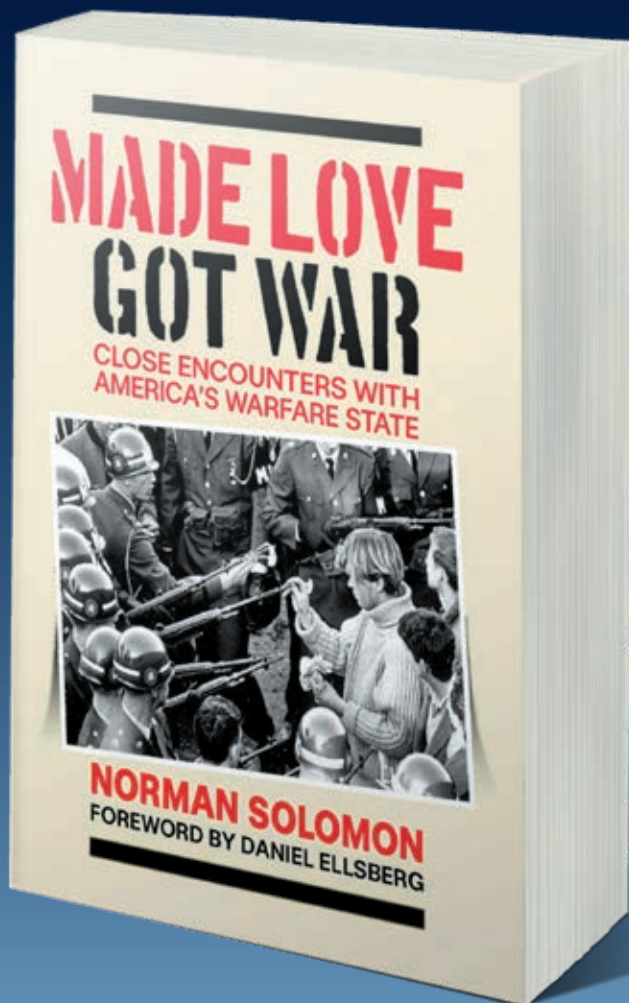
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Joby's one-pilot, four-passenger aircraft performed the first-ever electric air taxi flight over New York City

Sam Pizzigati

FOOLING THEMSELVES, FOULING THE PLANET

Look, up in the sky! It's a bird! It's a plane, it's . . . Wall Street's electric air-taxi future!

Last month, a flying machine from the California-based Joby Aviation became the first “electric vertical take-off and landing aircraft – “eVTOL” – to go airborne from the Downtown Heliport that services Lower Manhattan’s financial district.

Joby is now expecting, by sometime in 2025, to be regularly

ferrying high finance’s finest from Wall Street to JFK Airport in just seven minutes. Mere mortals taking autos and subways routinely spend well over an hour making the same trip.

Joby’s new one-pilot, four-passenger eVTOL figures to be only the first of many corporate efforts to speed New York’s deepest pockets on their electric way to destinations both lucrative and exotic. A host of corporations – from China’s eHang to Germany’s

Volocopter – already have big plans underway for zipping the world’s richest up and over congested city streets.

But just imagine if all the investments and expertise going into turning our skies into air-taxi lanes for the richest among us were instead going into air-speed services that actually meet real public needs. Imagine air taxis, for instance, ferrying critically injured rural residents to distant emergency care.

Those sorts of efforts will have to wait. The vast wealth of our wealthiest is instead bending innovation and expertise to servicing the already rich. And that bending, new research out of Oxfam details, is keeping our planet’s richest

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entertained at a vast environmental cost.

The world's wealthiest 1 percent, Oxfam's latest research reveals, are now generating more carbon emissions than all the world's poorest 66 percent combined. The carbon emissions from this 1 percent will – between 2020 and 2030 – “cause 1.3 million heat-related deaths” worldwide.

The world's bottom 99 percent, Oxfam adds, would have to consume for 1,500 years to match the carbon output that billionaires now produce in a single year.

But, even so, the political impact of the super rich actually outpaces the impact of their personal energy consumption. Only our richest “have the wealth, power, and influence to protect themselves.” And that same “wealth, power, and influence,” the new Oxfam study lays out, is keeping governments worldwide doing no more than “incentivising incremental change” in energy policy instead of phasing out fossil fuels and investing massively in renewable energy.

We must not let ourselves treat climate and inequality as “separate issues,” environmental activist Greta Thunberg adds in her foreword to Oxfam's latest appraisal of our world's environmental and economic crises.

“Either we safeguard living

conditions for all future generations,” she relates, “or we let a few very rich people maintain their destructive lifestyles and preserve an economic system geared towards short-term economic growth and shareholder profit.”

The “twin crises of climate and inequality,” *Oxfam's Climate Equality: A planet for the 99%* report goes on to spell out, are “driving one another” – and only “a radical new approach” stands any chance of “overcoming the catastrophe unfolding before us.”

That “radical new approach” must take on “the disproportionate role that the richest individuals play in the climate crisis through their emissions, investments, and capture of politics.”

How can we best realise this badly needed “new approach”? We would need, argues Oxfam, to start aggressively taxing our super rich and the corporations that fuel their fortunes “to help pay for the transition to renewable energy.”

Just one example: Some 45 major oil and gas corporations averaged annual windfall profits of \$237-billion in 2021 and 2022, dollars that overwhelmingly funnelled straight into rich shareholder pockets. Governments worldwide, Oxfam notes, could have increased

global investments in renewable energy by 31 percent had they taxed this windfall profit at 90 percent.

The new Oxfam study surveys a wide range of other options the world's nations could pursue to subject the rich to serious taxation. Governments could, for instance, levy “steep and progressive” tax increases on the incomes of the ultra rich – as well as on their property, land, and inheritances. They could raise taxes on corporate profits, fossil fuels, and financial transactions – or levy entirely new taxes on “high-emitting luxury travel.”

The world, in other words, could have plenty of money for social and climate spending “if rich-country governments were willing to implement bold and progressive tax reforms.”

“We cannot allow the richest countries to claim that they cannot afford to raise the trillions needed,” Oxfam ends up concluding. “Mobilizing this money simply takes political will.” **CT**

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

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INSIGHTS

Trevor Grundy

INSIDE STALIN'S WARTIME HOTEL FOR JOURNALISTS

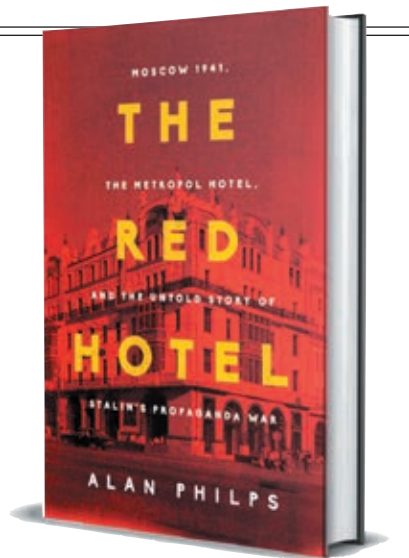
The 4th-century BC historian Thucydides advised his readers to be wary of the stories told by those who were eye-witnesses when events took place that changed the course of history. In his introduction to *The Peloponnesian War*, he said that those who were there when great things happened are usually less interested in telling the truth than in catching the attention of a sympathetic public. What they remembered and wrote about was lost in what Thucydides called “the unreliable streams of mythology.”

With that in mind, let's give three cheers to Alan Philps, a British historian of growing stature, whose book *The Red Hotel* is a brave attempt to show how a pack of mainly British and American newshounds told the world what Stalin wanted them to hear at a time of mind-boggling change in Russia.

The Red Hotel is a worthy successor to one of the greatest books ever written on this subject – Eugene Lyons's *Assignment in Utopia* (George G.Harrap & Co, 1938).

Josef Stalin never wanted Westerners in the Soviet Union writing about starvation in Ukraine, terror trials in Moscow, or the Red Army's collapse after Hitler's invasion of Russia.

It was Winston Churchill who persuaded him to let a posse of



THE RED HOTEL: The Untold Story of Stalin's Disinformation War

Alan Philps

Published by Headline / £22

newshounds live in Moscow and tell the western world about the bravery of “Uncle Joe” and the heroism of the Red Army.

Churchill wanted good positive stuff out of his journalists in Russia in order to justify his and Roosevelt's decision to send military equipment to the Russian government upon which Churchill had earlier declared war in 1917.

More than a dozen scribes found themselves holed-up in the Metropol Hotel (which gives this book its title), a huge art-nouveau edifice just off Red Square and close to the headquarters of the NKVD (later the KGB).

In the 1930s the British American

hack Walter Duranty lived and played there. This vile man made his name and his fortune by keeping quiet about mass starvation in the Ukraine. He was rewarded with an interview with “Uncle Joe,” that made Duranty famous and which established him as the unchallenged doyen of the Western press pack.

Duranty moved around a bit but God help any enterprising reporter who strayed far from the hotel which was little more than a luxury knock-shop and rumour factory for well-paid British, America, French media “prisoners.”

Very few hacks spoke more than a few words of Russian. Some came as lovers of Communism, but most left disillusioned with Stalin's Marxist heaven on earth.

It encouraged rather than stopped them writing best-sellers when they got back to London or New York.

Alan Philps knows how to survive in a press pack bubble and tells his readers how dependant foreign correspondents are on local “fixers” and translators.

They played vital roles in Moscow in the 1930s and 1940s, but all were closely scrutinised by the NKVD. But God help them again if it was discovered any spoke out of turn or moved closer to what was really going on in the Ukraine, or in any of the backstreets of Moscow where it was rumoured Russians were getting ready to sing the praises of the approaching German army.

The role played by the press-pack bubble changed the way Westerners saw “Uncle Joe” and his underlings.

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It is hard to calculate the damage they did – I have spoken to and taught English to young Russians who deny there was ever hunger, yet alone starvation, in Ukraine in the 1930s.

Laurence Rees sums it up well in his books *Hitler and Stalin* (Penguin Books, 2020), in which he writes, “Hitler, as the world knows, presided over the most horrific crime in history – the Holocaust. But the shadow cast by this terrible event has meant that much less attention has been paid to the enormous number of civilian deaths that Stalin was responsible for at the same time. This lack of focus on Stalin’s wartime crimes, combined with the perception that as an ally of the West he was on the side of righteousness during the conflict, has meant that the Soviet leader has largely escaped the level of censure that he deserves.”

When the celebrated American reporter Edward Snow slipped on the pavement at Gorky Street, he accepted the hand of a passer-by. When he heard Snow thank him with an American accent, the Muscovite fled.

The death penalty was Stalin’s reward to anyone talking to a foreigner.

The Australian journalist Godfrey Blunden persuaded his fixer, a woman called Nadya Ulanovskaya to introduce him to some ordinary Russians in Moscow.

She did and Blunden promised her name would never be mentioned in anything he wrote about the visit. Anyway, he told her, it was to be material for a novel not a report.

The book, *A Room on the Route*,

came out in 1947. The research made it obvious who had shown him around an out-of-bounds part of Moscow.

For Nadya, that was a grim start from the horrendous Lubyanka NKVD torture house to forced labour camps in the Arctic shovelling human waste.

Philips, with his richly detailed descriptions about how the press bubble floated along the surface in a country that rivalled the atrocities of Nazi Germany, has written a book that deserves a place in the knapsack of any young reporter off to dangerous places to make a name for him or herself.

Western journalists still build

their careers on the broken backs of fixers and translators. Yet, when the war is over and the public wants new butterflies to chase, they are left without hope.

Think what happened to all those translators and fixers who worked for the British and Americans in Afghanistan. The comparisons are obvious and any reporter off to cover the latest flashpoint would do well to dip into *The Red Hotel* before leaving home. **CT**

Trevor Grundy worked as a reporter in Central, Eastern and Southern Africa from 1966 to 1996.

His latest book, *Love, Hate and the Leader: A Fascist Childhood*, was recently published by Routledge.

Richard Ward

CONSORTING WITH THE ENEMY

Having just returned from almost three weeks in Vietnam, travelling its length with a group of veterans on a tour sponsored by Veterans For Peace, I was left with the indelible impression that the American War, as the Vietnamese refer to it, was a prolonged spasm of a staggeringly profligate infantilism by the United States, like a brutish, spoiled child endlessly smashing its expensive toys against the wall.

Of no concern to this infant were three million Vietnamese dead, the ruined lives and environmental damage caused by Agent Orange, and 58,000 of its own soldiers killed

in pursuit of its goal. And this goal, again, was? We don’t remember? No matter. Perhaps merely a tantrum. Naughty child!

It’s been 48 years since troops of the People’s Army of Vietnam raised their country’s flag in victory over Independence Palace (now Reunification Hall) in Saigon. The victory was decisive then, and, as is abundantly clear now, in view of economic and geopolitical trends and deteriorating conditions in the United States, a triumph of historic significance.

Since that time, after a terrible period of privation and further conflict, the Socialist Republic of

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Vietnam has managed to recover, and is now a youthful, energetic, developing country.

Remarkably, the Vietnamese people our delegation came in contact with were welcoming and, if not necessarily forgiving (at least concerning the US government), unwilling to dwell on past sufferings and atrocities visited on their country by the United States.

I found this attitude almost incomprehensible. As one who actively opposed the American War and, if I may speak for them, those who directly participated and ended up opposing it, like my comrades in our Veterans For Peace delegation, one is forever haunted by its memory.

The United States learned nothing from the war in Vietnam. The primary motivation after its humiliating defeat was to kick the “Vietnam syndrome” and again project its image as the supreme military power on earth. This the United States did with increasing ferocity, at first a few cowardly steps in Grenada in 1983, and Panama in 1989, and then, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, unleashing at long last its military terror around the world, most notably in West Asia.

My two lasting impressions after three weeks in Vietnam were, first, of an energetic and optimistic country that is obviously a key part of the developing Asian Century, and second, the depressing reality of the stupidity and psychopathy of the West, especially the United

States, which continues blindly on its imperial path of domination and destruction.

This stupidity and psychopathy now above all include the US support of Israel’s genocidal campaign in Gaza, escalating during our stay in Vietnam, a hideous ripping open of wounds that have never healed. For while we visited sites and museums of the American War, primarily a bombing exercise of almost unfathomable proportions, Israel’s



Guide points to a map showing the intensity of US bombing during the Vietnam war at the RENEW/NPA de-mining site in Quang Tri province, near Khe Sahn.

bombs, manufactured and supplied by the United States, which makes it a willing accomplice to genocide, were falling with increasing devastation on civilians, schools, hospitals, ambulances, communications centres, power plants, mosques, churches, journalists and their families, UN sites and personnel in Gaza.

The parallels were impossible to ignore. One could not visit these Vietnamese sites without hearing the exploding bombs and screams of Palestinians.

To be sure, the killing and

abduction of civilians by Hamas on October 7 were horrific war crimes, another chapter in this tragic historical narrative. Treat people like animals for 75 years and this is what you get.

Of the enduring images of the relentless US bombing of Vietnam perhaps the most powerful is of nine-year-old Phan Tho Kim Phúc running down a dirt road, her mouth agape in terror and pain, the skin of her body scorched and peeling from a napalm strike. There

are four other children in the photo, all running. The child in the left foreground is about the same age as Phan, mouth open in a classic rictus of horror. There is a young child in the rear, looking back at the dense cloud of dark smoke from the explosions. There are two children in the right foreground, a girl of about ten leading a younger boy, perhaps her brother, by the hand. Four South Vietnamese soldiers follow, shepherding the children. The Israel/US despicable, shocking bombing of Gaza (not to mention

Israel’s blockade of essential supplies, food, water, fuel, medicine) has thus far killed more than 8,000 children. Like the Vietnamese children of the American War, the children of Gaza will be forever running in terror down the road of history. The shame is beyond reckoning.

I decided after the Veterans For Peace tour ended to spend a few extra days in Vietnam and take the 33-hour train ride from Ho Chi Minh City to Hanoi. I was tired and emotionally drained from the VFP

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tour, but it was something I'd always wanted to do. The Vietnamese countryside was exquisite, though still marred by bomb craters alongside the tracks, filled with water from the heavy rains. Our train was at least the equal of Amtrak, if not better. Carts with hot food passed up and down the aisles. My fellow passengers were circumspect and courteous.

About five hours south of Hanoi I stood between cars looking out the window at a flooded landscape, torrential rain coming down, the water halfway up the elevated banks of the railway. I wondered if this was normal. It was not. A conductor approached and indicated on his translator app that about half an hour ahead a section of track had been undermined and that we would be getting out at the next station and then, via bus, loop around the damaged section and pick up another train to Hanoi.

I went back to my seat. An announcement came over the intercom. The passengers reacted calmly, some with nervous laughter. We collected our belongings, and the train slowed down as the water rose higher, almost to the tracks. For the next 30 minutes we crept along, finally arriving at the station where we were met by uniformed women who directed us to waiting buses. There were about 200 passengers. One of the officials singled me out and directed me onto a crowded bus. The people graciously made room. In 20 minutes we were at the next station, an hour later on the train to Hanoi.

I wonder what would have happened in a similar situation on Amtrak. I've got a soft spot for that neglected old dame, having

travelled with her many times and experienced all sorts of disruptions, not always handled well by those in charge. The Vietnamese officials were commanding, organised, and polite. The operation was carried out with crisp, good-natured efficiency. The women in their dark

uniforms brought back old images and associations. 50 years ago we would have been bombing them. **CT**

Richard Ward *divides his time between New Mexico and Ecuador. He can be reached at r.ward47@gmail.com.*



FILTHY COCKTAIL: Sewage sludge is sprayed onto a British farm.

George Monbiot

FARMS ARE BEING BLITZED BY A CHEMICAL SHITSHOW

It's an experiment with eight-billion test subjects, no controls and no endpoint. What happens when you release thousands of novel chemicals, most of which have not been tested for their impacts on human health or ecosystems, into a living planet? What are the effects on the development of foetuses, on human brains, other organs, immune

systems, cancer rates, fertility? What are they doing to other species and to Earth systems? We seem determined to find out the hard way.

The gap between our actions and our knowledge is astounding. Of the 350,000 registered synthetic chemicals, about a third are impossible to assess, as their composition is either "confidential"

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or “ambiguously described”. For most of the rest, deployment comes first, testing later. For instance, the health and environmental impacts of 80 percent of the chemicals registered in the European Union have yet to be assessed. And the EU is as good as it gets. Our own government, as one of the benefits of Brexit, has just decided to downgrade the safety information chemical companies have to provide to an “irreducible minimum”.

Far from shielding us from this chemical load, the government is knowingly and actively exposing us. In 2017, the Environment Agency produced a startling report on the contamination of the sewage sludge being sold or given to farmers as fertiliser by water companies.

It revealed that there has been a radical change in the disposal of many industrial wastes. Instead of taking their liquid waste to dedicated disposal

facilities, chemical and cosmetics manufacturers now pay water companies for the right to dump their loads into sewage treatment works.

In other words, two completely different waste streams – human excrement and industrial effluent – are being deliberately and irremediably mixed. This filthy cocktail is augmented by runoff and drainage from roads, building sites,



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businesses and homes, laced with everything from tyre crumb to PFAS (“forever chemicals”). When this chemical shitstorm hits the sewage system, it’s either pumped directly into rivers through illegal discharges by the water companies or held back as sewage sludge, now a toxic and highly complex mess.

What then happens to it? Well, the next steps are as clear as sewage. There are, the report says, “a number of gaps in the Environment Agency’s understanding of what water companies are doing with tankered industrial wastes, how they handle them and ... the destinations of sludge generated”. A proliferation of “waste brokers, contractors and subcontractors” ensures that the tracking of waste from source to sink is almost impossible. Transfer and consignment notes fail to list the industrial effluents the sludge contains or to explain where it is going. It is often “miscoded,” creating a false impression that it’s safe.

But from what the agency can tell, “much of the mixed sludge was destined for farmland”. That’s not surprising: about 87 percent of sewage sludge ends up as fertiliser. The manufacturers get cheap disposal for hazardous waste, the water companies get paid for accepting it, and farmers get cheap or free manure. But they are not informed about the added extras.

The testing rules for sewage sludge being sent to farmland have not been updated since 1989, and cover only heavy metals, fluoride and pathogens. But thanks to the mixing of waste streams and the proliferation of new synthetic chemicals, it now contains a vast

range of toxins. These include, the report shows, polychlorinated biphenyls, dioxins, furans, phthalates, forever chemicals, antibiotics, huge quantities of microplastic and many other compounds. There are no legal limits for any of these poisons in the sewage sludge being spread on farmland. The report notes that some of the samples it took of sludge being sent to farmland were “vastly different” from the way they were described in the consignment documents. Agricultural land, in other words, has become a dumping ground for hazardous industrial waste – another gift to humanity from the privatised water industry.

A great acreage of both arable and pasture land is likely to have been contaminated with a vibrant cocktail of environmental toxins. What are the effects? We have no idea. Soils receiving this sludge are routinely tested only once every 20 years, if at all, and for none of the new contaminants. The report notes that their cumulative effects could render the soil “no longer ... suitable for supporting crop growth”.

Alarming as the chemical levels it discovered were, the report states that these are likely to be “best-case examples”. A source at the agency tells me it did not investigate sludge from sewage systems receiving heavy industrial loads: the true extent of contamination is likely to be far worse. “Some of the levels,” they tell me, “are horrendous. The human health risks are phenomenal.” In some cases, this contamination would prohibit

building houses on the land. “But you can grow crops and raise animals on it for human consumption!”

The 2017 report proposed urgent action to investigate the full range of contaminants and their accumulation in the soil, to separate waste streams, code and track them properly, and to change the dumping regime. So what did the government do? Bury it. The report was discovered only in 2020, as a result of a freedom of information request by Greenpeace. To this day, it has not been officially published and cannot be found on any government website. Only after it was brought to light did the government promise to take action: first immediately, then later in 2020, then in 2021, then in 2023. Nothing has happened. It published a feeble set of proposals with a 2023 deadline, but failed to adopt them.

Losing patience after six years of inaction, a group of us founded a new legal campaign, Fighting Dirty. We wrote to the government, challenging its failure to meet the 2023 deadline. Its immediate response? It dropped the deadline. So now, as the first of our cases, we are taking the government to court for its failure to monitor and regulate the spreading of sewage sludge on agricultural land.

This shitshow won’t end by itself. A lawsuit might be the only remaining means of protecting our farmland, our living systems and our health. Wish us luck. **CT**

George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist. His website is www.monbiot.com.

INSIGHTS

Jim Hightower

WHEN VOTERS BANNED THE BOOK BANNERS

In one of their satirical songs, the Austin Lounge Lizards lampooned the ridiculous bigotry of some Christian fundamentalists. “Jesus loves me,” they sang, “but he can’t stand you.”

That could be the bellicose anthem of a quasi-religious far-right front group with a very sweet-sounding name: “Moms for Liberty.” Far from sweet, however, these moms are funded by rich donors to be ground troops in the culture wars – essentially an anti-liberty campaign against people, books, teachers, and ideas they don’t like.

In the last few years, squads of these moms have turned into political hate groups, persecuting small town school board members by baselessly accusing them of conspiring to indoctrinate children with pornography, hatred of white people, and “liberal” thinking.

Having stirred up dust devils of division and fear, the “momsters” ran candidates in local board elections this fall, hoping to take over public schools. But they miscalculated on an essential political reality: Most Americans are not right-wingers, bigots, or Christian Nationalists.

The group had counted on

surprising voters in what are usually low visibility and low-turnout races, but the extremists were the ones surprised by an aggressive voter pushback against their scheme.

Indeed, various surveys show that the far-right moms group lost about 80 percent of its races across the country, including in swing states like Ohio, Pennsylvania, and

Virginia.

In the very conservative school district of Pennridge, Pennsylvania, where a far-right majority of the board was attempting to impose a national model of a politically driven educational system, all five far-right incumbents running for re-election were swept out.

To help push back against politicisers of your school district, check out the Campaign for Our Shared Future: CampaignSharedFuture.org. **CT**

Jim Hightower is a radio commentator, writer, and public speaker. This op-ed was distributed by OtherWords.org.

SECOND THOUGHTS



TELLING IT LIKE IT ISN'T: A recent headline change on the website of the *New York Times*.

Beverly Gologorsky

IN THE SHADOW OF WAR

Life and fiction in 21st-century America

I'm a voracious reader of American fiction and I've noticed something odd in recent years. This country has been eternally "at war" and you just wouldn't know that – a small amount of veteran's fiction aside – from the novels that are generally published. For at least a decade, Americans have been living in the shadow of war and yet, except in pop fiction of the Tom Clancy variety (where, in the end, we always win), there's remarkably little evidence of it.

As for myself – I'm a novelist – I find that no matter what I chose to write about, I can't seem to avoid that shadow. My first novel was about Vietnam vets coming home and my second is permeated with a shadowy sense of what the Iraq and Afghan wars have done to us. And yet I've never been to, or near, a war, and nothing about it attracts me. So why is it always lurking there? Recently, I haven't been able to stop thinking about just why that might be and I may finally have a very partial answer, very modestly encapsulated in one rather un-American word: class.

I come from – to use an old-fashioned phrase – a working class immigrant family. The middle child of four siblings, not counting the foster children my mother cared for, I grew up in the post-World War II years

in the basement of a building in the South Bronx in New York City. In my neighbourhood, war – or at least the military – was the norm. Young men (boys, really) generally didn't make it through life without serving in some military capacity. Soldiers and veterans were ubiquitous. Except to us, to me, none of them were "soldiers" or "veterans." They were just Ernie, Charlie, Danny, Tommy, Jamal, Vito, Frank. In our neck of the urban woods – multi-ethnic, diverse, low-income – it was the way things were and you never thought to question that, in just about every apartment on every floor, there was a young man who had been in, would go into, or was at that moment in the military and, given the conflicts of that era, had often been to war as well.

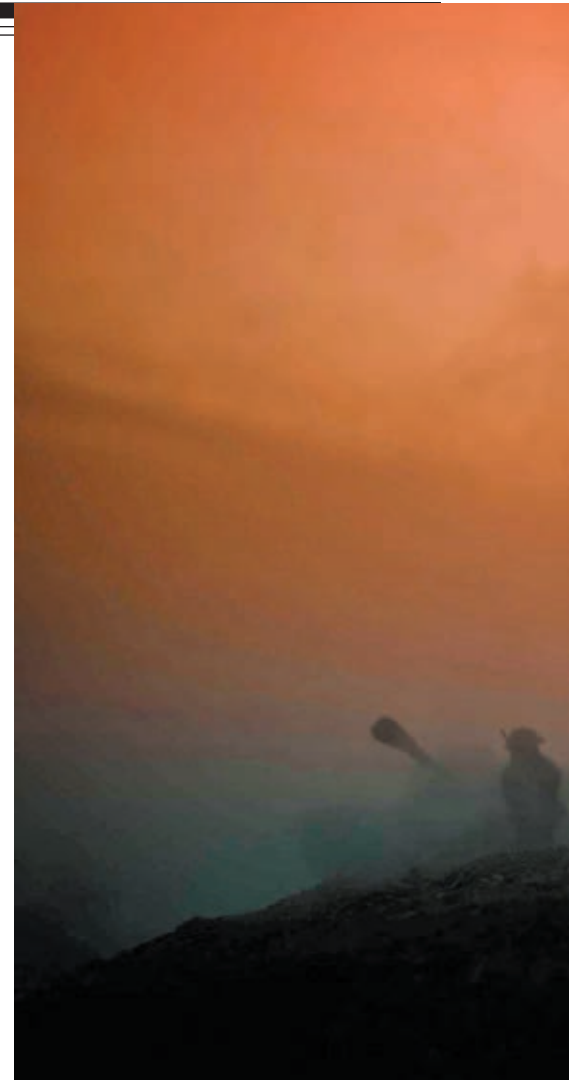
Many of the boys I knew joined the Marines before they could be drafted for some of the same reasons men and women volunteer now. (Remember that there was still a draft army then, not the all-volunteer force of 2013.) However clichéd they may sound today, they reflected a reality I knew well. Then as now, the military held out the promise of a potentially meaningful future instead of the often depressing adult futures that sur-

rounded us as we grew up.

Then as now, however, too many of those boys returned home with little or nothing to show for the turmoil they endured. And then as now, they often returned filled with an inner chaos, a lostness from which many searched in vain for relief.

When I was seven, the Korean War began. I was 18 when our first armed advisers arrived in Vietnam. After that disaster ended, a lull ensued, broken by a series of "skirmishes" from Grenada to Panama to Somalia to Bosnia, followed by the First Gulf War, and then, of course, America's invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

I dated, worked with, or was related to men who participated in some of these wars and conflicts. One of my earliest memories, in fact – I must have been three – is of my





anxious 19-year-old sister waiting for her soldier-fiancé to make his way home from World War II. Demobilised, he finally arrived with no outward signs that war had taken a toll on him. Like so many of those “greatest generation” vets, though, he wouldn’t or couldn’t talk about his experiences, and remained hard to reach about most things for years afterwards. His army hat was my first military souvenir.

When I was eight or nine, my brother was drafted into the Korean War and I can still remember my constant worries about his well-being. I wrote my childish letters to him nearly every day. He had been assigned to Camp Breckinridge, Kentucky, given a pair of lace-up boots, and told he’d be training as a paratrooper. He could never get

past the anxiety that assignment bestowed on him. Discharged, many pounds thinner and with a bad case of mononucleosis, he came home with a need to have guns around, guns he kept close at hand for the rest of his life.

My first “serious” boyfriend was a sailor on the USS Warrington. I was 15. Not surprisingly, he was away more than home. He mustered out with an addiction to alcohol.

I was 18 when my second boyfriend was drafted. John F. Kennedy was president and the Vietnam War was, then, just a blip on the American horizon. He didn’t serve overseas, but afterwards he, too, couldn’t figure out what to do with the rest of

his life. And so it went.

Today, I no longer live in the South Bronx where, I have no doubt, women as well as men volunteer for the military with similar mindsets to those of my youth, and unfortunately return home with problems similar to those suffered by generations of soldiers before them. Suffice it to say that veterans of whatever war returned having experienced the sharp edge of death and nothing that followed in civilian life could or would be as intense.

It’s in the nature of militaries to train their soldiers to hate, maim, and kill the enemy, but in the midst of the Vietnam War – I had, by then, made it out of my neighbourhood and my world – something challenged this trained-to-kill belief system and it began to break down in a way

previously unknown in our history. With that mindset suddenly in ruins, many young men refused to fight, while others who had gone to war, ones from neighbourhoods like mine, came home feeling like murderers.

In those years, thinking of those boys and many others, I joined the student antiwar movement, though I was often the only one in any group not regularly on campus. (Working class women worked at paying jobs!) As I learned more about that war, my anger grew at the way my country was devastating a land and a people who had done nothing to us. The loss of American and Vietnamese lives, the terrible wounds, all of it felt like both a waste and a tragedy. From 1964 on, ending that war sooner rather than later became my 24/7 job (when, that is, I wasn't at my paying job).

During those years, two events remain vivid in my memory. I was part of a group that opened an antiwar storefront coffee shop near Fort Dix in New Jersey, a camp where thousands of recruits received basic training before being shipped out to Vietnam. We served up coffee, cake, music, posters, magazines, and antiwar conversation to any soldiers who came in during their off-hours – and come in they did. I met young men from as far away as Nebraska and Iowa, as close by as Queens and Brooklyn. I have no idea if any of them ever refused to deploy to Vietnam as some soldiers did in those years. However, that coffee house gave me an education in just how vulnerable, scared, excited, unprepared, and uninformed they were about what they would be facing and, above all, about the country they were invading.

Our storefront hours ran from 5 pm to whenever. On the inevitable night bus back to the Port Authority

The South China Sea, according to Chinese researchers, holds large reserves of “strategically important” precious metals

terminal, I would be unable to shake my sadness. Night after night, on that ride home I remember thinking: if only I had the power to do something more to save their lives, for I knew that some of them would come back in body bags and others would return wounded physically or emotionally in ways that I remembered well. And for what? That was why talking with them has remained in my memory as both a burden and a blessing.

The second event that stays with me occurred in May 1971 in Washington, DC. A large group of Vietnam veterans, men who had been in the thick of it and seen it all, decided they needed to do something that would bring national attention to the goal of ending the war. The method they chose was to act out their repudiation of their previous participation in it. Snaking past the Capitol, an extremely long line of men in uniform threw purple hearts and medals of every sort into a trash bin. Most then made a brief statement about why they hated the war and could no longer bear to keep those medals. I was there and I'll never forget their faces. One soldier, resisting the visible urge to cry, simply walked off without saying a word, only to collapse on a fellow soldier's shoulder. Many of us watched, sobbing.

In those years, I penned political articles, but never fiction. Reality overwhelmed me. Only after that war ended did I begin to write my world, the one that was – always –

shadowed by war, in fiction.

Why doesn't war appear more often in American novels? Novelist Dorothy Allison once wrote, “Literature is the lie that tells the truth.” Yet in a society where war is ever-present, that truth manages to go missing in much of fiction. These days, the novels I come across have many reference points, cultural or political, to mark their stories, but war is generally not among them.

My suspicion: it has something to do with class. If war is all around us and yet, for so many non-working-class Americans, increasingly not part of our everyday lives, if war is the thing that other people do elsewhere in our name and we reflect our world in our fiction, then that thing is somehow not us.

My own urge is to weave war into our world, the way Nadine Gordimer, the South African writer, once wove apartheid into her novels – without, that is, speechifying or pontificating or even pointing to it. When American fiction ignores the fact of war and its effects remain hidden, without even brief mentions as simple markers of time and place, it also accepts peace as the background for the stories we tell. And that is, in its own way, the lie that denial tells.

That war shadows me is a difficult truth, and for that I have my old neighbourhood to thank. If war is the background to my novels about everyday life, it's because it's been in the air I breathed, which naturally means my characters breathe it, too. **CT**

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John Pilger

WE ARE SPARTACUS

The bravery of Julian Assange and David McBride has allowed us to understand the real meaning of resistance

Spartacus was a 1960 Hollywood film based on a book written secretly by the blacklisted novelist Howard Fast, and adapted by the screenplay writer Dalton Trumbo, one of the “Hollywood 10” who were banned for their “un-American” politics. It is a parable of resistance and heroism that speaks unreservedly to our own times.

Both writers were Communists and victims of Senator Joseph McCarthy’s House Un-American Activities Committee, which, during the Cold War, destroyed the careers and often the lives of those principled

and courageous enough to stand up to a homegrown fascism in America.

“This is a sharp time, now, a precise time ...” wrote Arthur Miller in *The Crucible*, “We live no longer in the dusky afternoon when evil mixed itself with good and befuddled the world.”

There is one “precise” provocateur now; it is clear to see for those who want to see it and foretell its actions. It is a gang of states led by the United States whose stated objective is “full spectrum dominance.” Russia is still the hated one, Red China the feared one.

From Washington and London,

the virulence has no limit. Israel, the colonial anachronism and unleashed attack dog, is armed to the teeth and granted historical impunity so that “we” the West ensure the blood and tears never dry in Palestine.

British MPs who dare call for a ceasefire in Gaza are banished, the iron door of two-party politics closed to them by a Labour leader who would withhold water and food from the children.

In McCarthy’s time, there were bolt holes of truth. Mavericks welcomed then are heretics now; an underground of journalism exists

(such as this site) in a landscape of mendacious conformity. Dissenting journalists have been defenestrated from the “mainstream” (as the great editor David Bowman wrote); the media’s task is to invert the truth and support the illusions of democracy, including a “free press.”

Social Democracy has shrunk to the width of a cigarette paper that separates the principal policies of major parties. Their one subscription is to a capitalist cult, neoliberalism, and an imposed poverty described by a UN special rapporteur as “the immiseration of a significant part of the British population.”

War today is an unmoving shadow; “forever” imperial wars are designated normal. Iraq, the model, is destroyed at a cost of a million lives and three million dispossessed. The destroyer, Blair, is personally enriched and fawned over at his party’s conference as an electoral winner.

Blair and his moral counter, Julian Assange, live 14 miles apart, one in a Regency mansion, the other in a cell awaiting extradition to hell.

According to a Brown University study, since 9/11, almost six million men, women and children have been killed by America and its acolytes in the “Global War on Terror.” A monument is to be built in Washington in “celebration” of this mass murder; its committee is chaired by the former president, George W. Bush, Blair’s mentor. Afghanistan, where it started, was finally laid to waste when President Biden stole its national bank reserves.

There have been many Afghani-stans. The forensic William Blum devoted himself to making sense of a state terrorism that seldom spoke its name and so requires repetition: “In my lifetime, the United States has overthrown or attempt-



MEDIA HEROES: Julian Assange (above) and David McBride.



ed to overthrow more than 50 governments, most democracies. It has interfered in democratic elections in 30 countries. It has dropped bombs on the people of 30 countries, most of them poor and defenceless. It has fought to suppress liberation movements in 20 countries. It has attempted to murder countless leaders.”

Perhaps I hear some of you saying: that is enough. As the Final Solution of Gaza is broadcast live to millions, the small faces of its victims etched in bombed rubble, framed between

TV commercials for cars and pizza, yes, that is surely enough. How profane is that word “enough”?

Afghanistan was where the West sent young men weighed down with the ritual of “warriors” to kill people and enjoy it. We know some of them enjoyed it from the evidence of Australian SAS sociopaths, including a photograph of them drinking from an Afghan man’s prosthetic.

Not one sociopath has been charged for this and crimes such as kicking a man over a cliff, gunning down children point-blank, slitting throats: none of it “in battle.” David McBride, a former Australian military lawyer who served twice in Afghanistan, was a “true believer” in the system as moral and honourable. He also has an abiding belief in truth, and loyalty. He can define them as few can. Last month he was in court in Canberra as an alleged criminal.

“An Australian whistleblower,” reports Kieran Pender, a senior lawyer at the Australian Human Rights Law Centre, “[will face] trial for blowing the whistle on horrendous wrongdoing. It is profoundly unjust that the first person on trial for war crimes in Afghanistan is the whistleblower and not an alleged war criminal.”

McBride can receive a sentence of up to 100 years for revealing the cover-up of the great crime of Afghanistan. He tried to exercise his legal right as a whistleblower under the Public Interest Disclosure Act, which the current attorney general, Mark Dreyfus, says “delivers on our promise to strengthen protections for public sector whistleblowers.”

Yet it is Dreyfus, a Labor minister, who signed off on the McBride trial following a punitive wait of four years and eight months since his arrest at Sydney airport: a wait that shredded his health and family.

Those who know David and know of the hideous injustice done to him

fill his street in Bondi near the beach in Sydney to wave their encouragement to this good and decent man. To them, and me, he is a hero.

McBride was affronted by what he found in the files he was ordered to inspect. Here was evidence of crimes and their cover-up. He passed hundreds of secret documents to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Police raided the ABC's offices in Sydney while reporters and producers watched, shocked, as their computers were confiscated by the Federal Police.

Attorney-General Dreyfus, self-declared liberal reformer and friend of whistleblowers, had the singular power to stop the McBride trial. A Freedom of Information search of his actions in this direction reveals little, at most, an indifference.

You can't run a fully-fledged democracy and a colonial war; one aspires to decency, the other is a form of fascism, regardless of its pretensions. Mark the killing fields of Gaza, bombed to dust by apartheid Israel. It is no coincidence that in rich, yet impoverished Britain an "inquiry"

Police raided the ABC's offices in Sydney while reporters and producers watched, shocked, as their computers were confiscated by the Federal Police

is currently being held into the gunning down by British SAS soldiers of 80 Afghans, all civilians, including a couple in bed.

The grotesque injustice meted out to David McBride is minted from the injustice consuming his compatriot, Julian Assange. Both are friends of mine. Whenever I see them, I am optimistic. "You cheer me," I tell Julian as he raises a defiant fist at the end of our visiting period. "You make me feel proud," I tell David at our favourite coffee shop in Sydney.

Their bravery has allowed many of us, who might despair, to understand the real meaning of a resistance we all share if we want to prevent the conquest of us, our conscience, our self respect, if we prefer freedom and decency to compliance and collusion. In this, we are

all Spartacus.

Spartacus was the rebellious leader of Rome's slaves in 71-73 BC. There is a thrilling moment in the Kirk Douglas movie *Spartacus* when the Romans call on Spartacus's men to identify their leader and so be pardoned. Instead hundreds of his comrades stand and raise their fists in solidarity and shout, "I am Spartacus!" The rebellion is under way.

Julian and David are Spartacus. The Palestinians are Spartacus. People who fill the streets with flags and principle and solidarity are Spartacus. We are all Spartacus if we want to be. **CT**

John Pilger has twice won Britain's highest award for journalism and has been International Reporter of the Year, News Reporter of the Year and Descriptive Writer of the Year. He has made 61 documentary films and has won an Emmy, a BAFTA and the Royal Television Society prize. His Cambodia Year Zero is named as one of the ten most important films of the 20th century. He is the winner of Consortium News' 2023 Gary Webb Award. He can be contacted at www.johnpilger.com and on X @johnpilger.

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Chris Hedges

ISRAEL REOPENS THE GAZA SLAUGHTERHOUSE

Phase One of Israel's genocidal campaign on Gaza has ended. Phase Two has begun. It will result in even higher levels of death and destruction

The skies over Gaza are filled – after a seven-day truce – with projectiles of death. Warplanes. Attack helicopters. Drones. Artillery shells. Tank shells. Mortars. Bombs. Missiles. Gaza is a cacophony of explosions and forlorn screams and cries for help beneath collapsed buildings. Fear, once again, is coiling itself around every heart in the Gazan concentration camp.

By the evening of Friday, December 1, 184 Palestinians – including three journalists and two doctors – had been killed by Israeli air strikes in the north, south and central Gaza, and at least 589 injured, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza. Most of them are women and children. Israel will not be deterred. It plans to finish the job, to obliterate what is left in the north of Gaza and decimate what remains in the south, to render Gaza uninhabitable, to see its 2.3 million people driven out in a massive campaign of ethnic cleansing via starvation, terror, slaughter and infectious diseases.

The aid convoys, which brought in token amounts of food and medicine – the first batch was shrouds and coronavirus tests according to the director of al-Najjar hospital – have been halted. No one, least of all President Joe Biden, plans to intervene to stop the genocide. Secre-

tary of State Antony Blinken visited Israel, and while calling for Israel to protect civilians, refused to set conditions that would disrupt the \$3.8-billion Israel receives in annual military assistance or the \$14.3-billion supplemental aid package. The world will watch passively, muttering useless bromides about more surgical strikes, while Israel spins its roulette wheel of death.

By the time Israel is done, the 1948 Nakba, where Palestinians were massacred in dozens of villages and 750,000 were ethnically cleansed by Zionist militias, will look like a quaint relic of a more civilised era.

Nothing is off limits. Hospitals. Mosques. Churches. Homes. Apartment blocks. Refugee camps. Schools. Universities. Media offices. Banks. Sewer systems. Telecommunications infrastructure. Water treatment plants. Libraries. Wheat mills. Bakeries. Markets. Entire neighbourhoods. Israel's intent is to destroy Gaza's infrastructure and daily kill or wound hundreds of Palestinians. Gaza is to become a wasteland, a dead zone that will be incapable of sustaining life.

Israel began to bomb Khan Younis on December 1 after dropping leaflets warning civilians to evacuate further south to Rafah, located

on the border crossing with Egypt. Hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians had sought refuge in Khan Younis. Once Palestinians are pushed to Rafah, there is only one place left to flee – Egypt. The Israeli Ministry of Intelligence, in a leaked report, calls for the forcible transfer of Gaza's population to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.

A detailed plan to intentionally displace the Palestinians in Gaza and push them into Egypt has been embedded in Israeli doctrine for five decades. Already, 1.8- million Palestinians in Gaza have been driven from their homes. Once Palestinians cross the border into Egypt – which the Egyptian government and Arab leaders are seeking to prevent despite pressure from the US – Palestinians will never return.

This is not a war against Hamas. It is a war against Palestinians.

Israeli strikes are generated at a dizzying rate, many of them from a system called "Habsora" – The Gospel – which is built on artificial intelligence that selects 100 targets a day. The AI-system is described by seven current and former Israeli intelligence officials in an article by Yuval Abraham on the Israeli sites *+972 Magazine* and *Local Call*, as facilitating a "mass assassination factory." Israel, once it locates what it assumes to be a Hamas operative from



PHASE TWO: The Qatari-funded Hamad Town residential complex in Khan Younis was bombed by Israel on December 2, 2023.

a cell phone, for example, bombs and shells a wide area around the target, killing and wounding tens, and at times hundreds of Palestinians, the article states.

“According to intelligence sources,” the story reads, “Habsora generates, among other things, automatic recommendations for attacking private residences where people suspected of being Hamas or Islamic Jihad operatives live. Israel then carries out large-scale assassination operations through the heavy shelling of these residential homes.”

Some 15,000 Palestinians, including 6,000 children and 4,000 women, have been killed since Oct. 7. Some 30,000 have been wounded. Over six thousand are missing, many buried under the rubble. More than 300 families have lost 10 or more members of their families. More than 250 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since Oct. 7, and more than 3,000 injured, although the area is not controlled by Hamas. The Israeli military claims to have killed between 1,000 and 3,000 of some 30,000 Hamas fighters, a relatively small number given the scale of the assault. Most resistance

fighters shelter in their vast tunnel system.

Israel’s playbook is the “Dahiya Doctrine.” The doctrine was formulated by former Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Chief of Staff Gadi Eizenkot, who is a member of the war cabinet, following the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Dahiya is a southern Beirut suburb and a Hezbollah stronghold. It was pounded by Israeli jets after two Israeli soldiers were taken prisoner. The doctrine posits that Israel should employ massive, disproportionate force, destroying infrastructure and civilian residences, to ensure deterrence.

Daniel Hagari, spokesman of the IDF, conceded at the start of Israel’s most recent attack on Gaza that the “emphasis” would be “on damage and not on accuracy.”

Israel has abandoned its tactic of “roof knocking” where a rocket without a warhead would land on a roof to warn those inside to evacuate. Israel has also ended its phone calls warning of an impending attack. Now dozens of families in an

apartment block or a neighbourhood are killed without notice.

The images of mass destruction feed the thirst for revenge within Israel following the humiliating incursion by Hamas fighters on Oct. 7 and the killing of 1,200 Israelis, including 395 soldiers and 59 police officers. There is a sadistic pleasure voiced by many Israelis over the genocide and a groundswell of calls for the murder or expulsion of Palestinians, including those in the occupied West Bank and those with Israeli citizenship.

The savagery of the air strikes and indiscriminate attacks, the cutting off of food, water and medicine, the genocidal rhetoric of the Israeli government, make this a war whose sole objective is revenge. This will not be good for Israel or the Palestinians. It will fuel a conflagration throughout the Middle East.

Israel’s attack is the last desperate measure of a settler colonial project that foolishly thinks, as many settler colonial projects have in the past, that it can crush the resistance of an indigenous population with genocide. But even Israel will not get away with killing on this scale. A generation of Palestinians, many of whom have seen most, if not all, of their families killed and their homes and neighbourhoods destroyed, will carry within them a lifelong thirst for justice and retribution.

This war is not over. It has not even begun. **CT**

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

Jonathan Cook

HOW A SLOGAN BECAME BIGGER NEWS THAN THE MURDER OF GAZA BABIES

The protest chant 'From the River to the Sea' rejects neither Israelis or Jews but the apartheid nature of Israel. That's why western politicians and media want to criminalise it

The lead foreign story for the BBC on 13 November should have been a no-brainer. As Israeli soldiers surrounded al-Shifa hospital in northern Gaza, preparing to storm it, dozens of premature babies inside the facility had been removed from their incubators. The hospital no longer had any power to run the machines.

Distressing footage showed the babies huddled together in a makeshift, foil-lined pen, shivering from cold. Several had already died.

The symbolism was hard to miss. Gaza's civilians were huddled together, too, after Israel had bombed their homes to rubble and ordered them to move south. They were exposed and vulnerable against Israel's wrath. And growing numbers were dying.

The babies story was both heart-wrenching and infuriating. Israel had been repeatedly warned by the United Nations that this would be one of the terrible consequences of its collective punishment of Gaza's population, denying the fuel needed to generate electricity. Israel simply

ignored the warnings.

But editors at the BBC's News at Six decided to lead the foreign coverage not with the babies being killed by Israel's withholding of fuel but with a story from the other side of the divide. It must have been one of the most perverse news judgments on record.

Instead, the BBC led with the brother of a British-Israeli man who had been killed during Hamas's attack on 7 October. The attack itself was by then more than a month old, which even the BBC seemed to understand could not justify demoting the dying babies from the top foreign news slot.

A better angle was needed. And it was this: the BBC reported that the brother was increasingly wondering whether it was safe for him to remain in Britain. This was a sentiment shared by many other Jews, according to the report.

Paradoxically, the implication was that for British Jews it might be a safer alternative to move to Israel, despite weeks of western coverage highlighting Israelis' fears about their vulnerability following Ha-

mas's attack. Did this British man really think he would be more secure in the same state in which his brother had just been killed in a mass atrocity? The BBC's reporter did not pose the question.

So what evidence did the brother cite to justify his fears? He told the BBC that he found the marches in the UK for Gaza upsetting and intimidating. Chants like "From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be Free" were, he observed, evidence of deep-rooted and growing antisemitism in British society.

The problem is not just that many British Jews assume the UK has an antisemitism problem based on a highly dubious interpretation of the chant's meaning. It is that establishment media organisations are echoing that misunderstanding and treating it as more newsworthy than Israel killing Palestinian babies, with the UK government's blessing.

It is just one illustration of a pattern of reporting by western media outlets skewing their news priorities in ways that reveal a racist hierarchy of concern. Jewish fears are



FREEDOM CALLS: Supporters of Palestine take to the streets of Melbourne, Australia, at a pro-Palestine rally.

of greater import than actual Palestinian deaths, even babies' deaths.

The hypocrisy is especially hard to stomach, given a central Israeli justification for its subsequent genocidal rampage through Gaza. Israel promoted the claim that Hamas had beheaded 40 Israeli babies on October 7 – a story that was widely reported as fact, even though no evidence was ever produced for it.

The media has revisited the events of October 7 for weeks, desperately trying to find fresh angles to maintain a sense of “balance” in the suffering of both sides. But, as the downgrading of the al-Shifa babies story underscores, coverage of Israel's trauma often comes at the expense of reporting on the far

worse, and current, torment faced by Palestinians.

On the BBC news on November 20, for example, a story about the agonies of the families of the Israeli hostages had three times as much time dedicated to it as the plight of Palestinians in Gaza – on a day when Israel attacked another hospital, the Indonesian, and rained down more bombs on Palestinian civilians.

Also strangely, when media outlets consider the suffering of the hostages, they barely even allude to the fact that the most terrifying part of the hostages' ordeal is being subjected to the same Israeli

bombing campaign as that faced by Palestinians.

The intense focus on the plight of the hostages held by Hamas contrasts strikingly with the complete lack of interest, both historic and current, in Israel's own hostages: the Palestinian women and children, often seized by masked soldiers in the middle of the night, who are locked up in Israeli jails, where they are rarely, if ever, able to see family.

Though the media refer to them simply as “prisoners,” they have been either jailed without trial or prosecuted in military courts with an almost 100 per cent conviction rate.

Another unmentionable is that

western war correspondents, so ready to risk their lives for a story in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria, are keeping out of Gaza, or embedding with the Israeli army – and not just because Israel orders them to stay outside. If they wished, they could find a way in.

Their news outlets refuse to let them in because they know that Israel's bombing campaign is so ruthless, so untargeted, so unpredictable, that there would be too much danger of their reporters being injured or killed.

That very fact ought to be part of the news story. But that would require turning upside down the narrative framework underpinning western reporting.

These editorial decisions make sense only because a manufactured political climate dominates in the West. Israel and Israelis, even Israeli soldiers enforcing apartheid rule, are treated as innocents, while ordinary Palestinians, even babies, are portrayed as complicit in the mindless barbarism Hamas stands accused of.

The very premises of western coverage wipe from the slate decades of brutalising Israeli occupation and illegal Jewish settlement of Palestinian territory, as well as an inhuman 16-year siege of Gaza. In media coverage, the roles of occupier and occupied, of predator and prey, of abuser and victim, have been reversed.

This is also the only way to make sense of the continuing furore over the chant that was considered more newsworthy than Israel's reckless abuse and endangerment of premature babies.

Shortly before she was sacked as home secretary, Suella Braverman called for the government to criminalise as hate speech slogans such as “From the River to the Sea,

Ordinary Palestinians, even babies, are portrayed as complicit in the mindless barbarism Hamas stands accused of

Palestine will be Free”. She had earlier called for the banning of the Palestinian flag at demonstrations.

Hers is far from a rogue view. The government was reported to be seriously considering outlawing slogans protesting against the bombing of Gaza, classing them as support for terrorism.

Lord Carlile, who oversaw the drafting of the 2006 Terrorism Act, threw his weight behind the idea, arguing that protesters who chant “From the River to the Sea” ought to be prosecuted.

Predictably under Labour leader Keir Starmer, there is bipartisan support for repressing any signs of solidarity with Palestinians. MP Andy McDonald was suspended from the parliamentary party for calling for equality for Israelis and Palestinians, presumably because he added the phrase “between the river and the sea.”

Apparently any mention of that phrase, in any context, equates to support for the extermination of Israelis or Jews.

Even supposed “free speech absolutist” Elon Musk, owner of X (formerly Twitter), fell for this canard. He called phrases like “From the River to the Sea” a “euphemism,” adding that they “necessarily imply genocide.” He threatened to suspend users repeating the slogan.

This line of reasoning is completely preposterous – as well as grossly inconsistent.

The truth is that the phrase has been adopted for many decades by all those in the region, on both sides,

who envision a single state in the region – for good or bad.

This brings us to another of these plentiful media paradoxes.

There has been strong pushback in the media against calling Israel's actions genocidal. For decades, however, the official charter of the ruling Likud party in Israel has referred to the area “Between the Sea and the [River] Jordan”.

And unlike the Gaza protesters, the Likud charter does imply genocidal intent, especially given Israel's current rampage. It declares: “Between the Sea and the Jordan, there will only be Israeli sovereignty.”

This is at the root of the dehumanising language used by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his ministers. They have called the Palestinians “human animals” and “Amalek,” the enemy of the Israelites who had to be destroyed, including women and children.

When protesters chant “From the River to the Sea,” by contrast, they reject not Israelis or Jews but the apartheid nature of Israel. They recognise that Israeli governments have already created a single state across the lands that were historic Palestine, and one in which different ethnic groups are segregated and accorded different rights.

The demand that freedom come to “Palestine,” rather than Israel, does not imply Israelis will be harmed. It offers a vision of equality for both peoples in the same land, superseding a state of Israel born as a European colonial project, one designed to oust Palestinians from their homeland.

The chant acknowledges that there is no possibility of making peace with Israel because of its structural embodiment of ethnic supremacism. Instead, it calls for a process of decolonisation – a dismantling of illegal settlements and the revoking of segregated rights – as happened with the end of white rule in South Afri-

ca. It recognises that decolonisation is incompatible with the ideological premises on which Israel is founded.

The Gaza protests are not hate marches. They are marches to end decades of Israeli colonisation that have culminated in the dehumanisation of Palestinians and a genocide in Gaza.

It would be preferable to think that the efforts to criminalise solidarity with Palestinians as they endure ethnic cleansing and genocide derive from confusion.

The evidence, however, suggests otherwise. In his tweet, Musk identified not just the chant but any effort towards “decolonisation” – in its simplest sense, the tearing down of illegal Jewish settlements built on occupied Palestinian land – as a euphemism for genocide.

In this stark zero-sum assessment, apparently shared by media like the BBC, as well as the UK government and the Labour Party, dignity and freedom for Palestinians are seen as incompatible with the survival of Israelis.

This is part of a pattern, too. Even before October 7, Britain’s political and media class had waged a campaign against solidarity with Palestinians, equating it to antisemitism.

The non-violent movement to boycott Israel – to end the Jewish supremacy embodied by the Likud charter and forestall the events we see today in Gaza without resorting to rockets and guns – was labelled as antisemitism.

Pointing out that Israel is an apartheid state ruling over Palestinians, as all the leading human rights groups now acknowledge, was also tarred as antisemitism.

That campaign reached its nadir with the malicious smearing as antisemites of former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and hundreds of thousands of Palestinian solidarity activists in the UK.

The problem is our susceptibility to the lies and deceptions told by western establishments to promote their narrow interests

More clearly than ever, this recent history should profoundly disturb us.

It has a parallel with events in Gaza itself. For years, Palestinians there tried non-violent ways to protest against their encagement. They massed at the fence symbolising the siege of their enclave, but were met with sniper fire from the Israeli army. Their protests were called terrorism.

They sent over that same fence flaming balloons that set fire to neighbouring fields on the lands Palestinians were cleansed from decades ago to create what we today call Israel. This plea for visibility, this nuisance act to grab attention, was denounced as terrorism too.

And all the while, the people of Gaza watched as the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank failed dismally in its efforts at international diplomacy. Attempts to take Israel to the International Criminal Court for war crimes, including by building illegal settlements, were condemned. They supposedly posed an existential threat to Israel.

It was the blocking of all non-violent means for Palestinians to liberate themselves from an ever-deepening, ever more violent occupation that led to the October 7 breakout from Gaza. That prison break may have been bloody, it may have included many atrocities, but it was entirely predictable.

Chiefly responsible for it are Isra-

el, and the western political and media class, who ignored and smeared Palestinians, human rights groups and solidarity activists, as they now smear an innocent chant.

There is a goal here. A very ugly one. The campaign to delegitimise any solidarity with Palestinians – classifying it as hate – is meant to foment polarisation and escalation. At its starkest, it requires of us that we side with those who are murdering babies.

Israel, aided by western establishments, has intentionally driven supporters of justice for Palestinians, on one side, and much of the Jewish public on the other, into entrenched, oppositional camps. Each feels victimised. One side feels frustrated, vilified and angry. The other feels fearful and unforgiving.

This is not accidental. It reflects a desire by western establishments to create the very internal divisions, hatred and instability they claim to be trying to avert. The aim is to ensure that Israel remains an untouchable ally, able to project western power and influence into the oil- and gas-rich Middle East.

The problem is not a chant. The problem is not marches opposing a terror campaign of bombs and the murder of babies.

The problem is our susceptibility to the endless lies and deceptions told by western establishments to promote their narrow interests over our shared humanity. **CT**

Jonathan Cook is an award-winning British journalist, who was based in Nazareth, Israel, for 20 years before returning to the UK in 2021. The author of three books on the Israel-Palestine conflict, Cook won the Martha Gelhorn Special Prize for Journalism in 2011. He previously worked for Britain’s *Guardian* and *Observer* newspapers. His website is www.Jonathan-Cook.net

Russell Mokhiber

GUINEA PIGS FOR INTERNATIONAL OCCUPATION AND REPRESSION

An interview with Antony Loewenstein, author of *The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation Around the World*

*In his new book, **Palestine Laboratory** (Verso, 2023), Antony Loewenstein shows how Israel's military industrial complex uses the occupied Palestinian territories as a testing ground for weaponry and surveillance technology that they then export around the world to despots and democracies.*

*Russell Mokhiber editor of the **Capitol Hill Citizen**, interviewed Loewenstein in August from his home in Australia. After the October 7 attack by Hamas, he emailed Loewenstein to get an updated take on the breach of Israeli security:*

"Israeli intelligence, military and surveillance failures recently, when Hamas militants successfully breached Israel's air, sea and land borders, will bring a transformative reckoning within the Israeli establishment," Loewenstein wrote back. "But I'm confident that it will have little negative impact on Israel's surging arms industry as all the West is united behind the Jewish state and will be keen to buy the latest repressive and defence tech.

RUSSELL MOKHIBER: Let's start with the title of your book *Palestine Laboratory*. What do you mean by it?

ANTONY LOEWENSTEIN: Israel has been occupying Palestine for over half a century. It's the longest occupation of modern times. I'm talking about after 1967, the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.

Over those decades what Israel has done is develop tools and technologies to control Palestinians – their daily lives – where they move, what they think, how they communicate. In the modern age, that's obviously through cell phones and the internet. It's not just a question of Israel testing all these technologies on Palestinians. It's also using them as guinea pigs.

Much of the technology which Israel has been using, including before the digital era and now in the modern 21st-century, is routinely tested on Palestinians and that is then marketed and sold around the world as so called battle tested on Palestinians. Large numbers of countries over the last half century have been desperate for that repres-

sive technology to repress their own peoples, their own minorities.

MOKIBHER: Your book is filled with stories other than the export of cell phone surveillance technology. There was an Anti-Defamation League (ADL) program that sent US police to Israel. You have a segment about Israel's involvement with Chile and the support of Pinochet. There is a part about the Canadian government buying Israeli drones. And you have a segment on the Israeli intelligence services pushing what is called pinkwashing – covering its crimes with support of the LGBTQ community. You report on Israel using drones to drop horrific smelling water on protesters to disperse them – it's called the skunk water drone.

But a key focus of your book is surveillance technology. You quote Israeli human rights lawyer Eitay Mack as saying this – "Because of surveillance tech, a country can avoid massacring protestors now. Today, you're able to identify and start surveillance of the next Nelson Mandela before he even knows he's Nelson Mandela."

LOEWENSTEIN: Eitay is a remarka-



Antony Loewenstein: "When you have an occupied population on your doorstep for over half a century, you have huge amounts of experience in a dark, amoral way in testing the most sophisticated weapons in the world."

ble person. He's one of Israel's finest human rights lawyers. He has spent years trying to uncover and challenge Israel's defence and arms industry. And I think what he says is correct.

He doesn't mean that massacres don't happen. Clearly around the world they're happening. He's talking about incredibly powerful surveillance technology, particularly spyware like Pegasus, which gives a country or a police department or a military complete access to your cell phone, every kind of email and photograph and detail. Through this technology, they know who you're communicating with, they know who you're talking to, what you're thinking.

For many of us, for better or worse, our cell phones have become our lives. And for many of us, therefore, so much information about who we are, what we think, who we mix with either professionally or personally.

And this has real life ramifications. For the book, I spoke to lots of people in places like India, Togo and Mexico and elsewhere. And in those countries, the people who I spoke to were human rights lawyers or activists or journalists.

And they were telling me about the really incredibly destructive practice of a government department without their knowledge, without their consent, getting access to every single piece of information on their phone. And that is often very damaging because they're communicating with people in sensitive situations.

There are other countries that are developing spyware of course. It's not just Israel. The US, of course, is also a global leader in this technology, as is China and Russia and others. But the difference is with Israel, so much of their technology has been tested in Palestine on Palestinians for years.

MOKIBHER: In the global military industrial complex, Israel is the tenth largest exporter of military software. There are nine other countries who are larger exporters. Why focus on Israel?

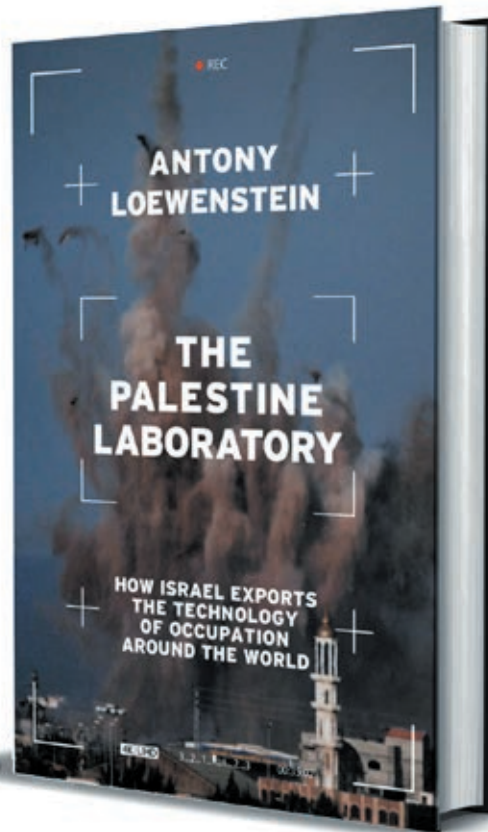
LOEWENSTEIN: Israel is not the top arms dealer in the world. It never will be. The United States is the largest. About 40 percent of the world's weapons are coming from the United States. France and Russia are each larger than Israel.

So why focus on Israel? Because Israel is an ethno-nationalist state. It's a nation that prioritises the Jewish population above everybody else. And if you are not a Jew in Israel itself, but instead live under the occupation in Palestine, you are most certainly a second class citizen.

In the last twenty or so years, Israel is providing inspiration to other ethno-nationalist states. And India is the one I focus on in the book. India is not becoming a Hindu fundamentalist state because of Israel, of course. India is doing what it wants to do for its own dark reasons under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

But both Israel and India have an ideological alignment. They believe they are doing the best for their countries. In Israel they are prioritising Jews. And in India they are prioritising Hindus. And they are inspiring each other. Indian officials are openly looking at the occupation of Palestine as an inspiration, wanting to do something similar in Kashmir, a Muslim majority part of India where right now they are bringing huge numbers of Hindus to settle the land.

But I also focus on how Israel uses Palestinians as guinea pigs. It's true, as I say in the book, that the United States used Afghanistan and



**THE PALESTINE LABORATORY:
How Israel Exports the Technology
of Occupation Around the World**

Anthony Loewenstein

Published by Verso / \$29.66 (Amazon)

Iraq as a testing ground for many weapons. And the United States is testing weapons on the battlefield in the Ukraine now.

Israel is not alone in doing this. But when you have an occupied population on your doorstep for over half a century, you have huge amounts of experience in a dark, amoral way in testing the most sophisticated weapons in the world.

And while Israel is tenth largest arms dealer, it's one of the top spyware dealers in the world. That's one of its great expertise.

MOKIBHER: The Pegasus spyware you mentioned is the property of a private company in Israel, the NSO

Group, with strong ties to the Israeli government. How does the spyware work and how is it used to control the Palestinian population?

LOEWENSTEIN: The NSO Group is the most infamous Israeli spyware company. It's been around for about fifteen years. Often, many of us may get a text from some strange number. And it will say click on this link. And we click on it and forget it.

Back in the day, when you clicked on the link, that essentially inserted on your phone the spyware, which allowed a government, police department or intelligence unit to get full access to your phone – that includes every single detail on your phone, whether you are using encrypted apps or not. It was even to the point where if

your phone is switched off, they can remotely turn on the camera and microphone without your knowledge or consent.

These days, it doesn't even require someone to click on a link. All they have to do is randomly call your phone number. And you may or may not pick up the call, but it doesn't matter, they are in your phone. You forget about it because we all get weird random calls all the time.

And the NSO Group is using this technology against human rights workers in Palestine. With this and other technology, Israel has complete spectral dominance over every inch of Palestine and Israel. Every single phone call and communication is monitored, which is not that dissimilar than what Edward Snowden revealed about the NSA in the United States.

Israel has its Unit 8200, which is the equivalent of the NSA. Unit 8200

is not as powerful or as big as the NSA. But it's main role is to monitor Palestinians 24/7. There has been evidence to suggest that the United States is using Israeli intelligence to monitor Palestinians within the United States itself.

Palestinians can try to be careful, but ultimately, what do you do? You could not use a phone. But then you are monitored on email and internet traffic and virtually everyone uses email and the internet these days in some form.

It just shows how Palestinians are completely captured and occupied by Israel.

MOKIBHER: You point out in the book that it's not just the export of drones and spyware. But it's the export of drones and spyware in conjunction with a political ideology. You write this: "Ethno-nationalist ideology grows when accountable democracy withers. Israel is the ultimate model and goal."

LOEWENSTEIN: Israel is 75 years old and was born in the ashes of the Holocaust. Now, three-quarters of a century on, I would argue as a Jew that it is the most successful ethno-nationalist state in the world. It prioritises Jews over everyone else. And as I mentioned, it's an inspiration to not only India, but Hungary under Viktor Orban who is trying to build a quasi Christian ethno-nationalist state.

And there is also an alliance between Israel and the global far right. On the face of it, that seems crazy, because the far right traditionally is not a big fan of Jews at all. But when you go into far right rallies, you see the Israeli flag being waved in the crowd.

It's not so much an admiration of Jews. Those on the far right don't like Jews at all. What they do admire is a Jewish supremacist state. They want to create a Christian state in their own territory. And Is-

The vision of the hard right wingers in Israel is that of a state like the Taliban – a hard line fundamentalist Jewish theocracy

rael is the model. Israel is a nation that has done it for three quarters of a century. It's gotten away with it. There is very little challenge to it. It is in a complete state of impunity, led of course by the United States.

As a Jew, I'm increasingly concerned about Israel's alliance with far right groups around the world. Just a few weeks ago there was an article in the Israeli press about how the Israeli government is trying to reach out to far right parties in Romania who are often Holocaust deniers and neo-Nazis. You almost have to laugh, but it's a dangerous moment.

You have a self-described Jewish state partnering with, or courting, far right elements. And as shocking as this may seem today, it's nothing new. Israel has worked with far right countries around the world for decades, including some nations in Latin and South America who took in actual Nazis who were fleeing Europe. And Israel had no problem working with those countries, the most notorious being Argentina during its dictatorship.

Israel is moving toward becoming a hard line Jewish theocracy. The vision of the hard right wingers in Israel is that of a state like the Taliban – a hard line fundamentalist Jewish theocracy.

MOKIBHER: You write that Richard Spencer, the alt-right leader in the United States, refers to himself as a

"white Zionist" and that in 2018 he was effusive in his admiration of Israel saying: "Jews are, once again, at the vanguard, rethinking politics and sovereignty for the future, showing a path forward for Europeans." You write that he made that statement "in the wake of Israel's Nation State Law, which formalised its Jewish supremacy over any illusion of democracy for all of its citizens."

LOEWENSTEIN: Yes that goes to what I was saying before. There is a real admiration, almost a jealousy among far right leaders, for what Israel does and gets away with. Israel getting away with it is part of the inspiration.

MOKIBHER: You are not the first to write about Israel developing technology to control the Palestinian population and exporting that technology around the world. For example, you refer to a 1986 Thomas Friedman article in the *New York Times* titled – "How Israel's Economy Got Hooked on Selling Arms Abroad." And there was a book by Ronen Bergman – *Kill First: The Secret History of Israel's Targeted Assassinations*. There is a literature on this subject. So why did you write this book and how is it different?

LOEWENSTEIN: Yes, Friedman wrote that story and Bergman wrote that book. But Bergman's book was about Israel's assassination program around the world.

I wanted to write a book because most people don't know about this. The book came out in May of this year. And in speaking with people in the United States and Europe and elsewhere, including very political people, I confirmed that there wasn't a knowledge or understanding of how not just pervasive Israel's arms industry is and how so-called counter-terrorism techniques have been shared around the world in the past, and how influential it remains

today.

There are stories that appear in the press. *The New York Times* has reported on Pegasus. *Haaretz* has done some good reporting on these issues, but those are isolated examples. And when the press reported on Pegasus, for example, it was – this rogue Israeli company is doing terrible things to human rights workers around the world. On one level that’s true. But it misses the bigger picture, which is that these companies like the NSO Group are a key arm of the Israel state. The same way Raytheon and Lockheed Martin are key arms of the US government.

MOKIBHER: You report that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy last year said that Israel was the ideal model for his country.

“We will become a ‘big Israel’ with its own face,” he stated. “We will not be surprised if we have representatives of the Armed Forces or the National Guard in cinemas, supermarkets, and people with weapons. Ukraine will definitely not be what we wanted it to be from the beginning. It is impossible. Liberal, European – it will not be like that. Ukraine will definitely come from the strength of every house, every building, every person.”

LOEWENSTEIN: Since the Russian invasion in February 2022, Ukraine has been quite angry at how little support Israel has given it. On the face of it that might seem odd. Zelenskyy is Jewish and a strong Zionist. He has met Netanyahu in the past. His vision is an Israel light version in the Ukraine. But Israel is reluctant to sell arms to Ukraine because Israel wants to be close to Russia under Putin.

For many years now, Israel has been given carte blanche by the Russians to bomb within Syria. For many years now, Russia has been a key ally to Syrian Prime Minis-

Those on the far right don't like Jews at all. What they do admire is a Jewish supremacist state, They want to create a Christian state in their own territory

ter Bashar al-Assad. Without Russian and Iranian help, Assad would have lost the civil war. But Israel wanted the opportunity to have access to the sky to bomb what they claim to be Iranian and Syrian arms transfers within that country. And they needed Russian permission to do so. So Israel continues to refuse to sell Ukraine Pegasus and other technologies.

MOKIBHER: Before we end this, I just wanted to get a bit about your background. You came from a liberal Zionist household in Australia. How did you go from there to where you are now?

LOEWENSTEIN: I grew up in Melbourne, Australia in the mid-1970s. It was a typical Jewish home. It was a liberal household. Not religious. It was pretty common then and even now in Jewish households that Israel is supposed to play a big part in your life. You should support Israel and defend it among friends and family.

Most of my family were killed in the Holocaust in Europe. The ones who got out escaped to Australia. When I was growing up in the 1970s, my family was not hard core Zionist, but there was an expectation that I would support Israel.

When I was young, I didn’t really question it. But as the years went on, it struck me as fairly irrational. In my teenage years, I started understanding that there was so much

racism against Palestinians. I had never met a Palestinian. The Palestinians were the suicide bombers, they were the threat.

When I started questioning the narrative I lost Jewish friends. I had not been to Israel until 2005. When I went there, I still believed in the two state solution and the idea of the Jewish state.

But then things changed. My first book was titled *My Israel Question*. It came out in 2006. It was essentially a critical Jewish view of the conflict. The response in Australia was insane. The Israel lobby in Australia tried to ban it. They tried to get it pulped. I was being condemned in Parliament. At the time, it was a bit overwhelming, but in hindsight it seemed so absurd. But all that controversy helped make the book a best seller.

As time went on, I visited Israel, the West Bank and Gaza every three or four years. I wrote a book in 2012 called *After Zionism*. In the years between 2006 and 2012, my views evolved. I then lived there in East Jerusalem between 2016 and 2020 with my partner.

I felt over time that reality trumped this concept of a two state solution.

Now in 2023, there are roughly 750,000 Jewish settlers living illegally in Palestine – the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Now, Israel has a choice. It can be one state, which will be an apartheid state which gives preferential treatment to Jews and discriminates against Arabs, Palestinians and anyone who is not Jewish. Or it can be a democratic state, which it is very far from today. **CT**

Russell Mokhiber is the editor of the Capitol Hill Citizen. This interview was included in the November/December issue of the newspaper, which is available from www.capitolhillcitizen.com.

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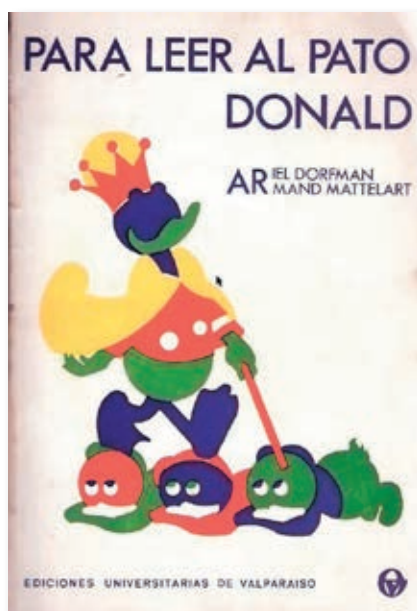
DUCK! WALT DISNEY AND SALVADOR ALLENDE ARE STILL FIGHTING FOR OUR SOULS

The values symbolised in those now-ancient comic books continue to underwrite the social order (or do I mean disorder?) that's moving us towards ultimate self-destruction globally

This year marks the anniversaries of two drastically different events that loomed all too large in my life. The first occurred a century ago in Hollywood: on October 16, 1923, Walt Disney signed into being the corporation that bears his name. The second took place in Santiago, Chile, on September 11, 1973, when socialist President Salvador Allende died in a military coup that overthrew his democratically elected government.

Those two disparate occurrences got me thinking about how the anniversaries of a long-dead American who revolutionised popular culture globally and a slain Chilean leader whose inspiring political revolution failed might illuminate – and I hope you won't find this too startling – the dilemma that apocalyptic climate change poses to humanity.

This isn't, in fact, the first time those two men and what they represented affected my life. Fifty years ago, each of them helped determine my destiny – a time when I had not the slightest hint that global warming might someday leave them again



COVER STORY: The original Chilean edition, published 50 years ago, and the recent English-language version of *How To Read Donald Duck*.

juxtaposed in my life.

In mid-October 1973, as the Walt Disney Corporation was celebrating the 50th anniversary of its founding, I found myself in the Argentine embassy in Santiago, Chile, where I had sought refuge after the country's military had destroyed its democracy and taken power. Like 1,000 oth-

er asylum seekers, I was forced to flee to those compressed premises – in my case, thanks in significant part to Walt Disney. To be more specific, what put me in peril was *Para Leer al Pato Donald* (*How to Read Donald Duck*), a bestselling book I had co-written in 1971 with Belgian sociologist Armand Mattelart that

skewered Uncle Walt's – as we then called it – “cultural imperialism.”

That book had been born out of Salvador Allende's peaceful revolution, the first attempt in history to build socialism by democratic means rather than by conquering the state through armed insurrection. That Chilean road to socialism meant, however, leaving intact the economic, political, and media power of those who opposed our radical reforms.

One of our most urgent cultural tasks was contesting the dominant stories of the time, primarily those produced in the United States, imported to Chile (and so many other countries), and then ingested by millions of consumers. Among the most prevalent, pleasurable, and easily digestible of mass-media commodities were *historietas* (comic books), with those by Disney ruling the market. To create alternative versions of reality for the new, liberated Chile, Armand and I felt it was important to grasp the ideological magic that lurked in those oh-so-popular comics. After all, you can't substitute for something if you don't even know how it works.

Our goal was to defeat our capitalist adversary not with bullets but with ideas, images, and emotions of our own. So, the two of us set out to interpret hundreds of Donald Duck *historietas* to try to grasp just what made them so damn successful. In mid-1971, less than a year after Allende's election victory and after 10 feverish days of

collaboration, he and I felt we had grasped the way Walt's supposedly harmless ducks and mice had subtly shaped the thinking of Chileans.

In the end, in a kind of frenzy, we wrote what John Berer (one of the great art critics of the 20th-century) would term “a handbook of de-colonisation,” a vision of what imperial America was selling the world as natural, everlasting, and presumably unalterable by anyone, including our President Allende. We did our best to lay out how Walt (and his workers) viewed family and sex, work and criminality, society and failure, and above all how his ducks and mice trapped Third World peo-

MEN OF DESTINY: Chilean president Salvador Allende, assassinated in 1973 (left); and Walt Disney, founder 50 years earlier, of the corporation that revolutionised popular culture globally.



ples in an exotic world of underdevelopment from which they could only emerge by eternally handing over their natural resources to foreigners and agreeing to imitate the American way of life.

Above all, of course, since the values embedded in Disney comics were wildly individualistic and competitive, they proved to be paeans to unbridled consumerism – the absolute opposite, you won't be surprised to learn, of the communal vision of Allende and his followers as they tried to build a country where solidarity and the common good would be paramount.

Miraculously enough, our book hit a raw nerve in Chilean society. In a country where everything was being questioned by insurgent, upstart masses, including power and property relations, here were two lunatics stating that nothing was sacred – not even children's comics! Nobody, we insisted, could truly claim to be innocent or untainted, certainly not Uncle Walt and his crew. To build a different world, Chileans would have to dramatically question who we thought we were and how we dreamt about one another and our future, while exploring the sources of our deepest desires.

Our call for transgression had been written in academic prose destined for obscure scholarly journals, we would surely have been ignored. But the style we chose for *Para Leer al Pato Donald* was as insolent, raucous, and carnivalesque as the Chilean revolution itself. We tried to write so that any mildly literate person would be able to understand us.

Still, don't imagine for a second that we weren't surprised when the reaction to our book proved explosive. Assaults in the opposition press and media were to be expected, but assaults on my family and

I was almost run over by a furious driver, screaming "Leave the Duck alone!" Our house was pelted with stones, while Chileans outside it cheered Donald Duck

me were another matter. I was almost run over by a furious driver, screaming "Leave the Duck alone!" Our house was pelted with stones, while Chileans outside it cheered Donald Duck. Ominous phone calls promised worse. By mid-1973, my wife Angélica, our young son Rodrigo, and I had moved – temporarily, we hoped – to my parents' house, which was where the military coup of September 11 found us.

Salvador Allende died at the Presidential Palace that day, a death that foretold the death of democracy and of so many thousands of his followers. Among the victims of that military putsch were a number of books, including *Para Leer Al Pato Donald*, which I saw – on television, no less – being burnt by soldiers. A few days later, the editor of the book told me that its third printing had been dumped into the bay of Valparaíso by navy personnel.

I had resisted, post-coup, going into exile, but the mistreatment of my book convinced me that, if I wanted to avoid being added to the inquisitorial pyre, I would have to seek the safety of some embassy until I could get permission to leave the country.

It was a sobering experience for the man who had brazenly barbecued the Duck to find himself huddling in a foreign embassy on the very day the corporation that had created those comics was celebrating its 50th anniversary. Consider that a sign of how completely Uncle

Walt had won that battle, though he himself had, by then, been dead for seven years. Very much alive, however, were his buddies, those voracious fans of Disneyland – then-American President Richard Nixon and his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, masterminds of the conspiracy that had destabilised and sabotaged the Allende revolution, which they saw as inimical to American global hegemony. Indeed, the coup had been carried out in the name of saving capitalism from hordes of unwashed, unruly revolutionaries, while punishing any country in the hemisphere whose leadership dared reject Washington's influence.

Nor would it take long before the dictatorship that replaced Allende began enthusiastically applying economic shock therapy to the country, accompanied by electric shocks to the genitals of anyone who dared protest the extreme form of capitalism that came to be known as neoliberalism. That deregulatory free-market style of capitalism with its whittling down of the welfare state would, in the years to come, dominate so many other countries as well.

Fifty years after the coup that destroyed Allende's attempt to replace it with a socialism that would respect its adversaries and their rights, such a revolutionary change hardly seems achievable anymore, even in today's left-wing regimes in Latin America. Instead, capitalism in its various Disneyesque forms remains dominant across the planet.

Nor should it be surprising that, in all these years, the corporation Walt Disney founded a century ago has grown ever more ascendant, becoming one of the planet's major entertainment and media conglomerates (though it, too, now finds itself

in a more difficult world). Admittedly, with that preeminence has come changes that even an obdurate critic like me must hail. How could I fail to admire the Disney corporation's stances on racial equality and gay rights, or its opposition to Ron DeSantis's "Don't Say Gay" bill. How could I not note the ways in which its films have come to recognise the culture and aspirations of countries and communities it caricatured in the comics I read in Chile so long ago? And yet, the smiling, friendly form of capitalism it now presents – the very fact that it doesn't wish to shock or alienate its customers – may, in the end, prove even more dangerous to our ultimate well-being than was true half a century ago.

True, I would no longer write our book the way Armand and I did all those decades ago. Like any document forged in the heat of a revolutionary moment eager to dismantle an oppressive system, imbued with a messianic belief in our ability to change consciousness, and tending to imagine our readers as empty vessels into which ducks and mice (or something far better) could be poured, we lacked a certain subtlety. It was hard for us to imagine Chilean comic-book readers as human beings who could creatively appropriate images and stories fed to them and forge a new significance all their own.

And yet, our essay's central message is still a buoyant, rebellious reminder that there could be other roads to a better world than those created by rampant capitalism.

Indeed, our probe of the inner workings of a system that preys on our desires while trying to turn us into endlessly consuming machines is particularly important on a planet imperiled by global warming in ways we couldn't even imagine then.

Take a scene I came across as I scanned the book just this

Our essay's central message is still a rebellious reminder that there could be other roads to a better world than those created by rampant capitalism

week. Huey, Dewey, and Louie rush into their house with a bucket. "Look, Unca Donald," they say, in sheer delight, "at the strange fish we caught in the bay." Donald grabs the specimen as dollar signs ignite around his head and responds: "Strange fish!... Money!... The aquarium buys strange fish."

In 1971, we chose that bit of Disney to illustrate how its comics then eradicated history, sweat, and social class. "There is a great round of buying, selling, and consuming," we wrote, "but to all appearances, none of the products involved has required any effort whatsoever to make. Nature is the great labour force, producing objects of human and social utility as if they were natural."

What concerned us then was the way workers were being elided from history and their exploitation made to magically disappear. We certainly noted the existence of nature and its exploitation for profit, but reading that passage more than 50 years later what jumps out at me isn't the dollarisation of everything or how Donald instantly turns a fish into merchandise but another burning ecological question: Why is that fish in that bucket and not the sea? Why did the kids feel they could go to the bay, scoop out one of its inhabitants, and bring it home to show Unca Donald, a displacement of nature that Armand and I didn't even think to highlight then?

Today, that environmental per-

spective, that sense of how we humans continue to despoil our planet in an ever more fossil-fuelised and dangerous fashion, is simply inescapable. It stares me in the face as we now eternally break heat records worldwide.

Perhaps that fictitious fish and its castoff fate from half a century ago resonate so deeply in me today because I recently included a similar creature in my new novel, *The Suicide Museum*. In it, Joseph Hortha, a billionaire (of which there are so many more than in 1971), snags a yellow-fin tuna off the coast of Santa Catalina, California, a bay like the one where those three young ducks netted their fish. But Hortha, already rich beyond imagining, doesn't see dollar signs in his catch. When he guts that king of the sea, bits of plastic spill obscenely out of its innards, the very plastic that made his fortune. Visually, in other words, that tuna levels an instant accusation at him for polluting the oceans and this planet with his products.

To atone, he will eventually make delirious plans to build a gigantic "Suicide Museum," meant to alert humanity to the dangerous abyss towards which we're indeed heading. In other words, to halt our suicidal rush towards Anthropocene oblivion, we need to change our lifestyles drastically. "The only way to save ourselves is to undo civilisation," Hortha explains, "unfound our cities, question the paradigm of modernity that has dominated our existence for centuries." He imagines "a Copernican swerve in how we interact with nature," one in which we come to imagine ourselves not as nature's masters or stewards, but once again as part of its patterns and rhythms.

And if just imagining a world without plastic is daunting, how much

more difficult will it be to implement policies that effectively limit the way our lives are organised around a petro-universe now blistering the planet? You have to wonder (and Uncle Walt won't help on this): Is there any chance of stunning the global upper and middle classes into abandoning their ingrained privileges, the conveniences that define all our harried existences?

On this increasingly desperate planet, I suspect the critique of Disney that Armand and I laid out so long ago still has a certain potency. The values symbolised in those now-ancient comic books continue to underwrite the social order (or do I mean disorder?) that's moving us towards ultimate self-destruction globally.

Such a collective cataclysm won't be averted unless we're finally ready to deal with the most basic aspects of contemporary existence: unabashed competition, untrammelled consumerism, an extractive attitude towards the Earth (not to speak of a deeply militarised urge to kill one another), and a stupefying faith that a Tomorrowland filled with happiness is just a mono-rail ride away. To put it bluntly, our

History is made by unexceptional men and women who, when they dare imagine an alternative future, can accomplish exceptional things

species can't afford another century of the principles fostered by the Disney emporium.

And what of Salvador Allende, dead this half-century that's seen Uncle Walt's values expand and invade every corner of our souls? What of his vision of a just society that seems so much farther away today, as would-be autocrats and hard-core authoritarians rise up everywhere in a world in which The Donald is anything but a duck?

President Allende rarely spoke of the environment in his speeches, but he did want us to live in a very different world. While he was no eco-prophet, he distinctly had some-

thing to say about the catastrophic predicament now facing us.

Today, we should value his lifelong certainty, reiterated in that last stand in defence of democracy and dignity in Chile's Presidential Palace 50 years ago, that history is made by unexceptional men and women who, when they dare imagine an alternative future, can accomplish exceptional things.

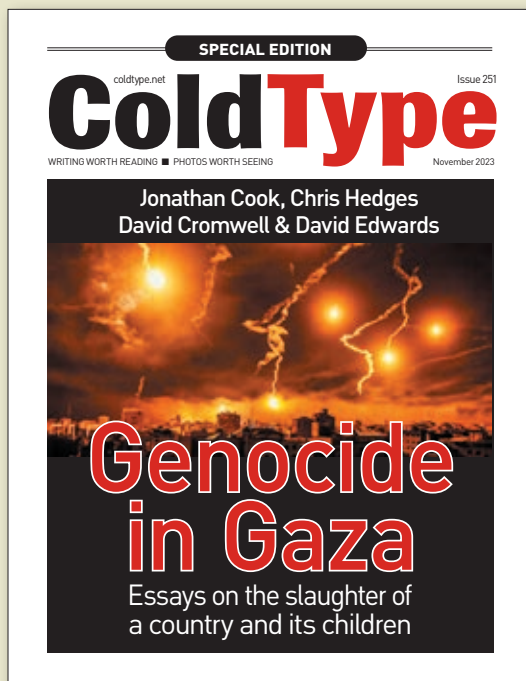
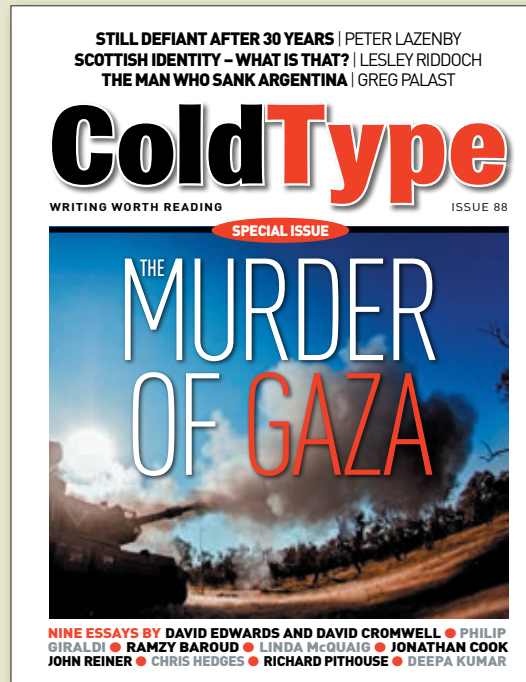
As the symbolic battle between Walt Disney and Salvador Allende for the hearts and minds of humanity continues, the last word doesn't, in fact, belong to either of them, but to the rest of us. It's we who must decide if there will even be generations, a century from now, to look back on our follies, no less thank us for subversively saving our planet for them. **CT**

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Norman Solomon

FOR MEDIA ELITES, WAR CRIMINAL HENRY KISSINGER WAS A GREAT MAN

For US mass media, Henry Kissinger's quip that "power is the ultimate aphrodisiac" rang true. Influential reporters and pundits often expressed their love for him. The media establishment kept swooning over one of the worst war criminals in modern history.

After news of his death broke on November 29, prominent coverage echoed the kind that had followed him ever since his years with President Richard Nixon, while they teamed up to oversee vast carnage in Southeast Asia.

The headline over a *Washington Post* news bulletin summed up: "Henry Kissinger Dies at 100. The Noted Statesman and Scholar Had Unparalleled Power Over Foreign Policy."

But can a war criminal really be a "noted statesman"?

The *New York Times* top story began by describing Kissinger as a "scholar-turned-diplomat who engineered the United States' opening to China, negotiated its exit from Vietnam, and used cunning, ambition and intellect to remake American power relationships with the Soviet Union at the time of the Cold War, sometimes trampling on democratic values to do so."



STATESMAN-OF-WAR: Henry Kissinger, war criminal who was loved by the media.

And so, the *Times* spotlighted Kissinger's role in the US "exit from Vietnam" in 1973 – but not his role during the previous four years, overseeing merciless slaughter in a war that took several million lives.

"Leaving aside those who perished from disease, hunger, or lack of medical care, at least 3.8-million Vietnamese died violent war deaths, according to researchers from Harvard Medical School and the University of Washington," historian and journalist Nick Turse has noted. He added: "The best estimate we have is that 2-million of them were civilians. Using a very conservative extrapolation, this suggests that 5.3-million civilians were wounded during the war, for a total of 7.3-million Vietnamese civilian casualties overall. To such figures might be added an estimated 11.7-million Vietnamese forced from their homes and turned into refugees, up to 4.8-million sprayed with toxic herbicides like Agent Orange, – an estimated 800,000 to 1.3 million war orphans, and 1-million war widows."

All told, during his stint in government, Kissinger supervised policies that took the lives of at least three-million people.

Henry Kissinger was the crucial

US official who supported the September 11, 1973 coup that brought down the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile – initiating 17 years of dictatorship, with systematic murder and torture (“trampling on democratic values” in *Times*-speak).

Kissinger remained as secretary of state during the presidency of Gerald Ford. Lethal machinations continued in many places, including East Timor in the Indonesian archipelago. “Under Kissinger’s direction, the US gave a green light to the 1975 Indonesian invasion of East Timor (now Timor-Leste), which ushered in a 24-year brutal occupation by the Suharto dictatorship,” the human rights organisation ETAN reported. “The Indonesian occupation of East Timor and West Papua was enabled by US weapons and training. This illegal flow of weapons contravened congressional intent, yet Kissinger bragged about his ability to continue arms shipments to Suharto.

“These weapons were essential to the Indonesian dictator’s consolidation of military control in both East Timor and West Papua, and these occupations cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Timorese and Papuan civilians. Kissinger’s policy toward West Papua allowed for the US-based multinational corporation Freeport McMoRan to pursue its mining interests in the region, which has resulted in terrible human rights and environmental abuses; Kissinger was rewarded with a seat on the Board of Directors from 1995-2001.”

Now that’s the work of a noted statesman.

The professional love affairs between Kissinger and many American journalists endured from the time he got a grip on the steering wheel of US foreign policy when Nixon became president in early 1969. In Southeast Asia, the agenda

went far beyond Vietnam.

Nixon and Kissinger routinely massacred civilians in Laos, as Fred Branfman documented in the 1972 book *Voices From the Plain of Jars*. He told me decades later: “I was shocked to the core of my being as I found myself interviewing Laotian peasants, among the most decent, human and kind people on Earth, who described living underground for years on end, while they saw countless fellow villagers and family members burned alive by napalm, suffocated by 500-pound bombs, and shredded by anti-personnel bombs dropped by my country, the United States.” Branfman’s discoveries caused him to scrutinise US policy: “I soon learned that a tiny handful of American leaders, a US executive branch led by Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Henry Kissinger, had taken it upon themselves – without even informing let alone consulting the US Congress or public – to massively bomb Laos and murder tens of thousands of subsistence-level, innocent Laotian civilians who did not even know where America was, let alone commit an offence against it. The targets of US bombing were almost entirely civilian villages inhabited by peasants, mainly old people and children who could not survive in the forest. The other side’s soldiers moved through the heavily forested regions in Laos and were mostly untouched by the bombing.”

The US warfare in Southeast Asia was also devastating to Cambodia.

Consider some words from the late Anthony Bourdain, who illuminated much about the world’s foods and cultures. As this century got underway, Bourdain wrote: “Once you’ve been to Cambodia, you’ll never stop wanting to beat Henry

Kissinger to death with your bare hands. You will never again be able to open a newspaper and read about that treacherous, prevaricating, murderous scumbag sitting down for a nice chat with Charlie Rose or attending some black-tie affair for a new glossy magazine without choking. Witness what Henry did in Cambodia – the fruits of his genius for statesmanship – and you will never understand why he’s not sitting in the dock at The Hague next to [Slobodan] Milošević.”

Bourdain added that while Kissinger continued to hobnob at A-list parties, “Cambodia, the neutral nation he secretly and illegally bombed, invaded, undermined, and then threw to the dogs, is still trying to raise itself up on its one remaining leg.”

But back in the corridors of US media power, Henry Kissinger never lost the sheen of brilliance. Among the swooning journalists was ABC’s Ted Koppel, who informed viewers of the *Nightline* programme in 1992: “If you want a clear foreign-policy vision, someone who will take you beyond the conventional wisdom of the moment, it’s hard to do any better than Henry Kissinger.” As one of the most influential broadcast journalists of the era, Koppel was not content to only declare himself “proud to be a friend of Henry Kissinger.”

The renowned newsman lauded his pal as “certainly one of the two or three great secretaries of state of our century.” **CT**

Norman Solomon is national director of *RootsAction.org* and executive director of the *Institute for Public Accuracy*. He is the author of many books including *War Made Easy*. His latest book, *War Made Invisible: How America Hides the Human Toll of Its Military Machine*, was published in summer 2023 by *The New Press*.

Vijay Prashad

IS THIS THE END OF THE MONROE DOCTRINE?

Most of the world is no longer willing to be bullied by the West

Every day since October 7 has felt like an International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, with hundreds of thousands gathering in Istanbul, a million in Jakarta, and then yet another million across Africa and Latin America to demand an end to the brutal attack being carried out by Israel (with the collusion of the United States).

It is impossible to keep up with the scale and frequency of the protests, which are in turn pushing political parties and governments to clarify their stances on Israel's attack on Palestine. These mass demonstrations have generated three kinds of outcomes:

1. They have drawn a new generation not only into pro-Palestine activity, but into anti-war – if not anti-imperialist – consciousness.

2. They have drawn in a new section of activists, particularly trade unionists, who have been inspired to stop the shipment of goods to and from Israel (including in places such as Europe and India, where the governments have supported Israel's attacks).

3. They have generated a political process to challenge the hypocrisy of the Western-led 'rules-based

international order' to demand that the International Criminal Court indict Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other senior Israeli government officials.

No war in recent years – not even the “shock and awe” campaign used by the United States against Iraq in 2003 – has been as ruthless in its use of force. Most horrifying is the reality that civilians, penned in by the Israeli occupation, have no escape from the heavy bombardment.

Nearly half (at least 5,800) of the more than 14,000 civilians that have been murdered [at the time of writing] are children. No amount of Israeli propaganda has been able to convince billions of people around the world that this violence is a righteous rejoinder for the October 7 attack. Visuals from Gaza show the disproportionate and asymmetrical nature of Israel's violence over the past 75 years.

A new mood has taken root among billions of people in the Global South and been mirrored by millions in the Global North who no longer take the attitudes of US leaders and their Western allies at face value. A new study by the European Council of Foreign Relations shows that “much of the rest of the world wants the war in Ukraine to stop as soon

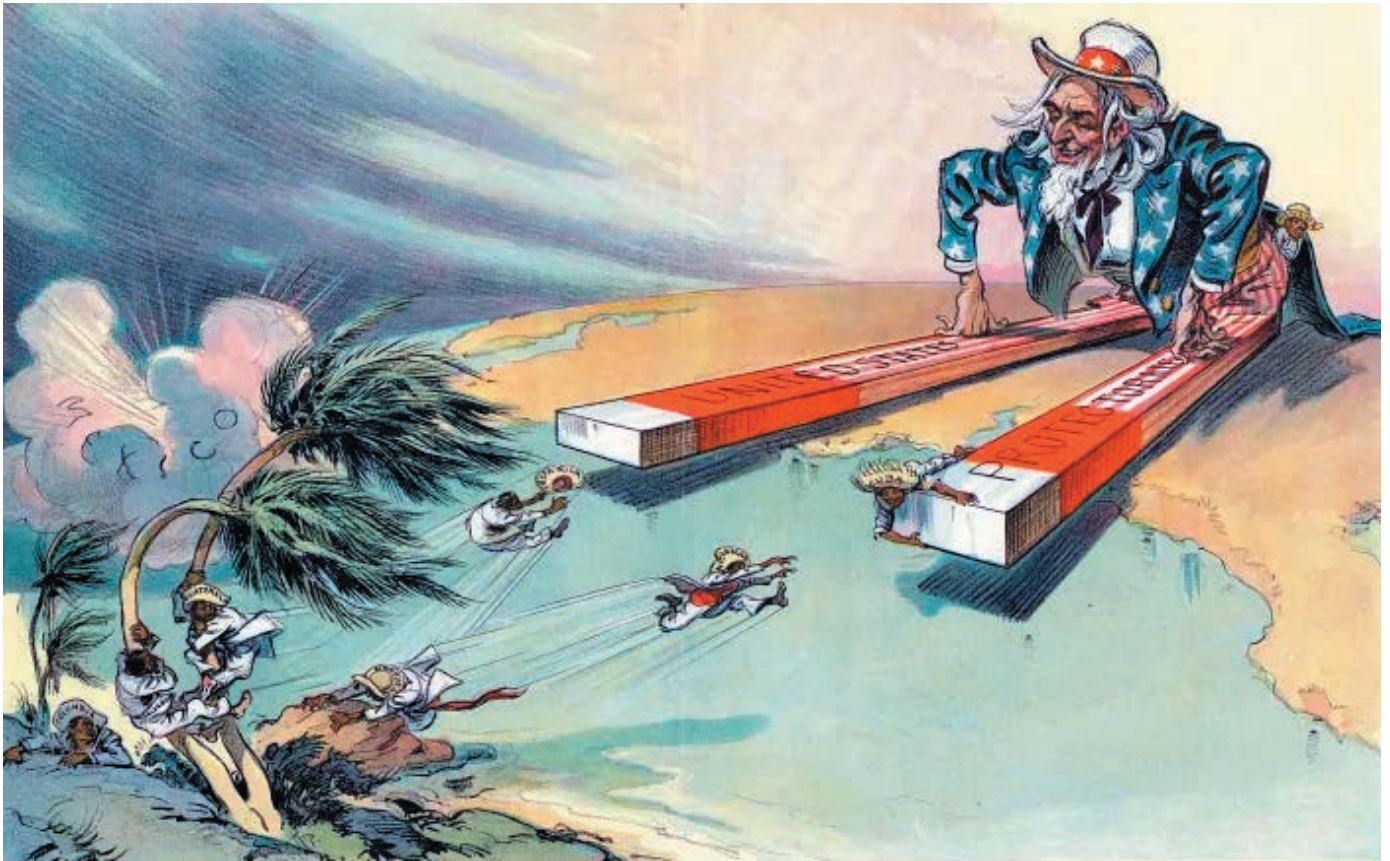
as possible, even if it means Kyiv losing territory. And very few people – even in Europe – would take Washington's side if a war erupted between the US and China over Taiwan.”

The council suggests that this is due to the “loss of faith in the West to order the world.” More precisely, most of the world is no longer willing to be bullied by the West (as South Africa's Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor put it).

Over the last 200 years, the US government's Monroe Doctrine has been instrumental in justifying this type of bullying.

In 1823, James Monroe, then president of the United States, told the US Congress that his government would stand against European interference in the Americas. What Monroe meant was that Washington would, from then on, treat Latin America and the Caribbean as its “backyard,” grounded by a policy known as the Monroe Doctrine.

Over the past 200 years, the US has operated in the Americas along this grain, exemplified by the more than 100 military interventions against countries in the region.



The Pull of the Monroe Magnet (Uwe Keppler)

Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the US and its Global North allies have attempted to expand this policy into a Global Monroe Doctrine, most destructively in Western Asia.

Two decades before Monroe's pro-clamation, the world's first anti-colonial revolution took place in Haiti. The 1804 Haitian Revolution posed a serious threat to the plantation economies of the Americas, which relied upon enslaved labour from Africa, and so the US led a process to suffocate it and prevent it from spreading. Through US military interventions across Latin America and the Caribbean, the Monroe Doctrine prevented the rise of national self-determination and defended plantation slavery and the power of the oligarchies.

Nonetheless, the spirit and promise of the Haitian Revolution could

not be extinguished, and in 1959 it was reignited by the Cuban Revolution, which in turn inspired revolutionary struggles across the world and, most importantly, in the so-called backyard of the United States. Once again, the US initiated a cycle of violence to destroy Cuba's revolutionary example, prevent it from inspiring others, and overthrow any government in the region that tried to exercise its sovereignty.

Latin America and the Caribbean became fertile ground for economic policies that benefitted US-led transnational monopolies

Together, US and Latin American oligarchies launched several campaigns, such as Operation Condor, to violently suppress the left through assassinations, incarcerations, torture, and regime change. These efforts culminated in a series of coups against left-wing forces in the Dominican Republic (1965), Chile (1973), Uruguay (1973), Argentina (1976), and El Salvador (1980).

The military governments that were subsequently installed quashed the sovereignty agenda and imposed a neoliberal project in its place. Latin America and the Caribbean became fertile ground for economic policies that benefitted US-led transnational monopolies. Washington co-opted large sections of the region's bourgeoisie, selling them the illusion that national development would come alongside the growth of US power.

Despite this repression, waves of

popular movements continued to shape the region's political culture. During the 1980s and 1990s, these movements toppled the military dictatorships put in place by Operation Condor and then inaugurated a cycle of progressive governments inspired by the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions and propelled forward by the electoral victory of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela in 1998. The US response to this progressive upsurge was yet again driven by the Monroe Doctrine as it sought to secure the interests of private property above the needs of the masses.

This counterrevolution has employed three main instruments:

Coups. Since 2000, the US has attempted to conduct “traditional” military coups d'état on at least 27 occasions, with some of these attempts succeeding, such as in Honduras (2009), while many others were defeated, as in Venezuela (2002).

Hybrid Wars. In addition to the military coup, the US has also developed a series of tactics to overwhelm countries that are attempting to build sovereignty, such as information warfare, lawfare, diplomatic warfare, and electoral interference. This hybrid war strategy includes manufacturing impeachment scandals (for example, against Paraguay's Fernando Lugo in 2012) and “anti-corruption” measures (such as against Argentina's Cristina Kirchner in 2021). In Brazil, the US worked with the Brazilian right wing to manipulate an anti-corruption platform to impeach then President Dilma Rousseff in 2016 and imprison former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in 2018, leading to the election of far-right Jair Bolsonaro in 2018.

Economic Sanctions. The use of illegal, unilateral coercive measures – including economic sanctions and blockades – is a key instrument of the Monroe Doctrine.

On television, my then-girlfriend and I witnessed the narrative shift from “It's racist to avoid Chinatown” to “If we can save just one life”

The US has employed such instruments for decades (since 1960 in the case of Cuba) and expanded their use in the 21st-century against countries such as Venezuela. The Latin American Strategic Geopolitics Centre (CELAG) showed that US sanctions against Venezuela led to the loss of more than three million jobs from 2013 to 2017 while the Centre for Economic and Policy Research found that sanctions have reduced the public's caloric intake and increased disease and mortality, killing 40,000 people in a single year while endangering the lives of 300,000 others.

US attempts to undermine progressive politics in Latin America, underpinned by the Monroe Doctrine, have not been entirely successful. The return of left-wing governments to power in Bolivia, Brazil, and Honduras after US-backed right-wing regimes illustrates this failure.

Another sign is the resilience of the Cuban and Venezuelan revolutions. To date, while efforts to expand the Monroe Doctrine around the world have caused immense destruction, they have failed to install stable client regimes, as we saw with the defeat of US projects in Afghanistan and Iraq. Nonetheless, Washington remains undeterred and has shifted its focus to the Asia-Pacific to confront China.

Two hundred years ago, the forces of Simón Bolívar trounced the Spanish Empire in the 1821 Battle of Carabobo and opened a period of independence for Latin America. Two years later, in 1823, the US government announced its Monroe Doctrine. The dialectic between Carabobo and Monroe continues to shape our world, the memory of Bolívar instilled in the hope of and struggle for a more just society.

Today, the ugliness of the war on Gaza suffocates our consciousness. Em Berry, a poet from Aotearoa, New Zealand, wrote a beautiful poem on the name *Gaza* and the atrocities being inflicted upon its people by apartheid Israel:

*This morning I learned
The English word gauze
(finely woven medical cloth)
comes from the Arabic word
Ghazza
because Gazans have been skilled
weavers for centuries
I wondered then
how many of our wounds
have been dressed
because of them
and how many of theirs
have been left open
because of us*

CT

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CT



Medea Benjamin & Nicolas Davies

CAN US THREATS PREVENT A WIDER MIDDLE EAST WAR?

Any direct US military action will be seen as support for Israel
and likely to provoke further escalation of the conflict

While US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken has been frantically shuttling around the Middle East trying to stop the Israeli conflict in Gaza from exploding into a regional war, the United States has also sent two aircraft carrier strike groups, a Marine Expeditionary Unit and 1,200 extra troops to the Middle East as a “deterrent.” In plain language, the United States is threatening to attack any forces that come to the defence of the Palestinians from other countries in the region, reassuring Israel that it can keep killing with impunity in Gaza.

But if Israel persists in this genocidal war, US threats may be impotent to prevent others from in-

tervening. From Lebanon to Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Iran, the possibilities of the conflict spreading are enormous. Even Algeria says it is ready to fight for a free Palestine, based on a unanimous vote in its parliament on November 1.

Middle Eastern governments and their people already see the United States as a party to Israel’s massacre in Gaza. So any direct US military action will be seen as an escalation on the side of Israel and is more likely to provoke further escalation than to deter it.

The United States already faces this predicament in Iraq. Despite years of Iraqi demands for the removal of US forces, at least 2,500 US troops remain at Al-Asad Airbase in western Anbar province,

Al-Harir Airbase, north of Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan, and another small base at the airport in Erbil. There are also “several hundred” NATO troops, including Americans, advising Iraqi forces in NATO Mission Iraq (NMI), based near Baghdad.

For many years, US forces in Iraq have been mired in a low-grade war against the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) that Iraq formed to fight ISIS, mainly from Shia militias. Despite their links to Iran, the armed groups Kata’ib Hezbollah, Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq and other PMFs have often ignored Iranian calls to de-escalate attacks on US forces. These Iraqi groups do not respect Iran Quds Force leader General Esmail Qaani as highly as they did General Soleimani, so Soleimani’s

assassination by the United States in 2020 has further reduced Iran's ability to restrain the militias in Iraq.

After a year-long truce between US and Iraqi forces, the Israeli war on Gaza has triggered a new escalation of this conflict in both Iraq and Syria. Some militias rebranded themselves as the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, and began attacking US bases on October 17. After 32 attacks on US bases in Iraq, 34 more in Syria and three US airstrikes in Syria, US forces conducted airstrikes against two Kata'ib Hezbollah bases in Iraq, one in Anbar province and one in Jurf Al-Nasr, south of Baghdad, on November 21, killing at least nine militiamen.

The US airstrikes prompted a furious response from the Iraqi government spokesman Bassam al-Awadi.

"We vehemently condemn the attack on Jurf Al-Nasr, executed without the knowledge of government agencies," al-Awadi said. "This action is a blatant violation of sovereignty and an attempt to destabilise the security situation... The recent incident represents a clear violation of the coalition's mission to combat Daesh (ISIS) on Iraqi soil. We call on all parties to avoid unilateral actions and to respect Iraq's sovereignty..."

As the Iraqi government feared, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq responded to the US airstrikes with two attacks on Al-Harir airbase on November 22 and several more on November 23rd. They attacked Al-Asad airbase with several drones, launched another drone attack on the US base at Erbil airport, and their allies in Syria attacked two US bases across the border in north-eastern Syria.

Short of a ceasefire in Gaza or a full US withdrawal from Iraq and Syria, there is no decisive action the US can take that would put a stop to these attacks. So the level of vi-

Short of a ceasefire in Gaza or US withdrawal from Iraq and Syria, there is no action the US can take that would stop these attacks

olence in Iraq and Syria is likely to keep rising as long as the war on Gaza continues.

Another formidable and experienced military force opposing Israel and the United States is the Houthi army in Yemen. On November 14, Abdul-Malek al-Houthi, the leader of the Houthi government in Yemen, asked neighbouring countries to open a corridor through their territory for his army to go and fight Israel in Gaza.

The Houthi Deputy Information Secretary Nasreddin Amer told *Newsweek* that if they had a way to enter Palestine, they would not hesitate to join the fight against Israel,

"We have fighters numbering hundreds of thousands who are brave, tough, trained and experienced in fighting," Amer said. "They have a very strong belief, and their dream in life is to fight the Zionists and the Americans."

Transporting hundreds of thousands of Yemeni soldiers to fight in Gaza would be nearly impossible unless Saudi Arabia opened the way. That seems highly unlikely, but Iran or another ally could help to transport a smaller number by air or sea to join the fight.

The Houthis have been waging an asymmetric war against Saudi-led invaders for many years, and they have developed weapons and tactics that they could bring to bear against Israel. Soon after al-Houthi's statement, Yemeni forces in the Red Sea boarded a ship owned, via shell companies, by Israeli billionaire Abraham Ungar. The ship, which was on

its way from Istanbul to India, was detained in a Yemeni port.

The Houthis have also launched a series of drones and missiles towards Israel. While many members of Congress try to portray the Houthis as simply puppets of Iran, the Houthis are actually an independent, unpredictable force that other actors in the region cannot control.

Even NATO ally Türkiye is finding it difficult to remain a bystander, given the widespread public support for Palestine. President Erdogan of Türkiye was among the first international leaders to speak out strongly against the Israeli war on Gaza, explicitly calling it a massacre and saying that it amounted to genocide.

Turkish civil society groups are spearheading a campaign to send humanitarian aid to Gaza on cargo ships, braving a possible confrontation like the one that occurred in 2010 when the Israelis attacked the Freedom Flotilla, killing 10 people aboard the Mavi Marmara.

On the Lebanese border, Israel and Hezbollah have conducted daily exchanges of fire since October 7, killing 97 combatants and 15 civilians in Lebanon and 9 soldiers and 3 civilians in Israel. Some 46,000 Lebanese civilians and 65,000 Israelis have been displaced from the border area. Israeli defense minister Yoav Gallant warned on November 11,

How will Hezbollah react if Israel resumes its brutal massacre in Gaza after the brief pause is over or if Israel expands the massacre to the West Bank, where it has already killed at least 237 more Palestinians since October 7?

In a speech on November 3, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah held back from declaring a new war on Israel, but warned that "all options are on the table" if Israel does not end its war on Gaza.

As Israel prepared to pause its bombing on November 23, Iranian foreign minister Hossein Amirabdollahian held meetings in Qatar, first with Nasrallah and Lebanese officials, and then with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.

In a public statement, Amirabdollahian said, “the continuation of the ceasefire can prevent further expansion of the scope of the war. In the meeting with the leaders of the resistance, I found out that if Israel’s war crimes and genocide continue, a tougher and more complicated scenario of the resistance will be implemented.”

Amirabdollahian already warned on October 16 that, “The leaders of the resistance will not allow the Zionist regime to do whatever it wants in Gaza and then go to other fronts of the resistance.”

In other words, if Iran and its allies believe that Israel really intends to continue its war on Gaza until it has removed Hamas from power, and then to turn its war machine loose on Lebanon or its other neighbours, they would prefer to fight a wider war now, forcing Israel to fight the Palestinians, Hezbollah and their allies at the same time, rather than waiting for Israel to attack them one by one.

Tragically, the White House is not listening. The next day, President Biden continued to back Israel’s vow to resume the destruction of Gaza after its “humanitarian pause,” saying that attempting to eliminate Hamas is “a legitimate objective.”

America’s unconditional support for Israel and endless supply of weapons have succeeded only in turning Israel into an out-of-control, genocidal, destabilising force at the heart of a fragile region already shattered and traumatised by decades of US warmaking. The result is a country that refuses to recognise its own borders or those of its neighbours, and rejects any and all limits

America’s support for Israel has succeeded only in turning Israel into an out-of-control, genocidal, destabilising force

on its territorial ambitions and war crimes.

If Israel’s actions lead to a wider war, the US will find itself with few allies ready to jump into the fray. Even if a regional conflict is avoided, the US support for Israel has already created tremendous damage to the US reputation in the region and beyond, and direct US involvement in the war would leave it more isolated and impotent than its previous misadventures in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The United States can still avoid this fate by insisting on an immediate and permanent ceasefire and

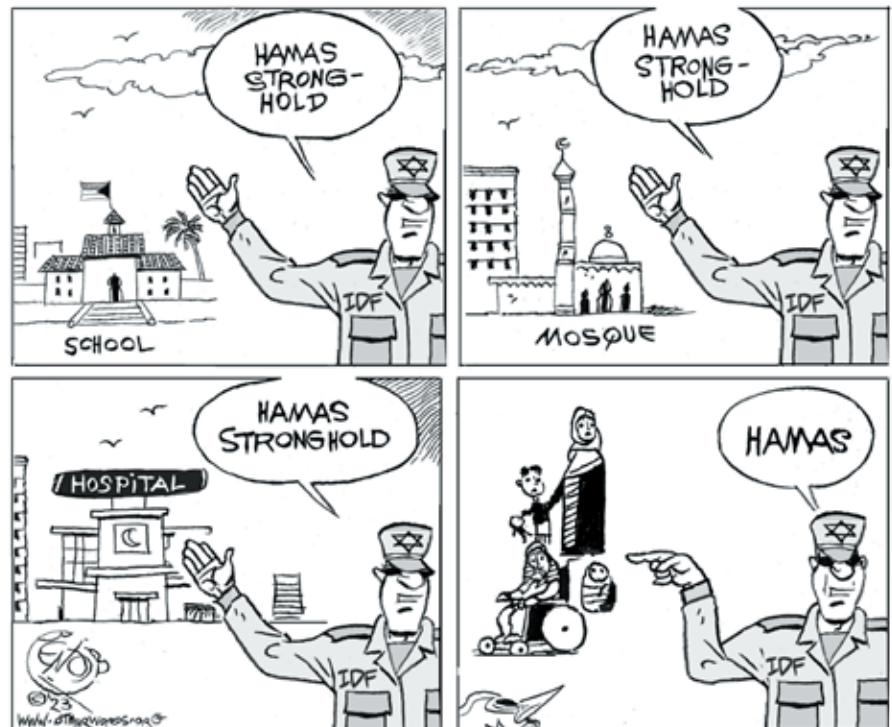
the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. If Israel will not agree to that, the US must back up this position with an immediate suspension of arms deliveries, military aid, Israeli access to US weapons stockpiles in Israel and diplomatic support for Israel’s war on Palestine.

The priority of US officials must be to stop Israel’s massacre, avoid a regional war, and get out of the way so that other nations can help negotiate a real solution to the occupation of Palestine. **CT**

Medea Benjamin is the cofounder of CODEPINK for Peace, and the author of several books, including Inside Iran: The Real History and Politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Nicolas J. S. Davies is the author of Blood on Our Hands: The American Invasion and Destruction of Iraq. Benjamin and Davies are the authors of War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict.

BENDIB’S WORLD

Khalil Bendib



Ramzy Baroud

HOW GAZA UNITED THE WORLD

The war in Gaza has galvanised global solidarity movements, especially those that are invested in indigenous rights

For decades, the struggle for national liberation in Palestine was understood to be part of a global struggle for liberation, mainly in the Global South.

And since national liberation movements were, per definition, the struggle for indigenous people to assert their collective rights for freedom, equality and justice, the Palestinian struggle was positioned as part of this global indigenous movement.

Alas, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the growing dominance of the United States and its allies, the return of Western colonialism in the form of neocolonialism to Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere, have localised many of the indigenous movements' struggles.

This proved costly, as it allowed France, the US, Britain and others to, once more, sectionalise the Global South into regions of influence, controlling them through whatever military, political and economic strategies they had in mind. Similar to the scramble for Africa in the late 19th-century, recent decades wrought a new kind of colonial scramble for the Global South.



In the Palestinian context, the struggle was multi-faceted: the demise of global powers, like the USSR, which created some kind of geopolitical balance, isolated Palestinian Resistance movements. This forced these movements, namely those involved in the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), to seek political compromises, without achieving anything tangible in return.

For Washington, these concessions on the part of a once national liberation movement in Palestine, were consistent with the US's regional agenda and the quest for a "New Mid-

dle East."

Ultimately, this resulted in the wrongly termed "Palestinian division," factional clashes in 2007, and a state of political paralysis which defined the so-called Palestinian leadership. And, while Palestinians were busy sorting out their political and leadership crisis, Israel's settler-colonial process accelerated, at the expense of whatever remained of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Of course, this does not, from an intellectual and historical point of view, alter the essential nature of the Palestinian struggle, which remained that of an indigenous nation fighting for its rights. However, it did confuse the political definitions and discourses surrounding the so-called Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

This confusion was a direct outcome of the misrepresentation of the Palestinian struggle through Israeli propaganda and US-Western media, which remained committed to elevating the Israeli line. Israel invested in presenting Palestinians as a divided people, who have no vision of peace, and their Resistance movements as essentially terrorist groups, hellbent on the destruction of Israel and so on.

But things began to change in recent years, with the revival of indigenous movements around the world, from the black struggle in the US to the indigenous people resurgence in North and South America, to the ultimate rise of an actual global movement, centred around landless societies and indigenous rights – which heavily invested in global solidarity and intersectionality, allowing it to multiply its powers several times over.

The common element of “decolonisation” – in all its manifestations – has created intersectional links among various struggles around the world, which allowed the Palestinian struggle for liberation to fit perfectly into the new global narrative.

“Black Australians and Palestinians share a history and reality of erasure that has lasted far beyond the anti-colonial era of the early last century, when most colonised peoples gained independence from colonial powers,” Eugenia Flynn and Tasnim Sammak wrote in their article “Black Australia to Palestine: solidarity in decolonial struggle,” published at the Australian web site indigenousx.com.au.

The Black Lives Matter Movement also played a central role in recentring Palestine around urgent and revived struggles in the United States and even beyond US political geography.

“Palestinians played a crucial role in the (2014) Ferguson, Missouri, uprising that flared that year in the wake of the police killing of Black teenager Michael Brown,” Russell Rickford wrote in an article in *Vox*.

“Palestinian activists used social media to share with African American protesters tactics for dealing with tear gas attacks by militarized police forces – an experience with which many subjects of Israeli occupation are all too familiar,” Rick-

Whether the war lasts for another week, another month or a year, the consequences will certainly be felt for many years to come

ford added.

This was only the beginning, however, as, over the years, Palestine began featuring as a staple in the black struggle discourse in the US. Both movements fed on each other’s popularity, conceiving new networks and connecting other global struggles together in a most harmonious fashion.

All of this has been propelled forward by the growing connectivity of activists and their struggles around the world, thanks to the utilisation of social media, along with independent indigenous media as critical components in organisation and mobilisation.

While the credibility of mainstream media is being greatly questioned by Western societies, social media is now appearing to be a reliable source of information of news about popular mobilisation and direct action.

The ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza has demonstrated the power of social media in terms of its ability to overcome the intentional lies and deception of corporate media, thus greatly diminishing its traditional role in shaping public opinion around Palestine, the Middle East, the US’ self-serving ‘war on terror’ and many other issues.

It would not be an exaggeration to state that there is a parallel war to the one happening in Gaza now, one that engages millions of people around the world, working dili-

gently to defeat Israeli-US-Western propaganda and to demand accountability for those carrying out war crimes in Gaza.

It would be inaccurate to say that Western governments have been silent in the face of Israeli atrocities in Gaza. As indigenous struggles around the world ally with the struggle of the Palestinians, colonial and neocolonial powers have no other option but to ally with colonial Israel.

This means that Western powers are active participants in the Israeli war on Gaza, through their generous military support of Israel, the sharing of intelligence information and through political and financial backing.

Whether the war lasts for another week, another month or a year, the consequences will certainly be felt for many years to come, not only in Palestine or even the Middle East, but worldwide as well.

The war in Gaza has galvanised global solidarity movements, especially those that are invested in indigenous rights. All of this is reminiscent of the height of the anticolonial national liberation movements of decades ago.

Thus, this historic moment must be seized, not only for the sake of Gaza and the Palestinian people but also for the sake of freedom and justice everywhere else in the world. **CT**

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

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