

ANGEL OF DEATH | LAURA GOTTESDIENER
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ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING | PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

ISSUE 108



War-hungry
Western
leaders
demand
more war.
But will it
save lives?
Is it legal?
Does it make
sense?

AFTER PARIS: WHAT NEXT?

JOHN PILGER **FIONA DE LONDRAS** PETER CERTO JOHN W. WHITEHEAD



Cover:

Prague prays for the victims of last month's terror attacks in Paris . Photo: Bianca Dagheti, via flickr.com (Pages 31-45)

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A nation stumbles

Stymied in Syria, bogged down in Yemen, its economy precarious, Saudi Arabia is looking increasingly fragile, writes **CM Hallinan**

For the past eight decades Saudi Arabia has been careful.

Using its vast oil wealth, it has quietly spread its ultra-conservative brand of Islam throughout the Muslim world, secretly undermined secular regimes in its region and prudently kept to the shadows, while others did the fighting and dying. It was Saudi money that fueled the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan, underwrote Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iran, and bankrolled Islamic movements and terrorist groups from the Caucasus to the Hindu Kush.

Today that circumspect diplomacy is in ruins, and the House of Saud looks more vulnerable than it has since the country was founded in 1926. Unraveling the reasons for the current train wreck is a study in how easily hubris, illusion, and old-fashioned ineptness can trump even bottomless wealth.

The kingdom's first stumble was a strategic decision last fall to undermine competitors by upping oil production and, thus, lowering the price. Their reasoning was that, if the price of a barrel of oil dropped from over \$100 to around \$80, it would strangle competition from more expensive sources and new technologies, including



Syrian refugee Mahmoud in the shelter where he lives with his family in El Akbiya, Lebanon. Saudi Arabia is underwriting many of the groups trying to overthrow Syria's Bashar al-Assad. Photo: UNHCR/S. Baldwin

the US fracking industry, the Arctic, and emergent producers such as Brazil. That, in turn, would allow Riyadh to reclaim its shrinking share of the energy market. There was also the added benefit that lower oil prices would damage countries that the Saudis didn't like, such as Russia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Iran.

TROUBLED MONARCHY

Riyadh, along with other Gulf monarchies, including Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, is underwriting many of the groups trying to overthrow Syria's Bashar al-Assad

In one sense it worked. The American fracking industry is scaling back, the exploitation of Canada's oil sands has slowed, and many Arctic drillers closed up shop. And, indeed, countries such as Venezuela, Ecuador, and Russia took a serious economic hit. But despite obvious signs, the Saudis failed to anticipate China's economic slowdown and how that would dampen economic growth in the leading industrial nations. The price of oil went from \$115 a barrel in June 2014 to \$44 today. Because it is so pure, it costs less than \$10 to produce a barrel of Saudi oil.

The Kingdom planned to use its almost \$800 billion in financial reserves to ride out the drop in prices, but it figured that oil would not fall below \$80 a barrel, and then only for a few months.

According to the *Financial Times*, in order to balance its budget, Saudi Arabia needs a price of between \$95 and \$105 a barrel. And while oil prices will likely rise over the next five years, projections are that the price per barrel will only reach \$65. Saudi debt is on schedule to rise from 6.7 per cent of GDP this year to 17.3 per cent next year, and its 2015 budget deficit is \$130 billion.

Saudi Arabia is spending \$10 billion a month in foreign exchange reserves to pay the bills and has been forced to borrow money on the international financial market. Recently, the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) regional director, Masood Ahmed, warned Riyadh that the country would deplete its financial reserves in five years unless it drastically cut its budget.

But the kingdom can't do that.

When the Arab Spring broke out in 2011, the Saudi Arabia headed it off by pumping \$130 billion into the economy, raising wages, improving services and providing jobs for its growing population. Saudi Arabia has one of the youngest populations in the Middle East, a lot of it unemployed and much of it poorly educated. Some 25 percent of the population lives in poverty. Money keeps the lid on, but for how long,

even with the heavy-handed repression that characterizes Saudi political life?

Miscalculated attack

In March, the kingdom intervened in Yemen, launching an air war, naval blockade and partial ground campaign on the pretense that Iran was behind the civil war, a conclusion not even the Americans agree with.

Again, the Saudis miscalculated, even though one of its major allies, Pakistan, warned Riyadh that it was headed for trouble. In part, the kingdom's hubris was fed by the illusion that US support would make it a short war – the Americans are arming the Saudis, supplying them with bombing targets, backing up the naval blockade, and refueling their warplanes in mid-air.

But, six months down the line, the conflict has turned into a stalemate. The war has killed 5,000 people, including 500 children, flattened cities, and alienated much of the local population. It has also generated a food and medical crisis, as well as creating opportunities for the IS and al-Qaeda to seize territory in Southern Yemen. Efforts by the UN to investigate the possibility of war crimes were blocked by Saudi Arabia and the US.

As the Saudis are finding out, war is a very expensive business, a burden the Saudis could meet under normal circumstances, but not when the price of the kingdom's only commodity, oil, is plummeting.

Nor is Yemen the only war that the Saudis are involved with. Riyadh, along with other Gulf monarchies, including Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, is underwriting many of the groups trying to overthrow Syria's Bashar al-Assad. When anti-government demonstrations broke out in 2011, the Saudis – along with the Americans and the Turks – calculated that Assad could be toppled in a few months.

But that was magical thinking. As bad as Assad is, a lot of Syrians, particularly minorities such as Shiites, Christians, and Druze, were far more afraid of the Islamists from al-Qaeda and the IS than they were of their

own government. So the war has dragged on for four years and has now killed close to 250,000 people.

Once again, the Saudis miscalculated, though in this case they were hardly alone. The Syrian government turned out to be more resilient than it appeared. And Riyadh's bottom line that Assad had to go just ended up bringing Iran and Russia into the picture, checkmating any direct intervention by the anti-Assad coalition. Any attempt to establish a no-fly zone will have to confront the Russian air force, not something that anyone other than US presidential aspirants are eager to do.

The war has also generated a flood of refugees, deeply alarming the European Union, which finally seems to be listening to Moscow's point about the consequences of overthrowing governments without a plan as to who takes over. There is nothing like millions of refugees headed in your direction to cause some serious re-thinking of strategic goals.

The Saudis' goal of isolating Iran is rapidly collapsing. The P5+1 – The US, China, Russia, Great Britain, France, and Germany – successfully completed a nuclear agreement with Teheran, despite every effort by the Saudis and Israel to torpedo it. And at Moscow's insistence, Washington has reversed its opposition to Iran being included in peace talks around Syria.

Stymied in Syria, mired down in Yemen, its finances increasingly fragile, the kingdom also faces internal unrest from its long marginalized Shia minority in the country's east and south. To top it off, the IS has called for the "liberation" of Mecca from the House of Saud and launched a bombing campaign aimed at the kingdom's Shiites.

Royal family's woes increase

Last month's hajj disaster that killed more than 2,100 pilgrims – and anger at the Saudi authorities foot dragging on investigating the tragedy – have added to the royal family's woes. The Saudi's claim 769 people were killed, a figure that no other country

in the world accepts. And there are persistent rumors that the deadly stampede was caused when police blocked off an area in order to allow high-ranking Saudis special access to the holy sites.

Some of these missteps can be laid at the feet of the new king, Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and of a younger generation of aggressive Saudis he has appointed to key positions. But Saudi Arabia's troubles are also a reflection of a Middle East in transition. Exactly where that it is headed is by no means clear, but change is in the wind.

Iran is breaking out of its isolation and, with its large, well-educated population, strong industrial base, and plentiful energy resources, is poised to play a major regional, if not international, role. Turkey is in the midst of a political upheaval, and there is growing opposition among Turks to Ankara's meddling in the Syrian civil war

Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, is impaled on its own policies, both foreign and domestic. "The expensive social contract between the Royal family and Saudi citizens will get more difficult, and eventually impossible to sustain if oil prices don't recover," Meghan L. O'Sullivan, director of the Geopolitics of Energy project at Harvard told the *New York Times*.

However, the House of Saud has little choice but to keep pumping oil to pay for its wars and keep the internal peace. But more production drives down prices even further, and, once the sanctions come off of Iran, the oil glut will become worse. While it is still immensely wealthy, there are lots of bills coming due. It is not clear the kingdom has the capital or the ability to meet them. **CT**

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The House of Saud has little choice but to keep pumping oil to pay for its wars and keep the internal peace. But more production drives down prices even further

Pregnant silence

It's about time we discussed the real population crisis, writes **George Monbiot**

Perhaps it's no coincidence that so many post-reproductive white men are obsessed with human population growth, as it's about the only environmental problem of which they can wash their hands

This is about the population crisis. About the breeding that's laying waste to the world's living systems. But it's probably not the population crisis you're thinking of. This is about another one, that we seem to find almost impossible to discuss.

You'll hear a lot about population in the next few weeks, as the Paris climate summit approaches. Across the airwaves and on the comment threads it will invariably be described as "the elephant in the room." When people are not using their own words, it means they are not thinking their own thoughts. Ten thousand voices each ask why no one is talking about it. The growth in human numbers, they say, is our foremost environmental threat.

At their best, population campaigners seek to extend women's reproductive choices. Some 225-million women have an unmet need for contraception. If this need were answered, the impact on population growth would be significant, though not decisive: The annual growth rate of 83-million would be reduced to 62-million. But contraception is rarely limited only by the physical availability of contraceptives. In most cases, it's about power: Women are denied control of their wombs. The social transformations they need are wider and deeper than donations from the other side of the world are likely to achieve.

At their worst, they seek to shift the blame from their own environmental impacts. Perhaps it's no coincidence that so many post-reproductive white men are obsessed with human population growth, because it's about the only environmental problem of which they can wash their hands. Neither, do I believe, is it a coincidence that of all such topics this is the least tractable. When there is almost nothing to be done, there is no requirement to act.

Such is the momentum behind population growth, an analysis in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences reported that were every government to adopt the one-child policy China has just abandoned, there would still be as many people on Earth at the end of this century as there are today. If two-billion people were wiped out by a catastrophe in mid-century, the planet would still hold a billion more by 2100 than it does now.

Consumption is the problem

If we want to reduce our impacts this century, the paper concludes, it's consumption we must address. Population growth is outpaced by the growth in our consumption of almost all resources. There is enough to meet everyone's need, even in a world of 10-billion people. There is not enough to meet everyone's greed, even in a world of two-billion people.

So let's turn to a population crisis over which we do have some influence. I'm talking about the growth in livestock numbers. Human numbers are rising at roughly 1.2 per cent a year. Livestock numbers are rising at around 2.4 per cent a year. By 2050, the world's living systems will have to support about 120-million tonnes of extra human, and 400-million tonnes of extra farm animals.

Raising them already uses three-quarters of the world's agricultural land. One-third of our cereal crops are used to feed them. This may rise to roughly half by 2050. More people will starve as a result, because the poor rely mainly on grain for their subsistence, and diverting it to livestock raises the price. Now the grain that farm animals eat is being supplemented by oil crops, particularly soya, for which the forests and savannahs of South America are being cleared at shocking rates.

This might seem counter-intuitive, but were we to eat soya, rather than meat, the clearance of natural vegetation required to supply us with the same amount of protein would decline by 94 per cent. Producing protein from chickens requires three times as much land as protein from soybeans. Pork needs nine times, beef 32 times.

Leading cause of extinctions

A recent paper in the journal *Science of the Total Environment* suggests that our consumption of meat is likely to be "the leading cause of modern species extinctions." Not only is livestock farming the major reason for habitat destruction and the killing of predators, but its waste products are overwhelming the world's capacity to absorb them. Factory farms in the US generate 13 times as much sewage as the human population. The dairy farms in Tulare County, California, produce five times as much as New York City.

Freshwater life is being wiped out across the world by farm manure. In England, the

system designed to protect us from the tide of crap has comprehensively broken down. Dead zones now extend from many coasts, as farm sewage erases ocean life across thousands of square kilometres.

Livestock farming causes around 14 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, slightly more than the output of the world's cars, lorries, buses, trains, ships and planes. If you eat soya, your emissions per unit of protein are 20 times lower than eating pork or chicken, and 150 times lower than eating beef.

So why is hardly anyone talking about the cow, pig, sheep and chicken in the room? Why are there no government campaigns to reduce the consumption of animal products, just as they sometimes discourage our excessive use of electricity? A survey by the Royal Institute of International Affairs found that people are not unwilling to change their diets, once they become aware of the problem, but that many have no idea that livestock farming damages the living world.

It's not as if eating less meat and dairy will harm us. If we did as our doctors advise, our environmental impacts would decline in step with heart disease, strokes, diabetes and cancer. British people eat, on average, slightly more than their body-weight in meat every year, while Americans consume another 50 per cent: wildly more, in both cases, than is good for us or the rest of life on Earth.

But while plenty in the rich world are happy to discuss the dangers of brown people reproducing, the other population crisis scarcely crosses the threshold of perception. Livestock numbers present a direct moral challenge, as in this case we have agency. Hence the pregnant silence. **CT**

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George Monbiot's book, *Feral*, was recently released in paperback format. This article was originally published at his web site <http://monbiot.com>

The media makes a collective non-decision to treat this catastrophe as a non-issue, and we all carry on as if it's not happening

Angel of Death

One night in Kunduz, one morning in New York. **Laura Gottesdiener** offers two versions of the US destruction of a hospital in Afghanistan

Usually, I try to avoid talking about our wars once I leave the office. After all, what do I know? I wasn't there when the American gunship began firing on that hospital

When people ask me what my new job is like, I tell them that I wake up very early and count the dead. When I say “very early,” I mean a few minutes after 4 a.m., as the sky is just softening to the color of faded purple corduroy. By “the dead,” I mostly mean people across the world that my government has killed or helped another nation’s government kill while I was sleeping.

Once I was a freelance reporter, spending weeks or months covering a single story. Today, I’m a news producer at Democracy Now! and, from the moment I arrive at the office, I’m scouring the wire services for the latest casualties from Washington’s war zones. It’s a disconcerting job for someone used to reporting stories on the ground. As I cull through the headlines – “Suspected US drone strike kills 4 militants in Pakistan,” “US troops dispatched to Kunduz to help Afghan forces” – I’ve never felt so close to this country’s various combat zones. And yet I’m thousands of miles away.

Usually, I try to avoid talking about our wars once I leave the office. After all, what do I know? I wasn’t there when the American gunship began firing on that hospital Doctors Without Borders ran in Kunduz, and I didn’t get there afterwards either. Nor was I in Yemen’s Saada province a few weeks later when a Doctors Without Borders health clinic was bombed.

If you live in the USA and don’t listen to Democracy Now!, odds are you didn’t even know that second strike happened. How is it possible, I think to myself, that bombing medical facilities isn’t front-page news? On that gutted clinic in Yemen, however, I can’t tell you much more. I know that the strike was carried out by US-backed, Saudi-led forces, and that it happened only a few days after the Obama administration approved an \$11.25-billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia. But I don’t know what the air felt like that evening just before the missile hit the maternity ward.

Still, when your job is to chronicle these wars each morning, how can you not say something? How can you not start writing when our wars become all you think about, something you begin to dream about? How can you not respond when you realize, as I did recently, that the longest of them, the (second) US war in Afghanistan, has stretched on for nearly half my life?

All this is my way of telling you that I need to talk to you about Kunduz.

A calm night in October

As with any good story, there’s what happened – and then there’s the version you’re asked to believe. Let’s start with the first one.

On Friday, Oct 2, staff members from the trauma centre in Kunduz, Afghanistan,



An AC-130H gunship drops flares during a training flight.

Photo: US Air Force

climbed to the roof of that hospital and laid out two large flags with the name of their organization, Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), the Nobel-Prize-winning medical-humanitarian aid organization best known by its French acronym MSF. This wasn't something the workers could have done days earlier. The previous Monday, Sept 28, Taliban fighters had unexpectedly seized control of the fifth largest city in Afghanistan, as up to 7,000 government troops and police fled. Over the next days, the Afghan government's efforts to retake the city sparked intense fighting between the Taliban and government troops backed by US Special Operations forces.

As that fighting grew closer to the hospital, stray bullets pierced the ceiling of the intensive care unit, and MSF staff were instructed to sleep inside the hospital compound. If any of them left, it was feared, they might be unable to safely return to work the next day.

And there was plenty of work to be done. 100 wounded patients arrived on Monday – 36 of them in critical condition. The staff added 18 extra beds. Over the next four days, another 250 patients passed through the emergency room alone. The building was so overcapacity that staff members put mattresses and pillows in corridors and administrative offices.

Fighter jets could be heard roaring overhead as the US began launching air strikes in support of the Afghan army's haphazard efforts to retake the city. Most of the hospital's staff refrained from even stepping outside.

By Friday, however, the fighting began to recede from the area around the hospital, and staff members felt safer climbing to the roof to spread out the flags in order to ensure that the facility would be identifiable from the air. The organization had also sent the hospital's GPS coordinates to the US Department of Defense, the Afghan ministries

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NIGHT ATTACK

The low-flying AC-130 is equipped with cannons and a 105-mm howitzer. It can fly at speeds of up to 300 miles per hour, but it's designed, above all, to circle close to the ground while firing at targets below

of Interior and Defense, and the US Army in Kabul four days earlier. The markers were just considered one more level of protection.

The hospital itself couldn't be missed. Its lights blazed throughout Friday night and into the early hours of Saturday morning as doctors tried to tackle a "backlog of pending surgeries." Outside the compound's walls, the rest of the city, home to 270,000 inhabitants, was mostly dark. After a week of fighting, the hospital was one of the few buildings in the area that still had running generators and so the power to light itself. It was a relatively calm night, slightly overcast and unseasonably warm for early October. The sound of gunfire had receded, and some staff members even dared to step outside for the first time in days.

"The single deadliest aircraft"

The explosions began just as staff members were putting patients under anesthesia in the operating room.

At 2:19 a.m., a representative of MSF in Kabul called the American-led NATO mission to Afghanistan to say the hospital was being bombed. A minute later, an MSF representative called the Red Cross, then the United Nations. From New York, a member of MSF called the Pentagon.

We don't know what was happening inside the Pentagon that night. We do know that, back in Kunduz, a US AC-130 gunship was circling above the hospital's main building.

The low-flying AC-130 is equipped with cannons and a 105-mm howitzer. It can fly at speeds of up to 300 miles per hour, but it's designed, above all, to circle close to the ground while firing at targets below. As an article in the *Washington Post* explained, "The AC-130 essentially loiters over a target at around 7,000 feet, flying in a circle and firing from weapons ports mounted on the aircraft's left side."

The gunship is specially designed for night missions. The plane is equipped with

infrared sensors, while its crew of 12 (or so) sport night-vision goggles. Manufactured by Lockheed Martin and Boeing, the older version of the plane, the AC-130H Spectre, cost \$110 million apiece, while the newer AC-130U Spooky version goes for \$210 million. One Special Operations Air Force captain described the gunship as "the single deadliest aircraft and flying squadron in the war on terrorism." In 2002, this same type of gunship fired on a wedding party in Afghanistan's Helmand province, killing more than 40 people.

Versions of the gunship have been in use by the US military since the Vietnam War. An older model, which flew in Operation Desert Storm, the first Gulf War, is now on display at the National Museum of the United States Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio. It was dubbed Azrael, which in both Hebrew and Arabic means the Angel of Death.

At 2:47 a.m., a representative from MSF in Kabul texted the American-led mission to Afghanistan that one of the Kunduz hospital's staff members had just died, that many were missing, and that the trauma centre was still under repeated fire.

Five minutes later, someone from the mission texted back, "I'm sorry to hear that. I still do not know what happened."

At this point, the US gunship above had been firing on the hospital's main building on and off for more than 45 minutes. The strikes were, according to MSF director of operations Bart Janssens, very precise. "[The gunship] came four or five times over the hospital, and every time extremely precisely hit with a series of impacts on the main building of the hospital," he told Reuters.

Surviving staff members recall that the first room to be attacked was the intensive care unit, which then held a number of patients, including two children. The strikes next hit the lab, the emergency room, the X-ray room, the mental health centre, and the operating theatres, where two patients

were lying on the operating tables. Both were killed.

Everyone capable of fleeing tried to do so: doctors, staff, patients. One man in a wheelchair was killed by flying shrapnel. Some people were on fire as they ran. One staff member was decapitated. As people fled the building, doctors and medical staff were hit by fire from the plane. Some who survived had the impression, from the sound of the plane, that it was following them as they ran.

“A purpose to kill and destroy”

MSF's hospital had been a fixture in Kunduz since August 2011, the only medical facility in the region. A photo snapped a few months after its opening showed a large sign affixed to the front gate of the compound, “The MSF Trauma Centre will prioritize treatment for war-wounded and other seriously injured persons, without regard to their ethnicity or political affiliations, and determined solely by their medical needs. No fee charged.” Above the text was an image of an automatic rifle surrounded by a red circle with two thick lines through it, indicating the hospital's and the organization's strict no-weapons policy in its facilities.

Doctors Without Borders opened the facility two years after it returned to Afghanistan. In 2004, the organization had pulled out of the country after five of its workers were killed in a roadside ambush in Badghis Province. In 2009, the group returned and began supporting a hospital in Kabul. Upon its reentry, Michiel Hofman, then a director of the organization, told the German magazine *Der Spiegel* that he had been “shocked” to discover normal wartime rules of hospital neutrality didn't seem to apply in the ongoing conflict. “International forces and police,” he said, “would regularly go into hospitals to harass patients. Hospitals would be attacked. There is a dire record of respecting the neutrality of health structures.”

That same year, a Swedish aid group running a hospital in Wardak Province accused

the US Army's 10th Mountain Division of storming the facility and tying up hospital guards as the troops searched for members of the Taliban.

Nonetheless, the Kunduz hospital operated in relative peace until July 2015, when armed members of a US-backed Afghan Special Operations team raided it, forcing the facility to close temporarily. It soon reopened. By October 2015, the site was under increasingly close surveillance by US Special Operations analysts, who, it was later reported, believed there might have been a Pakistani intelligence operative working out of the facility. (MSF officials insist that there were only nine international staff members, none of whom were Pakistani, no less intelligence operatives.)

In the days before the attack, those analysts had put together a cache of information about the hospital – including maps with the facility circled.

At 2:56 a.m., on the morning of the attack, an MSF representative in Kabul again texted an official of the American-led mission, demanding an end to the strikes, which had lasted nearly an hour. By then, flames had overtaken the main building, with children still trapped inside. Abdul Manar, a caretaker at the hospital, recalled the sound of their cries. “I could hear them screaming for help inside the hospital while it was set ablaze by the bombing,” he told Al Jazeera.

“I'll do my best,” the official responded. “Praying for you all.”

The strikes nonetheless continued. At 3:10 and 3:14, MSF again called the Pentagon. Finally, sometime around 3:15 a.m., the gunship flew off and the strikes were over.

With the operating rooms destroyed, surviving staff members turned an office desk into a makeshift operating table and attempted to treat a doctor whose leg had been blown off. Lajos Zoltan Jecs, a nurse, helped with the surgery. The doctor, he recalled, died atop that desk. “We did our best,” he wrote later, “but it wasn't enough.”

The staff were in shock. Many were cry-

With the operating rooms destroyed, surviving staff members turned an office desk into a makeshift operating table and attempted to treat a doctor whose leg had been blown off

NIGHT ATTACK

As the story changed, culpability shifted back and forth. The Afghans, not the Americans, had called in the attack. No, the Afghans never directly called in the attack. The Americans called in the attack from within the US chain of command

ing. Jecs and others went to check on the damage in the intensive care unit only to find six patients burning in their beds.

In all, 30 people died: 13 staff members, 10 patients, and seven bodies so badly burned that, more than a month later, the remains have not yet been identified.

The hospital closed that same day. About two weeks later, a US tank rammed into the shell of the charred building, possibly destroying evidence of what that AC-130 had done. All told, MSF general director Christopher Stokes concluded: “The view from inside the hospital is that this attack was conducted with a purpose to kill and destroy. But we don’t know why.”

Another version of the story

That’s one version of the story, based on a Doctors Without Borders preliminary report on the destruction of their hospital, released on Nov 5, as well as on articles published by Reuters, the Associated Press, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and Al Jazeera, the testimonies of medical staff published by MSF, and a Democracy Now! interview with the executive director of MSF USA.

Here’s the second version of the story, the one we in the United States are meant to believe. It’s far more confusing and lacking in details, but don’t worry, it’s much shorter.

On October 3rd, an American AC-130 gunship “mistakenly struck” a hospital run by Doctors Without Borders in Kunduz. The attack was ordered by US Special Operations forces, possibly at the behest of the Afghan army (or maybe not).

Earlier contradictory accounts, all issued within the span of four days, go as follows: (1) it may not have been an American air strike, (2) the US launched airstrikes in the neighborhood of the hospital and the facility was hit by accident, (3) the hospital was hit because American Special Operations forces were under fire near the hospital and called in the strikes in their own defence, (4) the facility was hit because Afghan forc-

es supported by that Special Ops unit “advised that they were taking fire from enemy positions and asked for air support from US forces.”

As the story changed, culpability shifted back and forth. The Afghans, not the Americans, had called in the attack. No, the Afghans never directly called in the attack. The Americans called in the attack from within the US chain of command.

In the end, the bottom line from Washington was: We’re conducting a full investigation and one of these days we’ll get back to you with the details.

This second version of the story (in its many iterations) came from commander of the US mission in Afghanistan, General John Campbell, White House spokesperson Josh Earnest, and Pentagon spokesperson Peter Cook. Unnamed sources added some colourful, although unsupported, allegations about a Pakistani intelligence agent or armed Taliban fighters being inside the hospital – despite all evidence to the contrary.

Campbell offered his “deepest condolences.” President Obama called the head of MSF and personally apologized for the “tragic incident.” The Pentagon promised to make “condolence payments” to the families of those killed.

Several investigations into the “incident” were launched by the Pentagon and a joint Afghan-NATO team. However, MSF’s repeated call for an independent investigation by the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission, established under the additional protocols to the Geneva Convention, have been ducked or ignored.

There is, at least, one aspect both accounts agree on: the timing.

It’s undisputed that the attack occurred on October 3, 2015 – just over nine months after President Obama officially declared the ending of the US combat mission in Afghanistan.

All the unknown deaths

In the mornings as I scan the news, I’m

often overcome by the absurdity of writing about ongoing wars that have officially ended or a hospital that has been “mistakenly” struck with exceptional precision. The US bombing of that trauma centre in Kunduz was indisputably horrific, “one of the worst episodes of civilian casualties in the Afghan war,” as the *New York Times* described it. But its outrageousness comes, in part, because for once we have enough information to piece the story together because that AC-130 attacked a well-known, prize-winning, Western humanitarian organization.

To my mind, however, the truly disconcerting stories are the ones that arrive at my desk with so little information that it’s almost impossible to say or write anything with certainty. And so I can’t really tell you what happened on August 12, when “a suspected US drone strike in Yemen ... killed five suspected al-Qaeda militants,” as the Associated Press reported in the standard language used to obscure attacks for which we, in the United States, have essentially no real information whatsoever.

Who were these five people, I wonder, killed suddenly as they drove along a road somewhere to the east of the city of Mukalla? Statistically speaking, there’s a reasonable likelihood that they were innocent. As the *Intercept* recently reported, based on leaked secret documents, 90 per cent

of those killed during one recent period in the US drone campaign in Afghanistan were not the sought-after targets. Without being there, however, I can’t tell you who those five Yemeni “militants” were, or what lives they led, or how many children they had, or even whether they were children themselves – and the odds are that neither can the Pentagon.

Nor can I tell you what happened when the US launched its first drone strike in Syria on August 4. I remember scouring different news sources over the following mornings for the most basic piece of information: How many people – if any – had been killed. That was, after all, what I was doing: waking up early and counting the death toll from America’s endless wars.

But in the days and weeks that followed, the Pentagon’s spokesman refused to offer specifics of any sort on this strike. It’s possible he didn’t have any. And so, to this day, even the number of deaths remains unknown. **CT**

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Laura Gottesdiener is a freelance journalist and a news producer with Democracy Now! The author of A Dream Foreclosed: Black America and the Fight for a Place to Call Home, her writing has appeared in Mother Jones, Al Jazeera, Guernica, Playboy and Rolling Stone. This essay originally appeared at <http://tomdispatch.com>

90 per cent of those killed during one recent period in the US drone campaign in Afghanistan were not the sought-after targets

READ THE BEST OF JOE BAGEANT
at: <http://coldtype.net/joe.html>

Day-old donuts

Dell Franklin is enjoying brunch with Popeye, when Ev and Ears arrive . . . followed by the delightful Arleta . . .

Ev, who sports a wild red beard, with hair sprouting from a ragged ballcap, and a smile as lopsided as his van, sits down a yard or so from me on the sofa and runs his hand over the weather-beaten material and nods his approval

I'm lounging in front of my tiny one bedroom clapboard cottage, a block from the beach, when I hear the tractor-like growling and rattling of fellow cab driver Everett's huge boxy, lopsided van, which serves as his transportation/living quarters. The street I live on is as quiet and still as any in America, and I know that noise means Ev's here and I will have to put down my *LA Times* and interrupt my breakfast of English muffin and coffee, because, if my guess is right, Ev will bring day-old donuts and want to talk, and talk, and talk - cab talk.

His van groans to a stop about five feet from me. Two rickety lawn chairs are strapped to the top, and a mountain bike that Ed found in an alley behind a college dorm in San Luis Obispo clings to the grill. The van is listing to one side.

I'm sitting on a sofa I hauled out to the front of my house from down the street when it was left over from a yard sale and had a free sign on it. Popeye, my big tail-less orange cat, sits on the arm of the sofa and glares at Ev's dog, Ears, a one-eared, three-legged, frothing-at-the-the-mouth Australian mix, which sits shotgun and stares back through the spittle-coated

window. Recently a big black Doberman/Lab mix charged this very sofa as I sat on it, and Popeye clawed a chunk out of his nose, sending him whimpering away, never to return.

Ev comes around the front of the van holding a pink box and a styrofoam cup of coffee, still dressed in his cab uniform, in which I'm sure he eats and sleeps. He has probably just got off his graveyard shift, which he likes to stretch until late mornings with fares at the airport, a habit that infuriates drivers coming on in the morning.



The graveyard is the money shift, and Ev glories in it; claiming he has "big time, big money regulars and local politicians," who regard him as their special cabby and tip him "huge." Ev, who sports a

wild red beard, with hair sprouting from a ragged ballcap, and a smile as lopsided as his van, sits down a yard or so from me on the sofa and runs his hand over the weather-beaten material and nods his approval.

"This is almost as nice as the one I got in my van," he grins. "It was free, too. I furnished my van with stuff I found in back of dorms. Those rich college kids throw away some pretty nice stuff. All I ever bought was a generator. I got my toaster oven,

TV, chair, TV tray, fridge, microwave, all in alleys. You gotta get there early before the trash trucks come, cuz those garbage guys'll beat yah to it."

I put down my paper, sip my coffee. "You gotta have a pretty good nest-egg, Ev, seeing that the only things you pay for are coffee, food and dog food."

He looks trapped, won't meet my gaze. "Nah, I got bills, man. Laundry and stuff..."

"Come on, you sleep in your van in the cab parking lot, unless it's too hot, and then you park under that big tree on Branch Street. No rent, no utilities, thrift store wardrobe . . . You got the best shifts and those moneybags guys tipping you big, you gotta have a huge bank account by now, Ev."

Popeye hunches and hisses as Ears barks at him like a savage beast, splattering the window with fresh spittle. Ev rises and orders him to cut it out. Ears, instantly obedient, goes silent, sitting back in his seat. Ev reclines on the sofa.

"He doesn't mean any harm, but I don't want him hurting Popeye."

"That three-legged creature wouldn't get a lick in before Popeye took his eye, Ev. I like Ears, so leave him in the van."

"There's no way any cat can whip Ears. Ears beats up pitbulls."

Ev opens the donut box. There's six donuts in there, two glazed, two devil's food with chocolate frosting, and two buttermilks. Ev grabs a glazed one, takes a bite, and glaze is all over his beard as he sips his coffee. I take a buttermilk donut. I decide to let the subject of a fight between Ears and Popeye go, and take a bite from the donut. It's not bad, but I know it will roil my stomach. I am much older than Ev and watch my diet after years of boozing and unhealthy eating. Ev hangs out at the Denny's in San Luis Obispo on his time off and mooches leftover food for Ears and drinks so much coffee the waitresses eventually

cut him off, especially since he doesn't understand the tipping game as I do, having been a bartender most of my life.

Ev grew up in an orphanage for poor kids back in Kansas and was shuttled from one foster home to another and eventually spewed out onto the plains, where his first job was bopping cattle to death in a slaughterhouse assembly line. He's about 30, can repair most things, and considers his cab gig his best ever.

He finishes his donut and picks out a devil's food. He takes a bite, sips his coffee, sneaks a shy look at me, and then stares straight ahead. Ears never takes his eyes off him.

"You ever pay for women?" he asks, not looking at me.

"Not since the army. Almost all of us paid in those days."

"You ain't got a girl, though."

"I'm in between. It's not so bad."

"You think any of the other cabbies pay for it?"

"Two of 'em are married. The rest, I don't know."

He leers slyly at me. "Those married guys, they're payin' for it. I think Jay, the screenwriter looks at porn and jerks off. I think Harley hates germs so much he wouldn't touch a woman. And that golfer, Rick, he wouldn't pay for it, cuz he's even cheaper than me. He's so cheap he won't let me buy him a coffee out at the airport cuz he might have to buy me one back."

"What about you, Ev, you pay for it?"

He peers around, leery. He leans closer, and in a lowered voice, says, "I found five hundred bucks in a wad in the back of my cab the other night. And I think I know who left it."

"Who?"

He moves back, looks away. "I ain't sayin'."

"You're supposed to report it, aren't yah?"

Popeye hunches and hisses as Ears barks at him like a savage beast, splattering the window with fresh spittle. Ev rises and orders him to cut it out

ON THE ROAD

Ears goes all softy, licks Arleta's face politely, gazes into her eyes, every trace of his usual ferocity replaced by a blissful acceptance of her affection. She talks to him, tells him he's handsome

"Well, you know Jerry's a thief. I give it to him; he'll keep it and tell the dude called I didn't find nothin'"

"He might not. Then you're screwed, if you keep it."

"Well, so far it's been 48-hours and Jerry ain't said shit." He takes a bite from his donut, crumbs dropping on his lap. "Anyway, I'm thinkin' of treatin' myself to a woman, even if I hate the idea of payin' for it."

There's a rustle behind us. Ev and I turn to see Arleta standing in the doorway. I met Arleta at the bar down the street a couple of months back. She's 42, divorced, has three grown-up kids, is originally from Bakersfield and lives in Morro Bay, seven miles south. Once or twice a week she comes over and makes a salad and side dish, while I barbecue steaks. Afterwards we have a couple of drinks at the bar down the street before going to bed together. She is nurturing and compliant, demanding little, satisfied as I am to share something ritualistically good and pleasing, if not totally fulfilling.

She comes behind the sofa and places her arms around my shoulders and smiles at Ev, says, "Hi," and Ev blushes as deep a red/purple as I've seen, while Ears begins whining at the window, a look of concern on his fierce countenance. I introduce them, and Arleta disappears for a minute and returns with three cups of coffee and some paper towels and sits between us. Then she spots Ears.

"What a beautiful dog," she exclaims. "Such blue eyes. They almost glow."

"That's Ears," Ev tells her. "He's got one ear and one missing leg. I got him at the pound."

She looks right at Ev, smiles. "Can I pet him?"

"Well..." Ev looks uneasy. "He'll chase Popeye if I let him out."

"Maybe you could open the window so I can pet him."

Ev stands and walks to the door of his van, reaches in to roll down the window. Arleta follows him. She's in jeans and midriff blouse. She has an easy, natural, sway to her walk. Ears cranes his snout out of the window, and Arleta strokes his head, scratches his lone ear. Ears goes all softy, licks her face politely, gazes into her eyes, every trace of his usual ferocity replaced by a blissful acceptance of her affection. She talks to him, tells him he's handsome. Ev stands in a grinning trance beside her. Ears, calm, trusting, allows Arleta, who has a dog and two cats, to continue mollycoddling him, until he places his only front paw on her shoulder and peers deep into her eyes.

She kisses him on the side of his face, and when she moves back, his paw comes down, and he delivers a slight sob, like somebody has taken away his bone.

Later, on the sofa, we share the rest of the donuts. They are delicious, though Arleta, a stickler for food and a fine basic cook, winks and whispers in my ear that they're day-old, at least.

When the second round of coffees is consumed, Ev is still talking to her, telling her of his entire life growing up on the prairie and his medley of jobs here, there and everywhere, and disclosing to her his dream of saving enough money to buy or build a little shack in the Big Sur, where he and Ears could live comfortably in the woods while he works part time as a cook in some place in Gorda or Lucia or farther up the Sur.

He's still talking to her when he walks her back to her car, and he stands watching her after a warm hug as she drives off, wiggling her fingers at him while Ears looks on, edgy, concerned. **CT**

Dell Franklin is a long-time journalist and founder of the Rogue Voice literary magazine. He blogs at <http://dellfranklin.com>

What anarchy is all about

Anarchy is NOT about violent revolution, writes **Andreas Wittel**, it's a way to build a civilised society without capitalism or a centralised government

Whenver public protests ignite into violent behaviour, the mainstream media are often quick to refer to “anarchy” and to “anarchists.” Those who are referred to as anarchists are protesters who burn tyres or engage in battles with the police. In this narrative, anarchists are lawless hooligans, and anarchy is about chaos and pointless violence.

The most recent example was the Million Mask March in London on Nov 5. This event was indeed organised by a number of anarchist groups – and there were limited outbreaks of violence – but the equation of chaos and violence with anarchism is about as productive as the equation of circles with squares. It is a crude and bizarre misrepresentation.

What is anarchism anyway? It is a radical and revolutionary political philosophy and political economy. While there are many definitions and many anarchisms, most would agree to the definition formulated by Peter Kropotkin. This definition is in an article which Kropotkin was invited to write for the 11th edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica.

According to Kropotkin, anarchism “is a name given to a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government – harmony in such a society being obtained, not by the

submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilised being.”

Free society of free individuals

Let's unpack this a bit. The etymology of the term traces back to the Greek word “anarkhia,” which means “without rulers” or “without authority.” It stands for the absence of domination, hierarchy and power over others.

Anarchism is a process whereby authority and domination is being replaced with non-hierarchical, horizontal structures, with voluntary associations between human beings. It is a form of social organisation with a set of key principles, such as self-organisation, voluntary association, freedom, autonomy, solidarity, direct democracy, egalitarianism and mutual aid.

Based on these principles and values, anarchism rejects both a capitalist economy and a nation state that is governed by means of a representative democracy. It is a utopian project that aspires to combine the best parts of liberalism with the best parts of communism.

At its heart is a mix of the liberal em-

The equation of chaos and violence with anarchism is about as productive as the equation of circles with squares

CHANGING SOCIETY



Writing on the wall: Anarchism rejects capitalism and the nation state.

Photo: Jeff Meyer/via Flickr

Most anarchist principles, convictions and moral positions are not at all an invention of modern anarchist theory – they are as old as human civilisation

phasis on individual freedom and the communist emphasis on an equal society. I particularly like the definition of Cindy Milstein about anarchism being a “free society of free individuals.”

Long history

The political philosophy of anarchisms emerged in the mid-19th century – as part of the thought of Enlightenment. Key anarchist thinkers include Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, William Godwin, Peter Kropotkin, Mikhail Bakunin, Emma Goldman, and Max Stirner. Proudhon is credited as the first self-proclaimed anarchist and is often seen as the founder of classic anarchist thinking. In particular, he developed the concept of spontaneous order in society, where organisations can emerge without central or top-down coordination.

In fact, Godwin developed his anarchist theory half a century earlier – without ever

using the term. His writings are a profound critique of the state and its structural violence, arguing that the state and its government has a bad influence on society in that it produces unwanted dependency. He has also pointed out that law and legislation is created by the rich and powerful. Sound familiar?

However, it is also important to emphasise that most anarchist principles, convictions and moral positions are not at all an invention of modern anarchist theory – they are as old as human civilisation. And due to the rather different political philosophies of liberalism and communism, anarchist theory – like most political ideologies – is not a consistent and homogeneous concept. It evolves as different people articulate its core ideologies in different ways.

We can at least distinguish between two rather different schools: social anarchism

and libertarian anarchism (or free market anarchism). While social anarchism puts emphasis on society and often supports a political economy that socialises the means of production, libertarian anarchism is mostly concerned with ensuring the maximum amount of liberty for the individual. Here, the will of the individual is considered to be more important even than a harmonious and egalitarian society.

Over the past two decades or so, anarchist practice has enjoyed a significant revival. This is particularly visible in new social movements that have been influenced by anarchist forms of organisation with horizontal structures and non-representative decision-making processes.

Anarchist forms of resistance have also largely informed the alter-globalisation movement— which believes in the benefits of global thinking but rejects economic globalisation. The 1999 battle of Seattle was perhaps the first moment of a reinvigorated anarchism. It has been followed by many other movements and forms of resistance, such as Reclaim the Streets, EuroMayDay, various environmental movements, and more recently the Occupy movement and the hacktivist group Anonymous. And they are having quite an impact. One could easily argue that anarchist forms of resistance are now outperforming the more socialist and hierarchical forms of resistance.

Oscar Wilde, a libertarian anarchist, is widely associated with the following bon mot: “The problem with socialism is that it takes up too many evenings.”

An anarchist world?

But questions must be raised about the feasibility of anarchist practice. While an anarchist organisation clearly can work on a local level, on the level of small communities and on a rural regional level (see the Zapatista movement or large parts of Kurdish rural regions), the jury is still out on whether anarchist social organisation can be embedded in large urban areas, or on a national or global level.

How can forms of direct democracy, such as the general assembly of the Occupy movement, be built and maintained in settings with large populations? At first glance, this seems rather unlikely. Then again, digital technologies might open up new possibilities for large-scale forms of anarchist organisation. Certainly, anarchism is on the rise.

For a non-academic, fictional approach to an understanding of anarchism, I would warmly recommend *The Dispossessed*, a 1970s sci-fi novel by feminist writer Ursula Le Guin.

CT

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Andreas Wittel is a senior lecturer in social theory, at Nottingham Trent University in England. This article was first published at <http://theconversation.com>

One could easily argue that anarchist forms of resistance are now outperforming the more socialist and hierarchical forms of resistance

READ THE BEST OF **FRONTLINE**

<http://coldtype.net/frontline.html>



Nanny with a camera

Vivian Maier's photographs became famous after her death.
Linda Matthews employed her as a live-in nanny during the 1950s

A tall, imposing woman came up the front steps in black Oxfords and a black skirt, black jacket and wide-brimmed black hat

The photographer Vivian Maier worked for me for three years in the early 1980s, though no one knew she was a photographer then. She was in her late fifties, I was in my late thirties. I had a big house in Chicago, a busy husband, two children of six and eight, and a five-month-old baby, and I wanted to go back to work. It seemed to me that a live-in nanny might simplify our lives, and so when I saw her ad in the local paper, I phoned her.

She spoke confidently, with a bit of an accent. Yes, she said, her background was French, and she made delicious crême caramel. When I asked how she managed children, she said she kept them busy and safe but left the coddling to their parents. I asked her to come to an interview. It was the end of August. A tall, imposing woman came up the front steps in black Oxfords and a black skirt, black jacket and wide-brimmed black hat. Her shirt was a brightly patterned cotton print, short-sleeved. Her hair was brushed back from her narrow face: a no-nonsense face, intelligent, observant, composed.

She didn't fawn over the children, but spoke to each of them, including the baby. She said she didn't believe in television for children and asked if we had a stroller. I said yes, and a pram. She said she would need them both. I showed her the house and the three attic rooms we could offer her. I said if she came to live with us, I would carpet the

attic hallway and her bedroom. We would all eat dinner together, but I would do the cooking. She said she wanted to cook, at least on the days I was at work. I said I'd think about it. Then we talked about her salary. I asked what she expected, and she said: "Well, I have to live." She asked for \$175 a week, and she wanted me to pay all the social security, her share and mine. I agreed, feeling slightly outmanoeuvred. She had another request. She wanted a deadbolt put on the attic door before she moved in.

I could see her point: She wouldn't want the children to get into her things when she was out. I asked what colour carpet she'd like; that surprised her. "Rose-coloured," she said. I wanted to know what we should call her. She said she always addressed her employers as Mr and Mrs So-and-So, but she wanted us to call her Viv. Why didn't she want parity? She just didn't, so Viv it was. On her way out, she saw the *New York Times* lying on the kitchen table. "Wonderful," she said.

Viv moved in on a Friday to a rose-carpeted attic with a deadbolt on the door. She had two or three suitcases, some bags and boxes, and a camera – a reasonable amount of luggage. Looking back, I marvel at what a plunge it was to hire her. But at the time, I felt enormous relief, and excitement too.

We quickly learned how much she cared



Lemonade stand, July 1983 (from the Matthews family collection). Photo: Vivian Maier

about food. Not drink: She didn't drink coffee, tea or alcohol, only water, or lemonade, if we had it. She liked sweets. She made crème caramel from time to time, but it was solid, nourishing food she cared about. When I made the first grocery list for our new household, I asked if there was something I could get for her. Canned peas, she said. Buy a case of canned peas, or two if they were cheap. She liked them for breakfast. Canned peas were full of nourishment. The next morning, we watched her open a can and eat the peas with a serving spoon, standing at the kitchen window. She liked soup for breakfast, too, always warm or at room temperature, not hot.

Viv wanted very badly to do our cooking. On my first day back at work, she suggested that I give her \$10 so she could pick up something special for supper. That evening,

a great grey-white beef tongue sat on the dining-room table, lolling over the edges of the platter. The children stared. "Don't even pass it to me," my husband said. If she had sliced it thin and served it with a sauce, it might have had a chance, but that kind of fussiness was not in her repertoire. She ate a lot of tongue by herself that week.

The next evening a pot stood on the table. I had approved a stew, but when she lifted the lid, whole unpeeled carrots floated in a broth alongside hairy-rooted little turnips. There was meat underneath, but I don't think we got that far. "I like to see what I'm eating," Viv said. My husband groaned.

The third night we had steak. We all liked it rare, especially Viv: She said she liked it quivering. But we weren't going to eat steak every night. I got out a cookery book and made menus for the next fortnight. Viv thought my menu list was funny, just as she thought my grocery lists were funny, but from then on I wrote the menus, bought the food and said she had to do it my way. She protested, but not too much. At least she was doing the cooking.

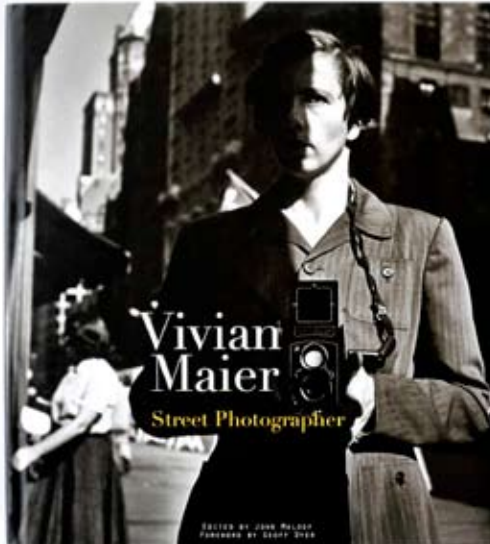
Viv cared about food, and she cared about clothes. Her formal ensemble of dark skirt and jacket with a print shirt never varied. The skirts and jackets were secondhand, trophies of much searching. When she found things she liked, she bought them and had them altered. She bought her Oxfords used as well, and plagued the cobbler near our house with demands for new heels, soles and laces, always at rock-bottom prices. It was getting hard to replace those Oxfords, and she had trouble keeping her old ones in repair. She had her shirts professionally laundered, and her skirts and jackets dry-cleaned. The standard she set for herself was expensive to maintain. Maybe that was what she meant when she said she had to live.

Viv's manner with the children was businesslike but not unfriendly. She called the baby Monsieur le Comte and kept up a stream of chatter, often in French, as she

On my first day back at work she suggested that I give her \$10 so she could pick up something special for supper. That evening, a great grey-white beef tongue sat on the dining-room table, lolling over the edges of the platter

REMEMBERING MISS VIVIAN

She took photographs as they made their way down alleys and sidestreets, and accumulated treasures that festooned the stroller when they returned



Self portrait: Cover of the book, Vivian Maier, Street Photographer.

spooned mashed sweet potato into his mouth. When he began to speak I was astonished to hear French as well as English. He said “hot” in English and “juice” in French. He said “chapeau” and “pomme,” and one day said “la voilà” when we were looking for his sock.

When the older children came home from school or when there was no school, the daily promenade began. Viv put her camera round her neck, the baby in his stroller, and off they went downtown or to the lake, often with other local children in tow. She liked to stop at the candy counter in the local department store, Marshall Field’s, where she passed out free samples until the manager told her she had worn out her welcome. She looked for bargains everywhere, especially offal: pigs’ feet, sheeps’ heads, liver, tripe. The children were horrified by those cuts, but she found them perfectly acceptable and very well priced. She didn’t buy them for the household, though, after our adventure with the beef tongue.

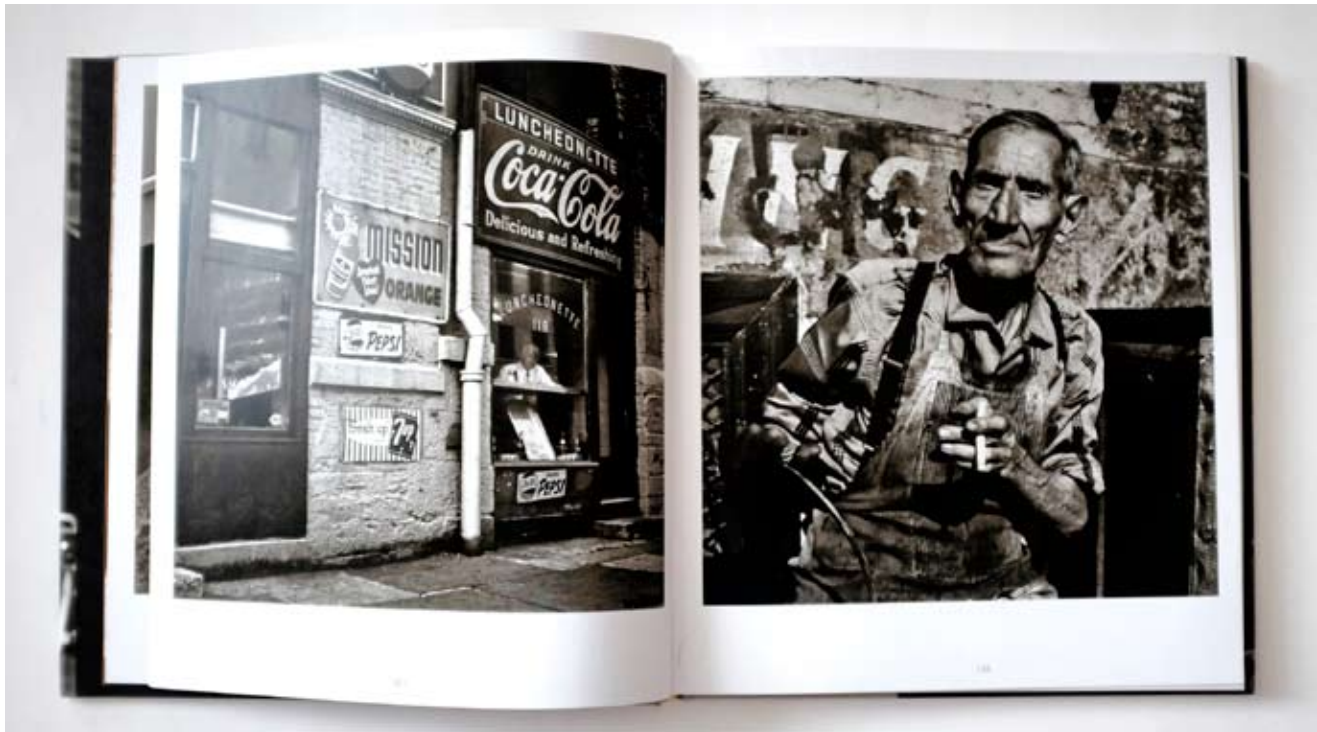
She took photographs as they made their way down alleys and sidestreets, and accumulated treasures that festooned the stroller when they returned. Many of

her finds – broken umbrellas, strangely shaped bits of wood or metal, old toys – sat outside on the patio until I quietly put them in the trash, but some we kept. One day they brought home some fuzzy hand puppets, and an enormous stuffed camel, a Steiff, Viv told us, which sat in our dining room for months. Our toddler climbed on its back, and the cat liked to sleep between its folded forelegs and chin.

People in the neighbourhood noticed Viv. She cut an unsettling figure in her bulky clothing and men’s shoes, even – or perhaps especially – when she was surrounded by children. Her face was sometimes strangely shiny from the Vaseline she used each morning as face cream. She didn’t smile in public: I think she tried to hide her teeth, which were rather crooked. Some of my friends found her voice too emphatic and her presence intimidating, but I had no problem with it. She looked like a good person to have on your side.

When the children did silly dances, Viv would cry, “La la! Ta ta!” and pass them scarves or dishtowels to flourish. One day I came home from work to find everybody wearing 3D glasses, the kind they hand out at the movies. Even the cat was wearing them. Viv was taking pictures with my camera, and the children were laughing. At birthday parties she coaxed the guests into making hats out of discarded wrapping paper, and took snapshots. I always had the film developed, so we have lots of her photographs of the children: Our daughter posing as an Egyptian, a gang of kids in Halloween costumes, eating birthday cake with icing all over their faces, or rollerskating on the sidewalk in bathing suits and tutus.

Sometimes she let slip a detail about her life. She said she had come from France to New York City with her mother, just at the end of childhood. I asked her once what had brought her to Chicago. Instead of answering, she changed the subject; apparently she’d once spent a whole year travelling the world on a freighter, her employers gave her



Bold images of life in the Chicago streets. Spread of images from the book, Vivian Maier, Street Photographer.

time off to make the trip. Was that when she came to Chicago? But the story was over: I never learned why she settled in Chicago. She once told me that her first job had been cutting and sewing in a Manhattan sweatshop. The best thing about the job was that it was in the garment district. On Saturdays she wandered around all day, looking at the latest fashions and fabrics. I asked her why she left the job, and she said one day it occurred to her that she never saw the sun. It's easy to guess that she needed freedom and daylight to take photographs, but she didn't say so.

Viv looked at the *New York Times* every day and asked me if she could take the paper upstairs when we were finished with it so that she could cut out articles she liked. She was most interested in headlines that affirmed her general assessment of humanity: crime-ridden and driven by folly. Her favourite expressions were: "You have to laugh;" "If you don't laugh, you're going to cry;" "Idiots, pure and simple;" "Robbery, pure and simple;" "Criminals, pure and

simple." She saw life in black and white, with no room for other points of view.

She took a cold shower every morning. She said she'd started this routine when she had a very warm bedroom, and the cold shower was invigorating. But the attic in our house wasn't so warm, and she mentioned one day that after her shower she felt chilled. I suggested that she take a warm shower instead: cool room, warm shower; warm room, cool shower. "Hmph!" she said. She hadn't thought of that.

Another day she came into the kitchen agitated. She had just read an article about chipmunks: As soon as the females stop menstruating, they die! The unfairness! I was taken aback. "Viv," I said, "turn it the other way around: chipmunks menstruate until the end of their lives." "Hmph!" she said. And then: "That's an idea."

As far as I can remember, that was the only time we spoke of menstruation. Viv didn't like to speak directly about bodily functions. Her opinions emerged at the edges of other discussions. It was clear she felt

It's easy to guess that she needed freedom and daylight to take photographs, but she didn't say so

REMEMBERING MISS VIVIAN

Some of the best photos we have of ourselves and the children Viv took on vacation with my camera. She also took some with her own camera, very few of which we saw, though she gave us two as gifts

men had an unfair advantage. Who got pregnant? Who took care of babies? Women, of course. Who left messes for others to clean up? Whose clothes were better made and more durable and less expensive to clean and maintain? Who perpetrated crimes of sex and violence? Men.

She once told us about a man she had seen on the street in a sleeveless undershirt, his stringy armpit hair hanging down like moss from a tree. The children howled in disgust, but I was bemused: what was the story about? I think she found the man's body hair both disgusting and fascinating, an example of male indifference to propriety and at the same time a freakish wonder.

The first Christmas Viv worked for us, we took her to northern Michigan to spend the holiday with my husband's family. We always walked between my mother-in-law's house and our house, about half a mile away. I had imagined Viv would enjoy the walk, but I was wrong. She stumped along behind the children in her boots and heavy coat, looking fed up and bewildered. When we got back to our house, she sat bolt upright on the living-room floor and muttered "God, oh God" to herself. On her day off, we drove her to the nearby town so she could shop and explore, but she spent only an hour or so there before phoning to be picked up. There was nothing to look at, nothing to buy, just little stores, little houses, deep snow and endless winter woods. Nothing she wanted to photograph.

That was the only time she spent Christmas with us.

Summer vacations in Michigan were more successful. Some of the best photos we have of ourselves and the children Viv took there with my camera. She also took some with her own camera, very few of which we saw, though she gave us two as gifts. In one, our naked toddler is watering flowers with a plastic watering can. In the other, our older son is getting his first haircut at a barber's

shop; I'm hovering next to him, showing the barber where to trim.

In the winter of 1984 our family business was going well, our youngest child was nearly three, no longer a baby. Should we take on a foster child? Viv hated the idea. The legalities would require her to have a medical and see a dentist, which she refused: They were all quacks, pure and simple. A foster child might need some special care, would Viv help provide it? She wouldn't say. Finally one evening she threw out her arms and said: "If you want to take care of somebody, why don't you take care of me?"

In the end we decided against fostering. But there was tension in our household after that. Our older children were tired of touring the neighbourhood with Viv after school. One afternoon, they wandered away from her and found their way home by themselves. No harm was done, but it was a frightening experience for Viv, and a humiliating one. She was going to have to adapt to a household with older children in it, and it wasn't clear that she could.

And there was more. One warm evening when my husband and I came home from work, we found everybody hot and languishing on the screened porch, where Viv had pulled the door and all the windows closed. We hurried around, throwing everything open to get the breeze in, while Viv exclaimed: "Don't do that! You're letting out the heat! You're going to miss that heat when winter comes!" Of course, we knew that she couldn't bear to throw anything away. She told me once, with pride in her voice, that she had 12 broken Leicas in storage, valuable to anyone who could afford to fix them. But hanging onto warm air? That fell into another category.

I hadn't been in the attic for almost three years, not since Viv came to live with us. But I needed a suitcase that was stored up there, and she wasn't home. I found my key to the deadbolt and went to get it. The attic was full of newspapers. Her little sitting room, bright with windows looking onto the tree-

tops, was stacked shoulder-high with them. Her rose-carpeted bedroom was impassable except for a narrow track running from bed to bathroom. She had made a space on the floor of the storage room under the eaves for some books and clothes, but the rest of the attic was crammed with newspapers. She wasn't cutting out the articles she liked and throwing away the rest; she was hoarding everything.

One Saturday not long afterwards, on Viv's day off, a neighbour asked if we had any old papers. He was painting his bathroom and needed to cover the floor, so I gave him an armful from the pile by the kitchen door. Viv noticed as soon as she came home. Where were her newspapers? What had we done with her newspapers? "Viv," I said, "they are my newspapers, not yours. And there are way too many newspapers in this house!" She was too upset to argue. She went upstairs and locked herself in the attic for the rest of the evening.

I thought we could work through it, find a way to keep going. My husband said no, she was getting too nutty. At the kitchen sink the next morning, when nobody else was around, I said: "Viv, I think it's time for you to find another job." She stepped back and said: "You do, do you?" It almost seemed like she had been expecting it.

We took the children for a long weekend in Michigan when she moved out. I didn't see – I didn't want to see – what she did with the newspapers. Did they go into storage along with the Leicas? Now that she was disappearing from our world, another piece of the puzzle slipped into place. She needed money not so much to live, but to pay for the life that was behind her. She kept it in trunks and boxes and suitcases in storage, along with the newspapers that recorded those times.

I didn't see her again. Or not until 2011, two years after she died, when her name and picture started appearing in newspapers and on TV. The contents of her stor-

age lockers had been auctioned off, and bought up by some amateur collectors, who found a number of prints, along with more than 100,000 negatives and 3,000 rolls of undeveloped film. What they saw looked pretty good, so they started releasing some of the images onto the internet. Gradually, the pictures attracted the interest of street photography enthusiasts, and then of people such as photographer and famed film director Cindy Sherman, and then of high-end gallerists and collectors.

It wasn't long before they were recognised for what they were: An extraordinary collection of photographs, spanning 50 years, of the streets of New York City and Chicago and beyond, of children and tramps and construction workers and society girls, and the graffiti on the walls. She had learned some things from that time in the garment district. The photos show her fascination with pattern: light and dark, sun and shadow, objects and their reflections, fabric patterns, too. She loved to juxtapose one texture against another: polka dots against stripes, a lady's furs against a bum's tattered jeans. In some of the pictures she is visible herself, reflected in a mirror or a window at the edge of the frame, always observing, waiting for her moment.

We can't assume that she left the canisters of film in boxes only because she couldn't afford to have them developed. We can't assume that she would have printed more of her photographs if only she'd had a darkroom and the money for supplies. My husband once asked to see some of her work. She showed him six or seven prints, and when he wanted to see more, she refused. She said she couldn't risk it; people would steal her work. The current dispute over the ownership of her images suggests that she had a point. Viv knew how good her photographs were: Those she did print proved it to her years before she began tossing canisters of film into cardboard boxes. Viv hoarded her film because it preserved her life as she had lived it. **CT**

My husband once asked to see some of her work. She showed him six or seven prints, and when he wanted to see more, she refused. She said she couldn't risk it; people would steal her work. The current dispute over the ownership of her images suggests that she had a point

Linda Matthews is a co-founder of *Chicago Review Press* and the author of *Middling Folk: Two Seas, Two Centuries, One Scots-Irish Family*. This essay originally appeared in the *London Review of Books* – <http://lrbc.co.uk>



THE FACE OF OCCUPATION

Mats Svensson reflects on the life – and death – of Hashem al-Azzeh, a friend in Hebron, Palestine, where a few hundred illegal Israeli settlers are protected by thousands of soldiers

Hashem al-Azzeh gently took my hand. Almost caressed it, wishing to know how I felt. Both his handshake and his eyes were tender – tender but penetrating. I knew immediately that he had experienced something that had affected him deeply.

I had had to climb over the wall from his neighbour's. It was partially dismantled. There was no longer a path to the house. Everything was blocked. Directly



Apartheid, Israeli-style: Here, there are five young soldiers, there to protect illegal settlers.

behind the house, on top of a small hill, was a long house. Israeli flags were draped over the windows. I saw a man sitting with an automatic weapon. We looked at each other. He did not seem to like my presence. He was an Israeli settler. He was my host's neighbour.

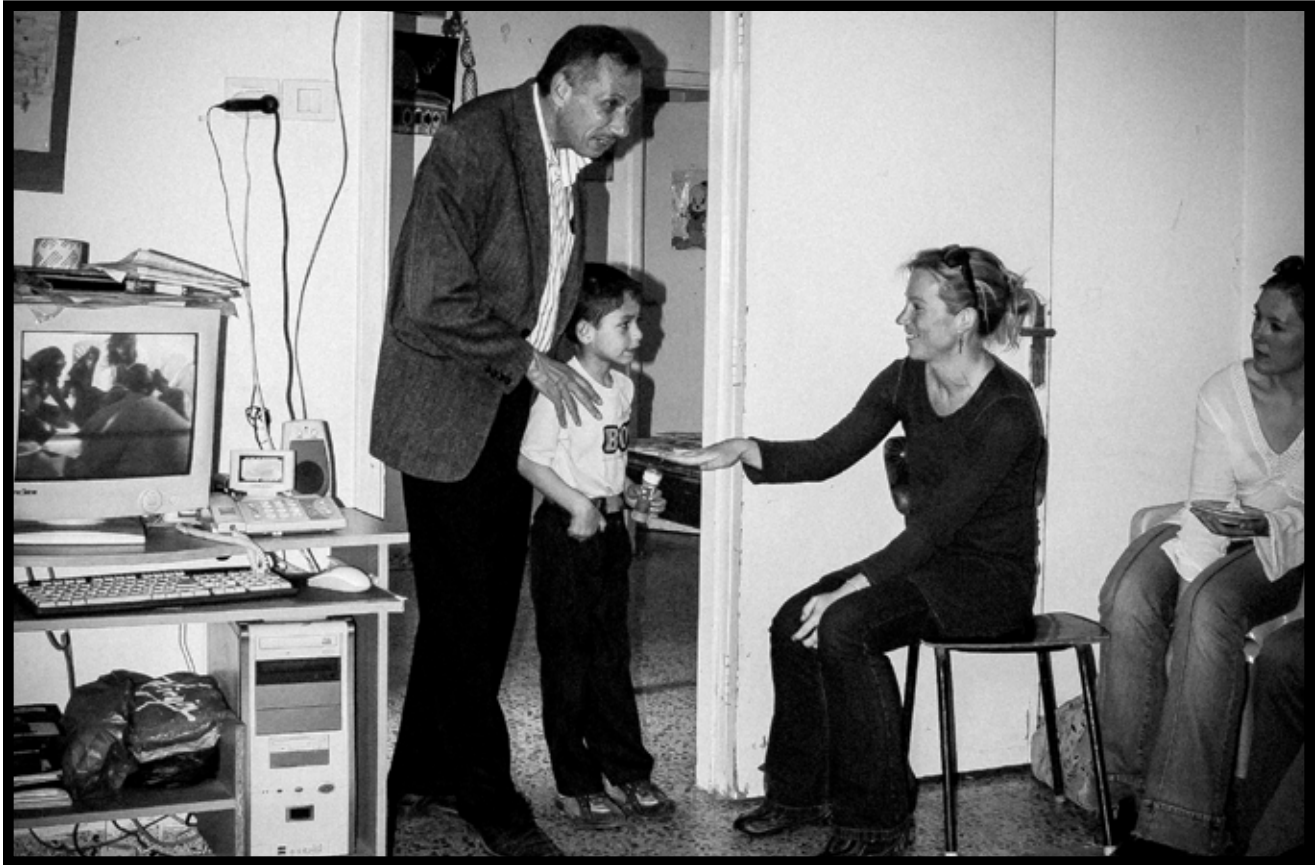
Within a few metres: One who tries to steal the land and homes, another who just wants to remain, to stay in the house that had been his family home for so

many years. The settler with the automatic weapon, on the other hand, had not lived there for very long. They came and went. Many did not stay long.

Hashem had no enemies. But Hashem was hated, hated by the settlers. Right here, they were planning to continue the expansion. They could wait, but they did not want to wait too long. It was as though different groups of criminal settlers were competing against each other: To win

Within a few metres: One who tries to steal the land and homes, another who just wants to remain

IN THE PICTURE



Tragedy of Hebron:: Both Hashem al-Azzeh's handshake and his eyes were tender, tender but penetrating. Constantly attacked by settlers, Hashem had a heart attack while passing through an area where the Israeli army was using teargas.

The Israeli soldiers would not come in the middle of the night to ward off the settlers. They would not come during the day, either. They never came

meant to be the one who expanded the fastest. But Hashem's house was in the way.

Hashem's wife Nisreen welcomes me. While she tells me how the settlers had broken the window last night, Hashem sets the table. Nisreen is carrying a little girl. The family is growing.

I see that she is not comfortable talking about last night's events. It had been a large group. They had been loud. It was the neighbours, up on the hill, just behind the house. They had broken the window and woken up the whole family. She told me with a sad voice that there was no one to call: The Israeli soldiers would not come in the middle of the night to ward off the settlers. They would not come during the day, either. They never came.

Her neighbours had also been hit. They



Marked: A crude Star of David daubed onto the door of Hashem al-Azzeh's home by Jewish settlers



Deserted streets, closed shops: The occupier finds many different ways to crush the Palestinians. The net above the street is piled high with rubbish thrown from the homes of the settlers in the apartments above.

did not dare to go outside, either. They only had one another, and the two families tried to support each other.

We sit at the table. Hashem begins to talk about the destroyed grapevines and olive trees. Nisreen sits beside him. Has her hand on his shoulder. Supporting him. Now the worry is gone. Sometimes she fills in. Adds where Hashem forgets or misses something important that needs to be said. About that time they had also come during the night. The family had a few grapevines and olive trees along the path between the house and the wall. One morning they were all cut off. The roots remained as well as the crowns but in between there was a gap. One can kill in many ways. The settlers use all the means at their disposal.

Some young settler girls came a few

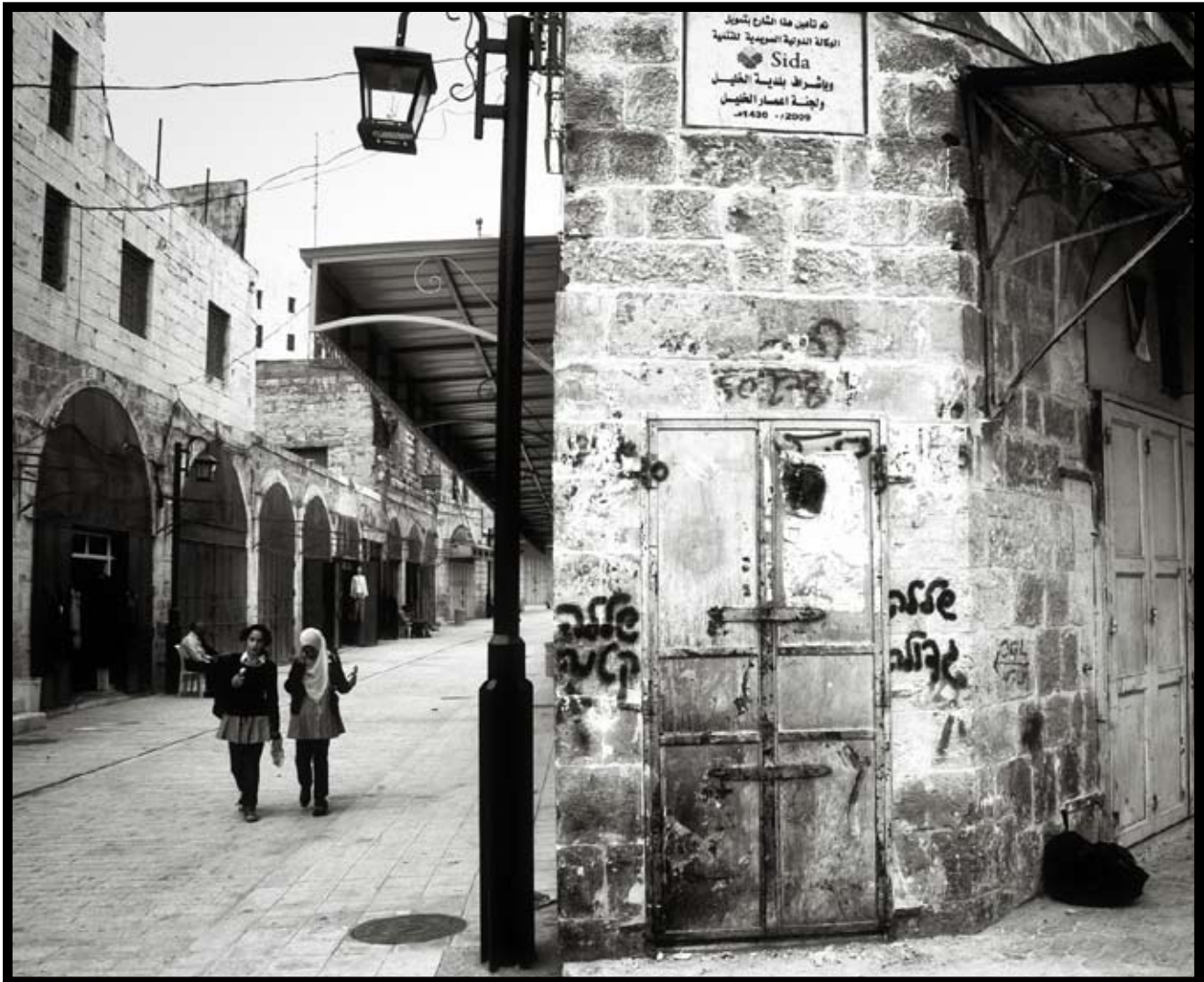
nights ago. They rushed toward the house. Shouted “whore” at Nisreen and “bastards” at her children. They screamed like maniacs. For a while, they were on all sides. In the morning, Hashem started clearing up. Washed the walls clean of faeces. They had painted Stars of David on the doors. As he cleaned the path leading to the door, with the sawed-off olive trees and grapevines on one side, they continued to throw garbage and faeces.

When we sit at the table, we see a wife and husband who are so fused together that nothing can come between them. They are committed to each other and for their right to live in their own house. They are alone where they are sitting. I can see dignity, I can feel dignity. For a moment, I am envious of their inner strength.

I listen, taking in every word, every

Some young settler girls came a few nights ago. They rushed toward the house. Shouted “whore” at Nisreen and “bastards” at her children

IN THE PICTURE



Going home: These students will soon have to pass through a checkpoint. Still children, but they have already experienced more than most adults.

A few hundred individuals are protected by thousands of soldiers

movement. There is a calm in the room. We share the bread that Nisreen has just baked. It is warm. Warm like the warmth of being together. There is a constant stream of people to this table. We come from all over the world. It will be a meal that stays within all of us. That transforms.

I think about the crazy people who are allowed to continue doing what they are doing. That a few hundred individuals are protected by thousands of soldiers. It becomes so clear that they should not be here. Neither the settlers, nor the Israeli soldiers. Large parts of the Israeli project are illegal.

They violate normal human relations.

The trees should not be cut down or burned. We don't like to see faeces on doors. I become deeply sad when I see a Star of David in the wrong place. I do not understand how someone can come up with the idea of painting this particular symbol on a Palestinian home.

For all of us who had the privilege of visiting Hashem and his family, what was going on there, and is allowed to continue, is incomprehensible. It still continues, while country after country intensifies its relations with the occupying power.



Unwelcome: Israeli women walk the streets. No one wants them there, but it seems they will stay, protected by force.



Waiting: An old man sits outside one of the few open stores in Hebron.



Living on stolen land: A young settler boy walks hand-in-hand with an Israeli soldier.

For all of us who had the privilege of visiting Hashem and his family, what was going on there and is allowed to continue is incomprehensible

More than 20 years ago, apartheid ended in South Africa. We thought then that it would never return. We were wrong. In Palestine, apartheid deepens day by day, and virtually all western countries ignore it. On each bullet that is used to oppress and degrade Palestinians, there is an invisible dollar sign. Huge amounts of dollars are transferred to Israeli bank accounts so that the oppression in Hebron and other places can continue.

A few days ago – on October 21 – Hashem was killed by the soldiers after excessive

tear gas inhalation. He was on his way to the hospital because he was feeling chest pains. He could not get any ambulances because the Israeli forces do not allow them into the closed-off area.

He did not come home.

Now his wife mourns her beloved husband. His three children, the eldest of whom is just 13-years-old, do not understand why their father is never returning. In the house above theirs, they can hear celebration. Victory songs are being sung while the residents continue to shout “whore” and “bastards.” The soldiers look

IN THE PICTURE



Fenced in: The net roof gives some protection from the dirt that the settlers above pour down. But it does not protect from the daily humiliation suffered by the Palestinians beneath.

No obligations are placed on Netanyahu to end the occupation. The criminals are fully protected

away. They allow the crazy people to continue to be crazy. The international community also allows the madness to continue. No obligations are placed on Netanyahu to end the occupation. The criminals are protected.

The other week, a 73-year-old woman was killed as she drove her car in Hebron, on her way to lunch. An 11-second movie was published on the web. An Israeli soldier seems to have had enough. Perhaps he has witnessed far too much of the madness.

I know that many murderers are on the loose in Hebron. Innocent people are being killed. Some people are killed while driving past Israeli soldiers, while oppos-

ing the illegal occupation and ongoing colonization of Palestine, or while questioning the Israeli oppression, an oppression that has led to apartheid.

Palestinians have been deprived of their human rights. To resist is a crime. **CT**

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Mats Svensson, a former Swedish envoy and the author of *Crimes, Victims and Witnesses – Apartheid in Palestine*, is posting one to five pictures a day on Instagram as part of a year-long photographic project – *WITHOUT SHELTER* – which will culminate in an exhibition next year in South Africa. Follow him on Instagram at: <https://websta.me/n/matssvenssons>



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Military action is the problem, not the solution

The Islamic State's latest atrocities are a calculated effort to bring the war in Syria home to the countries participating in it, writes **Peter Certo**

You can't simply bomb extremism out of existence. As governments from Moscow to Paris to Beirut are learning, you put your own people's lives on the line when you try

A café. A stadium. A concert hall. One of the most horrifying things about the murderous attacks in Paris was the terrorists' choice of targets. They chose gathering places where people's minds wander furthest from unhappy thoughts such as war. And they struck on a Friday night, when many westerners take psychic refuge from the troubles of the working week.

The message was simple: Wherever you are, this war will find you. The same could be said of the 43 Lebanese civilians murdered only the day before, when a bomb exploded in a crowded marketplace in Beirut. Or of the 224 vacationers who died when their Russian airliner blew up over Egypt a few weeks earlier.

The Islamic State, or ISIS, claimed responsibility for each of these atrocities. But that's not the only thing they have in common. In fact, all of them occurred in countries whose governments – or, in Lebanon's case, a powerful militia – have got involved in Syria. Russia started bombing ISIS targets and other Syrian rebels in October. Hundreds of Lebanese Hezbollah fighters have fought and died defending the Syrian regime. And France was the first country to join the Obama administration's war on ISIS last year.

Indeed, scarcely a month before ISIS attacked the French capital, French planes

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were bombing the Islamic State's capital in Raqqa, Syria – dropping bombs that “did not help them at all in the streets of Paris,” as a grim communiqué from the terrorist group gloated afterward.

These horrific attacks on civilians are part of a calculated effort to bring the war in Syria home to the other countries participating in it. And the US bill could come due next.

Washington is funneling of millions of dollars' worth of weapons to its proxies in Syria. It's dispatching special forces to “advise” an array of the Islamic State's enemies. And, in an air war totally unauthorized by Congress, US warplanes have launched thousands of strikes on alleged ISIS targets in Iraq and Syria since 2014.

But you can't simply bomb extremism out of existence. And as governments from Moscow to Paris to Beirut are learning, you put your own people's lives on the line when you try.

Military intervention has succeeded mightily in breaking things and killing people, but it's done nothing to wind down the greatest factor fueling the rise of ISIS: Syria's wider civil war. An international arms em-

bargo and a deal between the Syrian regime and other rebel groups – jobs for diplomats, not drones – would go much further toward curtailing the threat of ISIS.

But France has responded to the carnage in Paris by pounding Raqqa with more air strikes – reportedly bombing medical clinics, a museum, and a stadium of its own, among other targets.

Leading US presidential candidates aren't proposing anything smarter.

Hillary Clinton declared that ISIS “must be destroyed” with “all of the tools at our disposal.” Ted Cruz called for “overwhelming air power” and condemned the Obama administration for having insufficient “tolerance for civilian casualties.” Ben Carson called for “boots on the ground,” while Donald Trump swore he’d “bomb the shit out of” ISIS-controlled oil fields and hand them over to ExxonMobil.

Virtually all GOP contenders, along with a

gaggle of Republican governors, agreed that they’d close the door to Syrian refugees, too – as though they can evade the consequences of war by making life more miserable for the innocent people fleeing it.

None of this bravado makes me feel safer here in Washington, where ISIS threatened more Paris-style bloodshed in a recent video. When I imagine those cold-blooded killers running roughshod through the bars, restaurants, and concert halls my neighbors and I frequent, my stomach drops.

But that’s the lesson, isn’t it: When your government answers every problem in the world with military force, war begets war. And eventually there’s nowhere left to hide.

CT

Peter Certo is the editor of Foreign Policy In Focus and deputy editor of OtherWords, a non-profit editorial service run by the Institute for Policy Studies – <http://IPS-dc.org>

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Lessons of 9/11 that we learned too late

John W. Whitehead hopes France doesn't follow the US example and become a militarised state obsessed by revenge

Rushed through Congress a mere 45 days after the 9/11 attacks, the USA Patriot Act drove a stake through the heart of the Bill of Rights

"They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." – Benjamin Franklin

"Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country." Hermann Goering, German military commander and Hitler's designated successor

For those who remember when the first towers fell in New York City on 9/11, there is an unnerving feeling of déjà vu about the Paris attacks. Once again, there is that same sense of shock. The same shocking images of carnage and grief dominating the news. The same disbelief that anyone could be so hateful, so monstrous, so evil as to do this to another human being. The same outpourings of support and unity from around the world. The same shared fear that this could easily have happened to us or our loved ones.

Now the drums of war are sounding. French fighter jets have carried out a series of "symbolic" air strikes on Syrian targets. France's borders have been closed, Paris has been locked down, and military personnel are patrolling its streets.

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What remains to be seen is whether France, standing where the United States did 14 years ago, will follow in America's footsteps as she grapples with the best way to shore up her defences, where to draw the delicate line in balancing security with liberty, and what it means to secure justice for those whose lives were taken.

Here are some of the lessons we in the United States learned too late about allowing our freedoms to be eviscerated in exchange for the phantom promise of security.

Beware of mammoth legislation that expands the government's powers at the citizenry's expense. Rushed through Congress a mere 45 days after the 9/11 attacks, the USA Patriot Act drove a stake through the heart of the Bill of Rights, undermined civil liberties, expanded the government's powers and opened the door to far-reaching surveillance by the government on American citizens.

Pre-emptive strikes will only lead to further blowback. Not content to wage war against Afghanistan, which served as the base for Osama bin Laden, the US embarked on a pre-emptive war against Iraq in order to stop any adversary challenging



Birth of a security state? Paris was on security alert after the ISIS attack. the country is living in fear and it seems the added security id going to be around for a long time. Photo: Andrew Tijou, via Flickr

America's military superiority and adopt a strike-first policy against terrorist threats before they're fully formed. We are still suffering the consequences of this failed policy, which has resulted in lives lost, taxpayer dollars wasted, the fomenting of hatred against the US and the further radicalisation of terrorist cells.

War is costly. There are many reasons to go to war, but those who have advocated that the US remain at war, year after year, are the very entities that have profited most from these endless military occupations and exercises. Thus far, the US taxpayer has been made to shell out more than \$1.6-trillion on military operations, the training of security forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, weapons maintenance, base support, reconstruction, embassy maintenance, foreign aid, and veterans' medical care, as well as war-related intelligence operations not tracked by the Pentagon since 2001.

Other estimates that account for war-related spending, veterans' benefits and various promissory notes place that figure

closer to \$4.4-trillion. That also does not include the more than 210,000 civilians killed so far, or the 7.6-million refugees displaced from their homes as a result of the endless drone strikes and violence.

Advocating torture makes you no better than terrorists. The horrors that took place at Abu Ghraib, the American-run prison in Iraq, continue to shock those with any decency. Photographs leaked to the media depicted US military personnel humiliating, hurting and abusing Iraqi prisoners in a myriad of perverse ways. While American servicemen and women smiled and gave thumbs up, naked men were threatened by dogs, or were hooded, forced into sexual positions, placed standing with wires attached to their bodies, or left bleeding on prison floors. Adding to the descent into moral depravity, the United States government legalized the use of torture, including waterboarding, in violation of international law, and continues to sanction human rights violations in the pursuit of national security. The ramifications have been far-reaching, with lo-

The United States government legalized the use of torture, including waterboarding, in violation of international law

If you stop holding the government accountable to the rule of law, the only laws it abides by will be the ones used to clamp down on the citizenry

cal police now employing similar torture tactics at secret locations such as Homan Square in Chicago.

Allowing the government to spy on the citizenry will not reduce acts of terrorism, but it will result in a watched, submissive, surveillance society. A byproduct of this post 9/11-age in which we live, whether you're walking through a store, driving your car, checking email, or talking to friends and family on the phone, you can be sure that some government agency, whether the National security Agency or some other entity, is listening in and tracking your behaviour. This doesn't even begin to touch on the corporate trackers such as Google that monitor your purchases, web browsing, Facebook posts and other activities taking place in the cyber sphere. We are all becoming data collected in government files. The chilling effect of this endless surveillance is a more anxious and submissive citizenry.

Don't become so distracted by the news cycle that you lose sight of what the government is doing. The average American has a hard time keeping up with and remembering all of the "events," manufactured or otherwise, that occur like clockwork and keep us distracted, deluded, amused, and insulated from the reality of the American police state. Whether these events are critical or unimportant, when we're being bombarded with wall-to-wall news coverage and news cycles that change every few days, it's difficult to stay focused on one thing – namely, holding the government accountable to abiding by the rule of law – and the powers-that-be understand this. In this way, regularly scheduled trivia and/or distractions that keep the citizenry tuned into the various breaking news headlines and entertainment spectacles also keep them tuned out from the government's steady encroachments on their freedoms.

If you stop holding the government accountable to the rule of law, the only laws it abides by will be the ones used to clamp

down on the citizenry. Having failed to hold government officials accountable to abiding by the rule of law, the American people have found themselves saddled with a government that skirts, flouts and violates the Constitution with little consequence. Overcriminalisation, asset forfeiture schemes, police brutality, profit-driven prisons, warrantless surveillance, SWAT team raids, indefinite detentions, covert agencies, and secret courts are just a few of the egregious practices carried out by a government that operates beyond the reach of the law.

Do not turn your country into a battlefield, your citizens into enemy combatants, and your law enforcement officers into extensions of the military. A standing army – something that propelled the early colonists into revolution – strips the citizenry of any vestige of freedom. How can there be any semblance of freedom when there are tanks in the streets, military encampments in cities, Blackhawk helicopters and armed drones patrolling overhead? It was for this reason that those who established America vested control of the military in a civilian government, with a civilian commander-in-chief. They did not want a military government, ruled by force. Rather, they opted for a republic bound by the rule of law: the US Constitution. Unfortunately, we in America now find ourselves struggling to retain some semblance of freedom in the face of police and law enforcement agencies that look and act like the military and have just as little regard for the Fourth Amendment, laws such as the National defense Authorization Act that allow the military to arrest and indefinitely detain American citizens, and military drills that acclimate the American people to the sight of armored tanks in the streets, military encampments in cities, and combat aircraft patrolling overhead.

As long as you remain fearful and distrustful of each other, you will be incapable of standing united against any threats

posed by a power-hungry government. Early on, US officials solved the problem of how to implement its authoritarian policies without incurring a citizen uprising: fear. The powers-that-be want us to feel threatened by forces beyond our control (terrorists, shooters, bombers). They want us afraid and dependent on the government and its militarized armies for our safety and well-being. Most of all, they want us distrustful of each other, divided by our prejudices, and at each other's throats.

If you trade your freedom for security, the terrorists win. We've walked a strange and harrowing road since September 11, 2001, littered with the debris of our once-vaunted liberties. We have gone from a nation that took great pride in being a model of a representative democracy to being a model of how to persuade a freedom-loving people to march in lockstep with a police state. And in so doing, we have proven Osama bin Laden right. He warned that "freedom and human rights in America

are doomed. The US government will lead the American people in – and the West in general – into an unbearable hell and a choking life."

To sum things up, the destruction that began with the 9/11 terror attacks has expanded into an all-out campaign of terror, trauma, acclimation and indoctrination aimed at getting Americans used to life in the American police state. The bogeyman's names and faces change over time, but the end result remains the same: our unquestioning acquiescence to anything the government wants to do in exchange for the phantom promise of safety and security has transitioned us to life in a society where government agents routinely practice violence on the citizens while, in conjunction with the corporate state, spying on the most intimate details of our personal lives.

The lesson learned is this: Once you start down the road towards a police state, it will be very difficult to turn back. **CT**

If you trade your freedom for security, the terrorists win

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John W. Whitehead is a constitutional attorney and founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His latest book "Battlefield America: The War on the American People" is available at <http://amazon.com>

HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt



Passing knee-jerk laws won't make us safer

Calm, clear heads are better than frantic action, writes **Fiona de Londras**

Does anyone believe that internment in Northern Ireland, control orders throughout the UK, military enquiries in Guantánamo Bay, or the proscription of terrorist organisations in Nigeria actually tackle terrorism in any effective way?

Terrorism generates fear. That is its purpose. Attacks serve to make us think twice before we leave the house, to sow suspicion and fear about neighbours and friends, who may be different from us in some way, and to make us question the core of our liberal values. Paradoxically, terrorist attacks tend to unify and to divide at the same time. Just as sorrow and sympathy unite us, fear and anxiety divide us into “us” and “them.”

In these circumstances, we are drawn, quite understandably, to demands for more security, more counter-terrorism, more laws. But is “more” the right answer? Certainly the history of legal responses to terrorism indicates that legislation produced rapidly in the wake of terrorist acts can be problematic and often fails to address the core problem.

The record shows politicians may rush through legislation in order to capitalise on sympathy, fear and the demand for more security. This can result in laws that lack the benefit of robust debate, and that extend state power and often greatly curtail individual rights. And to what end? Does anyone truly believe that internment in Northern Ireland, control orders throughout the UK, military enquiries in Guantánamo Bay, or the proscription of terrorist organisations in Nigeria (to give just a few examples) actually tackle terrorism in any effective way?

AFTER PARIS: WHAT NEXT?

Certainly these measures satisfy our desire to see that something is done. They tend also to stem from governments' good faith efforts to provide a legal framework for security. But it is by no means clear that they work.

The attacks in Paris last month have rightly been condemned by governments and organisations all over the world. The incomprehensible combination of the extraordinary and the banal, where going to a restaurant or concert on a Friday night leads to one's assassination, vividly exposes the insecurity inherent in living in an ideologically divided world with easy access to arms, information and international travel.

Early reports suggest that the attacks have also shown up weaknesses in intelligence cooperation and policing. It's not at all clear, however, that they expose any inadequacies in the law. But, despite this, politicians are already calling for more and quicker laws to address terrorism. French President, François Hollande, called for swift constitutional change in France to address the nature of terrorist emergencies, including stripping citizenship from

convicted terrorists and excluding dual nationals from the country. In the UK, Lord Alex Carlile has already suggested that the attacks provide a rationale for placing the Investigatory Powers bill on a fast-track, robbing it of the vigorous parliamentary debate that such a bill requires.

Less is more

To accede to calls for swift and fundamental legal changes is mistaken. The immediate aftermath of an attack is a febrile milieu, in which debate is hampered by the political costs of opposition. In such a context, the virtue of saying the unpopular in defence of the principled is costly indeed. We simply do not yet know enough to tell whether the attacks in Paris suggest that more, new, or different investigatory powers are necessary, or that exclusion orders would have prevented these attacks. Legislating in a hurry is profoundly unwise and should be avoided.

The same is true at the European level. Over the past 14 years, the EU has become adept at making counter-terrorism law, but less skilled at accounting for rights in the course of doing so. Predictably, suggestions of fundamental legal changes in the wake of the attacks on Paris have been made with regards to Europe's borders, intelligence sharing between member states and collective security. But we have already seen the potential drawbacks of passing hastily developed European-wide counter-terrorism laws.

After the Madrid and London bombings, the EU Data Retention Directive was put on the books, despite protestations that the blanket surveillance it required was unlawful. And so it proved to be when, eight years after its introduction and after numerous legal challenges, the directive was struck down by the European Court of Justice for disproportionately interfering with fundamental rights.

The court accepted that security is an important common goal that the EU is



The European Court of Justice – where bad laws go to die.

Photo: Orion_Katerina (via Flickr.com)

entitled to pursue, but this does not mean that fundamental rights can or should be sacrificed in its name. That same message can be found repeated in decades of court cases and academic writing, as well as gleaned from the declining social cohesion and enduring insecurity that exist in spite of – perhaps even partly because of – quick legal responses to massive security failures.

Markus Söder, the finance minister for the German federal state of Bavaria, said “Paris changes everything.” We should hope that this is true: that Paris may be the terrorist attack in the aftermath of which we finally step away from the well-worn pattern of reactionary legislation, disproportionate interference with rights and distorted debate on counter-terrorism. Instead we need calm heads and a willingness to question whether more and more counter-terrorism law can ever deliver the security we desire.

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We have already seen the potential drawbacks in passing hastily developed European-wide counter-terrorism laws

'Anything that flies on everything that moves'

Nothing's changed, from Pol Pot to ISIS, the West's solution to the world's problems is the same, writes **John Pilger**

By most scholarly measure, Bush and Blair's invasion of Iraq in 2003 led to the deaths of 700,000 people – in a country that had no history of jihadism

In transmitting President Richard Nixon's orders for a "massive" bombing of Cambodia in 1969, Henry Kissinger said, "Anything that flies on everything that moves." As Barack Obama ignites his seventh war against the Muslim world since he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the orchestrated hysteria and lies make one almost nostalgic for Kissinger's murderous honesty.

As a witness to the human consequences of aerial savagery – including the beheading of victims, their parts festooning trees and fields – I am not surprised by the disregard of memory and history, yet again. A telling example is the rise to power of Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge, who had much in common with today's Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). They, too, were ruthless medievalists who began as a small sect. They, too, were the product of an American-made apocalypse, this time in Asia.

According to Pol Pot, his movement had consisted of "fewer than 5,000 poorly armed guerrillas uncertain about their strategy, tactics, loyalty and leaders." Once Nixon's and Kissinger's B52 bombers had gone to work as part of "Operation Menu," the West's ultimate demon could not believe his luck.

The Americans dropped the equivalent of five Hiroshimas on rural Cambodia during 1969-73. They levelled village after vil-

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lage, returning to bomb the rubble and corpses. The craters left monstrous necklaces of carnage, still visible from the air. The terror was unimaginable. A former Khmer Rouge official described how the survivors "froze up and they would wander around mute for three or four days. Terrified and half-crazy, the people were ready to believe what they were told ... That was what made it so easy for the Khmer Rouge to win the people over."

A Finnish government commission of enquiry estimated that 600,000 Cambodians died in the ensuing civil war and described the bombing as the "first stage in a decade of genocide." What Nixon and Kissinger began, Pol Pot, their beneficiary, completed. Under their bombs, the Khmer Rouge grew to a formidable army of 200,000.

ISIS has a similar past and present. By most scholarly measures, Bush and Blair's invasion of Iraq in 2003 led to the deaths of 700,000 people – in a country that had no history of jihadism. The Kurds had done territorial and political deals; Sunni and Shia had class and sectarian differences, but they were at peace; intermarriage was common. Three years before the invasion,



Wanted: War criminals poster calls for the prosecution of Bush and Blair.

Photo: Fabio Venni (via flickr.com)

I drove the length of Iraq without fear. On the way I met people proud, above all, to be Iraqis, the heirs of a civilization that seemed, for them, a presence.

Bush and Blair blew all this to bits. Iraq is now a nest of jihadism. Al-Qaeda – like Pol Pot’s “jihadists” – seized the opportunity provided by the onslaught of Shock and Awe and the civil war that followed. “Rebel” Syria offered even greater rewards, with CIA and Gulf states’ ratlines of weapons, logistics and money running through Turkey. The arrival of foreign recruits was inevitable. A former British ambassador, Oliver Miles, wrote recently, “The [Cameron] government seems to be following the example of Tony Blair, who ignored consistent advice from the Foreign Office, MI5 and MI6 that our Middle East policy – and in particular our Middle East wars – had been a principal driver in the recruitment of Muslims in Britain for terrorism here.”

ISIS is the progeny of those in Washington and London who, in destroying Iraq as both a state and a society, conspired to commit an epic crime against humanity. Like Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, ISIS is the mutations of a western state terror dispensed by a venal imperial elite unde-

terred by the consequences of actions taken at great remove in distance and culture. Their culpability is unmentionable in “our” societies.

It is 23 years since this holocaust enveloped Iraq, immediately after the first Gulf War, when the US and Britain hijacked the United Nations Security Council and imposed punitive “sanctions” on the Iraqi population – ironically, reinforcing the domestic authority of Saddam Hussein. It was like a medieval siege. Almost everything that sustained a modern state was, in the jargon, “blocked” – from chlorine for making the water supply safe to school pencils, parts for X-ray machines, common painkillers and drugs to combat previously unknown cancers carried in the dust from the southern battlefields contaminated with depleted uranium.

Just before Christmas 1999, the Department of Trade and Industry in London restricted the export of vaccines meant to protect Iraqi children against diphtheria and yellow fever. Kim Howells, a medical doctor and parliamentary under-secretary of state in the Blair government, explained why. “The children’s vaccines,” he said, “were capable of being used in weapons of

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In 1998, when Denis Halliday revealed the extent of the suffering in Iraq for which the Blair Government shared primary responsibility, Hain abused him on the BBC's Newsnight as an "apologist for Saddam"

mass destruction." The British Government could get away with such an outrage because media reporting of Iraq – much of it manipulated by the Foreign Office – blamed Saddam Hussein for everything.

Under a bogus "humanitarian" Oil for Food Programme, \$100 was allotted for each Iraqi to live on for a year. This figure had to pay for the entire society's infrastructure and essential services, such as power and water. "Imagine," the UN assistant secretary general, Hans Von Sponeck, told me, "setting that pittance against the lack of clean water, and the fact that the majority of sick people cannot afford treatment, and the sheer trauma of getting from day-to-day, and you have a glimpse of the nightmare. And make no mistake, this is deliberate. I have not in the past wanted to use the word genocide, but now it is unavoidable."

Disgusted, Von Sponeck resigned as UN humanitarian co-ordinator in Iraq. His predecessor, Denis Halliday, an equally distinguished senior UN official, had also resigned. "I was instructed," Halliday said, "to implement a policy that satisfies the definition of genocide: a deliberate policy that has effectively killed well over a million individuals, children and adults."

A study by the United Nations Children's Fund, Unicef, found that between 1991 and 1998, the height of the blockade, there were 500,000 "excess" deaths of Iraqi infants under the age of five. An American TV reporter put this to Madeleine Albright, US ambassador to the United Nations, asking her, "Is the price worth it?" Albright replied, "We think the price is worth it."

In 2007, the senior British official responsible for the sanctions, Carne Ross, known as "Mr. Iraq," told a parliamentary selection committee, "[The US and UK governments] effectively denied the entire population a means to live." When I interviewed Carne Ross three years later, he was consumed by regret and contrition. "I feel ashamed," he said. He is today a rare truth-teller of how governments deceive and how a compliant

media plays a critical role in disseminating and maintaining the deception. "We would feed [journalists] factoids of sanitised intelligence," he said, "or we'd freeze them out."

On Sept 25, a headline in the *Guardian* read: "Faced with the horror of ISIS we must act." The "we must act" is a ghost risen, a warning of the suppression of informed memory, facts, lessons learned and regrets or shame. The author of the article was Peter Hain, the former Foreign Office minister responsible for Iraq under Blair. In 1998, when Denis Halliday revealed the extent of the suffering in Iraq for which the Blair Government shared primary responsibility, Hain abused him on the BBC's *Newsnight* as an "apologist for Saddam." In 2003, Hain backed Blair's invasion of stricken Iraq on the basis of transparent lies. At a subsequent Labour Party conference, he dismissed the invasion as a "fringe issue."

Now Hain is demanding "air strikes, drones, military equipment and other support," for those "facing genocide" in Iraq and Syria. This will further "the imperative of a political solution." Obama has the same in mind as he lifts what he calls the "restrictions" on US bombing and drone attacks. This means that missiles and 500-pound bombs can smash the homes of peasant people, as they are doing without restriction in Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Somalia – as they did in Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos. On Sept 23, a Tomahawk cruise missile hit a village in Idlib Province in Syria, killing as many as a dozen civilians, including women and children.

The day Hain's article appeared, Denis Halliday and Hans Von Sponeck visited me in London. They were not shocked by the lethal hypocrisy of a politician, but lamented the enduring, almost inexplicable absence of intelligent diplomacy in negotiating a semblance of truce. Across the world, from Northern Ireland to Nepal, those regarding each other as terrorists and heretics have faced each other across a table. Why not now in Iraq and Syria.

Like Ebola from West Africa, a bacteria called “perpetual war” has crossed the Atlantic. Lord Richards, until recently head of the British military, wants “boots on the ground” now. There is a vapid, almost sociopathic verbosity from Cameron, Obama and their “coalition of the willing” – notably Australia’s aggressively weird Tony Abbott – as they prescribe more violence delivered from 30,000 feet on places where the blood of previous adventures never dried. They have never seen bombing, and they apparently love it so much they want it to overthrow their one potentially valuable ally, Syria. This is nothing new, as the following leaked UK-US intelligence file illustrates:

“In order to facilitate the action of liberative [sic] forces ... a special effort should be made to eliminate certain key individuals [and] to proceed with internal disturbances in Syria. CIA is prepared, and SIS (MI6) will attempt to mount minor sabotage and coup de main [sic] incidents within Syria, working through contacts with individuals... a necessary degree of fear... frontier and [staged] border clashes [will] provide a pretext for intervention... the CIA and SIS should use... capabilities in both psychological and action fields to augment tension.”

That was written in 1957, though it could have been written yesterday. In the imperial world, nothing essentially changes. Last year, the former French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas revealed that “two years before the Arab Spring,” he was told in London that a war on Syria was planned. “I am going to tell you something,” he said in an interview with the French TV channel LPC, “I was in England two years before the violence in Syria on other business. I met top British officials, who confessed to me that they were preparing something in Syria ... Britain was organising an invasion of rebels into Syria. They even asked me, although I was no longer minister for foreign affairs, if I would like to participate ... This operation goes way back. It was prepared, pre-conceived and planned.”

The only effective opponents of ISIS are accredited demons of the west – Syria, Iran, Hezbollah. The obstacle is Turkey, an “ally” and a member of NATO, which has conspired with the CIA, MI6 and the Gulf medievalists to channel support to the Syrian “rebels,” including those now calling themselves ISIS. Supporting Turkey in its long-held ambition for regional dominance by overthrowing the Assad government beckons a major conventional war and the horrific dismemberment of the most ethnically diverse state in the Middle East. A truce – however difficult to achieve – is the only way out of this imperial maze, otherwise, the beheadings will continue. That genuine negotiations with Syria should be seen as “morally questionable” (the *Guardian*) suggests that the assumptions of moral superiority among those who supported the war criminal Blair remain not only absurd, but dangerous. Together with a truce, there should be an immediate cessation of all shipments of war materials to Israel and recognition of the State of Palestine. The issue of Palestine is the region’s most festering open wound, and the oft-stated justification for the rise of Islamic extremism. Osama bin Laden made that clear. Palestine also offers hope. Give justice to the Palestinians and you begin to change the world around them.

More than 40 years ago, the Nixon-Kissinger bombing of Cambodia unleashed a torrent of suffering from which that country has never recovered. The same is true of the Blair-Bush crime in Iraq. With impeccable timing, Henry Kissinger’s latest self-serving tome has just been released with its satirical title, “World Order.” In one fawning review, Kissinger is described as a “key shaper of a world order that remained stable for a quarter of a century.” Tell that to the people of Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Chile, East Timor and all the other victims of his “statecraft.” Only when “we” recognise the war criminals in our midst will the blood begin to dry

“I was in England two years before the violence in Syria on other business. I met top British officials, who confessed to me that they were preparing something in Syria ... Britain was organising an invasion of rebels into Syria”

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John Pilger’s film “Cambodia Year Zero”, which has been credited with alerting the world to the terrors of the Pol Pot regime, was recently named one of ITV’s television’s 60 Greatest Programs

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Silk roads, night trains and industrial revolution

Will chess be the game of the future as China ramps up its efforts in Eurasia? asks **Pepe Escobar**

China's president is telling whoever is willing to listen that, despite the fears of the Obama administration and of some of the country's neighbours, there's no reason for war ever to be on the agenda for the US and China

The US is transfixed by its multibillion-dollar electoral circus. The European Union is paralyzed by austerity, fear of refugees, and now all-out jihad in the streets of Paris. So the West might be excused if it's barely caught the echoes of a Chinese version of Roy Orbison's song, All I Have to Do Is Dream. And that new Chinese dream even comes with a road map.

The crooner is President Xi Jinping, and that road map is the ambitious, recently unveiled 13th five year plan. After years of explosive economic expansion, it sanctifies the country's lower "new normal" gross domestic product growth rate of 6.5 per cent a year through at least 2020.

It also sanctifies an updated economic formula for the country: out with a model based on low-wage manufacturing of export goods, and in with the shock of the new, namely, a Chinese version of the third industrial revolution. And while China's leadership is focused on creating a middle-class future powered by a consumer economy, its president is telling whoever is willing to listen that, despite the fears of the Obama administration and of some of the country's neighbours, there's no reason for war ever to be on the agenda for the US and China.

Given the alarm in Washington about what is touted as a Beijing quietly pursuing expansionism in the South China Sea, Xi has been remarkably blunt on the subject



War is off the agenda: China's President Xi Jinping. Photo: UK Foreign Office

of late. Neither Beijing nor Washington, he insists, should be caught in the Thucydides trap, the belief that a rising power and the ruling imperial power of the planet are condemned to go to war with each other sooner or later.

Just two months ago in Seattle, Xi told a group of digital economy heavyweights, "There is no such thing as the so-called Thucydides trap in the world. But should major countries time and again make the mistakes of strategic miscalculation, they might create such traps for themselves."

A case can be made – and Xi's ready to make it – that Washington, which, from Afghanistan to Iraq, Libya to Syria, has gained

something of a reputation for “strategic miscalculation” in the 21st century, might be doing it again. After all, US military strategy documents and top Pentagon figures have quite publicly started to label China (like Russia) as an official “threat.”

To grasp why Washington is starting to think of China that way, however, you need to take your eyes off the South China Sea for a moment, turn off Donald Trump, Ben Carson, and the rest of the posse, and consider the real game-changer – or “threat” – that’s rattling Beltway nerves in Washington when it comes to the new Great Game in Eurasia.

Swarms of Chinese tourists iPhoning away and buying everything in sight in major Western capitals already prefigure a Eurasian future closely tied to and anchored by a Chinese economy turbo-charging toward that third industrial revolution. If all goes according to plan, it will harness everything from total connectivity and efficient high-tech infrastructure to the expansion of green, clean energy hubs. Solar plants in the Gobi desert, anyone?

Yes, Xi is a reader of economic and social theorist Jeremy Rifkin, who first conceived of a possible third industrial revolution powered by both the Internet and renewable energy sources.

It turns out that the Chinese leadership has no problem with the idea of harnessing cutting-edge Western soft power for its own purposes. In fact, it seems convinced that no possible tool should be overlooked when it comes to moving the country on to the next stage in the process that China’s Little Helmsman, former leader Deng Xiaoping, decades ago designated as the era in which “to get rich is glorious.”

It helps when you have \$4-trillion in foreign currency reserves and massive surpluses of steel and cement. That’s the sort of thing that allows you to go “nation-building” on a pan-Eurasian scale. Hence, Xi’s idea of creating the kind of infrastructure that could, in the end, connect China to Central Asia, the Middle East, and Western Europe. It’s what

the Chinese call “One-Belt, One-Road,” the junction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Twenty-First Century Maritime Silk Road.

Since Xi announced his One-Belt, One-Road policy in Kazakhstan in 2013, Price-waterhouseCoopers in Hong Kong estimates that the state has ploughed more than \$250-billion into Silk Road-oriented projects, ranging from railways to power plants. Meanwhile, every significant Chinese business player is on board, from telecom equipment giant Huawei to e-commerce monster Alibaba (fresh from its Singles Day online blockbuster). The Bank of China has already provided a \$50-billion credit line for myriad Silk Road-related projects. China’s top cement-maker Anhui Conch is building at least six monster cement plants in Indonesia, Vietnam, and Laos. Work aimed at tying the Asian part of Eurasia together is proceeding at a striking pace. For instance, the China-Laos, China-Thailand, and Jakarta-Bandung railways – contracts worth more than \$20-billion – are to be completed by Chinese companies before 2020.

With business booming, right now the third industrial revolution in China looks ever more like a mad scramble toward a new form of modernity.

A Eurasian “War on Terror”

The One-Belt, One-Road plan for Eurasia reaches far beyond the Rudyard Kipling-coined 19th century phrase “the Great Game,” which in its day was meant to describe the British-Russian tournament of shadows for the control of Central Asia. At the heart of the 21st century’s Great Game lies China’s currency, the yuan, which may soon join the International Monetary Fund’s special drawing rights reserve-currency basket. If so, this will mean the total integration of the yuan, and so of Beijing, into global financial markets. An extra basket of countries will add it to their foreign exchange holdings and subsequent currency shifts may amount to the equivalent of trillions of US dollars.

Xi is a reader of economic and social theorist Jeremy Rifkin, who first conceived of a possible third industrial revolution powered by both the Internet and renewable energy source

THE NEW ECONOMY

Another kind of binding geography – what I’ve long called Pipelineistan, the vast network of energy pipelines crisscrossing the region, bringing its oil and natural gas supplies to China – is coming into being

Couple the One-Belt, One-Road project with the recently-founded, China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and Beijing’s Silk Road Infrastructure Fund (\$40-billion committed to it so far). Mix in an internationalized yuan and you have the groundwork for Chinese companies to turbo-charge their way into a pan-Eurasian (and even African) building spree of roads, high-speed rail lines, fiber-optic networks, ports, pipelines, and power grids.

According to the Washington-dominated Asian Development Bank (ADB), there is, at present, a monstrous gap of \$800-billion in the funding of Asian infrastructure development to 2020, and it’s yearning to be filled. Beijing is now stepping right into what promises to be a paradigm-breaking binge of economic development.

And don’t forget about the bonuses that could conceivably follow such developments. After all, in China’s stunningly ambitious plans at least, its Eurasian project will end up covering no less than 65 countries on three continents, potentially affecting 4.4 billion people. If it succeeds even in part, it could take the gloss off al-Qaeda- and ISIS-style Wahhabi-influenced jihadism not only in China’s Xinjiang Province, but also in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. Imagine it as a new kind of Eurasian war on terror whose “weapons” would be trade and development. After all, Beijing’s planners expect the country’s annual trade volume with belt-and-road partners to surpass \$2.5-trillion by 2025.

At the same time, another kind of binding geography – what I’ve long called Pipelineistan, the vast network of energy pipelines crisscrossing the region, bringing its oil and natural gas supplies to China – is coming into being. It’s already spreading across Pakistan and Myanmar, and China is planning to double down on this attempt to reinforce its escape-from-the-Straits-of-Malacca strategy. (That bottleneck is still a transit point for 75 per cent of Chinese oil imports.) Beijing prefers a world in which most of those en-

ergy imports are not water-borne and so at the mercy of the US navy. More than 50 per cent of China’s natural gas already comes overland from two Central Asian “stans” (Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) and that percentage will only increase once pipelines to bring Siberian natural gas to China come online before the end of the decade.

Of course, the concept behind all this, which might be sloganized as “to go west (and south) is glorious” could induce a tectonic shift in Eurasian relations at every level, but that depends on how it comes to be viewed by the nations involved, and by Washington.

Leaving economics aside for a moment, the success of the whole enterprise will require superhuman PR skills from Beijing, something not always in evidence. And there are many other problems to face (or duck). These include Beijing’s Han superiority complex, not a hit among either minority ethnic groups or neighbouring states, as well as an economic push that is often seen by China’s ethnic minorities as benefiting only the Han Chinese. Mix in a rising tide of nationalist feeling, the expansion of the Chinese military (including its navy), conflict in its southern seas, and a growing security obsession in Beijing. Add to that a foreign policy minefield, which will work against maintaining a carefully calibrated respect for the sovereignty of neighbours. Throw in the Obama administration’s “pivot” to Asia and its urge both to form anti-Chinese alliances of “containment,” and to beef up its own naval and air power in waters close to China. And, finally, don’t forget red tape and bureaucracy, a Central Asian staple. All of this adds up to a formidable package of obstacles to Xi’s Chinese dream and a new Eurasia.

All Aboard the Night Train

The Silk Road revival started out as a modest idea floated in China’s Ministry of Commerce. The initial goal was nothing more than getting extra “contracts for Chinese

construction companies overseas.” How far the country has traveled since then. Starting from zero in 2003, China has ended up building no less than 16,000 kilometers of high-speed rail tracks in these years – more than the rest of the planet combined.

And that’s just the beginning. Beijing is now negotiating with 30 countries to build another 5,000 kilometers of high-speed rail at a total investment of \$157-billion. Cost is, of course, king. A made-in-China high-speed network (top speed: 350 kilometres an hour) costs around \$17-million to \$21-million per kilometer. Comparable European costs: \$25-million to \$39-million per kilometre. So no wonder the Chinese are bidding for an \$18-billion project linking London with northern England, and another linking Los Angeles to Las Vegas, while outbidding German companies to lay tracks in Russia.

On another front, even though it’s not directly part of China’s new Silk Road planning, don’t forget about the Iran-India-Afghanistan Agreement on Transit and International Transportation Cooperation. This India-Iran project to develop roads, railways, and ports is particularly focused on the Iranian port of Chabahar, which is to be linked by new roads and railways to the Afghan capital Kabul and then to parts of Central Asia.

Why Chabahar? Because this is India’s preferred transit corridor to Central Asia and Russia, as the Khyber Pass in the Afghan-Pakistani borderlands, the country’s traditional linking point for this, remains too volatile. Built by Iran, the transit corridor from Chabahar to Milak on the Iran-Afghanistan border is now ready. By rail, Chabahar will then be connected to the Uzbek border at Termez, which translates into Indian products reaching Central Asia and Russia.

Think of this as the Southern Silk Road, linking South Asia with Central Asia, and in the end, if all goes according to plan, West Asia with China. It is part of a wildly ambitious plan for a north-south transport

corridor, an India-Iran-Russia joint project launched in 2002 and focused on the development of inter-Asian trade.

Of course, you won’t be surprised to know that, even here, China is deeply involved. Chinese companies have already built a high-speed rail line from the Iranian capital Tehran to Mashhad, near the Afghan border. China also financed a metro rail line from Imam Khomeini Airport to downtown Tehran. And it wants to use Chabahar as part of the so-called Iron Silk Road that is someday slated to cross Iran and extend all the way to Turkey. To top it off, China is already investing in the upgrading of Turkish ports.

Who lost Eurasia?

For Chinese leaders, the One-Belt, One-Road plan – an “economic partnership map with multiple rings interconnected with one another” – is seen as an escape route from the Washington Consensus and the dollar-centred global financial system that goes with it. And while “guns” are being drawn, the “battlefield” of the future, as the Chinese see it, is essentially a global economic one.

On one side are the mega-economic pacts being touted by Washington – the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership – that would split Eurasia in two. On the other, there is the urge for a new pan-Eurasian integration program that would be focused on China, and feature Russia, Kazakhstan, Iran, and India as major players. Last May, Russia and China closed a deal to coordinate the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) with new Silk Road projects. As part of their developing strategic partnership, Russia is already China’s No. 1 oil supplier.

With Ukraine’s fate still in the balance, there is, at present, little room for the sort of serious business dialogue between the European Union (EU) and the EEU that might someday fuse Europe and Russia into the Chinese vision of full-scale, continent-wide

German business types, in particular, remain focused on and fascinated by the limitless possibilities of the New Silk Road concept and the way it might profitably link the continent

THE NEW ECONOMY

At the moment, inside the Beltway, sentiment ranges from gloating over the economic “death” of the BRICS nations, to fear or even downright anticipation of World War III and the Russian “threat”

Eurasian integration. But German business types, in particular, remain focused on and fascinated by the limitless possibilities of the New Silk Road concept and the way it might profitably link the continent.

If you're looking for a future first sign of détente on this score, keep an eye on any EU moves to engage economically with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Its membership at present: China, Russia, and four “stans” (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan). India and Pakistan are to become members in 2016, and Iran once UN sanctions are completely lifted. A monster second step (no time soon) would be for this dialogue to become the springboard for the building of a trans-European “one-belt” zone. That could only happen after there was a genuine settlement in Ukraine and EU sanctions on Russia had been lifted. Think of it as the long and winding road towards what Russian President Vladimir Putin tried to sell the Germans in 2010: a Eurasian free-trade zone extending from Vladivostok to Lisbon.

Any such moves will, of course, only happen over Washington's dead body. At the moment, inside the Beltway, sentiment ranges from gloating over the economic “death” of the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), most of which are facing daunting economic dislocations even as their political, diplomatic, and strategic integration proceeds apace, to fear or even downright anticipation of World War III and the Russian “threat.”

No one in Washington wants to “lose” Eurasia to China and its new Silk Roads. On what former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski calls “the grand chessboard,” Beltway elites and the punditocracy that follows them will never resign themselves to seeing the US relegated to the role of “off-shore balancer,” while China dominates an integrating Eurasia. Hence, those two trade pacts and that “pivot,” the heightened US naval presence in Asian waters, the new urge to “contain” China, and the demonisa-

tion of both Putin's Russia and the Chinese military threat.

Thucydides, eat your heart out

Which brings us full circle to Xi's crush on Jeremy Rifkin. Make no mistake about it: Whatever Washington may want, China is indeed the rising power in Eurasia and a larger-than-life economic magnet. From London to Berlin, there are signs in the EU that, despite so many decades of trans-Atlantic allegiance, there is also something too attractive to ignore about what China has to offer. There is already a push towards the configuration of a European-wide digital economy closely linked with China. The aim would be a Rifkin-esque digitally integrated economic space spanning Eurasia, which in turn would be an essential building block for that post-carbon third industrial revolution.

The G20 this year was in Antalya, Turkey, and it was a fractious affair dominated by Islamic State jihadism in the streets of Paris. The G20 in 2016 will be in Hangzhou, China, which also happens to be the hometown of Jack Ma and the headquarters for Alibaba. You can't get more third industrial revolution than that.

One year is an eternity in geopolitics. But what if, in 2016, Hangzhou did indeed offer a vision of the future, of silk roads galore and night trains from Central Asia to Duisburg, Germany, a future arguably dominated by Xi's vision. He is, at least, keen on enshrining the G20 as a multipolar global mechanism for coordinating a common development framework. Within it, Washington and Beijing might sometimes actually work together in a world in which chess, not Battle-ship, would be the game of the century.

Thucydides, eat your heart out. **CT**

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An era ends

The last underground coal mine in Britain closes this month. **Granville Williams** tells why the industry's history and heritage are so important

By mid-December, the last coal will be mined at Kellingley Pit in Yorkshire, England, and the remaining miners made redundant. Below ground are enough coal reserves for the mine to remain open until the 2030s, but by next March the pit shafts will have been sealed with concrete, and this will mark the definitive end of underground coal mining in the United Kingdom.

In 1947, when the 958 largest pits were taken into public ownership, coal supplied 90 per cent of the UK's energy and more than 700,000 men worked in the industry. For anyone who has lived and worked in coal mining areas this is not only a time for nostalgia, but also for cold anger at the way, through brutal political decisions or government inertia, an industry has been destroyed over three decades and whole communities put on the rack of dereliction and unemployment.

Most mining communities were absolutely dependent on the pit for employment and to sustain the local economy. Villages were created around the coal mines, which nurtured socialist politics, trade unionism, clubs, brass bands and sporting activities, and a strong sense of community. There is a rich literature about this across the UK coalfields from Wales through to Scotland, with distinctive patterns of life and social organisation in



Remembering the dead: The memorial at Kellingley Colliery in Yorkshire.

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each of the coalfields.

In the north-east we see this in the former Great Northern Coalfield of Northumberland and Durham, where the last mine, Ellington in Northumberland, closed in January, 2005. This was the region which, at its height, had 200 pits. The Road to Jericho, by William Bell, an account of life and work in the Durham coalfield produced what Sid Chaplin, the novelist and short story writer, describes in his introduction as, "Not only the best

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account I have ever come across on this subject, it is also the most closely detailed narrative of how pit-folk lived, thought, worked and felt during the period from the turn of the century onwards to the mid-twenties and the great collapse of the depression.”

The book is an essential text that vividly describes life and work in a mining community, and gives a clear insight into why miners engaged in such a long and bitter struggle against avaricious coal owners to build a union and to defend their wages and working conditions.

Robert Saint worked at Hebburn Colliery, near Jarrow in County Durham, and composed the miners' hymn, Gresford, after a 1934 explosion at Gresford Colliery, North Wales, killed 266 men and boys. The hymn has been played at every Durham Miners' Gala since 1936.

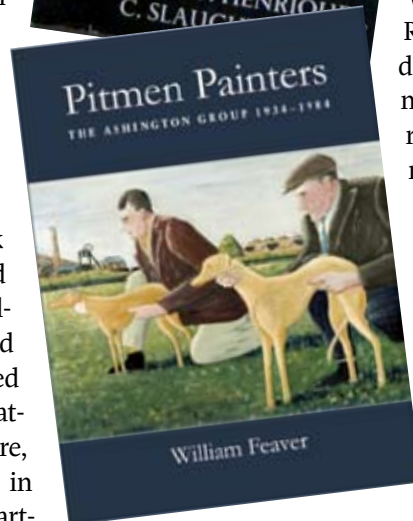
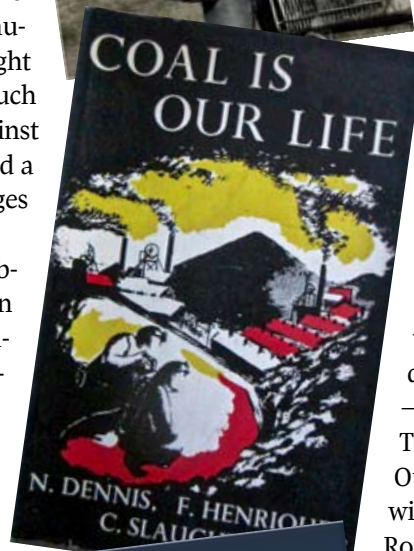
An evening class, started in the early 1930s, in Ashington, Northumberland, for miners keen to learn about art, and the work of the men who attended – artists such as Oliver Kilbourn, George Brownrigg and George Blessed, who captured work at the coalface and patterns of family life and leisure, are a moving record of life in a mining community. The artists were the subject of *Pitmen Painters: The Ashington Group 1934-1984*, by William Feaver, and also Lee Hall's play, *The Pitmen Painters*.

The event that bonded scat-

tered mining communities with their National Union of Mining (NUM) lodge banners and brass bands, was the Gala, first organised in 1871, in the city of Durham. It is a testimony to the bitter struggles by the miners that the Gala was cancelled in 1921, 1922, 1926, and 1984, because of strikes and lock-outs. The only other cancellations were during the two world wars. It's ironic that, in July 2015, as the last three pits in the UK (Thoresby, Hatfield and Kellingley) were under threat, 150,000 people attended the Gala, the largest attendance for many years.

The classic book, *Coal Is Our Life*, published in 1956 with a striking cover by Rosamund Seymour, was dedicated “To the Yorkshire mineworker.” *Coal Is Our Life* revealed a cohesive community, an ordered world in which trade unionism had a crucial social role that was not just narrowly focused on industrial relations.

The book, written by social anthropologists Norman Dennis and Fernando Henriques and the sociologist Cliff Slaughter, details, the work of the miners, trade unionism, leisure and the family in the mining town of “Ashton,” which depicted the real town of Featherstone, situated in what was then the dense industrial area



Mining reads: *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Coal is Our Life*, and *Pitmen Painters*, all available at amazon.co.uk

of the West Riding of Yorkshire. I remember the prosperous town, population around 14,000, in the 1960s, with its bustling high street and shops. As well as the Miners' Welfare (described in *Coal Is Our Life* as "by far the biggest building in Ashton") there were big barns of pubs such as The Jubilee, which would be packed with miners on weekends. We used to sell the Socialist Labour League paper, the *Newsletter*, in them on a Saturday night, competing with the Salvation Army's *War Cry*.

The town had drawn national attention in September 1893, when the miners were on strike against what one paper described as, "the abrupt and tactless demand of the coal-owners for a heavy wage reduction." Protests by the miners led to the authorities calling for troops to be sent to Featherstone, and 54 men of the 1st Battalion of the South Staffordshire Regiment arrived on the afternoon of September 7. Their presence angered the miners, and, when confronted by an angry crowd, the Riot Act was read, and the troops opened fire, killing two miners. A sculpture, to mark the centenary of the Featherstone Massacre, stands in the shopping precinct.

Rugby League played a key role in the town and Featherstone Rovers was prominent in the 1969 documentary, *The Game That Got Away*. "In Featherstone, they mine coal and play rugby league," the commentator, Roger Mills, observes as the film cuts to Ackton Hall's extensive pit-top winding gear. The documentary reveals that half the Rovers team were miners, up at 5 a.m. to go down the pit, and playing for an £8 win bonus, which would give them £15 for their efforts. In 1995, Rupert Murdoch, in a deal with the Rugby Football League, paid £87-million to create a Super League and shift the game from winter to summer (so that it played parallel to the game in Australia). There was fierce opposition to the initial proposals, one of which was to merge Wakefield Trinity, Featherstone Rovers and Castleford, traditional rivals with more than 100 years of history into one team

called Calder, the name of the river that runs through Wakefield. Despite the protests, the change was made.

Ian Clayton captures something of the quality of the people of Featherstone, in his book, *Bringing It All Back Home*: "My gran's family were farmers' labourers who stood in the squares of little Yorkshire market towns while potential employers felt at their muscles before hiring them. The family at some point in Victorian times gravitated to the coal towns to find work digging under the ground they had once ploughed. My gran had four uncles who were all killed in the World War I before they were 25. She had two brothers who left the mines for the second war and never came home. During the miners' strike, Margaret Thatcher called miners and their families 'the enemy within.' My granddad swung his boot at the television and refused to ever watch the news again. He stuck to his word. In the last five years of his life, the five that fell outside of his 40 down the pit and six in the army at El Alamein and Monte Casino, he only watched snooker."

Kellingley Pit, the 'Big K', is near Knottingley in West Yorkshire. It was Britain's first 'super pit', producing more than one-million tonnes of coal a year after it opened in April, 1965. At its peak, it employed more than 2,500 people and had a big impact on the town.

The miners' social club in Knottingley was built by miners making weekly donations of nine-pence. The club was an ambitious project, even for a pit the size of Kellingley, driven by Jimmy Miller, the NUM branch secretary, a Communist party member, and gifted orator. He wanted miners to have access to education, books, quality entertainment, and sporting and leisure facilities. At the beginning of the 1984-85 miners' strike, the club had reserves of £30,000, but, a year later, there were debts of £150,000. This was because the club was the centre of activity during the strike, feeding pickets and the families of striking miners, serving hundreds of meals a day, seven days a week.

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Granville Williams
is the author of
*Settling Scores:
The Police, the
Media and the
Miners' Strike
and Big Media &
Internet Titans:
Media Ownership
-The Democratic
Challenge, both
available from
www.cpbf.org.uk*

The miners agreed, after the strike, to donate 50-pence a week out of their pay to clear the debt.

The club is still there.

Jimmy Miller also used the co-operative buying power of the miners and their families to buy consumer goods at huge discounts. If a Kellingley miner wanted a new TV, or a washer, or a set of car tyres, he went to the union co-operative run by the NUM officials. Miners paid a small weekly sum to the union, so the bill was paid gradually. The Kellingley co-operative operation was so large that the union branch had its own warehouse at the pithead. The profits from this activity went to support the annual holiday of retired miners, wives and widows in Blackpool.

The warehouse was closed by the management during the 1984-85 miners' strike.

As I write this, the news is of a big protest demonstration in Scunthorpe against steel closures taking place up and down the country. Some former miners, bitter over the

failure of steelworkers to support them during the 1984-85 strike, see this as "payback" time. But the fate of the steelworkers parallels that of the mining communities after the pit closures. When the steel plant in Redcar was mothballed in October this year, 2,200 jobs at the plant went, and the local economy began to disintegrate. Jobs will be lost amongst the suppliers of parts to the plant, the outside engineers who did the servicing, the port workers and hauliers, the cafes and shops. Days after the closure, one of Teeside's biggest employment agencies went into liquidation.

So, let's mark the end of UK coal mining, not in a romanticised way, for the world of mining was never idyllic. But the very nature of their often difficult and dangerous work meant that miners developed a distinct sense of camaraderie and brotherhood, with everybody looking after each other. Dennis Clayton, a former miner from Bolsover Colliery in North Derbyshire, sums it up: "The miners; there will never be another group

like them. They were brilliant men."

Their year-long strike in defence of jobs and communities, and the amazing work of Women Against Pit Closures, inspired tremendous national and international solidarity. It continues to inspire today.

To modify the words of Albert Camus, writing about the Spanish Civil War: "Men and women learned that one can be right and yet be beaten, that force can defeat spirit, that there are times when courage is not its own reward." **CT**

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Saturday Night Low with the Donald

A poem by **Philip Kraske**

When I saw the Donald on ol' SNL,
I verily wondered what in the hell?
Of course I'd heard the idea'd been hatched,
But due to Mex pressure would surely get scratched.
Only rednecks say he might be The Man,
With the tie, the hair, and 10-foot mouth-span.

But at NBC there was dough to be made,
And Trump pulled numbers that would easy put
paid,
To doubts of another lucrative season,
Ratings that quashed the power of reason.
Yeah, he's a racist, but our best guys are on it.
They'll pour buckets of laughs and just drown it.

So a comic let loose a milky dumb joke,
'Bout making five long giving Don a good poke.
And Trump replied kindly that he understood,
Since a buck from wherever is a buck to the good.
Hence the race issue got turned into camp,
Easily ignored like a fly or a tramp.

Outside in the cold the Mexies raised Caine:
The humor with them did not translate plain.
They deserved better'n that poorly-lit clip,
Of them marching calmly and giving no lip.
They got no attention, no cash-in-hand deal,
Just two seconds' news and the anchorman's squeal.

But such is the change in our common weal:
So long as it's Mexies, it's just no big deal.
Imagine if Trump had said rapists are black,
Blacks who speak English and know for a fact,
That you can't trash them and with it get 'way,
Without half the earth and Barack cut your hay.

Back in the sixties Trump's drive would have tanked
The moment he said that José should be spanked.
Not a show in the world would've shown his face,
And quickly would he have dropped from the race.
But nowadays bigotry gets smoothed and effaced,
As SNL shows, cold cash now Trumps taste. **CT**

Philip Kraske lives in Madrid, Spain, where he teaches English on a freelance basis and does some translation.

His four novels, of varied plots but centring on American politics and society, began to appear in 2009.

His website is <http://philipkraske.com>

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WRITING WORTH READING | PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

War-hungry
Western
leaders
demand
more war.
But will it
save lives?
Is it legal?
Does it make
sense?

AFTER
PARIS:
WHAT NEXT?

PETER CERTO JOHN W. WHITEHEAD

LA, WINGNUTS AND WATER | STACEY WARDE
MORE DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE | ANN JONES
TACK - IS THIS TOTAL WAR? | BARRY LANDO

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PHOTOS WORTH SEEING



INDIANA
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ISSUE 106

WILL
JUSTICE
EVER
CATCH UP
WITH
TONY
BLAIR?

Felicity Arbuthnot on the latest
evidence that implicates the former
British PM in the lies that led to
disaster in the Middle East