

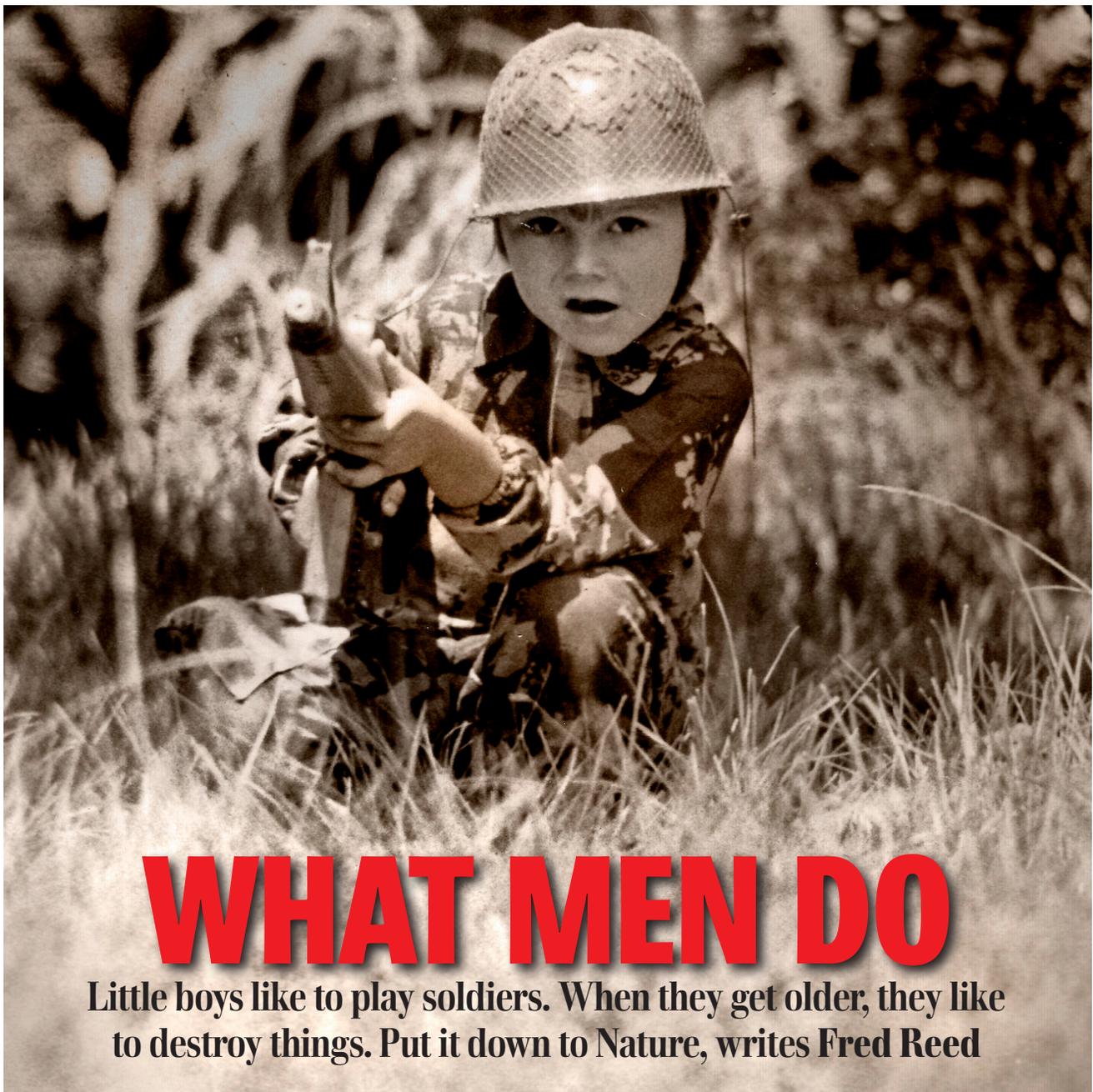
**IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF NEAL CASSADY'S GHOST | JOE BAGEANT  
PUSSY RIOT & AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL | DIANA JOHNSTONE  
A NATION AT WAR WITH ITSELF | JOHN W. WHITEHEAD**

OCTOBER 2012

# **ColdType**

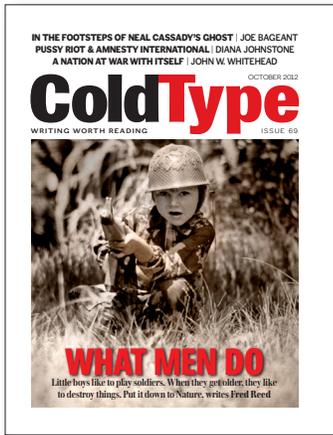
WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 69



## **WHAT MEN DO**

Little boys like to play soldiers. When they get older, they like to destroy things. Put it down to Nature, writes Fred Reed



Cover Photo:  
JRS Archive

# ColdType

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Editor: Tony Sutton – [editor@coldtype.net](mailto:editor@coldtype.net)

# A nation at war with itself

John W. Whitehead takes a close look at the politics of fear

*“Fear is the foundation of most governments”  
– John Adams*

**T**urn on the TV or flip open the newspaper on any given day, and you will find yourself accosted by reports of government corruption, corporate malfeasance, militarized police and marauding SWAT teams. America is entering a new phase, one in which children are arrested in schools, military veterans are forcibly detained by government agents because of the content of their Facebook posts, and law-abiding Americans are being subjected to the latest in government spy technology.

These threats to our freedoms are not to be underestimated. Yet even more dangerous than these violations of our basic rights is the language they are couched in – the language of fear. It is a language spoken effectively by politicians on both sides of the aisle, shouted by media pundits from their cable TV pulpits, marketed by corporations, and codified into bureaucratic laws that do little to make our lives safer or more secure.

This language of fear has given rise to a politics of fear whose only aim is to distract and divide us. In this way, we have been discouraged from thinking analytically and believing that we have any part to play in solving the problems before us. Instead, we

have been conditioned to point the finger at the other Person or vote for this Politician or support this Group, because they are the ones who will fix it. Except that they can't and won't fix the problems plaguing our communities.

No amount of freedom has ever been won by sitting back and watching things play out, or by voting for a certain person, or giving money to a certain group. Freedom is won through action, not just in terms of nonviolent protest or petition (which are vital), but in terms of daily interactions with friends and neighbors, discussing the issues and how best to equip communities to deal with daily challenges. Freedom is won most effectively by taking a stand, starting at the local level, whether it's challenging the influx of profit-driven red light cameras at street intersections, taking issue with a school board decision that sends a message to young people that they have no rights, or demanding that local police de-militarize.<sup>14</sup>

These small acts of rebellion are what win us our rights. Yet as information technology rapidly advances and mindless entertainment proliferates, this type of “free” thinking is being squelched. In the absence of individuals who will stand up for themselves and their freedoms, it is all too easy for the politics of fear to gain traction. Having abdicated our responsibilities as citizens, we have ceded power to bureaucrats

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and government officials who, with our tacit approval, continue to dismantle our basic rights while providing an illusion of safety and security. This lack of ownership and willingness to engage in self-government on the part of the American people has, in turn, given rise to the rapid militarization of the police over the past 40 years, the criminalization of non-threatening activities such as gathering with friends and family in the privacy of one's home for prayer and worship, the surveillance dragnet which now tracks virtually every American, and the general sense that we no longer have any control over our government

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**War on Drugs**  
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A perfect example of this masterful use of the politics of fear to cow the populace is the government's War on Drugs. Reputedly a response to crime and poverty in inner cities and suburbia, it has been the driving force behind the militarization of the police, at all levels, over the past 40 years. While it has failed to decrease drug use, it has exacerbated social problems by expanding America's rapidly growing prison system and allowing police carte blanche access to our homes and personal property. ....

**Undeterred by its failure to check drug use, the governmental machine keeps chugging along. Consider that in 2011, half a billion dollars' worth of military equipment flowed from the military to local police, with another \$400 million worth of equipment reaching local police by May 2012. In addition to direct transfers of equipment, the federal government has given local police departments grants totaling \$34 billion since 9/11. The 50-person police department in Oxford, Alabama, for example, has acquired \$3 million worth of equipment, including M-16s, infrared goggles, and an armored vehicle. All of these new toys lead to specious SWAT team raids that eviscerate the Fourth**

**Amendment, acclimating us to the vision of police in jackboots with assault rifles patrolling our streets.**

Enter the War on Terror, the logical end-point of constructing government policy based upon fear and paranoia. Marked by constant surveillance, torture, kidnapping, extrajudicial killing by our government, and the resulting loss of our basic rights, the War on Terror is the culmination of a mentality of fear cultivated by the political elite and willingly accepted by the American people.

A case in point is the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in the aftermath of 9/11. Supposedly tasked with protecting the American homeland from terrorist threats, DHS has become more of a domestic army than a security agency.

For example, in March 2012, defense contractor ATK agreed to produce 450 million hollow point rounds to be used by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office. DHS placed another order for 750 million rounds of various ammunition in August 2012.

DHS is just one of many aspects of a total militarization of government which has been taking place since the 1980s and rapidly advancing since 9/11. Consider that in August 2012, the Social Security Administration (SSA) placed an order for 174,000 rounds of hollow point ammunition. The SSA plans to send the ammunition to 41 locations throughout the United States, including major cities such as Los Angeles, Detroit, and Philadelphia, among others.

It's unclear why the SSA would need hollow point bullets, which are designed to explode upon entry into the body, causing massive organ damage. However, it's worth noting that DHS and SSA have already collaborated in police exercises. In January 2012, Federal Protective Service officers with DHS conducted a training exercise at the

SSA office in Leesburg, Florida. One officer carrying a semi-automatic assault rifle randomly checked IDs as people filed into the building, while other officers combed the building with K-9 units. The exercise was part of the larger Operation Shield, which, according to DHS officials, involves federal officers randomly showing up to government buildings throughout the country in order to test the effectiveness of their security procedures

DHS and SSA aren't the only agencies beefing up their ammunition stockpiles. In August 2012, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which houses the National Weather Service, requested 46,000 hollow point bullets to be sent to locations in Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Florida, as well as 500 paper targets. The NOAA later released a statement claiming that the ammunition is intended for the Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement which is entrusted to "enforce[e] laws that conserve and protect our nation's living marine resources and their natural habitat."

**Violence against farmers**

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and its state level counterparts are also becoming militarized. Consider the increasingly violent campaign against raw milk farmers in recent years. In April 2008, Mark Nolt, a Mennonite raw milk farmer, was arrested in a raid on his property involving six state troopers and a representative of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. In April 2010, Dan Allyger, an Amish raw milk farmer in Pennsylvania, was subjected to a predawn raid conducted by agents from the FDA, US Marshals, and a state trooper.

These police exercises are the result of government policies engineered to maximize fear and paranoia. Yet they are only possible because of the acquiescence of the American people to all government programs relating to "security" since 9/11. Despite the fact that violent crime rates are low, and terrorist attacks are radically unlikely (in fact, one is more likely to die in a car wreck or be struck by lightning than be killed by a terrorist), we are seeing government agencies "protecting" us by harassing, arresting, and sometimes killing our friends and neighbors, all in the name of security. This is the inertia of government bureaucracy. Created during moments of fear, such agencies and the corporate entities that benefit from them always resist change once a citizenry gathers their senses and demands are made for the restoration of free government.

Thus, fear is the root of the problem. The only thing which will improve our present condition is the taming of our fear. We must act on courage. Courage to think differently, speak loudly, and challenge directly the systems which we know to be unjust. Voting will do precious little to circumvent the politics of fear which Democrats and Republicans use to justify their attacks on our personal liberties.

As author Mark Vernon has noted, "... the politics of fear plays on an assumption that people cannot bear the uncertainties associated with [risk]. Politics then becomes a question of who can better deliver an illusion of control."

**CT**

*John W. Whitehead is an attorney and author who has written, debated and practiced widely in the area of constitutional law and human rights.*

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# Those protests: Look behind the propaganda

Deepa Kimar analyses the real reasons behind the violence in Benghazi

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What is a political clash is turned instead into a cultural conflict and the “clash of civilizations” between the secular West and the religious and backward “Muslim world”  
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Protests that began outside US diplomatic institutions over the vile and racist film “Innocence of Muslims” in Egypt and Libya have spread across the world from Bangladesh and India to Iran, Iraq and Morocco.

The mainstream media in the US, from Fox to NPR, have framed these protests through the simplistic lens of “anti-American violence in the Muslim world.” This framing communicates an entire world view that is taken for granted.

First, it discredits protest against the US by painting them as violent. This focus on violence, and on the sensational, allows the media to conveniently skip over the complex reasons why people in the Middle East, South Asia and North Africa might be angry with the US.

The racist film which portrays the Prophet Muhammad as a womanizer, a pedophile, a bumbling idiot, and a bloodthirsty fanatic and anti-Semite, is the tip of the iceberg. It has become a symbol of the disrespect with which the US holds people in Muslim majority countries, and has brought to the fore deep-seated grievances against how the US conducts itself in the Middle East and elsewhere. Yet, this complexity is elided in favor of simplistic explanations and caricatures.

Second, by using the term “Muslim world” the media invite us to look at people in Muslim majority societies primarily

through the lens of religion. While sections of the demonstrators are there to express outrage at the film, the focus on Islamist involvement in the protests to the exclusion of other voices casts this as a religious rather than a political confrontation. Thus, the protestors are presented not as political actors but religious zealots.

Third, what follows from this is that the US can be presented as an innocent victim, a misunderstood champion of democratic rights, secularism, and free speech, of the irrational fanaticism that we have come to expect from “those Muslims.”

In short, what is a political clash is turned instead into a cultural conflict and the “clash of civilizations” between the secular West and the religious and backward “Muslim world.”

Speaking about the Libya attacks, Hillary Clinton lamented, “I ask myself, how could this happen? How could this happen in a country we helped liberate, in a city we helped save from destruction?”

.....  
**Same question**

Fully 11 years after the events of 9/11 the same question is being asked about why people in the Middle East might be angry with the US, and the same ridiculous explanations are on offer – it is a clash of values, a clash of civilizations.

In 2001 George Bush explained “why they hate us” in this way, they hate “a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.”

Last month, Clinton said, “All over the world, every day, America’s diplomats and development experts risk their lives in the service of our country and our values, because they believe that the United States must be a force for peace and progress in the world, that these aspirations are worth striving and sacrificing for. Alongside our men and women in uniform, they represent the best traditions of a bold and generous nation.”

The difference between the two it seems is that the “clash of civilization” rhetoric has developed in these 11 years from a supposed hatred of our freedoms right here to a hatred of our soldiers and diplomats over there.

What has also changed is that the “self-appointed leaders” that Bush refers to have faced challenges from the uprisings begun in 2011. US-backed dictators in Tunisia and Egypt were swept from power by people’s movements and a reluctant US went along with the changes, backing counter-revolutionary forces in an attempt to control the outcome.

You wouldn’t know that to hear the buyer’s remorse for supposed US support of the “Arab Spring.” The protests today are being presented as the inevitable outcome of an unruly people when the iron hand of the dictator has been removed. The logic of course is that “some people are just not ready for democracy.”

At first, Clinton in an effort to win Arab public opinion stated that the Libya attacks were the work of “a small and savage” group, and that Libyans in general are good. The familiar lines were redrawn between “good Muslims” and “bad Muslims” and a slew of “good Muslims” were trotted out on

television to sing praises to the US efforts to “bring democracy” to the “Muslim world” and to apologize for the acts of the fundamentalists.

The formula is so predictable it might as well be a soap opera.

The second episode of the soap focused on distancing the film “Innocence of Muslims” from American values. Clinton stated that “the United States government had absolutely nothing to do with this video. We absolutely reject its content and message.”

**Crazed fanatics?**

The White House then asked Google, the owner of youtube, to “review” its posting of the film. The assumption here is that when Muslims watch such caricatures of their religion they leap up like crazed fanatics and go out and kill people and destroy property. After all, they are not civilized enough to appreciate our values of free speech.

So what begins with a focus on “bad Muslim” and “savages,” then becomes generalized to the childlike population that must be protected from themselves. As the poet Rudyard Kipling put it over a century ago, the colonized is “half devil, half child.” The “half child” must be taught to appreciate our civilized values.

As the liberal commentator E J. Dionne put it on NPR, “I think this situation is particularly complicated for our country because we believe both in free speech, even for vile speech, but we also believe in religious toleration and respect for the faiths and non-faith of others. And I think we have a problem because a lot of people in Muslim countries aren’t used to a government that doesn’t have to approve all speech.”

What gets omitted from this picture is that “Innocence of Muslims” is a product of the far right in the US. It is not an anomaly in an otherwise secular and tolerant nation. Rather, it joins a slew of similar films produced by a well-funded Islamophobic network such as the “Third Jihad” which

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**The far right everywhere has a proclivity to burn things down and kill people it seems, but don't expect to see this framework in the mainstream media**  
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was shown to NYPD recruits as part of their training.

Steve Klein, the main producer of the film, is an anti-Muslim bigot who as, Max Blumenthal writes, has emerged from the same axis of Islamophobia that produced Anders Breivik, the Norwegian terrorist. There is a well-funded international network of anti-Muslim groups that is just as vile as the Islamic fundamentalists.

In the US, the Islamophobic network has attacked mosques and incited fear and hatred. Just last month a mosque in Joplin, Mo was burned to the ground and six Sikhs in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, were killed by a neo-Nazi. Since 2010 there has been a 50% increase in anti-Muslim hate crimes.

The far right everywhere has a proclivity to burn things down and kill people it seems, but don't expect to see this framework in the mainstream media. While there will be continued reporting on the shady dealings of the people involved in the production of this anti-Muslim film, we are unlikely to see systematic coverage of the far right in the US, much less a reference to these vile people as "savages."

That would upset the soap opera formula because then the land of liberty, free speech, democracy and apple pie would be just as complex a society as Muslim majority countries where a range of political attitudes occupy the spectrum.

It would mean admitting that there are extremists right here who stand for more or less the same things that the Islamic fundamentalists stand for.

The Southern Poverty Law Center reported that there are over 1000 far right hate groups in the US.

But the protests in the Middle East and North Africa since the Libya incident, however, should not be reduced to a "clash of fundamentalisms" either. It is not simply the US far right provoking the Islamist far right to respond. Rather, thousands who have come out to demonstrate against US embassies and diplomatic missions in

the region are expressing their frustration against the part the US has played in proping up counter-revolutionary forces in the region.

When the Arab uprisings began in late 2010 and early 2011, the US believed that their dictator ally Mubarak would hold on to power and the Obama administration didn't take a position against Mubarak and even stood by him. After the first rounds of protests, Clinton emphasized the need for an "orderly" and "peaceful" transition. In other words, time for the US to find a suitable pro-US replacement for Mubarak.

While the Obama administration rhetorically welcomed the "Arab spring," the strategy was to control the outcome of the uprisings so that the example of Tunisia and Egypt, and the model of mass uprising for social change, would be limited to the Spring of 2011. Even the name for the uprisings calls for temporal containment.

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**Support for counter-revolution**

The US has consequently supported the forces of counter-revolution. In 2011, the US sent three shipments of weapons to the Egyptian military that were used to lethally attack protestors. It has also stood by the counter revolutionary efforts of its allies - Saudi Arabia and Qatar. In Bahrain, the US's fifth fleet turned the other way when Saudi troops drenched the uprising there in blood.

This is not the first time the US has played such a role. In the 1950s workers struggles in Saudi Arabia were defeated by the Saudi monarchy with the help of the American oil company, ARAMCO. A "free princes" movement to bring about very rudimentary democratic reforms in that country was similarly squelched with US assistance.

Democracy and oil don't go together as far as the US elite is concerned, as the CIA coup to depose the democratically elected Iranian head of state Muhammad Mossadegh shows.

Could this history of US involvement be behind the anger and the protests that have swept the region? Such an explanation is scant in the mainstream. While the *New York Times* would admit that the “broadening of the protests appeared to reflect a pent-up resentment of Western powers in general” on its front page story on Sept 15th, the images that cover more than half the page are of angry bearded Muslim men, fire and ashes, and burning US flags.

Reminiscent of the coverage of the 1979 Iranian revolution, political actors with legitimate grievances are reduced to angry Islamic mobs. Yet again Clinton provided the talking points.

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**Controlling the protests**

Episode three of the unfolding soap involved an attempt to control the spread of protests. The US sent troops to Yemen and Sudan, with Clinton stating that the “people of Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Tunisia did not trade the tyranny of a dictator for the tyranny of a mob,” distancing the protestors from the rest of the population who are to be “rescued” by the US.

She also called on the “good Muslims” to act. As she put it, “Reasonable people and responsible leaders in these countries need to do everything they can to restore security and hold accountable those behind these violent acts.” What it means to be “reasonable” is to shut up and fall in line behind the US.

Perhaps she misses Mubarak, whom she has referred to in the past as a “family friend,” and who would have known how to use ruthless violence and torture to subdue political dissent.

Also absent from mainstream media discussion is the part played the US in funding, arming and training Islamists during the Cold War. The Holy Warriors who fought the US proxy war against the Soviet Union in the 1980s were assembled and trained by the CIA and Pakistani ISI. The key recruiter to the Afghan war was none other than Osama bin Laden, a valued CIA asset, who would go on to form al Qaeda.

Yet, there is nary a peep about the part played by the US in strengthening these forces.

Eleven years after 9/11, the media are still asking the same question: why do they hate us? And same tired answer is being provided, but this time by the liberal imperialists wielding the “clash of civilizations” rhetoric with perhaps greater skill than their neocon predecessors.

**CT**

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*Deepa Kumar is an Associate Professor of Media Studies and Middle East Studies at Rutgers University.*

*Her website is <http://deepakumar.net> She is currently working on two book projects. The first is on Islamophobia and brings together, and extends, her many articles on this topic. The second is on Political Islam, US foreign policy and the media.*

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# The questions not being asked

America reaps the whirlwind, China gets the trade, writes **Barry Lando**

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**And, while the US has been lavishing hundreds of billions on bases, the Chinese have been buying up mineral deposits, land, forests, petroleum, inking construction contracts for huge infrastructure projects**  
.....

**A**part from Mitt Romney's ridiculous slur against President Obama following the murder of a US Ambassador Chris Stevens, Americans should be focusing on a much more formidable question:

When was the last time a Chinese diplomat was murdered or even roughed up by an angry mob? When did you least hear about a Chinese embassy burned down or pillaged? We'll be back to that question.

From Morocco and Tunisia to Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Iraq, anti-American crowds have taken to the streets. The outpouring of hatred is symptomatic of the fact that across much of North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia American policy is in tatters. Probably more than ever before.

The region is strewn with the wreckage of failed US ambitious and disastrous American plans. Incredibly though, even as the US surveys the shambles of Libya, there are still Americans pushing for the United States to intervene in Syria's bloody civil war. (In fact, for months now, the US. And some of its Arab allies have been clandestinely doing just that.)

Even the Prime Minister of Israel, supposedly America's most valuable ally in the region, makes political points by sticking his finger in the eye of the American President.

The reason for America's obsession with this part of the world, we've heard for years,

is that its trade routes and resources are critical to US interests.

But hold on – that may once have been true, but, as things stand now, those trade routes and resources are even more crucial to China than to America. China, for instance, gets a greater percentage of its oil through the vital Straights of Hormuz – upon which the US spends billions to patrol – than does the United States.

And, while the US has been lavishing hundreds of billions on bases, the Chinese have been spending their huge wad across Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia buying up mineral deposits, land, forests, petroleum, inking construction contracts for huge infrastructure projects, as well as opening up vast new markets.

Where are the Chinese troops to protect all this? Where are the sprawling Chinese naval and air bases, their drones, killer teams and special forces? Not needed, thanks, the US is handling security.

Which makes for some sad ironies. The fact, for instance, that the murdered US Ambassador Chris Stevens had spent months aiding the Libyan rebels during their uprising against Khadhafi – while China was one of the last major allies to continue supporting the dictator. Yet the Chinese are back in Libya wheeling and dealing for construction contracts and oil.

Meanwhile, next door in Egypt, newly

elected President Mohammed Morsi, whose country, mind you, continues to receive more than a billion dollars in aid from the United States, judged he had more to gain by joining in attacks against the US, than by cooling the popular passions. And where was his first trip abroad after winning the election? To China.

Yet China would seem a very appropriate target for Muslim anger.

The US may have invaded Muslim countries, but for decades China has been brutally persecuting and repressing millions of its own Muslim minorities, such as the Uighars in Northwest China.

But how many furious crowds have taken to the streets in Muslim lands to protest the plight of the Uighars? How many have even heard of them? How many Muslim leaders who are lambasting the United States because of an off-the wall film that the US government had absolutely nothing to do with? How many of them have ever uttered a single word of public protest against China?

That's not to say the Chinese are beloved in the region. There've been violent, sometimes bloody, protests against their labor and trade practices. But nothing that compares in scale and depth to the hatred and

suspicion of the United States throughout the region.

The current outcry over a film insulting Mohammed is just the tip of an emotional iceberg. Underneath it all are more than half a century of Western and American interventions in the region, as well as the US's continued support of Israel.

While the US has spent huge sums trying to overthrow regimes, punish perceived enemies, prevent nuclear proliferation (except in Israel), and shape the outcome of the new political forces that are roiling the area, the Chinese have had their eyes fixed on one objective only – getting hold of vital natural resources to fuel their ravenous economy, finding new markets for their products and mammoth projects for their construction companies.

Why can't the US do the same?

That's the kind of basic questions that American should be discussing in the wake of the killing of the US Ambassador, as they go about electing a new President.

But don't count on it. **CT**

*Barry Lando is the author of "Web of Deceit, the History of Western Complicity in Iraq, from Churchill to Kennedy to George W. Bush."*

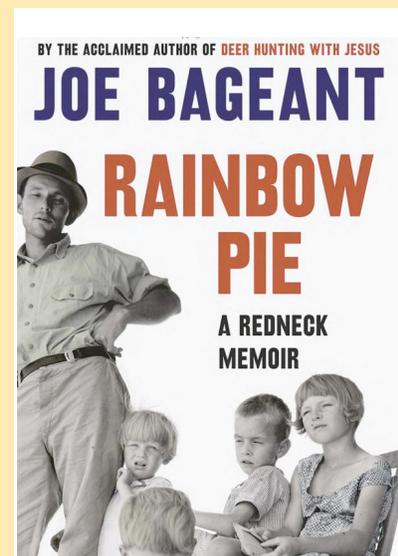
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## JOE BAGEANT

### Rainbow Pie: A Redneck Memoir

Bageant writes about the rural white underclass, not as an anthropological study of an exotic tribe, but as his very own people. Set between 1950 and 1963, combining personal recollections, family stories, and historical analysis, this book leans on Maw, Pap, Ony Mae, and other members of this dirt poor Scots-Irish family to chronicle the often heartbreaking postwar journey of 22 million rural Americans moving from their small subsistence farms into the cities, where they became the foundation of a permanent white underclass.

**\$11.51** Amazon.com



# Why the Middle East exploded, really

The Muhammad video was just a spark that ignited a long-smouldering fire in the Middle East, says **Ray McGovern**

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Ignoring the albatross of tarnished credentials hanging around Ajami's neck, the *Post* apparently saw him as just the right academician to put perspective on the violence in Middle East capitals  
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**W**hy Is the Arab world so easily offended?" asks the headline atop an article by Fouad Ajami, which the *Washington Post* published online to give perspective to the recent anti-American violence in Muslim capitals.

While the *Post* described Ajami simply as a "senior fellow" at Stanford's conservative Hoover Institution, Wikipedia gives a more instructive perspective on his checkered career and dubious credibility.

An outspoken supporter of the war on Iraq, Ajami was still calling it a "noble effort" well after it went south. He is a friend and colleague of one of the war's intellectual authors, neocon Paul Wolfowitz, and also advised Condoleezza Rice. It was apparently Wolfowitz or Rice who fed Ajami's analyses to then-Vice President Dick Cheney, who cited Ajami's views repeatedly in speeches.

The most telling example of this came in Cheney's VFW address on August 26, 2002, in which the Vice President laid down the terms of reference for the planned attack on Iraq. Attempting to assuage concerns about the upcoming invasion, Cheney cited Ajami's analysis: "As for the reaction of the Arab 'street,' the Middle East expert Professor Fouad Ajami predicts that after liberation, the streets in Basra and Baghdad are 'sure to erupt in joy in the same

way the throngs in Kabul greeted the Americans.'"

In his writings, Ajami did warn, in a condescending way, that one could expect some "road rage ... of a thwarted Arab world - the congenital condition of a culture yet to take full responsibility for its self-inflicted wounds." He then added:

"There is no need to pay excessive deference to the political pieties and givens of the region. Indeed, this is one of those settings where a reforming foreign power's simpler guidelines offer a better way than the region's age-old prohibitions and defects."

.....  
**No One Better?**

Ignoring the albatross of tarnished credentials hanging around Ajami's neck, the *Post* apparently saw him as just the right academician to put perspective on the violence in Middle East capitals. As for his record of credibility? Well, who takes the trouble to go to Wikipedia for information on pundits?

Nor were the *Post's* editors going to take any chances that its newspaper readers might miss the benefit of Ajami's wisdom. So the *Post* gave pride of place to the same article in its Sunday *Outlook* section, as well. What the *Post* and other mainstream media want us to believe comes through

clearly in the title given to the article's jump portion, which dominated Page 5: "Why a YouTube trailer ignited Muslim rage."

Setting off the article were large, scary photos: on page one, a photo of men brandishing steel pipes to hack into the windows of the US embassy in Yemen; the page-5 photo showed a masked protester, as he "ran from a burning vehicle near the US embassy in Cairo."

So – to recapitulate – the *Post's* favored editorial narrative of the Mideast turmoil is that hypersensitive, anti-American Muslims are doing irrational stuff like killing US diplomats and torching our installations. This violence was the result of Arabs all too ready to take offense at a video trailer disrespectful of the Prophet. Nonetheless, it seems to be true that the trailer did have some immediate impact and will have more. According to an eyewitness, the 30 local guards who were supposed to protect the US consulate in Benghazi simply ran away as the violent crowd approached on Tuesday night.

Wissam Buhmeid, the commander of the Tripoli government-sanctioned Libya's Shield Brigade, effectively a police force for Benghazi, maintained that it was anger over the video trailer which made the guards abandon their post.

"There were definitely people from the security forces who let the attack happen because they were themselves offended by the film; they would absolutely put their loyalty to the Prophet over the consulate. The deaths are all nothing compared to insulting the Prophet."

**Pretext and Catalyst**

Predictably, Islamophobes and Muslim haters with influence over Western media coverage are citing the violence as the kind of "irrational" over-reaction that "exposes" Islam's intolerance and incompatibility with democratic values and demon-

strates that Islam is on a collision course with the West.

It is no surprise that Ajami gives no attention to the many additional factual reasons explaining popular outrage against the US and its representatives – reasons that go far deeper than a video trailer, offensive though it was. Ajami steers clear of the dismal effects of various US policies over the years on people across the Muslim world – in countries such as Iraq, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Tunisia, Libya, Afghanistan. (The list stretches as far as distant Indonesia, the most populous Muslim state.)

Last month's violence not only reflects the deep anger at and distrust of the US across the Islamic world, but also provides insight into the challenges posed by the power now enjoyed by the forces of extremism long held in check by the dictators toppled by last year's wave of revolutions.

Who are the main beneficiaries of misleading narratives like that of Ajami. He himself concedes, "It is never hard to assemble a crowd of young protesters in the teeming cities of the Muslim world. American embassies and consulates are magnets for the disgruntled."

So, does that mean the notorious video trailer is best regarded as a catalyst for the angry protests rather than the underlying cause? In other words, if the video served as the spark, who or what laid the kindling? Who profits from the narrative that neocons are trying so hard to embed in American minds?

Broad hints can be seen in the *Washington Post's* coverage over following days – including a long piece by its Editorial Board, "Washington's role amid the Mideast struggle for power," published the same day Ajami's article appeared online.

What the two have in common is that the word "Israel" appears in neither piece. One wonders how and why the *Post's* editors could craft a long editorial on the

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**One wonders how and why the *Post's* editors could craft a long editorial on the "Mideast struggle for power" – and give editorial prominence to Ajami's article – without mentioning Israel**  
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.....

“Mideast struggle for power” – and give editorial prominence to Ajami’s article – without mentioning Israel.

Presumably because the *Post*’s readers aren’t supposed to associate the fury on the Arab “street” with anger felt by the vast majority Arabs over what they see as US favoritism toward Israel and neglect for the plight of the Palestinians. The Israeli elephant, with the antipathy and resentment its policies engender, simply cannot be allowed into the discussion.

In the circumstances of last week, Israel may be less a centerpiece than the ugly Islamophobia that has found a home in America. But these factors tend to build on and reinforce each other. And the indignities suffered at the hand of Israel certainly has resonance is the larger context of Muslims who feel their religion and culture are under attack in a variety of ways.

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**“Why do they hate us?”**  
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During a live interview on Al-jazeera, I tried to inject some balance into the discussion. I noted that one key reason for the antipathy toward the US among Muslims is the close identification of the US with Israel and the widespread realization that support from Washington enables Israel’s policies of oppression and warmongering against the Palestinians and its regional neighbors.

As to “why they hate us,” I had time to recall three very telling things I had mentioned in an earlier article on this sensitive topic.

1 – From the 9/11 Commission Report of July 2004, page 147, regarding the motivation of alleged 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed: “By his own account, KSM’s animus toward the United States stemmed not from his experience there as a student, but rather from his violent disagreement with US foreign policy favoring Israel.”

2 – The mainstream-media-neglected

report from the Pentagon-appointed Defense Science Board, a report that took direct issue with the notion that they hate us for our freedom. Amazingly, in their Sept. 23, 2004, report to Rumsfeld, the DSB directly contradicted what Vice President Dick Cheney and President George W. Bush had been saying about “why they hate us.” Here’s part of what the DSB said:

“Muslims do not ‘hate our freedom,’ but rather, they hate our policies. The overwhelming majority voice their objections to what they see as one-sided support in favor of Israel and against Palestinian rights, and the longstanding, even increasing support for what Muslims collectively see as tyrannies, most notably Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Pakistan, and the Gulf States. Thus, when American public diplomacy talks about bringing democracy to Islamic societies, this is seen as no more than self-serving hypocrisy.”

The *New York Times* ignored the Defense Science Board’s startling explanation (as it has other references to the elephant plopped on the sofa). On Nov. 24, 2004, the erstwhile “newspaper of record” did publish a story on the board’s report – but performed some highly interesting surgery.

Thom Shanker of the *Times* quoted the paragraph beginning with “Muslims do not ‘hate our freedom”” (see above), but he or his editors deliberately cut out the following sentence about what Muslims do object to, i.e., US “one-sided support in favor of Israel and against Palestinian rights” and support for tyrannical regimes.

The *Times* then included the sentence immediately after the omitted one. In other words, it was not simply a matter of shortening the paragraph. Rather, the offending middle sentence was surgically removed.

Equally important – and equally missing – there is never any sensible examination of the motives that might be driving what Cheney called this “same assortment

of killers and would-be mass murderers [who] are still there.” We are left with Ajami’s image of hypersensitive or irrational Muslims unwilling to confront their own cultural failings.

3 – On May 21, 2009, just four months after he left office, Dick Cheney gave a speech at the neocon America Enterprise Institute and blurted out some uncharacteristic honesty. He explained why terrorists hate “all the things that make us a force for good in the world – for liberty, for human rights, for the rational, peaceful resolution of differences.”

However, no longer enjoying the services of a functionary to vet his rhetoric, Cheney slipped up (and so did the reporters covering the event). Expanding on the complaints of the terrorists, Cheney said:

“They have never lacked for grievances against the United States. Our belief in freedom of speech and religion ... our belief in equal rights for women ... our support for Israel (emphasis added) – these are the true sources of resentment.”

“Our support for Israel” – a true source of resentment. Cheney got that part right.

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**One brief shining moment**

My mind wandered back to June 2004, when former CIA analyst Michael Scheuer published his insightful book, *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror*. The book won him interviews with the likes of NBC’s Andrea Mitchell, and – to his credit – Scheuer rose to the occasion with candor rarely heard in mainstream media before or since.

On June 23, 2004, he told Mitchell, “It’s very hard in this country to debate policy regarding Israel ... bin Laden’s ‘genius’ lies in his ability to exploit those US policies most offensive to Muslims – our support for Israel, our presence on the Arabian peninsula, in Afghanistan and Iraq, our support for governments that Muslims believe oppress Muslims.”

Scheuer went on to say that bin Laden regarded the war on Iraq as proof of America’s hostility toward Muslims, and of the reality that America “is willing to do almost anything to defend Israel. The war is certainly viewed as an action meant to assist the Israeli state. It is ... a godsend for those Muslims who believe as bin Laden does.”

In an interview with ABC’s “This Week,” he added that failure to change American policies to better match realities in the Middle East could mean decades of war. Only if the American people learn the truth could more effective strategies be fashioned and implemented, he added.

By and large, the truth-telling did not happen, so there has been but negligible pressure from the American people. The situation today differs little from then.

Indeed, in the same time frame of Scheuer’s book, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld grappled publicly with a troubling “unknown” that followed along the same lines, i.e., “whether the extremists ... are turning out newly trained terrorists faster than the United States can capture or kill them. It is quite clear to me that we do not have a coherent approach to this.”

Since then, eight years have come and gone – with still no coherent approach and with continued media camouflaging of the bedrock reasons as to “why they hate us.”

Among the chief beneficiaries of this woodenheaded approach? One can look at the military-industrial-congressional-media-security complex, especially the war profiteers and their favored politicians who stoke fear of the “evildoers.” All the better to scare you with. **CT**

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**Ray McGovern** works with *Tell the Word*, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He served for 30 years as an Army intelligence officer and then a CIA analyst. He is co-founder of *Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS)*.

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**Eight years have come and gone – with still no coherent approach and with continued media camouflaging of the bedrock reasons as to “why they hate us”**  
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# ‘We see further into the future’

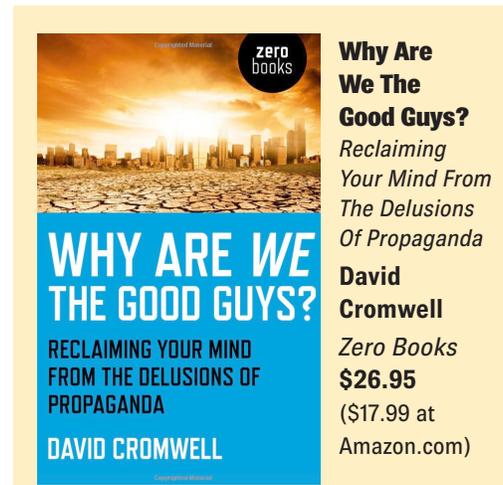
An excerpt from David Cromwell’s new book, *Why Are We The Good Guys? Regaining Your Mind From The Delusions Of Propaganda*

“Try naming a single American daily newspaper or TV network that was unequivocally against the US attacks on Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Panama, Grenada, and Vietnam. Or even against any two of them. How about one?”

In a remarkable study of how the huge Hollywood film industry perpetuates the myth of the US as a beacon of democracy and a force for good around the world, Matthew Alford notes that: “The concept of a benevolent US foreign policy emerges from the widespread historical belief in “American exceptionalism”, which describes the belief that the US is an extraordinary nation with a special role to play in human history; that is, America is not only unique but also superior among nations.”

As Alford points out, it was the nineteenth century French political thinker and historian Alexis de Tocqueville who was the first major figure to use ‘exceptional’ to describe the US and the American people, although the basic concept can be traced back to earliest colonial times with the idealistic Puritan vision of America as the ‘shining city on a hill.’

With characteristic insight, the US writer William Blum ‘wonders] if this sense of exceptionalism has been embedded anywhere more deeply than in the United States, where it is drilled into every cell and ganglion of American consciousness from kindergarten on. If we measure the degree of indoctrination (I’ll resist the temptation to use the word “brainwashing”) of a population as the gap between what the people believe their government has done in the world and what the actual (very sordid) facts are,



the American people are clearly the most indoctrinated people on the planet.’

Blum continues: ‘The role of the American media is of course indispensable to this process – Try naming a single American daily newspaper or TV network that was unequivocally against the US attacks on Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Panama, Grenada, and Vietnam. Or even against any two of them. How about one? Which of the mainstream media expressed real skepticism of The War on Terror in its early years?’

## Propaganda of exceptionalism

The propaganda of ‘exceptionalism’ is rife in the US; not least in military and political

circles. Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Peters said at the US Army War College in 1997 that: ‘Our country is a force for good without precedent’. Thomas Barnett told the US Naval War College: ‘The US military is a force for global good that ... has no equal.’ In 1998, Madeleine Albright, US Secretary of State, said: ‘If we have to use force, it is because we are America! We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see further into the future.’

In 2000, Condoleezza Rice, later the US Secretary of State, claimed that in the pursuit of its national security, the United States no longer needed to be guided by ‘notions of international law and norms’ or ‘institutions like the United Nations’ because it was ‘on the right side of history.’ In 2002, President George W. Bush said that he did not want other countries dictating terms or conditions for the war on terrorism: ‘At some point, we may be the only ones left. That’s okay with me. We are America’.

The reverberations continue to the present day. When Obama delivered his 2012 State of the Union address, he proclaimed that ‘the renewal of American leadership can be felt across the globe’ and ‘America remains the one indispensable nation in world affairs.’ And, as ever, the speech ended with those words that are always meant to imply divine ordination: ‘God bless the United States of America’.

Professional journalists, especially the more prominent and influential ones, are required to follow this script, preferably because they sincerely believe in it. The punishment if they don’t stick to the ideological line is denial of access to powerful politicians or even career death.

#### ..... Hard-core nationalists

As the US political analyst Glenn Greenwald points out, ‘most establishment media figures, by definition, are hard-core nationalists who scorn any ideas that suggest their country is at fault for anything. The very

suggestion that the United States of America might have done anything to provoke rational hatred against it and thus helped cause 9/11 is like poison [in the journalist’s] soul.’

Greenwald continues: ‘Similarly, the very suggestion that the US is the aggressor when it comes to Iran – rather than the other way around – is heresy’. The ‘idea that the US seeks war with Iran will be slanderous’ for establishment journalists, ‘up until the minute the first US fighter jet drops a bomb, at which point the war will instantly become necessary and just.’ This is because ‘their ultimate political allegiance is to the US political establishment (the same one over which they claim to act as Watchdogs), and they cannot abide any arguments that that establishment engages in bad acts: it can periodically make “mistakes” or exercise “poor judgment” (almost always totally understandable and driven by good motives: they over-reacted to 9/11 out of a noble desire to keep us safe), but never engage in truly bad acts. Bad acts are only what America’s enemies do, not America’s political leaders.’

It is, of course, much the same in the UK, the ever-faithful sidekick of the US in their unequal ‘special relationship’. In 2010, John Pilger’s powerful documentary *The War You Don’t See* exposed the role of British and other Western media in providing an echo chamber for government propaganda and warmongering. He says: ‘The role of respectable journalism in Western state crimes – from Iraq to Iran, Afghanistan to Libya – remains taboo.’

Pilger adds: ‘Two of Blair’s most important functionaries in his mendacious, blood-drenched adventure in Iraq, Alastair Campbell and Jonathan Powell, enjoy a cosy relationship with the liberal media, their opinions sought on worthy subjects while the blood in Iraq never dries. For their vicarious admirers, as Harold Pinter put it, the appalling consequences of their actions “never happened”’.

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The writer went on to say that the most “damning report” refers to a meeting between M15, Special Operations Executive, the CIA and SAIMR  
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It would be inconceivable for a BBC presenter to refer sceptically to the West's invasion of Afghanistan, Iraq or Libya as a 'peace enforcement operation'  
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Whenever there is a Western 'intervention' – an attack on yet another vulnerable nation – 'responsible' institutions snap into patriotic mode to support 'our boys' (and girls) once the missiles start flying and the bombs start dropping. And, at all times, the 'mainstream' media can be relied upon not to dig too deeply or too systematically into the crimes of the West. But the whistleblowing organisation WikiLeaks sounds a warning note for all media professionals, echoing the Nuremberg judgements, that: 'if a journalist hides the truth they are not journalists; they are partners in the crime they are hiding.'

It is, of course, fine for journalists in the West to point to the crimes of official enemies, and to mock them for their transparent propaganda efforts. Thus, the BBC's Emily Maitlis was able to introduce Newsnight with a touch of sardonic wit: 'Hello, good evening. The Russians are calling it

a "peace enforcement operation". It's the kind of Newspeak that would make George Orwell proud.'

Maitlis was referring to the invasion of Russian forces into the Georgian province of South Ossetia in August 2008. By contrast, it would be inconceivable for a BBC presenter to refer sceptically to the West's invasion of Afghanistan, Iraq or Libya as a 'peace enforcement operation', and to describe such language as 'the kind of Newspeak that would make George Orwell proud.' **CT**

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*David Cromwell is co-editor of Media Lens, a UK-based media analysis website at [www.medialens.org](http://www.medialens.org). This is an edited extract from his new book, "Why Are We The Good Guys? Reclaiming Your Mind From The Delusions Of Propaganda," published by Zero Books, <http://www.zero-books.net/books/why-are-we-the-good-guys>*

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## HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt



# Aliens attack!

Our second excerpt from Greg Palast's new book, *Billionaires And Ballot Bandits: How To Steal An Election In 9 Easy Steps*

"There is a massive effort underway to register illegal aliens in this country!"  
– State Senator Russell Pearce

Arizona State Senator Russell Pearce sponsored one of the nation's nastiest ID laws, Prop 200. It requires all new registrants to prove they are US citizens.

When I heard about all these illegal aliens wading the Rio Grande, I had to call Senator Pearce's office.

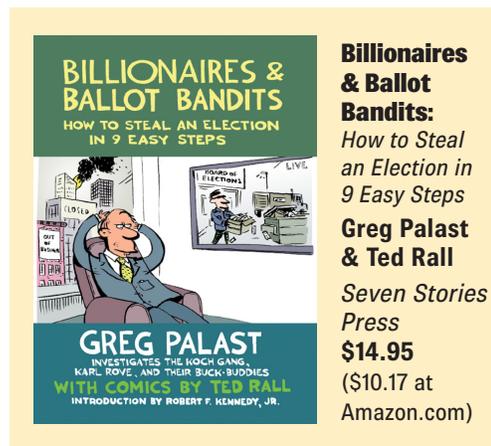
"How many illegal aliens have actually been registered?" I asked.

Pearce's PR flak told me, *five million*. All Democrats too.

FIVE MILLION? WOW!! Our investigations team flew to Arizona to look for these hordes of voters swimming the Rio Grande – just so they could vote for Obama.

We wanted Pearce to give us their names and addresses so we could bust a bunch and get a Pulitzer Prize. It should be easy: their names and addresses are on their felonious registration forms. I'd happily make a citizen's arrest of each one, on camera. But Pearce ducked us, literally hiding from our cameras. Turns out, he didn't have five million names. He didn't have *five*. He didn't have *one*.

His five million alien voters came from a Republican website that extrapolated from the number of Mexicans in a border town



Since 2006, over 100,000 have been removed from the rolls – and that's just in Arizona – for voters' failure to prove their citizenship. The fact that every one of these Americans are citizens, well, hey

who refused jury service because they were not citizens. Not one, in fact, had registered to vote: they had registered to drive. They had obtained licenses as required by the law.

The illegal voters, "wetback" welfare moms, and alien job-thieves are just GOP website wet-dreams, but their mythic PR power helps the party's electoral hacks chop away at voter rolls and civil rights with little more than a whimper from the Democrats.

There are only four proofs of citizenship in the USA:

1. If you have your original birth certificate. Good luck with that, especially among the Hispanic poor who had home births and little access to such records.
2. A US passport. (Not many of the clerks

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The chance you will be allowed to register to vote, to cast a vote, and to have that vote counted is directly proportional to the melanin in the skin of your ancestors  
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working at Wal-Mart look like they'd just come back from their ski vacation in the Alps.)

3. Naturalization papers. If you become a citizen, you have documents that say so. The problem is that most Hispanic families in Arizona were citizens of the USA before there was a USA. They are natural, not naturalized, citizens, and so don't have the papers.

4. White skin. In Arizona, according to the US Justice Department, the cops accept that white skin is a proof of citizenship. Maricopa County (Phoenix) Sheriff Joe Arpaio is on trial for having his cops stop citizens of brownish hue, demanding their citizenship papers and tossing them in the hooskew when they don't.

I tested the white-skin-is-citizenship rule myself. I went to visit Arpaio's famous (infamous?) open-air prison in the desert. You can see the sign, ILLEGAL ALIENS ARE PROHIBITED FROM VISITING ANYONE IN THIS JAIL - SHERIFF JOE ARPAIO. What if he found out that Grandma Palast snuck in

from Windsor, Canada!

Not to worry: the sheriff's crew was happy to escort me and my investigations chief around Tent City, and the deportee-sniffing professionals never asked for her citizenship papers. She doesn't have them because she's not a citizen. But she did remember to bring her white skin.

But hunting for illegal aliens isn't the point. Arizona Hispanics vote two-to-one Democratic and if they were all allowed to register, the Republican sheriff and the state GOP would be toast. Or, I should say, tortillas.

And it's darn effective. So far, not one illegal alien has been caught voting - but *one in three* registrations in Phoenix have been rejected.

*Olé, Señor Rove!*

**CT**

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**Greg Palast's** most recent book is "Vulture's Picnic: In Pursuit of Petroleum Pigs, Power Pirates and High-Finance Carnivores".  
**Ted Rall's** latest is "The Book of Obama: From Hope And Change To The Age Of Revolt"

*"Greg Palast is the last of the great, old-fashioned muckraking investigative reporters. He's an "outlier," unafraid of corporate tyrants" - Robert F. Kennedy Jr*

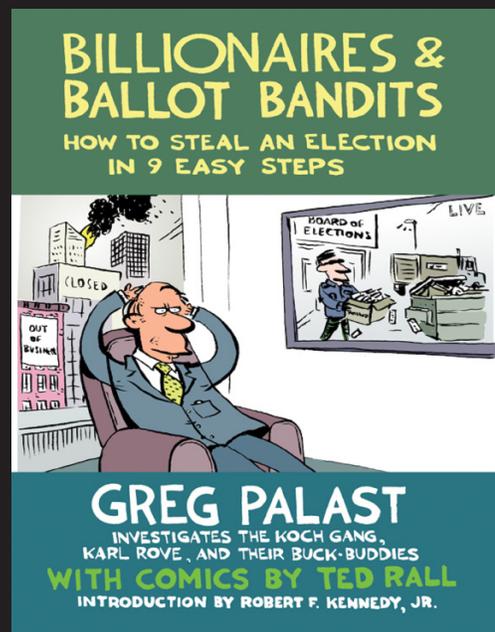
# BILLIONAIRES & BALLOT BANDITS

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with comics by Ted Rall

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Seven Stories Press



# We are at war

Johnny Barber adds up the price of eleven years of hostilities

*“We are at War. Somebody is Going to Pay.” – George W. Bush, Sept 11, 2001.*

**E**leven years later, we are still at war. Bullets, mortars and drones are still extracting payment. Thousands, tens of thousands, millions have paid in full. Children and even those yet to be born will continue to pay for decades to come.

On a single day in Iraq last month there were 29 bombing attacks in 19 cities, killing 111 civilians and wounding another 235. On Sept 9, reports indicate 88 people were killed and another 270 injured in 30 attacks all across the country. Iraq continues in a seemingly endless death spiral into chaos. In his acceptance speech for the Democratic nomination for President, Obama claimed he ended the war in Iraq. Well... not quite.

The city of Fallujah remains under siege. Not from US troops, but from a deluge of birth defects that have plagued families since the use of depleted uranium and white phosphorus by US forces in 2004. No government studies have provided a direct link to the use of these weapons because no government studies have been undertaken, and none are contemplated.

Dr. Samira Alani, a pediatric specialist at Fallujah General Hospital, told Al Jazeera, “We have all kinds of defects now, ranging from congenital heart disease to severe

physical abnormalities, both in numbers you cannot imagine. There are not even medical terms to describe some of these conditions because we’ve never seen them until now.” The photographs are available on line if you can bear to look at what we have wrought. George W. Bush will loudly proclaim his “Pro-life” bona fides, and he’ll tell you he believes “that every child, born and unborn, ought to be protected in law and welcomed into life.” Apparently, “every child” doesn’t apply to the children of Fallujah, and the “law” doesn’t apply to George W. Bush.

## **Paying for the rest of their lives**

Our soldiers, some physically damaged by IED’s, some mentally destroyed by PTSD, will pay for these wars for the rest of their days. Drug and alcohol abuse is out of control. Suicide among the troops is an epidemic. 2,916 Americans were lost in the towers on that fateful day, many, many more have perished in the intervening years.

Today we will be asked to honor the men and woman of our armed forces, but what does honoring the veterans entail? In its most recent report, The Veterans Administration estimates about 107,000 veterans are homeless on any given night. Mental illness plagues 45% of homeless vets and 70% suffer from some kind of substance abuse. So

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**The city of Fallujah remains under siege. Not from US troops, but from a deluge of birth defects that have plagued families since the use of depleted uranium and white phosphorus by US forces in 2004**  
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**In America, 35 million people are hungry or do not know where their next meal is coming from and 13 million of them are children. Who benefits from the “War on Terror”?**  
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how do you honor our veterans? Are “Support Our Troops” ribbons still in vogue? How does our government honor our veterans other than use them as political pawns in stump speeches and cannon fodder for their wars?

84,000 American troops remain in Afghanistan. While the occupation is rarely mentioned in the US mainstream media, that doesn't mean the killing has stopped. On average, one US soldier dies every day. Not an enormous sum, unless it is your mother, father, son or daughter that has perished. Few Americans notice. Afghan loses are not reported. They have loved ones who grieve as well.

The American public has turned its attention to feeding their families, keeping their homes, and finding employment. But what of the \$2 billion dollars per week we are spending on war in Afghanistan? What would \$2 billion per week look like in our devastated communities, in our schools, in creating jobs or in caring for our elders? Politicians in both parties claim our first priority is to reduce the debt. If they were really serious, if they were honest, they would end this occupation and stop calling for cuts to Medicaid, Food Stamps, and Social Security.

And what is the price extracted from the Afghan people? Security is still a dream, even in Kabul. As I write this, six people have perished in a suicide bombing outside NATO headquarters, in the heart of Kabul. Several of them were impoverished street kids, peddling packs of gum to the westerners who frequent the area.

Hillary Clinton, Madeline Albright, Jan Schakowsky, and other prominent American women claim American forces are necessary in Afghanistan to protect the gains made in woman's rights.

On Sept 6, Emma Graham-Harrison reported in the *Guardian* that three women in Kabul were attacked by a group of men because of their work as television actresses. One of the women was murdered. After

seeking treatment at the hospital, the two survivors were taken to prison, where they face intrusive virginity tests and possible charges of prostitution or collusion in the attack. They face long prison sentences. This is not the Taliban; this is woman's rights in Afghanistan today, rights that Hillary Clinton fears will be rolled back!

On the streets of Kabul it is not unusual to see burka clad women clutching starving children begging for spare change. Poverty and hunger is even worse in Kandahar and Helmand, areas that have seen some of the most intense fighting of the war. In southern Afghanistan 29.5% of the children are suffering from severe malnutrition. This compares to famine stricken areas of Africa, yet, officially, there is no famine in Afghanistan and hundreds of millions of dollars of humanitarian aid has flowed into the country.

In America, 35 million people are hungry or do not know where their next meal is coming from and 13 million of them are children. Who benefits from the “War on Terror”?

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**Very credible evidence of torture**

On Sept 2, Hamid Karzai announced his choice for the new intelligence chief, Asadullah Khalid. Khalid is currently the country's minister of tribal and border affairs who oversees its southern security forces. In 2009 Richard Colvin, Canada's former deputy ambassador to Afghanistan, testified before Canada's parliament that his team had uncovered “very credible” evidence of torture, which allegedly included Khalid's direct involvement. “He was known to have had a dungeon in Ghazni, his previous province, where he used to detain people for money, and some of them disappeared,” Colvin said in his testimony. “He was known to be running a narcotics operation. He had a criminal gang. He had people killed who got in his way.” Khalid and Karzai dismiss the allegations as unfounded.

In Kabul, children freeze to death in the winter, and they starve to death all year round. Meanwhile on the edge of Kabul a “New City” is being built. Hamid Karzai’s brother, Qayum Karzai, the owner of a construction company, benefits as his company “wins” government contracts without the hassles of competitive bidding. Karzai’s relatives are also benefiting from lucrative contracts in the oil and mineral sectors. In late 2011, Watan Oil and Gas, a company controlled by President Karzai’s cousins Rateb and Rashid Popal gained a contract with China’s National Petroleum Corporation. In 1989 Rateb was convicted for smuggling drugs in the US and spent more than eight years in prison.

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**Government full of warlords**

The Popal family’s company, Watan Risk Management, also worked as a contractor for the US forces. In 2010, they were accused of paying off Taliban insurgents with a cut from NATO contracts. According to the *New York Times*, another brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai was involved in the heroin trade and was also on the CIA’s payroll for several years before his assassination in 2011. The Karzai family now brings in billions of dollars a year. 42% of Afghans live on less than a dollar a day. So we are bent on ridding Afghanistan of the Taliban while the government is full of warlords, gangsters, and drug dealers.

Since America’s intervention in Afghanistan, the heroin trade has exploded, doubling opium production. Afghanistan is now the source of 90% of the world’s heroin. This dovetail’s nicely with America’s “War on Drugs.”

The growth in the heroin trade coupled with the despair of daily living has contributed to an eruption of drug addiction. Addicts can be found huddled under bridges throughout Kabul. As these men succumb to addiction, their families are left to fend for themselves. Heroin floods the streets

of Europe and Russia. Which banks benefit from the enormous cash flows generated by the heroin trade? Who in the Afghan government benefits?

The corruption is mind-boggling. We support terrorist elements, most recently in Syria and Libya, but before that in Iraq, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, and then find ourselves fighting them down the road. In a reversal of our usual modus operandi, it has come to light that during the Bush years the CIA tortured numerous members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), an armed Islamist Group that had worked to overthrow Gaddafi for 20 years, before transferring them to Gaddafi’s regime for further torture. Some of these same fighters rendered and tortured by America and Libya now hold key leadership posts in the “liberated” Libya.

Private interests in Saudi Arabia continue to fund Sunni extremists around the world. Wikileaks released a Dec. 2009 cable from the State Department that complained that Saudi donors remain the primary financiers of militant groups like Al-Qaeda. In May 2010, the *Sunday Times* of London revealed that the Afghan Financial Intelligence Unit, FinTRACA, reported that since 2006 at least 1.5 billion dollars from Saudi Arabia was funneled to the Taliban in Afghanistan, with Al-Qaeda withholding a cut for their delivery services. Why is there no outcry from the US?

In 2011 overseas weapons sales by the United States totaled \$66.3 billion, or more than three-quarters of the global arms market. Russia was second, with \$4.8 billion in deals. Who benefits from the War on Terror and who benefits when America threatens war?

Over half of the sales, or \$33.4 billion, consisted of arms sales to Saudi Arabia. These sales included F-15 fighter jets, dozens of Apache and Black Hawk helicopters, as well as an array of missiles, bombs and delivery systems, as well as accessories such as night-vision goggles and radar warning

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**Arms sales offset the flow of US dollars to pay for Saudi oil, and this explains why there is no outrage directed toward the Saudi regime**  
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## PAYING THE PRICE

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**The war business is profitable if you refuse to count the cost of human lives**  
.....

systems. These sales offset the flow of US dollars to pay for Saudi oil, and this explains why there is no outrage directed toward the Saudi regime.

.....  
**Enormous price**

The War on Terror exploits the tragedy of September 11 for the benefit of a very few. Poor people continue to pay an enormous price, while the elites, including our own government and the corporations it answers to, ignore everything but the influx of cash into their coffers. The war business is profitable if you refuse to count the cost of human lives.

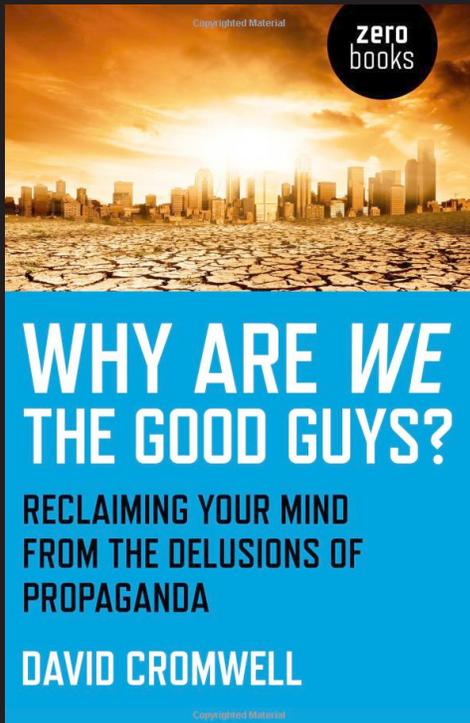
In his acceptance speech for the Democratic nomination for President, Obama said, "Our destinies are bound together. A freedom which only asks what's in it for me, a freedom without a commitment to others, a freedom without love or charity, is

unworthy of our founding ideals." In closing, he said, "We travel together. We leave no one behind. We pull each other up." Why is it our Presidents fail to include those they bomb in their lofty sentiments? The simple truth is our destinies are bound together with those who lie beyond the borders of our country as well.

A young, educated Afghan man, an advisor to Parliament, sees the corruption of his government and despairs. He asks me, "What is my share in this world?" He continues, "Absolutely nothing. And for my child, the same." His voice trails off. We sit drinking tea as night comes on. **CT**

.....  
*Johnny Barber is writing from Kabul where he is a guest of the Afghan Peace Volunteers in Kabul.*

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## WHY ARE WE THE GOOD GUYS?

Reclaiming your Mind from the Delusions of Propaganda

DAVID CROMWELL

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# What men do

Why do men fight? A primer by **Fred Reed**

**T**here is no hope, I tell you. There are no reasons. We kid ourselves.

In politics we think we do things for reasons. We don't, except in the details. We do as we do because of what we are. We have wars because having wars is what men do. Reasons are only aftermarket appendages.

Read history. Everywhere, in every epoch, with only the occasional brief oversight, leaders come to power – kings, tribal chiefs, emperors, presidents – and attack anyone convenient. Always, somewhere, there are wars. Depending, the participants use rocks, pointed sticks, arrows, swords, tanks, carriers or Stratofortresses, these artifacts being mere details. A nuclear submarine is just a gaudier pointed stick.

Start where you like. Take Joshua. He attacked Canaan, conquered cities, and put the populations to the sword, men, women, and children. He wasn't the first and certainly not the last. Assyrians, Romans, Tamburlaine, Genghis Khan, the Crusaders, on and on, through Nanjing and Hiroshima and Nagasaki, business as usual. Indiscriminate killing of whole populations is normal military procedure. Today it is thought proper to justify it in some way – liquidating a city would cause the enemy to surrender, see, saving lives, or something.

This is feel-good twaddle. Humanity has acquired just enough moral sense to be em-

barrassed about the things it does, but not enough to stop doing them. Dresden and Hamburg were put to the sword, however you name it.

Wars are no more the product of free will than the path of a bowling ball dropped from a bridge. All of history is filled with, almost consists of, men setting out with armies to conquer somebody. It is what men do – men, as distinct from women, who would rather read a book or go shopping. The historical pattern is that men invent everything and build everything, and then blow it all up and kill everybody. The wisdom of this is perhaps subject to question.

## It's what men do

Wars seldom have any purpose other than to be wars. The kings of England didn't need to conquer France, didn't need France at all – what were they going to do with it? – but they set out to conquer it with hormonal automaticity, ravaging the countryside, bankrupting their own country, sowing misery and death. It's what men do.

Today the United States is the planet's major predator, in historical company with Halter, Mao, Stalin, the British empire, Napoleon the French Hitler, the Hapsburgs, Ottomans, the Plantagenets, various Persians, thousands of men leading thousands

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**Wars are no more the product of free will than the path of a bowling ball dropped from a bridge**  
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**Little boys like to play army, despite efforts to get them to prefer dolls to guns**  
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of armies, all butchering and burning and raping and looting. It is what men do.

We are still at it. We think we have reasons: We are combating terror, or protecting our allies from evil, or disseminating democracy. No, actually. We are doing what is built into our nature. Empires expand like bubbles, collapse like bubbles, fight the rising new empires. The losses in lives and unhappiness and treasure far exceed anything gained, which is irrelevant. We fight because it is a biological imperative. We cannot not fight.

This is unlikely to change. From birth, most of what we do is genetic: the Terrible Twos, sexual jealousy, fear of the dark, the forming of warrior bands (the Marines, the Pittsburgh Steelers, little boys playing cops and robbers).

When children reach adolescence the girls become insufferable, the boys wreck cars, and each discovers an absorbing interest in the other. They, we, have reasons, but always the same reasons that come at the same age. "The herd of independent minds," somebody said.

The appeal of military behavior and paraphernalia is built in. Little boys like to play army, despite efforts to get them to prefer dolls to guns. In the slums the adolescent join paramilitary gangs, the Crips and Bloods, the Vice Lords and Latin Kings, with uniforms (for example, black and gold football jackets) and Ministers of War, membership rituals, hand signs, and territory – and, in true military fashion, they fight to expand their realms. We are as predictable as gravitation.

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**Canine morality**

Our morality is canine. Dogs are friendly and playful among themselves, affectionate with each other and with their owners, but, unless extremely domesticated, instantly hostile to strangers. This makes perfect sense among animals that live as a co-operative group in a hostile wild. It is less practi-

cal among countries with nuclear arms.

Humans differ little from dogs. Consider a man working with an intelligence agency in Washington. He may be a sterling fellow, good father, never kick the dog or molest the neighbor's children, doesn't shoplift, and in general is a good citizen. Tell him to do the satellite reconnaissance for the bombing of Baghdad and he will do it without a trace of conscience – even though he knows the bombing will kill thousands of innocent people. He may speak of duty, patriotism, and any of various sorts of routine high principle. No, it is just the psychology of the pack, us agin' them. By nature we care about our fellow dogs, but not about other dogs.

Our instinct, like that of Fido, bends us toward easy enmity toward outsiders. Note how quickly Americans came to hate Moslems (who return the sentiment) even though, as thoughtful commentators have pointed out in exasperation, the haters usually know nothing about Islam, have never met a Moslem, or been out of the United States. Rationally this makes no sense. It does make sense, though, for members of a small hunting band for whom strangers are usually intent on killing you and stealing your women.

This innate hostility toward outsiders explains why all the desperate attempts to impose "diversity" don't work. People of different colors and cultures don't like each other. To point out that this is really, truly, seriously stupid changes nothing. It's how we are.

When feminists speak of "testosterone poisoning," they are exactly right (though they often seem to suffer from it themselves). Steroid chemistry trumps cogitation. Through all time young males have dreamed of becoming warriors. They still do. Note the gonadal popularity of war movies, of bloody video games, the reverence for "Navy SEALs" (as if there were another kind) and their air of inexorable force-of-nature invincibility. How many men have

not fantasized of the night HALO drop from 20,000 feet, rip cord in hand, or rolling in on a hostile target in an F16, pop and pickle and hit the afterburner, or driving a hot space-fighter fighter against Darth Vader's Death Star, swerving, evading, closer, aiming, aiming....? A professor at Yale might not admit it. He might be lying, too.

Then there's The Strut, also biologically mediated: The whole alpha-male business of honor, pageantry, sword and codpiece, feathers and gewgaws. In nature movies you have seen the male swamp bird wildly flapping his wings and waving his head around to impress the girl birds. Men are men, no matter their phylum, and women are as programmed as men. They go for the

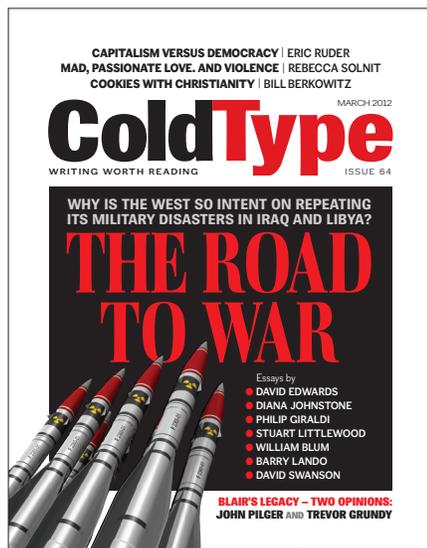
display, in our case for the warrior.

Maybe you were the best lance in a tournament before Edward III. Maybe you are a fresh-caught new Marine just back from boot at Parris Island, heavier by thirty pounds of muscle and killer cocky toward those sorry stay-at-home dweebs you left behind. Either way, the girls will be all over you. We can laugh at it, with reason. But it works.

We are what we are. We do what we do. Therein lies the rub. **CT**

*Fred Reed has worked for Army Times, The Washingtonian, Soldier of Fortune, Federal Computer Week, and The Washington Times. His web site is <http://fredoneverything.net>*

In nature movies you have seen the male swamp bird wildly flapping his wings and waving his head around to impress the girl birds



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# Afghanistan: Some futures are too clear

Philip Kraske on the way history has a habit of repeating itself

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**Is humanity really witnessing the first war for women's lib? I think not**  
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If there are parallels between Vietnam and Afghanistan, there are futures to predict as well. Let's look at the parallels first.

When the last prisoner of war was brought home from Vietnam and the nation as one sighed, "Good-bye and good riddance," who would have thought that just forty years later America would be in the same mess? And it is the same. A war in an obscure Asian country that Americans neither understand nor care a damn about; against an enemy naturally allied to the country's people, who themselves hold in contempt the corrupt government America is bravely trying to present to the world as representative and patriotic. Again, we continue fighting in order not to lose.

Then as now, the mumbled justification from the usual mandarins is American security and American interests in the region, though just how American security depends on that far-off country and what interests hang in the balance – these are never articulated, and for good reason: who's willing to die for oil pipelines and rare-earth mines? When cornered nowadays, officials chuck up the Hail Mary: if Americans leave, Afghan women will never break the chains of their enslavement. True enough, but is humanity really witnessing the first war for women's lib? I think not.

Then there is the terrorism argument: if

America leaves, terrorists – that one-size-fits-all substitute for communists – will again take up residence in the country. Which is far from clear. If the Taliban return to power, what can they actually offer terrorists that other countries don't? Full terrorism services, like assertiveness training for squad leaders? Explosives experts, found where your fingers did the walking, who will prepare your suicide bomber for a real, quality, 100-casualty pop? And financing – there's another pain in the patootie for terrorists.

(And in a post-American Afghanistan, they can forget about financing with drug money. The Taliban are willing to use it to finance their comeback, but before the invasion, their rulers had stamped out the heroin trade completely, just on principle. And that would be a huge turn-off for terrorists since drug money is a far safer investment than, say, Facebook. Indeed, the FARC, Colombia's narco-rebels, financed themselves so well in the 90s that in June, 1999, they received a chummy visit from Richard Grasso, then head of the New York Stock Exchange, who pitched them on investing in Wall Street.)

.....  
**Final chapter?**

Given the parallels, what will be the final chapter of the Afghan mess? Americans be-

ing plucked off the roof of the embassy, as in Saigon? I think that's it – except that we must substitute “the base headquarters” for “the embassy.” Here's how it will play out.

To judge by the number of Allied forces that are being killed by their Afghani comrades during training, the Taliban have finally, after all these years, taken to heart General Giap's lesson that the place to win a war against America is not on the battlefield, but on the streets of America. Every time Afghani soldiers kill Allied ones, public opinion takes another hit. No wonder Nato allies are already heading for the exits.

Not America. The difference between the Vietnam exit strategy and the Afghanistan one is that America can't just obtain “peace with honor – or even “declare victory and get out,” as Senator George Aiken wisely suggested back then. For it turns out that the Pentagon and those nasty little Napoleons who populate the security, military and foreign-policy circles intend to keep those bases in Afghanistan – all part of the misbegotten and undeclared strategy of encircling China, which has the gall to work hard and save its money and raise its country up, and do it all without sending a bomber drone to suck the oxygen out of anyone's lungs. So Bagram and the other big bases will stay long after America and its reluctant allies have officially “left.”

Or maybe not so long. For the bases will become big, fat targets for Afghanis – and not a few Pakistanis, still smarting from Mr. Obama's Murder Incorporated – who, like Average Joes the world over, don't like foreigners living down the road with their damn bases and adjoining streets of brothels and fighter jets humming and twittering

all night long.

And a couple of years after America's official withdrawal, the unending attacks on their bases and “green zones” will incline mature minds to the prospect of real withdrawal. Around the world, other Average Joes might well take inspiration from the Afghani attacks and decide to chuck a few firecrackers over the fences of America's 1,180 foreign bases, just to put a little muscle behind their complaints about how drunken soldiers are harrasing their daughters.

So somewhere towards the end of this decade, the last panicked soldier from Wisconsin will finally be lifted off the roof of the Bagram control tower, still thinking what a bunch of ingrates these people are for not accepting our gifts of civil rights and democracy, and Afghanis will finally be left alone to sort out their differences, just as the Vietnamese did in the 70s, and gained for themselves forty mostly peaceful years.

And lastly the coda. The exodus of desperate Afghanis persecuted for having worked with Americans – or supplied or traded with or shared a joke with or lent their daughter to – will swell refugee camps in Pakistan, and eventually end up in the United States. Local welcome committees will be set up, funny anecdotes about families hosting refugees will appear in the news, and little by little puzzling ghosts in blue burkas, trailed by swarthy, squeaking children, will begin to appear drifting uncertainly around supermarkets from Bangor to Burbank. When you see that, you'll know the war is finally over.

**CT**

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*Philip Kraske's latest book is “City On The Ledge” – \$12.40 from Amazon.com*

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**Bagram and the other big bases will stay long after America and its reluctant allies have officially “left”**  
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# In the footsteps of Neal Cassady's ghost

A long-forgotten essay by **Joe Bageant**

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**Cassady's attitude  
might best be  
described as that  
of an American  
Zen Buddhist  
Drugstore Cowboy  
Poolshooting  
Mystic, with a  
terrible fascination  
for the relationship  
between velocity  
and life**  
.....

*Joe Bageant died last year at age 64. I knew him only for the last eight years of his life. For the final three years, he lived nearby here in Mexico and we talked every day – partly as a routine death watch, making sure the other guy did not wake up dead one morning. Joe would freely talk about anything and everything personal. Except for his early writing. I knew that he had written hundreds of articles for newspapers and magazines, often under a pseudonym, and I would ask to see some of his early stuff. He said he never kept his old articles and that may have been true. I launched and maintained his website (still do) with his promise that he would learn how to post, but he never did. It was a struggle to even get him to look at his own website when I made editing or design changes. “I hate this me-me-me stuff,” he would say. After Joe died, an old friend of his sent me several clips of his early freelance articles. Joe is not here to argue about it, so I’ve typed the following – written when he was 29. – Ken Smith, ken@kvsmith.com*

*“For a time I held a unique position. Among the hundreds of isolated creatures who haunted the streets of lower downtown Denver, there was not one so young as myself. Amid these dreary men who had committed themselves, each for his own good reason, to the task of finishing their days as penniless drunkards. I alone as the sharer of their way of life, presented the sole replica of their own childhood to which their vision could daily turn. Being thus grafted onto them, I became the unnatural son of a few score beaten men.”  
– Neal Cassady: opening lines of *The First Third*.*

**B**y the time of his death in Mexico in 1968 at the age of 43, Neal Cassady's turbulent passage across the American landscape had already left its mark upon literature. This was mostly through his effect on writers of the Beat Generation, the key figures of which were his closest friends. His attitude, more than the small body of writing he left behind, was a source of inspiration to such people as Kerouac, Ginsberg, Corso, Burroughs, and Kesey. This attitude might best be described as that of an American Zen Buddhist Drugstore Cowboy Poolshooting Mystic, with a terrible fascination for the relationship between velocity and life.

Early childhood found him growing up in the wino dive hotels of lower Denver, while

his last years saw him careening through the acid antics of Ken Kesey's now famous Merry Pranksters. In between he left nothing untouched. Poetry, jazz, cafeterias, fast cars, women, and drugs, all were part of his experientially based philosophy.

As in the 60s, a new wave of interest turns toward the Beat Scene, Cassady's role looms ever larger for its inclusiveness. The search for the visions of a man now gone is best begun by experiencing the sounds and moods from which his inspiration was drawn. Much of Neal Cassady's were drawn from his brooding Larimer Street beginnings.

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There are no last names on skid row, except on police blotters. Hence, the ragged tramps at the Western Palace Hotel all have vague names like Slim, Red, Shorty, and Boe. These bums are rich as winos go, with the most of them living on small pensions; and the Western is what is called in these circles a solid flop (meaning that most of its residents live here permanently).

Housing about 60 winoed-out old men who manage to come up with the \$16.20 a week required to call it home. A verifiable address like this is as extravagant as life gets for those drowned in a well of muscatel. Scaley and bruised white ankles of their less fortunate brothers can be seen protruding from under dumpsters or jutting from phone booths up and down Champa Street. February's nasty and biting winds have no favorites but prey upon the derelicts of the Larimer district with special viciousness.

Torpid life in flop America has remained unchanged since the turn of the century and the smiling women with a cause still glom oatmeal onto tin plates as policemen pick up comatose bodies clad in long overcoats, taking care to avoid the areas of the rancid armpit or the slimy sock. But the company at the Western Palace is select and though no one here will ever win any hygiene awards, encounters with the police are rare. They

take much pride in the fact of always having a roof over their heads but the truth lies more in luck than accomplishment and they will turn up dead somewhere in the same rat-like fashion as the rest of them. And each knows it.

"You say you were around here in the 30s? That was a while back. You must be getting up there in years."

"Well, I's 64 las' April. Sheeit, I was jus' a young fart, mebbe 20 somethin'. But I wasn't drinkin' none then. Naw, I was workin' for the city on the streets, but I always did live round this neighborhood."

"Did you ever know a fella name of Cassady that lived down here back then? Had a little boy with him for a while. He used to do barbering."

"Was he a bum?"

"Yeah."

"There wasn't many bums with kids. I knowed all the bums for years an' there wasn't but a couple what had kids."

"This guy's boy was named Neal."

"I think I might'a knowed him. Them kids was always watchin' but never said much. Ain't much you could say about 'em. They were just there."

*"Now and again, when with child energy, I burst into the room, I would catch Shorty playing with himself. (I thought it was fried eggs littering the floor.) Even though he was past 40, any preoccupation with this form of diversion was justified . . . since judging from his appearance, he must not have had a woman since his youth, if then"*

About nine o'clock the cry "lights out" sends the card players to the sheetless, waxy mattresses coated with the dried-up orgasms of secretive indulgers of the hand. Since the beds have no springs to squeak betrayal, total privacy swallows the solitary fantasies of unwashed manhood and darkness. Tiny pathetic flames of desire flicker once, then die in the night.

Neal Cassady growing up in this grizzled

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**Torpid life in flop America has remained unchanged since the turn of the century and the smiling women with a cause still glom oatmeal onto tin plates as policemen pick up comatose bodies clad in long overcoats, taking care to avoid the areas of the rancid armpit or the slimy sock**  
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## REMEMBERING JOE

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Not even an hour wait in the block-long line increases the anticipation for that dab of lukewarm oatmeal and paper cup of weak coffee that appears on your steel tray

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stench of sallow expiration. The clear-eyed dreamer in mission relief knickers, glancing into the oil rail-road puddles of March, catching that distinct angle at which they reflect back broken blue fragments of sky. Him laughing amid the traffic noise or sinking the four-ball into the side pocket. Breathing in deep the Denver night.

The light of morning and evening are virtually indistinguishable through the blind, greasy windows of the Western Palace, giving them the appearance of yellow rectangles that merely brighten or dim. The yellow light's waxing brings a spattering of water in grimy sinks and a flourish of clogged razors as those men who are still capable of desiring food leaving for the Guardian Angel.

Breakfast at the Guardian Angel Mission is as uninspiring as breakfast can possibly be. Food in the skids has always been regarded chiefly as fuel by both the cooks and the ulcerated stomachs that consume it. Not even an hour wait in the block-long line increases the anticipation for that dab of lukewarm oatmeal and paper cup of weak coffee that appears on your steel tray.

"The line moved slowly at any time . . . If alone, I could whiz through the entire operation in less than half an hour, for then some kindly line crawlers would push me past them. I would edge around a couple dozen of these indulgent men who, while committing the cheat for me, gave a sly wink and a chortle of self-satisfaction."

Once seated at the long tables, the bland trance of a Larimer Street morning begins to give way to small schemes of wine procurement. Scoring wine is often a joint venture of two or more parties, a venture that struggles well into an afternoon of the shakes before the goal is accomplished. Amputees and those with obvious physical infirmities have a distinct advantage in this game. They need only park in front of a likely place of business with their hats before them, while for the rest

it is a day afflicted with minor squabbles as one plan after another falls apart with pitiful anguish.

Pawn, panhandle, or scrounge is the action, with the term junkie here meaning a salvage dealer. Junkies are an absolutely merciless breed being generally bitchy and cheap, bargaining with the flops in terms of police threats or savage dogs. It is a strange moody sensation indeed to watch the bent-over tramps with their shopping bags of junk at dusk, entering the salvage dealer's dim interior which is guarded by a pair of fierce green flashing eyes.

"From these modest Larimer beginnings I was to become so bewitched by going junking that in following years I developed my scavenging into regular weekend tours conducted through all Denver's alleys. Laboring under what bulge of rescued discards my gunnysack contained, I would turn my snow-chilled feet homeward, and while pausing to rest, enjoyed watching the spectacle, as to the west, white peaks rose slowly curtaining the perfect orb of a descending winter sun."

These days, getting to where the scavenging is good entails a walk of 15 or 20 blocks and even then there are droves of little Mexican kids to compete with. Coming back in the chilling evening air, the oatmeal energy gives out about the time the more intrepid of the waif packs creep from behind buildings to place stealthy feet lightly into your shadow. Year in, year out, expeditions of tottering men move like a silent net across Denver, gathering the humblest of treasures before the sharp glances of housewives shaking mops and dark-eyed children of grassless back yards.

By the time the street lights come on the day has yielded whatever it is about to, leaving some the flushed smile of a wine glow; others shivering. Like everywhere else on this planet, the haves tend to hang out with the haves, and the have-nots are cast to their

own devices. Bombay or Denver, it's all the same.

"Yeah, I know all about Neal Cassady. Grew up to be some kind of writer, didn't he? Haven't heard anything about him for years though."

"He died about eight years ago in Mexico."

"You don't say! Well I heard he was on some kind of dope or something back years and years ago. Is that what killed him?"

"You might say it was a combination of things."

"That's too bad."

Evening meal at the mission is somewhat more complex than breakfast because dinner is a religious proposition. Since the missions are supported for the most part by churches, a conversion to Christ is expected nightly from the ranks of drooling bums. From a lot that has elected the wretchedest of life's paths, this is expecting quite a bit. Wino attitude toward this evangelism is best expressed in the term they use for these conversions. They call it "taking a dive." Sooner or later the hungriest one in the crowd goes down in a fit of religious ecstasy and after a thorough cross-examination, dinner is served.

With the problems of sustaining the flesh taken care of for another day, activity turns to such things as trading life-stories or articles of clothing (or maybe eyeballing those you intend to steal off your sleeping buddies). Shoes seem to be the big item in demand and about the only way to keep a pair is to sleep with them tied around your neck. As for the stories, they are always delivered in

the same even monotone and have a strange dirge-like quality.

Though each is a different tale of demise, they all weave together to make a fabric, while the bleak lights of the hotel wash the men of Larimer in a certain cast of loneliness unknown to most. More often than not, they were once tradesmen practicing a skill that enabled them to raise families, make house payments, spout political opinions, and do all those things working men spend their three score and ten doing. But the weft and warp of this fabric is guilt and its escape through booze. Booze that brings new guilt feelings and a worthless self-persecuting sense of humility.

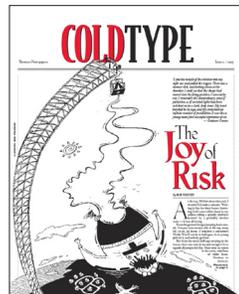
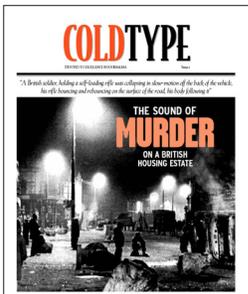
And often as the pages of this tome are turned in the hotel night, a policeman walks through the dismal lobby, and as he leafs through the registry book it is noticed that one of the boys is not with us tonight. One hand of cards will not be dealt and one empty bed by the window is frozen in the street-light's glare.

It was Neal Cassady who said "To have seen a specter isn't everything," and it was he too who said "There are death masks piled one atop another clear to heaven." The truth of it tumbles from February's aching skies, to run down the spine like ice, and as sure as ice melts, February is forgotten by June, the doors of the pool rooms are propped open and the young girls go by in their magnificent way.

**CT**

Joe Bageant's website is at <http://joebageant.com>

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 .....



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# Pussy Riot and Amnesty International

Diana Johnstone on the decline of political protest

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**While it has protested against such flagrant abuses as Guantanamo and the abusive jailing of Bradley Manning, Amnesty International appears to be under pressure to “balance” such punctual criticism by blanket denunciations of governments targeted for regime change by the United States**  
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Once upon a time there was an organization called Amnesty International which was dedicated to defending prisoners of conscience all over the world. Its action was marked by two principles that contributed to its success: neutrality and discretion. In the context of the Cold War, the early AI made a point of balancing its campaigns between prisoners from each of three ideological regions: the capitalist West, the communist East and the developing South. The campaigns remained discreet, avoiding ideological polemics and focusing on the legal and physical conditions of captives. Their aim was not to use the prisoners as an excuse to rant against an “enemy” government, but to persuade governments to cease persecuting non-violent dissidents. It strove successfully to exercise a universal civilizing influence.

Since the end of the Cold War, the work of Amnesty International has become more complicated and more difficult. Back in the early days, most of the “prisoners of conscience” were held either in the Soviet bloc or in the US satellite dictatorships in Latin America, which facilitated symmetry without unduly offending the US superpower. But especially since the Bush administration’s reaction to September 11, 2001, the United States has increasingly become the world’s most notorious jailer. This has brought an organization whose core is Anglo-American under

conflicting pressures. While it has protested against such flagrant abuses as Guantanamo and the abusive jailing of Bradley Manning, it appears to be under pressure to “balance” such punctual criticism by blanket denunciations of governments targeted for regime change by the United States. In the case of US-backed “color revolutions”, human rights organizations such as AI and Human Rights Watch are enlisted not to defend specific political prisoners, but rather to denounce general abuses which may or may not be seriously documented. The United States has increasingly managed to take control of AI for its own foreign policy campaigns.

A milestone in this takeover came last January, when the talented State Department official Suzanne Nossel was named as executive director of Amnesty International USA. As Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations, Ms Nossel played a role in drafting the United Nations Human Rights Council resolution on Libya. That resolution, based on exaggeratedly alarmist reports, served to justify the UN resolution which led to the NATO bombing campaign that overthrew the Gaddafi regime. Credited with coining the expression “smart power”, taken up by Hillary Clinton as a policy slogan, Ms Nossel has won international recognition for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, thereby positioning the United States as a vanguard of human

rights against the world's many traditional societies, especially those whose regimes US "smart power" wishes to embarrass, isolate, or even overthrow.

In its new phase, AI, like Human Rights Watch and other Western "humanitarian" organizations, has ceased to make any distinction between genuine repression of dissident thinkers and the sort of repression that is triggered by deliberate provocation, that is, by actions whose sole purpose is precisely to provoke repression, in order to accuse a targeted regime of being repressive. The Serbian group "Otpor" pioneered this sort of action, following teachings of Gene Sharp. Actions which anywhere in the world would be considered disorderly conduct are elevated to the level of Victor Hugo eloquently defying Napoleon III.

Neither the quality of dissidence nor its context seem to matter. And nobody stops to ponder seriously how to deal with provocateurs who deliberately break the law in order to be arrested. Should the law be suspended especially for them? Or what? Arresting them falls into a trap, but not arresting them would arouse complaints from indignant citizens who dislike such exhibitionism. It is a real dilemma.

Amnesty International has devoted extraordinary attention to the Pussy Riot case, while totally ignoring, for instance, the threat of US prosecution that led Julian Assange to seek political asylum.

What is most notable about this attention, and the attention of the Western media in general, is its tone. The tone is by no means a diplomatic appeal intended to persuade authorities to free the women in question. Rather, it is a tone of provocation.

For instance:

"Masha, Nadia and Maria, who are being detained for their peaceful performance of a protest song in a cathedral, could very well be carted off to a labor camp in Siberia where they will be at risk of rape and other abuses." (All stress is from the original texts, which I received from the organizations cited.)

"Pussy Riot's crime? Singing a protest song in a church.

"Amnesty International is mounting a strong global response to help keep Pussy Riot's case front and center. Help us send a truckload of colorful ski masks to President Putin in protest.

Today's verdict is emblematic of increased efforts by President Putin and his cronies to stifle free speech in Russia. That's why we're sending President Putin as many colorful masks, called balaclavas, as we can. Donate \$20 or more to send a mask to Putin. ... It is clear that Russian authorities are trying to silence these women and instill fear in other activists – don't let them succeed."

This is a tone that can only make it more, not less, politically difficult for President Putin to overturn the court's ruling and grant amnesty and early release to the young women.

Amnesty International, like Western media, have constantly simplified the case in terms designed to suggest that Russia is returning to Stalinist rule of the 1930s. The French tabloid *Libération* splashed across its front-page photo of the three women, "To the GULAG for a song".

**Paying the Price**

Avaaz, the on-line protest organizer, went farther.

"Russia is steadily slipping into the grip of a new autocracy ...Now, our best chance to prove to Putin there is a price to pay for this repression lies with Europe.

"The European Parliament is calling for an assets freeze and travel ban on Putin's powerful inner circle who are accused of multiple crimes. ... if we can push the Europeans to act, it will not only hit Putin's circle hard, as many bank and have homes in Europe, but also counter his anti-Western propaganda, showing him that the whole world is willing to stand up for a free Russia."

The whole world? Is this really a major concern of the whole world?

**Amnesty International has devoted extraordinary attention to the Pussy Riot case, while totally ignoring, for instance, the threat of US prosecution that led Julian Assange to seek political asylum**

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**Once the women were arrested on a complaint by the church, the wheels turned, a trial was held, they were convicted and sentenced by a judge on the basis of complaints by offended Christians**  
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Avaaz goes on:

“What happens in Russia matters to us all. Russia has blocked international coordination on Syria and other urgent global issues, and a Russian autocracy threatens the world we all want, wherever we are.”

The world we all want? Or the world Hillary Clinton wants?

At a so-called “Friends of Syria” (meaning supporters of Syrian rebels) meeting in Geneva last July 6, Hillary Clinton lashed out against Russia and China for blocking US-sponsored Syrian regime change initiatives in the United Nations. “I do not believe that Russia and China are paying any price at all – nothing at all – for standing up on behalf of the Assad regime. The only way that will change is if every nation represented here directly and urgently makes it clear that Russia and China will pay a price,” Clinton warned.

What Hillary wants, Hillary gets – at least in the narrow world of the “international community” made up of the US, its NATO satellites and their totally obedient media and NGOs.

Avaaz concludes: “Let’s join together now to show Putin that the world will hold him to account and push for change until Russia is set free.”

Now think about this. “We”, the signers of Avaaz petitions, aspire to “show Putin” that despite being legally elected President of Russia, the outside world is going to “push for change until Russia is set free.” Set free by whom? Pussy Riot? When did they, when could they, win an election? So how is Russia to be “set free”? By a no-fly zone? By US drones?

Russia must “pay a price” for obstructing US designs for Syria. Is Pussy Riot part of the price?

The chorus of Western media, pop stars and other assorted self-styled humanitarians have all echoed the notion that the Pussy Riot women were jailed “by Putin” because of an innocent song they sang against him in a church. But where is the evidence that they were arrested by Putin? It seems they were

arrested by police on a complaint by the Orthodox Church, which did not appreciate their hijinks on the high altar. Churches tend to consider that their space is reserved for their own rites and ceremonies. The Catholic Cathedral in Cologne called the police to arrest Pussy Riot copy cats. It was not the first time the Pussy Riot group had invaded an Orthodox church, and this time the offended ecclesiastics were fed up. The group had demonstrated “against Putin” several times previously without being arrested. So where is the proof that they were “jailed by Putin” as a “crackdown on dissent”?

Putin is on record, and on video, as saying he thinks the women should not be harshly punished for their stunt. But hey, Russia has a judicial system. The law is the law. Once the women were arrested on a complaint by the church, the wheels turned, a trial was held, they were convicted and sentenced by a judge on the basis of complaints by offended Christians. It is an interesting detail that the witnesses failed to hear any mention of Putin – they were simply offended by the cavorting and the dirty words uttered by the masked performers. It seems that the “song”, if that is what it was, and the anti-Putin lyrics, if one can call them that, were added subsequently to the video put on line by the group.

So why was this “a crackdown by Putin”? Because, once the West labels a disobedient leader of a foreign state a “dictator”, his state no longer has a judicial system of its own, free elections, independent media, freedom of expression, contented citizens – no, none of that, because in the collective groupthink of the West, every “dictator” is Hitler/Stalin combined, and nothing bad that is done or happens in his country is a result of anything but his own wicked will. In the end, of course, his greatest aspiration is probably to “kill his own people”.

But Avaaz, Amnesty International and Libération are vigilant...

Of course, it would be absurd to imagine that citizens of Russia, or any other country, are all contented with their leaders, even if

they elected them by an overwhelming majority. Even democratic countries offer only a limited choice of presidential candidates to their voters. But after centuries of Tsarist autocracy, invasion by Mongols, Napoleon, and Hitler; Bolshevik revolution, Communist single-party dictatorship, then the economic and social collapse of the Yeltsin years, Russia has nevertheless now largely adopted its own version of Western capitalist democracy, complete with respect for religion.

And here is an oddity: the West, which used to aim its intercontinental ballistic missiles at “atheistic communism”, does not seem at all satisfied that the Orthodox Christian Church has re-emerged as a respected component of Russian society. The Western criterion for a free society has changed. It is no longer freedom to practice a religion, but freedom to practice a form of sexuality condemned by religion. Now, this may be an important improvement, but since it has taken the Christian West two thousand years to arrive at this level of wisdom, it should be a little bit patient with other societies lagging a decade or so behind.

It is a notorious constant of Russian history that its leaders are torn between emulating Western Europe and reasserting their own traditions – what is called Slavophilia. After a period of Westernizing, the Slavophiles usually triumph because the West rudely rebuffs the friendly overtures of the Westernizers. This gives the more aggressive Western leaders the perfect excuse to use force and coercion against the “backward” Russians. It seems to be happening again, with a particularly bizarre post-modern twist.

Many informed commentators have pointed out that Pussy Riot is not a “rock band” made up of singers and musicians. They compose no songs, they make no recordings, they do not sing and dance at concerts for fans.

At best, they could be described as “performance artists” along the lines of the nutty Doonesbury character “J.J.” Their art consists of attracting attention by, among other

things, taking off their clothes and copulating in a museum or masturbating with a dead chicken in a supermarket. (All to be seen on line.)

This is called protest art. It is provocation. What does it provoke? According to the practitioners of this sort of thing, who tend to think of themselves as vastly more clever than ordinary mortals, it is meant to wake up the sluggish masses, teach them by example to be free, to break taboos, to defy authority.

Clever performance art may make a political point people can understand. But what is the message from public sex with dead poultry?

The West, or at least Western media, politicians and humanitarians, seem to get the message. They interpret Pussy Riot as a significant political protest against Vladimir Putin.

A small percentage of Russians, especially those who regularly visit US ambassador Michael McFaul in his Moscow embassy for spiritual and material encouragement, may also see it that way.

But it is a fair bet that even more Russians see Pussy Riot’s exploits as an expression of “Western decadence”. Especially when they see the entire West cheering and even imitating their actions. And indeed, in its readiness to use anything and everything to embarrass a government obstructing US geopolitical goals, Hillary Clinton’s foreign policy establishment is favoring a widespread backlash against perceived Western corruption and decadence. Whatever their intention, Pussy Riot is a gift to the Slavophiles.

And to the new Amnesty International and its followers, who instead of taking the trouble to write thoughtful letters on behalf of persecuted dissidents, are merely asked to contribute \$20 (or more) for a rag with holes in it. Fun!

**CT**

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# Great paper. Great propaganda organ

Edward S. Herman on the two faces of the world's most famous newspaper

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A case can be made that the NYT is the world's greatest – or at least most important – organ of state propaganda  
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On October 11, 2011, Paul Krugman asserted on his blog that he had the privilege of writing two columns a week for “the world’s greatest newspaper,” the *New York Times* (NYT). The NYT is surely an outstanding paper, with exceptionally wide scope, many good journalists on board and publishing many interesting and enlightening articles. But if the standard by which we judge greatness is the quality of its service to the public interest, to the 99 percent who don’t own or advertise in newspapers or TV networks, or control or benefit directly and heavily from other corporate and financial entities, and/or exercise substantial influence on governments, the paper’s greatness is debatable.

In fact, a case can be made that the NYT is the world’s greatest – or at least most important – organ of state propaganda. Because of its great prestige, its being pegged as a “liberal” newspaper, and the paper’s allowing just enough dissent to give the appearance of balance and to make its most serious apologetics seem credible, the general public is not aware of how often and how effectively the paper serves the imperial state, normalizing US imperial ventures and putting them in a favorable light – and providing systematic apologetics for abuses by it favored clients. The editors even belatedly admitted their war-supportive bias in the run-up to the UN Charter-violating and lie-based Iraq war, and

they are clearly doing the same in the case of Iran, where the paper has had almost daily accounts of Iran’s alleged moves toward nuclear weapons capability, while working on the premise that Israel’s (and the US’s) actual nuclear weapons, and almost daily and credible threats, are perfectly acceptable and understandable and don’t even constitute essential context in discussing the Iran menace.

The paper has preserved its high reputation even as it has been repeatedly guilty of serious failures in its basic newspaper function, at huge social cost. The classic illustration is provided in their own editorial “The Lie That Wasn’t Shot Down” (ed., June 18, 1988), which acknowledged that their earlier furious news-editorial-propaganda barrage of 1983 claiming a deliberate and knowing Soviet destruction of the civilian Korean airliner 007 was based on a lie. Significantly, the counter-evidence cited in the five-years-late editorial was not uncovered by the paper’s own staff, but by a congressman’s inquiry. So they swallowed an official lie that served the official party-line and ongoing process of demonization of the “evil empire,” but despite all their resources never got around to examining whether it was valid.

When this great newspaper is in the propaganda mode, which is often, and especially where foreign policy and “national security” matters are at issue, their biases are frequently blatant and even amusing. This

can often be read in their word usage and headline policy which discloses their bias at a glance. For example, their party-line hostility to Hugo Chavez has been steadfast, and even led them to editorialize in favor of the soon to be aborted 2002 coup-d'etat, with the editors claiming that "Venezuelan democracy is no longer threatened by a would-be dictator. Mr. Chavez, a ruinous demagogue, [who] stepped down after the military intervened and handed power to a respected business leader, Pedro Carmona" (ed., "Hugo Chavez Departs," April 13, 2002). The editors quickly changed their minds as the coup was reversed and the editors were subjected to sharp criticism for unprincipled behavior, acknowledging that Chavez's "forced departure last week drew applause at home and in Washington...which we shared, [but] overlooked the undemocratic manner in which he was removed. Forcibly unseating a democratically elected leader, no matter how badly he has performed, is never something to cheer." (ed., "Venezuela's Political Turbulence," April 16, 2002.) But the editors had cheered it, and had misrepresented the facts: the "ruinous demagogue" didn't "step down," his performance had not been "ruinous" as had been, for example, Yeltsin's in Russia, lauded by the editors, and ending democracy does not terminate a threat to democracy, either in Venezuela in 2002 or Chile back in 9/11/73.

The incident revealed that the establishment party-line bias of NYT editors runs deeper than their commitment to democracy. More recently, William Neuman's "Chavez, After Treatment for Cancer, Gets His Bluster Back and Flaunts It" (Jan. 22, 2012), is a simple and easily replicable illustration of the institutionalized presence of an anti-Chavez bias. "Bluster" and "flaunts" are snarl words that the paper wouldn't use for high-level US or UK politicians, but are standard for a Chavez.

This kind of language would also not be used to describe Argentinian state terrorists of the years of military rule (1976-1983), or Augusto Pinochet in Chile, at least during the time when they were in power. (For illus-

trations, see my *The Real Terror Network*, pp. 184-193.) It was amusing to see that the December 11, 2006 NYT obituary for Pinochet by Jonathan Kandell was entitled "Augusto Pinochet, 91, Dictator Who Ruled by Terror in Chile, Dies." While he was in power the NYT very rarely referred to him as a "dictator," and I believe they never said that he "ruled by terror." But with Pinochet dead and long out of power the paper can combine "dictator" and "rule by terror" in the very title of an article on him.

The official party-line is now hostile to Vladimir Putin, and surely not because of any undemocratic or corruption factors, which were perfectly acceptable and even encouraged in the Yeltsin and early Putin years, with the editors describing Yeltsin's 1996 electoral victory as "A Victory for Russian Democracy" (July 4, 1996), which it certainly wasn't, but it was a triumph of a man who was taking our orders. No, Putin's problem is his decline in willingness to take orders, and notably his resistance to the US-NATO push for clienthood and subservience on a global basis, with Russia, like China, constituting an alternative potential center of power. The result is that the NYT selects as newsworthy and pushes anything that will put Putin in a bad light.

Thus the trial and imprisonment of the "Pussy Riot" trio in 2012 is given intensive, page-one coverage, and with a characteristic slant and misinterpretation that meet the political demands for denigration, including outrage that a mere "stunt" attacking Putin results in a jail sentence. (David M. Herszenhorn, "Anti-Putin Stunt Earns Punk Band Two Years in Jail," Aug. 18, 2012.) That it was carried out in Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral, which invited police action, and that it was a police action sought by church authorities rather than political officials, is buried. The subtitle is "Trial of Three Women Put Intense Focus on Free Speech." But "Pussy Riot" members had carried out other actions elsewhere without jailing, and so had many others, so was it a challenge to free speech in Russia or was it a stunt that could be mobilized

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**The NYT has long been unfriendly to labor unions and in favor of “reform” here and across the globe, “reform” meaning “flexible” labor markets and more compliant or disappeared unions**  
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by anti-Putin (and pro-Western) forces as part of a larger propaganda campaign? Does this case tell us anything useful about free speech in Russia? Isn't it amazing to see it taken up by Amnesty International, Avaaz and Human Rights Watch with such aggressiveness, AI and HRW having neglected the important case of Julian Assange and the serious official US campaign against whistle-blowers and contributors of "material aid" (undefined) to terrorists? Would the NYT give such intensive and positive publicity to Americans interrupting church services to make a political point, or carrying out illegal acts of protest against US training-of-state-terrorists programs at the School of Americas or nuclear weapons facilities?

The Moscow protests against Putin have not only been featured heavily in the NYT, with photos, here also you can find language that is reserved for propaganda service. Thus a rally in Moscow is described as "vast" with a crowd of tens of thousands (the organizers claiming 120,000), and a challenge to Putin's authority, all within the single headline! (Ellen Barry and Michael Schwartz, "Vast Rally in Moscow Is a Challenge to Putin's Power," Dec. 24, 2011.) The same *Times* reporters write that "After Election Putin Faces Challenges to Legitimacy" (March 5, 2012). Putin received a larger percentage of the votes than did Bush or Obama, but you will not find the NYT mentioning any challenge to an elected US president's "legitimacy." Such language is reserved for hostiles.

The NYT has long been unfriendly to labor unions and in favor of "reform" here and across the globe, "reform" meaning "flexible" labor markets and more compliant or disappeared unions. This may strike people as implausible given the liberalism of the paper, but it is an establishment newspaper, and while it expresses regret that inequality has grown so great and may oppose crude attacks on labor, the underlying forces damaging labor and escalating inequality have been scanted or openly supported. The *Times's* leading liberal for many years, Anthony Lewis, was enthused

that Margaret Thatcher had put labor in its place, and he and the editors both supported the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement and castigated labor for opposing it.

The *Times* had only modest and scattered coverage of the Reagan-business community attacks on organized labor in the 1980s, even though many of these attacks were in violation of the law, and although they were badly weakening an important civil society institution that protects ordinary citizens both in the workplace and political arena and was arguably essential to a real rather than nominal democracy. Business Week wrote in 1994 that "over the past dozen years...US industry has conducted one of the most successful union wars ever," assisted by "illegally firing thousands of workers for exercising their right to organize." But you would hardly know this reading the *New York Times* (or for that matter its mainstream colleagues).

I was still intrigued to see a recent *Times* article by Liz Alderman with the title "Italy Wrestles With Rewriting Its Stifling Labor Laws" (August 11, 2012), with the word stifling repeated in the heading on the continuation page.

The article rests almost entirely on the claims by members of one Italian family business of their multiple difficulties: that they won't hire because they can't fire workers in a business downturn; that they can't fire for theft without an airtight case; that taxes to support an "extensive social welfare net" are burdensome; and workers can stay on three years beyond retirement age even if superior and cheaper replacements are available. No contesting or qualifying sources are introduced, so that the benefits of these laws and taxes to workers are not mentioned and evaluated. Only the costs to business and their further macro effects are deemed relevant. "Italy" and the NYT want "reform."

The *New York Times* is a great newspaper, but arguably this very fact helps make it a great instrument for the engineering of consent to lots of problematic and sometimes very nasty policies and pieces of reality. **CT**

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# Nothing more evil

War is *not* the answer to America's problems, writes **David Swanson**

A writer at the *Atlantic* named Conor Friedersdorf recently noted the level of evil many have been brought to support: "Tell certain liberals and progressives that you can't bring yourself to vote for a candidate who opposes gay rights, or who doesn't believe in Darwinian evolution, and they'll nod along. Say that you'd never vote for a politician caught using the 'n'-word, even if you agreed with him on more policy issues than his opponent, and the vast majority of left-leaning Americans would understand. But these same people cannot conceive of how anyone can discern Mitt Romney's flaws, which I've chronicled in the course of the campaign, and still not vote for Obama. Don't they see that Obama's transgressions are worse than any I've mentioned? I don't see how anyone who confronts Obama's record with clear eyes can enthusiastically support him.

I do understand how they might concluded that he is the lesser of two evils, and back him reluctantly, but I'd have thought more people on the left would regard a sustained assault on civil liberties and the ongoing, needless killing of innocent kids as deal-breakers."

Not long ago, I attended a speech by Obama, along with thousands of his adoring cheerleaders formerly known as citi-

zens. I asked him to stop killing people in Afghanistan, and the Secret Service asked me to leave. But, just now, I got a phone call from the local Obama office. They had my name because I'd picked up a ticket to attend the speech. The young woman wanted to know if I would come help phone other people. I asked if she was familiar with the president's kill list and his policy of killing men, women, and children with drones. She said she knew nothing about that but "respected my opinion." She hung up. Objecting to presidential murder is now an opinion, and willingness to be aware of its existence is an appendage to the opinion. If you don't object to presidential murder by Democrat, then you simply arrange not to know about it. Thus, in your opinion, it doesn't exist.

Some of my friends at this moment are in Pakistan apologizing to its government and its people for the endless murderous drone war fought there by our country. They're meeting with victims' families. They're speaking publicly in opposition to the crimes of our government. And my neighbors, living in some other universe, believe most fundamentally, not that one candidate will save us, not that the two parties are fundamentally opposed, not that a citizen's job is to vote, not that war is all right if it's meant well – although

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**Objecting to presidential murder is now an opinion, and willingness to be aware of its existence is an appendage to the opinion**  
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**We know that then-President George W. Bush proposed disguising a plane as belonging to the United Nations, flying it low, and trying to get Iraq to shoot at it**  
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they clearly believe all of those things – but, most fundamentally, they believe that unpleasant facts should simply be avoided. So, in a spirit of afflicting the comfortable to comfort the afflicted, here are a few from recent days.

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**War is a lie**

We know that in the past “defensive” wars have been intentionally launched by fraud or provocation. We know that many in our government want a war with Iran. We know that several years ago then-Vice President Dick Cheney proposed disguising US ships as Iranian and attacking other US ships with them. We know that then-President George W. Bush proposed disguising a plane as belonging to the United Nations, flying it low, and trying to get Iraq to shoot at it. We know that there was no Gulf of Tonkin incident, no evidence that Spain attacked the Maine, no doubt that the weapons and troops on board the Lusitania were public knowledge, no question that FDR worked hard to provoke an attack by Japan, and so on. And we know that Iran has not attacked another nation in centuries. So, it almost goes without saying that Washington warmongers are contemplating ways to get Iran to make the “first move.” Assassinating scientists hasn’t worked, blowing up buildings doesn’t seem to do it, cyber-war isn’t blossoming into real war, sanctions are not sanctioning armed resistance, and dubious accusations of Iranian terrorism aren’t sticking. Exactly what do we have to do to get ourselves innocently attacked by the forces of evil?

The Israel Lobby to the rescue! Patrick Clawson, Director of Research at the Washington Institute Of Near East Policy, blurted out the following on video at the end of last month:

“Crisis initiation is really tough. And it’s very hard for me to see how the United States president can get us to war with

Iran. . . . The traditional way America gets to war is what would be best for US interests. Some people might think that Mr. Roosevelt wanted to get us into World War II . . . . You may recall, we had to wait for Pearl Harbor. Some people might think Mr. Wilson wanted to get us into World War I. You may recall that he had to wait for the Lusitania episode. Some people might think that Mr. Johnson wanted to send troops to Vietnam. You may recall he had to wait for the Gulf of Tonkin episode. We didn’t go to war with Spain until the Maine exploded. And Mr. Lincoln did not feel he could call out the federal army until Fort Sumter was attacked, which is why he ordered the commander at Fort Sumter to do exactly that thing which the South Carolinians had said would cause an attack. So, if in fact the Iranians aren’t going to compromise, it would be best if somebody else started the war. . . . I mentioned that explosion on August 17th. We could step up the pressure. I mean, look people, Iranian submarines periodically go down. Someday one of them might not come up. Who would know why? [LAUGHTER FROM AUDIENCE] . . . . We are in the game of using covert means against the Iranians. We could get nastier.”

This is serious advocacy for manufacturing a “defensive” and “humanitarian” war. This is not a war critic or a Yes Men prankster. The position of most elected officials in Washington, including the President, fits well with this.

That position includes the ultimatum that Iran must cease doing what US National Intelligence Estimates say it is not doing, namely building nuclear weapons. The goal at the bottom of all of this is war. The purpose of the war is not related to any of the excuses for it. The purpose is something else entirely. But it’s ugly, so it’s easier not to look.

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**Human experimentation**

We often forget that war is the worst thing

there is. Hence our government's shift in policy back to outsourcing a lot of the torture and insourcing the "cleaner" approach of assassination without torture. Hence, also, our common fantasy that war can be used to solve a problem that is somehow worse than war.

We also forget that torturing people can be crueler than experimenting on them. Torture has been given an acceptance in the United States during the past decade that "human experimentation" has not. So, we are still capable of a bit of shock when a story comes out like this one: During the 1950s and 1960s the US Army sprayed zinc cadmium sulfide, apparently including radioactive particles, in poor neighborhoods in St. Louis and other cities, to test the results on the people who unknowingly breathed it.

At the end of World War II, the US military's Operation Paperclip brought nearly 500 Nazi scientists to the United States to work on US weaponry. Many view their influence on the nascent military industrial complex as critical to its sadistic and sociopathic tendencies ever since. In fairness to the Nazis, it's possible that they simply fit in well, serving the military of a nation with a long history of genocide, slavery, torture, and public deception.

I came across a member of Veterans For Peace recently who's been struggling many years as a result of experimental vaccines and drugs given to hundreds of thousands of US soldiers during the Gulf War. We also learned that every prisoner in the Guantanamo death camp has been given experimental drugs without their knowledge or at least without their consent.

And then there's this: "Congressional Probe Reveals Cover-Up of 'Auschwitz-Like' Conditions at US-Funded Afghan Hospital:

"A congressional investigation has revealed a top US general in Afghanistan sought to stall an investigation into abuse at a US-funded hospital in Kabul that kept

patients in, quote, 'Auschwitz-like' conditions. Army whistleblowers revealed photographs taken in 2010 which show severely neglected, starving patients at Da-wood Hospital, considered the crown jewel of the Afghan medical system, where the country's military personnel are treated. The photos show severely emaciated patients, some suffering from gangrene and maggot-infested wounds. For TV viewers of Democracy Now!, please be warned: these images are extremely graphic and may be disturbing."

**Nothing more than evil**

Here's what I'm trying to get at. If you try to think of something more evil than what we are now doing, you'll fail. Name your evil: destroying the earth's climate? President Barack Obama flew to Copenhagen to single-handedly derail any process for protecting the earth's atmosphere. The only way in which to fantasize about greater evil is quantitative, not qualitative. We could drop more bombs. We could starve more children. We could experiment on more prisoners. In fact, this is what Lesser Evilism amounts to. A Lesser Evilist today is not choosing less evil policies, but the same policies in what he or she hopes will be lesser amounts.

That might be a rational calculation within a polling place. But living it prior to and after an election, apologizing and cheering for one of two teams, as if self-governance were a spectator sport, is nothing other than complicity in the most hideous forms of cruelty and murder. That complicity is insidious. Evil begins to look like something else, because the Lesser Evilist, within his or her own mind, comes to view the Lesser Evil forces as good, if not glorious, if not saintly. **CT**

*David Swanson's books include "War Is A Lie." He blogs at <http://davidswanson.org> and <http://warisacrime.org>*

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# Syria, the story so far

William Blum ruminates on US politicians, ambassadors and soldiers

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**The story of the “imminent” invasion of Benghazi by Moammar Gaddafi’s forces last year was only propaganda to justify Western intervention**  
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**T**oday, many Americans are asking – indeed I ask myself,” Hillary Clinton said, “how can this happen? How can this happen in a country we helped liberate, in a city we helped save from destruction? This question reflects just how complicated, and at times, how confounding the world can be.”

The Secretary of State was referring to the attack on the American consulate in Benghazi, Libya September 11 that killed the US ambassador and three other Americans. US intelligence agencies have now stated that the attackers had ties to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

Yes, the world can indeed be complicated and confounding. But we have learned a few things. The United States began blasting Libya with missiles knowing they were fighting on the same side as the al-Qaeda types. Benghazi was and is the headquarters for Muslim fundamentalists of various stripes in North Africa. However, it’s incorrect to claim that the United States (aka NATO) saved the city from destruction. The story of the “imminent” invasion of Benghazi by Moammar Gaddafi’s forces last year was only propaganda to justify Western intervention.

And now the United States is intervening – at present without actual gunfire, as far as is known – against the government of Syria, with the full knowledge that they’re again on the same side as the al-Qaeda types. A rash

of suicide bombings against Syrian government targets is sufficient by itself to dispel any doubts about that. And once again, the United States is participating in the overthrow of a secular Mideast government.

At the same time, the Muslim fundamentalists in Syria, as in Libya, can have no illusions that America loves them. A half century of US assaults on Mideast countries, the establishment of American military bases in the holy land of Saudi Arabia, and US support for dictatorships and for Israel’s genocide against the Palestinians have relieved them of such fanciful thoughts. So why is the United States looking to forcefully intervene once again? A tale told many times – world domination, oil, Israel, ideology, etc. Assad of Syria, like Gaddafi of Libya, has shown little promise as a reliable client state so vital to the American Empire.

It’s only the barrier set up by Russia and China on the UN Security Council that keeps NATO (aka the United States) from unleashing thousands of airborne missiles to “liberate” Syria as they did Libya. Russian and Chinese leaders claim that they were misled about Libya by the United States, that all they had agreed to was enforcing a “no-fly zone”, not seven months of almost daily missile attacks against the land and people of Libya. Although it’s very fortunate that the two powers refuse to give the US another green light, it’s difficult to believe that they

were actually deceived last spring in regard to Libya. NATO doesn't do peacekeeping or humanitarian interventions; it does war; bloody, awful war; and regime change. And they would undoubtedly be itching to show off their specialty in Syria – perhaps even without Security Council blessing – except that NATO and the US always prefer to attack people who are exceptionally defenseless, and Syria has ballistic missile capabilities and chemical weapons.

It's likely that the American elections also serve to keep Obama from expanding the US role in Syria. He may have concluded that there are more votes in the Democratic Party base for peace this time than for waging war against his eighth (sic) country.

The propaganda bias in the Western media has been extreme. Day after day, month after month, we've been told of Syrian government attacks, using horrible means, almost invariably with the victims described as unarmed civilians; without any proof, often without any logic, that it was actually the government behind a particular attack, with the story's source turning out to be an anti-government organization; rarely informing us of similar behavior on the part of the rebel forces. In May, the BBC included pictures of mass graves in Iraq in their coverage of an alleged Syrian government massacre in Houla, Syria. The station later apologized for the pictures saying that they had been submitted to the BBC by a rebel group. On June 7, Germany's leading daily, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, citing opponents of Assad, reported that the Houla massacre was in fact committed by anti-Assad Sunni militants, and that the bulk of the victims were members of the Alawi and Shia minorities, which have been largely supportive of Assad.

According to a report of Stratfor, the private and conservative American intelligence firm with high-level connections, many of whose emails were obtained by Wikileaks: "most of the [Syrian] opposition's more serious claims have turned out to be grossly exaggerated or simply untrue." They claimed

"that regime forces besieged Homs and imposed a 72-hour deadline for Syrian defectors to surrender themselves and their weapons or face a potential massacre." That news made international headlines. Stratfor's investigation, however, found "no signs of a massacre", and warned that "opposition forces have an interest in portraying an impending massacre, hoping to mimic the conditions that propelled a foreign military intervention in Libya." Stratfor then stated that any suggestions of massacres were unlikely because the Syrian "regime has calibrated its crackdowns to avoid just such a scenario ... that could lead to an intervention based on humanitarian grounds."

Democracy Now – long a standard of progressive radio-TV news – has been almost as bad as CNN and al Jazeera (the latter owned by Qatar, an active military participant in both Libya and Syria). The heavy bias of Democracy Now in this area goes back to the very beginning of the Arab Spring. The program made some unfortunate choices in its mideast news correspondents, seemingly only because they spoke Arabic and/or had contacts in the region. Where have you gone Amy Goodman? RT (Russia Today) has stood almost alone amongst English-language television news sources in offering an alternative to the official Western line.

Michel Chossudovsky of Global Research, notes that "Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and now Syria are but a sequence of stops on a global roadmap of permanent war that also swings through Iran. Russia and China are the terminal targets." When the Syrian government is overthrown – and in all likelihood the Western forces will not relent until that happens – the al Qaeda types will be dominant in the Syrian version of Benghazi. The American ambassador would be well advised to not visit.

**Can you believe that I almost feel sorry for the American military?**

In Afghanistan, the US military has tried

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**So the Afghan army is trying something new, most likely with American input: a guide to the strange ways of the American soldier**  
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training sessions, embedded cultural advisers, recommended reading lists, and even a video game designed to school American troops in local custom. But 11 years into the war, NATO troops and Afghan soldiers are still beset by a dangerous lack of cultural awareness, officials say, contributing to a string of attacks by Afghan police and soldiers against their military partners. Fifty-one coalition troops have been killed this year by their Afghan counterparts. While some insider attacks have been attributed to Taliban infiltrators, military officials say the majority stem from personal disputes and misunderstandings.

So the Afghan army is trying something new, most likely with American input: a guide to the strange ways of the American soldier. The goal is to convince Afghan troops that when their Western counterparts do something deeply insulting, it's likely a product of cultural ignorance and not worthy of revenge.

The pamphlet they've produced includes the following advice:

- "Please do not get offended if you see a NATO member blowing his/her nose in front of you."
- "When Coalition members get excited, they may show their excitement by patting one another on the back or the behind. They may even do this to you if they are proud of the job you've done. Once again, they don't mean to offend you."
- "When someone feels comfortable in your presence, they may even put their feet on their own desk while speaking with you. They are by no means trying to offend you. They simply don't know or have forgotten the Afghan custom." (Pointing the soles of one's shoes at someone is considered a grievous insult in Afghanistan.)
- The guide also warns Afghan soldiers that Western troops might wink at them or inquire about their female relatives or expose their private parts while showering – all inappropriate actions by Afghan stan-

dards.

Hmmm. I wonder if the manual advises telling Afghan soldiers that urinating on dead Afghan bodies, cutting off fingers, and burning the Koran are all nothing more than good ol' Yankee customs, meaning no offense of course.

And does it point out that no Afghan should be insulted by being tortured in an American military prison since the same is done at home to American prisoners.

Most importantly, the Afghan people must be made to understand that bombing them, invading them, and occupying them for 11 years are all for their own good. It's called "freedom and democracy".

I almost feel sorry for the American military in Afghanistan. As I've written about the US soldiers in Iraq, they're "can-do" Americans, accustomed to getting their way, habituated to thinking of themselves as the best, expecting the world to share that sentiment, and they're frustrated as hell, unable to figure out "why they hate us", why we can't win them over, why we can't at least wipe them out. Don't they want freedom and democracy? ... They're can-do Americans, using good ol' American know-how and Madison Avenue savvy, sales campaigns, public relations, advertising, selling the US brand, just like they do it back home; employing media experts, psychologists, even anthropologists ... and nothing helps. And how can it if the product you're selling is toxic, inherently, from birth, if you're ruining your customers' lives, with no regard for any kind of law or morality, health or environment.

They're can-do Americans, used to playing by the rules – theirs; and they're frustrated as hell.

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**In case you're distressed about the possibility of a Romney-Ryan government, here's some good news:**

There are many people in the United States who are reluctant to be active against US

foreign policy, or even seriously criticize it, because a Democrat is in the White House, a man promising lots of hope and change. Some of them, however, might become part of the anti-war movement if a Republican were in the White House, even though pursuing the same foreign policy. And we can be sure the policy would be the same for there's no difference between the two parties when it comes to foreign policy. There's simply no difference, period, though each party changes its rhetoric a bit depending on whether it's in the White House or on the outside looking in.

Similarly, the movement for a national single-payer health insurance program has been set back because of President Obama. His health program is like prescribing an aspirin for cancer, but the few baby steps the program takes toward bringing the United States into the 21st century amongst developed nations is enough to keep many American health-care activists content for the time being, especially with Obama facing a tough election. They are satisfied with so little. With a Republican in the White House, however, there might be a resurgence of a more militant health-care activism.

Moreover, if the Republicans had been in power the past three years and done EXACTLY what Obama has done in the sphere of civil liberties and human rights, many Obamaites would have no problem calling the United States by its right name: a police state. I mean that literally. Not the worst police state in the history of the world. Not even the worst police state in the world today. But, nonetheless, a police state. Just read the news each day, carefully.

Sam Smith, editor of the *Progressive Review*, has written: "Barack Obama is the most conservative Democratic president we've ever had. In an earlier time, there would have been a name for him: Republican."

Oh but there's Social Security and Medicare, you say. Can Romney be trusted to not make serious cuts to these vital programs?

His choice of running mate, Paul Ryan, is practically a poster child for such cuts.

Well, can Obama be trusted to not make such cuts? Consider this recent comment in the New York Times: "[Obama] particularly believes that Democrats do not receive enough credit for their willingness to accept cuts in Medicare and Social Security."

As somebody once said, the United States doesn't need a third party. It needs a second party.

The only important cause that might significantly benefit from a Democratic administration is appointments to the Supreme Court, if there is in fact an opening. But does this fully override the benefits of Obama being out of office as outlined above?

Dear Reader: I truthfully do not want to be so cynical. Despite the quips, it's not really fun. But how else can one react to the Republicans and Democrats given their behavior at their recent conventions? If they can so obviously ignore the wishes of their own delegates, what can the average American citizen expect?

How many voters does it take to change a light bulb?

None. Because voters can't change anything.

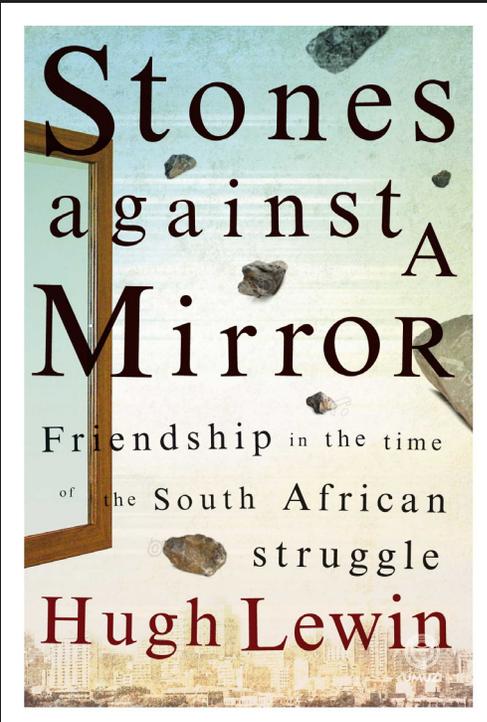
So what to do?

As I've said before: Inasmuch as I can't see violent revolution succeeding in the United States (something deep inside tells me that we couldn't quite match the government's firepower, not to mention its viciousness), I can offer no solution to stopping the imperial beast other than this: Educate yourself and as many others as you can, raising their political and ideological consciousness, providing them with the factual ammunition and arguments needed to sway others, increasing the number of those in the opposition until it raises the political price for those in power, until it reaches a critical mass, at which point ... I can't predict the form the explosion will take or what might be the trigger ... But you have to have faith. And courage.

**CT**

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**William Blum** is the author of *"Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II"*, *"Rogue State: a guide to the World's Only Super Power"* and *"West-Bloc Dissident: a Cold War Political Memoir"*. He can be reached at: [BBlum6@aol.com](mailto:BBlum6@aol.com) *CIA Interventions Since World War 2*  
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*"A fearless exploration into the deepest ground – the personal moral ambiguity of betrayal under brutal interrogation – actual betrayal of the writer by the most trusted associate and closest friend"*

– Nadine Gordimer

## STONES AGAINST A MIRROR

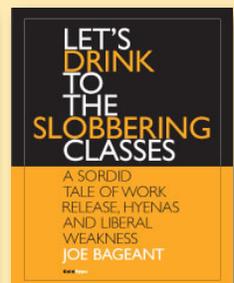
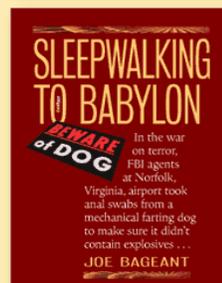
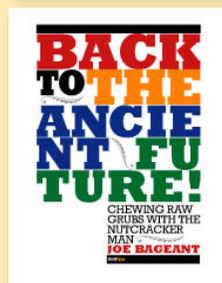
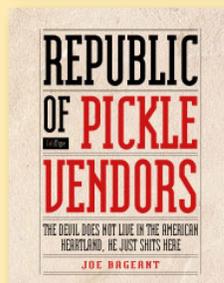
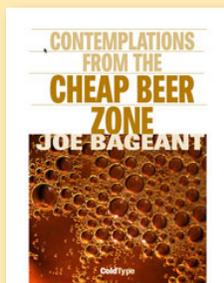
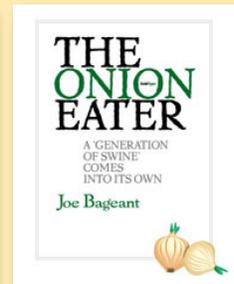
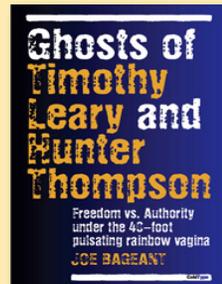
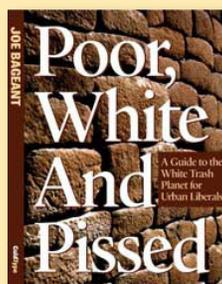
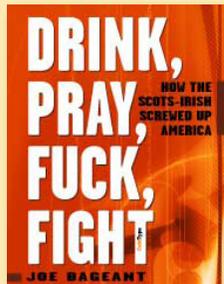
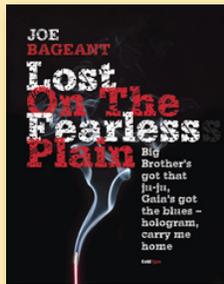
Friendship in the time of the South African struggle

HUGH LEWIN

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# What's going to last?

**Chellis Glendinning** interviews Bolivian author Juan Claudio Lechin, who talks about the conditions that predicate fascism and the morality of anarchism

**J**uan Claudio Lechín is Bolivian by blood – and by history. Juan Lechín the elder's dedication to insurgence against the feudal oppression of Bolivian workers paved the way for the Revolution of 1952 and some of the most radical labor laws ever attempted.

Lechín junior is normally a writer of fiction, film, and theater. His play *Fzernando, el caótico* took El Premio Nacional 98 José Machicado, and *La gula del picaflor* won El VI Premio Nacional de Novela in 2003. But Lechín's interest in politics is a life-long endeavor, dating back to the education he garnered growing up in the midst of national labor struggles, in exile three times in Venezuela and Peru during the dictatorships of the 1960s and '70s, as well as from a decades-long study of Marxism that began in childhood.

In recent years, Lechín has grown pre-occupied with the perception that fascism may be returning to Bolivia. In 2005, following years of fierce social movements, voters successfully elected the country's first indigenous president, former coca farmer and union leader Evo Morales Ayma.

Morales and his Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) party – which includes his *vicepresidente*, ex-guerrilla fighter Álvaro García Linera – promised to heal South America's poorest nation with a creative

blend of state socialism and indigenous values. But, in contrast to the hope that so many nurtured in 2005 – including anti-globalization activists, leftists, environmentalists, and Bolivians themselves – the Morales administration has forged a “proceso de cambio” featuring a new constitution that opens the way for endless reelection, blatant diminishment of freedom of the press, full-tilt industrialization including massive dams, new oil, gas, and lithium excavations, as well as high-tech corridors blasting through indigenous eco-reserves, and a tendency to dismiss, or in some cases violently repress, the nonstop protests that have arisen across the country.

*Las máscaras del fascismo: Castro, Chávez, Morales* (in Spanish by Plural Editores), Lechín's new book, audaciously compares the laws and political strategies that Fidel Castro, Hugo Chávez, and Morales himself have employed to congeal power with those of Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco.

The interview with Juan Claudio Lechín that follows took place on a day that a peaceful march to the capital initiated by indigenous communities was threatened by members of the MAS party wielding clubs and dynamite. Stationed between them, 900 policemen in full riot gear blocked passage, as officially stated,

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**Lechín's interest in politics is a life-long endeavor, dating back to the education he garnered growing up in the midst of national labor struggles, in exile three times in Venezuela and Peru during the dictatorships of the 1960s and '70s, as well as from a decades-long study of Marxism that began in childhood**  
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**Some Morales supporters started to shout that they were going to hang us! They threw dynamite into the Basilica de San Francisco cathedral, and we had to escape**  
.....

“to prevent violence,” although many citizens suspected the situation was a government setup to suppress the march. The issue? Native groups were exercising their constitutional right to protect sixty self-sufficient, sovereign communities and an ecology boasting thousands of plants and animals, including eleven endangered species, in their Territorio Indígena Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécura (TIPNIS) – in protest against the industrial superhighway the MAS government was constructing through their reserve. It was against this backdrop that Juan Claudio Lechín talked about governance in Latin America.

– Chellis Glendinning

**Chellis Glendinning:** *In the beginning of *Las máscaras del fascismo*, you speak of your fear to publish such a radical analysis. Can you explain that fear?*

**Juan Claudio Lechín:** Yes, it was a double fear: interior and exterior. I come from the Left. I studied Marxism from the age of twelve because, at the time, it gave an answer to my feelings, to my thirst for freedom and a vision of equalitarian society. But, after years, I started to get disappointed by the Soviet Union and to no longer believe certain magical aspects of the theory. I started to watch reality instead. I studied colonial history, and I began to lose many of the dogmas that Marxism had installed.

Then, one day in 2006, a group of citizens made a hunger strike against Evo Morales’s imposition on the national assembly to ratify a new constitution – which, of note to us, would give him the right to run for countless reelections – even though the required 66 percent vote was impossible to attain. Some Morales supporters started to shout that they were going to hang us! They threw dynamite into the Basilica de San Francisco cathedral, and we had to escape.

We human beings are structured by a

certain flow of ideas that get installed in our souls. When somebody breaks that flow – in order not to be empty – we tend to become unsettled.

At that moment I realized that there could be a correlation between what was unfolding in Bolivian and European fascism, so I studied fascism for four and a half years. It was an existential fear – to leave a corpus of ideas and jump into the emptiness in order to make sense of reality.

The external fear was to lose friends. Maybe my close friends of the Left would feel my book as an aggression, a punch. We human beings are structured by a certain flow of ideas that get installed in our souls. When somebody breaks that flow – in order not to be empty – we tend to become unsettled.

**Chellis Glendinning:** *So what are these ideas that could unsettle people?*

**Juan Claudio Lechín:** I make two premises: one, that fascism is a pragmatic model of taking absolute power, and two, that twelve conditions exist to detect the presence of fascism. I go on to analyze six characters: Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco in Europe; Castro, Chávez, and Morales in Latin America.

To my surprise, the correlations among them are extremely high. All of these leaders destroy a political system – the parliament, the judicial system, the laws, the army, media, all the freedoms that, at least in Latin America, the crowds fought for two centuries to capture. Free unions, free elections, free political speech.

Whether fascists use one tool, like eliminating freedom of speech, or another, like they will kill you, they aim to drive the leader and his party to absolute power – whereas in a liberal society and with autonomous regions or federalism, the division of power offers a path toward diminishing concentration. At least, peo-

ple have a means for fighting for justice because, in fascism, protest becomes impossible.

**Chellis Glendinning:** *Can you give examples?*

**Juan Claudio Lechín:** There's the issue of reelection. In the Sierra Maestra, Castro touted the constitution of 1940 as a tool of both freedom against Batista and future social reorganization. But as soon as he took power, he followed Franco, working toward a more daring document that was finally launched in 1976. In it, Castro would hold power indefinitely, without being burdened by elections.

In 1999, a year after Chávez took power, he initiated a new constitution, and one of its purposes was to guarantee unchallenged, continuous leadership. It was denied – but seven years later Evo Morales made the same effort, imposing 51 percent majority rule over the former 66 percent. Even in Cuba you need two-thirds.

Then there's freedom of the press. Fifty years ago, Castro began a process to allow only government newspapers, TV stations, and the like. Today the world has become more complex because instant communications have made it smaller, so you cannot do that so easily. Instead, Chávez installed 800 government-controlled broadcast stations in order to diminish private media presence.

The only one he couldn't fight was Radio Caracas, so he closed it down. The Venezuelan government also started to shrink the available frequencies so that whenever the license of an unwanted radio or TV station expired, the station had to close.

In 2011, the same was imposed in Bolivia with this new telecommunications law. As soon as he gained power, Evo put in 400 new radio stations, acquired equipment for a state-run TV station, bought up newspapers, and little by little decreased freedom

of expression while enlarging the presence of government-controlled media.

**Chellis Glendinning:** *A national uprising by the press and journalism departments of the universities occurred in 2010 and 2011. They were fighting against the government's new laws clamping down on freedom of expression. One law opened the way for closing down media venues based on criteria to be judged by the government. There were protest marches, national petitions, placards written in their own blood, caskets into which microphones and writing tablets had been thrown, microphones hung from nooses to mourn the death of journalism.*

**Juan Claudio Lechín:** Yes, a sort of “spring rebellion,” that was – with the same result as the one in Prague: defeat. Sadly, the protests were politically ineffective. They had good intentions, of course, and lots of passion, but there was no possibility of stopping the government and no internal direction to organize alternative proposals for freedom of speech.

In the end fascists will even take control of culture, of music, art, writing; the power never stops its expansion.

We could go over and over this administration's attempt to control every institution – judicial, legal, parliament, autonomies, political parties, the army, police. I put charts in the book to show the parallels in policies between European fascist states and these governments in Latin America. In the end fascists will even take control of culture, of music, art, writing; the power never stops its expansion.

**Chellis Glendinning:** *Have you personally had experiences that add to your insights?*

**Juan Claudio Lechín:** Many. For instance, in 2005 I went to Venezuela to present a novel. A close friend of mine who works in the parliament told me that Hugo Chávez wanted to meet with me, given that my

As soon as he gained power, Evo put in 400 new radio stations, acquired equipment for a state-run TV station, bought up newspapers, and little by little decreased freedom of expression

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from my position  
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called fascism  
or communism  
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father was a famous political figure in Bolivia. I sent the message back that I was on a more personal visit. My friend reported that Chávez was insistent. “Don’t be surprised,” he said, “if he calls you at three in the morning.”

He never called.

Weeks later I learned, through my friend’s father, that the secret service had uncovered something they considered threatening: I had signed a letter against the 2003 Cuban execution of three citizens for trying to escape.

It’s now common knowledge that the secret service in Venezuela is Cuban; the headquarters for Venezuelan passports, IDs, and security checks even resides in Havana. But, at the time, I was astonished. I didn’t want to believe it.

**Chellis Glendinning:** *Given that survival in a world of nation-states demands participation in a race for military and economic power, authoritarian governments grow out of the necessity for controlling society in order to compete in that contest. This is a political pressure. Fascism’s rise sociologically can also be seen as an extension of the mechanization required to maintain the mass technological society that has resulted from imperialist expansion. What’s your understanding of how the drive to absolute power emerges?*

**Juan Claudio Lechín:** I see it as a product of the clash between the onrush of modernity and the familiarity of feudalism. I believe that, over the last four centuries, two political philosophies have been at battle. One is monarchy, whether it’s feudal, absolutist, or whatever; the other is liberalism that can be constitutional, presidential, etc. These two systems have been waging a constant war, on the one side for the centralization of power, and on the other, for redistribution of power.

The rest, like communism or fascism, are in-between forms that some societies

acquire in the transition between these two. The moment in which fascism appears is when the values and institutions of liberal society have not yet been fully installed and there exist masses boasting a traditional mindset.

Fascism emerges from a social unconscious intent on re-establishing mentalities that people are familiar with – and this installation carries the novelty of being realized by a *caudillo* and leaders from the common people using a revolutionary discourse.

**Chellis Glendinning:** *Reading your book, one may become confused. The system you present as a backdrop for sanity against fascism is liberalism. Yet in the North many progressive activists have long since rejected liberalism, and certainly neo-liberalism. What do you mean by liberalism?*

**Juan Claudio Lechín:** Liberalism is a complex system. It has its political side, with its emphasis on liberties and deconstruction of power. But then there is the economic side: capitalism with its two opposing faces, the small owner and the transnational. Liberalism has its failures, of course.

I am not a liberal! But, from my position living inside dictatorships and military juntas in Latin America, I have witnessed that liberalism offers a better chance for people to succeed at protest than this shell of feudalism called fascism or communism. In it, nothing is possible. Too, liberalism is a young system; it’s still being created. One can intervene, propose, make it happen.

**Chellis Glendinning:** *Yet, in the book, you show your outrage at the excesses occurring in Latin America with illustrations that appear to favor rightist political agendas. What are your politics?*

**Juan Claudio Lechín:** I’m not from the Right or the Left. In fact, while the right

wing of liberalism is part of the system, so is the left wing. This is an ancient confrontation. To my mind, the big mistake of most of twentieth-century political philosophy has been to consider communism as the Left and liberalism as the Right, when liberalism actually originated as the revolutionary system that confronted the monarchic concentration of power. And communism, as it's existed, fosters concentration of power and destruction of liberties.

At this point, I think that there are very few left or right wings in Latin America. The two are overlapped, mixing speech and beliefs, traditions and impulses. The Right in Bolivia is petty, has no vision, and occupies a place of false importance in order that the Left can have its scary enemy.

The Left is filled with small, egotistical fascists trying to solve their personal darkneses of childhood with adrenaline addiction, while playing knights against its heretics in what, in the midst of global modernity, amounts to an unimportant country. And the poor? The *indigenas*? They are just stairs to climb on.

For me, political thought precedes any actions I take. If I am mistaken in my choices, at least I can be honest with myself.

**Chellis Glendinning:** So, would you call yourself an anarchist?

**Juan Claudio Lechín:** Yes. I'm an anarchist because I've lived my life with a high level of freedom. I make decisions not because of self-interest, but because I feel morally compelled. I've never worked in any government although, in the last thirty years, I've been asked to join every one of them. Like Tuto Quiroga's. Even Evo Morales invited me to run as the MAS candidate for Prefect of La Paz.

Politically speaking, anarchism has taken many forms. In all of them it's a state-

ment against authority and for freedom – and when I say freedom, it's not what is understood in the US, like freedom to buy in Saks or at Bloomingdale's. It's a freedom of being, of becoming towards a life based on solidarity and love.

**Chellis Glendinning:** Given your thoughts about anarchism and freedom, it's appropriate that you dedicate *Las mascararas del fascismo to your father. Who was he?*

**Juan Claudio Lechín:** My father was a union leader for over forty years. During his era, the unions inside Bolivia had all the political tendencies – communists, anarchists, liberals, Maoists, Trotskyites, nationalists.

And all kinds of Bolivians were members – peasants, taxi drivers, women, blind people, miners. It was a rough time. We had dictatorships, and for survival other unions throughout Latin America were intertwined with international powers like corporations and governments.

For his efforts, my father was imprisoned and exiled and prosecuted. But always, he had two quests. One was to maintain a united union. The other was to gain true citizenship for the people.

At his funeral an old woman embraced his coffin, crying and shouting, "He taught us what vacations are! What social security is! He taught us to be humans!" At that point I saw that, for all the ideological infighting, what was going to last was that people were able to fight for their rights and their dignity. **CT**

**Chellis Glendinning lives in Bolivia.** She is a psychotherapist specializing in recovery from traumatic stress and the author of five books. "Her *Off the Map: An Expedition Deep into Empire and the Global Economy*" and "Chiva: A Village Takes on the Global Heroin Trade" both won the US National Federation of Press Women book award in nonfiction.

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**I'm an anarchist because I've lived my life with a high level of freedom... and when I say freedom, it's not what is understood in the US, like freedom to buy in Saks or at Bloomingdale's**  
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# Growth is the problem

Chris Hedges on the end of the world as we know it

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**Consumer debt cannot continue to grow as house prices decline to realistic levels.**  
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**T**he ceaseless expansion of economic exploitation, the engine of global capitalism, has come to an end. The futile and myopic effort to resurrect this expansion – a fallacy embraced by most economists – means that we respond to illusion rather than reality. We invest our efforts into bringing back what is gone forever. This strange twilight moment, in which our experts and systems managers squander resources in attempting to re-create an expanding economic system that is moribund, will inevitably lead to systems collapse. The steady depletion of natural resources, especially fossil fuels, along with the accelerated pace of climate change, will combine with crippling levels of personal and national debt to thrust us into a global depression that will dwarf any in the history of capitalism. And very few of us are prepared.

“Our solution is our problem,” Richard Heinberg, the author of *The End of Growth: Adapting to Our New Economic Reality*, told me when I reached him by phone in California. “Its name is growth. But growth has become uneconomic. We are worse off because of growth. To achieve growth now means mounting debt, more pollution, an accelerated loss of biodiversity and the continued destabilization of the climate. But we are addicted to growth. If there is no growth there are insufficient tax rev-

enues and jobs. If there is no growth, existing debt levels become unsustainable. The elites see the current economic crisis as a temporary impediment. They are desperately trying to fix it. But this crisis signals an irreversible change for civilization itself. We cannot prevent it. We can only decide whether we will adapt to it or not.”

Heinberg, a senior fellow at the Post Carbon Institute, argues that we cannot grasp the real state of the global economy by the usual metrics – GDP, unemployment, housing, durable goods, national deficits, personal income and consumer spending – although even these measures point to severe and chronic problems.

Rather, he says, we have to examine the structural flaws that sit like time bombs embedded within the economic edifice. US household debt enabled the expansion of consumer spending during the boom years, he says, but consumer debt cannot continue to grow as house prices decline to realistic levels.

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**Toxic portfolios**

Toxic assets litter the portfolios of the major banks, presaging another global financial meltdown. The Earth’s natural resources are being exhausted. And climate change, with its extreme weather conditions, is beginning to exact a heavy economic toll

on countries, including the United States, through the destruction brought about by droughts, floods, wildfires and loss of crop yields.

Heinberg also highlights what he calls “the highly dysfunctional US political system,” which is paralyzed and hostage to corporate power. It is unable to respond rationally to the crisis or solve “even the most trivial of problems.”

“The government at this point exacerbates nearly every crisis the nation faces,” he said. “Policy decisions do not emerge from deliberations between the public and elected leaders. They arise from unaccountable government agencies and private interest groups. The Republican Party has taken leave of reality. It exists in a hermetically sealed ideasphere where climate change is a hoax and economic problems can be solved by cutting spending and taxes. The Democrats, meanwhile, offer no realistic strategy for coping with the economic unraveling or climate change.”

The collision course is set. It is now only a matter of time and our personal response.

“It could implode in a few weeks, in a few months or maybe in a few years,” Heinberg said, “but unless radical steps are taken to restructure the economy, it will implode. And when it does the financial system will seize up far more dramatically than in 2008. You will go to the bank or the ATM and there will be no money. Food will be scarce and expensive. Unemployment will be rampant. And government services will break down. Living standards will plummet. ‘Austerity’ programs will become more draconian. Economic inequality will widen to create massive gaps between a tiny, oligarchic global elite and the masses. The collapse will also inevitably trigger the kind of instability and unrest, including riots, that we have seen in countries such as Greece. The elites, who understand and deeply fear the possibility of an unraveling, have been pillaging state resources to save

their corrupt, insolvent banks, militarize their police forces and rewrite legal codes to criminalize dissent.”

If nations were able to respond rationally to the crisis they could forestall social collapse by reconfiguring their economies away from ceaseless growth and exploitation. It remains possible, at least in the industrialized world, to provide to most citizens the basics – food, water, housing, medical care, employment, education and public safety.

This, however, as Heinberg points out, would require a radical reversal of the structures of power. It would necessitate a massive cancellation of debt, along with the slashing of bloated militaries, heavy regulation and restraints placed on the financial sector and high taxes imposed on oligarchic elites and corporations in order to reduce unsustainable levels of inequality.

While this economic reconfiguration would not mitigate the effects of climate change and the depletion of natural resources it would create the social stability needed to cope with a new post-growth regime. But Heinberg says he doubts a rational policy is forthcoming. He fears that as deterioration accelerates there will be a greater resolve on the part of the power elite to “cannibalize the resources of society in order to prop up megabanks and military establishments.”

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### Community security

Survival will be determined by localities. Communities will have to create collectives to grow their own food and provide for their security, education, financial systems and self-governance, efforts that Heinberg suspects will “be discouraged and perhaps criminalized by those in authority.” This process of decentralization will, he said, become “the signal economic and social trend of the 21st century.” It will be, in effect, a repudiation of classic economic models

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**As deterioration accelerates there will be a greater resolve on the part of the power elite to “cannibalize the resources of society in order to prop up megabanks and military establishments”**

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Localism will soon be our fate. It will also be our strategy for survival

such as free enterprise versus the planned economy or Keynesian stimulus versus austerity. The reconfiguration will arise not through ideologies, but through the necessities of survival forced on the poor and former members of the working and middle class who have joined the poor. This will inevitably create conflicts as decentralization weakens the power of the elites and the corporate state.

Joseph Tainter, an archeologist, in his book *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, provides a useful blueprint for how such societies unravel. All of history's major 24 civilizations have collapsed and the patterns are strikingly similar, he writes. The difference this time around is that we will unravel as a planet.

Fatal expansion

Tainter notes that as societies become more complex they inevitably invest greater and greater amounts of diminishing resources in expanding systems of complexity. This proves to be fatal.

"More complex societies are costlier to maintain than simpler ones and require higher support levels per capita," Tainter writes. The investments required to maintain an overly complex system become too costly, and these investments yield declining returns. The elites, in a desperate effort to maintain their own levels of consumption and preserve the system that empowers them, through repression and austerity measures squeeze the masses harder and harder until the edifice collapses. This col-

lapse leaves behind decentralized, autonomous pockets of human communities.

Heinberg says this is our fate. The quality of our lives will depend on the quality of our communities. If communal structures are strong we will be able to endure. If they are weak we will succumb to the bleakness. It is important that these structures be set in place before the onset of the crisis, he says.

This means starting to "know your neighbors." It means setting up food banks and farmers' markets. It means establishing a local currency, carpooling, creating clothing exchanges, establishing cooperative housing, growing gardens, raising chickens and buying local. It is the matrix of neighbors, family and friends, Heinberg says, that will provide "our refuge and our opportunity to build anew."

"The inevitable decline in resources to support societal complexity will generate a centrifugal force," Heinberg said. "It will break up existing economic and governmental power structures. It will unleash a battle for diminishing resources. This battle will see conflicts erupt between nations and within nations. Localism will soon be our fate. It will also be our strategy for survival. Learning practical skills, becoming more self-sufficient, forming bonds of trust with our neighbors will determine the quality of our lives and the lives of our children." CT

Chris Hedges' latest book is "Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt," co-authored with artist and writer Joe Sacco

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# Bibi's crazy UN speech

Medievalist poses as champion of 'modernity,' says Justin Raimondo

It's no wonder the Israeli Foreign Ministry initially held back from releasing a transcript of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech to the UN General Assembly at the end of last month: Bibi's wackiness doesn't bear close scrutiny. Perhaps "wacky" isn't quite the right word for his 40-minute peroration, during which he pulled out a bomb "diagram" and a red marker to illustrate where he would draw a "red line" defining the outer limits of Iran's nuclear program. Cartoonish is more like it. The cartoonish quality of the bomb drawing underscored the content and tone of the speech, which was the jeremiad of a radical ideologue rather than anything one would expect from a statesman:

*"Today a great battle is being waged between the modern and the medieval. Israel stands proudly with the forces of modernity. We protect the right of all our citizens, men and women, Jews and Arabs, Muslims and Christians, all are equal before the law."*

Israel, which privileges its priestly caste, has a state religion, and bases its national mythology on a "promise" from G-d, is as medieval as any of its neighbors. Aside from being a lie, however, this statement is interesting because it evokes the very same supremacist spirit that animates the controversial pro-Israel public relations campaign launched by the Jewish state's extremist American supporters. Posters in the pub-

lic transport system, from New York to San Francisco, proclaim:

*"In any war between the civilized man and the savage, support the civilized man. Support Israel. Defeat jihad."*

No wonder the Israeli consulates in New York and San Francisco won't disavow those vile subway posters: Pamela Geller is the new public face of Israel.

Yes, Israel protects the rights of all citizens – unless they're Palestinians who happen to own property coveted by the "settlers," in which case it doesn't. And the key word here is citizens: of course, the Palestinians in the occupied territories are not citizens, but helots, with no rights, and no protection from fanatical Jewish fundamentalists who have launched hundreds of attacks on their homes, and sought to displace them at every opportunity, with the active complicity of the Israeli government.

## Sinking lower

This idea that Israel represents "modernity" is rich, considering that every day Israeli society is sinking lower into the morass of religious and cultural fundamentalism, a regression that has not gone unnoticed in the West. Bibi opened his speech with biblical references, describing Jerusalem as the "eternal capital" of Israel and declaring that "the Jewish state will live forever." Yet as we

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Netanyahu went on to cite the nonexistent “record of Iranian aggression without nuclear weapons” – an odd claim, since Iran hasn’t attacked a single one of its neighbors since the Battle of Thermopylae

secularists know, nothing lives “forever,” and the idea of a city being the “eternal” capital of anything is a metaphor, at best, at worst a dangerous delusion. If this is the “modern” then one wonders how much it differs from the “medieval.” But let’s not linger too long over the obvious. Bibi rants on:

*“Militant Islam has many branches, from the rulers of Iran with their revolutionary guards to al-Qaeda... but they’re all rooted in the same soil. It’s not whether this fanaticism will be defeated, but how many lives will be lost before it’s defeated. Nothing could imperil my country more than arming Iran with nuclear weapons. To imagine what the world would be like with a nuclear Iran, imagine what the world would be like with a nuclear al-Qaeda. There’s no difference.”*

The Israeli Prime Minister may have been addressing the UN General Assembly, but he was really talking to the Americans, whose fear and loathing of the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks can always be counted on to raise them to new levels of hysteria. Outside that context, however, equating the Iranians with Al Qaeda makes about as much sense as likening the late unlamented Saddam Hussein to Osama bin Laden – and, hey wait, didn’t we hear that equation made endlessly in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq? Yet this was not a time for subtlety from the Israeli Prime Minister – the cartoon “bomb” ended all hope of that – but for the crudest sort of propaganda, which is, of course, war propaganda.

**Imagine the impact**

Imagine if Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, who addressed the UN that day minutes before Netanyahu took the stage, had said: “Militant Judaism has many branches, from the Washington offices of AIPAC to the center of Jewish power in Tel Aviv – but they’re all rooted in the same soil” of intolerance? Picture him conjuring images of violent Jewish “fanaticism” – not a hard task,

given what is happening in Israel today. If he had done so, Abbas would have been denounced in every Western capital as the 21st century incarnation of Hitler.

Netanyahu went on to cite the nonexistent “record of Iranian aggression without nuclear weapons” – an odd claim, since Iran hasn’t attacked a single one of its neighbors since the Battle of Thermopylae. The country did fight one war in modern times, when it was attacked by Iraq, which was being backed by the United States. However, it’s necessary to remember that war propaganda has no need of facts: only emotionally-charged evocations of rage – and fear:

*“Given this record of Iranian aggression without nuclear weapons, just imagine an Iran with nuclear weapons. Who among you would feel safe in the Middle East? Who’d be safe in Europe? Who’d be safe in America? Who’d be safe anywhere?”*

That this alleged champion of “modernity” should base his case on fearmongering should come as no surprise: hasn’t fear been the leitmotif of all the “modern” ideologies of aggressive nationalism? Fear of the Other, of the barbarian at the gates – the “savage” who, at the first opportunity, will tear your throat out with his bare teeth – is what keeps ideologues like Netanyahu and his American co-thinkers in business.

Those Eye-ranians, says Bibi, aren’t like the rest of us, which is why deterrence won’t work. “Iran’s apocalyptic leaders” are awaiting the return of the Mahdi, a holy man, whose reappearance is supposed to occur after a devastating war:

*“Militant jihadists are not secular Marxists. Militant jihadists behave very differently. There were no Soviet suicide bombers.”*

Correct me if I’m wrong, but aren’t the Israelis also awaiting the return of Someone Special, a Messiah who will lead them out of the wilderness and establish the Kingdom of Jerusalem as His earthly domain? Militant jihadists may not be secular Marxists – but then again, militant Zionists aren’t, either. I would no more trust nuclear bombs

in Bibi's hands than I would in Ahmahdinejad's – the difference being that the former is actually in possession of such weapons.

Which brings us to the absurdity of this lecture by the leader of the only nuclear-armed country in the region: here is a nation which refuses to even admit it acquired nukes long ago, and which disdains the Nonproliferation Treaty, making the case for war against a neighbor that has indeed signed the NPT and is abiding by its requirements.

That treaty gives Tehran the right to develop nuclear power. Furthermore, there is zero evidence Iran is embarked on a nuclear weapons program: our own intelligence community tells us they gave that up in 2003 and show no signs of resuming it. Their own religious and political leaders have denounced the possession of nuclear weapons as sinful: the Israelis, on the other hand, haven't bothered reassuring us they would never use the nuke they won't admit they have.

**Rational world**

In a rational world, Israel would be in the dock, answering for its unwillingness to come out of the nuclear closet and admit what the whole world knows by now. Indeed, Bibi could give us some insight into exactly how Israel stole acquired the materials to build its formidable nuclear arsenal – since, according to recently declassified documents, he was directly involved.

In the world in which we are living, however, in which the innocent are put on trial and the guilty sit in judgement, the situation is quite different. In that world, the leader of a tiny nation entirely dependent on US largesse takes to the UN podium to issue his marching orders to Washington. Here is my “red line,” says Bibi – daring not only the Iranians but also the Americans to cross it.

Think of Netanyahu's UN oration as just another Romney campaign speech, in which

the GOP presidential candidate says Tehran must not be allowed to get “one turn of the screwdriver away” from joining the nuclear club. According to Netanyahu, Iran is nearly at that point today, and will have a nuclear weapon in less than a year if the US fails to act.

This is technical nonsense, but then again the truth has nothing to do with war propaganda: to the average American, the mere possession of weapons-grade uranium means all the Iranians have to do is plug it in and hurl it, slingshot style, in the general direction of Israel. This is an impression Israeli propagandists would dearly love to inculcate in the American public, and they have the great advantage of relying on general ignorance of the technical details. Good luck explaining to Mr. Average American why it would take a good four years after they've weaponized their nuclear material for the Iranians to create a usable nuke.

The ticking-bomb theme, which has been used to justify everything from torture to the invasion of Iraq, permeates Israeli propaganda in the US and was a central theme of Bibi's speech. His message was clear: “the hour is getting late.” We must act without giving too much thought to the possible consequences. Don't delay, don't think, act now – before the fraud is exposed, and we discover that – as in the case of the Iraqis – those “weapons of mass destruction” were just a figment of our easily manipulated collective imagination. **CT**

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In a rational world, Israel would be in the dock, answering for its unwillingness to come out of the nuclear closet and admit what the whole world knows by now

# Forget Iran, it's all about Obama

Jonathan Cook discusses the myth of the US-Israel special bond

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**Politicians may prefer to express undying love for Israel, but the US security establishment regards Israel as an unfaithful partner**  
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It is possibly the greatest of American political myths, repeated ad nauseam by presidential candidates in their election campaigns. President Barack Obama has claimed that the United States enjoys a special bond with Israel unlike its relations with any other country. He has called the friendship “unshakeable”, “enduring” and “unique”, “anchored by our common interests and deeply held values”.

His Republican rival, Mitt Romney, has gone further, arguing that there is not “an inch of difference between ourselves and our ally Israel”. A recent Romney election ad, highlighting his summer visit to Israel, extolled the “deep and cherished relationship”.

But, while such pronouncements form the basis of an apparent Washington consensus, the reality is that the cherished friendship is no more than a fairy tale. It has been propagated by politicians to mask the suspicion – and plentiful examples of duplicity and betrayal – that have marked the relationship since Israel’s founding.

Politicians may prefer to express undying love for Israel, and hand over billions of dollars annually in aid, but the US security establishment – at least, in private – regards Israel as an unfaithful partner.

The distrust has been particularly hard to hide in relation to Iran. Israel has been putting relentless pressure on Washington, ap-

parently in the hope of manoeuvring it into supporting or joining an attack on Tehran to stop what Israel claims is an Iranian effort to build a nuclear bomb concealed beneath its civilian energy programme.

While coverage has focused on the personal animosity between Obama and the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, the truth is that US officials generally are deeply at odds with Israel on this issue.

The conflict burst into the open recently with reports that the Pentagon had scaled back a joint military exercise, Austere Challenge, with the Israeli military that had been billed as the largest and most significant in the two countries’ history.

The goal of the exercise was to test the readiness of Israel’s missile-defence shield in case of Iranian reprisals – possibly the biggest fear holding Israel back from launching a go-it-alone attack. The Pentagon’s main leverage on Israel is its X-band radar, stationed in Israel but operated exclusively by a US crew, that would provide Israel with early warning of Iranian missiles.

A senior Israeli military official told *Time* magazine what message the Pentagon’s rethink had conveyed: “Basically what the Americans are saying is, ‘We don’t trust you.’”

But discord between the two “unshakable allies” is not limited to Iran. Antipathy has been the norm for decades. Over the sum-

mer, current and former CIA officials admitted the US security establishment has always regarded Israel as its number one counter-intelligence threat in the Middle East.

The most infamous spy working on Israel's behalf was Jonathan Pollard, a naval intelligence officer who passed thousands of classified documents to Israel in the 1980s. Israel's repeated requests for his release have been a running sore with the Pentagon, not least because defence officials regard promises that Israel would never again operate spies on US soil as insincere.

At least two more spies have been identified in the past few years. In 2008 a former US army engineer, Ben-Ami Kadish, admitted that he had allowed Israeli agents to photograph secret documents about US fighter jets and nuclear weapons in the 1980s. And in 2006 Lawrence Franklin, a US defence official, was convicted of passing classified documents to Israel concerning Iran.

In fact, such betrayals were assumed by Washington from the start of the relationship. In Israel's early years, a US base in Cyprus monitored Israeli activities; today, Israeli communications are intercepted by a team of Hebrew linguists stationed at Fort Meade, Maryland. Documents released last month by the Israeli air force archives also reveal that Israel eventually identified mysterious high-altitude planes that overflew its territory throughout the 1950s as American U-2 espionage planes.

In a sign of continuing US caution, Israel has not been included in the coterie of countries with which Washington shares sensitive intelligence. The members of the "Five Eyes" group, consisting of the US, Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, promised not to spy on each other – a condition Israel would have flouted were it a member.

Indeed, Israel has even stolen the identities of nationals from these countries to assist in Mossad operations. Most notoriously, Israel forged passports to smuggle Israeli agents into Dubai in 2010 to assassinate Hamas leader Mahmoud Al Mabhouh.

Israel is far from a trusted ally in the US "war on terror". A former intelligence official told the Associated Press in July that Israel ranked lower than Libya in a list of countries helping to fight terrorism compiled by the Bush administration after September 11. So why all the talk of a special bond if the relationship is characterised by such deep mistrust?

Part of the answer lies in the formidably intimidating tactics of the pro-Israel lobby in Washington. Thomas Friedman, the *New York Times* columnist, spoke for a growing number of observers last year when he wrote that the US Congress was effectively "bought and paid for" by Israel's lobbyists.

That power was all too evident last month when the Democratic national convention adopted an amended policy designating Jerusalem as Israel's capital, in opposition to both international law and the vocal wishes of delegates.

But there is another, less spoken-of reason. Francis Perrin, the head of the French Atomic Agency in the 1950s and 1960s, when France was helping Israel develop a nuclear weapon against the wishes of the US, once observed that the Israeli bomb was really "aimed against the Americans".

Not because Israel wanted to attack the US, but because it realised that – once it possessed the only nuclear arsenal in the Middle East – the US would rarely risk standing in its way, however much its policies ran counter to US interests.

For that reason, if no other, Israel is determined to stop any rival, including Iran, from getting a nuclear weapon that would end its monopoly. **CT**

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**Jonathan Cook** won the *Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism*. His latest books are *Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East* (Pluto Press) and *Disappearing Palestine: Israel's Experiments in Human Despair* (Zed Books). His website is [www.jkcook.net](http://www.jkcook.net)

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**The most infamous spy working on Israel's behalf was Jonathan Pollard, a naval intelligence officer who passed thousands of classified documents to Israel in the 1980s**  
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# South Africa leads way on boycott plan

Ramzy Baroud analyses the shifting attitudes to trading with Israel

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South Africa is expectedly leading the way towards that new global paradigm shift, and others countries are following suit  
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Should Israel be worried? Very much so, for the age of total impunity is coming to an end. Critical voices of the Israeli occupation and mistreatment of Palestinians are rising – not only within civil society circles, but among world governments as well.

The picture may seem grim if seen through the prisms of the recent US Republican and Democratic National Conventions. But the world is not the United States' government, which is defined by self-serving politics and a quisling corporate media that often places Israeli interests over those of the US itself. Now with the decline of the US as an economic superpower, and as other countries and regional blocs jockey for an advanced position in the new world order, Israel is sure to suffer further isolation in coming years.

Almost daily new evidence is emerging to demonstrate this increasingly stark reality. Israel's friends are fully aware of this, as are Israeli politicians. The emerging new realization is that money and power are rarely enough to buy legitimacy. South Africa is expectedly leading the way towards that new global paradigm shift, and others countries are following suit.

Recently, South Africa's cabinet passed a decision requiring Israel to distinguish between products made in Israel and those made in illegal Jewish colonies in the West Bank. The decision was both politically

sound and morally consistent with the country's anti-apartheid legacy. It was also a natural progression of South Africa's policies, which have reflected impatience with Israel through the years.

It is clear that Israel has chosen the apartheid option, not just as a de facto outcome of its military policies, but through a decided legal and political pattern. South Africa's decision, however, was not just motivated by political necessity. Veterans of the anti-apartheid struggle have had numerous influences on the country's civil society. Even the new generation is intoned with a freedom discourse that unites most sectors of society. 'Freedom for Palestine' was a natural fit in that powerful discourse and no amount of Israeli propaganda has been enough to deter South Africans from standing in solidarity with Palestinians. The feelings are mutual.

The total output of Israeli trade with South Africa was modest to begin with. Since 2009, trade volumes dipped significantly, and political ties became colder than ever. This had much to do with the Israel war on Gaza (2008-09) and what was seen as an act of Israeli piracy against the Turkish ship the Mavi Marmara in May 31, 2011. South Africa, along with few other countries, withdrew its ambassador from Israel in protest of the deadly raid which killed nine peace activists.

The matter is of greater significance than dollars and cents. The latter will become a

major factor when a global boycott reaches a critical mass. The real danger is the precedence that South Africa continues to set, which will provide other countries with legal and political references.

Soon after South Africa's decision – which followed remarks made by various officials discouraging their nationals from visiting Israel, and was followed by another major university voting for divestment and boycott – pro-Israel officials have tried to mobilize. Denis MacShane, British MP and Policy Council member for 'Labour Friends of Israel', reacted by making dismaying and historically inconsistent parallels between South Africa and Nazi Germany. Writing in the *Jewish Chronicle* on September 6, Moira Schneider said that MacShane "likened the boycott of Israeli products to the *kauf nicht bei Juden* imperative of Nazi Germany."

"Criticism of Israel is perfectly legitimate, but we have to be clear that the new antisemitic trope is beyond the pale of legitimate criticism," he was quoted as saying. "The notion of Israel as an apartheid state is deliberately promoted because an apartheid state cannot exist."

While the flawed logic has been uttered numerous times in the past, MacShane's alarm now can be explained outside the political context of South Africa, but rather in terms of what is happening in his own country. Indeed, there has been a string of statements pointing at efforts underway in several European countries to enact laws relevant to the illegality of the Jewish settlements.

Some recent statements include British Foreign Office Minister Alistair Burt "dropp(ing) the strongest hint yet that the UK may be moving towards a ban on goods from illegal Israeli settlements." (The Electronic Intifada, July 5, 2012). Towards the end of last year, Ireland's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade renewed his country's commitment to the exclusion of settlement products from the EU. More recently, on September 5, Israel's daily Haaretz reported on

the Norwegian Foreign Minister's comments regarding the import of goods produced in the settlements, "which we consider illegal according to international law."

Still more, on September 7, the *Jerusalem Post* reported that "the European Union is considering instituting a ban on imports of products made in Israeli settlements, a Greek Foreign Ministry official was quoted as saying to a group of Israeli and Palestinian journalists in Athens..."

Such a shift in language would never have been achieved without the civil society mobilization that occurred in several countries. As in South Africa, governments are being held accountable by vigilant and tireless groups, collectively pushing for Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). They will not reduce their efforts until Israel changes course, respects international law, and frees Palestinians from decades-long military bondage.

Unable to fathom the global paradigm shift, Israeli politicians are responding with an incoherent strategy. Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman, Yigal Palmor accused the government of South Africa of 'exclusion and discrimination.' The Israeli government decried the "blatant discrimination," claiming it was "based on national and political distinction". Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon went even further, accusing South Africa of exactly that which was alleged of Israel. "Unfortunately it turns out that the changes that took place in South Africa over the years have not brought about basic changes in the country, and it remains an apartheid state," Ayalon said (*Jerusalem Post*, August 23).

But angry words aside, the world is changing. Israel, however, is digressing into a dark corner where racism and apartheid are still applied with impunity. Many Israelis are refusing to attest to their country's fall into the abyss. A wakeup call can only arrive when the world treats the Israeli government in the same way that South Africa's apartheid regime was once treated.

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**"Unfortunately it turns out that the changes that took place in South Africa over the years have not brought about basic changes in the country, and it remains an apartheid state"**  
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**Ramzy Baroud** ([www.ramzybaroud.net](http://www.ramzybaroud.net)) is an internationally-syndicated columnist and the editor of *PalestineChronicle.com*. His latest book is *My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story* (Pluto Press, London.)

**CT**

# Apartheid never died in South Africa

It inspired a world order upheld by force and illusion, writes **John Pilger**

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The wall known as apartheid was built for the benefit of the few, not least the most ambitious of the bourgeoisie  
.....

**T**he murder of 34 miners by the South African police, most of them shot in the back, puts paid to the illusion of post-apartheid democracy and illuminates the new worldwide apartheid of which South Africa is both an historic and contemporary model.

In 1894, long before the infamous Afrikaans word foretold “separate development” for the majority people of South Africa, an Englishman, Cecil John Rhodes, oversaw the Glen Grey Act in what was then the Cape Colony. This was designed to force blacks from agriculture into an army of cheap labour, principally for the mining of newly discovered gold and other precious minerals. As a result of this social Darwinism, Rhodes’ own De Beers company quickly developed into a world monopoly, making him fabulously rich. In keeping with liberalism in Britain and the United States, he was celebrated as a philanthropist supporting high-minded causes.

Today, the Rhodes scholarship at Oxford University is prized among liberal elites. Successful Rhodes scholars must demonstrate “moral force of character” and “sympathy for and protection of the weak, and unselfishness, kindness and fellowship”. The former president Bill Clinton is one, General Wesley Clark, who led the Nato attack on Yugoslavia, is another. The wall known as apartheid was built for the benefit of the few, not least the most ambitious of the bourgeoisie.

This was something of a taboo during the years of racial apartheid. South Africans of British descent could indulge an apparent opposition to the Boers’ obsession with race, and their contempt for the Boers themselves, while providing the facades behind which an inhumane system guaranteed privileges based on race and, more importantly, on class.

The new black elite in South Africa, whose numbers and influence had been growing steadily during the latter racial apartheid years, understood the part they would play following “liberation”. Their “historic mission”, wrote Frantz Fanon in his prescient classic *The Wretched of the Earth*, “has nothing to do with transforming the nation: it consists, prosaically, of being the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism rampant though camouflaged”.

This applied to leading figures in the African National Congress, such as Cyril Ramaphosa, head of the National Union of Mineworkers, now a corporate multi-millionaire, who negotiated a power-sharing “deal” with the regime of de F.W. Klerk, and Nelson Mandela himself, whose devotion to an “historic compromise” meant that freedom for the majority from poverty and inequity was a freedom too far. This became clear as early as 1985 when a group of South African industrialists led by Gavin Reilly, chairman of the Anglo-American mining company, met

prominent ANC officials in Zambia and both sides agreed, in effect, that racial apartheid would be replaced by economic apartheid, known as the “free market”.

Secret meetings subsequently took place in a stately home in England, Mells Park House, at which a future president of liberated South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, supped malt whisky with the heads of corporations that had shored up racial apartheid. The British giant Consolidated Goldfields supplied the venue and the whisky. The aim was to divide the “moderates” – the likes of Mbeki and Mandela – from an increasingly revolutionary multitude in the townships who evoked memories of uprisings following the Sharpville Massacre in 1960 and at Soweto in 1976 – without ANC help.

Once Mandela was released from prison in 1990, the ANC’s “unbreakable promise” to take over monopoly capital was seldom heard again. On his triumphant tour of the US, Mandela said in New York: “The ANC will re-introduce the market to South Africa.” When I interviewed Mandela in 1997 – he was then president – and reminded him of the unbreakable promise, I was told in no uncertain terms that “the policy of the ANC is privatisation”.

Enveloped in the hot air of corporate-speak, the Mandela and Mbeki governments took their cues from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. While the gap between the majority living beneath tin roofs without running water and the newly wealthy black elite in their gated estates became a chasm, finance minister Trevor Manuel was lauded in Washington for his “macro-economic achievements”. South Africa, noted George Soros in 2001, had been delivered into “the hands of international capital”.

Shortly before the massacre of miners employed for a pittance in a dangerous, British-registered platinum mine, the erosion of South Africa’s economic independence was demonstrated when the ANC government of Jacob Zuma stopped importing 42 per cent of

its oil from Iran under intense pressure from Washington. The price of petrol has already risen sharply, further impoverishing people.

This economic apartheid is now replicated across the world as poor countries comply with the demands of western “interests” as opposed to their own. The arrival of China as a contender for the resources of Africa, though without the economic and military threats of America, has provided further excuse for American military expansion, and the possibility of world war, as demonstrated by President Barack Obama’s recent arms and military budget of \$737.5 billion, the biggest ever. The first African-American president of the land of slavery presides over a perpetual war economy, mass unemployment and abandoned civil liberties: a system that has no objection to black or brown people as long as they serve the right class. Those who do not comply are likely to be incarcerated.

This is the South African and American way, of which Obama, son of Africa, is the embodiment. Liberal hysteria that the Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney is more extreme than Obama is no more than a familiar promotion of “lesser evilism” and changes nothing. Ironically, the election of Romney to the White House is likely to reawaken mass dissent in the US, whose demise is Obama’s singular achievement.

Although Mandela and Obama cannot be compared – one is a figure of personal strength and courage, the other a pseudo political creation -- the illusion that both beckoned a new world of social justice is similar. It belongs to a grand illusion that relegates all human endeavour to a material value, and confuses media with information and military conquest with humanitarian purpose. Only when we surrender these fantasies shall we begin to end apartheid across the world. **CT**

*John Pilger’s documentaries have won academy awards in both the UK and the US. His website is <http://johnpilger.com>*

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# Romnesia

A potent myth is being used to justify economic capture by a parasitic class, writes **George Monbiot**

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**As the developed nations succumb to extreme inequality and social immobility, the myth of the self-made man becomes ever more potent**  
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**W**e could call it Romnesia: the ability of the very rich to forget the context in which they made their money. To forget their education, inheritance, family networks, contacts and introductions. To forget the workers whose labour enriched them. To forget the infrastructure and security, the educated workforce, the contracts, subsidies and bail-outs the government provided.

Every political system requires a justifying myth. The Soviet Union had Alexey Stakhanov, the miner reputed to have extracted 100 tonnes of coal in six hours. The United States had Richard Hunter, the hero of Horatio Alger's rags-to-riches tales(1).

Both stories contained a germ of truth. Stakhanov worked hard for a cause in which he believed, but his remarkable output was probably faked(2). When Alger wrote his novels, some poor people had become very rich in the United States. But the further from its ideals (productivity in the Soviet Union's case, opportunity in the US) a system strays, the more fervently its justifying myths are propounded.

As the developed nations succumb to extreme inequality and social immobility, the myth of the self-made man becomes ever more potent. It is used to justify its polar opposite: an unassailable rent-seeking class, deploying its inherited money to finance the seizure of other people's wealth.

The crudest exponent of Romnesia is the Australian mining magnate Gina Rinehart. "There is no monopoly on becoming a millionaire," she insists. "If you're jealous of those with more money, don't just sit there and complain; do something to make more money yourselves – spend less time drinking, or smoking and socialising and more time working ... Remember our roots, and create your own success."(3)

Remembering her roots is what Rinehart fails to do. She forgot to add that if you want to become a millionaire – in her case a billionaire – it helps to inherit an iron ore mine and a fortune from your father, and to ride a spectacular commodities boom. Had she spent her life lying in bed and throwing darts at the wall, she would still be stupendously rich.

The rich lists are stuffed with people who either inherited their money or who made it through rent-seeking activities: by means other than innovation and productive effort. They're a catalogue of speculators, property barons, dukes, IT monopolists, loansharks, bank chiefs, oil sheikhs, mining magnates, oligarchs and chief executives paid out of all proportion to any value they generate.

Looters, in short. The richest mining barons are those to whom governments sold natural resources for a song. Russian, Mexican and British oligarchs acquired under-priced public assets through privatisation, and now run a toll-booth economy(4). Bank-

ers use incomprehensible instruments to fleece their clients and the taxpayer. But as rentiers capture the economy, the opposite story must be told.

Scarcely a Republican speech fails to reprise the Richard Hunter narrative, and almost all these rags-to-riches tales turn out to be bunkum. “Everything that Ann and I have,” Mitt Romney claims, “we earned the old-fashioned way”(5). Old-fashioned like Blackbeard perhaps. Two searing exposures in *Rolling Stone* magazine document the leveraged buyouts which destroyed viable companies, value and jobs(6), and the costly federal bail-out which saved Romney’s political skin(7).

Romney personifies economic parasitism. The financial sector has become a job-destroying, home-breaking, life-crushing machine, which impoverishes other people to enrich itself. The tighter its grip on politics, the more its representatives must tell the opposite story: of life-affirming enterprise, innovation and investment, of brave entrepreneurs making their fortunes out of nothing but grit and wit.

There is an obvious flip-side to this story. “Anyone can make it – I did without help” translates as “I refuse to pay taxes to help other people, as they can help themselves”. Whether or not they inherited an iron ore mine from daddy. In the article in which she urged the poor to emulate her, Gina Rinehart also proposed that the minimum wage should be reduced. Who needs fair pay if anyone can become a millionaire?

In 2010, the richest 1% in the United States captured an astonishing 93% of that year’s gain in incomes(8). In the same year, corporate chief executives made, on average, 243 times as much as the median worker (in 1965 the ratio was ten times lower, namely 24:1)(9,10). Between 1970 and 2010 the Gini coefficient, which measures inequality, rose in the United States from 0.35 to 0.44: an astonishing leap(11).

As for social mobility, of the rich countries listed by the OECD, the three in which men’s earnings are most likely to resemble their fa-

ther’s are, in this order, the UK, Italy and the US. If you are born poor or born rich in these nations, you are likely to stay that way. It is no coincidence that these three countries all promote themselves as lands of unparalleled opportunity.

Equal opportunity, self-creation, heroic individualism: these are the myths that predatory capitalism requires for its political survival. Romnesia permits the ultra-rich both to deny the role of other people in the creation of their own wealth and to deny help to those less fortunate than themselves. A century ago, entrepreneurs sought to pass themselves off as parasites: they adopted the style and manner of the titled, rentier class. Today the parasites claim to be entrepreneurs. **CT**

**Notes**

1. The Ragged Dick series.
2. <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/08/31/world/in-soviet-eager-beavers-legend-works-overtime.html>
3. <http://www.ipa.org.au/sectors/northern-australia-project/publication/2081/let%27s-get-back-to-our-roots>
4. Mike Lofgren uses this term in this fascinating article: <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/revolt-of-the-rich/>
5. <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/09/full-transcript-mitt-romney-secret-video>
- 6 <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/greed-and-debt-the-true-story-of-mitt-romney-and-bain-capital-20120829>
7. <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-federal-bailout-that-saved-mitt-romney-20120829>
8. Emmanuel Saez, 2nd March 2012. Striking it Richer: the Evolution of Top Incomes in the United States. <http://elsa.berkeley.edu/~saez/saez-UStopincomes-2010.pdf>
9. Joseph Stiglitz, 2012. *The Price of Inequality*. Allen Lane, London.
10. Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein and Heidi Shierholz. *The State of Working America 2008/2009*. Economic Policy Institute, cited by Joseph Stiglitz, as above.
11. <http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/23/was-greed-good/>

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**George Monbiot** is the author of “*Heat: How to Stop the Planet from Burning*”. Read more of his writings at <http://monbiot.com> This piece was originally published in the *Guardian*  
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# Romney blurts out truth about neo-cons

Presidential hopes may have been sunk by a rare moment of truth, writes **Linda McQuaig**

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**Vast sums have been spent on pricey think-tanks to develop pseudo-sophisticated theories about how the benefits of modern conservatism will “trickle down,” in the hopes the public won’t notice the benefits are actually gushing up**  
.....

**I**ronically, in the now-famous video that seems likely to end his political career, it could be said that Mitt Romney was speaking truth to power.

Of course, “speaking truth to power” is a phrase normally used to describe courageous souls who risk their own hides to take a principled stand challenging those in power – not exactly what Mitt was doing.

Rather, assuming he was speaking privately to like-minded multi-millionaires, the Republican presidential candidate told the \$50,000-a-plate what they wanted to hear: that he hasn’t any intention of helping the 47 per cent of Americans too poor to pay income tax. “My job is not to worry about those people.”

With this truthfulness caught on tape, Romney has probably done more than incinerate his own presidential bid. He has so vividly exposed the cynicism and greed that lies at the heart of what is now called “conservatism” that he may have inadvertently begun its undoing.

Once upon a time, “conservative” could be used to describe people – Winston Churchill, Dwight Eisenhower, Robert Stanfield, Joe Clark – who had a vision of society in which a privileged elite dominated but also had a responsibility to less fortunate citizens and to the broader “public good.”

But about 30 years ago, a new breed of

“conservative” slithered onto the political scene. Stealing the moniker of conservatism, this new breed embraced the inequality of traditional conservatism (driving it skyward) while unburdening itself of the responsibility for others and the public good.

This new breed has proved itself to be self-centred, greedy and indifferent to the public good.

John Kenneth Galbraith cut to the essence when he described this “modern” conservative as engaged in “the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness.”

Vast sums have been spent on pricey think-tanks to develop pseudo-sophisticated theories about how the benefits of modern conservatism will “trickle down,” in the hopes the public won’t notice the benefits are actually gushing up.

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**No intellectual honesty**

There never was intellectual honesty or coherence to modern conservatism, which is why Romney could cast half of Americans as freeloaders for failing to pay tax while using the Cayman Islands for his own massive tax avoidance schemes – the full details of which remain better hidden than the torsos of the Royal Family.

Modern conservatism – or neo-conservatism – has infected Canada too, coming to fruition under the Harper majority gov-

ernment, which has intervened aggressively on the side of corporations against working people, and dismantled vital environmental protections in order to enrich energy mega-corporations.

But could the Romney video finally allow the public to grasp the depth of cynicism not just in Romney but in the wealthy donors, who make up the backbone of the conservative movement? Despite their vastly privileged lives, they seem resentful of the freeloading lower orders, some of whom can be seen on film rushing about in white gloves dutifully serving the wealth creators.

**Koch slip-up**

Such pull-back-the-curtains moments are rare. Another intriguing one came to light recently in the discovery of letters written by multi-billionaire Charles Koch in 1973 when he was trying to lure Friedrich von Hayek, the Austrian guru of modern conservative economics, to accept a post at a Koch think-tank in California.

Koch, a key funder of the Tea Party and Romney's campaign (with a pledge to

spend \$400 million defeating Obama), has been obsessed for decades with dismantling the US Social Security system – America's central social program – and has been instrumental in getting it on the Republican hit list.

Yet in letters (recently reported in *The Nation*), Koch eagerly informs Hayek that he'll qualify for Social Security and related medicare benefits, so the medical costs connected to his gall bladder surgery will be covered.

Koch even sends Hayek a government pamphlet explaining how to apply for Social Security benefits – benefits that Koch has worked tirelessly to deny to millions of ordinary (freeloading) Americans.

It's time we stopped treating modern conservatives as proponents of a legitimate political philosophy and started treating them as greedy profiteers who – at least until now – have pulled off the biggest heist in modern times.

**CT**

*Linda McQuaig's column appears monthly in the Toronto Star. Contact her at [lmcquaig@sympatico.ca](mailto:lmcquaig@sympatico.ca)*

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