

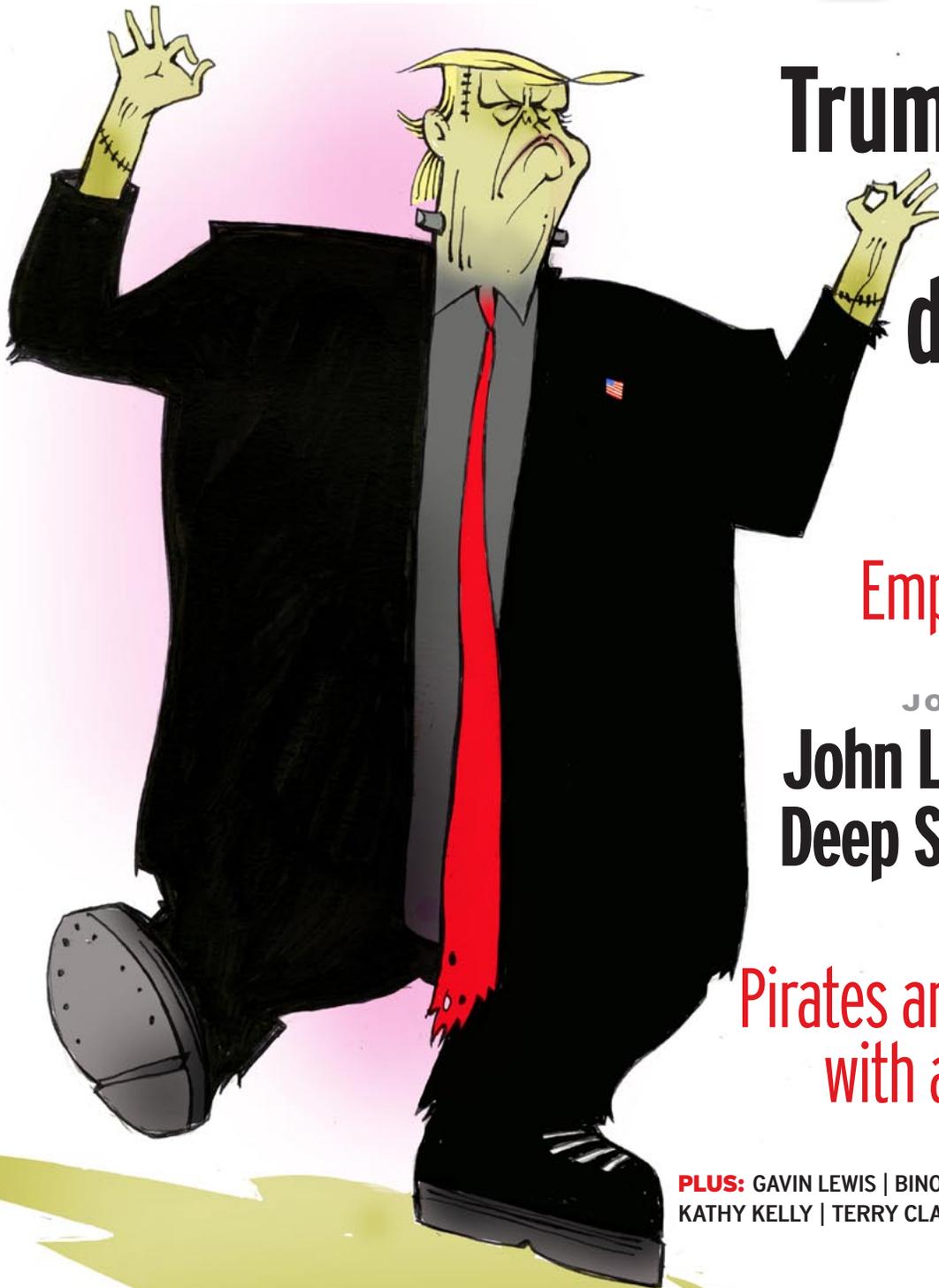
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# ColdType

ISSUE 192

WRITING WORTH READING ■ PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

MID-OCTOBER 2019



CJ HOPKINS

## Trumpenstein must be destroyed

TODD MILLER

## Trapped in an Empire of Borders

JOHN W WHITEHEAD

## John Lennon vs the Deep State Monster

TREVOR GRUNDY

## Pirates and adventurers with a licence to kill

**PLUS:** GAVIN LEWIS | BINOY KAMPMARK | ALINE KRIEGLER  
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# ColdType

Issue 192 | MID-October 2019

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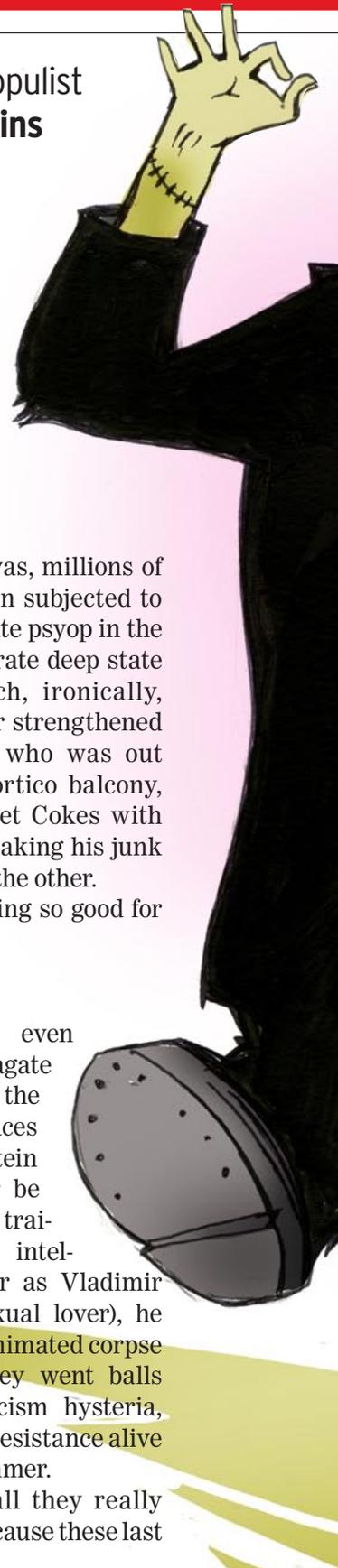
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The global capitalist ruling classes must either crush the ongoing populist insurgency or ... God knows where we go from here, writes **CJ Hopkins**

# Trumpenstein must be destroyed!



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**S**o here we go. Like a 1960s straight-to-drive-in Hammer Film Production, the 2020 campaign season has begun. Dig into your bucket of popcorn, pop the flap on your box of Good & Plenty, turn off your mind, and enjoy the show. From the looks of the trailer, it's going to be a doozy.

That's right, folks, it's the final instalment of the popular Trumpenstein horror movie series, TRUMPENSTEIN MUST BE DESTROYED! It will be playing, more or less around the clock, on more or less every screen in existence, until November 3, 2020 ... or until Trump takes that lonely walk across the White House lawn to the Marine One chopper and flies off to Mar-a-Lago in disgrace.

Here's a quick recap of the series so far, for those who may be joining us late.

When we last saw Trumpenstein he was out on the balcony of the White House South Portico in his Brioni

boxers, ripped to the gills on Diet Coke and bellowing like a bull elephant seal. Having narrowly survived the Resistance's attempts to expose him as a Russian intelligence asset (and the reanimated corpse of Adolf Hitler), he was pounding his chest and hollering angry gibberish at the liberal media like the Humongous in the second Mad Max movie.

The liberal mob was standing around with their torches and pitchforks in a state of shock. Doctor Mueller, the "monster hunter", had let Trumpenstein slip through his fingers. The supposedly ironclad case against him had turned out to be a bunch of lies made up by the Intelligence Community, the Democratic Party, and the corporate media.

Russiagate was officially dead. The President of the United States was not a Russian secret agent. No one was blackmailing anyone with a videotape of Romanian prostitutes peeing on a bed where Obama once slept. All that

had happened was, millions of liberals had been subjected to the most elaborate psyop in the history of elaborate deep state psyops ... which, ironically, had only further strengthened Trumpenstein, who was out there on the Portico balcony, shotgunning Diet Cokes with one hand and shaking his junk at the mob with the other.

It wasn't looking so good for "democracy".

**F**ortunately, even though Russiagate had blown up in the Resistance's faces and Trumpenstein could no longer be painted as a traitorous Russian intelligence asset (or as Vladimir Putin's homosexual lover), he was still the reanimated corpse of Hitler, so they went balls out on the fascism hysteria, which kept the Resistance alive through the summer.

Which was all they really needed to do. Because these last



three years were basically just a warm-up for the main event, which was always scheduled to begin this fall. Russiagate, Hitlergate, and all the rest of it ... it was all just a prelude to these impeachment hearings, and to the mass hysteria surrounding same, which the global capitalist ruling classes, the Intelligence Community, and the corporate media will be barraging us with until November 2020. The details don't really matter that much. They were always going to impeach him for something, and they were always going to do it now, and throughout the 2020 campaign season.

You do not honestly believe they are going to let him serve a second term, do you? He took them by surprise in 2016. That isn't going to happen again.

**S**eriously, take a moment and reflect on everything we've been subjected to since Hillary Clinton lost the election ... the unmitigated insanity of it all. The Russiagate hysteria. The Russian hacker hysteria. The Russian Facebook mind-control hysteria. The Hitler hysteria. The mass fascism hysteria. The anti-Semitism hysteria. The concentration camp hysteria. The white supremacist terrorism hysteria. Russian spy whales. Perfume assassins. The endless stream of fabricated "news" stories pumped out by the corporate media. Best-selling books, based on nothing. Comedians

singing hymns to former FBI directors on national television. Celebrities demanding CIA coups. Papers of record like the *New York Times* coordinating blatant propaganda campaigns. The list goes on, and on, and on.

All of this because one billionaire ass clown won an election without their permission?

**N**o, this was never just about Donald Trump, repulsive and corrupt as the man may be. The stakes have always been much higher than that. What we've witnessed over the last three years (and what is about to reach its apogee) is a global capitalist counter-insurgency, the goal of which is (a) to put down the ongoing populist rebellion throughout the West, and (b) to crush any hope of resistance to the hegemony of global capitalism ... in other words, a War on Populism.

Not that Donald Trump is a populist hero. Far from it. Trump is a narcissistic clown. He has always been a narcissistic clown. All he really cares about is seeing his face on television and plastering his name on everything in sight, preferably in huge gold letters. He got himself elected president by being cunning enough to recognise and ride the tsunami of populist anger that was building up in 2016, and that has continued to build throughout his presidency. It is not going away, that anger. The Western masses are no more thrilled about the global capi-



**The liberal corporate media are going to go full-Goebbels. They are going to whip up so much mass hysteria that people won't be able to think**

talist future today than they were when voted for Brexit, and Trump, and various other "populist" and reactionary figures.

Which is precisely why Trumpenstein must be destroyed, and why Brexit must not be allowed to happen ... or, if it does, why the people of the United Kingdom must be mercilessly punished. It is also why the Gilets Jaunes are being brutally repressed by the French police, and disappeared by the corporate media (while the Hong Kong protesters garner daily headlines), and why Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour

Party must be smeared as a hive of antisemites, and Tulsi Gabbard as an Assad-apologist, and why Julian Assange must be smeared and destroyed, and why Bernie Sanders must also be destroyed, and why anyone of any ilk (left, right, it doesn't matter) riding that wave of populist anger or challenging the hegemony of global capitalism and its psychotic, smiley-face ideology in any other way must be destroyed.

2020 is for all the marbles. The global capitalist ruling classes either crush this ongoing populist insurgency or ... God knows where we go from here. Try to see it through their eyes for a moment. Picture four more years of Trump ... second-term Trump ... Trump unleashed. Do you really believe they're going to let that happen, that they are going to permit this populist insurgency to continue for another four years?

They are not. What they are going to do is use all their power to destroy the monster ... not Trump the man, but Trump the symbol. They are going to drown us in impeachment minutiae, drip, drip, drip, for the next twelve months.

The liberal corporate media are going to go full-Goebbels. They are going to whip up so much mass hysteria that people won't be able to think. They are going to pit us one against the other, and force us onto one or the other side of a simulated conflict (Democracy versus the Putin-Nazis) to keep us from perceiving the actual conflict (Global Capitalism versus Pop-

ulism). They are going to bring us to the brink of civil war in order to prevent civil war. And, if that doesn't work, and Trump gets re-elected (or if it looks like he's going to get re-elected), they'll probably have to just go ahead and kill him.

**O**ne way or another, this is it. This is the part where the global capitalist ruling classes teach us all a lesson. The lesson they intend to teach us is the same old lesson that masters have been teaching slaves since the dawn of slavery. The lesson is, "abandon hope". The lesson is, "resistance is futile". The lesson is, "shut up, eat your

tofu, get back to work at your three gig jobs, service your school loans and your credit card debt, vote for who and what we tell you, and be grateful we don't fucking kill you. Oh, yeah ... and if you want to rebel against something, feel free to take up identity politics, or to march around town with posters of Saint Greta demanding that we stop destroying the planet. We'll get right on that, don't you worry".

What? You thought this had a happy ending, that Trumpenstein and the Bride of Trumpenstein were going to ride off into the orange sunrise at Mar-a-Lago in a Trump-branded golf cart, having made America

great again ... or that Bernie was going to storm the castle, vanquish Trumpenstein, and set up something resembling basic social democracy?

I told you it was a horror film, didn't I? **CT**

**CJ Hopkins** is an award-winning American playwright, novelist and political satirist based in Berlin. His plays are published by Bloomsbury Publishing (UK) and Broadway Play Publishing (USA). His debut novel, *ZONE 23*, is published by Snoggsworthy, Swaine & Cormorant Paperbacks. Reach him at [www.cjhopkins.com](http://www.cjhopkins.com) or [www.consentfactory.org](http://www.consentfactory.org)



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Springsteen's insistence that his characters' lives be understood as a part of their wider stories reflects same insight as that of philosopher, writes **Ron Beadle**

# Bruce Springsteen: An Aristotle for our times

**I**N the recently released film *Blinded by the Light*, Pakistani teenager Javed discovers commitment and courage through the music of Bruce Springsteen. Based on journalist Sarfraz Manzoor's 1980s memoir, the dreams and frustrations of a working-class boy from Luton, a few miles north of London, are given wings by the experience of another working-class boy from Freehold, New Jersey. Inspired, Javed shares his writings and his feelings.

The difficulty of retaining hope and virtue remains as much a feature of Springsteen's work in 2019 – when he has just enjoyed his 11th UK number one album – as it did when he made the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek* in 1975.

Much has been written about Springsteen – but as far as I know, nobody



COVER STAR: Bruce Springsteen hits the big-time. Below: Aristotle paid his dues a few years earlier.

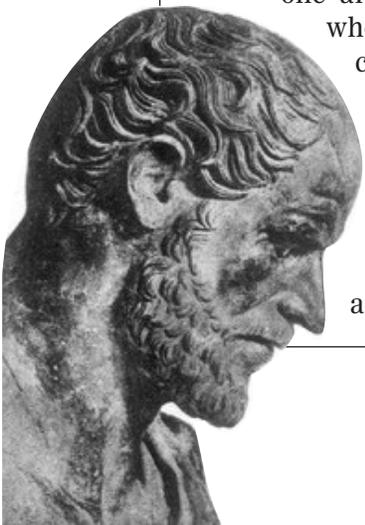
has suggested a connection with the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BC). But connections are there – in the centrality of virtue, friendship and community to lives well led. From the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment, Aristotle was often simply known as “The Philosopher”. His ideas were central to the development of Islamic and Christian philosophy and interest in his work has revived over the past decades.

**A**ristotle's works *The Politics* and *The Ethics*, are central to this revival. Two critical

features distinguish these works from their Enlightenment successors. The first is that thinking rightly requires us to reason towards the good – not just towards whatever we happen to want. The contrast with neoliberal economics, which presupposes that the individual be free to pursue their preferences, is stark. For Aristotle, desires must be directed towards genuine goods if they are to have legitimate claims on us.

The second is that ethics and politics go together – humans are “political animals” for whom a good life both benefits from and contributes to the community. The contrast with neoliberal politics, in which communities only have the claims that individuals grant them, could also not be starker.

The connections between Aristotle and Springsteen are best evidenced through the lens of contemporary moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre. More than anyone else, MacIntyre



Brue Springsteen on stage with the East Street Band in Glasgow on June 18, 2013.



Photo: Laura / flickr.com

has revived the idea that good lives require virtues that were central to Aristotle: wisdom, self-control, justice and courage – as well as the Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity.

But in most working lives – such as those in the rug mills, motor plants and plastics factories in which Springsteen’s father worked – such virtues were beside the point. As Springsteen writes in *The Promised Land* (1978):

*I've done my best to live the right way  
I get up every morning and go to work each day  
But your eyes go blind and your blood runs cold*

*Sometimes I feel so weak I just want to explode.*

**A**ccording to his autobiography, the young Springsteen wanted none of this – instead, he wanted a life of creativity and freedom: he was born to run. But while the working lives lived in his community alienated him, the community itself drew him back – he now lives just ten miles from his original hometown.

The music that enabled him to escape a life of industrial labour required him to develop both virtues and skills: the focus to spend thousands of

hours practising; the courage to risk failure, and the wisdom to seek partners and friends of the calibre of the E-Street Band, a working community of friends.

For Aristotle, true friendship is only available to the virtuous, those whose mutual regard goes beyond mutual enjoyment and usefulness, beyond death even. Springsteen captured this in his eulogy to Clarence Clemons, the longtime saxophonist in the E-Street Band, when he said that: “Clarence doesn’t leave the E-Street Band when he dies. He leaves when we die”.

Such commitment to one’s practice – and the enduring relationships this commitment

requires – demands adherence to the virtue of justice. So Springsteen’s recruitment of Clemons had nothing to do with race and everything to do with the magic that happened when they played together. But the novelty of their friendship in 1970s New Jersey was not lost on either of them. Prioritising the excellence of your craft means that race, gender, sexuality and anything else is irrelevant to your choices. Aristotelian commitments to equality are all about excellence.

Springsteen’s advocacy of social and especially racial justice – particularly in songs such as *American Skin: 41 Shots* – are married to his commitment to the defence of local communities, especially notable in *Death to my Hometown* where the bankers responsible for the 2008 financial crisis are described as:

*The greedy thieves who  
came around*

*And ate the flesh of  
everything they found  
Whose crimes have gone  
unpunished now  
Who walk the streets as free  
men now.*

**A**ccording to MacIntyre’s account, *After Virtue*, we need to understand our lives as being embedded in inherited narratives – and most of these, for most of us, and certainly for Springsteen and for Javed, are narratives of conflict. MacIntyre writes: “I can only answer the question ‘What am I to do?’ if I can answer the prior question ‘Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?’”

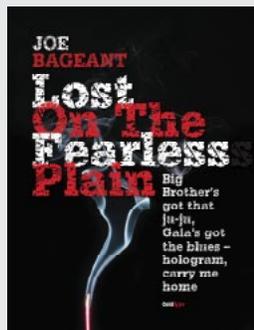
Springsteen’s characterised his work in just this way in his autobiographical Broadway show:

“I wanted to hear, and I wanted to know the whole American story. I wanted to know my story, your story, felt like I

needed to understand as much of it as I could in order to understand myself. Who was I and where I came from and what that meant, what did it mean to my family and where was I going and where were we going together as a people, and what did it mean to be an American and to be a part of that story in this place and in this time”.

For MacIntyre, the development of such narrative accounts is an essential part of Aristotelian self-understanding – one in which ethics and politics are inseparable. Springsteen’s insistence that his characters’ lives be understood as part of their wider stories reflects the same insight. **CT**

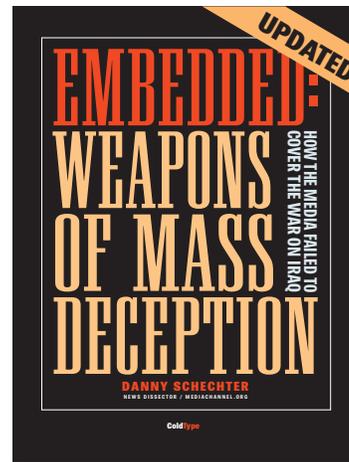
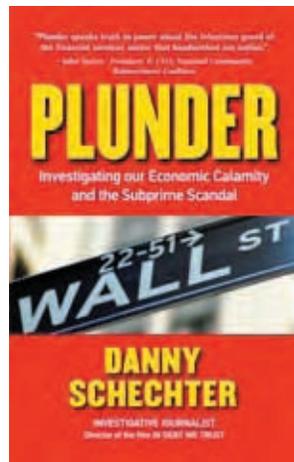
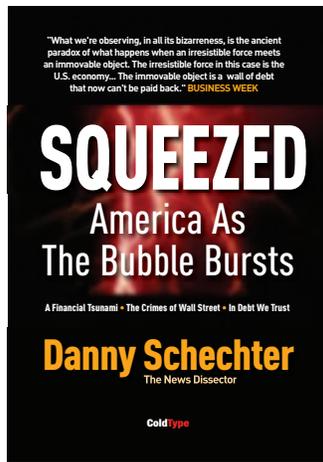
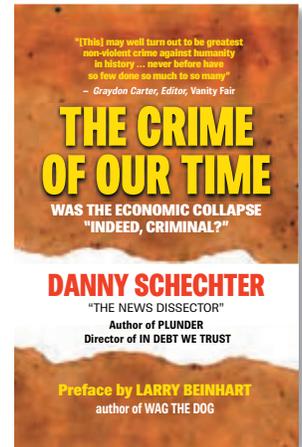
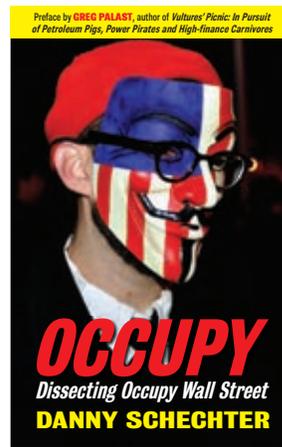
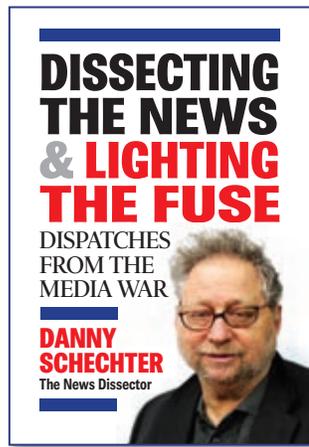
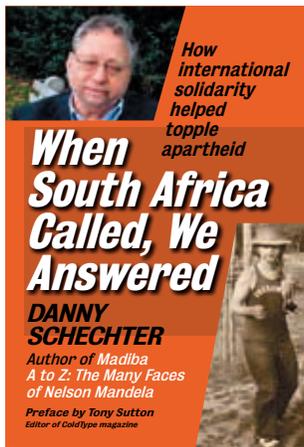
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# REMEMBERING DANNY SCHECHTER 1942 - 2015



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Danny Schechter, the NewsDissector, was acclaimed as one of the most politically astute journalists in recent memory. As a tribute to him and an appreciation of his work with ColdType, we are giving away free downloads of these seven books, all published in association with ColdType.net. Download them at:

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

**Gavin Lewis** discusses the women politicians who organised a petition to send Julian Assange to Sweden to face alleged sex charges

# Assange petition exposes hypocrisy of UK femocrats

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**O**N 25 November 2018, the former Australian prime minister Julia Gillard appeared on the BBC global news channel's 100 Women series. On the show's website, Gillard was described as having "used her experience to help advance women and girls around the world through the promotion of education and leadership".

Obviously the women she'd "helped" didn't include the refugees she attempted to dump on Malaysia, or those refugee women and children imprisoned in the internment camps Gillard had re-opened on Manus Island and Nauru.

In a similar vein, John Pilger notes "the views ... gathered from remarkable, despairing, eloquent Indigenous women of Gillard and her 'feminism' are mostly unknown or ignored or dismissed in this country", reflecting the fact that, under Gillard's regime, Indigenous youth incarceration occurred "at five times the rate of black South Africans during the

apartheid era". And this is only part of the picture.

Gillard's government also cut benefits to single parents, predominantly hurting working-class single mothers. In this respect, Gillard's rise to PM was as much a positive impact on women's structural marginalisation as Barack Obama's "Oh dear me" performative hand wringing in relation to America's Black Lives Matter human rights crisis was on racism.

**I**n Britain the equivalent to Gillard has been the former deputy leader of the Labour Party and similarly self-proclaimed feminist Harriet Harman. Harman voted for the Iraq War, for further airstrikes in Iraq in 2014, for air strikes on Syrian territory and for a no fly-zone over Libya that ultimately led to Hillary Clinton's brutal conquest of the country – Clinton, like Harman, describes/markets herself as a feminist. It scarcely needs to be said, and in contrast to Harman's/Clinton's politics,

that central to feminist debates has been a mixed peace activist/academic tradition – including early figures like Jane Adams, Ruth Adler, Vera Brittain and Betty Reardon through organisations like Women Strike for Peace (WSP) and current activists like Medea Benjamin – that has been in existence almost as long as there has been militarism and imperialism.

Harman, like Gillard, presided over cuts to the lone-parent benefit, again adversely affecting working-class women. Even within the corporate media, Peter Kosminsky's BBC Drama department production *The Project* (2002) situated the Harman benefit-cut announcement as the climactic moment when Labour's traditional support realised they had been betrayed by neoliberal entryism. This attack on benefits for lone mothers flew in the face of feminist traditions. The issue of support for women in society – particularly for their unpaid work – has been central since before the International Wages for House-

Women members of neoliberal elites who bomb, wound and harm the life chances of other women and their children are pejoratively referred to as 'femocrats'



FEMOCRATS: Jess Phillips (top right), Harriet Harman (right), Stella Creasy (left).

work campaigns of the early 1970s, initiated by such feminist figures as Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Silvia Federici, Brigitte Galtier and Selma James. This has subsequently broadened into a campaign that demands economic recognition of women's disproportionate unpaid labour as society's carers that is free from means testing.

Consequently, the Wages for Housework movement has provided the foundation for subsequent global Guaranteed

Minimum Income campaigns. Contrary to the debates stimulated by this feminist egalitarian tradition, thanks to "feminists" like Harman, Britain now gives more economic support to individual temporary foster parents than it does to help lone mothers keep their children with them. It is not surprising then that those women members of neoliberal elites who bomb, wound and harm the life chances of other women and their chil-

dren are pejoratively referred to in the United Kingdom as "femocrats".

Globally, free-speech campaigners and anti-war and anti-imperialist activists have been outraged by the British police seizure of Julian Assange from his position of sanctuary within the Ecuadorean embassy. In retaliation for WikiLeaks past critical journalism, the United States immediately applied for Assange's extradition on hacking charges. In a transparent public-relations attempt to overwrite this outrage, 70 British MPs wrote to the Home Secretary demanding that Sweden first be given the opportunity to extradite Assange for alleged past sex offences. This petition was organised by two politicians from the femocrat formation – Stella Creasy and Jess Phillips. Bringing an alleged sex offender before a court would be fine in principle, but in this instance it was hypocritically inconsistent on a number of levels.

At the time of the petition no such case existed, as Assange had previously been interviewed by visiting Swedish police and the investigation against him dropped. There was also the issue of the curious selectivity on the issue of sexist abuse by the femocrat elite, in particular, the deliberate blind eye turned to neoliberal political figures who had more obviously been accused of offences against women.

Brendan Cox was the hus-

band of murdered MP Jo Cox and is a prominent neoliberal UK third-sector technocrat. He and his wife were friends with Phillips, who petitioned against Assange.

In the face of a returning socialist tradition, the media often used Cox's subsequent bereaved status to augment his new Blair-type neoliberal golden-boy public persona. Yet in 2015, a year before his wife's death, a number of women colleagues at Save the Children where he worked made complaints about his inappropriate behaviour and threatened to go public when nothing was done. One such allegation was that Cox pinned a co-worker to a wall by her throat while telling her, "I want to fuck you".

Cox left the organisation before being subjected to scrutiny on this and other allegations. However, another woman, a senior US official who met him at a Harvard University event, made similar allegations against him, "of grabbing her by the hips, pulling her hair, and forcing his thumb into her mouth ... in a sexual way". In contrast to Assange's treatment, and despite a social-media furore, for nearly three years there was largely a media blackout on the story.

At last, in February 2018, a right-wing tabloid broke the embargo and reported the allegations, and other news organisations had to follow suit. Finally, "Cox apologised for the 'hurt and offence' caused by his past behaviour," and announced he was withdrawing from public

### **It could have been demanded that the MPs with 'collective cabinet responsibility' should face some form of deselection process or career censure**

life. Philips played down events, stating "You have to show how you're going to change the way you are in the future and I think Brendan, more so than many I've seen in this area, is actually trying to do that". Other femocrats made similar conciliatory noises.

**T**he blind eye turned to Cox is not unique. In 2010 neoliberal knight and Manchester City Council leader Sir Richard Leese spent 20 hours in a cell, having struck his teenage stepdaughter in the head. Despite having previously fronted a "violence in the home will not be tolerated" domestic-violence strategy, he was supported by his femocrat colleagues and quietly reinstated as leader. He is still council leader to this day, as the city newspaper has permitted no subsequent mention of the incident.

Similarly, while an MP, Simon Danczuk had rape allegations made against him, and spent two nights in a Spanish jail following an incident that hospitalised his ex-wife. He also sex-texted a teenage job applicant – something that after a very lengthy investiga-

tion resulted in his deselection as a Labour candidate. Danczuk was a prominent critic of Jeremy Corbyn. No one in the establishment bothered with petitions against him, nor in the short term were the allegations allowed to dent his sideline career as a newspaper columnist.

If in the femocrat universe only some people's alleged sexism is to be strategically targeted, it is also true that only some people qualify as victims. Certainly there's never been a parliamentary petition to bring to justice those politicians responsible for civilian deaths – including those of many women – in the course of actions taken under the new imperialism. There's not been a parliamentary petition even in regard to specific incidents such as the Baghdad massacre of civilians, including two Reuters journalists, which was revealed by Chelsea Manning and Assange via WikiLeaks. There's been no parliamentary furore even after it was revealed that torture went on under the Blair regime and that one of the victims – Fatima Bouchar – had been pregnant at the time of her rendition. To put this in perspective, it could have been demanded that the MPs – many of them women – with "collective cabinet responsibility" for these practices should face some form of deselection process or career censure.

What is significant is that those petition organisers attempting to narrow the public focus and debate exclusively

to issues of Assange's sexual past are closely linked to the type of reprehensible practices and sites of vested interest upon which WikiLeaks shines a spotlight.

Petition organiser Stella Creasy has "(g)enerally voted for use of UK military forces in combat operations overseas' and 'against investigations into the Iraq war". In the run-up to her vote to bomb Syria, Creasy smeared as an abuse of her and her staff a peace vigil outside her constituency office where Reverend Stephen Saxby and representatives of the local mosque led prayer. Phillips is being groomed by an intrusive corporate media as a "future leader" neoliberal replacement for Corbyn. Yet she seems to have little connection to the traditions of Labour or to feminism – even though she uses the latter label as part of her personal political marketing.

Historical Labour icon Beatrice Webb supported the cooperative movement, and championed trade unionism to the point of coining the phrase "collective bargaining". Phillips, by comparison, does paid side work for Michael Ashcroft, the Conservative peer, former deputy Tory party chairman and party donor, and infamous offshore tax avoider.

Phillips, like a number of her femocrat contemporaries, is an advocate of the Western imperialist agenda, which she spins as "intervention". When Tory prime minister Theresa May ordered air strikes on Syria, Phillips boasted, "I regret that

## Phillips is being groomed as a 'future leader' neoliberal replacement for Corbyn. Yet she seems to have little connection to the traditions of Labour or to feminism

were wasn't a parliamentary vote on this issue. But I wish to tell the prime minister and the house that she would have had my vote had I been asked to give it".

By contrast with Phillips' agenda of Western expansionism, Sylvia Pankhurst, representing that deep feminist tradition of peace and female solidarity, has a memorial in her name in Addis Ababa and was made an honorary Ethiopian for her role in championing the country's resistance against invading Italian fascist forces.

**M**any British femocrat neoliberals have not only harmed other women but entered politics content to market themselves as "Blair Babes", having only recently jumped on the feminist bandwagon. They have often been supported in spinning a neoliberal agenda by middle-aged columnists who have similarly spent much of their careers beginning articles with the phrase "I'm not some sort of boring feminist, but..." and have now been forced to brush the dust off their undergraduate notes on women's issues.

In the meantime, a generation of young Britons is suffer-

ing the consequences of reduced funding for the educational opportunities, workplace protections and access to welfare their grandparents had decades ago. This has happened because the Labour Party has been infiltrated by neoliberal fake socialists and fake social democrats, of which the femocrat phenomenon is a manifestation.

This reflects a global problem that the corporate media have refused to scrutinise, and indeed have been willing participants in. The political corruption and imperialist crimes revealed by WikiLeaks is material to which the corporate media not only turns a blind eye but supports with propaganda. Unsubstantiated speculation on Assange's sex life receives more coverage than a million dead Iraqis. Between media misdirection and femocrat outrage, Assange's chance of a fair hearing based on evidence seems ever diminishing. **CT**

*Gavin Lewis is a freelance British writer and academic. He has published in Britain, Australia and the United States on film, media, politics, cultural theory, race and representation. He has taught critical theory, film and cultural studies at a number of British universities. This essay first appeared in issue 160 (Oct-Nov 2019) of the Australian magazine Arena, edited by Alison Caddick, under the title, Julian Assange and the Femocracy. See <https://arena.org.au/julian-assange-and-the-femocracy-by-gavin-lewis>.*

Publishing executive **Terry Clark** became a press photographer at a time when loads of faces sold newspapers. Now retired, he's back on the streets with his trusty Nikon

## A passion for people

**16** **W**ORK was plentiful in the 1960's: walk out of a job one week, find another the next week. That's pretty much how I got into journalism at my hometown newspaper in rural Lincolnshire in England. I heard on the grapevine that there was a job going at the local rag. Ten minute interview: Can you do shorthand? Tick. Can you work a camera? Tick.

A few days later, I was out on my first job; half of a village church had fallen down which had the potential to make spectacular pictures. Training was minimal: "Look through the viewfinder and if there's no blurry bits it will be fine – just press the shutter", said my boss. I was on my way in a career that would span 50 years.

I worked on the theory that the more faces I put in the paper through my pictures the more people would buy the paper. I was soon asked to repeat the same formula across the

rest of the county when my company launched more small newspapers.

As the company grew I spent less and less time behind a camera and more time behind a desk, eventually taking a seat

on the board of directors. My trusty Nikon camera collection gathered dust for a few years until retirement gave me time to pursue photography once more.

People have always fascinated me. Landscapes don't: they're





the same from decade to decade. But people are always different.

People-watching through the lens is now universally known as street photography and that's very definitely where my passion is. I joined the digital

revolution years ago but still have a collection of film bodies; so this winter I plan to dust them down, load up some film and produce some grainy street pictures all without any help from Photoshop! **CT**

Performer plays a violin while singing and working a puppet at the same time on the cobbled streets of the old town of Whitby on the north east coast of England





**FACING PAGE:** Lincoln's magnificent cathedral proves a backdrop for the busker who is known to everyone as The Music Man .

**TOP:** A meeting on Brighton's Pier. Dubbed London by the sea, Brighton is a buzzing cosmopolitan city, yet still retains the traditional values which epitomise English seaside towns.

**RIGHT:** The man behind the lens, centre, caught in a piece of glass sculpture at a country house open day in rural Lincolnshire.





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**ABOVE:** The art of conversation seems to be fast disappearing in the pubs of Britain

**LEFT:** Wannabe boy band? Not quite. From the market town of Horncastle, we present Itchy Fingers, who play country blues at pubs and festivals.

**FACING PAGE:** Surrounded by all her possessions, an elderly street lady shelters in a quiet corner of a public garden facing London's Thames Embankment.



New book exposes the lies that ‘fair-minded British soldiers and their aristocratic overlords were on a civilising mission,’ writes **Trevor Grundy**

# Pirates and adventurers with a licence to kill

**S**o many words of Indian origin have entered the English language, but *loot*, the Hindustani word for plunder is perhaps the best known. Explaining how and why the word became commonplace is one of William Dalrymple’s objectives in *The Anarchy: The Relentless Rise of the East India Company*, a book that should be read by students looking for a new hate figure, now that Cecil Rhodes has been brought to his knees.

The activities of Rhodes and his royal-sponsored British South Africa Company (BSAP) fade into insignificance compared with the antics of Robert Clive and the royal-backed East India Company.

*Anarchy* is a systematic, beautifully written, well-researched and sourced, anecdote-filled, encyclopedic volume that rips to pieces centuries of lies hammered into the heads of generations of British schoolchildren. These lies claim that millions of impoverished “natives” were given

a chance to raise themselves from the dust by fair-minded British soldiers and their aristocratic overlords who were on a civilising mission.

The truth lies elsewhere, and thanks to Dalrymple we now have the full story about how a sub-continent was wrecked by a motley group of pirates and adventurers, an empire within an empire with a licence to kill.

We meet them first in 1601 when a ship called the Red Dragon slipped anchor at Woolwich at the start of a two-month voyage to Indonesia to exploit the new royal charter granted by Queen Elizabeth I.

Isolated from mainland Europe, partly because of Henry VIII’s break with Rome and aware that Britain could not match the naval might of Holland, Portugal and Spain, the East India Company’s directors were forced to scour the globe for markets. However, the ship’s compass was set not for Indonesia but for India. Soon, a trading-house acorn became a multi-national oak and the EIC

spread its tentacles towards anything worth grabbing and looting, moving into the opium trade which kept millions of people in China at death’s door for so long and with such disastrous consequences.

And fear that the EIC would play a major role in the American colonies was one of the factors that encouraged English settlers to dump tea into the sea at Boston harbour, sparking the American War for Independence.

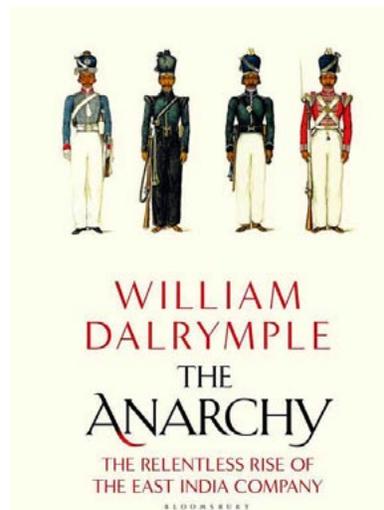
**I**n the beginning, the East India Company pirates were stunned by the wealth and splendour of the mighty Mughal Empire. The EIC had been authorised by its founding charter to “wage war” and it had controlled small areas around its Indian settlements since the 1630s, but by 1765 the Company had ceased to resemble a conventional trading corporation dealing in the silks and spices which so delighted the rich back home in England.

Having acquired the right to tax 20-million people, it was able to generate annual revenues in excess of £3-million (£315-million today). Dalrymple writes: “Within a few months, 250 Company clerks backed by the military force of 20,000 locally recruited Indian soldiers, had become the effective rulers of the richest Mughal provinces. An international corporation was in the process of transforming itself into an aggressive colonial power”.

By 1803, when its private army had grown to 200,000 men “it had swiftly subdued or directly seized an entire sub-continent. Astonishingly, this took less than half a century. The first serious territorial conquests began in Bengal in 1756; 47 years later, the Company’s reach extended as far north as the Mughal capital of Delhi and almost all of India south of that city was then effectively ruled from a boardroom in the city of London”.

Dalrymple continues: “We still talk about the British conquering India, but that phrase disguises a more sinister reality. It was not the British government that began seizing great chunks of India in the mid-18th-century but a dangerously unregulated private company headquartered in one small office, five windows wide, in London, and managed in India by a violent, utterly ruthless and intermittently mentally unstable corporate predator – Clive”.

The reason for EIC’s stunning success will be hotly



**THE ANARCHY**  
 The Relentless Rise  
 of the East India Company  
 William Dalrymple  
 Bloomsbury Publishing  
 £30

debated for years to come. Dalrymple suggests the most crucial factor of all was the support that the EIC enjoyed from British parliamentarians.

“The relationship between them grew steadily more symbiotic throughout the 18th-century until eventually it turned into something we might today call a public-private partnership. Returned nabobs like Clive used their wealth to buy both MPs and parliamentary seats – the famous Rotten Boroughs. In turn, Parliament backed the Company with state power.”

**A** good proportion of the loot of Bengal went directly into Robert Clive’s pocket and he returned to Britain with a personal fortune then valued at £234,000 that made him the

richest ‘self-made’ man in Europe.

The author reminds us that after the Battle of Plassey in 1757 which led to the eventual colonisation of the entire country, the contents of the Bengal treasury were loaded onto 100 boats and floated down the Ganges from the Nawab of Bengal’s palace in Murshidabad to Fort William, the company’s Calcutta headquarters.

It was, as Dalrymple explains, a victory that owed as much to treachery, forged contracts, bankers and bribes as it did to military prowess.

Perhaps not the right book to take with you on a relaxing weekend break, *The Anarchy* is a disturbing work of scholarship that comes at a time of nostalgia for Empire is a factor in British life. The book is lavishly illustrated with full colour plates that depict the way Indians saw the British intruders, including Clive, who killed himself, and Warren Hastings, who overcame stage-managed disgrace to save his name and reputation.

Tellingly, Adolf Hitler was a great admirer of the 18th- and 19th- century British imperialists. The way so few ruled so many fascinated him. In the book *Hitler’s Table Talk*, he asked how they did it and wondered if the Germans could do the same in Eastern Europe and a defeated Russia.

He’d have loved this book. **CT**

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**Trevor Grundy** is a Kent, UK-based journalist, researcher and author.

The US border is much bigger than you think (and don't just blame Donald Trump), writes **Todd Miller**

# Trapped in an Empire of Borders

**T**HE driver of the passenger van pulled onto the shoulder of the road, looked back, and said, “There’s an immigration checkpoint up ahead. Does everyone have their papers?”

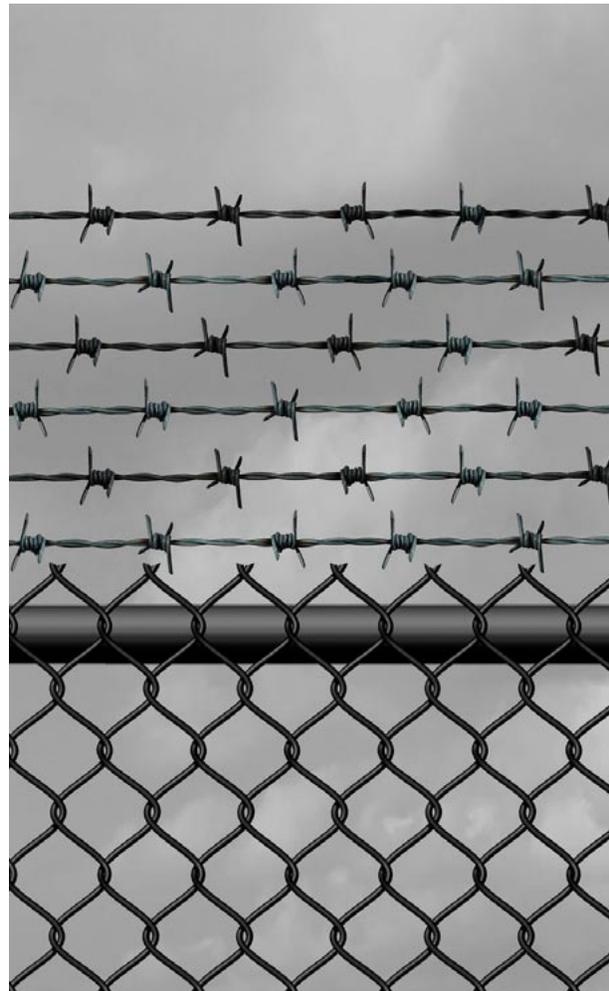
We were just north of the Guatemalan border, outside the town of Ciudad Hidalgo in the Mexican state of Chiapas. There were 10 of us in the van: a family of eight from nearby Monte Rico, Guatemala, photojournalist Jeff Abbott, and me. The driver pointed to the road blockade, already in sight. From a back seat, I could see uniformed officials questioning people inside stopped vehicles.

It was a broiling afternoon in August 2014. Dark clouds were building overhead, threatening rain. There was a murmur of hushed conversation among the family members whom I had first seen no more than half an hour before. They had only recently landed on the Mexican side of the Suchiate River on a raft made of gigantic inner tubes and wooden boards and

were already aboard the van when Abbott and I crammed in.

They would prove to be a boisterous crew. “Welcome to the family!” a woman who later introduced herself as Sandra said. “At least for this trip to Tapachula!” Much laughter followed. They were going to the wake of a family member in Mexico and, as people had done here forever, they simply crossed the river, avoiding the official entry point less than a mile away. Like so many political borders around the world, the Guatemalan-Mexican divide had been officially demarcated relatively recently – in 1882, to be exact – cutting through regions with strong family, community, and linguistic ties.

**T**he checkpoint just ahead represented a new kind of demarcation line: the United States border arriving 1,000 miles to the south. A month before, in July 2014, when Mexican officials announced a bolstering of



their own border in what they called *Programa Frontera Sur* (the Southern Border Program), the United States immediately applauded that country’s new “strategy for its southern border” in an embassy press release.

Under a multibillion-dollar military aid programme known as the Merida Initiative, as that cable made clear, the US was already, in the pre-Donald Trump era, supporting the Mexican government’s border enforcement strategies in significant ways, including enhancing its biometric and



other identification systems. Indeed, US help in strengthening Mexico's southern border already included backscatter X-ray vans and contraband-detection equipment; funds for Mexico's National Institute of Migration, the Mexican Marines, and the federal police; patrol boats, night-vision and communication equipment, and marine sensors. That country's interior minister, Miguel Osorio Chong, said, "Who doesn't have the necessary documents to enter into our territory and enter the United States, we can't allow them to be in our

territory". It was in its own way a serious admission: Mexico had already functionally been "hired" to protect the US border from 1,000 miles away.

And this was something US officials had already been pushing for years. As Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary and former Customs and Border Protection (CPB) Commissioner Alan Bersin said in 2012, "The Guatemalan border with Chiapas is now our southern border". And indeed it was. So don't just blame Donald Trump for this country's border fixation. In a broader sense,

in the 21st-century, the border should no longer be considered just that familiar territory between the US and Mexico (where President Trump now wants to build that "big, fat, beautiful wall" of his) and the Canadian border to the north. Never mind that, as a start, there already is a wall there or rather, as the US border enforcement officials have long described it, a "multi-layered" enforcement zone. If you were to redefine a wall as obstacles meant to blockade, reroute, and in the end stop (as well as incarcerate) people, then, even before

Donald Trump, the equivalent of a wall was that expansive 100-mile-deep zone of defences. These included sophisticated detection technologies of every sort and increasing numbers of armed border personnel supported by unprecedented budgets over the last 25 years.

In those same years, this country's borders have, in a sense, undergone a kind of expansion not just into southern Mexico (as I witnessed in 2014), but also into parts of Central America and South America, the Caribbean, and other areas of the world. As Bersin put it, there had been a post-9/11 shift to emphasising the policing not just of the literal US border but of global versions of the same, a massive, if under reported, "paradigm change". A US border strategy of "prevention through deterrence", initiated in 1994, that first militarised and then blockaded urban areas on our actual southern border like Brownsville, El Paso, Nogales, and San Diego, would later spread internationally.

The recent focus on Trump's wall has hidden such global developments that, since 2003, have, for instance, led to 23 Customs and Border Protection attachés being stationed in places like Bogota, Cairo, New Delhi, Panama City, and Rome. In 2004, CBP commissioner Robert Bonner described this as "extending our zone of security where we can ... so that American borders are the last line of defense, not the first line of defence".

In 2003, the 9/11 Commis-



### A US border strategy, that first militarised and then blockaded urban areas on the southern border would later spread internationally

sion Report laid out the thinking behind this clearly indeed: "9/11 has taught us that terrorism against Americans 'over there' should be regarded just as we regard terrorism against Americans 'over here'. In this same sense the American homeland is the planet".

Fourteen years later, retired General John Kelly endorsed just such a strategy at his confirmation hearing as Department of Homeland Security secretary. "Border security", he assured the senators, "cannot be attempted as an endless series of 'goal line stands' on the one-foot line at the ports of entry or along the thousands of miles of border between this country and Mexico ... I believe the defence of the Southwest border starts 1,500 miles to the south in Peru".

As it happened, even Kelly was understating just how far the US border already extended

into the world.

When I first began to research the exporting of the US border, I didn't faintly know the extent of it, though I would, in the end, visit the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Israel-Palestine, Jordan, Kenya, and the Philippines, among other places.

In 2015, while waiting at the front gate of the Zacapa military base in Guatemala – I had an interview scheduled with the commander of that country's new border force known as the Chorti – a soldier asked me if I was from BORTAC. "What?" I replied, certain I hadn't heard him correctly. He then repeated the word more slowly, as if perhaps he had pronounced it incorrectly.

I wouldn't have been alone in my surprise. Most people in the United States had never heard of BORTAC. After many years of researching the US border, however, I now know quite a bit about that "Border Patrol Tactical Unit" that performs SWAT-style operations along the US borderlands. As it happens, it also does training missions abroad. Indeed, as I would soon find out from Colonel Obed Lopez, the Chorti commander, its members had visited his military base during a three-month-long training session also involving the US National Guard, Special Forces units, and police that, as he put it, "they used in cities." They had provided instruction in "weapons, tactics, ground movements

and agility training, first aid”. Colonel Lopez told me.

In fact, on its international missions, BORTAC often works as part of a larger Customs and Border Protection team. As one CBP trainer told me, they would “travel and see the border operations in various countries and make an assessment of their border security, and make recommendations on what could be done to improve their security”. Like doctors of border policing, the CBP team would analyse the situation, then offer a diagnosis and prescription, including recommendations for funding, training, assistance, and equipment from Washington.

**T**he Dominican Republic was the first place where, in 2012, I saw the results of such US training and funding. Border guards from CESFRONT, an enforcement unit formed in 2007, were by then stationed along that country’s border with Haiti. Holding assault rifles, they stood behind barricades on the banks of the grimly named Massacre River, looking like rudimentary replicas of the US Border Patrol in Nogales. As Haitians bathed in the river, they remained there for hours and hours, ensuring that no unauthorised people tried to cross from one of the poorest places on the planet because, of course, wherever you go, the border story turns out to be about how the rich and powerful deal with the poor and marginalised.



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Between the State Department and the Department of Defense there are now more than 100 programmes that the Department of Homeland Security uses to finance such border programmes globally. Among the most prominent are those run by the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) and the Export Control and Border Security Related Program (EXBS).

The INL works in 71 countries, EXBS in 60, including every country in North Africa and every island state in the South Pacific. With these two outfits alone, you could stand in front of a world map, point anywhere, and the likelihood is that you’d find a US programme funneling funds, resources, and border training there.

In other words, when it comes to borders, US operations aren’t limited either to the Western

hemisphere or even to countries with land borders. In the Philippines in 2015, for example, the US dedicated \$20-million to the construction of the National Coastal Watch Center, an “action that underscores the US commitment to helping the Philippines manage and secure its maritime domain”, according to the American embassy there. After all, as that year’s Pentagon “Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy” stressed, the United States has “enduring economic and security interests” in that region where it puts a “premium on maintaining peace and security”. In that spirit, it doled out the lucrative contract to build that Watch Center to Raytheon. (Yes, in building a global border regime, there’s money to be made.)

That company also landed a big contract to build what journalist William Arkin described as the “Great Wall of Jordan”. According to a document it produced in 2016, “Border Security and Critical Infrastructure Protection”, this meant a 287-mile “security system” on Jordan’s borders with Syria and Iraq, including high-tech cameras, ground radars, “quick reaction” team vehicles, command and control centres, and “passive barrier fencing.” In that same document, Raytheon took credit for “deployed solutions” globally covering more than 10,000 kilometers of land and maritime borders in more than 24 countries, while training more than 9,000 security force members

in “surveillance system operations, maintenance, and border security operations”.

**A**nd all this just scratches the surface when it comes to the sums of money involved. In Jordan alone in 2015, for instance, \$385-million in such funding went into the Jordanian military to support border policing and “counter-terrorism” efforts, including 26,000 rifles and machine guns, three million rounds of small-arms ammunition, 5,000 night-vision devices, and eight UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters. As US Ambassador Alice Wells said the next year, the helicopters would “provide Jordan with another tool for safeguarding its frontiers”.

In discussing “the sheer number of incursions the Border Guards thwart, almost nightly”, however, she made no mention of the massive refugee crises – in Syria and Iraq – significantly provoked by the US invasion and occupation of Iraq; nor did she mention US geopolitical interests in the region of the sort former Pentagon senior policy adviser Eric Edelman described to the Senate Armed Services Committee in December 2017: “US policy makers have considered access to the region’s energy resources vital for the US allies in Europe, and ultimately for the United States itself”.

In other words, the emerging US global border system can be conceptualised in two ways: there are our territorial



### **There are more than 70 border walls, thousands of border agents, and billions of dollars of surveillance along borders that separate the Global North from the Global South**

borders, of course, but increasingly there is a global empire of borders meant to promote Washington’s geopolitical, economic, and military interests, no matter who is in office.

Such efforts will ultimately contribute to a vast global border and immigration system. In total, there are already more than 70 border walls on this planet, tens of thousands of border agents, and billions of dollars of high-tech surveillance equipment in place along borders that separate the Global North from the Global South. Militarised borders are almost never about one country’s security or protection. They represent, instead, global partnerships that pit transnational elites against the world’s most vulnerable people.

Scholar and activist Harsha Walia explains it this way: “Border controls are most severely deployed by those

Western regimes that create mass displacement ... and are most severely deployed against those whose very recourse to migration results from the ravages of capital and military occupations”. In the years to come, this will increasingly include millions displaced by the impact of the global climate crisis that will disturb the lives of the world’s least developed countries at a rate predicted to be five times higher than the global average.

**A**s journalist John Washington put it, borders have become “globalisation’s bouncers”. Borderlands historian Guadalupe Castillo explains it this way: “The nation-state has become the policeman for the corporate world”, creating borders to “clear the landscape for those ... for whom borders don’t exist”; that is, the “one percent.” The power of that one percent can go wherever it pleases, extracting natural wealth and fossil fuels, while destroying livelihoods and the living earth. Borders aren’t for them, but for those who find themselves unable to make ends meet and so are vulnerable to every threat.

Chiapas, where our van idled 200 yards from that checkpoint so long ago, was an example of this. One of the richest places in Mexico in terms of natural resources – water, petroleum, mineral wealth, natural gas, coffee – it remains one of the poorest for its people. During my stay there, everyone was talk-

ing about the border *operativos* and sensed that the increased fortification of their border was the result of direct orders from Washington. (And keep in mind that this was years before Donald Trump entered the Oval Office and such developments became front-page news.)

**I**n 2017, at the Border Security Expo, I listened to Tony Crowder, commander of Customs and Border Patrol Air and Marine Operations, confirm the suspicions of those inhabitants of Chiapas by saying that the US had gone into Mexico and “built technology” giving that country’s officials more “domain awareness capability”. He added, “We coordinated with them directly in their country with as many as 600 to 800 tactical responses in a year’s time ... sharing domain awareness with them”. Later, explaining to me his agency’s intense and constant coordination with Mexico, a CBP official said, “I bet you there are 15 phone calls going on with Mexico at this very moment”.

That same year, as US Northern Command head General Lori Robinson pointed out, “to support the Government of Mexico’s Southern Border Strategy to improve security on their border with Guatemala and Belize”, her command had ensured “the timely delivery of a record Foreign Military Sales of over a billion dollars in UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles”. And now,



**When the state, including the American imperial state, puts up barriers, people figure out ways to get around them. This is the nature of a global border system**

two years later, Mexico’s newly formed National Guard patrols that southern frontier in force, essentially at the behest of Donald Trump.

**A**t that checkpoint so long ago, the driver suddenly turned the van around and we headed back toward the border with Guatemala. I assumed that the family, which had suddenly gone silent, would just miss that wake. I figured that the driver had decided to skip the checkpoint so that the family wouldn’t be pulled out, handcuffed, incarcerated, and formally expelled from the country like so many others.

Then he suddenly made a surprise right turn and we were on a dirt road, parallel to the main road, heading the other way. Above us, purple clouds were moving fast over the landscape and there was the smell of rain.

We were clearly evading the checkpoint.

Sandra suddenly gave us a smile. “We don’t have papers!” she exclaimed. Then she laughed, a sound so joyful that her mother, a blanket over her shoulders, burst into laughter, too, just as the sky burst with rain.

I still wonder how many similar moments have happened in the five years since or will happen in the years to come around the world. This is the nature of a global border system. When the state, including the American imperial state, puts up barriers, people figure out ways to get around them. It matters little whether it’s the Jordanian-Syrian divide, the waters between the Philippines and Malaysia, or the southern border of the United States. Even with the billions and billions of dollars spent, the new technologies, the smart walls (and dumb ones), the checkpoints and biometric ID devices, borders can always be subverted with some grassroots organising, a little luck, and a joyful spirit. **CT**

*Todd Miller has written on border and immigration issues for the New York Times, Al Jazeera America, and the NACLA Report on the Americas. His latest book is Empire of Borders: The Expansion of the US Border Around the World. Follow him on Twitter @memomiller and view more of his work at [www.toddmillerwriter.com](http://www.toddmillerwriter.com) This essay first appeared at [www.tomdispatch.com](http://www.tomdispatch.com)*

By understanding the psychological buttons they're pressing, we can stop demagogues from destroying our democracy, writes **George Monbiot**

# Start making sense and save our democracy

**I**s this democracy's death spiral? Are we, in this country and others, falling into a lethal cycle of fury and reaction, that blocks the reasoned conversation on which civic life depends?

In every age there have been political hucksters using aggression, lies and outrage to drown out reasoned argument. But not since the 1930s have so many succeeded.

Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, Narendra Modi, Jair Bolsonaro, Scott Morrison, Rodrigo Duterte, Nicolás Maduro, Viktor Orbán and many others have discovered that the digital age offers rich pickings. The anger and misunderstanding that social media generates, exacerbated by troll factories, bots and covertly funded political advertising, spill into real life.

Today, politicians and commentators speak a language of violence that was unthinkable a few years ago. In the UK, Johnson mocks the memory of the murdered MP Jo Cox. Nigel

Farage, talking of civil servants, promises that "once Brexit's done, we will take the knife to them". Brendan O'Neill, editor of the website Spiked, a publication that has received funding from the Koch brothers, told the BBC that there should be riots over Brexit's delay. They must all know, particularly in view of the threats and assaults suffered by female MPs, that violent language licenses violence. But these statements seem perfectly pitched to trigger unreasoning aggression.

**S**urely voters must now wake from this nightmare, dismiss those who have manufactured our crises, and restore the peaceful, reasoned politics on which our security depends? Unfortunately, the solution may not be as simple as that.

Several fascinating branches of neuroscience and psychology suggest that threat and stress in public life are likely to be self-perpetuating. The more threatened we feel, the more

our minds are overwhelmed by involuntary reflexes and unthinking reaction.

The strangest of these effects is described by the neuroscientists Stephen Porges and Gregory Lewis. They show that when we feel threatened, we cannot hear calm, conversational voices. When we feel safe, the muscles in the middle ear contract, with an effect like tightening the skin of a drum. This shuts out deep background sounds, and allows us to tune into the frequencies used in ordinary human speech.

But when we feel threatened, it is the deep background noises we need to hear. In evolutionary time, it was these sounds (roars, bellows, the padding of paws or rumble of hooves, thunder, a flood pulse in a river) that presaged danger. So the muscles of the middle ear relax, shutting out conversational frequencies. In the political context, if people are shouting at us, moderating voices are, physically, tuned out. Everyone has to shout to be heard, ramping up the level of

stress and threat.

When we feel particularly threatened or angry, a fight-or-flight response kicks in, overwhelming our capacity for reason – a phenomenon some psychologists call amygdala hijack. The amygdala sits at the base of the brain and channels strong emotional signals that can override the prefrontal cortex, preventing us from making rational decisions. We lash out irrationally, saying stupid things that then trigger amygdala hijack in other people. That’s more or less how social media works.

**A**ll this is exacerbated by the frantic and blinkered way in which we seek a place of safety when we feel insecure. Security is what psychologists call a classic “deficit value”: one whose importance to us escalates when we feel it is deficient, shutting out other values. This allows the very people who made us insecure to present themselves as the “strongmen” to whom we can turn for refuge from the chaos they created. Disturbingly, a survey by the Hansard Society in April revealed that 54 percent of respondents now agree with the statement “Britain needs a strong ruler willing to break the rules”, while only 23 percent disagree.

I suspect the demagogues – or their advisers – know what they’re doing. Either instinctively or explicitly, they understand the irrational ways in which we react to threat, and know that,

to win, they must stop us from thinking. Why does Johnson appear to want a no-deal Brexit so badly? Perhaps because it generates the stress and threat responses on which his success depends. If we don’t break this spiral, it could drag us down to a very dark place indeed. So what can we do? How, in particular, do we discuss genuinely alarming situations, such as Brexit or climate breakdown, without triggering threat reactions?



**CALM STRENGTH:** Greta Thunberg at the European Parliament.

The first thing the science tells us is this: treat everyone with respect. The stupidest thing you can possibly do, if you want to save democracy, is to call your opponent gammon.

Never get drawn into a shouting match, however offensive the other person might be. Don’t be distracted by attempts to manufacture outrage: bring the conversation back to the topics you want to discuss. We should emulate the calm strength with which Greta Thunberg responds to the tidal wave of nastiness she faces: “As you may have noticed, the haters are as active as ever – going after me, my looks, my clothes,

my behaviour and my differences ... But don’t waste your time giving them any more attention.”

After studying the success or failure of other political movements, Extinction Rebellion has developed a protocol for activism that looks like a model of good political psychology. It uses humour to deflect aggression, distributes leaflets explaining the action and apologising for the disruption, trains activists to resist provocation, and runs de-escalation workshops, teaching people to translate potential confrontations into reasoned conversation. It urges “active respect” towards everyone, including the police.

By setting up people’s assemblies, it seeks to create a civic space in which other voices can be heard. As another paper by Stephen Porges, the neuroscientist whose work has done so much to explain our reflexes, points out, our brains don’t allow us to experience compassion for others until we feel safe. Creating calm spaces in which to explore our differences is an essential step towards rebuilding democratic life.

All this might sound like common sense. It is. But understanding how our minds function helps us to see when they are unconsciously working for the demagogues. Breaking the spiral means restoring the mental state that allows us to think. **CT**

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It's getting harder to reconcile Lennon's dream of a world of peace with the reality of the American police state, writes **John W Whitehead**

# John Lennon versus the Deep State monster

*"You gotta remember, establishment, it's just a name for evil. The monster doesn't care whether it kills all the students or whether there's a revolution. It's not thinking logically, it's out of control."*

– John Lennon (1969)

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**J**OHNN Lennon, born 79 years ago on October 9, 1940, was a musical genius and pop cultural icon. He was also a vocal peace protester and anti-war activist and a high-profile example of the lengths to which the Deep State will go to persecute those who dare to challenge its authority.

Long before Julian Assange, Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning were being castigated for blowing the whistle on the government's war crimes and the National Security Agency's abuse of its surveillance powers, it was Lennon who was being singled out for daring to speak truth to power about the government's warmongering, his phone calls monitored and

data files illegally collected on his activities and associations.

For a while, at least, Lennon became enemy number one in the eyes of the US government. Years after his assassination it was revealed that the FBI had collected 281 pages of files on him, including song lyrics. J Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI, directed the agency to spy on the musician. There were also orders calling on government agents to frame Lennon for a drug bust. "The FBI's files on Lennon ... read like the writings of a paranoid goody-two-shoes", observed reporter Jonathan Curiel.

As the *New York Times* notes, "Critics of today's domestic surveillance object largely on privacy grounds. They have focused far less on how easily government surveillance can become an instrument for the people in power to try to hold on to power. 'The US vs. John Lennon' ... is the story not only of one man being harassed, but of a democracy being undermined."

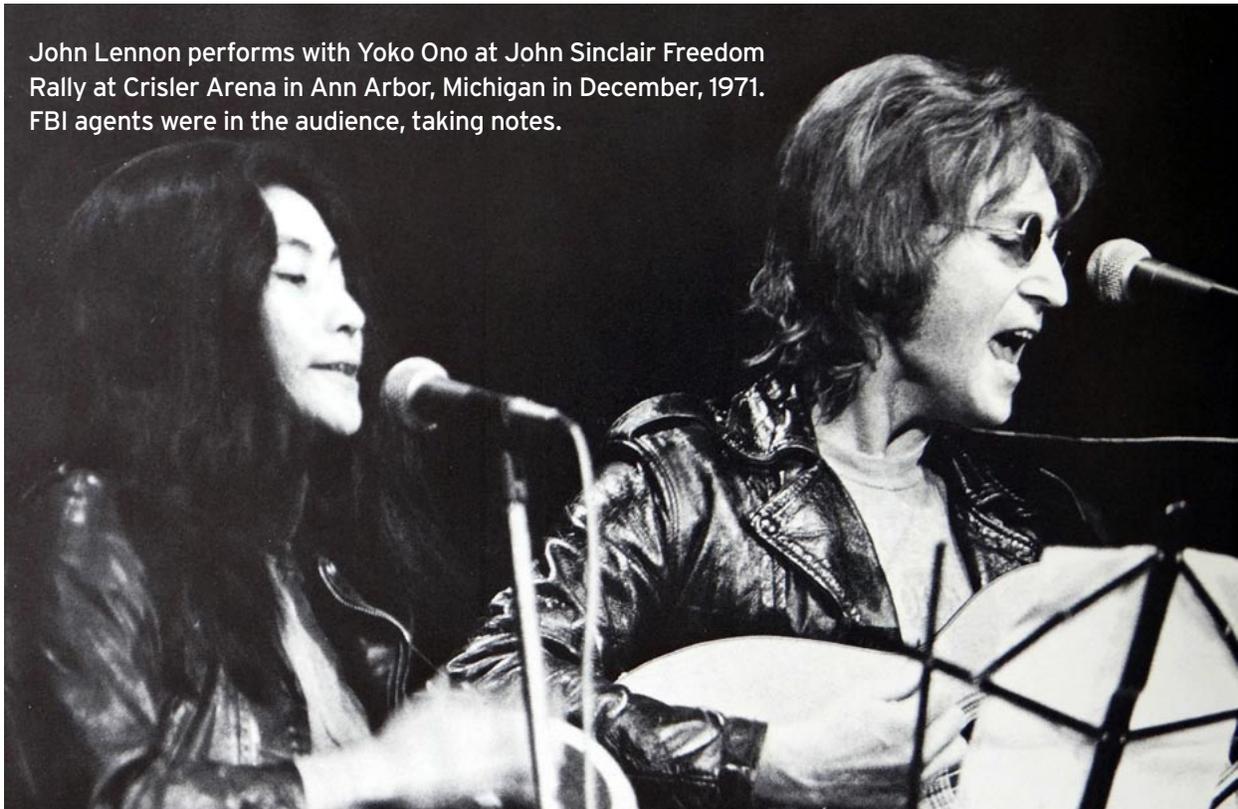
Indeed, all of the many

complaints we have about government today – surveillance, militarism, corruption, harassment, SWAT team raids, political persecution, spying, overcriminalisation, etc – were present in Lennon's day and formed the basis of his call for social justice, peace and a populist revolution.

For all of these reasons, the US government was obsessed with Lennon, who had learned early on that rock music could serve a political end by proclaiming a radical message. More importantly, Lennon saw that his music could mobilise the public and help to bring about change. Lennon believed in the power of the people. Unfortunately, as Lennon recognised: "The trouble with government as it is, is that it doesn't represent the people. It controls them".

However, as Martin Lewis writing for *Time* notes: "John Lennon was not God. But he earned the love and admiration of his generation by creating a huge body of work that inspired and led. The apprecia-

John Lennon performs with Yoko Ono at John Sinclair Freedom Rally at Crisler Arena in Ann Arbor, Michigan in December, 1971. FBI agents were in the audience, taking notes.



tion for him deepened because he then instinctively decided to use his celebrity as a bully pulpit for causes greater than his own enrichment or self-aggrandisement”.

For instance, in December 1971 at a concert in Ann Arbor, Mich., Lennon took to the stage and in his usual confrontational style belted out *John Sinclair*, a song he had written about a man sentenced to 10 years in prison for possessing two marijuana cigarettes. Within days of Lennon’s call for action, the Michigan Supreme Court ordered Sinclair released.

What Lennon did not know at the time was that government officials had been keeping strict tabs on the ex-Beatle they referred to as “Mr. Lennon”. Incredibly, FBI agents were in

the audience at the Ann Arbor concert, “taking notes on everything from the attendance (15,000) to the artistic merits of his new song”.

The US government, steeped in paranoia, was spying on Lennon. By March 1971, when his *Power to the People* single was released, it was clear where Lennon stood. Having moved to New York City that same year, Lennon was ready to participate in political activism against the US government, the “monster” that was financing the war in Vietnam.

The release of Lennon’s *Sometime in New York City* album, which contained a radical anti-government message in virtually every song and depicted President Richard Nixon and Chinese Chairman

Mao Tse-tung dancing together nude on the cover, only fanned the flames of the conflict to come.

The official US war against Lennon began in earnest in 1972 after rumours surfaced that Lennon planned to embark on a US concert tour that would combine rock music with anti-war organising and voter registration. Nixon, fearing Lennon’s influence on about 11-million new voters (1972 was the first year that 18-year-olds could vote), had the ex-Beatle served with deportation orders “in an effort to silence him as a voice of the peace movement”.

Then again, the FBI has had a long history of persecuting, prosecuting and generally harassing activists, politicians, and cultural figures. Most

notably among the latter are such celebrated names as folk singer Pete Seeger, painter Pablo Picasso, comic actor and filmmaker Charlie Chaplin, comedian Lenny Bruce and poet Allen Ginsberg.

Among those most closely watched by the FBI was Martin Luther King Jr, a man labelled by the FBI as “the most dangerous and effective Negro leader in the country”. With wiretaps and electronic bugs planted in his home and office, King was kept under constant surveillance by the FBI with the aim of “neutralising” him. He even received letters written by FBI agents suggesting that he either commit suicide or the details of his private life would be revealed to the public. The FBI kept up its pursuit of King until he was felled by a hollow-point bullet to the head in 1968.

While Lennon was not – as far as we know – being blackmailed into suicide, he was the subject of a four-year campaign of surveillance and harassment by the US government (spearheaded by FBI Director J Edgar Hoover), an attempt by President Richard Nixon to have him “neutralised” and deported.

As Adam Cohen of the *New York Times* points out, “The FBI’s surveillance of Lennon is a reminder of how easily domestic spying can become unmoored from any legitimate law enforcement purpose. What is more surprising, and ultimately more unsettling, is the degree to which the surveillance turns out to have

### **As Lennon stepped outside the car to greet the fans congregating outside, Chapman, in an eerie echo of the FBI’s moniker for Lennon, called out, ‘Mr Lennon!’**

been intertwined with electoral politics”.

As Lennon’s FBI file shows, memos and reports about the FBI’s surveillance of the anti-war activist had been flying back and forth between Hoover, the Nixon White House, various senators, the FBI and the US Immigration Office.

Nixon’s pursuit of Lennon was relentless and in large part based on the misperception that Lennon and his comrades were planning to disrupt the 1972 Republican National Convention. The government’s paranoia, however, was misplaced.

Left-wing activists who were on government watchlists and who shared an interest in bringing down the Nixon Administration had been congregating at Lennon’s New York apartment. But when they revealed that they were planning to cause a riot, Lennon balked.

As he recounted in a 1980 interview, “We said, We ain’t buying this. We’re not going to draw children into a situation to create violence so you can overthrow what? And replace it with what? . . . It was all based on this illusion, that you can create violence and overthrow what is, and get communism or

get some right-wing lunatic or a left-wing lunatic. They’re all lunatics”.

Although Lennon was not part of the “lunatic” plot, the government persisted in its efforts to deport him. Equally determined to resist, Lennon fought back. Every time he was ordered out of the country, his lawyers delayed the process by filing an appeal. Finally, in 1976, Lennon won the battle to stay in the country when he was granted a green card. As he said afterwards, “I have a love for this country. . . This is where the action is. I think we’ll just go home, open a tea bag, and look at each other”.

Lennon’s time of repose didn’t last long, however. By 1980, he had re-emerged with a new album and plans to become politically active again. The old radical was back and ready to cause trouble. In his final interview on December 8, 1980, Lennon mused, “The whole map’s changed and we’re going into an unknown future, but we’re still all here, and while there’s life there’s hope”. That same day, Mark David Chapman was waiting in the shadows when Lennon returned to his New York apartment building. As Lennon stepped outside the car to greet the fans congregating outside, Chapman, in an eerie echo of the FBI’s moniker for Lennon, called out, “Mr Lennon!” Lennon turned and was met with a barrage of gunfire as Chapman – dropping into a two-handed combat stance – emptied his .38-caliber pistol and pumped four hollow-point bul-

lets into his back and left arm. Lennon stumbled, staggered forward and, with blood pouring from his mouth and chest, collapsed to the ground. John Lennon was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital. He had finally been “neutralised.”

Yet where those who neutralised the likes of John Lennon, Martin Luther King Jr, John F Kennedy, Malcolm X, Robert Kennedy and others go wrong is in believing that you can murder a movement with a bullet and a madman.

Thankfully, Lennon’s legacy lives on in his words, his music and his efforts to speak truth to power. As Yoko Ono shared in a 2014 letter to the parole board tasked with determining whether Chapman should be released: “A man of humble origin, [John Lennon] brought light and hope to the whole world with his words and music. He tried to be a good power for the world, and he was. He gave encouragement, inspiration and dreams to people regardless of their race, creed and gender”.

Sadly, not much has changed for the better in the world since Lennon walked among us. Peace remains out of reach. Activism and whistleblowers continue to be prosecuted for challenging the government’s authority. Militarism is on the rise, with local police dressed like the military, all the while the governmental war machine continues to wreak havoc on innocent lives across the globe. Just recently, for example, US military forces carried out drone strikes in Afghanistan

## Activism and whistleblowers continue to be prosecuted. Local police dress like the military, The war machine wreaks havoc on innocent lives across the globe

that killed 30 pine nut farmers.

For those of us who joined with John Lennon to imagine a world of peace, it’s getting harder to reconcile that dream with the reality of the American police state. Meanwhile, those who dare to speak up are labelled dissidents, troublemakers, terrorists, lunatics, or mentally ill and tagged for surveillance, censorship, involuntary detention or, worse, even shot and killed in their own homes by militarised police.

As Lennon shared in a 1968 interview: “I think all our society is run by insane people for insane objectives... I think we’re being run by maniacs for maniacal means. If anybody can put on paper what our government and the American government and the Russian... Chinese... what they are actually trying to do, and what they think they’re doing, I’d be very pleased to know what they think they’re doing. I think they’re all insane. But I’m liable to be put away as insane for expressing that. That’s what’s insane about it”.

So what’s the answer? Lennon had a multitude of suggestions.

“If everyone demanded peace instead of another televi-

sion set, then there’d be peace”.

“War is over if you want it”.

“Produce your own dream. ... It’s quite possible to do anything, but not to put it on the leaders. ... You have to do it yourself. That’s what the great masters and mistresses have been saying ever since time began. They can point the way, leave signposts and little instructions in various books that are now called holy and worshipped for the cover of the book and not for what it says, but the instructions are all there for all to see, have always been and always will be. There’s nothing new under the sun. All the roads lead to Rome. And people cannot provide it for you. I can’t wake you up. You can wake you up. I can’t cure you. You can cure you”.

“Peace is not something you wish for; It’s something you make, Something you do, Something you are, And something you give away”.

“If you want peace, you won’t get it with violence”.

And my favourite advice of all: *Say you want a revolution / We better get on right away / Well you get on your feet / And out on the street / Singing power to the people.* **CT**

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**John W. Whitehead** is a constitutional attorney, founder and president of *The Rutherford Institute*. His books *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* and *A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State* are available online at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

Iran's capacity to strike back if attacked by the US or its proxies should make a politically desperate Trump think twice, writes **Vijay Prashad**

# Attacking Iran could be a grave mistake

**O**N CBS's *60 Minutes*, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the architect of his kingdom's brutal war on Yemen, suggested that a war against Iran would be a bad idea. It could, he said, lead to a "total collapse of the global economy".

The region that includes Saudi Arabia and Iran contains about a third of the world's energy reserves, and a fifth of its oil goes through the Strait of Hormuz – one of the flashpoints of our present. MBS, as the prince is known, used the interview to urge the West to put more pressure on Iran. With a broad and sinister smile, he suggested that if the West did not succeed, then Saudi Arabia would be impelled to act against Iran.

Saudi Arabia continues to insist that the September 14 attack on its oil facilities came from Iran, and not from Yemen. This is despite the fact that both the civilian and the military authorities in Iran have denied that they conducted the success-

ful raid on the Saudi airfields. Instead, the Houthis in Yemen said that they did do the raid; adding that if the Saudis continue their aerial bombardment of Yemen, such drone strikes would become more common.

As CBS broadcast its interview with MBS, the Houthis released a video that depicted an attack on Saudi troops in August. That attack, the Houthis said, killed at least 500 Saudi soldiers who were trapped and fired upon by drones. Saudi Arabia has not responded to this claim. This attack is the most audacious to date, showing how confident the Houthis have become in this four-war.

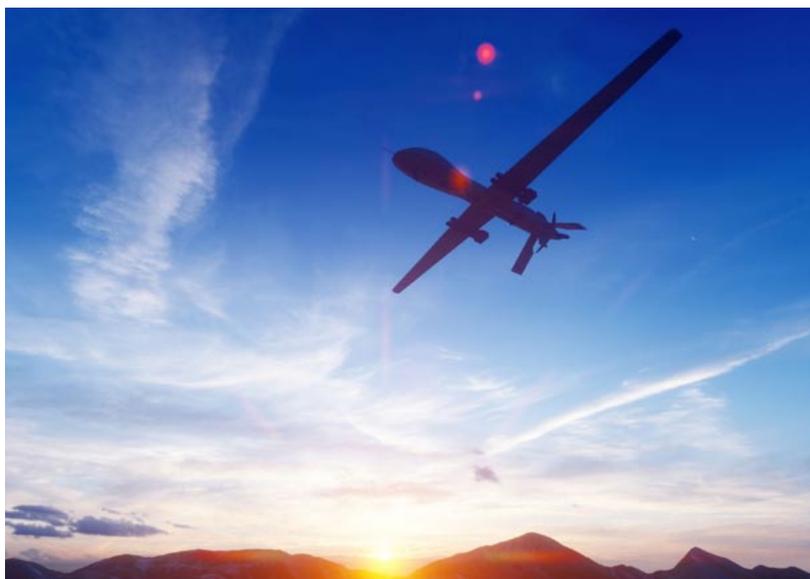
**T**hese two drone attacks show that the capability of the Houthis has increased. They have been able to strike genuine fear in the heart of Saudi Arabia, shutting down its oil production and lowering the morale of its troops. Saudi Arabia – with constant arms sales from the West – will be able to

continue to bomb Yemen from the sky. But, by all indications, it is unlikely to be able to launch a ground invasion to overthrow the Houthis.

Apart from aerial bombardment, the Saudis have used a blockade of the country to suffocate its people. But this has both created a terrible humanitarian catastrophe and focused the attention of the United Nations.

On September 10, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet told the UN Human Rights Council that the impact of this war on Yemen has been "truly devastating". More than 24-million people – nearly 80 percent of the population – require humanitarian aid. Most of it comes through the port of al-Hudaydah, which has faced attacks and a blockade. The UN has struggled to ensure that it be open. The Saudi attempt to starve the population has failed.

At the opening of the UN General Assembly, Yemen was represented by Mohammed



Military drone flies over a desert mountain plain.

Abdullah al-Hadhrami, the foreign minister of one of the two governments that claim to represent Yemen. His president is Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, whose government is backed by Saudi Arabia.

The other government is that of the Houthis, which is led by Mahdi al-Mashat (president) and Abdel-Aziz bin Hattour (prime minister). They are not recognised by the United Nations, so were not able to attend the opening of the General Assembly. Nor is their highly skilled foreign minister Hisham Sharaf the recognised representative of Yemen.

Al-Hadhrami's emotional address to the UN was marred by sectarianism. There was no room here for negotiations. Iran, he said, echoing Saudi Arabia, is "the main sponsor of terrorism throughout the world". That was that. That claim has become a cliché from Washington, DC, to Riyadh. It

has become so common that no evidence is needed to prove it.

It does not matter that it was Saudi Arabia – through the Muslim World League (founded in 1962) – that broadcast the seeds that would eventually germinate as al-Qaeda. Every country with a Muslim World League office, Indonesia to Chechnya, would provide the leadership and personnel for Osama bin Laden and his followers. Over the course of decades, the Saudis cultivated the most dangerous elements in these societies, providing money, training, and the most reactionary version of Islam to form the detachments that would rain terror on their own societies and on the world.

Afghanistan, which remains in a terrible situation, is a case in point. The Saudis – with the full backing of the CIA – built up such despicable men as Gulbud-

din Hekmatyar and Mohammed Yunis Khalis.

Hekmatyar made his name in the engineering department of Kabul University by throwing acid on the faces of female students. This was the man who would be lifted up by the Saudis and the CIA as the face of the mujahideen resistance to the Afghan communists and then later to the USSR.

These were men with a morbid sectarianism, great hatred for non-orthodox Muslims a central part of their political landscape. Assassination of minorities and intimidation of women governed their worldview.

Hekmatyar's form of war was to bomb civilian areas so that silence welcomed his entry into towns and cities. He is known as the "Butcher of Kabul". This is the calibre of people who are part of the Saudi-CIA network. Hekmatyar was so terrible that even the US government, which supported him for decades, was forced to name him a terrorist in 2003.

Saudi Arabia's tentacles run across the planet, and their battalions of terrorists became legendary after the attack on the United States in 2001. And yet, it is not Saudi Arabia (with its US handlers) that is seen as the "main sponsor of terrorism" but Iran. It is a topsy-turvy diagnosis.

If the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Israel attack Iran – even in a limited way – the retaliation will be swift. It will come from many fronts:

- Iran will launch direct strikes on the oil facilities in

Saudi Arabia.

- Iran will attack US bases and ships in the region, including in Afghanistan.

- Iraqi militias will open a front against US assets in their country.

- Iraqi, Iranian, and Syrian militias in Syria will attack US assets in the east of that country.

- Hezbollah will attack Israel.

- Yemen's Houthi movement might fire its missiles and drones deep into Saudi Arabia.

Such a scenario means that the entire region – from the Mediterranean Sea to the Hindu Kush mountains – will be plunged deeper into war.

Instead of this, Iran has indi-

cated that it prefers the road of diplomacy.

- The United States must return to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. Modifications of that deal can take place through discussion, not by a full-scale demand by Washington for its renegotiation.

- Yemen's Houthi movement has said it would like a ceasefire with Saudi Arabia and would like to work together for peace.

**T**hese are far better as a way ahead than the scenario that goes into full-fledged war. Pressure on the United States and Saudi Arabia to come to the table is minimal. The Europeans, who could ramp up the pres-

sure, are convulsed by their own Brexit dilemmas, and by a weakness of resolve.

Impeachment proceedings against Trump might lead his Twitter finger to declare war on Iran as a distraction. It might just come to that – a terrifying situation. **CT**

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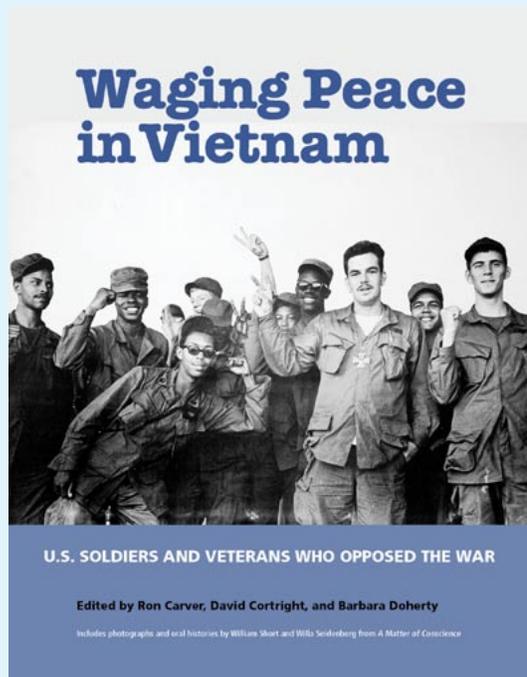
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# Insights

Art: Gerd Altmann / Pixabay



## Globalising surveillance by artificial intelligence

By Binoy Kampmark

**T**HEY all do it: corporations, regimes, authorities. They all have the same reasons: efficiency, serviceability, profitability, all under the umbrella term of “security”. Call it surveillance, or call it monitoring the global citizenry; it all comes down to the same thing. You are being watched for your own good, and such instances should be regarded as a norm.

Given the weaknesses of international law and the general

hiccups that accompanies efforts to formulate a global right to privacy, few such restrictions, or problems, preoccupy those in surveillance. The entire business is burgeoning, a viral complex that does not risk any abatement.

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has released an unnerving report confirming that fact, though irritatingly using an index in doing so. Its focus is Artificial Intelligence (AI)

technology. A definition of sorts is offered for AI, being “an integrated system that incorporates information acquisition objectives, logical reasoning principles, and self-correction capacities”.

When stated like that, the whole matter seems benign. Machine learning, for instance, “analyses a large amount of information in order to discern a pattern to explain the current data and predict future uses”.

There are several perturbing highlights supplied by the report’s author, Steven Feldstein. The relationship between military expenditure and states’ use of AI surveillance systems is noted, with “forty of the world’s top fifty military spending countries (based on cumulative military expenditures) also [using] AI surveillance technology”.

Across 176 countries, data gathered since 2017 shows that AI surveillance technologies are not merely good domestic fare but a thriving export business. The ideological bent of the regime in question is no bar to the use of such surveillance. Liberal democracies are noted as major users, with 51 percent of “advanced democracies” doing so. That number, interestingly enough, is less than “closed autocratic states” (37 percent); “electoral autocratic/

competitive autocratic states” (41 percent) and “electoral democracies/illiberal democracies” (41 percent).

The political taxonomist risks drowning in minutiae on this point, but the chilling reality stands out: all states are addicted to diets of AI surveillance technologies.

Feldstein makes the fairly truistic point that “autocratic and semi-autocratic” states so happen to abuse AI surveillance more “than governments in liberal democracies”, but the comparisons tend to breakdown in the global race for technological superiority.

Russia, China and Saudi Arabia are singled out as “exploiting AI technology for mass surveillance purposes” but all states seek the Holy Grail of mass, preferably warrantless surveillance. Edward Snowden’s revelations in 2013 did more than anything else to scupper the quaint notion that those who profess safeguards and freedoms are necessarily aware about the runaway trends of their security establishment.

The corporation-state nexus is indispensable to global surveillance, a symbiotic relationship that resists regulation and principle. This has the added effect of destroying any credible distinction between a state supposedly more compliant with human rights standards, and those that are not.

The common thread, as ever, is the technology company. As

Feldstein notes, in addition to China, “companies based in liberal democracies – for example, Germany, France, Israel, Japan, South Korea, the UK, the United States – are actively selling sophisticated equipment to unsavoury regimes”.

These trends are far from new. In 1995, Privacy International published a report with the unmistakable title *Big Brother Incorporated*, an overview of surveillance technology that has come to be aptly known as the Repression Trade. “Much of this technology is used to track the activities of dissidents, human rights activists, journalists, student leaders, minorities, trade union leaders, and political opponents”.

Corporations with no particular allegiance except to profit and shareholders, such as British computer firm ICL (International Computers Limited) were identified as key designers behind the South African automated Passbook system, Apartheid’s stand out signature. In the 1980s, the Israeli company Tadiran, well in keeping with a rich tradition of the Repression Trade, supplied the murderous Guatemalan policy with computerised death lists in their “pacification” efforts.

**T**he current galloping power in the field of AI surveillance technology is China, underpinned by the clout-heavy Belt and Road Initiative rosily de-

scribed by its fans as a Chinese Marshall Plan. Where there are market incentives, there are purchasing prospects for AI technology. “Technology linked to Chinese companies are found in at least 63 countries worldwide. Huawei alone is responsible for providing AI surveillance technology to at least 50 countries.”

Chinese technology, it is speculated, may well boost surveillance capabilities within certain African markets, given the “aggressiveness of Chinese companies”.

Other powers also participate in what has become a field of aggressive competitors. Japan’s NEC is its own colossus, supplying technology to some 14 countries. IBM keeps up the pressure as a notable American player, doing so to 11 countries. That particular entity made something of a splash in May, with a report revealing sales of biometric surveillance systems to the United Arab Emirates security and spy agencies stirring discussion in May this year.

Another recipient of IBM surveillance technology is the Philippines, a country more than keen to arm its police forces with the means to monitor, and more than occasionally murder, its citizens. (The Davao City death squads are a bloody case in point.)

Issues with the report were bound to arise. A humble admission is made that the sampling method may

be questionable in terms of generating a full picture of the industry. “Given the opacity of government surveillance use, it is nearly impossible to pin down by specific year which AI platforms or systems are currently in use”. Nor does the index “distinguish between AI surveillance used for legitimate purposes and unlawful digital surveillance”. A murky field, indeed.

For all the grimness of Feldstein’s findings, he is also aware of the seductive element that various platforms have offered. Rampant, amoral AI surveillance might well be a hideous by-product of technology, but the field teems with promise in “deep learning; cloud computing and online data gathering”, “improved performance of complex algorithms; and market-driven incentives for new uses of AI

technology”.

This shows, in a sense, the Janus-faced nature in critiquing such an enterprise; such praise tends to come with the territory, given Feldstein’s own background as former deputy assistant secretary of state in the Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Bureau of the US State Department.

Feldstein leaves room to issue a warning. “As these technologies become more embedded in governance and politics, the window for change will narrow.” The window, in many instances, has not so much narrowed as closed, as it did decades ago. **CT**

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## How the wounds of war ravage Afghanistan

By **Kathy Kelly**

**T**S economy gutted by war, Afghanistan’s largest cash crop remains opium. Yet farmers there do grow other crops for export. Villagers in the Wazir Tangi area of Nangarhar province, for example, cultivate pine nuts.

As a precaution, this year at harvest time, village elders notified the governor of the province that they would be bringing in migrant workers to help them collect the nuts. Hired labourers, including children, would camp out in the

pine nut forests, they informed the officials. They hoped their letter would persuade US and ISIS forces, which had been fighting in or near their villages, not to attack.

On September 17, 2019, the migrant workers reached their rest spot for the night, and began building fires and making camp. In the early hours of the following morning, a US drone attacked, killing at least 32 people. More than 40 others were wounded. The US military claims that ISIS fighters were hiding among the farmers who were killed.

I followed this story while recuperating from surgery after breaking my hip on a train from Chicago to Washington, DC. Before the train reached the first stop out of Chicago, emergency services workers had taken me to the Memorial South Bend hospital. I was well cared for, and now a physical therapist is already helping me with movement and exercise.

I read about the labourers who survived the attack on the pine nut forest. According to Haidar Khan, the owner of the pine nut trees, about 150 workers were there for harvesting, and some are still missing. One survivor described people asleep in tents pitched near the farm when the attack happened. “Some of us managed to escape, some were injured but many were killed”, said Juma Gul, a resident of northeastern Kunar

province and one of the migrant workers who had travelled to harvest and shell pine nuts. I wonder: Where are the missing? What care was available for wounded survivors? How many were children? Did a nearby facility offer X-rays, surgery, medications, clean bandages, prostheses, walkers, crutches, nourishing food and physical therapy?

I remember on visits to Afghanistan watching disabled victims of war in the capital city of Kabul as they struggled along unpaved roads, using battered crutches or primitive prostheses. They were coming to collect free duvets being distributed to people who otherwise might not survive the harsh winter weather. Their bodies so clearly bore the brunt of war.

In Kabul earlier this month, my 21-year-old friend Muhammad Ali reminded me of the importance of asking questions. Wanting me and others to understand more about the impact of war on his generation, he prodded: “Kathy, do you know about Jehanzib, Saboor, Qadeer, and Abdul, these brothers who were killed in Jalalabad?”

The brothers, aged from 24 to 30, were killed by an Afghan “strike force” trained by the CIA, according to the news. In Jalalabad, two of them worked for the government and two ran their own businesses. The squad that entered their homes beat

them before killing them.

Family and friends felt sure the brothers had no links to militias. “They were kind and humble people, anyone who knew them loved the boys”, Naqeeb Sakhizada, who owns a shop in the area and knew the brothers for more than ten years, told Al Jazeera. “They cared for people and also had a good sense of humour”.

In her WWI memoir, *Testament of Youth*, Vera Brittain wrote about volunteering as a nurse toward the end of WWI. Her clinic, in France, received European soldiers from the western front who arrived mutilated, maimed, exhausted and traumatised. Her fiancée, brother and two close friends were killed in the war. One day, she thought she must be imagining the line of soldiers who marched past the clinic tents looking robust, upright and well fed. Then she realised they were from the United States. New recruits come, and the war machine grinds on.

Looking forward, perhaps we won't see so many lines of US soldiers marching through villages and cities in Afghanistan. A soldier operating a drone can continue the United States mission from afar.

We must still bear in mind Vera Brittain's pertinent comments about the realities of war: “I have only one wish in life now and that is for the ending of the War. I wonder how

much really all you have seen and done has changed you. Personally, after seeing some of the dreadful things I have to see here, I feel I shall never be the same person again, and wonder if, when the War does end, I shall have forgotten how to laugh. The other day I did involuntarily laugh at something and it felt quite strange. Some of the things in our ward are so horrible . . . one day last week I came away from a really terrible amputation dressing I had been assisting at – it was the first after the operation – with my hands covered with blood and my mind full of a passionate fury at the wickedness of war, and I wished I had never been born”.

I look forward to going on with my life once I recover from this broken hip. I can only imagine Vera Brittain's ordeal. And I can only imagine the trauma of a child labourer awakened by an aerial attack in a pine nut forest, racing through the trees in hopes of escape, and perhaps surviving without a limb, or missing a brother, or wishing he had never been born. **CT**

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**Kathy Kelly** ([kathy@vcnv.org](mailto:kathy@vcnv.org))  
co-coordinates *Voices for Creative Nonviolence* – [www.vcnv.org](http://www.vcnv.org) – *When in Kabul, she is a guest of the Afghan Peace Volunteers* – [www.ourjourneytosmile.com](http://www.ourjourneytosmile.com) – *This article first appeared on The Progressive website* – [www.progressive.org](http://www.progressive.org)

## Equality is the only cure for South African violence

By Anine Kriegler

**T**HE release of crime statistics in South Africa always triggers great angst among ordinary citizens, and obfuscation on the part of the South African authorities. This year was no exception.

In their latest release of crime statistics, the South African Police Service seem to have tried to downplay crime rate increases (and exaggerate crime rate decreases), by using the wrong population estimates. The police incorrectly used the June 2018 population estimates in their analysis of the 2017/18 crime rates. This is not the first time they have made this kind of bungle.

But their motivation is clear. Applying the correct population estimates suggests that the country saw the biggest per capita annual murder rate increase since 1994. Last year's figures suggested that the murder rate had stabilised. But these were unfounded, as the murder rate has now risen to 36 per 100,000. The last time it was this high was in 2009. The increase is cause for serious concern.

Even the new minister of police Bheki Cele expressed



**LOSING BATTLE:** South Africa's police have "dropped the ball".

shock at the numbers, describing South Africa as being close to a "war zone". He admitted that the country's police force "dropped the ball".

**A** logical response might be that there is a need for more policing. According to Cele: "We have lost the UN norm of policing which says one policeman to 220 citizens. One police officer is now looking at almost double that".

But this isn't the answer. A sensible response to South Africa's rising crime rates would be twofold: a problem-solving approach that would require a close analysis of what's causing crime to rise in

a given area. Then they'd need to devise a plan that takes into account all the contributory factors – and involves everyone affected in addressing it.

And, secondly, the country's leaders must address inequality. South Africa is a highly unequal society. It has one of the highest gini-coefficients (a measure of inequality) in the world. Research shows that inequality and crime go hand in hand.

Police leaders reported that their staff numbers have gone down by 10,000 since 2010. They argued that they had 62,000 fewer police than were needed.

Police agencies all over the world often claim that, to reduce crime, they need bigger budgets and more officers. But the evidence that these two things automatically lead to more effective crime prevention is far from clear.

Take the issue of police numbers. Short-term and extreme spikes in police numbers (such as in response to terrorist threats) do seem to reduce crime. But a review of a number of studies on the relationship between policing levels and crime rates suggested that the impact of more police is generally small. The paper also noted that part of the problem was that there have been few rigorous experiments on, for example, extra police resources being allocated randomly.

Bigger budgets also have mixed outcomes. This is be-

cause, very often, a significant proportion of spending on police is ineffectual. Police resources often aren't targeted, even though there's evidence that doing so produces good results.

This isn't hard to do: crime is highly concentrated in hot spots that are often surprisingly small and quite stable over time. With the right focus, resources could be directed to these areas. But mostly they aren't.

What works best is a problem-solving approach. This involves focussing narrowly on understanding specific crime problems in specific places, and using not only police but drawing on the knowledge and resources of all parties, including other government departments and local communities.

For example, particular factors might be contributing to a spike in robberies in a particular area. These could include a large cohort of bored young people in the community, paths that are fertile ground for attacks because they are dark and overgrown, or unlit parks near a derelict building.

More police patrols wouldn't necessarily be the best solution. The underlying problems would need to be addressed. This might include creating a partnership between property owners, the agencies in charge of parks and lighting administration, schools and parents, and the communities that use the spaces.

**O**ne concern with a targeted approach is that crime is simply pushed elsewhere. But evidence suggests that the displacement effect is usually limited and that, in fact, nearby areas often enjoy a diffusion of benefits. There's a more fundamental problem that needs to be solved on a national scale before South Africa's crime levels can be reduced: inequality.

Research shows that inequality is arguably the single best predictor of whether a country will experience high or low levels of crime and violence. Inequality

- makes property crime more attractive and profitable;
- drives frustration, hostility and hopelessness; and,

- undermines trust, community engagement and the functioning of social and institutional structures.

South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world. Murder levels nationally have been at about this level or higher (above 30 per 100,000, which is considered very high by global standards) since at least the 1970s. High levels of violence are not a matter of police resources. They are a structural feature of this society.

This is not to say that the police are blameless. Among other things they should be doing more to solve cases. But addressing the key drivers of crime and violence requires that South Africa builds a much larger social partnership. It has no hope of becoming a fundamentally less violent country until it becomes a more equal one. **CT**

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## We've waited too long for companies to fix CEO pay

By Sarah Anderson

Art: Pixabay

**WENT** on CNBC's Squawk Box early this month to talk about a new proposal from Senator Bernie Sanders to put tax penalties on corporations with extreme gaps between their CEO and worker pay. This is an issue I've been working on for many years.

In fact, a dozen years ago, in August 2007, I had also appeared on Squawk Box to talk about solutions to our runaway CEO pay problem. Back then I was particularly critical of the massive payouts going to Wall Street executives such as then-CEO of Countrywide Financial, Angelo Mozilo. Rising foreclosure rates on his company's subprime mortgages were already causing jitters. But when I questioned Mozilo's \$43-million paycheck, the CNBC host and other guests nearly bit my head off.

"Mozilo built that company from nothing!" I remember one of them shouting into my earpiece. "His shareholders believe he walks on water!"

As we know now, Mozilo had built his massive fortune on nothing but a house of cards. Four months after this CNBC show, Countrywide didn't even exist.



Mozilo was just one of many bonus-chasing Wall Street executives whose recklessness drove the US economy off a cliff. In the aftermath of that meltdown, I had hoped that big corporations and their shareholders would solve the broken executive pay system on their own. Why would anyone continue to tolerate a system that is all about short-term gains for those at the top – regardless of the consequences for the rest of us?

**B**ut more than a decade later, the myths that propped up Angelo Mozilo remain prevalent.

Others on the recent CNBC show reiterated the widely debunked theory that the free market determines pay. Up and down the corporate lad-

der, they claimed, employees are paid what they're worth – even if that results in vast pay divides, with CEOs making hundreds of times more than their employees.

I got a little impatient with this point of view.

The discussion made me even more convinced that the time is now for public policy to rein in these persistently extreme CEO-worker pay gaps. Corporations will not change their practices on their own.

A new Institute for Policy Studies report I co-authored analyses the potential impact of a federal tax penalty on companies with huge pay gaps, as Sanders and others have proposed. We applied graduated rates, from 1 percentage point on companies with CEO-median worker pay ratios over 100 to 1 to 5 percentage points on ratios above 500 to 1.

What we found is that if such taxes had been in place last year, S&P 500 corporations would have owed as much as \$17.2-billion more in 2018 federal taxes. This is assuming that the companies didn't change the size of their gaps. Ideally, of course, they would respond to the tax by narrowing their gaps – by lifting up the bottom or bringing down the top (or both).

We also looked at how much more certain companies with particularly large gaps would've owed the IRS if they didn't narrow their gaps.

Walmart, for example, with a pay gap of 1,076 to 1, would

have owed as much as \$794-million in extra federal taxes in 2018 with this penalty in place. With those millions, the federal government could have extended food stamp benefits to 520,997 people for an entire year.

Marathon Petroleum, with a 714-to-1 gap, would have owed an extra \$228-million, more than enough to provide annual heating assistance for 126,000 low-income people.

CVS, a drug store chain with a 618-to-1 ratio, would have added a revenue stream that could have provided annual Medicare prescription benefits for 33,977 seniors.

A tax penalty on extreme pay gaps would give corporations an incentive to finally narrow these obscene divides. If they still refuse to do so, the tax will generate revenue that can be used for inequality-reducing public services and investments. We've waited too long for big corporations to do the right thing on their own. **CT**

*Sarah Anderson is a co-editor of Inequality.org at the Institute for Policy Studies and a co-author of the IPS report Executive Excess: Making Corporations Pay for Big Pay Gaps.*

in America's inner cities or its ravaged, formerly industrial states, or outside the US – in Gaza, or Honduras – who were born into and will die in some hideous but normalised bedlam. So Trump depression implies a certain insular smugness – though I deeply sympathize with my American friends who haven't slept through a night since 2016.

Some Canadians join in, like the *Globe and Mail's* Lawrence Martin: "There's a cancer on this presidency that has to be exorcised". But mostly we don't, and not just because we lack Trump. (We have wannabes, like [Ontario Premier] Doug Ford, who recently visited the US and declared himself a Republican at customs.) It's because, despite deceptive similarities, we're not them, something it's always useful to recall. This month's general election continues to

provide reminders, such as:

- **Guns.** Prime Minister Justin Trudeau discussed guns daily at the beginning of this month. Conservative

leader Andrew Scheer said guns aren't the problem, gangs are. This is unlike the debate in the US gun "rights" there aren't about hunting or even the right to resist oppressive governments. They go back to their revolution and fears that

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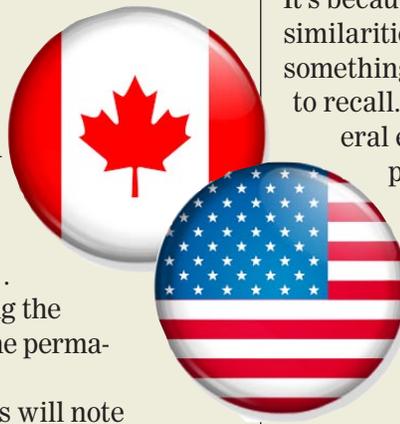
## No, Canadians are just not Americans!

By Rick Salutin

**T**HE US is now at peak derangement on the Trumpometer, which measures Americans' states of mind, not Trump's. *Salon* surveyed "Trump's Wacky, Angry, and Extreme August" with tips on fighting "Trump depression". The *New Yorker* portrayed "a dark journey to a nasty and contentious place". *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd wrote: "We've been trying to figure out for three

years if he is a mad aberration ... or is rewiring the game in some permanent way".

Observers will note this angst mostly arises in journalists and/or liberals who feel they're no longer receiving the deference they deserve. It's their equanimity that's achieved maximum disruption, through, eg, being labelled fake news. There are many people



a huge slave population might seize guns to free themselves, after the US Constitution failed to.

So gun ownership was prohibited for Blacks, even after they'd fought in the Civil War. At least that's Jonathan Metzl's argument in his fine book, *Dying of Whiteness*. It's why "gun rights" belonged only to those suppressing Indigenous peoples. The plot lines in Hollywood westerns I grew up on, made that clear: It's always bad white guys who sell illegal guns to "the Indians". It never occurred to any of us to ask why Indians didn't have Second Amendment rights, too. This still echoes in Black Lives Matter shooting incidents.

There are hints of it here in Canada. In one CBC doc, an Ontario gun owner says people like him are "more thoroughly vetted than Trudeau's token Syrian refugees", as if Canadians need guns to combat immigrating terrorists. That's disconcerting but it doesn't approach the depths of race anxiety in the US

- **Affordability.** Drill down minimally and you'll find the affordability issue is about cutting taxes so "you" can decide how to spend "your money" instead of handing it to government. That has an appeal here but far more so there. Why? Metzl, a psychiatrist and great listener, quotes someone who wants to repeal Obamacare even though it will leave him medically vulnerable. He says, "To be

honest I can't even think about it [Obamacare] right now, I'm so concentrated on the illegals". That's nearly incomprehensible to Canadians.

What he means is, if racialised "others", like refugees, rise toward his status via programs like public health care, using his taxes, it'll undermine the sense of superiority that his whiteness provides: it's what WEB DuBois called "the psychological benefits of being white". This, says Metzl, "turns whiteness into a statistically perilous category". You imperil your physical existence for the sake of your tenuous, race-based, identity.

The issue arose this month due to Liberal plans to run deficits. (So do Tories, but they're

really sad about it.) In my view, these are bogus fears built on abstract numbers. But taking Metzl's insight, the risk isn't that governments will go into debt by running deficits, it's that they'll be used to create programmes that break down inequality and dent the self-esteem of certain demographics. That kind of existential dread surely lurks here but it abounds in the US.

Some of this may sound unreal, and some quite familiar. That's the unique effect of living so close and feeling so far from their gobsmacking reality. **CT**

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**Rick Salutin** writes about current affairs and politics. This column was first published in the *Toronto Star*.

## HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt



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