

CaitLin Johnstone

**george W bush:
Man of Peace?**

Gavin Lewis

**a comedian, racial
abuse and pro-
israel moral panic**

CJ hopkins

**hillary and her
Putin-nazis are
coming (again)!**

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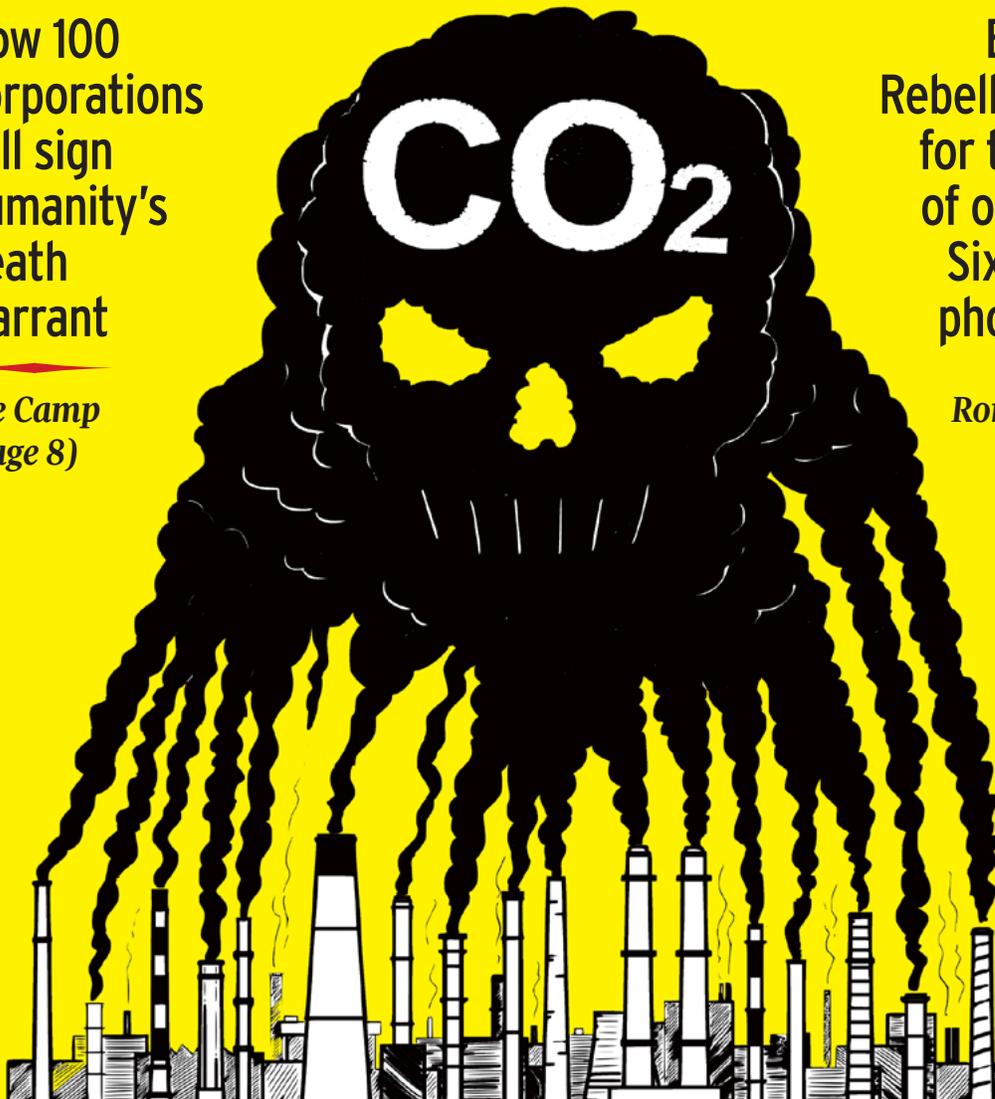
EVE OF DESTRUCTION!

How 100
corporations
will sign
humanity's
death
warrant

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Extinction
Rebellion fights
for the future
of our planet:
Six pages of
photographs

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In its support for Israel, Britain's *Guardian* newspaper has been claiming to fight antisemitism, so why provide a platform for a comedian who's been discredited for his previous 'Pineapple Heads' racism? asks Gavin Lewis

A comedian, racial abuse, and pro-Israel moral panic

THE UK's neoliberal *Guardian* and *Observer* newspapers have been in the forefront of a campaign of pro-Israel moral panics peaking with attempts to undermine Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party. In the run-up, this has led to accusations of antisemitism against a number of Black activist women who have been critical of Israeli apartheid, including former National Union of Students (NUS) President Malia Bouattia, Labour MP Naz Shah, Jewish-Jamaican-British Jackie Walker, formally of the political group Momentum. This intimidation resulted in a Jewish Labour event supporting Walker being subjected to a bomb threat.

At the 2017 peak phase of what so far as has been an annual cycle of *Guardian* pro-Israel McCarthyism, the paper took the unusual editorial step of gifting, in consecutive daily editions, both lead letters page and columnist status to the privileged Cambridge educated Jewish comedian David Baddiel, to



Ethnic InSULTS: *Guardian* columnist David Baddiel.

write about the supposed offensive racism and antisemitism of comments by the historically anti-racist Labour Party politician Ken Livingstone.

This was contradictory on a number of fronts, for Livingstone's historical critique had been exclusively about Zionism, the ideology that had for 16 years previously been defined by UN resolution 3379 as a form of racism, and specifically not

about the broader western Jewish diaspora.

Despite this, Baddiel was allowed to transpose this theme into issues of antisemitism. But what is particularly astonishing about Baddiel's privileged media placement is that the comic is almost totally disgraced and discredited on anti-racist multicultural issues. Yet, he is still a regular *Guardian* source on its largely unsubstantiated antisemitism claims.

Baddiel and his comedy partner Frank Skinner, spent much of the 1996 ITV series of *Fantasy Football* insulting the ethnic appearance of the Black soccer player Jason Lee, who played at the time for Nottingham Forest, and inciting others to do so. Lee was singled out for a campaign of vilification simply because he had chosen to adopt the locks-and-cornrows style of his Afro-diasporic heritage.

A 2016 interview with the wife of the 1970s Black profes-

photo: Youtube

sional footballer Bob Hazel by the BBC's Adrian Childs, illustrates the racist historical template upon which the Baddiel/Skinner campaign was constructed. In it, she suggests that the English Football Association actually prohibited her husband from having dreadlocks.

Baddiel invented the slur 'Pineapple Heads' for Black people with 'Dredds & Cornrows'. Professor Ben Carrington details the strategic exploitative depths into which this campaign of the TV series *Fantasy Football* plunged and further extended its impact on other Black citizens. "David Baddiel 'Blacked up' (evoking the barely coded racist imagery of the minstrel shows) with a pineapple on his head out of which Jason Lee's dreadlocks were growing – the 'joke' being that Jason Lee's 'dreads' resemble a fruit on top of his head. This joke was then carried out with increasing frequency for the rest of the series, with young children sending in drawings of Jason Lee adorned with various fruit on his head.

The pineapple joke was then taken up by football fans in the terraces who chanted songs about Jason Lee's hair and significantly transcended the normally insular world of football fandom and entered into the public domain as both a descriptive term and a form of ridicule ('Pineapple Head')



PI NEAPPLE HEAD!: David Baddiel (top) in blackface and fake dreadlocks for his depiction of soccer player Jason Lee (above) in the 1986 British TV series *Fantasy Football*.

for any black person with dreads tied back".

Inevitably, many of those subjected to the abusive copycat street 'ridicule', Carrington identifies were children.

To put this in perspective: if Baddiel's racial slurs had been replicated in modern Califor-

nia – where abuses and discrimination based upon ethnic appearances, including natural hair are now outlawed – he would be arrested and potentially legally sanctioned for his offences? Significantly, the majority of the condemnatory cultural criticisms of the Baddiel phenomenon originate predominantly in the era of the specific offences, and cannot simply be disregarded as some sort of latter sensitive 21st-century politically correct reading of 1990s events.

Concerns about the Baddiel/Skinner campaign were expressed even in the contemporary corporate media of the time. The poet and critic Tom Paulin said, "Jason Lee has been treated with great cruelty ... the charge of racism is a very feasible one – the *Sun* (newspaper) had him portrayed as having bananas growing out of his head. It doesn't take much to realise what that's saying". (*Late Review*, BBC2, 6 May 1996).

What we have in Baddiel is a privileged Cambridge graduate who has opportunistically exploited the minstrel tradition of mocking Black ethnic identity, set loose ancient tropes of so-called Black primitivism and fielded so-called 'humour' whose function was to suppress the articulation of ethnic difference and the right to challenge

white aesthetic norms.

Significantly, Jason Lee was also ridiculed on Baddiel/Skinner's *Fantasy Football* for "looking like an Ancient Egyptian", which begs the question: Which continent's citizens was he implicitly being told he should be aspiring to look like? Little wonder the Black community has historically had to fight light/dark racist hierarchies.

Sociologists Steve Greenfield and Guy Osborn explained in their 2001 book, *Regulating Football: Commodification, Consumption and the Law*, that, given this campaign was so solidly orientated on issues of ethnic identity, the joke was "not merely something that Lee could have laughed off, perhaps cut off his dreadlocks and 'assimilated'."

In fact, in a moment indicative of the racist forces that had been let loose, Prof. Ben Carrington describes how, the *Independent* newspaper's Jim White who had been on the same *Late Review* show as Tom Paulin, and who was apparently jumping on the same 'New Lad' bandwagon as Baddiel and Skinner, "went on to say that if Jason Lee was so upset by the remarks that he should have his dreadlocks cut off, which would have then endeared him to the (white) audience".

In recent years, when fans of Tottenham Hotspur football club – who've historically enjoyed significant local London Jewish support – attempted the debatable solidarity of proclaiming themselves to be 'Yiddos,' the Police and Crown



RACISM FOR SALE: Golliwog dolls in a Yorkshire shop stem from the same Minstrel tradition iconography as Baddiel's Blackface.

Prosecution Service threatened to prosecute. Ironically, this is in part due to Baddiel – a prominent fan of rival club Chelsea, with a genuine history of sporadic overt anti-semitic chanting – having made privileged media platform demands that he be listened to on this issue.

Yet in an era of prosecutions for past historic abuse offences, Baddiel's incitements have not been allowed to damage his *Guardian* media career, let alone provoke the legal indictment of potentially inciting racial hatred, that many genuine anti-racists and members of Britain's Black communities would no doubt welcome. Given his history, perhaps some would even regard his uncritical promotion and prominence within a newspaper serving a multicultural society as in itself a manifestation of racism.

In 2016 as part of its pro-Israel moral panic, *Guardian* writer and editor of opinion Jonath-

an Freedland alleged that a Labour Party activist who had objected to the occupation of Palestine had used the phrase 'big noses' when referring to Jews. He concluded therefore that, "Labour and the left have an antisemitism problem".

Given that Baddiel's 'Pineapple Head' taunting and incitements are so comprehensively documented and, in going on for an entire television series, exceed this example by a country mile, if we were to equally apply Freedland's criteria, shouldn't we could similarly conclude the *Guardian* senior editorial team has a problem with Black people?

Certainly if you imagine an ethnic inversion of victim and aggressor, the *Guardian* would hardly be giving columnist privileges to a Black working-class comedian with a history of ridiculing white Jewish ethnicity. Yet, to sidestep accusations that it is racist in its support of the apartheid Pro-Israel lobby, Baddiel is the person the *Guardian* has at times resorted to, as a short-term promotional figurehead.

In the UK media, Muslims are frequently the object of ethnic global conspiracy theories: subjected to monolithic KKK-type abusive collective caricatures over sex abuse smears, resulting in lethal attacks on their mosques, and told in newspaper headlines to 'get their house in order.' So are other Black Britons when, for example, there have been race riots after police shoot-to-kill incidents.

By contrast to the monolithic indictments of Black minorities, no one is equivalently permitted to ask if members of a white ethnic group being socialised to believe that supporting white colonial conquest and apartheid dominance can be excused by Jewish fundamentalism, might potentially be opening the door to further racist practices?

For example, Baddiel's offences are also mirrored by the Jewish entrepreneur Alan Sugar who, while similarly accusing Labour of antisemitism over scrutinising Israel in June 2018, made traditional British 'all darkies look the same' jokes – ie spivs and street vendors – about the African Senegalese football team. Demands by the African media for his resignation were ignored by the BBC.

Similarly, in 2016, Israel advocate UK Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis unashamedly suggested to the UK media, "In a nutshell minorities need to pass the Norman Tebbit test". The Tebbit test is a prejudicial form of political labelling – often described as racist – which takes its name from the conservative politician Norman Tebbit, who suggested the Britishness of Black minority groups could be open to question if they simply had the 'temerity' to support a commonwealth sports team – such as the West Indian or Pakistan cricket teams. Many of the Black minority victims of that prejudice could justifiably ask, in an age of concerns about foreign interference in domestic politics, how it is that white media members and political

Jason Lee said of the impact of the incitements on his family at sporting venues, 'It can't be nice, supporting your child or partner and seeing him get so much abuse'

elites can, by comparison to mere sports fandom, give their allegiance to Israel, a racist foreign government condemned by Desmond Tutu and other Nobel Prize winners for its apartheid, and no one outside of Al Jazeera's exposés of Israel's political interference, is permitted to ask if this has any relevance for British democracy?

While the Guardian has deliberately censored such ethnic colonialist racist hypocrisies from its coverage and has been practising variations of its 'angel dancing on the head of a pin' invocations of antisemitism in support of Israel, it would certainly be legitimate for Black Britons to wonder how they or Jason Lee would survive unharmed at Israel's checkpoints or its exclusive white-American gated communities. Here alongside the victimisation of the Palestinians – as researcher David Sheen and many others have documented – the oppression of Black Jews and even, on occasion, indigenous middle-eastern Jews by the white settlers, is the norm.

You would hope that, regardless of their skin colour, UK

citizens would get to enjoy greater advocacy and protection from their British political and media elites, than a racist apartheid foreign government? Black readers should certainly not have to put up with having their noses shoved in the 'Pineapple Head' and Minstrel tradition Blacked-up ethnic abuses of David Baddiel, for which, the *Guardian* editorial team is apparently prepared to provide the cover of impunity.

FOOTNOTE: Jason Lee said of his experience, "It was, looking back, a form of bullying". He recalled the impact of the incitements on his family at sporting venues, "There would be racial stuff. In the end, I would tell them not to come. It can't be nice, supporting your child or partner and seeing him get so much abuse."

Courtesy of this *Guardian* public relations rehabilitation, Baddiel appeared on BBC TV shows in 2018, including *Frankie Boyle's New World Order*, as an apparently respectable critical voice on antisemitism. He is also a regular on BBC Radio 4. The current editor of the *Guardian* pitching her editorial tent on these evident racial double standards is Katharine Viner. Ct

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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.

The corporations that are screwing up your life, tainting your water, polluting your air, and buying your favourite coffee shop, are also creating the climate catastrophe, writes Lee Camp

100 companies will sign humanity's death warrant

8

A tiny number of sociopaths make the decisions that are currently dooming us all, and as much as I'd like to tell you otherwise, those people don't even notice if we all march outside in colourful hats.

Only 100 companies will sign humanity's death sentence. That's it. One hundred corporate boards filled with sociopaths. But I'll get back to that in a moment.

In recent weeks, climate activists in New York City jammed up foot traffic on Wall Street with a die-in, covering themselves in fake blood and lying on the ground. Other activists in Washington, DC, blocked intersections using

a variety of tactics, gridlocking traffic and pissing off a lot of people. It seems clear that when it comes to our impending extinction, practically no one cares, unless it means they have to sit in traffic for ten extra minutes. Apparently there is nothing that upsets Americans more than being stuck in their car, moving at a negative mph, completely unable to get to the jobs they fucking hate.

And that's why those are the types of protests that matter – the ones that interrupt the flow of capitalism, not the colourful marches where we all show up for two hours while the politicians we're ostensibly trying to



influence go play golf. I'm not saying don't get involved in the friendly marches; I'm just saying our rulers don't care that you did. It's like when you dress up your baby in a costume: I'm not saying you have to stop, but



you're only doing it for yourself. The ruling elite, like your baby, doesn't actually care.

But since I aim to please, here's a point for those of you who don't give a shit about the climate crisis. The corporations

that are screwing up your life, tainting your water, polluting your air, buying up your favourite coffee shop and turning it into a gas station, sucking your tax dollars up through subsidies, and all the while paying their employees a warm can of farts per hour – those corporations are the same ones creating the climate catastrophe.

In fact, the *Guardian* reported that just 100 companies are responsible for 71 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. These corporations include Exxon Mobil, Saudi Aramco, Shell, Chinese and Russian coal, Chevron, BP, CNPC, ConocoPhillips, Gazprom, Lukoil, Total, Petrobras and many others. One hundred incredibly rich yet morally bankrupt companies. That's it.

It gets worse. The *Carbon Majors Report* revealed that more than half of all industrial emissions over the past 30 years were put out by just 25 corporate and state-owned entities. Twenty-five companies are killing us, smothering us, stealing our futures while choking us (and not the fun kind of consensual choking done in the bedroom. This is the bad kind of choking that results in drought and hurricanes and your dog stuck in a tree!).

Basically, a tiny number of sociopaths make the decisions that are currently dooming us all, and as much as I'd like to tell you otherwise, those people don't even notice if we all march outside in colourful hats. The

marches are kinda like those "rate your experience" things at airports and restaurants, with giant colour-coded buttons that feature four choices, ranging from a smiley face all the way down to the dreaded frowny face. I hate to get conspiratorial, but I'm 84 percent certain that those buttons aren't connected to anything. The powers that be just know that you feel better if you think you gave your opinion. Although I will say that the last time I "rated my experience", I actually did get a response from TSA at the airport. I was only halfway through taking a dump on the frowny face when guys with guns showed up.

Point is, the only protests that create change are those that interrupt the flow of business, because these corporations will not give up easily. Too much profit rests in the balance for them to stop their prolonged execution of the human race.

The *Guardian* article continues: "Fossil fuel companies risked wasting more than two-trillion dollars over the coming decade by pursuing coal, oil and gas projects that could be worthless in the face of international action on climate change and advances in renewables – in turn posing substantial threats to investor returns".

They have made a two-trillion-dollar gamble that we will all keep using fossil fuels even as society collapses. So they don't just have a dog in the race, they have a goddamn elephant riding on top of a TRex riding on top of Mike Pompeo. (One can argue that such

an animal would not fare well in a race, but it is undeniably a significant beast to have in said contest.)

And I realise that for the average American – the regular person scraping by, trying to get the kids to eat, the dogs to poop and the grandpa to shut up for one second – climate change isn't his or her top concern. But the truth is, your daily troubles are connected to the same corporations that are causing the largest existential threat we fleshy apes have ever faced. The higher-ups at those organisations control our governments and, therefore, our day-to-day lives.

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A Tamara Pearson writes for *Common Dreams*, “The CEOs making these calculated decisions are hubristic-parasites with a fallacy-fetish, who treat wealth as a game – declaring themselves winners when they have more zeros than whole countries, while treading all over our magical habitat in their race for wealth. ... Spoon-fed elitists who are so white and male and wealthy that they



It's now one big, incestuous, money-obsessed pile of X-rated nastiness – and you and I are not part of it. We are the cannon fodder

aren't touched by the problems they create”.

While I love Pearson's analysis, she's wrong about one thing. These parasites are not only white and male. As President Obama pointed out last year in a speech, “American energy production, you wouldn't always know it, but it went up every year I was president. ... And you know that ... suddenly America's like the biggest oil producer ... that was me, people”.

Our former president is actually proud of the fact that he helped put the nail in our cof-

fin. When the ruling elite don't think you're paying attention, they brag about their crimes – the same way you or I might sit around privately and say, “Man, you wouldn't believe how much weed I smoked last night”. Our powers that be sit around boasting, “Man, you wouldn't believe how many regulations I gutted last night”.

The 100 corporations actively suffocating us in a blanket of global warming emissions are the same ones that run our government. They have wrapped their tentacles around our politicians, the regulatory agencies and the criminal justice system. It's now one big, incestuous, money-obsessed pile of X-rated nastiness – and you and I are not part of it. We are the cannon fodder, the collateral damage, the chumps. Until we stop these corporations, the expiration date of the human race is set in stone. **Ct**

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Lee Camp is an American stand-up comedian, writer, actor and activist. Camp is the host of the weekly comedy news TV show Redacted Tonight With Lee Camp on RT America. This article was first published at www.truthdig.com.

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opening ceremony
of the extinction
rebellion autumn
uprising at London's
Marble Arch, which
included the red
rebel brigade (now
with added green,
representing forests)





Rebels for our future

Words & photographs
by **Ron Fassbender**

The international activist movement Extinction Rebellion staged two weeks of protests in London – and other cities around the world – to force the government to tell the truth about the threats from climate change and biodiversity loss in October. It also called for the government to declare an emergency and set up a citizens’ assembly to assess how best to respond.

The protests were peaceful and good natured, with non-violent direct action a core tactic of protests that disrupted key

areas of the city. However, by October 19, the police reported that more than 1,700 people had been arrested, many for obstructing the highway (eg lock-ons while lying in the road). As XR publicly say, their strategy aims at maximising arrests to gain publicity and raise the issue of climate change in the media and public consciousness.

Policing was much heavier compared to the April “rebellion”, with pre-emptive arrests and raids on storage facilities. On October 14, police expanded an order banning XR protests to include the whole of London, a ban that has been widely criticised and may be subject to judicial review.



XR Autumn Uprising—October 8

ABOVE: Vicar Tim Hewes is arrested.

RIGHT: confiscated pink pillows reappear at the march.

CENTRE, RIGHT: clowns perform for climate action.

FACING PAGE TOP: Whitehall lock-ons.

BELOW: Protesters are D-locked by their necks in Parliament St.







16 **XR Strength
from Grief
– October 12**

ABOVE: Banner declares, 'no Insects, no Food'.

RIGHT: Skeletons parade down London's Oxford Street.

FACING PAGE TOP: The crowd heads off to Russell Square.

BELOW, RIGHT: Road block in Woburn Place.

BELOW, LEFT: A blunt warning to the world, 'no pollinators, no food'.





It's not just Britain that is headed for the sub-basement of imperial history, the US seems determined to follow suit, writes Tom Engelhardt

Is Donald Trump the ultimate Brexiteer?

Donald Trump may prove to be the ultimate Brexiteer. Back in August 2016, in the midst of his presidential campaign, he proudly tweeted, "They will soon be calling me MR BREXIT!" On the subject of the British leaving the European Union (EU) he's neither faltered nor wavered. That June, he was already cheering on British voters, 51.9 percent of whom had just opted for Brexit in a nationwide referendum. They had, he insisted, taken "their country back" and he predicted that other countries, including you-know-where, would act similarly. As it happened, Mr "America First" was proven anything but wrong in November 2016.

Ever since, he's been remarkably eager to insert himself in Britain's Brexit debate. Last July, for instance, he paid an official visit to that country and had tea with the queen ("an incredible lady ... I feel I know her so well and she certainly knows me very well right now"). As *Politico* put it at the

time, "In just a matter of a few hours, he snubbed the leader of the opposition – who wants a close relationship with the EU after Brexit and if he can't get it, advocates a second referendum on the options – in favour of meeting with two avid Brexiteers and chatting with a third". Oh, and that third person just happened to be the man who would become the present prime minister, Brexiteer-to-hell Boris Johnson.

Since then, of course, he's praised Johnson's stance – get out now, no deal – to the heavens, repeatedly promising to sign a "very big" trade agreement or "lots of fantastic mini-deals" with the Brits once they dump the European Union. (And if you believe there will be no strings attached to that generous offer, you haven't been paying attention to the presidency of one Donald J Trump.) In Britain itself, sentiment about Brexiting the EU remains deeply confused, or perhaps more accurately disturbed, and little wonder. It's clear enough that,

from the economy to medical supplies, cross-Channel traffic snarl-ups to the Irish border, a no-deal Brexit is likely to prove problematic in barely grasped ways, as well as a blow to living standards. Still, there can be little question that the leaving option has been disturbing at a level that goes far deeper than just fear of the immediate consequences.

Remember, we're talking about the greatest power of the late 18th, 19th, and early 20 centuries, the country that launched the industrial revolution, whose navy once ruled the waves, and that had more colonies and military garrisons in more places more permanently than any country in history. Now, it's about to fall into what will someday be seen as the subbasement of imperial history. Think of Johnson's version of Brexiting as a way of saying goodbye to all that with a genuine flourish. Brexit won't just be an exit from the European Union but, for all intents and purposes, from history itself. It



MR BRExit!: Donald trump wants the US out of the global system of alliances and trade arrangements ...

will mark the end of a century-long fall that will turn Britain back into a relatively inconsequential island kingdom.

Bnow, you might think that all of this is a lesson written in the clouds for anyone, including Donald Trump, to see. Not that he will. After all, though no one thinks of him this way, he really is our own American Brexiteer. In some inchoate and (if I can use such a word for such a man) groping fashion, he, too, wants us out; not, of

course, from the European Union, though he's no fan of either the EU or the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), but from the whole global system of alliances and trade arrangements that Washington has forged since 1945 to ensure the success of the "American Century" – to cement, that is, its global position as the next Great Britain.

Not so long ago, when it came to Washington's system of global power, the US was the sun for orbiting allies in alliances like NATO, the Southeast

Asian Treaty Organisation, and the Organisation of American States. Meanwhile, the US military had scattered an unprecedented number of garrisons across much of the planet. In the wake of the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States briefly seemed to be not just the next but potentially the last Great Britain. Its leaders came to believe that this country had been left in a position of unique dominance on Planet Earth at "the end of history" and perhaps until the end of time. In the years after the

Soviet Union imploded in 1991, it came to be known as “the sole superpower” or, in the phrase of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, “the indispensable nation”. It briefly seemed to find itself in a position no country, not even the Roman or British empires, had ever been in.

Now, in his own half-baked, half-assed fashion, Donald Trump is promoting another kind of first: his unique version of “America First”. Two *New York Times* reporters, David Sanger and Maggie Haberman, evidently reminded him of that isolationist phrase from the pre-World War II era in an interview in March 2016 during his election run. They described the exchange this way: “He agreed with a suggestion [of ours] that his ideas might be summed up as ‘America First.’”

“Not isolationist, but I am America First”, he said. “I like the expression.” So much so that, from then on, he would use it endlessly in his presidential campaign.

Donald Trump has been something of a collector of, or perhaps sponge for, the useful past slogans of others (as well as the present ones of his right-wing followers in the Twitter-sphere). As any red baseball cap should remind us, the phrase that helped loft him to the presidency was, of course, “Make America Great Again”, or MAGA, a version of an old line from Ronald Reagan’s winning election campaign of 1980. He had the foresight to try to trademark it only days after Mitt Romney lost his bid for the

‘Donald Trump, in other words, is the first person to run openly and without apology on a platform of American decline’

presidency to Barack Obama in November 2012.

Both phrases would appeal deeply to what became known as his “base” – a significant crew in the heartland, particularly in rural America, who felt as if (in a country growing ever more economically unequal) the American dream was over. Their futures and those of their children no longer seemed to be heading up but down toward the sub-basement of economic subservience. Their unions had been broken, their jobs shipped elsewhere, their hopes and those for their kids left in the gutter. In a country whose leadership class still had soaring dreams of global domination and wealth beyond compare, whose politicians (Republican and Democratic alike) felt obliged to speak of American greatness, they were – and Donald Trump sensed it – the first American declinists.

At the time, however, few focused on the key word in that slogan of his, the final one: again. As I wrote back in April 2016, with that single word, candidate Trump reached out to them, however intuitively, and crossed a line

that would feel familiar today to someone like Boris Johnson in a British context. With it, he had, to put it bluntly, begun to exit the American century. He had become, as I commented then, “the first American leader or potential leader of recent times not to feel the need or obligation to insist that the United States, the ‘sole’ superpower of Planet Earth, is an ‘exceptional’ nation, an ‘indispensable’ country, or even in an unqualified sense a ‘great’ one”. He had, in short, become America’s first declinist presidential candidate, striking a new chord here, just as the Brexiteers would do in England.

As I also wrote then, “Donald Trump, in other words, is the first person to run openly and without apology on a platform of American decline.” This country, he made clear, was no longer “great.” In doing so (and in speaking out, after a fashion, against America’s forever wars of this century), he grasped, in his own strange way, the inheritance that the post-Cold War Washington establishment had left both him and the rest of the country.

After all, if Donald Trump hadn’t noticed that something was wrong, someone would have. As the planet’s sole superpower with a military budget that left every other nation in the shade, the US had, since 2001, invaded two countries, repeatedly bombed many more, and fought conflicts that spread across much of the Greater Middle East and Africa. Those wars, when launched in 2001 (Afghanistan) and 2003

(Iraq), were visibly meant both to demonstrate and ensure American dominion over much of the planet. Fifteen years later, as Donald Trump alone seemed to grasp, they had done the very opposite.

By the time The Donald took to the campaign trail, the US had not had a single true victory in this century. Not even in Afghanistan where it all began. In the years before he entered the Oval Office, the world's only truly "exceptional" power had mainly proven exceptionally incapable (in ways that weren't true in the Cold War years) of making its desires and will felt anywhere, except as a force for ultimate disruption and displacement.

Globally speaking, despite all its alliances, its unparalleled military power, and its loneliness at the top – Russia remained a nuclear-armed but fragile petrostate and China was visibly rising but not yet "super" – it looked like a great power in the early stages of decline. As not just Donald Trump's but Bernie Sanders's campaign suggested in 2016, there was a kind of decline underway at home as well, a process of hollowing out that extended from the economy to the courts to the political system.

It was no mistake that, in January 2017, in a new age of plutocracy and degradation, a billionaire entered the White House – or that his first major domestic act (with a Republican Congress) would be a tax cut that only gave yet more to the already extraordinarily wealthy. Nor would it be strange that, for the first time, the 400

He's been undermining the alliances that once ensured American power and influence, even as he cozies up to autocrats and plutocrats the world over

wealthiest Americans would have a lower tax rate than any other income group.

Though The Donald insisted that he would make this country great again, his presidency has proven a distinctly declineist one. He has, after all, been hard at work cracking open the American imperial system as it once existed and directing the country into a future ripe for candidates with yet redder hats and slogans.

If Boris Johnson is plugging for a Britain Last moment, Donald Trump has been treading a similar path for the greatest power on the planet. In his trade wars, he's been intent on cracking open the American global economic system, whether in relation to the EU, China, or allies like Japan and South Korea. In his relations with such allies, he's been hard at work undermining the alliances that once ensured American power and influence, even as he cozies up to autocrats and plutocrats the world over.

Of course, in October 2019, its forever wars and new trade wars notwithstanding, the United States remains the strongest military power on the planet,

not to speak of the wealthiest one around. So no matter what President Trump may do, we're not about to join Great Britain in that imperial subbasement any time soon. Still, as the Trump years should already have made clear, we are in at least the early stages of an American Brexit, globally and domestically.

When the Trumpian era ends, whether in 2020, 2024, or at some other moment, count on this: the American global system will have been cracked open, the domestic political and judicial systems undermined further, and this country made even more unequal in a gilded age beyond compare, as well as split at least in two ("civil war"!) in terms of popular sentiment.

There is, however, a difference between a British and an American Brexit. While a British one could harm the European Union (and even perhaps the American economy), its effects (except on England itself) should be relatively modest. On our overheating orb, however, an American Brexit could take the planet down with it. We are, after all, on a world in decline.

Think of Donald Trump as the president of that decline or, if you prefer, as MR. BREXIT! Ct

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tom engelhardt is a co-founder of the American Empire Project and the author of a history of the Cold War, The End of Victory Culture. His sixth and latest book is A Nation Unmade by War (Dispatch Books). This article was first published at www.tomdispatch.com

Jonathan Cook tells of Israel's plans for the eviction of nearly 40,000 Bedouin from their homes in unrecognised villages under the guise of 'economic development' projects ... the largest expulsion in decades

Israel plans to turn Bedouin into refugees

The decades-long struggle by tens of thousands of Israelis against being uprooted from their homes – some for the second or third time – should be proof enough that Israel is not the western-style liberal democracy it claims to be.

In the middle of last month 36,000 Bedouin – all of them Israeli citizens – discovered that their state is about to make them refugees in their own country, driving them into holding camps.

These Israelis, it seems, are the wrong kind. Their treatment has painful echoes of the past. In 1948, 750,000 Palestinians were expelled by the Israeli army outside the borders of the newly declared Jewish state established on their homeland – what the Palestinians call their Nakba, or catastrophe.

Israel is regularly criticised for its belligerent occupation, its relentless expansion of illegal settlements on Palestinian land and its repeated, savage military attacks, especially on Gaza.

On rare occasions, analysts also notice Israel's systematic discrimination against the 1.8-million Palestinians whose ancestors survived the Nakba and live inside Israel, ostensibly as citizens. But each of these abuses is dealt with in isolation, as though unrelated, rather than as different facets of an overarching project. A pattern is discernible, one driven by an ideology that dehumanises Palestinians everywhere Israel encounters them.

That ideology has a name. Zionism provides the thread that connects the past – the Nakba – with Israel's current ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their homes in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, the destruction of Gaza, and the state's concerted efforts to drive Palestinian citizens of Israel out of what is left of their historic lands and into ghettos.

The logic of Zionism, even if its more naive supporters fail

to grasp it, is to replace Palestinians with Jews – what Israel officially terms Judaisation.

The Palestinians' suffering is not some unfortunate side effect of conflict. It is the very aim of Zionism: to incentivise Palestinians still in place to leave "voluntarily", to escape further suffocation and misery.

The starkest example of this people replacement strategy is Israel's long-standing treatment of 250,000 Bedouin who formally have citizenship.

The Bedouin are the poorest group in Israel, living in isolated communities mainly in the vast, semi-arid area of the Negev, the country's south. Largely out of view, Israel has had a relatively free hand in its efforts to "replace" them.

That was why, for a decade after it had supposedly finished its 1948 ethnic cleansing operations and won recognition in western capitals, Israel continued secretly expelling thousands of Bedouin outside its borders, despite their claim on citizenship.



BETTER DAYS: celebrating inside a tent at Kseife, a Bedouin village

Meanwhile, other Bedouin in Israel were forced off their ancestral lands to be driven either into confined holding areas or state-planned townships that became the most deprived communities in Israel.

It is hard to cast the Bedouin, simple farmers and pastoralists, as a security threat, as was done with the Palestinians under occupation.

But Israel has a much broader definition of security than simple physical safety. Its security is premised on the maintenance of an absolute demographic dominance by Jews.

The Bedouin may be peaceable but their numbers pose a major demographic threat and their pastoral way of life

obstructs the fate intended for them – penning them up tightly inside ghettos.

Most of the Bedouin have title deeds to their lands that long predate Israel's creation. But Israel has refused to honour these claims and many tens of thousands have been criminalised by the state, their villages denied legal recognition. For decades they have been forced to live in tin shacks or tents because the authorities refuse to approve proper homes and they are denied public services like schools, water and electricity.

The Bedouin have one option if they wish to live within the law: they must abandon their

ancestral lands and their way of life to relocate to one of the poor townships.

Many of the Bedouin have resisted, clinging on to their historic lands despite the dire conditions imposed on them.

One such unrecognised village, Al Araqib, has been used to set an example. Israeli forces have demolished the makeshift homes there more than 160 times in less than a decade. In August, an Israeli court approved the state billing six of the villagers \$370,000 (Dh1.6 million) for the repeated evictions.

Al Araqib's 70-year-old leader, Sheikh Sayah Abu Madhim, recently spent months in jail after his conviction for tres-

passing, even though his tent is a stone's throw from the cemetery where his ancestors are buried.

Now the Israel authorities are losing patience with the Bedouin. Last January, plans were unveiled for the urgent and forcible eviction of nearly 40,000 Bedouin from their homes in unrecognised villages under the guise of "economic development" projects. It will be the largest expulsion in decades.

"Development", like "security", has a different connotation in Israel. It really means Jewish development, or Judaisation – not development for Palestinians. The projects include a new highway, a high-voltage power line, a weapons testing facility, a military live-fire zone and a phosphate mine.

It was revealed last month that the families would be forced into displacement centres in the townships, living in temporary accommodation for years as their ultimate fate is decided. Already these sites are

What is taking place is an administrative version of the ethnic cleansing Israeli officials conduct more flagrantly in the occupied territories on so-called security grounds

being compared to the refugee camps established for Palestinians in the wake of the Nakba. The barely concealed aim is to impose on the Bedouin such awful conditions that they will eventually agree to be confined for good in the townships on Israel's terms.

Six leading United Nations human rights experts sent a letter to Israel in the summer protesting the grave violations of the Bedouin families' rights in international law and arguing that alternative approaches were possible.

Adalah, a legal group for Palestinians in Israel, notes that Israel has been forcibly evicting the Bedouin over seven decades, treating them not as human beings but as pawns in its

never-ending battle to replace them with Jewish settlers.

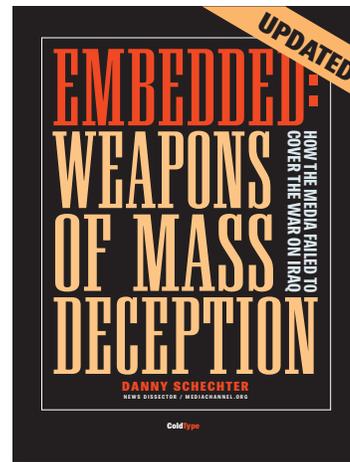
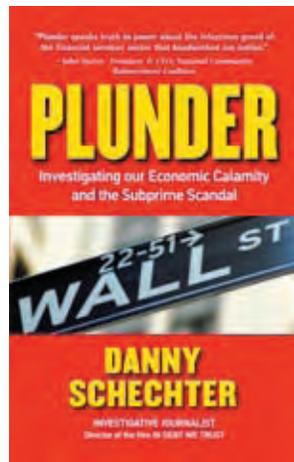
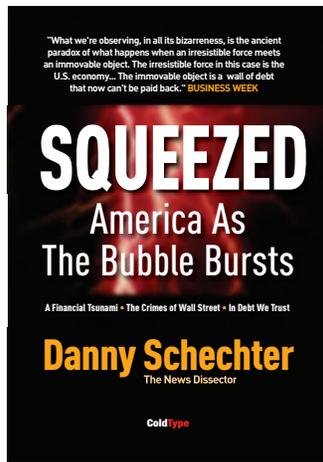
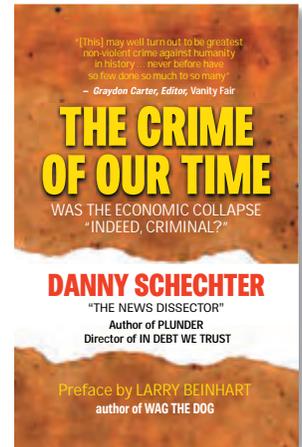
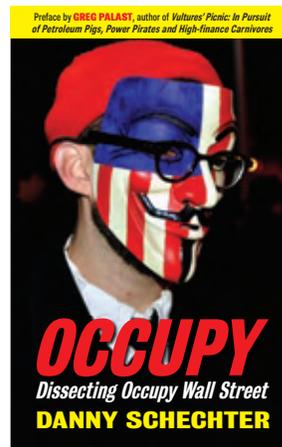
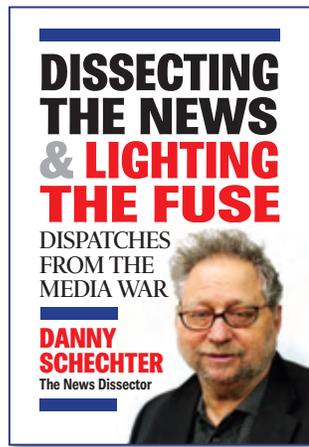
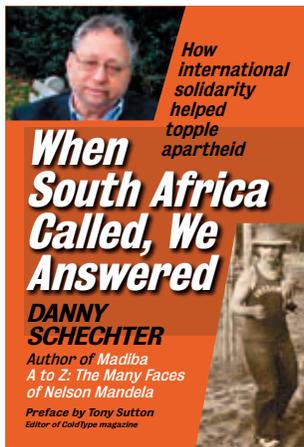
The Bedouin's living space has endlessly shrunk and their way of life has been crushed. This contrasts starkly with the rapid expansion of Jewish towns and single-family farming ranches on the land from which the Bedouin are being evicted.

It is hard not to conclude that what is taking place is an administrative version of the ethnic cleansing Israeli officials conduct more flagrantly in the occupied territories on so-called security grounds. These interminable expulsions look less like a necessary, considered policy and more like an ugly, ideological nervous tic. **CT**

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Jonathan Cook won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His books include Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East (Pluto Press) and Disappearing Palestine: Israel's Experiments in Human Despair (Zed Books). His website is www.jonathan-cook.net.

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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>

Where it all began: John Cohen's photos from the sixties chronicle the generation of musicians whose work would influence American music and culture for decades to come

When old time music came of age



Photos: John Cohen

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ABOVE:
The Crook Brothers,
backstage at the
Grand Ole Opry
in Nashville.

MAIN PHOTO:
The Country Boys
with Roland and
Clarence Clark
perform at the
Ash Grove,
Los Angeles, 1963.

John Cohen's new book *Speed Bumps on a Dirt Road*, recently published by powerHouse Books, is a living document of country music's founding fathers and mothers.

Cohen travelled across the USA, photographing musicians, at home, backstage at public events, from the wings at fiddlers' conventions, out in country music parks, and in the studio for live radio show

performances and recording sessions.

Cohen's photographic journey took him across the country playing music and recording, and documenting what was to be a generation of musicians who would influence American music and culture for decades to come.

Travelling between the Union Grove fiddlers' convention to the Grand Ole Opry to a coal celebration in Hazard, Kentucky, Cohen made historic photographs of

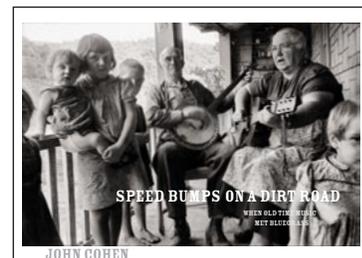


performers such as Bill Monroe and Doc Watson, the country's very first all-bluegrass show, and a bluegrass bar in Baltimore, among much more. *Speed Bumps on a Dirt Road* presents old time music as the root of country music.

This superbly-produced large format book includes photographs of: Flatt & Scruggs, fiddler "Eck" Robertson in Amarillo, Texas, Doc Watson, bluegrass fid-

dlers "Tex" Logan, the Stanley Brothers at Sunset Park, Sara and Maybelle of the Carter Family, and Cousin Emmy, Alice & Hazel, and a dulcimer in a parking lot.

John Cohen, who died in September, was also a prolific filmmaker of 17 music documentaries, including: *The High Lonesome Sound*, *End of an Old Song*, *Musical Hold-outs*, *Mountain Music of Peru*, and *Pericles In America*. **CT**



SPEED BUMPS ON A DIRT ROAD

When Old Time Music Met Bluegrass

John Cohen

powerHouse Publishing

Us \$45 / Canada \$60



Photos: John Cohen



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ABOVE:
Grandma Davis
and her family,
Roaring River,
North Carolina,
1961

RIGHT:
Alice Gerrard
and Hazel Dickens,
Chevy Chase,
Maryland,
1965.

CENTRE RIGHT:
Dale Poe and
Uncle Charlie
Higgins, Galax,
Virginia.





ABOVE:
Grand Ole Opry,
Nashville,
Tennessee, 1961



LEFT:
Grandma Davis and
daughter on stage,
Union Grove Old Time
Fiddlers' Convention

People should stop looking at this war criminal as a cuddly teddy bear with whom it's fun to share a sporting arena suite or a piece of hard candy, or to hang medals on for his treatment of veterans, writes Caitlin Johnstone

George W. Bush: Peace expert?

Humanity was treated to an important lecture on peace at a recent event for the NIR School of the Heart by none other than Ellen Degeneres and world-renowned peace expert George W Bush.

“I don't think the Iranians believe a peaceful Middle East is in their national interest”, said the former president, according to the *Washington Post's* Josh Rogin, whose brief Twitter thread on the subject appears to be the only online record of Bush's speech. “An isolationist United States is destabilising around the world”, Bush said during the speech in what, according to Rogin was a shot at the sitting president: “We are becoming isolationist and that's dangerous for the sake of peace”.

For those who don't speak fluent neoconservative, “isolationist” here means taking even one small step in any direction other than continued military expansionism into every square inch of planet

Earth, and “We are becoming isolationist” means, “We have hundreds of military bases circling the globe, our annual military budget is steadily climbing toward the trillion-dollar mark, and we are engaged in countless undeclared wars and regime change interventions all around the world”.

It's unclear why Bush is choosing to present himself as a more peaceful president than Trump given that, by this point in his first term, Bush had launched not one but two full-scale ground invasion wars whose effects continue to ravage the Middle East to this very day, especially given the way both presidents appear to be in furious agreement on foreign policy matters like Iran. But here we are.

From a certain point of view it's hard to say which is stranger: (a) a war criminal with a blood-soaked legacy of mass murder, torture and military expansionism telling Trump that he is endangering peace with his “iso-

lationism”, or (b) the claim that Trump is “isolationist” at all. Trump's so-called isolationism has thus far consisted of killing tens of thousands of Venezuelans with starvation sanctions in an attempt to effect regime change in the most oil-rich nation on earth, advancing a regime change operation in Iran via starvation sanctions, CIA covert ops, and reckless military escalations, continuing to facilitate the Saudi-led slaughter in Yemen, and to sell arms to Saudi Arabia, inflating the already insanely bloated US military budget to enable more worldwide military expansionism, greatly increasing the number of bombs dropped per day from the previous administration, killing record numbers of civilians in airstrikes for which he has reduced military accountability, and advancing many, many new cold war escalations against the nuclear superpower, Russia.

But these bogus warnings about a dangerous, non-existent threat of isolationism are nothing new for Dubya. In his fare-

well address to the nation, Bush said: "In the face of threats from abroad, it can be tempting to seek comfort by turning inward. But we must reject isolationism and its companion, protectionism. Retreating behind our borders would only invite danger. In the 21st-century, security and prosperity at home depend on the expansion of liberty abroad. If America does not lead the cause of freedom, that cause will not be led".

The use of the pro-war buzzword "isolationism" has been re-emerging from its post-Bush hibernation as a popular one-word debunk of any opposition to continued US military expansionism in all directions, and it is deceitful in at least three ways.

First, the way it is used consistently conflates isolationism with non-interventionism, which are two wildly different things. Second, none of the mainstream political figures who are consistently tarred with the "isolationist" pejorative are isolationists by any stretch of the imagination, or even proper non-interventionists: they all support many interventionist positions which actual non-interventionists object to. Third, calling someone who opposes endless warmongering an "isolationist" makes as much sense as calling someone who opposes rape a man-hating prude. Opposing an intrinsically evil act is not the same as withdrawing from the world. Nobody actually believes that US foreign policy is under any threat of anything remotely resembling isolationism. The

real purpose of this buzzword is to normalise the forever war and drag the Overton window so far in the direction of ghoulish hawkishness that the opposite of "war" is no longer "peace", but "isolationism". By pulling this neat little trick, the propagandists of the political/media class have successfully made endless war seem like a perfectly normal thing to be happening and any small attempt to scale it back look weird and freakish, when the truth is the exact opposite. War is weird, freakish and horrific, and peace is of course normal. This is the only healthy way to see things.

It would actually be great if Bush could shut up forever, ideally in a locked cell following

a public war tribunal. Failing that, people should stop looking at him as a cuddly teddy bear with whom it's fun to share a sporting arena suite or a piece of hard candy or to hang medals on for his treatment of veterans.

This mass murdering monster has been growing more and more popular with Democrats lately just because he offers mild criticisms of Trump, as have war pigs like Bill Kristol and Max Boot and even John Bolton for the same reason, and it needs to stop. And in the name of a million dead Iraqis, please don't start consulting this man on matters of peace. **CT**

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Caitlin Johnstone is an Australian blogger. Her website is www.caitlinjohnstone.com



CJ Hopkins is getting ready for four more years of martial law, concentration camps, gigantic banners with the faces of Trump and Putin hanging in football stadiums, along with mandatory Sieg-heiling in the nation's public schools

Hillary's Putin-Nazis are coming (again)!

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It looks like that's it for America, folks. Putin has gone and done it again. He and his conspiracy of Putin-Nazis have "hacked," or "influenced", or "meddled in" our democracy. Unless Admiral Bill McRaven and his special ops cronies can ginny up a last-minute military coup, it's four more years of the Trumpian Reich, Russian soldiers patrolling the streets, martial law, concentration camps, gigantic banners with the faces of Trump and Putin hanging in the football stadiums, mandatory Sieg-heiling in the public schools, National Vodka-for-Breakfast Day, death's heads, babushkas, the whole nine yards.

We probably should have seen this coming.

That's right, as I'm sure you are aware by now, president-in-exile Hillary Clinton has discovered Putin's diabolical plot to steal the presidency from Elizabeth Warren, or Biden, or whichever establishment puppet makes it out of the Demo-

cratic primaries. Speaking to former Obama adviser and erstwhile partner at AKPD Message and Media David Plouffe, Clinton revealed how the godless Rooskies intend to subvert democracy this time: "I'm not making any predictions, but I think they've got their eye on somebody who is currently in the Democratic primary and are grooming her to be the third-party candidate".

She was referring, of course, to Tulsi Gabbard, sitting Democratic Member of Congress, decorated Major in the Army National Guard, and long shot 2020 presidential candidate.

Apparently, Gabbard (who reliable anonymous sources in the Intelligence Community have confirmed is a member of some kind of treasonous, Samoan-Hindu, Assad-worshipping cult that wants to force everyone to practice yoga) has been undergoing Russian "grooming" at a compound in an undisclosed location that is probably in the

basement of Mar-a-Lago, or on Sublevel 168 of Trump Tower.

In any event, wherever Gabbard is being surreptitiously "groomed" (presumably by someone resembling Lotte Lenya in *From Russia With Love*), the plan (ie, Putin's plan) is to have her lose in the Democratic primaries, then run as a third-party "spoiler" candidate, stealing votes from Warren or Biden, exactly as Jill Stein (who, according to Clinton, is also "totally a Russian asset") stole them from Clinton back in 2016, allowing Putin to install Donald Trump (who, according to Clinton, is still being blackmailed by the FSB with that *kompromat* pee-tape) in the White House, where she so clearly belongs.

Clinton's comments came on the heels of a preparatory smear-piece in the *New York Times*, "What, Exactly, Is Tulsi Gabbard Up To?", which reported at length on how Gabbard has been "injecting chaos" into the Democratic primaries. Professional "disinformation



RUSSIAN ASSET?: hillary clinton (right) claimed that the Russians intend to subvert next year's US election by backing tulsi Gabbard in the fight to be Democratic Party candidate.

experts" supplied the *Times* with convincing evidence (ie. unfounded hearsay and innuendo) of "suspicious activity" surrounding Gabbard's campaign.

Former Clinton-aide Laura Rosenberger (who also just happens to be the director of the Alliance for Securing Democracy, "a bipartisan transatlantic national security advocacy group" comprised of former Intelligence Community and US State Department officials, and publisher of the Hamilton 68 dashboard) "sees Gabbard as a potentially useful vector for Russian efforts to sow division".

The *Times'* piece goes on to list an assortment of unsavoury, extremist, white supremacist, horrible, neo-Nazi-type persons

that Tulsi Gabbard has nothing to do with, but which Hillary Clinton, the Intelligence Community, the *Times*, and the rest of the corporate media would like you to mentally associate her with. Richard Spencer, David Duke, Steve Bannon, Mike Cernovich, Tucker Carlson, and so on. Neo-Nazi sites like the Daily Stormer. 4chan, where, according to the *New York Times*, neo-Nazis like to "call her Mommy".

In keeping with professional journalistic ethics, the *Times* also reached out to experts on fascism, fascist terrorism, terrorist fascism, fascist-adjacent Assad-apologism, Hitlerism, horrorism, Russia, and so on, to confirm

Gabbard's guilt-by-association with the people The *Times* had just associated her with. Brian Levin, director of the CSU Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, confirmed that Gabbard has "the seal of approval" within goose-stepping, Hitler-loving, neo-Nazi circles. The Alliance for Securing Democracy (yes, the one from the previous paragraph) conducted an "independent analysis" which confirmed that RT ("the Kremlin-backed news agency") had mentioned Gabbard far more often than the Western corporate media (which isn't backed by anyone, and is totally unbiased and independent, despite the fact that most of it is owned by a handful of powerful global corporations, and at least one CIA-

affiliated oligarch). Oh, and Hawaii State Senator Kai Kahele, who is challenging Gabbard for her seat in Congress, agreed with the *Times* that Gabbard's support from Jew-hating, racist Putin-Nazis might be a potential liability: "Clearly there's something about her and her policies that attracts and appeals to these type of people who are white nationalists, antisemites, and Holocaust deniers".

But it's not just the *New York Times*, of course. No sooner had Clinton finished cackling than the corporate media launched into their familiar Goebbelsian piano routine, banging out story after television segment repeating the words "Gabbard" and "Russian asset". I've singled out the *Times* because the smear piece in question was clearly a warm-up for Hillary Clinton's calculated smear job. No, the old gal hasn't lost her mind. She knew exactly what she was doing, as did the editors of the *New York Times*, as did every other establishment news source that breathlessly "reported" her neo-McCarthyite smears.

As I have noted previously, 2020 is for all the marbles, and it's not just about who wins the election. No, it's mostly about crushing the "populist" backlash against the hegemony of global capitalism and its happy, smiley-faced, conformist ideology. To do that, the neoliberal establishment has to delegitimise, and lethally stigmatise, not just Trump, but also people like Gabbard, Bernie Sanders, Jeremy Corbyn ... and any oth-

Clinton knew exactly what she was doing, as did the editors of the NYT and every other news source that breathlessly 'reported' her neo-McCarthyite smears

er popular political figure (left, right, it makes no difference) deviating from that ideology. In Trump's case, it's his neo-nationalism. In Sanders and Corbyn's, it's socialism (or at least some semblance of social democracy). In Gabbard's, it's her opposition to the Corporatocracy's ongoing efforts to restructure and privatise the Middle East (and the rest of the planet), and their using the US military to do it.

Ask yourself, what do Trump, Sanders, Corbyn, and Gabbard have in common? No, it's not their Putin-Nazism ... it's the challenge they represent to global capitalism. Each, in his or her own way, is a symbol of the growing populist resistance to the privatisation and globalisation of everything. And thus, they must be delegitimised, stigmatised, and relentlessly smeared as "Russian assets", "antisemites", "traitors", "white supremacists", "fascists", "communists", or some other type of "extremists".

Gabbard, to her credit, understands this, and is focusing attention on the motives and tactics of the neoliberal

establishment and their smear machine.

As I noted in an essay last year, "the only way to effectively counter a smear campaign (whether large-scale or small-scale) is to resist the temptation to profess your innocence, and, instead, focus as much attention on the tactics and the motives of the smearers as possible". This will not save her, but it is the best she can do, and I applaud her for having the guts to do it. I hope she continues to give them hell as they finish off her candidacy and drive her out of office.

Oh, and if you're contemplating sending me an email explaining how these smear campaigns don't work (or you spent the weekend laughing about how Hillary Clinton lost her mind and made an utter jackass of herself), maybe check in with Julian Assange, who is about to be extradited to America, tried for exposing US war crimes, and then imprisoned for the remainder of his natural life. If you can't get through to Julian at Belmarsh, you could ring up Katharine Viner at the *Guardian*, which has ruthlessly smeared Assange for years, and published outright lies about him, and is apparently doing very well financially.

And, if Katharine is on holiday in Antigua or somewhere, or having tea with Hillary in the rooftop bar of the Hay-Adams Hotel, you could try Luke Harding (who not only writes and publishes propaganda for the *Guardian*, but who wrote a whole *New York Times*

best-seller based on nothing but lies and smears). Or try Marty Baron, Dean Baquet, Paul Krugman, or even Rachel Maddow, or any of the other editors and journalists who have been covering the Putin-Nazi “Attack on America,” and keeping us apprised of who is and isn’t a Hitler-loving “Russian asset”.

Ask them whether their smear machine is working ... if you can get them off the phone with their brokers, or whoever is decorating their summer places in the Hamptons or out on Martha’s Vineyard.

Or ask the millions of well-off liberals who are still, even after

The next 12 months is going to make the last three years look like the Propaganda Special Olympics

Russiagate was exposed as an enormous hoax based on absolutely nothing, parroting this paranoid official narrative and calling people “Russian assets” on Twitter. Or never mind, just pay attention to what happens over the next 12 months.

In terms of ridiculous official propaganda, spittle-flecked

McCarthyite smears, and full-blown psychotic mass Putin-Nazi hysteria, it’s going to make the last three years look like the Propaganda Special Olympics. 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. He can be reached at www.cjhopkins.com or www.consentfactory.org.



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It's getting harder to believe that Americans live in a nation that values freedom and which is governed by the rule of law, writes John W. Whitehead

Where kids are terrorised, traumatised, and killed

*"Am I going to get shot again."
– Two-year-old survivor of a police shooting that left his three siblings, ages one, four and five, with a bullet in the brain, a fractured skull and gun wounds to the face*

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Children learn what they live. As family counsellor Dorothy Law Notté wisely observed, "If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn. If children live with hostility, they learn to fight. If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive".

And if children live with terror, trauma and violence – forced to watch helplessly as their loved ones are executed by police officers who shoot first and ask questions later – will they in turn learn to terrorise, traumatise and inflict violence on the world around them?

I'm not willing to risk it. Are you?

It's difficult enough raising a child in a world ravaged by war,

disease, poverty and hate, but when you add the toxic stress of the police state into the mix, it becomes near impossible to protect children from the growing unease that some of the monsters of our age come dressed in government uniforms.

Case in point: in Hugo, Oklahoma, plain clothes police officers opened fire on a pickup truck parked in front of a food bank, heedless of the damage such a hail of bullets – 26 shots were fired – could have on those in the vicinity.

Three of the four children inside the parked vehicle were shot: a four-year-old girl was shot in the head and ended up with a bullet in the brain; a five-year-old boy received a skull fracture; and a one-year-old girl had deep cuts on her face from gunfire or shattered window glass. Only the two-year-old was spared any physical harm, although the terror will likely linger for a long time.

"They are terrified to go any-

where or hear anything", the family attorney said. "The two-year-old keeps asking about 'Am I going to get shot again'."

The reason for the use of such excessive force?

Police were searching for a suspect in a weeks-old robbery of a pizza parlour that netted \$400.

This may be the worst use of excessive force on innocent children to date. Unfortunately, it is one of many in a steady stream of cases that speak to the need for police to de-escalate their tactics and stop resorting to excessive force when less lethal means are available to them.

For instance, in Cleveland, police shot and killed 12-year-old Tamir Rice who was seen playing on a playground with a pellet gun. Surveillance footage shows police shooting the boy two seconds after getting out of a moving patrol car.

In Detroit, 7-year-old Aiyana Jones was killed after a Detroit SWAT team launched a flash-bang grenade into her family's apartment, broke

through the door and opened fire, hitting the little girl who was asleep on the living room couch. The cops were in the wrong apartment.

In Georgia, Christopher Roupe, 17, was shot and killed after opening the door to a police officer. The officer, mistaking the remote control in Roupe's hand for a gun, shot him in the chest.

These children are more than grim statistics on a police blotter. They are the heart-breaking casualties of the government's endless, deadly wars on terror, on drugs, and on the American people themselves.

Then you have the growing number of incidents involving children who are forced to watch helplessly as trigger-happy police open fire on loved ones and community members alike.

In Texas, an 8-year-old boy watched as police – dispatched to do a welfare check on a home with its windows open – shot and killed his aunt through her bedroom window while she was playing video games with him.

In Minnesota, a four-year-old girl watched from the back-seat of a car as cops shot and killed her mother's boyfriend, Philando Castile, a school cafeteria supervisor, during a routine traffic stop merely because Castile disclosed that he had a gun in his possession, for which he had a lawful conceal-and-carry permit. That's all it took for police to shoot Castile four times as he was

There will soon be nothing left to teach young people about freedom as we have known it beyond remembered stories of the 'good old days'

reaching for his license and registration.

A child doesn't even have to be directly exposed to a police shooting to learn the police state's lessons in compliance and terror, which are being meted out with every SWAT team raid, roadside strip search, and school drill.

Indeed, there can be no avoiding the hands-on lessons being taught in the schools about the role of police in our lives, ranging from active shooter drills and school-wide lockdowns to incidents in which children engaging in typically child-like behaviour are suspended (for shooting an imaginary "arrow" at a fellow classmate), handcuffed (for being disruptive at school), arrested (for throwing water balloons as part of a school prank), and even tasered (for not obeying instructions).

What is particularly chilling is how effective these lessons in compliance are in indoctrinating young people to accept their role in the police state, either as criminals or prison guards.

If these exercises are intended to instill fear, paranoia and compliance into young people, clearly, our children are getting the message, but it's not the mes-

sage that was intended by those who fomented a revolution and wrote our founding documents. Their philosophy was that the police work for us, and "we the people" are the masters, and they are to be our servants.

Now that philosophy has been turned on its head.

Certainly, it's getting harder by the day to insist that we live in a nation that values freedom and which is governed by the rule of law.

Yet unless something changes and soon, there will soon be nothing left to teach young people about freedom as we have known it beyond remembered stories of the "good old days".

For starters, as I point out in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People*, it's time to take a hard look at the greatest perpetrators of violence in our culture – the US government and its agents – and do something about it: demilitarise the police, prohibit the Pentagon from distributing military weapons to domestic police agencies, train the police in de-escalation techniques, stop insulating police officers from charges of misconduct and wrongdoing, and require police to take precautionary steps before engaging in violence in the presence of young people.

We must end the carnage. Ct

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John W Whitehead is a constitutional attorney and founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His new book Battlefield America: The War on the American People is available at www.amazon.com.

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Insights

photo: Zach D. Roberts



UAW members picket at Rochester, newYork

Labour coverage of GM motor strike

By Mike Elk

On the night of September 16, security guards and a small crowd waited in the parking lot at the General Motors plant in Rochester, New York, for a strike that no one knew for sure would come. As the minutes ticked by it seemed it wasn't going to happen at all. Then, about 20 minutes after midnight, hundreds of workers began flooding out of the turnstiles at the front gates of the plant, many of them shouting and high fiving as they walked out. It was the first strike in 39 years, as 49,000 GM workers at 52 facilities across 19 states went on strike.

A strike at one of the city's biggest employers should be front-page news. But for two days, the local daily, the *Rochester Democrat-Chronicle*, didn't even run a story on the strike's effects on local workers, 1,000 of whom work at the Rochester plant, and 840 of whom are members of the United Automobile Workers union. In another age, walk-outs at a company as large as General Motors would have received around-the-clock coverage, appeared on the top of daily newscasts and on front pages. Now, outside of the financial press, the *Detroit*

Free Press, and a few diligent local reporters, the strike is treated as an afterthought. The *New York Times* ran only five reports from the field over the course of a month, while the *Washington Post* ran none and relied entirely on wire services for its coverage.

The stories that have appeared on the strike in the mainstream press have tended to frame it, incorrectly, through a Trump lens, offering up a false narrative of angry white working-class GM strikers, precisely the kind of people who propelled Trump to the presidency. One *Chicago Tribune* headline read "As UAW strike against GM drags on, President Donald Trump has plenty of 2020 supporters on key Michigan picket line". *Vox* wrote that the strike gives "Democrats a unique opportunity to reach disillusioned Trump voters".

These storylines play into a mistaken stereotype: in fact, only 28 percent of UAW members voted for Trump, according to a survey by the union. Worse, they also ignore the role of African American workers in helping to lead these strikes. While African Americans comprise 12 percent of the workforce, they make up 17 percent of automotive manufacturing workers, according to the

Bureau of Labor Statistics.

“The reason that reporters are underserving the GM strike is the same reason they’re missing the engagement of black people in the labour movement – there just isn’t a serious investment on the part of these outlets in looking at the world through the eyes of wage workers”, says Janine Jackson, a veteran labour reporter and programme director at Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting. She notes that the media, which is 83 percent white, mostly fails to cover the diversity of unions because few reporters come from racially diverse, working-class backgrounds. “For media elites, the image of ‘America’s working class’ is a white image; black people go in a separate category. It’s divisive and ahistorical and wrong”.

It’s evident that most news outlets don’t see covering workers as a serious beat in the way they see crime or sports. Just five out of the top 25 newspapers have full-time labour reporters. But the potential audience is there. In 2015, after getting fired during a failed union drive at Politico, I started *Payday Report* as a crowdfunded labour news site using my National Labor Relations Board settlement as seed money. In three years, we have raised \$100,000 directly from readers to cover stories of the

labour movement that most local papers ignore.

During the GM strike, we were able to raise more than \$5,000 to file over a dozen stories from Rochester, Toledo, Cleveland, Tennessee, and Kentucky. With the exception of outlets like Reuters and AP, we filed more on-the-ground stories from more states than any other outlet in the US.

The lesson is clear: people

want to read about labour news – and they will pay good money for it. **CT**

Mike Elk is a Sidney-award winning labour reporter who founded the labour publication, Payday Report. He also covers labour and immigration issues for the Guardian and lives in Pittsburgh. Read more at www.PaydayReport.com.

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No inquest for Salisbury poison victim

By Craig Murray

THE killing of poor Dawn Sturgess was much the most serious of the events in the English towns of Salisbury and Amesbury that attracted international attention. Yet nobody has been charged, no arrest warrant issued and no inquest held.

The inquest for Dawn Sturgess has been postponed, for the fourth time, and for the first time no new prospective date has been given for it to open. Alarming, the coroner’s office are referring press enquiries to Scotland Yard’s Counter Terrorism Command – which ought to have no role in an inquest process supposed to be independent of the police.

It appears very probable



NO INquest: Dawn sturgess

that the independent coroner’s inquiry process is going to be cancelled and, as in the case of Iraq war whistleblower David Kelly, replaced by a politically controlled “public inquiry” with a trusty or malleable judge in charge, like Lord Hutton of Kincora. This is because

As the CEO of a fishing tackle manufacturer, Bedell started a profit-sharing programme that distributed 20 percent of the company’s earnings to workers. An employee recreation fund fostered team spirit and gave everyone on his payroll the chance to go on fishing trips or to ball games.

“I never paid myself more than four or five times what my employees were making”, he recalls. “I lived like my friends in my hometown of Spirit Lake, Iowa. I drove an older car, served as a scoutmaster, and resided in a modest home. I had a good life”.

Yet today’s overpaid CEOs are unlikely to start sharing that good life – and the wealth that finances it – more equita-

bly without public policies to prod them in this direction.

Some of Bedell’s proposals include putting workers on corporate boards and giving companies with modest pay gaps preferential treatment, such as lower tax rates and a leg up in government contracting. These kinds of policies recognise the dignity and value in the labour of all employees – not just the guy in the corner office. **Ct**

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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. Distributed by www.OtherWords.org.

ligence Organisation formed the view that Habib had not been involved in the planning of future terrorist attacks, a point deemed insufficient in securing his early release. On his release, he initiated federal court proceedings against the Australian government over their complicity in the matter. The case was settled in 2010.

The squalid affair is worth nothing for the essential connivance of Australian officials in the ongoing detention of Habib. Even intelligence assessments within the intelligence fraternity pointing to his innocence were dismissed. In a joint media statement from the Attorney-General and the Minister for Foreign Affairs on January 11, 2005, the standard line was reiterated: “it remained the strong view of the United States that, based on information available to it, Mr Habib had prior knowledge of the terrorist attacks on or before 11 September 2001”. What the US suspected, went.

Finally, Australian MPs support Julian Assange

By Binoy Kampmark

Australian politicians, and the consular staff of the country, are rarely that engaged on the subject of protecting their citizens. In a couple of notorious cases, Australian authorities demonstrated not only an indifference, but a consciously venal approach to its citizens in overseas theatres.

Mamdouh Ahmed Habib,

a dual Australian-Egyptian national, was detained in Pakistan in October 2001 and subsequently sent to Guantánamo Bay via Bagram in Afghanistan and Egypt. His subsequent detention till 2005 in a chapter of that sinisterly framed Global War on Terror was without charge and heavy with speculation. In April 2002, the Australian Security Intel-

In a wordy and not particularly illuminating report on the case by the Australian Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security, it was “found that communication to the Habib family in respect of Mr Habib’s welfare was not adequate and recommends that an apology be made”. Stress was made that Australian intelligence officials were not directly involved in his rendering to Guantánamo

Bay, though it was noted that “ASIO should have made active enquiries about how Mr Habib would be treated in Egypt before providing information which may have been used in his questioning in Egypt”.

An even more notable case of crude, dismissive abandonment can be found in the plight of David Hicks, another Australian who found himself facing an array of charges brought forth by the “war” on terror. His role in US legal history in fighting that dubious category of “unlawful combatant” and military commissions is assured, but what stood out in the case was an abject refusal on the part of Prime Minister John Howard and his foreign minister Alexander Downer to engage in anything resembling assistance.

In May 2003, with rumours thick that some detainees from Guantánamo Bay were being released, Downer was quick to scratch Hicks from the list. “After all, remember David Hicks was somebody who was allegedly involved with both al-Qaeda and the Taliban, the Taliban being the political articulation of the view of al-Qaeda”.

When pressed by ABC Radio on Australian contributory negligence, Downer merely swatted the allegation, insisting on cryptic and inchoate legal categories. “He’s being held though, let me just make this clear, he’s being held



nO hELP: Australian David Hicks was abandoned by his country after being detained at Guantanamo.

as an unlawful combatant, as somebody who was detained initially by the Northern Alliance and subsequently by the United States”.

Amnesty secretary general Irene Khan, in an open letter to Australian prime minister John Howard, made the case that Hicks had been abandoned. Even after the finding by the US Supreme Court that specifically established military commissions were unconstitutional, the Australian government remained approving of that most curious of aberrations. “They have not taken any effort to ensure that he gets a fair trial”.

In every sense, the Australian response to Julian Assange’s detention, both during his time in the Ecuadorean embassy and in Belmarsh, betrays an unhealthy tendency to regard the controversial citizen as a menace best distanced. Let another country deal with

him, and if that country be the United States, all the better.

In recent days, a sense of momentum is gathering suggesting that Australia’s political classes might be tiring of this view. Nationals MP Barnaby Joyce has been shooting off his mouth for reasons more constructive than usual. “Whether you like a person or not, they should be afforded the proper rights and protections and the process of justice, as determined by an Australian parliament, not another nation’s parliament”.

Grounds for extradition to the United States from the UK, argued Joyce, had not been made out. “If a person is residing in Australia and commits a crime in another country, I don’t believe that is a position for extradition”.

Independent Tasmanian MP Andrew Wilkie is also mucking in, hoping to cobble together a coalition of supporters in the Australian parliament to support Assange’s return to Australia. “The only party I’m having to work extra hard on getting members of the group is Labor”.

The more traditional front, however, is being maintained by the Treasurer, Josh Frydenberg. “He [Assange] ultimately will face the justice for what he’s been alleged to have done, but that is a legal process that will run its course”. Rather weakly,

Frydenberg made a lukewarm concession: that “we will continue, as a government, to provide him with the appropriate consular services”.

If there was a time to fight legal eccentricity and viciousness, it is now. Just as Hicks and Habib faced complicity and a range of stretched and flexible legal categories, Assange faces that most elastic of instruments designed to stifle publishing and whistleblowing: the US Espionage Act of 1917. Should he be extradited from the United

Kingdom and face the imperial goon squad in Washington, we will be spectators to that most depraved of state acts: the criminalisation of publishing. Australia’s parliamentarians, never the sharpest tools in the political box, are starting to stir with that realisation. **Ct**

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uct or technology to become relevant again.

To do so, we need to go back to the late 1980s, when sales of compact discs outsold vinyl records for the first time (in 1988), and then the sales of cassettes (in 1993). In 1998, vinyl represented only 0.7 percent of the total music industry revenues.

Why did consumers start to abandon vinyl and cassettes? Because compact discs are more resistant to scratches. Because they are simply more practical, easier to store, and easier to switch to the song you want to listen to. Because compact discs were sold to them as of superior sound quality: they can in theory emulate the sound of vinyl to a sampling rate indistinguishable from the original to the human ear while being able to reproduce more extreme frequencies (purists disagree).

Three decades later, digital music has replaced compact discs. In the US, the streaming industry accounts for 80 percent of music industry revenues. Looking back at the criteria that made the vinyl obsolete, the current streaming technology outperforms compact discs in every dimension: high sound quality and no scratches or storage problems.

The only

Vinyl records and printed photos make a comeback

By Renaud Foucart

The resurgence of vinyl records in a time of digital music and streaming is a story of how innovation can make technological comebacks possible. In the summer of 2019, the sales of vinyl albums are on the verge of becoming the largest source of revenue from physical sales in the music industry. This follows 15 years of upward trend – today, while remaining a niche product, the vinyl record may well eventually survive to be the only analogue medium for music, as the sales of CD continue their downward spiral.

Researchers in sociology and consumer culture have shown how this trend goes well beyond nostalgia – buyers of vinyl are attracted by its status as an object, its physical presence. This attraction matters even more today, as most of the time listening to a song does not involve buying a physical support anymore.

Our study starts from this vinyl comeback. We try to show how it is precisely the process of innovation, in which a new product or technology replaces an outdated one, that opens the possibility for an even older and obsolete prod-



characteristic on which the compact disc can compete is its physical presence – some people want to possess an object they can touch and display in their home. But on this dimension, it seems vinyl is doing much better than compact discs. Hence, people attracted by the object are more likely to buy a vinyl to complement their digital consumption.

The music industry and vinyl retailers have well understood the importance of that dimension. Recent new and re-releases of vinyl incorporate special features which play up the attractions of buying vinyl. Heavyweight vinyl pressing suggests the importance of the musical content. The same holds for coloured vinyl or other special features such as cover art posters.

This is a story of predators and prey – and is not unique to the music industry. Once the appearance of a new technology leads to the extinction of the previous one, it can be interesting to look at what existed before. Some of the characteristics of a long-extinct technology may have become relevant again now that

the predator has disappeared. The key is then to identify how to emphasise these characteristics to the old format work alongside the new format.

In the photography industry, the first generation of analogue films has been almost entirely replaced by a second generation of digital cameras. A third generation, based on smartphones and social networks, was not originally designed for physical printing.

As more and more consumers now use the third-generation, abandoning digital cameras – according to data by the Camera and Imaging Product Association, shipments of digital cameras have decreased by more than 60percent between 2010 and 2019 – the physical dimension of analogue photography seems to have become a useful complement.

As a result, photography on film has started to return as a niche product – and discontinued products such as Kodak's Ektachrome or Fujifilm's black and white



films are being reintroduced. Some consumers, who had abandoned products of the first generation start using them again as a complement

to the third one. As in the case of vinyl recordings, the industry has well understood the demand for tangible photography, beyond simply reverting to old cameras.

Polaroid is soon to release a “Lab” to print analogue pictures of images taken on smartphones. Fujifilm's Instax, meanwhile, offers the possibility to print a format similar to Polaroid based on digital pictures.

Not every comeback is possible. Many products and technologies disappear because they have nothing useful to bring anymore. But when a new product or technology starts dominating a market, it may be a good idea to look at what existed two or three generations before. This may well prove to be part of the future – even if it's just a small one. **Ct**

Renaud Foucart is Senior Lecturer, Lancaster University Management School, at Lancaster University in England. This article was first published at www.theconversation.com.

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Corporations at work mega merger, mega mess

By Jim Hightower

Here's a recipe for you: Chop up some Oscar Mayer wieners, stir in Heinz ketchup, blend with Cool Whip and Maxwell House Coffee, sprinkle Planters peanuts over the mixture, add A1 Steak Sauce, then top it with Cheez Whiz and blast it in the microwave.

Sounds like a gloppy mess. But an even messier version was cooked up in 2015, when Kraft Foods merged with HJ Heinz, thus conglomerating more than 200 brand-name products – including all of the above – into one \$28-billion-a-year behemoth. The combination was hailed at the time as a whiz-bang deal that would prove that bigger is always better.

Uh... apparently not.

Four years later, Kraft Heinz's sales have slumped, profits are tumbling, its stock price has plummeted by half in the last year, investors are bailing out, shareholders are suing, regulators are investigating, employees are dispirited, and... well, as some business journalists have put it, the mega-merger is a mega-mess.

The Kraft Heinz consolidation was engineered from out-

side by a Brazilian corporate takeover outfit named 3G, in cahoots with US buyout buccaneer Warren Buffett. They are ideological disciples of the old orthodoxy that the sole responsibility of corporate executives is to jack up the stock price and profits for big shareholders – in this case, themselves.

Their self-serving approach to increasing Kraft

Heinz's profit was to squeeze "costs", meaning squeezing out experienced managers, workers, product development, and the vibrancy of the corporation itself – which has steadily squeezed out their own profits.

This old model of self-enrichment through corporate takeover, consolidation, and contraction, turns out to be not just bad morals, but bad business. It's time for us, the media, and public officials to start saying no to merger mania. **Ct**

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HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt



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