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KING DONALD

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AGE OF FASCISM**

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INVENT GAZA ETHNIC
CLEANSING PLAN**

**THE PURGE OF THE DEEP
STATE AND THE ROAD
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Just say
No –
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ANTI-PALESTINIAN RACISM IN MEDIA

MANUFACTURING CONSENT FOR GENOCIDE AND OCCUPATION

News media can hold the powerful to account. Instead, many mainstream outlets perpetuate anti-Palestinian racism. They frequently **dehumanize** Palestinians, **justify** Israeli violence, **discredit and exclude** Palestinian voices, **cancel** rights-based language, and more.

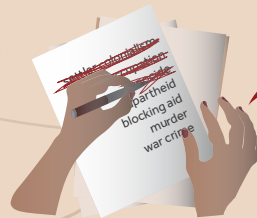
Silence critical voices

More than 100 media workers faced **retaliation for criticizing Israel's assault on Gaza**, in the form of canceled events, restricted assignments, rescinded awards, termination, or pressure to resign, between Oct. 2023–Feb. 2024, according to the National Writers Union.



Censor these words

Some news outlets **remove words and phrases** widely used to describe Israeli violations against Palestinians. A New York Times memo instructed journalists to avoid the terms "genocide," "ethnic cleansing," "occupied territory," and "refugee camps" when covering Palestine.



Discredit Palestinian sources

Information from Palestinian sources or human rights organizations is routinely treated with **skepticism**, while information from Israeli or "Western" official sources is often treated as **established fact**. Palestinians are interviewed less frequently than Israeli or U.S. guests.



Hide war crimes

Reporting often uses the **passive voice** to discuss war crimes committed by Israeli forces. For example, one *Washington Post* headline initially omitted that the Israeli military caused the deaths of premature babies at a hospital in Gaza: "Four fragile lives found ended."



Don't question dominant narratives

Some journalists amplify Israeli claims **without verifying them**, such as claims that Palestinian militants hide in Gaza hospitals. An official from the International Criminal Court called these claims "grossly exaggerated" and said "I think we've been misled about that in the press."



Empathize selectively

News outlets frequently use **emotive language** like "massacre," "slaughter," and "horrific" to describe the killings of Israelis, but not Palestinians. For decades, studies of reporting from *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *LA Times*, among others, have shown that mainstream media **disproportionately covers Israeli deaths**.

FROM CENSORING THE STORY TO KILLING THE STORY

Protect journalists

Israeli forces **killed 195 journalists and media workers** in Gaza and bombed at least 50 media offices (Oct. 7, 2023–Jan. 14, 2025).



Stop the media blackout

The Israeli government **barred foreign journalists** from entering Gaza, imposed **communications blackouts**, arbitrarily **arrested and tortured** Palestinian journalists, and **banned Al Jazeera**.



VISUALIZING PALESTINE

FEB 2025 © CC BY NC ND SOURCES bit.ly/vp-apr

INSIGHTS



RT/israeli military

Drone footage released by the Israeli military shows the extent of the destruction of the cars fleeing the Supernova rave on October 7, 2023, likely inflicted by Israeli drones and helicopters

In an interview with Israeli television early last month, Yoav Gallant, the former Israeli defence minister, confirmed that the so-called ‘Hannibal Directive’ was implemented by Israeli military forces on October 7, 2023, the day of attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian fighters.

There had already been strong evidence, including reports by Israeli news media, that Israeli forces killed many Israeli civilians, either in ‘friendly fire’ incidents or by implementing the deadly doctrine, intended to prevent Israelis being captured alive and used as bargaining tools for the release of Palestinians held in Israel.

In March last year, the Al Jazeera investigations team broadcast a thoroughly researched account of what happened on October 7, de-

DAVID CROMWELL

Media silent over Israel’s use of ‘Hannibal Directive’

bunking Israeli propaganda myths about ‘beheaded babies’ and ‘mass rape,’ and including expert analysis of the likely implementation of the Hannibal Directive. Western media ignored the documentary’s careful findings.

In a clip from Israel’s Channel 12 interview with Gallant, journalist Amit Segal explained to viewers that “the Hannibal Directive says to shoot to kill when there is a vehicle containing an Israeli hostage.” Gallant did not dispute the point. The former defence minister, who was sacked from his post by Netanyahu last November, went on to say that the directive was issued ‘tactically’ and ‘in various places’ next to Gaza.

The interview was the first time a senior Israeli official had confirmed that the Hannibal Directive was indeed deployed on October 7. This re-

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markable admission has seemingly been blanked by the entire UK news media.

The original directive, which was kept secret and never published, was first implemented during Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon in 1986. It allowed the Israeli military to use any force necessary to prevent Israeli soldiers from being captured and taken into enemy territory, even if such action would lead to those captives' deaths. After being revised several times, the directive was dropped in 2016.

However, according to the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* last July, it was once again implemented on October 7, 2023 and extended to the killing of Israeli civilians, if that was deemed necessary to prevent them from being abducted by Palestinian fighters.

In this new Israeli television interview, Gallant stated that the directive was used in some places, but not in others and "that is a problem." However, in an article for *Electronic Intifada*, journalist Asa Winstanley pointed out that:

"Contrary to Gallant's statement that the Hannibal Directive was unevenly applied in different areas, Israeli newspaper *Yediot Ahronot* reported in January 2024 that at midday on October 7, an unambiguous order was given from the high command of the Israeli military to invoke the Hannibal Directive across the entire region."

According to Israeli journalists Ronen Bergman and Yoav Zitun, the order was to be followed, 'even if this means the endangerment or harming of the lives of civilians in the region, including the captives themselves'.

An investigation published by

Electronic Intifada on the first anniversary of the October 7, attacks concluded that Israeli forces, including tanks and helicopters, may have killed hundreds of their own people. Al Jazeera reported that 28 Israeli Apache helicopters used all their ammunition and had to be reloaded.

As far as we can tell from internet and newspaper database searches, there have been no mentions of Gallant's admission that the Hannibal Directive was in force on October 7. The most recent – and only – mention of 'Hannibal Directive' on the BBC website is from 2015. And we had

to go all the way back to 2006 to find the phrase anywhere on the *Guardian* website. This is a shocking example of propaganda by omission.

As is well-known by now, in part because of an extensive recent piece by Owen Jones, Middle East coverage on the BBC News website is overseen by online MidEast editor Raffi Berg. Jones's investigation, based on interviews with BBC journalists, past and present, pointed to "collective management failure" in the upper echelons of the BBC.

But BBC insiders also stated that Berg 'micromanages' the online Middle East news section of the website, "ensuring that it fails to uphold impartiality."

Thus, for example, BBC News stories on the 'war' between Israel and Gaza – in other words, the genocide as recognised by scholars, legal experts and human rights organisations – regularly include the following copy-and-pasted sentence:

" Hamas seized 251 hostages and killed about 1,200 people when it attacked Israel on October 7, 2023, triggering the Gaza war."

This line resembles an Israeli government press statement. Note that there is no mention that Israeli forces likely killed many of their own citizens on October 7. Nor is there an indication that the Hamas attacks were 'triggered' by decades of brutal Israeli occupation and apartheid. In other words, the BBC template line does not reflect the Palestinian perspective; and it is certainly not impartial, or even accurate, reporting.

One former BBC journalist said of Berg: "He did very little to hide his objective of watering down anything critical of Israel."

And a BBC insider told Jones:

► HOME TRUTHS ARUNDHATI ROY

ONCE WEAPONS WERE
MANUFACTURED TO FIGHT
WARS. NOW WARS ARE
MANUFACTURED TO
SELL WEAPONS.

ARUNDHATI ROY



INSIGHTS

“Many of us have raised concerns that Raffi has the power to reframe every story, and we are ignored.”

As Medialens has pointed out repeatedly in our alerts and books, media propaganda, whether by commission or omission, is a systemic issue; it is not merely the machinations of particular individuals.

However, institutional groupthink and carrot-and-stick pressures ensure that journalists and editors who reach positions of significant responsibility can only do so by

adhering to ‘mainstream’ narratives and news framing that satisfy the requirements of state and corporate power.

This has been seen ever more clearly by large numbers of people since October 7, 2023 in news coverage of Israel and Palestine; especially the glaring deceptions and erasures of the truth.

The media’s grip on the public mind may finally be weakening. **CT**

David Cromwell is co-editor of Medialens, the UK media watchdog. This article was first published at www.medialens.org.

► **TOM PETERS**

Parents fight schools over ‘dog food’ menus

Schoolchildren, parents and staff across New Zealand have spoken out against new school lunches, which have been compared to dog food and prison meals.

As part of its sweeping austerity measures, designed to make the working class shoulder the burden of the economic recession, the right-wing coalition government led by the National Party has reduced spending on school lunches from \$8 to \$3 per meal.

Associate education minister David Seymour, leader of the far-right ACT Party, boasted on January 30 that the new programme will save \$130 million a year and is “setting a precedent for the government working with businesses to achieve bet-

ter results.”

These savings are at the expense of 242,000 school students from low-income households who are now receiving smaller and often revolting meals. According to the *New Zealand Herald*, “Auckland Primary Principals’ Association president Kyle Brewerton said kids have been comparing the lunches to ‘dog food’ and refusing to eat it.”

Ōtāhuhu College student Divya Kumar told Radio NZ her meal was “really bland,” with “overcooked pasta, and I don’t think it provides the nutrition we need as students.” Another student, Heremoko, said it was “like prison food,” adding: “Last year we actually knew what we were eating, we could see it. This year we’re questioning what

we’re eating.”

Photos of the meals have been shared widely. One Reddit post from Auckland displayed a picture of an “unidentifiable pasta ball and lentils.” The lunches were delivered two hours late. “Not one child could stomach the food and so after offers to give food away to [the] local community were declined, all several hundred of these went into the rubbish.”

A parent shared a picture of what was “supposed to be mac and cheese” but “looks and tastes horrible.” They told the *Herald*: “I normally try to not waste food but when I tasted it, it was just so bland. If I guessed it was a white sauce with not much cheese, couldn’t actually taste the ham, and the veg/mac was so overcooked that they were just soggy.”

One Reddit user commented: “This is what they want. They want the food to go uneaten so they can [say] they’re not being eaten and it’s a waste of money. They don’t want to pay for kids to eat.”

Another suggested that “Parliament should be served the same food as our school children get.”

Due to late lunch deliveries throughout the first week of the new service, which caterers attributed to ‘teething problems,’ some principals reported that they had to buy food at the supermarket to feed hungry children. Some schools asked parents to send their children to school with extra food as a precaution, according to the *Herald*.

Last October it was reported that 75 suppliers would lose their contracts under the previous school lunches program, destroying as many as 2,000 jobs. They were replaced by a consortium led by the British-based multinational Com-

INSIGHTS

pass Group, and also including the NZ businesses Gilmours and Libelle.

Compass is the world's largest catering company, operating in 45 countries and providing billions of meals each year in healthcare, education, the military and other sectors. It has been involved in several scandals.

In 2015, Compass subsidiary Chartwells settled a lawsuit over school meals in Washington, DC. A whistleblower alleged that Chartwells had overcharged the school district and there were repeated instances in which "food was delivered late, the number of meals was insufficient or the food was of poor quality or spoiled."

In 2021, Chartwells was at the centre of a scandal involving food parcels sent to 1.7 million UK children whose schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The parcels were extremely meagre, prompting widespread public outrage.

Chartwells/Compass is the largest provider of school lunches in



EAT THIS: New Zealand school lunches, January 2025



Photo: only-on-the-wknd, Hokinanaz

the UK, where meals are frequently criticised for their poor quality and low nutritional value. The BBC reported on March 14, 2024, on complaints that meals at Redbridge Community School in Southampton were getting smaller while prices were rising, and were often undercooked. "Chartwells seem to be unable to bake a potato," the head teacher said.

The New Zealand government and its defenders in the media have responded to criticism by essentially saying children from poor house-

holds should consider themselves lucky to get any food at all.

Minister Seymour told Newstalk ZB the media was highlighting "the worst examples that they can find and the worst comments that they can find." In response to principals saying "this is not good enough," Seymour called for a reality check and said "this is a government with a \$17-billion deficit."

Far-right blogger Cam Slater posted on X/Twitter that parents unhappy with the lunches their children were getting should "feed them yourselves like you did in the holidays. That is what [is] wrong with this country, too many with their hand out."

Slater's comment was shared by billionaire toy company founder Nick Mowbray, New Zealand's richest man and a major donor to the ACT and National Parties.

The slop now being served at schools is connected to the government's broader agenda of gutting and privatising the education system and other public services.

The ACT Party is overseeing the reintroduction of privately-run charter schools, with funding provided last year to establish 50 of them. This will divert public funds

Photo: only-on-the-wknd, Hokinanaz / Reddit

► GREED AT A GLANCE

INEQUALITY.ORG

6 million
The number of people the UN predicts will die in the next 4 years if the Trump administration cuts USAID funding for HIV/AIDS programs.

The U.S. budget for these programs in poor countries (\$6.5 billion in FY24) is just 1% of Elon Musk & Mark Zuckerberg's combined wealth.

Sources: UNAIDS, Forbes, and other media sources (USAID.gov site is down), Feb. 7, 2025

INSIGHTS

to private operators, who do not face the same requirements as public schools to follow the curriculum and can set different pay rates for teachers.

In the US and the UK, charter schools or academies have played a major role in deregulating education and attacking conditions for school staff. Under the 2008–2017 National Party-ACT government, a trial of charter schools in New Zealand resulted in financial irregularities and dysfunction, forcing one school to be shut down.

The Labour Party has criticised the new school meals, with education spokesperson Jan Tinetti saying “this government chose cost-cutting ahead of quality.” She declared she was deeply concerned about “wider impacts on reducing child poverty” and on children’s ability to learn.

This is utterly hypocritical. In its 2023 budget, the last Labour government increased operational funding for schools by just 3.5 percent – about half the 6.7 percent annual inflation rate. Tens of thousands of teachers repeatedly went on strike to protest against frozen wages, although their struggles were suppressed by the union bureaucracy.

The Labour government also oversaw an increase in the number of children living in poverty. Labour campaigned for deeper austerity measures in the October 2023 election, which it lost in a landslide defeat amid a worsening social crisis, paving the way for the current far-right government. **CT**

Tom Roberts wrote this article for the World Socialist Web Site – www.wsws.org.

that needed to be “cleared out,” or barriers that should be “ripped up,” “torn down” and “kicked down.” Rather than obsessing about risk (which is what they exist to do), the regulators’ role should be to “deliver growth.” Deliberately echoing Trump’s language as he promised to assault the planning system, Starmer said he would “build, baby, build.” He issued a general statement on regulation: “This government will sweep it away.”

His mission, Starmer says, is inspired by his “conversations with leading CEOs,” who complain that their schemes are impeded by citizens’ objections, legal challenges and the need for consultation with regulators.

Welcome to capital’s age-old struggle with that infuriating concept, democracy. Amazingly, he stated that he was modelling his assault on the democratic state on Margaret Thatcher’s deregulation of finance capital, whose eventual result, in 2007, was the first run on a British bank in 140 years, helping to trigger the global financial crisis.

While Trump might collide with a Congress in which he has a fragile majority, and various constitutional obstacles, this government is currently unassailable. It faces no opposition from the Tories: it’s what they wanted to do, had they dared.

Though the prime minister seeks to appease corporate and oligarchic power, his attack on regulation has results he might find less helpful. When he pulls a lever, he could discover that, without a robust administrative state, nothing happens. Then the good stuff as well as the bad fails to materialise.

The good stuff includes the land

► **GEORGE MONBIOT**

Starmer’s self-destructive war on UK regulations

This might sound astonishing, but the UK government’s core programme now appears to be the same as Donald Trump’s: dismantling the administrative state. There’s less theatre, but the results could prove harder to contest. Absurd? Consider the evidence.

Take the government’s brutal expulsion of the chair of the Competition and Markets Authority, Marcus Bokkerink. His crime, it seems, was to take his role seriously, seeking to

prevent the formation of corporate monopolies. He has been replaced with the former manager of Amazon UK, a company widely accused of monopolistic practices. This is pure Trump: kick out the regulator and insert someone from a company they were seeking to regulate.

Or take the culture war against public protections launched last month by Keir Starmer and the chancellor, Rachel Reeves, who variously described them – using ever more violent language – as “weeds”

INSIGHTS

use consultation that the government launched last month. Its proposals could and should be revolutionary. It sets out, for the first time in England, a rational policy for deciding which land should be used for what. Where farming produces almost nothing (as in the sheep-wrecked uplands), the new paper suggests the land could be better used for reviving ecosystems. As 85 percent of the UK's agricultural area is managed for livestock feed and production, it looks at how we might meet our demand for food more efficiently. It calls for restoring peatlands, woodlands and coastal habitats and for "renaturalising our water bodies and making space for water." It wants our national parks and other "protected" landscapes to become "greener, wilder and more accessible."

There are some bizarre contradictions. The main paper laments the fact that England is "one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world." But its analytical annexe, published separately, suggests the government intends to stick to the risible Tory target of improving the abundance of wild species no sooner than 2042. The plans are further undermined by using a completely inappropriate standard called "tree growth potential" to determine where trees should be allowed to return. While this is useful in planning timber plantations, it makes no sense for ecological restoration.

There is nowhere too high for trees to establish in England, and hunched and gnarled woods in the hills are no less valuable habitats than straight stands of timber in the lowlands. The result, as the annexe shows, will be to exclude new woods from the uplands while causing conflict in the productive lowlands be-



CULTURE WARRIORS?
UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer with Rachel Reeves, Chancellor of the Exchequer

Photo:
Skwawkbox

tween forest restoration and food production.

More positively, the consultation also proposes a community right to buy land and buildings, like Scotland's; and better and more accessible data and updated maps on the condition and fertility of land, which are essential for good planning.

All these proposals require two things: a commitment that won't falter in the face of lobbying by incumbent powers, led by the National Farmers' Union and the Country Land and Business Association; and strong, confident, well-financed government agencies.

But after 15 years of defunding, demoralisation and demonisation, these bodies, such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Rural Payments Agency, are scarcely breathing. The government, through further budget cuts, seems determined to finish them off.

in January, it launched a Trumpian culture war against the regulators. A week later, it launched a huge and complex strategy that is entirely reliant on them.

Local authorities are also crucial for delivering the land use plans,

but they too are incapacitated by systemic defunding. Like the dire state of the regulators, this issue goes unmentioned in the consultation. The new paper states that "investors, farmers and other businesses want certainty" about government policy, and "a more joined-up, strategic approach to land use strategy and planning." Yes: to make long-term plans, land managers need a solid regulatory framework. Instead, they get deregulatory chaos.

Far from addressing these issues, the government will rely on "private nature markets." The timing could scarcely be worse, coinciding with a global collapse of confidence in these markets, and the carbon and nature "credits" they sell, as a result of fraud, malpractice, wishful thinking and false accounting. These issues seem intrinsic to an industry selling future promises for cash today.

Even if these markets somehow worked, they would still need to operate within strong regulatory controls, enforced by tough public authorities.

Farmers can justifiably complain that they're being asked to make environmental improvements

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while the government swings its wrecking ball of airport expansion and new trunk roads, says to hell with the newts and bats, has announced a massive liquefied fossil gas project under the guise of “carbon capture and storage” and seeks support for the approval of the Rosebank oilfield.

If your aim is to generate furious resistance, try blatant double standards.

How is the government failing to understand these things: that you can't implement an ambitious pro-

gramme of change without robust government bodies? And that you can't simultaneously appease corporate lobbyists, the *Daily Mail*, the *Times* and the *Telegraph* and deliver effective and beneficial policy? How is it that politicians who are neither felons, frauds, sexual assaulters nor coup plotters nevertheless mirror the agenda of the orange tyrant? **CT**

George Monbiot is a columnist with the Guardian, where this article first appeared.

after learning that both pilots involved were white.

The claim was ridiculous, but it sucked up attention that might have gone to the Trump administration's own moves instead. And that's exactly why we keep seeing lies like these – to protect incompetent politicians and the corporate interests that prop them up.

Once you realise that, you'll start noticing it everywhere.

For instance, there's ample evidence that climate change contributed to Southern California's horrific wildfires this winter. But rather than implicate the campaign-contributing fossil fuel companies that have supercharged these disasters, right-wing influencers blamed DEI hires like women firefighters.

About a year ago, when a foreign cargo ship destroyed Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge, the same crowd had nothing to say about regulating shipping companies or infrastructure safety. Instead, they just started calling the city's Black mayor, Brandon Scott, the “DEI mayor.”

And finally, we saw an earlier version of this script when a Norfolk Southern train derailed in East Palestine, Ohio, spilling toxic chemicals and burning them up in a noxious cloud over the impoverished town.

Norfolk Southern had skimped on maintenance, overstretched its workers, and ploughed the savings into stock buybacks rather than safety. The company had also poured money into Ohio's statehouse, which killed a bipartisan rail safety bill the company had lobbied against.

The talking heads on Fox News didn't have anything to say about that – or about President Trump's

► PETER CERTO

Disaster blaming, even when it's laughably untrue

In this chaotic news cycle, America's worst plane crash in a generation already feels a generation old.

But the administration's response to the tragic January collision that killed 67 people over the Potomac is worth revisiting. Not only because the loved ones of those lost deserve answers, but because it highlights a MAGA playbook we've seen repeatedly now – and we'll see again very soon.

We don't yet know what caused the crash. But shortly before it, President Trump disbanded a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) safety committee, fired the FAA administrator, and implemented a federal hiring freeze despite a shortage of air traffic controllers. (Staffing at the local tower was “not normal” the night of the collision,

the *New York Times* reported.)

Speculation has even emerged that Elon Musk, the unelected billionaire bureaucrat who's been illegally gutting the federal government, urged the FAA administrator's firing in retaliation for past fines against his SpaceX company.

Did any of that contribute? That's for a proper investigation to determine. But one thing's for sure: It wasn't the DEI initiatives President Trump immediately blamed.

Trump suggested that unqualified minority hires caused the accident because the prior administration thought “the workforce was too white.” When pressed for even a shred of evidence, he shrugged that it was “common sense.” Administration figures like Vice President Vance stuck with the claim even

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decision to nix an Obama-era regulation to prevent accidents like these during his first term.

Instead, right-wing multimillionaires like Tucker Carlson and Charlie Kirk claimed the accident happened because President Biden didn't care about the poor whites of rural Ohio. (Kirk even claimed the episode proved there was a whole "crusade against white people.")

At best, these obviously false claims suck the oxygen out of any discussions that might involve the incompetence of politicians or misdeeds of their corporate supporters. At worst, they foster division for its own sake. Neither makes us safer.

As Trump, Musk, and their allies illegally purge federal agencies and open the floodgates to corporate

malfeasance of all varieties, more disasters like these are almost inevitable. And just as inevitably, they'll blame DEI, immigrants, LGBTQ people, or some other scapegoat when that happens.

For our hard-earned tax dollars, most of us just want the government to protect our communities and our planet – even when that's less profitable for a few corporations. But to get that, we'll have to pull together across the divides their backers like to drive between us. **CT**

Peter Certo is the Communications Director of the Institute for Policy Studies and editor of www.otherwords.org where this article was first published.

pear Arab has spread to the United States. The only way to be safe from friendly fire as an Israeli is to be the white-skinned kind of Israeli whose family comes from Europe.

People who are medically evacuated from Gaza are reportedly being forced to sign paperwork at exiting checkpoints saying they cannot return to the enclave. This revelation comes shortly after Doctors Without Borders informed us that Israeli forces have been entering hospitals in Gaza and methodically destroying all the medical equipment inside them. This is a cold, calculated move to facilitate the ethnic cleansing of Gaza.

Someone accused me of being "obsessed with Israel" recently and it just blew my mind. Civil rights are being destroyed throughout the West to defend a state that's committing genocide and ethnic cleansing with western backing, and we're not meant to talk about that state and the things it's doing? Huh?

I mean, do people think I like writing about this sleazy apartheid state all the time? Does it look like I enjoy it? Do you think it's been fun having to look at videos of children with their guts ripped out by western-supplied weapons and getting called a Nazi when I say it's wrong? Yeah man that shit's like crack to me. I'm obsessed with it.

I'm not obsessed with Israel. I hate writing about Israel. I wish I never had to think about it. Israel just happens to be the focal point of the worst things that are happening in the world right now, all with the backing of the western empire I live under. I can't just not talk about this; if I didn't I'd be a shitty person. This is obvious to anyone with a

► CAITLIN JOHNSTONE

Why I write about Israel all the time: Because I have to!

So Israel held a bunch of Palestinians in concentration camps without charge just for being Palestinian, and then they not only starved and tortured them but actually made them wear a Star of David on their prison garments. But remember kids, it's evil and wrong to compare Israel to Nazi Germany – no matter how cartoonishly blatant they make the similarities.

According to an Israeli media report, last May IDF troops strapped explosives to the neck of an 80-year-old Palestinian man in Gaza

and used him as a human shield for hours. They then shot and killed him and his wife.

When the Gaza holocaust first started I used to read headlines like this and go, "Holy shit that must be an exaggeration," and then I'd read up on it and go "Fuck, nope, that's exactly what happened." Now I read them and sigh and just sort of wilt inside.

Last month an Israeli national shot two other Israelis in Miami because he mistook them for Palestinians. The phenomenon of Israelis shooting Israelis who ap-

INSIGHTS

working mind and a healthy heart.

Israel apologists conflate all Jews with the actions of the state of Israel. They will deny that they do this, but they indisputably do. That is the message they are circulating when they accuse anyone who criticises Israel's actions of hating all Jews. They create antisemitism.

Trump says he wants to mutually denuclearise with Russia and China and negotiate a mutual 50 per cent cut to the military budget of all three nations. These would both be wonderful new developments. And, I'll believe it when I see it. As always, ignore their words. Watch their actions.

I'm harder on people who get close to the truth and then swerve than I am on people who are just completely asleep. Anarchists who wind up supporting NATO. Conspiracy analysts who wind up supporting Trump. Socialists who wind up supporting Democrats. These half-awake sleepwalkers annoy me in ways the average fully asleep member of the public does not, because they're forming their dopey worldviews based on a lot more information.

I wouldn't be mad at a blind person for knocking over my things, but someone who has one working eye and stumbles around wearing two eyepatches is just being a douchebag. They're like a man who pulled his head out of his ass, looked around, and then knowingly re-inserted it.

Someone recently tried to tell me that the "jury is still out" on Trump's actions regarding Israel, because maybe he'll wind up being

not so bad on the issue. This is nonsense. The jury isn't out on Trump regarding Israel. He's sending Israel weapons while it's murdering people in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon.

These are not things Trump might do. These are not things Trump is saying he will do. These are things Trump is doing. Presently. Even if you choose to believe his ethnic cleansing plans for Gaza are actually brilliant 9-D chess manoeuvres secretly designed to free Palestine and achieve peace (and they absolutely are not), you have to ignore hard material actions you are seeing right now right in front of your face in order to believe the jury is still out. You also have to ignore the fact that Trump has publicly admitted to being bought and controlled by the Adelsons.

There are arguments to be made that in terms of hard material facts on the ground so far Trump was the lesser evil on Israel, but there

are no arguments to be made that he isn't still evil. The jury is not out on that. The jury is very much in.

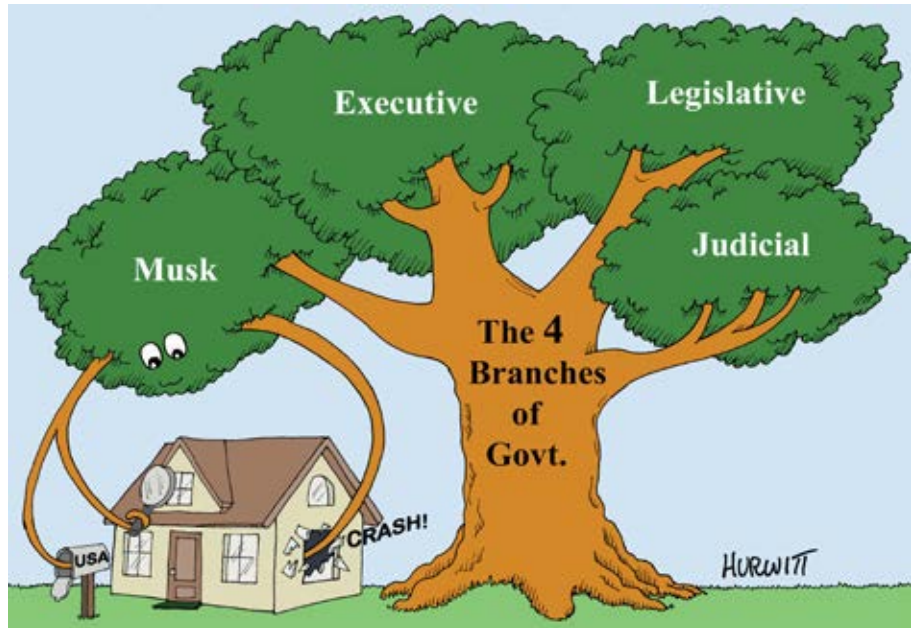
And it doesn't actually matter if Trump winds up being less destructive than Biden on Palestine. The election has been over for months. Trump is the president now. Biden is completely irrelevant. There is no excuse for defending the depraved actions of the president of the world's most powerful and destructive nation.

The experience of talking to Trump supporters about Trump's Israel sycophancy is identical to the experience of talking to Biden supporters about Biden's Israel sycophancy. It's exactly the same. These partisan livestock will make excuses for literally anything. **CT**

Caitlin Johnstone is an Australian independent journalist. This column was first published at www.caitlinjohnstone.com.au.

► HURWITT'S EYE

MARK HURWITT



➤ JONATHAN COOK

Trump didn't invent the Gaza ethnic cleansing plan. It's been US policy since 2007

The new President's innovation is not the threat to 'clean out' Gaza. It is dropping a long-standing aim to dress up Palestinian expulsion as a peace plan

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's intention from day one of his "revenge" attack on Gaza, launched 16 months ago, was either ethnic cleansing or genocide in Gaza.

His ally in genocide for the next 15 months was former US President Joe Biden. His ally in ethnic cleansing is current US President Donald Trump.

Biden provided the 2,000lb bombs for the genocide. Trump is reportedly providing an even larger munition – the 11-ton MOAB, or massive ordnance air blast bomb, with a mile-wide radius – to further incentivise the population's exodus.

Biden claimed that Israel was helping the people of Gaza by "carpet bombing" the enclave – in his words – to "eradicate" Hamas. Trump claims he is helping the people of Gaza by "cleaning them out" – in his words – from the resulting "demolition site."

Biden called the destruction of 70 percent of Gaza's buildings "self defence," Trump calls the imminent destruction of the remaining 30 percent "all hell breaking loose."

Biden claimed to be "working tirelessly for a ceasefire" while encouraging Israel to continue the murder of children month after month.

Trump claims to have negotiated a ceasefire, even as he has turned a blind eye to Israel violating the terms of that ceasefire: by continuing to fire on Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank; by refusing entry into Gaza of vital aid trucks; by allowing in almost none of the promised tents or mobile homes; by denying many hundreds of maimed Palestinians treatment abroad; by blocking the return of Palestinians to their homes in northern Gaza; and by failing to engage with the second phase of the ceasefire negotiations.

Those Israeli violations, although widely reported by the media as Hamas "claims", were confirmed to the *New York Times* by three Israeli officials and two mediators.

In other words, Israel has broken the agreement on every count – and Trump has stood foursquare behind this most favoured client state every bit as much as Biden did before him.

As Israel knew only too well in breaching the ceasefire, Hamas only ever had one point of leverage to try to enforce the agreement: to refuse to release more hostages. Which is precisely what the Palestinian group

announced on February 10 it would do until Israel began honouring the agreement.

In a familiar double act, Israel and Washington then put on a show of mock outrage.

Trump lost no time escalating the stakes dramatically. He gave Israel – or maybe the US, he was unclear – the green light to "let hell break out," presumably meaning the resumption of the genocide.

This would happen not only if Hamas refused to free the three scheduled hostages by the deadline. Trump insisted that Hamas was now expected to release all of the hostages.

The US president said he would no longer accept "dribs and drabs" being released over the course of the six-week, first phase of the ceasefire. In other words, Trump was violating the very terms of the initial ceasefire his own team negotiated.

Clearly, neither Netanyahu nor Trump have been trying to save the agreement. They are working tirelessly to blow it up.

Israel's *Haaretz* newspaper reported as much when Israeli sources revealed that Netanyahu's goal was to "derail" the ceasefire before it could reach the second stage when Israeli troops were supposed to fully



withdraw from the enclave and reconstruction begin.

“Once Hamas realises there won’t be a second stage, they may not complete the first,” a source told the paper.

Hamas insisted on a gradual release of hostages precisely to buy time, knowing that Israel would be keen to restart the slaughter as soon as it got the hostages home.

The Palestinians of Gaza are back to square one.

Either accept that they will be ethnically cleansed so that Trump and his billionaire friends can cash in on reinventing the enclave as the “Riviera of the Middle East” paid for by stealing the revenues from Gaza’s gas fields, or face a return to the genocide.

As should have been clear, Netanyahu only agreed to Washing-

ton’s “ceasefire” because it was never real. It was a pause so the US could recalibrate from a Biden genocide narrative rooted in the language of “humanitarianism” and “security” to Trump’s far more straightforward tough-guy act.

Now it’s all about the “art of the deal” and real-estate development opportunities.

But of course Trump’s plan to “own” Gaza and then “clean it out” has left his allies in Europe – in truth, his satraps – squirming in their seats.

As ever, Trump has a disturbing habit of saying the quiet part out loud. Of tearing away the already-battered veneer of western respectability. Of making everyone look bad.

The truth is that over 15 months Israel failed to achieve either of its stated objectives in Gaza – eradicating Hamas and securing the return of the hostages – because neither was ever really the goal.

Even Biden’s secretary of state, Antony Blinken, had to concede that Israel’s mass slaughter had served only to recruit as many fighters to Hamas as it had killed.

And Israeli military whistle-blowers revealed to the website +972 that Israel had killed many of its hostages by using indiscriminate US-supplied bunker-buster bombs.

These bombs had not only generated huge blast areas but also served effectively as chemical weapons, flooding Hamas’ tunnels with carbon monoxide, asphyxiating the hostages.

The indifference of the Israeli

leadership to the hostages' fate was confirmed by Israel's former defence minister, Yoav Gallant, in an interview with Israeli TV Channel 12.

He admitted that the army had invoked the so-called Hannibal directive during Hamas' breakout of Gaza on October 7, 2023, allowing soldiers to kill Israelis rather than risk letting them be taken hostage by the Palestinian group.

These matters, which throw a different light on Israel's actions in Gaza, have, of course, been almost completely blanked out by the western establishment media.

Israel's plan from the outset was the ethnic cleansing of Gaza. And now Trump is making that explicit.

So explicit, in fact, that the media have been forced to go into frenzied damage-limitation mode, employing one of the most intense psy-ops against their own publics on record.

Every euphemism under the sun has been resorted to avoid making clear that Trump and Israel are preparing to ethnically cleanse whoever's left of the 2.3-million Palestinians living in Gaza.

The BBC speaks of "resettling", "relocating" and "moving away" the population of Gaza.

In other reports, Palestinians are inexplicably on the brink of "leaving".

The *New York Times* refers to ethnic cleansing positively as Trump's "development plan," while Reuters indifferently calls it "moving out" Gaza's population.

Western capitals and their compliant media have been put in this uncomfortable position because Washington's client states in the Middle East have refused to play ball with Israel and Trump's ethnic cleansing plan.

Despite the ever-mounting slaughter, Egypt has refused to open its short border with Gaza to let the bombed, starved population pour into neighbouring Sinai.

Western politicians and the media have preferred to suggest that trump's "development plan" for Gaza is actually an innovation

There was, of course, never any question of Israel being expected to allow Gaza's families to return to the lands from which they were originally expelled, at gunpoint, in 1948 in order to create a self-declared Jewish state.

Then, as now, the western powers colluded in Israel's ethnic cleansing operations. This is the historical context western media prefer to gloss over – even on the rare occasions when they concede that there is any relevant background other than a presumed Palestinian barbarism. Instead the media resort to evasive terminology about "cycles of violence" and "historic enmities."

Backed into a corner by Trump's outbursts of the past few weeks, western politicians and the media have preferred to suggest that his administration's "development plan" for Gaza is actually an innovation.

In truth, however, the president isn't advancing anything new in demanding that Gaza's Palestinians be ethnically cleansed. What's different is that he is being unusually – and inadvisably – open about a long-standing policy.

Israel has always harboured plans to expel Palestinians from Gaza to Egypt and from the West Bank to Jordan.

But more to the point, as was noted by *Middle East Eye* a decade ago, Washington has been fully on board with the Gaza half of the expulsion

project since the latter stages of George W Bush's second presidency, in 2007. For anyone struggling with maths, that was 18 years ago.

Every US president, including Barack Obama, has leaned on Egypt's leader of the time to allow Israel to drive Gaza's population into Sinai – and each one has been rebuffed.

This open secret is not widely known for exactly the same reason that every western pundit and politician is now pretending to be appalled that Trump is actually advancing it.

Why? Because it looks bad – all the more so couched in Trump's vulgar real-estate sales pitch in the middle of a supposed ceasefire.

Western leaders had hoped to bring about the ethnic cleansing of Gaza with more decorum – in a "humanitarian" way that would have been more effective in duping western publics and maintaining the West's claim to be upholding civilised values against a supposed Palestinian barbarity.

Since 2007 Washington and Israel's joint ethnic cleansing project has been known as the "Greater Gaza Plan."

Israel's siege of the tiny enclave, which began in late 2006, was designed to create so much misery and poverty in the tiny enclave that the people there would clamour to be allowed out.

This was when Israel began formulating a so-called "starvation diet" for the people of Gaza, counting the calories to keep them alive but only barely.

Israel's conception of Gaza was that it was like a tube of toothpaste that could be squeezed. As soon as Egypt relented and opened the border, the population would flood into Sinai out of desperation.

Every Egyptian president was bullied and bribed to give in: Hosni Mubarak, Mohamed Morsi, and

General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. They all refused.

Egypt was under no illusions about what was at stake after October 7, 2023. It fully understood that Israel's levelling of Gaza was designed to squeeze the tube so hard the top would be forced off.

From the outset, officials like Giora Eiland, Israel's former national security adviser, stated publicly that the goal was to make Gaza "a place where no human being can exist."

Just a week into Israel's slaughter, in October 2023, military spokesperson Amir Avivi told the BBC that Israel could not ensure the safety of civilians in Gaza. He added: "They need to move south, out to the Sinai Peninsula."

The next day, Danny Ayalon, a Netanyahu confidant and former Israeli ambassador to the US, amplified the point: "There is almost endless space in the Sinai Desert... We and the international community will prepare the infrastructure for tent cities."

He concluded: "Egypt will have to play ball."

Israel's thinking was divulged in a leaked policy draft from its intelligence ministry. It proposed that, after their expulsion, Gaza's population would initially be housed in tent cities, before permanent communities could be built in the north of Sinai.

At the same time, the *Financial Times* reported that Netanyahu was lobbying the European Union on the idea of driving the enclave's Palestinians into Sinai under cover of war.

Some EU members, including the Czech Republic and Austria, were said to have been receptive and floated the idea at a meeting of member states. An unnamed European diplomat told the *FT*: "Now is the time to put increased pressure on the Egyptians to agree."

Netanyahu was lobbying the European Union the idea of driving the enclave's Palestinians into Sinai under cover of war

Meanwhile, the Biden administration supplied the bombs to maintain the pressure.

Sisi was only too aware of what Egypt was up against: a concerted western plan to ethnically cleanse Gaza. None of it had anything to do with Trump, who was more than a year away from being elected president.

In mid-October 2023, days into the slaughter, Sisi responded in a press conference with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz: "What is happening now in Gaza is an attempt to force civilian residents to take refuge and migrate to Egypt, which should not be accepted."

That was precisely why he dedicated so much effort to shoring up the short border shared between Gaza and Sinai both before and after Israel's genocide began.

Part of what makes Trump's sales pitch so surreal is that he is half-heartedly sticking to the original script: trying to make the plan sound vaguely humanitarian.

At the same time as re-arming Israel and warning of "all hell breaking loose," he has spoken of finding "parcels of land" in Egypt and Jordan where the people of Gaza "can live very happily and very safely."

He has contrasted that with their current plight: "They are being killed there at levels that nobody's ever seen. No place in the world is as dangerous as the Gaza Strip... They are living in hell."

That seems to be Trump's all-too-revealing way of describing the genocide Israel denies it is carrying

out and the one the US denies it is arming.

But the talk of helping Gaza's population is just the rhetorical left overs from the old sales pitch when previous US administrations were preparing to sell ethnic cleansing as integral to a new stage of the fabled "peace process."

As *Middle East Eye* noted back in 2015, Washington had been recruited to the Greater Gaza Plan in 2007. Then the proposal was that Egypt would give 1,600 sq km area in Sinai – five times the size of Gaza – to the Palestinian leadership in the West Bank, headed by Mahmoud Abbas.

Palestinians from Gaza would be "encouraged" – that is, pressured through the siege and aid blockade, as well as intermittent episodes of carpet bombing known as "mowing the lawn" – to flee there.

In return, Abbas would have to forgo a Palestinian state in historic Palestine, undermine the right of return of Palestinian refugees enshrined in international law, and pass the burden of responsibility for repressing the Palestinians on to Egypt and the wider Arab world.

Israel advanced the Sinai plan between 2007 and 2018 in the hope of sabotaging Abbas' campaign at the United Nations seeking recognition of Palestinian statehood.

Notably, Israel's large-scale military assaults on Gaza – in the winter of 2008, 2012 and again in 2014 – coincided with reported Israeli and US efforts to turn the screws on successive Egyptian leaders to concede parts of Sinai.

Trump is already deeply familiar with the Greater Gaza Plan from his first presidency. Reports from 2018 suggest he hoped to include it in his "deal of the century" plan to bring about normalisation between Israel and the Arab world.

In March that year the White House hosted 19 countries in a conference to consider new ideas for dealing with Gaza's mounting, entirely Israeli-made crisis.

As well as Israel, the participants included representatives from Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. The Palestinians boycotted the meeting.

A few months later, in the summer of 2018, Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and architect of his Middle East plan, visited Egypt. A short time later Hamas sent a delegation to Cairo to learn about what was being proposed.

Then, as seemingly now, Trump was offering a purpose-built zone in Sinai with solar-power grid, desalination plant, seaport and airport, as well as a free trade zone with five industrial areas, financed by the oil-rich Gulf states.

Revealingly, a veteran Israeli journalist, Ron Ben-Yishai, reported at the time that Israel was threatening to invade and bisect Gaza into separate northern and southern sectors to force Hamas' compliance. That is exactly the strategy Israel prioritised last year during its invasion and then set about emptying north Gaza of its residents.

Trump also sought to deepen the crisis in Gaza by withholding payments to the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA). That same policy was actively pursued by Israel and the Biden administration during the current genocide.

Since Trump took office, Israel has banned UNRWA activities anywhere in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Trump's team revived their own interest in the ethnic cleansing plan the moment Israel launched its gen-

Trump also sought to deepen the crisis in Gaza by withholding payments to the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA)

ocide – long before Trump knew whether he would win the November 2024 election.

In March last year, nearly a year ago, Kushner used exactly the same language Trump does now. He observed that “there's not much of Gaza left at this point,” that the priority was to “clean it up,” and that it was a “valuable waterfront property.” He insisted the people of Gaza would have to be “moved out.”

If Trump refuses to relent, the direction things head next for the people of Gaza hangs chiefly on neighbouring Egypt and Jordan: they must either accept the ethnic cleansing plan, or Israel will resume the extermination of Gaza's population.

Should they demur, Trump has threatened to cut US aid – effectively decades-old bribes to each not to come to the Palestinians' aid while Israel brutalises them.

King Abdullah of Jordan, during a visit to the White House, looked like a rabbit caught in the headlights.

He dared not anger Trump by rejecting the plan to his face. Instead he suggested waiting to see how Egypt – a larger, more powerful Arab state – responded.

But privately, as *MEE* has reported, Abdullah is so fearful of the destabilising effects of Jordan colluding in Gaza's ethnic cleansing – which he regards as an “existential issue” for his regime – that he is threatening war on Israel to stop it.

Similarly, Egypt has shown its displeasure. In the wake of Abdullah's humiliating visit, Sisi has reported-

ly postponed his own meeting next week with Trump – in a clear rebuff – until the ethnic cleansing plan is off the table.

Cairo is said to be preparing its own proposal for how Gaza can be reconstructed. Even Washington's oil-rich ally Saudi Arabia is in revolt.

It is rare to see Arab states show so much backbone to any US president, let alone one as vain and strategically unhinged as Trump.

Which may explain why the US president's resolve appears to be weakening. Later, his press secretary Karoline Leavitt suggested that Trump was now seeking from “our Arab partners in the region” a counter-proposal, a “peace plan to present to the president.”

And in another sign that Trump may be hesitating, Netanyahu walked back his threat to resume the genocide unless all the hostages were freed on February 15. He now demanded only the three that were originally scheduled.

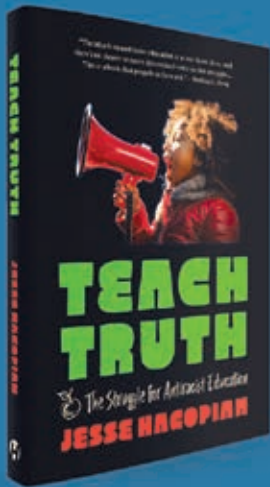
Reports from Gaza are that Israel has also significantly stepped up its aid deliveries.

All of which is welcome news. It may buy the people of Gaza a little more time.

But we should not lose sight of the bigger picture. Israel and the US are still committed to “cleaning out” Gaza, one way or another, as they have been for the past 18 years. They are simply looking for a more propitious moment to resume.

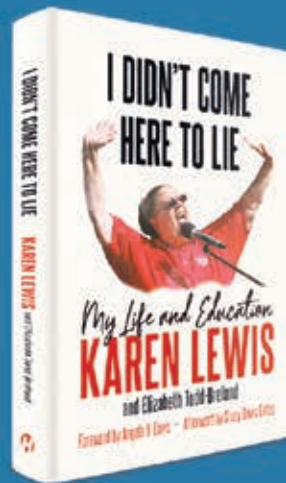
At least Biden and Trump have achieved one thing. They have made sure no one can ever again mistake the crushing of Gaza for a peace plan. **CT**

Jonathan Cook is the author of three books on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and a winner of the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. More of the author's writing can be found at www.jonathancook.net.



Teach Truth
The Struggle for Antiracist Education
Jesse Hagopian

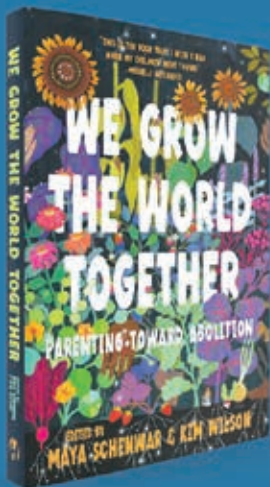
"They will ban this book; we must resist. There is more at stake than curriculum. We have a world to win." —Robin D. G. Kelley



I Didn't Come Here to Lie
My Life and Education

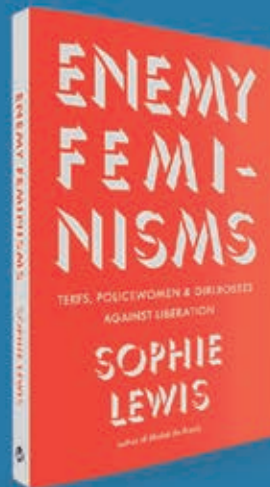
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Foreword by Angela Y. Davis
Afterword by Stacy Davis Gates

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**In the age
of would-be
King Donald
Trump, we
sustain our
own hope
by doing
the small,
essential
things
that sustain
the hope
of others**

Recently, my partner and I got together with a group of friends. We've been meeting every six weeks or so since 1982. Originally, this group of lesbians convened to talk about sex: what we were doing, what we wanted to do, what we fantasised about doing. But you know how it is with any relationship. Over time, it can come to embrace so many other things. That's how it's been with the group we call 'Group' (or sometimes 'A Closed Group with No Name').

We've seen each other through break-ups, new lovers, job changes, housing worries, ailments, the deaths of lovers, caring for aging and dying parents, and now confronting our own age and the nearness of our mortality.

We've been together through an earthquake, several wars (Desert Storm, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the rest of the 'Global War on Terror'), the advent of the Internet, and seven presidents. Now, we're facing the return of the worst of those seven. The Group's latest meeting took place at the end of the first week of Donald Trump's new term. So many disturbing things had happened in just seven days and none



of us really wanted to talk about any of it.

Finally, I thought: If I can't talk about him with these women I've known for more than 40 years, who can I talk with? I watched them, sitting in that living room nibbling on corn chips and guacamole, and finally asked, "Do you think we'll look back on this time and know that it was the beginning of the end?"

I didn't even need to say the end of what: of American democracy, the rule of law, and the hopes of people of colour, women, and queer folk? "The end" alone signified all of that and so much more.

"Absolutely we will," was my partner's instant response. The other women agreed that Trump's second term represents a genuine break with the democratic history of this country; that yes, it's as serious as that. We sat for a moment in overwhelmed silence.

It's often hard to recognise the difference between a change, however important – say, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* – and an actual break in the political structure of a nation. This country may have seen just one such event in the almost 250 years of its existence: the Civil War that killed between 618,000 and 750,000 combatants (something like 2.5 percent of the total population) and nearly divided the nation permanently.

On that occasion, however imperfect the motives and the liberation, the forces of freedom triumphed over those dedicated to human enslavement. I hope that 100 years from now people will be able to feel the same way about this moment: that the forces of freedom triumphed.

Could the second Trump presidency really represent as big a threat to the continuity of American life as the Civil War? It's so hard to recognise a paradigm shift when you're in the middle of one. It's easier when you've been dumped out on the other side, but by then it can be too late.

This was the experience of many German Jewish victims of the Holocaust. For at least a century, their forebears had been assimilated into German life. It took time to recognise the individual stages of an extermination plan whose full horror only came into focus over a period of years.

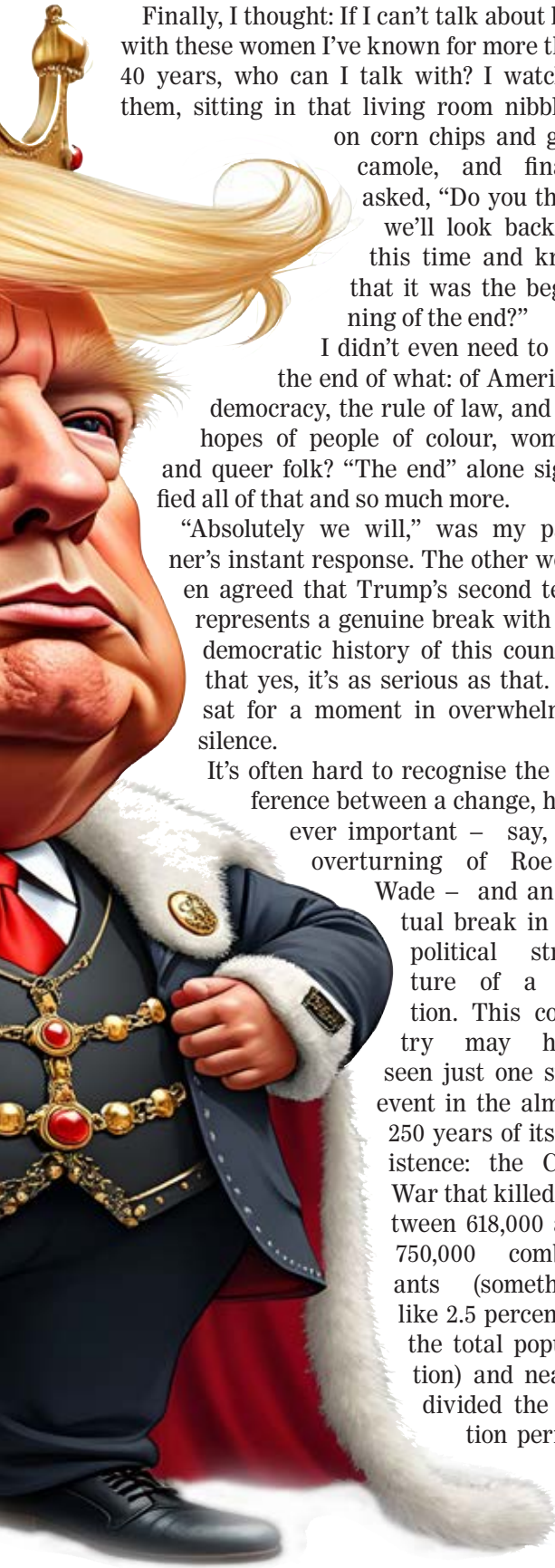
The expression "paradigm shift" derives from *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn's pioneering analysis of the way scientific disciplines change over time. As he saw it, a paradigm is a shared fundamental understanding of how a complex phenomenon (physics, biology, a nation) works. A paradigm shift represents the abrupt replacement of one theory (like Newton's theory of gravity) with something profoundly different (Einstein's theory of relativity).

The point is that a paradigm shift in this country wouldn't just be a tweak to business as usual like a change in the way the filibuster works in the Senate. It would be a wholesale upending of the constitutional balance of powers.

In this case, it would potentially mean relocating the power to make, assess, and execute the law (powers now resting in three distinct branches of government) all in the person of the president. It would be a change from democracy to autocracy, or as President Donald Trump has implied, to dictatorship. And it's happening now, in front of our very eyes.

Moving toward dictatorial control is the fundamental purpose of issuing a seeming-

It's often hard to recognise the difference between a change, however important – say, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* – and an actual break in the political structure of a nation



ly endless series of executive orders that clearly violate existing laws – for example, those governing the firing of inspectors general.

It's certainly true that Donald Trump doesn't like the very idea of inspectors general. We should remember that from his first term. He wants a free hand to run all the federal departments and agencies without watchdogs getting in the way.

But far more importantly, that executive order violated the 2022 Inspector General Act, as a former Pentagon inspector general under Trump told National Public Radio:

“Well [Trump's order] didn't follow the Inspector General Act, which requires the president, if he wants to remove an inspector general, which he's allowed to do, but he must give Congress 30 days notice before the removal, and the substantive rationale with detailed and case-specific reasons for each removal.”

The most important function of Trump's first week as president was to flaunt his power to make – and break – the law by fiat. Similarly, he has used executive orders to attempt to freeze funds already approved by Congress under the Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

As the Senate Committee on Appropriations has pointed out, it is Congress, not the president, that holds the power of the purse under the Constitution. In its 1975 decision in *Train v. City of New York*, the Supreme Court denied presidents the power to impound funds Congress has appropriated.

The same logic applies to Trump's order, through Secretary of State Marco Rubio, to impose a 90-day halt to all US foreign aid, civilian and military, except to Israel and Egypt. Again, this is an arrogation of congressional power by the president, and its point was undoubtedly

The most important function of Trump's first week as president was to flaunt his power to make – and break – the law by fiat

as much to assert presidential power as to effect some as-yet-undefined foreign policy goal.

And that logic will undoubtedly apply to a flood of other previously unimaginable actions Trump will most likely take between the writing and publication of this article.

The Episcopal Church's *Book of Common Prayer* contains a long prayer known as the *Great Litany*. A litany is a ritual petition to God, a list of actions congregants “beseech” God to take. The *Great Litany* is most often recited during Lent, a 40-day period of reflection leading up to Easter.

If you're standing or kneeling, it can seem to go on forever. And just when you think you might be nearing the end, along comes a whole new section requiring a whole new response. As time passes, you may find yourself covertly glancing at your watch. It's hard to stay focused through it all.

English speakers also use “litany” in a secular sense, as a metaphor for a long list of anything, especially when recited or recorded. We speak of “a litany of grievances,” “a litany of excuses,” or even “a litany of gripes and grudges,” which was how *Vanity Fair* described some of Trump's Inauguration Day remarks.

In the single week since that inauguration, observers have already produced excellent litanies of his many distressing actions. Although lists of these are available online,

there is no space to catalogue them all here. In fact, I couldn't, even if I wanted to, because the list grows by the day, even the hour.

Since I sat down at my desk this morning, Trump or his appointees have fired attorneys who worked with Special Prosecutor Jack Smith on criminal cases against him, rescinded job offers to 200 bank examiners who were to have been employed by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (the FDIC, which insures our bank accounts), and launched an investigation into the prosecution of the January 6th rioters. And that's just in the last six hours.

The *Episcopal Great Litany*, a long list of human concerns, leaps from topic to topic, petitioning for benedictions ranging from protection from “lightning and tempest; from earthquake, fire, and flood; from plague, pestilence, and famine” to a request that God “illumine all bishops, priests, and deacons with true knowledge and understanding of thy Word; and that both by their preaching and living, they may set it forth, and show it accordingly.”

Some might argue that this last request was at least partially fulfilled in the sermon of Episcopal Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde, the first woman elected to her position, who, at the ecumenical service held on the occasion of Donald Trump's inauguration, had the effrontery to address the new president in these words:

“Millions have put their trust in you. As you told the nation yesterday, you have felt the providential hand of a loving God. In the name of our God, I ask you to have mercy upon the people in our country who are scared now. There are gay, lesbian, and transgender children in Democratic, Republican, and independent families who fear for their lives.

“And the people who pick our crops and clean our office buildings;

who labour in our poultry farms and meat-packing plants; who wash the dishes after we eat in restaurants and work the night shift in hospitals – they may not be citizens or have the proper documentation, but the vast majority of immigrants are not criminals. They pay taxes and are good neighbours. They are faithful members of our churches, mosques and synagogues, gurdwara, and temples.”

Trump, of course, instantly demanded an apology.

In another bit of the *Great Litany* that seems particularly apt at the moment, supplicants plead with the Divine, “so to rule the hearts of thy servants, the President of the United States, and all others in authority, that they may do justice, and love mercy, and walk in the ways of truth.”

If only.

The list of Trump’s post-election actions is its own kind of litany – not of benediction, of course, but of horror. Like the *Great Litany*, it, too, leaps from topic to topic. To name just a few:

- The nominations to positions of power of the manifestly unfit (remember Matt Gaetz, the ethically-challenged), or the frankly vicious (Kristi Noem, the puppy-killer), or indeed of candidates combining both qualities (Pete Hegseth, Tulsi Gabbard).

- A spate of executive comments, orders, or presidential decrees displaying an imperial greed for territory that would have seemed like so many jokes just a few weeks ago. (Watch out, Panama, Canada, and Greenland!)

- The fulfilment of the Israeli fascist right-wing’s dearest desire: a proposal to cleanse Gaza of its more than two million Palestinian inhabitants, in order to make way for the



NASA/Paul E. Alers

Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde:
“Have mercy ...”



Gage Skidmore

Marco Rubio: 90 day halt to foreign aid, except Israel and Egypt



Gage Skidmore

Steve Bannon: “... flood the zone with shit”

development of what Trump has labelled “a phenomenal location,” where “some beautiful things can be done.”

- First steps in keeping his vow to deport millions of immigrants living in the United States, including a Chicago Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, operation, which included an “embedded” Dr Phil – further proof, should we need it, that the strategy is to enforce the authority of any decree, no matter how bizarre.

- Elon Musk’s seizure of access to the records of all federal employees and control of the Treasury Department’s disbursement process

Any one of those actions would have been sufficient to fuel a whole news cycle on its own. But that’s now inconceivable because before we, or the media, can focus on one Trump absurdity, another takes its place in the battle for our attention. To wit: in the last 15 minutes (while I was writing this), the *Washington Post* reported that Trump’s Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has ordered a freeze on all federal grants, “including, but not limited to, financial assistance for foreign aid, nongovernmental organizations, DEI, woke gender ideology, and the green new deal.” And now, in a head-snapping twist, the OMB seems to have rescinded the order – for the moment.

The *Cambridge Dictionary* offers an additional definition of litany: “a long list spoken or given to someone, esp. to someone who has heard or seen it before or finds it boring.”

Taken together, this apparently endless flood of outrages reflects the infamous observation of Trump’s advisor (and exoneree) Steve Bannon during his first administration: “The Democrats don’t matter. The real opposition is the media. And the way to deal with them is to flood the zone with shit.”

And indeed, the litany of Trump’s

autocratic actions has already flooded the zone with shit. The question is: How are we to navigate all that excrement? Can we do more than simply hope to stay afloat? Is there any way we can actually dam the floodtide? Or will we sigh and say we've seen it all before and find it boring?

At least we can try to build that dam. A few weeks ago, I wrote about some national organising we could join or support, efforts that are crucial because – yes! – we have to think big. But we also have to think small. I've been surprised by how many writers have responded to Trump's reelection by urging people to strengthen their own local connections with friends, neighbours, and family, while focusing on those among us who are most in need of protection from immediate attacks. In a way, that's exactly what the members of my group of lesbians have done for each other all these years.

It's what the members of my own household of chosen family do for each other daily, when we leave gifts of food or books, when we plan together to protect immigrant

'Small gusts of good will are acts driven by justice and compassion and solidarity, and they are what soothes our broken hearts'

friends at risk of being scooped up on the way to work.

All of that effort, big and small, must be sustained by hope. How do we keep hope alive once we've truly grasped the danger(s) we face?

I now ponder that question daily. This morning, one answer arrived in a newsletter by email, from a group called the Faithful Fools. The Fools live in San Francisco's Tenderloin district, where they accompany the other residents in their daily lives in a neglected and despised neighbourhood. Being Foolish, they don't ask whether they can be of any use or recognise the puniness of their efforts compared to the edicts of a president who would be king. This morning's newsletter brought me these words:

"Plenty of people have asked the question, 'After all these years, what keeps you going?' And we say, 'Well, we keep going because we are Fools,

of course.' This isn't to say that our work is ridiculous or without foundation. It's to say that we understand how uncertain the future is and we can't lose our way when the road gets rocky and tiresome ...

"We aren't foolish enough to believe that hope alone carries the day or soothes the soul. No, we believe it's the other way around; we believe that actions driven by justice, solidarity, and compassion are what sustain hope. Small gusts of good will are acts driven by justice and compassion and solidarity, and they are what soothes our broken hearts."

In short, in the age of would-be King Donald Trump, we sustain our own hope by doing the small, essential things that sustain the hope of others. **CT**

*Rebecca Gordon taught for many years in the philosophy department at the University of San Francisco. Now, semi-retired from teaching, she continues to be an activist in her faculty union. She is the author of *Mainstreaming Torture*, and *American Nuremberg: The US Officials Who Should Stand Trial for Post-9/11 War Crimes*. This article first appeared at www.tomdispatch.com.*

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► CHRIS HEDGES

The purge of the Deep State and the road to dictatorship

Donald Trump's dismantling of the Deep State presages the formation of something far worse

The Trump administration's war with the deep state is not a purgative. It is not about freeing us from the tyranny of intelligence agencies, militarised police, the largest prison system in the world, predatory corporations or the end of mass surveillance. It will not restore the rule of law to hold the powerful and the wealthy accountable. It will not slash the bloated and unaccountable spending – some \$1-trillion dollars – by the Pentagon.

All revolutionary movements, on the left or the right, dismantle the old bureaucratic structures. The fascists in Germany and the Bolsheviks in the Soviet Union, once they seized power, aggressively purged the civil service. They see in these structures, correctly, an enemy that would stymie their absolute grip on power.

It is a coup d'état by inches. Now we get our own.

Rearguard battles – as in the early years of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany – are taking place in the courts and media outlets openly hostile to Trump.

There will be, at first, pyrrhic victories – the Bolsheviks and the Nazis were stalled by their own judiciaries and hostile press – but gradually the purges, aided by a bankrupt liberalism that no longer stands or fights for anything, ensures the tri-

umph of the new masters.

The Trump administration has expelled or fired officials who investigate wrongdoing within the federal government, including 17 inspectors general.

Federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies, such as the FBI and Homeland Security, are being purged of those deemed hostile to Trump. Courts, as they are stacked with complaint judges, will be mechanisms for the persecution of state “enemies” and protection rackets for the powerful and the rich. The Supreme Court, which has granted Trump legal immunity, has already reached this stage.

“The original purge after the Shah's fall sought to rid the ministries of senior-level holdovers from the former regime and to provide the revolutionary faithful with jobs,” reads a declassified CIA memo, dated Aug. 28, 1980, on the then newly formed Islamic Republic of Iran.

“The second wave of purges began last month after a series of Khomeini speeches. Lower-level individuals who had been part of the Shah's bureaucracy, those with Western training, or those who were deemed to lack full Revolutionary fervour have been retired or fired on an increasingly large scale.”

We are repeating the steps that led to the consolidation of power by past dictatorships, albeit with

our own idiom and idiosyncrasies. Those naively lauding Trump's hostility towards the deep state – which I concede did tremendous damage to democratic institutions, eviscerated our most cherished liberties, is an unaccountable state within a state and orchestrated a series of disastrous global interventions, including the recent military fiascos in the Middle East and Ukraine – should look closely at what is being proposed to take its place.

The ultimate target for the Trump administration is not the deep state. The target is the laws, regulations, protocols and rules, and the government civil servants who enforce them, which hinder dictatorial control. Compromise, limited power, checks and balances and accountability are slated to be abolished.

Those who believe that the government is designed to serve the common good, rather than the dictates of the ruler, will be forced out. The deep state will be reconstituted to serve the leadership cult. Laws and the rights enshrined in the Constitution will be irrelevant.

“He who saves his Country does not violate any Law,” Trump boasted on Truth Social and X.

The chaos of the first Trump administration has been replaced with a disciplined plan to throttle what is left of America's anaemic democracy. Project 2025, the Center for Re-



newing America and the America First Policy Institute compiled in advance detailed blueprints, position papers, legislative proposals, proposed executive orders and policies.

The legal cornerstone for this deconstruction of the state is the unitary executive theory, articulated by Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia in his dissenting opinion in the case of *Morrison v. Olson*. In Scalia's opinion, Article II of the Constitution means that everything not designated as legislative or judicial power must be executive power. The executive branch, he writes, can execute all the laws of the United States outside of everything that is not explicitly given to Congress or the judiciary in the Constitution. It is a legal justification for dictatorship.

Although the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 does not use the

term "unitary executive theory," it advocates for policies that align with the theory's principles. Project 2025 recommends firing tens of thousands of government employees and replacing them with loyalists. Key to this project is the weakening of labor protections and rights of governmental employees, making it easier for them to be fired at the behest of the executive branch.

Russell Vought, the founder of Center for Renewing America and one of the key architects of Project 2025, has returned as director Office of Management and Budget, a position he also held in Trump's first term.

One of Trump's final acts in his first term was signing the order

"Creating Schedule F in the Excepted Service." This order removed employment protections from career government bureaucrats. Joe Biden rescinded it. It has been resurrected with a vengeance. It too has echoes from the past. The Nazis' 1933 "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service" saw political opponents and non-Aryans, including Germans of Jewish descent, dismissed from the civil service. The Bolsheviks likewise purged the military and civil service of "counter-revolutionaries."

The firing of over 9,500 federal workers – with 75,000 others accepting a less-than-ironclad deferred buyout agreement amid plans to cut 70 percent of staff from various government agencies – freezing of billions of dollars in funding and ongoing seizure of confidential data by

Elon Musk's so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) is not about downsizing and efficiency.

The cuts to federal agencies will do little to curb the rapacious spending by the federal government if the military budget – Congressional Republicans are calling for at least \$100-billion in additional military spending during the next decade – remains sacrosanct. And while Trump wants to end the war in Ukraine, part of his effort to build an alliance with the autocrat in Moscow he admires, he backs the genocide in Gaza. The purge is about gutting oversight and protections. It is about circumventing thousands of statutes that set the rules for government operations. It is about filling federal positions with “loyalists” from a database compiled by the Conservative Partnership Institute. It is about enriching private corporations – including several owned by Musk – that will be handed lucrative government contracts.

This deconstruction is also, I suspect, about increasing Musk's cloud capital, his algorithmic and digital infrastructure. Musk plans to turn X into the “everything app.” He is launching “X Money,” an add-on to the social media app, which gives users a digital wallet “to store money and make peer-to-peer transfers.”

A few weeks after the announcement of X Money's partnership with Visa, DOGE requested access to classified Internal Revenue Service data, including millions of tax returns. The data includes Social Security numbers and addresses, details on how much individuals earn, how much money they owe, properties they own and child custody agreements. In the wrong hands, this information can be commercialised and weaponised.

Musk is pursuing an “AI-first” agenda to increase the role of arti-

Trump has vowed to “remove the radicals, zealots, and Marxists who have infiltrated the federal Department of Education”

ficial intelligence (AI) across government agencies. He is building “a centralized data repository” for the federal government, according to *Wired*. Oracle founder, business associate of Elon Musk and long-time Trump donor Larry Ellison, who recently announced a \$500-billion AI infrastructure plan alongside Trump, urged nations to move all of their data into “a single, unified data platform” so it can be “consumed and used” by AI models. Ellison has previously stated that an AI-based surveillance system will guarantee that “Citizens will be on their best behaviour because we are constantly recording and reporting everything that's going on.”

Trump has, like all despots, long enemy lists. He has pulled security details from former officials from his previous administration, including retired Gen. Mark Milley, who was the highest-ranking officer in the military during Trump's first term, and Mike Pompeo, who was Trump's Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and Secretary of State. He has revoked or threatened to revoke, the security clearances of President Biden and former members of his administration including Antony Blinken, the former secretary of state, and Jake Sullivan, the former national security adviser. He is targeting media outlets he deems hostile, blocking their reporters from covering news events at the Oval Office and evicting them from their working spaces in the Pentagon.

These enemy lists will expand as

larger and larger segments of the population realise they have been betrayed, widespread discontent becomes palpable and the Trump White House feels threatened.

Once the new system is in place, laws and regulations will become whatever the Trump White House says they are. Independent agencies such as the Federal Election Commission, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the Federal Reserve System will lose their autonomy. Mass deportations, the teaching of “Christian” and “patriotic” values in schools – Trump has vowed to “remove the radicals, zealots, and Marxists who have infiltrated the federal Department of Education” – along with the gutting of social programmes, including Medicaid, low-income housing, job training, and assistance for children, will create a society of serfs and masters. Predatory corporations, such as the healthcare and pharmaceutical industries, will be licensed to exploit and pillage a disempowered public. Totalitarianism demands complete conformity. The result, to quote Rosa Luxemburg, is the “brutalisation of public life.”

The hollowed-out remnants of the old system – the media, the Democratic Party, academia, the shells of labor unions – will not save us. They mouth empty platitudes, cower in fear, seek useless incremental reforms and accommodation, and demonise Trump supporters regardless of their reasons for voting for him. They are fading into irrelevance. This ennui is a common denominator in the rise of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. It engenders apathy and defeatism.

The “Trump's Birthday and Flag Day Holiday Establishment Act,” introduced by Congresswoman Claudia Tenny, is a harbinger of what

lies ahead. The act would designate June 14 as a federal holiday to commemorate “Donald J. Trump’s Birthday and Flag Day.” The next step is choreographed state parades with oversized portraits of the great leader.

Joseph Roth was one of the few writers in Germany to understand the attraction and inevitable rise of fascism. In his essay “The Auto-da-Fé of the Mind,” which addressed the first mass burning of books by the Nazis, he counselled fellow Jewish writers to accept that they had been vanquished: “Let us, who were fighting on the front line, under the banner of the European mind, let us fulfil the noblest duty of the defeated warrior: Let us concede our defeat.”

Roth, blacklisted by the Nazis, forced into exile and reduced to poverty, did not delude himself with false hopes.

“What use are my words,” Roth asked, “against the guns, the loudspeakers, the murderers, the de-

Resistance, when it happens, will be expressed in spontaneous eruptions which coalesce outside the established centres of power

ranged ministers, the stupid interviewers and journalists who interpret the voice of this world of Babel, muddled anyhow, via the drums of Nuremberg?”

He knew what was coming.

“It will become clear to you now that we are heading for a great catastrophe,” Roth, after going into exile in France in 1933, wrote to Stefan Zweig about the seizure of power by the Nazis. “The barbarians have taken over. Do not deceive yourself. Hell reigns.”

But Roth also argued even if defeat was certain, resistance was a moral imperative, a way to defend one’s dignity and the sanctity of the truth.

“One must write, even when

one realizes the printed word can no longer improve anything,” he insisted.

I am as pessimistic as Roth. Censorship and state repression will expand. Those with a conscience will become an enemy of the state. Resistance, when it happens, will be expressed in spontaneous eruptions which coalesce outside the established centres of power. These acts of defiance will be met with brutal state repression. But if we do not resist, we succumb morally and physically to the darkness. We become complicit in a radical evil. This, we must never allow. **CT**

Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who was a foreign correspondent for 15 years for The New York Times, where he served as the Middle East bureau chief and Balkan bureau chief for the paper. He previously worked overseas for The Dallas Morning News, The Christian Science Monitor and NPR. He is the host of show “The Chris Hedges Report.”

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► SAM PIZZIGATI

Will the Musk coup define America's future?

It can happen if we don't start really pushing to prevent the ongoing concentration of the country's wealth in the hands of a handful of billionaires

A classic coup d'état has guns. Uniformed men run wild seizing government agencies and claiming control over what government does and who government serves.

But in our new cyber age, the Yale historian Timothy Snyder reflected in early February, a coup can unfold without any armed overthrow. We can have “a couple dozen young men go from government office to government office, dressed in civilian clothes and armed only with zip drives.”

These young men, operating upon “vague references to orders from on high,” can gain access to basic computer systems and “proceed to grant their Supreme Leader” effective power over just about everything that government does.

The historian Snyder is, of course, describing America's current reality. He's calling this reality a coup – and so are defenders of America's democratic faith.

We aren't living through “a coup with tanks in the streets and mobs overrunning government offices,” charges former US attorney and current Brennan Center senior fellow Joyce Vance. We've living through “a quieter coup, a billionaires' coup.”

“The richest man on Earth is at-

tempting to seize physical control of government payment systems and use them to shut down federal funding to any recipient he personally dislikes,” adds the University of Minnesota Law School's Will Stancil. “Elon Musk is directly usurping Congress's most important authority, the power of the purse.”

The Musk legions now hacking their way through the nation's capital, the *New York Times* reports, have already “inserted themselves” into the databases of 17 federal agencies. These legions include fervent Musk admirers like Akash Bobba, a software engineer less than three years out of high school who once interned with a tech firm chaired by fellow Musk billionaire Peter Thiel.

One by one, the federal agencies that keep the nation running have fallen, with the full blessings of Donald Trump, under Musk's effective control. Trump, meanwhile, is making headlines about taking over Gaza and Panama, in the process, notes Senator Chris Murphy from Connecticut, “distracting everyone from the real story – the billionaires seizing government to steal from regular people.”

The Trumpsters, agrees Senator Bernie Sanders from Vermont, are moving us “into an oligarchic form

of society where extraordinary power rests in the hands of a small number of unelected multi-billionaires.”

Elected officials and progressive activists are pushing back in the courts to stop the Musk putsch and scoring some initial victories. One federal judge, for instance, has just blocked Musk's access to the Treasury Department's computer payments system. That access, the judge ruled, threatens “irreparable harm” to the personal and financial data of millions of Americans.

But lower-level court rulings may not pass muster with higher-level Trump-appointed judges. Stopping the Musk coup will require a broader popular mobilisation, and that push back is indeed building, with protests drawing thousands in locales ranging from downtown Washington to a host of state capitols nationwide.

Our best hope to counter the Musk coup's billionaire corporate backers – “and their boundless options” to shape “our elections, legislation, and judicial appointments”? That may well be intensified trade union action, suggests a new analysis long-time labour activist Michael Podhorzer, and that action is also building.

Labour's national voice, the AFL-CIO, has just launched a new campaign, the Department of People



JUST SAY NO: Rally for Hope and Justice on Ithaca Commons, New York State

Who Work for a Living, to challenge Musk and his “Department of Government Efficiency.”

“Government can work for billionaires,” points out AFL-CIO president Liz Shuler, “or it can work for working people – but not both.”

Exactly what can unions help us accomplish that could reverse America’s continuing descent into a naked plutocracy? The Labor Institute’s Les Leopold recently outlined a core set of realisable demands that could “bring workers together and give them a sense of collective power.”

These demands range from prohibiting layoffs by corporations that collect taxpayer dollars and tax breaks to upping the hourly minimum wage to at least \$20.

The current federal minimum – just \$7.25 an hour – translates into an annual take-home of only \$15,080 for a full-time worker, not nearly enough to keep a single mom or dad with kids above the official federal poverty line.

That official poverty line traces back to the mid-1960s work of Mollie Orshansky, a Social Security Administration economist. To arrive

Minimum-wage workers today make 29 percent less – in real dollars – than they workers earned at the time of the last increase in 2009

at that line, Orshansky multiplied the cost of a minimum food diet by three to cover all the other expenses a poor household might confront.

But the current federal poverty line hasn’t increased, to keep up with inflation, since 2009. That’s left minimum-wage workers today making 29 percent less – in real dollars – than minimum-wage workers earned at the time of that last increase and a stunning 40 percent less than minimum-wage workers earned back in 1968.

What has increased – and spectacularly so – since 1968? The fortunes – and power – of America’s richest.

“A handful of people,” notes the New Economics Foundation analyst Fernanda Balata, now “hold dis-

proportionate influence over political outcomes and public discourse.” Enough influence to put coups on America’s political table.

How should we respond to that “disproportionate influence”? Balata spells out one intriguing possibility in a new paper the New Economics Foundation and Patriotic Millionaires International have just published. We need, her paper suggests, more than a poverty line. We need what amounts to an “extreme wealth line,” a framework for public policy that could help cap the fortunes of the world’s most fortunate.

Our globe’s current 10 wealthiest, Balata notes, “now own more than the poorest three billion combined.” These ten have become so rich, Oxfam relates, that they could lose 99 percent of their wealth and still rate as billionaires.

Nine of these top 10 billionaires just happen to be Americans. Affluents this rich, Balata lays out, are using their fortunes “to distort democratic foundations and the social contract, maintaining a system where they keep getting richer despite the consequences for the rest of us.”

Elon Musk’s coup has given those foundations their most significant shaking yet. Establishing an “extreme wealth line,” Balata’s work helps show, could start us down a road that could end that shaking, both today and deep into the future. This wealth line would essentially mark the point where wealth accumulations become a direct threat to our democratic, economic, and environmental future.

“By framing extreme wealth concentration as a societal risk, an extreme wealth line could reshape public opinion, as the poverty line transformed public understanding of economic deprivation,” Balata



Liz Shuler: Governments can work for billionaires, or it can work for working people – but not both”



Les Leopold: Bring workers together and give them a sense of collective power”

ta details. “An extreme wealth line could also provide a reference point for progressive taxation and regulatory reforms aimed at reducing excessive influence over public institutions and the media.”

Where might that extreme wealth line sit? In her research, Balata has interviewed a wide variety of policy analysts and deep pockets open to the wealth line notion. The wealthy among those interviewed suggested specific setpoints for that wealth line, figures ranging from \$10-million to \$1-billion. The policy-minded interviewees, by contrast, saw more value in setting the wealth line in a relative context, by linking, for instance, poverty and wealth lines in a fixed ratio.

Taking that approach could reverse the incentives that drive so much of the behaviour that our contemporary wealthy exhibit. Within our current economy and polity, our richest have an ongoing incentive to squeeze our poorest. The more they squeeze, the richer they can become. But a wealth line tied to the poverty line could reverse that dynamic.

Think about things this way: In a political system with a poverty line, tax-funded public assistance comes your way if your income sits you under that line or only slightly above it. If we linked that poverty line to a new extreme wealth line, new political dynamics would quickly come into play.

What sort of dynamics? The most affluent among us would suddenly have a vested personal interest in enhancing the incomes of our poorest. The reason? The wealth of our wealthiest would only rise if the incomes of our poorest rose first. We would be creating a society with an ongoing incentive to become ever more caring.

We can certainly stop the current Musk coup – if the mobilising against it continues to build. The challenge then becomes figuring out what we can do to stop our wealthiest from mounting ever more robust coup attempts in the years ahead. Establishing an excessive wealth line, in the United States and worldwide, could be a giant step toward a Musk-free tomorrow, a future without a super rich. **CT**

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

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The Art of Class War is a distinctive exploration of the 1984-85 UK Miners' Strike. Featuring dozens of cartoons from the pro-Thatcher press, the left press and trade union publications, it captures the polarised perspectives of right and left.

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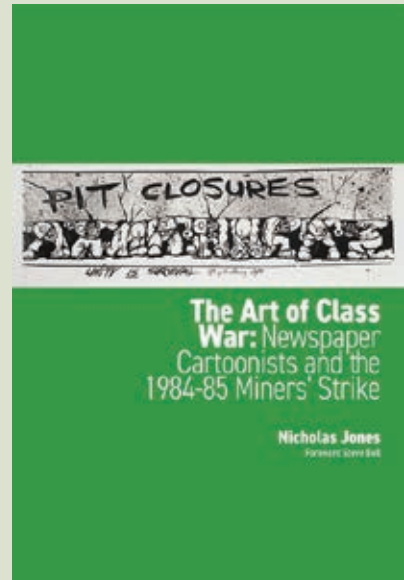
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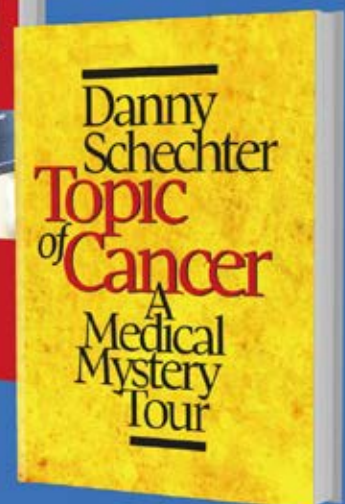
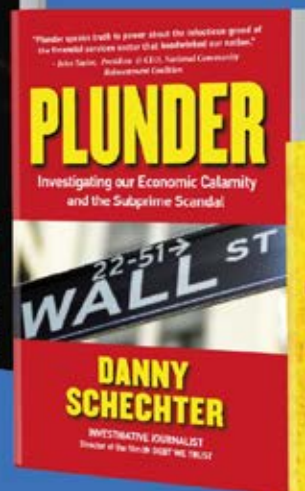
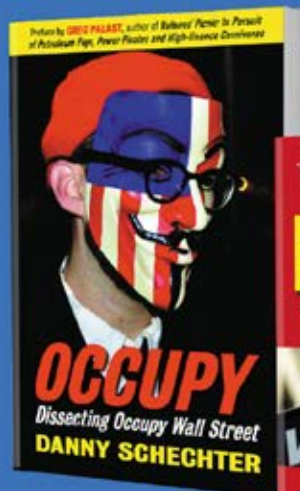
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► WILLIAM J. ASTORE

Manifest Destiny gets a reboot under Trump

Once it was a desire for westward expansion in the USA. Now the targets are Greenland, Canada, the Panama Canal, the Gulf of America, and Gaza

A few years ago, I came across an old book at an estate sale. Its title caught my eye: *Our New Possessions*. Its cover featured the Statue of Liberty against stylised stars and stripes. What were those “new possessions?” The cover made it quite clear: Cuba, Hawaii, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico. The subtitle made it even clearer: *A graphic account, descriptive and historical, of the tropic islands of the sea which have fallen under our sway, their cities, peoples, and commerce, natural resources and the opportunities they offer to Americans*. What a mouthful! I’m still impressed with the notion that “tropical” peoples falling “under our sway” offered real Americans amazing opportunities, as did our (whoops – I meant their) lands. Consider that Manifest Destiny at its boldest, imperialism unapologetically being celebrated as a new basis for burgeoning American greatness.

The year that imperial celebration was published – 1898 – won’t surprise students of US history. America had just won its splendid little imperial war with Spain, an old empire very much in the “decline and fall” stage of a rich, long, and rapacious history. And just then red-blooded Americans like “Rough Rider” Ted-

dy Roosevelt were emerging as the inheritors of the conquistador tradition of an often murderously swash-buckling Spanish Empire.

Of course, freedom-loving Americans were supposed to know better than to follow in the tradition of “old world” imperial exploitation. Nevertheless, cheerleaders and mentors like storyteller Rudyard Kipling were then urging Americans to embrace Europe’s civilising mission, to take up “the white man’s burden,” to spread enlightenment and civilisation to the benighted darker-skinned peoples of the tropics.

Yet to cite just one example, US troops dispatched to the Philippines on their “civilising” mission quickly resorted to widespread murder and torture, methods of “pacification” that might even have made Spanish inquisitors blush.

That grim reality wasn’t lost on Mark Twain and other critics who spoke out against imperialism, American-style, with its murderous suppression of Filipino “guerrillas” and bottomless hypocrisy about its “civilising” motives.

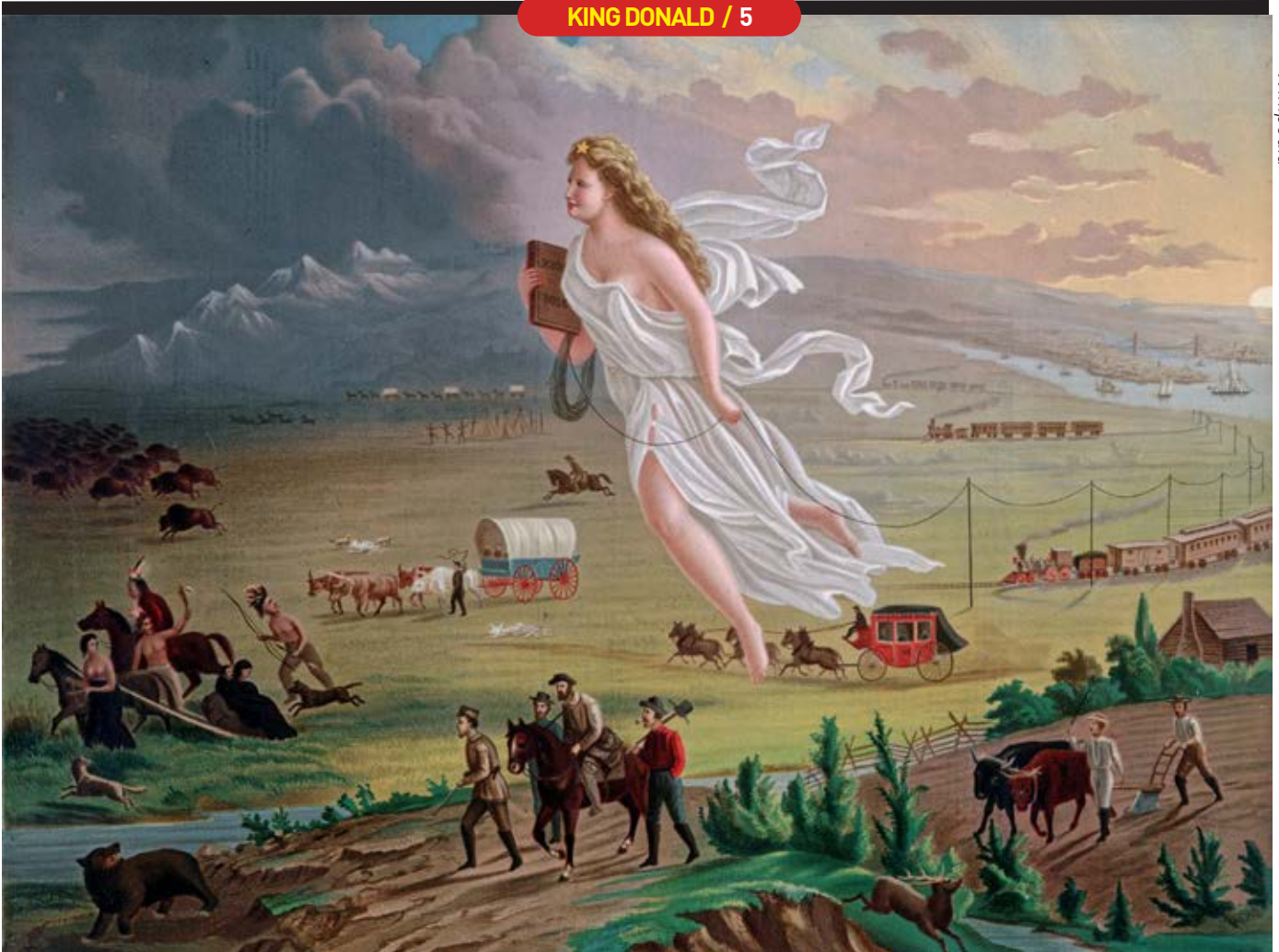
After his exposure to “enlightened” all-American empire-building, retired Major General Smedley Butler, twice awarded the Medal of Hon-

or, would bluntly write in the 1930s of war as a “racket” and insist his long career as a Marine had been spent largely in the service of “gangster” capitalism. Now there was a plain-speaking American hero.

And speaking of plain-speaking, or perhaps plain-boasting, I suggest that we think of Donald Trump as America’s retro president from 1898. Isn’t it time, America, to reach for our destiny once again? Isn’t it time for more tropical (and Arctic) peoples to be put “under our sway”? Greenland! Canada! The Panama Canal!

These and other regions of the globe offer Donald Trump’s America so many “opportunities.” And if we can’t occupy an area like the Gulf of Mexico, the least we can do is rebrand it the Gulf of America! A lexigraphic “mission accomplished” moment bought with no casualties, which sure beats the calamitous wars of George W. Bush and Barack Obama in this century!

Now, here’s what I appreciate about Trump: the transparent nature of his greed. He doesn’t shroud American imperialism in happy talk. He says it just like they did in 1898. It’s about resources and profits. As the dedication page to that old book from 1898 put it: “To all Americans who go a-pioneering in our new possessions and to the peo-



This 1872 painting by John Gast shows Manifest Destiny, the belief in westward expansion of the United States from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean

ple who are there before them.” Oh, and pay no attention to that “before” caveat. We Americans clearly came first then and, at least to Donald Trump, come first now, and – yes! – we come to rule. The world is our possession and our beneficence will certainly serve the peoples who were there before us in Greenland or anywhere else (the “hellhole” of Gaza included), even if we have to torture or kill them in the process of winning their hearts and minds.

My point is this: Donald Trump doesn’t want to return America to the 1950s, when men were men and women were, as the awful joke then went, “barefoot, pregnant, in the kitchen.” No, he wants to return this country (and the world) to 1900, when America was unapologetically

and nakedly grabbing everything it could. To put it in his brand of “locker room” language, Trump wants to grab Mother Earth by the pussy, because when you’re rich and powerful, when you’re a “star,” you can do anything.

It’s white (male) hunter all over again. Think Teddy Roosevelt and all those animals he manfully slaughtered on safari. Today, we might even add white (female) hunter, considering that Kristi Noem, the new director of homeland security, infamously shot her own dog in a gravel pit because she couldn’t train it to behave. It’s an America where men are men again, women are women, and trans

people are simply defined out of existence while simultaneously being forced out of the US military.

To replace the “yellow journalism” of newspaperman William Randolph Hearst in that age, think of the corporate-owned media networks of today, with billionaire owners like Jeff Bezos showing due deference to you-know-who. For the robber barons of that age, substitute men like Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg (to name only the two most famous billionaires of our moment) along with Bezos and their billionaire tech bros. It’s a new gilded age, a new age of smash and grab, where the rich get richer and the poor poorer, where the strong do what they will and the weak suffer as they must.

Of course, it's highly doubtful Trump can convince Canada to become the 51st state. Denmark doesn't seem remotely interested in selling Greenland to America and the Panamanians aren't eager to return their canal to all-American interlopers and occupiers.

Even the "Gulf of America" remains the Gulf of Mexico to the other peoples of the Western Hemisphere. But perhaps Trump and Musk can team up to plant the American flag on Mars!

Yet, while Trump may fail when it comes to any of these specific imperial designs, he's already succeeding, famously so, where it really matters. With all his imperial blather about Greenland, Gaza, and the like, what he's really conquering and colonising is our minds. The man and his ideas are now everywhere. Whatever else you can say about Trump, you can't get rid of him, especially in the mainstream media which he uses so effectively to trumpet (pun intended) his expansionist agenda.

Yes, Trump is normalising imperial conquest (again); yes, naked exploitation is unapologetically "destiny" (again). It's "drill, baby, drill" and party like it's 1900, since ideas about global warming due to fossil-fuel production and consumption simply didn't exist in that age. It's so retro chic to be chauvinistically self-ish, to loot openly, even to commit or enable atrocities under the cover of humanitarian concerns. (Think of Gaza and Trump's recent open call for cleansing the region of Palestinians to make way for their "betters," the Israelis, to enjoy peace and a "beautiful" seaside location.)

Regression, thy name be Trump. Unabashed greed and unbridled hypocrisy are selling points once again. Protectionist tariffs are

While Trump may fail when it comes to any of these specific imperial designs, he's already succeeding, famously so, where it really matters

"great" again. Immigrants, black and brown-skinned ones naturally, are depicted as endangering America's way of life. Time to get rid of as many "illegals" as we can. Deport them! Jail them in Cuba! America is for Americans!

President Teddy Roosevelt was a big fan of the US Navy's Great White Fleet, the 16 battleships, painted white, that he sent around the world in 1907. He used it to intimidate recalcitrant powers and impress them with America's growing might and reach. Though the US wasn't quite a military superpower yet, it was already an economic one, and combining military persuasion with economic prowess was an effective tactic to get other countries to toe Washington's line.

Today's US military is quite obviously a global one, an imperial one bent on total dominance of everything: land, sea, air, space, cyberspace, information, narrative. You name it and our military and its partners in what Ray McGovern calls the MICIMATT (which includes industry, Congress, intelligence, the media, academe, and think tanks) conspire to seize, occupy, control, and otherwise dominate.

Small wonder that Trump and his operatives within what might be thought of as the Mondial Imperial State have continued a tradition of seeking ever greater budgets for the Pentagon, more and more weapons sales, and the unending construction of new military bases. Contraction in this highly militarised

version of disaster imperialism is never an option (until, of course, it becomes one). Only growth is to be allowed, commensurate with seemingly bottomless appetites.

One example: newly appointed Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth and his Project 2025 supporters argue that US military spending should equal 5 percent of America's gross domestic product (GDP).

With this country's GDP sitting just under \$29-trillion in 2024, that would drive an imperial war budget of \$1.45-trillion instead of the nearly \$900-billion in this year's Pentagon budget.

For Hegseth & Co, the US military is all about warfighting (and wars, if nothing else, are expensive), so it must embrace and hone its warrior mystique. It matters to him and his like not at all that, since 9/11, if not before then, the US military has honed its warfighting identity in disastrous wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and elsewhere.

Another example. Just before I retired from the US military in 2005, I learned of efforts to create a new military command with sub-Saharan Africa as its focus. At first, it seemed like a joke. How was Africa directly related to US national security? Whence the threat? Of course, Africa as a threat wasn't the issue. It was Africa as an arena for US economic exploitation, just as it had been for European countries like Belgium, England, France, and Germany circa 1900, most infamously in the Congo, later exposed as the "heart of darkness" at the centre of a European imperialism that would contribute to the tensions leading to the eruption of World War I in 1914.

Two years after I retired, the US military did indeed form Africa Command (AFRICOM) as its latest combatant command. Today, every

sector of the globe has been accounted for by various commands within the Pentagon assigned to four-star generals and admirals, each in his or her own way as powerful as, once upon a time, the proconsuls of the Roman Empire.

With all of this as background, in his own mind at least, Donald Trump doth bestride the world like a colossus. What backs him up is a Republican vision (shared by most Democrats) of an imperial military (theoretically) unchallengeable in all domains. And whether the United States spends \$1.45-trillion or a mere \$900-billion annually on it, count on this: in the years to come, that military will be used in, most likely, the stupidest and most violent ways imaginable.

If you buy the conceit that Donald Trump is taking America back to 1900, it suggests a likely starting point for the next world war roughly 10 to 15 years in our future.

Ever-increasing military spending; calls for mobilisation and a return of the draft; talk of enervating national decline that could allegedly be reversed by an embrace of a new warrior mystique; viewing all competition as zero-sum games that America must win and countries like China must lose: these could act collectively to create conditions similar to 1914 – a tinderbox of tensions just waiting for the right spark to set the world aflame.

The critical difference, of course, is nuclear weapons. Though World War I wasn't the "war to end all wars," a World War III fought between the US. and its allies and China and/or Russia and their allies promises to be that "last" war. There's nothing like a few dozen thermonuclear weapons to settle accounts – as in ending most life on Planet Earth.

In an age of weapons of mass destruction and their widespread

If you buy the conceit that Donald Trump is taking America back to 1900, it suggests a starting point for the next world war 10 to 15 years in our future

"modernisation," jaw-jaw, as in compromise and cooperation through conversation, is the only sane choice when war-war looms. Dominance through destruction must give way to détente through dialogue. Can the Trump administration advance progress toward peace instead of letting us regress into war?

Mr. President, here's the real art of the deal. Rather than turning the calendar back to 1900, your goal

should be to turn the atomic clock back to several hours (if not days or weeks) before midnight.

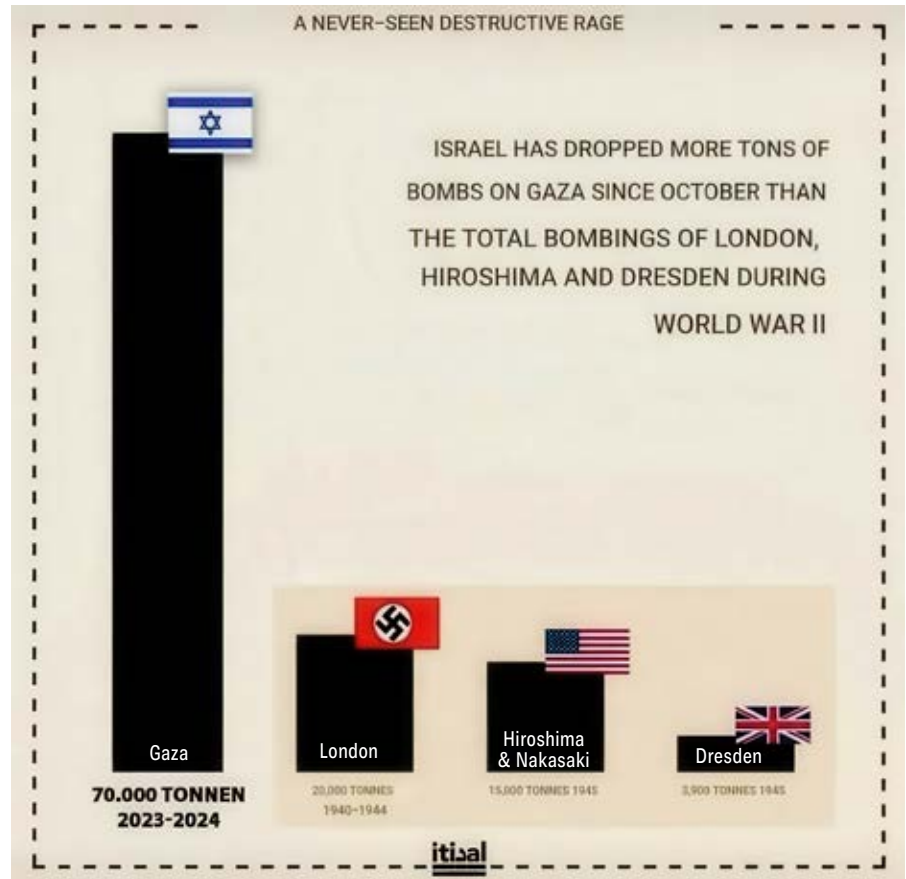
That clock currently sits at a perilous 89 seconds to midnight, or global nuclear war. With every fibre of your being, your goal should be to guarantee that it will never strike that ungodly hour.

For surely, even the most deluded strong man shouldn't wish his manifest destiny to be ruling over an empire of the dead. **CT**

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► BOMBS AWAY!

FROM THE INTERNET



► JOHN WHITEHEAD & NISHA WHITEHEAD

Sleepwalking into tyranny: Power is seized silently

If we allow this imperial coup to move forward without pushback or protest, we will be just as culpable as those signing the death warrant for our freedoms

“This is what militaries do during coups: you capture the major targets, with government buildings high on the list, and you take over communications and other systems.” – Ruth Ben-Ghiat, historian on fascism and authoritarian leaders

How something is done is just as important as why something is done.

To suggest that the ends justify the means is to launch oneself down a moral, ethical and legal rabbit hole that leaves us in a totalitarian bind.

We are already halfway down that road.

Whatever the justifications for discarding, even temporarily, the constitutional framework and protocols that have long served as the foundations for our republic (national security, an economic crisis, terrorists at the border, a global pandemic, etc.), none of them are worth the price we are being asked to pay – the rule of law – for what is amounting to a hostile takeover of the US government by an oligarchic elite.

This is no longer a conversation about stolen elections, insurrections, or even the Deep State.

This has become a lesson in how quickly things can fall apart.

This is what all those years of partisan double standards and constitutional undermining and legislative sell-outs and judicial betrayals add up to: a coup by oligarchic forces intent on a hostile takeover.

The government’s past efforts to sidestep the rule of law pale in comparison to what is unfolding right now, which is nothing less than the complete dismantling of every last foundational principle for a representative government that answers to “we the people.”

This shock-and-awe blitz campaign of daily seizures, raids and overreaching executive orders is a deliberate attempt to keep us distracted and diverted while the government is remade in the image of an autocracy, one in which privacy, due process, the rule of law, free speech, and equality will all be contingent on whether you are worthy of the privilege of rights.

I have long insisted on the need to recalibrate the government, but this is not how one goes about it.

The issue is not whether the actions being taken by the Trump Administration are right or wrong – although there are many that are egregiously wrong and some that are long overdue – but whether the Executive Branch has the power to unilaterally override the Constitution.

If we allow this imperial coup to move forward without pushback or protest, we will be just as culpable as those signing the death warrant for our freedoms.

Power corrupts. And absolute power corrupts absolutely.

However, it takes a culture of entitlement and a nation of compliant, wilfully ignorant, politically divided citizens to provide the foundations of tyranny.

For too long now, America has played politics with its principles and allowed the president and his colleagues to act in violation of the rule of law.

“We the people” are paying the price for it now.

Since the early days of our republic, we have operated under the principle that no one is above the law.

As Thomas Paine observed in *Common Sense*, “In America, the law is king. For as in absolute governments the King is law, so in free countries the law ought to be king; and there ought to be no other.”

Several years later, John Adams, seeking to reinforce this important principle, declared in the Massachusetts Constitution that they were seeking to establish “a government of laws and not of men.”



The history of the USA over the past 200-plus years has been the history of a people engaged in a constant struggle to maintain that tenuous balance between the rule of law – in our case, the United States Constitution – and the government leaders entrusted with protecting it, upholding it and abiding by it.

At various junctures, when that necessary balance has been thrown off by overreaching government bodies or overly ambitious individuals, we have found ourselves faced with a crisis of constitutional proportions.

Each time, we have taken the painful steps needed to restore our constitutional equilibrium.

That was then, this is now, and for too long now, we have failed to recognise and rectify the danger in allowing a single individual to declare himself the exception to the rule of law and assume the role of judge, jury, and executioner.

For all intents and purposes, we have become a nation ruled not by

All of us are in danger. Those cheering the erection of migrant camps at Guantanamo, take heed: you could be next

laws but by men, and fallible, imperfect men, at that.

We allowed Bush to overstep. We allowed Obama to overstep. We allowed Trump to overstep. We allowed Biden to overstep.

These power grabs by the Trump Administration, aided and abetted by Elon Musk, are more than an overstep, however.

All of us are in danger. Those cheering the erection of migrant camps at Guantanamo, take heed: you could be next. It's no longer a question of whether the government will lock up Americans for defying its mandates but when.

Partisan politics have no place in what is unfolding now.

This is what we know: the government has the means, the muscle and the motivation to detain individuals who resist its orders and do not comply with its mandates in a vast array of prisons, detention centres, and concentration camps paid for with taxpayer dollars.

It's just a matter of time.

It no longer matters what the hot-button issue might be (vaccine mandates, immigration, gun rights, abortion, same-sex marriage, healthcare, criticising the government, protesting election results, etc.) or which party is wielding its power like a hammer.

The groundwork has been laid. Under the indefinite detention provision of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the President and the military can detain and imprison American citizens with no access to friends, family or the courts if the government believes them to be a terrorist.

So, it should come as no surprise that merely criticising the government could get you labelled as a terrorist. After all, it doesn't take much to be considered a terrorist

anymore, especially given that the government likes to use the words “anti-government,” “extremist” and “terrorist” interchangeably.

This is what happens when you not only put the power to determine who is a potential danger in the hands of government agencies, the courts and the police but also give those agencies liberal authority to lock individuals up for perceived wrongs.

It’s a system just begging to be abused by power-hungry bureaucrats desperate to retain their power at all costs.

It’s happened before.

As history shows, the US government is not averse to locking up its own citizens for its own purposes. One need only go back to the 1940s, when the federal government proclaimed that Japanese-Americans, labelled potential dissidents, could be put in concentration (aka internment) camps based only upon their ethnic origin, to see the lengths the federal government will go to in order to maintain “order” in the homeland.

The US Supreme Court validated the detention programme in *Korematsu v. US* (1944), concluding that the government’s need to ensure the safety of the country trumped personal liberties.

Although that *Korematsu* decision was never formally overturned, Chief Justice Roberts opined in *Trump v. Hawaii* (2018) that “the forcible relocation of US citizens to concentration camps, solely and explicitly on the basis of race, is objectively unlawful and outside the scope of Presidential authority.”

Roberts’ statements provide little assurance of safety in light of the government’s tendency to sidestep the rule of law when it suits its purposes. Pointing out that such blatantly illegal detentions could happen again – with the blessing of the courts – Justice Scalia once

As history shows, the US government is not averse to locking up its own citizens for its own purposes

warned, “In times of war, the laws fall silent.”

We seem to be coming full circle on many fronts.

Consider that two decades ago we were debating whether non-citizens – for example, so-called enemy combatants being held at Guantanamo Bay and Muslim-Americans rounded up in the wake of 9/11 – were entitled to protections under the Constitution, specifically as they relate to indefinite detention.

Americans weren’t overly concerned about the rights of non-citizens then, nor do they seem all that concerned now. And yet in the near future we could well be the ones in the unenviable position of being targeted for indefinite detention by our own government.

Similarly, most Americans weren’t unduly concerned when the US Supreme Court gave Arizona police officers the green light to stop, search and question anyone – ostensibly those fitting a particular racial profile – they suspect might be an illegal immigrant. More than a decade later, the cops largely have carte blanche authority to stop any individual, citizen and non-citizen alike, they suspect might be doing something illegal.

As I point out in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* and in its fictional counterpart *The Erik Blair Diaries*, it will only be a matter of time before those brainwashed into believ-

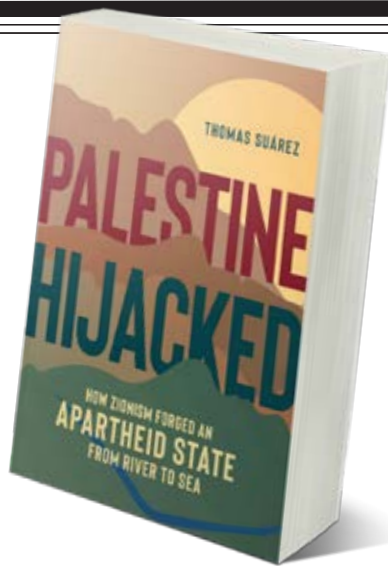
ing that they have nothing to worry about learn the hard way that in a police state, it doesn’t matter who you are or how righteous you claim to be, because eventually, you will be lumped in with everyone else and everything you do will be “wrong” and suspect.

Martin Niemöller learned that particular lesson the hard way.

A German military officer turned theologian, Niemöller was an early supporter of Hitler’s rise to power. It was only when Hitler threatened to attack the churches that Niemöller openly opposed the regime. For his efforts, Niemöller was arrested, charged with activities against the government, fined, detained, and eventually interned in the Sachsenhausen and Dachau concentration camps from 1938 to 1945.

As Niemöller reportedly replied when asked by his cellmate why he ever supported the Nazi party: “I find myself wondering about that too. I wonder about it as much as I regret it. Still, it is true that Hitler betrayed me... Hitler promised me on his word of honour, to protect the Church, and not to issue any anti-Church laws. He also agreed not to allow pogroms against the Jews... Hitler’s assurance satisfied me at the time... I am paying for that mistake now; and not me alone, but thousands of other persons like me.” **CT**

John W. Whitehead is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His most recent books are the best-selling Battlefield America: The War on the American People, the award-winning A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State, and a debut dystopian fiction novel, The Erik Blair Diaries. He can be contacted at staff@rutherford.org. Nisha Whitehead is the Executive Director of The Rutherford Institute.



➤ EDWARD CURTIN

Tearing the mask off an apartheid narrative

Zionist leaders exposed as 'ruthless terrorists'

Much has been written in the alternative press over the past year about the Israeli genocide of the Palestinians and its other war crimes in Lebanon, Syria, Iran, etc. This has often been viewed within the historical context of the self-declared Zionist Israeli state's founding in 1948 up to the present day. But far less has been said about the Zionist's racial-nationalist-settler-colonialist movement's history of terrorism to seize Palestine and kill and drive the people into exile that goes back for more than a century

For those who think Donald Trump's recent announcement that the United States will take over Gaza and force the besieged Palestinians to leave their country is shocking, the history presented by Thomas Suárez will disabuse them of that notion.

PALESTINE HIJACKED

How Zionism Forged An Apartheid State From River to Sea

Thomas Suárez

Olive Branch Press

The Zionist Trump is stating baldly the ultimate goal of the ethnic cleansing of all non-Jews from Palestine, which has been the Zionists' goal from the beginning and lies behind Biden, who considers himself a Zionist, and Trump's recent support for Israel's genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

When questioned why he supported the Zionist leaders' efforts to drive the Palestinians from their land, Winston Churchill, in 1937, replied, "I do not admit the dog in the manger has the final right to the manger, even though he may have lain there for a very long time."

As Suárez, a London-based histor-

ical researcher, former West Bank resident, violinist, and composer, writes, "He denied that 'a great wrong has been done to the Red Indians of America, or the Black people of Australia' by their replacement with 'a higher grade race.'" This higher grade race rhetoric is racism, pure and simple, and it has been applied to the Palestinians by the Zionists from the start. Dogs, vermin, etc. Hitler would be proud.

It is nothing new. Ethnic supremacy and a pure Jewish state have always been the goal, even as the Zionists used Nazi rhetoric and tactics that they allegedly abhorred while working with the Nazis to get German Jews into Palestine but nowhere else. What became known as The Haavara Transfer Agreement is proof of that.

In January 1933 when Hitler came to power as German Chancellor, there were international calls for a

boycott of German goods and services, supported by prominent Jews and Christians.

The boycott caused a severe blow to the Reich's economy. But an agreement with Hitler was arranged by Zionists to circumvent the boycott and provide Germany with needed capital, with Hitler allowing German Jews with sufficient wealth to emigrate to Palestine in return for their purchase of German goods and equipment, a quid pro quo arrangement that provided Germany with a propaganda win by claiming the boycott-breaking deal was made by Jews.

Four years later, Adolph Eichmann, on a trip to Palestine, was involved in a follow-up effort with the Zionist terrorist militia, the Haganah, and its representative Feival Pokes, for the Nazis to pressure German Jewish groups to urge Jews to go only to Palestine and no other countries.

The irony of Churchill's racist statement is that the Zionists, despite the UK's Balfour Declaration of 1917 declaring its support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," turned on their accomplices, who were in Palestine as "administrators" under a League of Nations mandate following WWI, with a savage terrorist campaign to drive out the British.

This gave the Zionists a narrative propaganda myth that they have exploited to the present that they were the victims of occupation in their own land, while it was the Zionists who, through terrorism, were driving the Palestinians from the land that was theirs for a very long time.

Treachery of this nature defines the history of all those arrayed against the Palestinians from the start – as today, with Trump being no exception.

The Zionist settler project was marketed as the myth of modern Jewish settlers sailing back to the Hebrew land of the Bible

Suárez makes it clear that the "Palestinians also committed terror attacks, and this book's focus on Zionist and Israeli terror must never be misinterpreted as excusing Palestinian violence against innocents," but the "Palestinian terror occurred principally during the uprisings of the late 1920s and late 1930 after years of being institutionally discriminated against and killed for the benefit of the Zionists, and after non-violent resistance – diplomacy, entreaties, strikes, boycotts – proved futile."

His focus in this book, therefore, is to document and offer a comprehensive and structural analysis of the decades-long terror campaign the Zionist racial-nationalist settler movement used to obliterate the "inferior" Arabs who were "dogs in the manger."

The Zionists' twin terror campaigns against the Palestinians and the British forced the British to withdraw in 1948. They then turned their full attention to exterminating the Palestinians, which resulted in the what Palestinians refer to as the Nakba – the purging of nearly a million Palestinians from their land and the destruction of more than five hundred of their villages – (what Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann, the first president of Israel, called "a miraculous simplification of our task"). It was then that the siege of Gaza began, not as Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and his accomplices claim began after Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack.

As Suárez writes, "The siege of

Gaza began in 1948, 58 years before the 2006 election of Hamas, which Israeli now uses to justify it. It served then the same purpose it serves today: to block people of the wrong ethnicity from returning home."

From its start, the Zionist settler project was rooted in a fanatical messianism marketed as the myth of these modern Jewish settlers simply sailing back to the Hebrew land of the Bible after a 2,000 year absence, a land that belonged to them even though they had never lived there. They were just returning to their sovereign home, decreed by God, and those Palestinians living there, no matter for how long, were usurpers who had to be driven from their homes, killed, or forced into exile. The branding of the Jewish state "Israel," a name entrenched in the messianic Jewish and Christian culture of the West, was crucial since it called up all the nostalgia for the Holy Land of yore and all the images of one's "true" homecoming. This was crucial to get Christian support in the West.

Palestine Hijacked (2022) is a book of deeply documented historical research (686 detailed endnotes) that tears the mask off the narrative that paints Zionism as a benign force.

Through assiduous archival research in poorly accessed and newly declassified archives of the Central Intelligence Agency, the British National Archives, the Library of Congress, the Zionist Organization of America, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency and others, Suárez uses original source documents to hoist the well-known Zionist leaders with their own petards, often in their own words, words never meant to see the light of day.

Chaim Weizmann, Theodore Herzl, David Ben-Gurion, Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir, Moshe Sharett are exposed as liars, and the latter three as ruthless terrorists, with the former three in com-

plete accord with their terror tactics. The same is shown to be true for those Western leaders who supported the terrorist seizure of Palestine by a Zionist racial-nationalist settler movement that had zero legal or moral right to the land, as they still do not.

Suárez sets the scene early on page 14:

“Through the decades to come [from the early days of Zionism], from mainstream leaders like David Ben-Gurion and Chaim Weizmann to the fanatical terror gang Lehi, the ideological pronouncements of the settler project were couched in the language of messianism. Zionism was building the final Kingdom, the Biblical Third Temple, a resurrection rising from the ashes of the fabled Second Temple and Solomon’s Temple. Zionism’s battles, its enemies, its conquests, its tragedies, were Biblical, and its establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 was sold as the resumption, the reconstitution, of the Biblical realm. **As Ben-Gurion put it, “the Bible is our mandate” to take Palestine.**” (*My emphasis*)

Again, as with Trump’s pronouncement, the old is new and the new, old; thus today we have American conservative Christian evangelicals’ (Christian Zionists) passionate support for Netanyahu’s war crimes, justified and blessed by the Biblical canard that lives on in the propagandistic narrative promoted by Israel and the corporate media.

It’s all here in Suárez’s chronicle. Not just details about the well-known Zionist terror attacks such as the bombing of The King David Hotel that could be turned into Zionist propaganda, but all the years of the slaughters of Palestinians, old and young, men and women and children in small villages and markets, in homes and on the roads and in the fields, done without mercy and carried out with a Biblical gleefulness by fanatics doing their “God’s will.”

If you think Zionism and Judaism are synonymous, you have swallowed a package of lies wrapped as a treacherous gift

It chills the soul to read the details of such genocide’s long history.

Suárez writes:

“The King David bombing endures as the iconic terror attack of the Mandate years, and history books falsely cite it as the most deadly. The 1940 bombing of the Patria [an immigrant ship] bombing was three times deadlier, killing about 267 people, and the two atrocities are identical in the claim that only infrastructure, not people, were the targets.

“Of the attacks in which the killing was the acknowledged purpose, at least one of the Irgun’s bombing [the Irgun, the Lehi, and the Haganah were the Zionist’s three main terror groups] of Palestinian markets killed more (July 6, 1980, about 120), and the Zionist armies coming slaughter of villages such as Deir Yassin – still during the Mandate – would also kill more people than the King David attack.”

If you wish to understand the terrorist nature of today’s Israeli government, you need to read this book.

If you think the recent Israeli use of exploding pagers has no history, learn about the Zionist use of exploding leaflets long ago.

If you think critics’ use of the term Nazi to describe the ongoing genocide of the Palestinians is over-the-top, learn about the history of Zionist collaborations with Hitler and the Italian fascist Mussolini.

If you think the Israel designs and attacks on Lebanon and Syria are

something new, think again.

If you are shocked by the question: Does Israel have a right to exist?, discover the illegal and immoral nature of its claims to that right. Then ask yourself to answer.

If you are afraid to learn these things for fear of being called antisemitic, learn how the Zionist founders of Israel weaponised that term long ago, against fellow Jews and anyone else who dared question their legitimacy, and how their progenitors and the US government that supports them now stand rightly condemned as supporters of genocide.

If you think Zionism and Judaism are synonymous, you have swallowed a package of lies wrapped as a treacherous gift; for Jews with a conscience know that the Zionist project is a terrible stain on their name.

Thomas Suárez has written a brave and great book. He should have the last word:

“The reason Israel holds millions of human beings under various levels of apartheid, the reason it keeps millions more languishing in refugee camps, is not that they are Palestinians, not that they are Arab.

“It is rather, strictly, because they are not Jewish. If they were Jewish, whether Palestinian or Arab or anything else, they would be welcomed and given a generous subsidy to move in from whatever part of the world they live and take over a house whose owner was expelled because s/he is not Jewish.

Nothing in the history of Zionism, of the Israeli state, or the so-called conflict can be understood divorced from this.” **CT**

Edward Curtin is an independent writer whose work has appeared widely over many years. His website is www.edwardcurtin.com and his latest book is ‘Seeking Truth in a Country of Lies.’

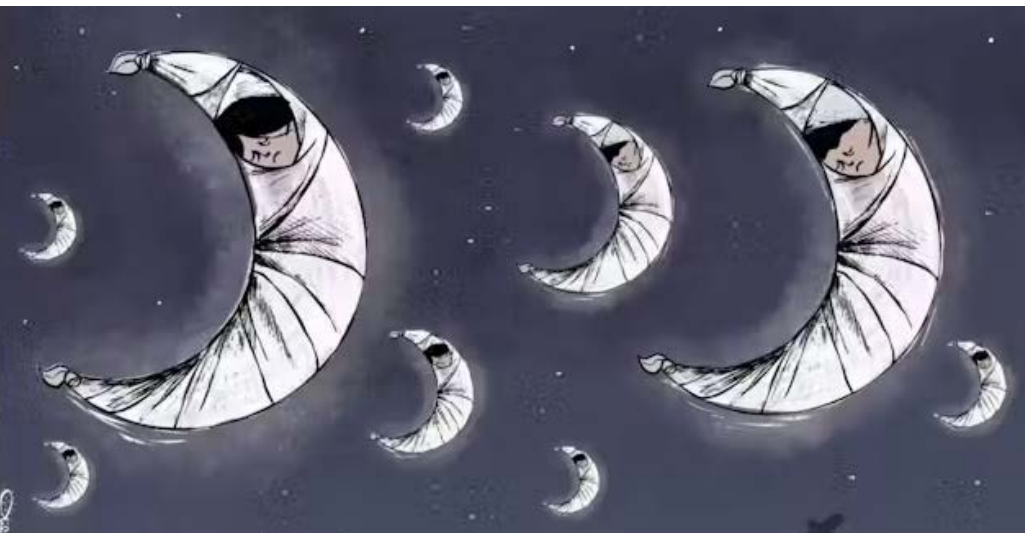


Illustration of crescent moons representing murdered Palestinians by Palestinian artist Mohammad Sabaaneh. Sabaaneh's Instagram account, @sabaaneh

► AMY MAZOWITA

Representing Gaza: Comics as resistance

Webcomics provide emotional outlets for artists, as well as intentional acts of solidarity and resistance

Comics and graphic narratives have long been used to document the events of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, both by people visiting and reporting on the region, as well as by Palestinians and Israelis.

Prominent texts include comic book artist and journalist Joe Sacco's *Palestine*, a detailed and visually chaotic account of the artist's visit to Gaza, and Sarah Glidden's *How to Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less*, a travelogue detailing the cartoonist's experience as a Jewish-

American tourist in Israel.

There is also Guy Delisle's *Jerusalem*, a story about living in Israel as a French-Canadian ex-pat, Palestinian artist Leila Abdelrazaq's *Baddawi*, a historical and familial retelling of life in a Lebanese refugee camp, and Palestinian political cartoonist Naji al-Ali's *A Child in Palestine*, a collection of political cartoons featuring a now-iconic child named Handala. Israeli comic book artist Rutu Modan's *Exit Wounds* recounts a love story set against the backdrop of a suicide bombing.



My previous writing explored how Glidden's *How to Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less* reflects the artist/author's complicated journey of self- and cultural discovery. As a Jewish American woman embarking on an Israeli-funded Birthright Trip, Glidden faces the violence enacted by the Israeli state. The book highlights Glidden's quest for an authentic representation of Israeli and Palestinian lived realities, and her journey towards self-acceptance.

Personal memory and reflection – whether about identity versus culture or lived experience versus



Illustration posted to Palestinian artist Mohammad Sabaaneh's Instagram account.

political unrest – has been a common thread across many graphic representations.

Comics and illustration can be powerful forms of witness in their capacity to juxtapose text and image. While some illustrators or cartoonists have replicated antisemitic, orientalist and anti-Arab stereotypes, taking up the long-established visual negative stereotypical tropes, others seek to document, educate and empathise with victims.

The use of negative visual tropes is not limited to graphic representations of Israel and Palestine, but a

widespread phenomenon that manifests in various dehumanising and hateful iterations across the visual arts. In this article, I focus not on the stereotypes we might find in comics related to Israel and Palestine, but instead prioritise how they are acting as networked resources.

Creators have recently taken to social media to share short comics about what many experts say is the Palestinian genocide in real time.

Palestinian artists such as Mohammad Sabaaneh (@sabaaneh on Instagram), author of *Power Born of Dreams: My Story is Pal-*

estine and Palestine in Black and White, offers regular updates about events in Gaza while highlighting the artist's criticism of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). In one post (above), Sabaaneh illustrates the word "Gaza" as if it were carved from large stones, and the word "genocide" spelled out across a series of rockets.

Sabaaneh's evocative illustrations have been featured in the *Washington Post* alongside the work of other Palestinian and Israeli cartoonists who are similarly sharing their critiques of the ongoing violence.

Sabaaneh, along with other Palestinian artists, is joined by western illustrators who are similarly using their social networks to draw attention to the IDF military incursion and its deadly effects.

These digital comics provide an accessible outlet for processing emotion, showing solidarity and disseminating knowledge.

This is in line with media and communication scholar Fredrika Thelandersson's research on mental health and social media, which argues that platform users "leverage platform affordances to create networks of care based in mutual experience."

While the comics I point to allow artists to process their feelings towards the conflict, they are also a crucial form of resistance to the ongoing attacks on Gaza and surrounding areas.

American cartoonist Lynda Barry, who uses the handle @theneared-sightedmonkey on Instagram, has consistently used Instagram to showcase her protest, sharing what the artist calls "Ceasefire Balloons." In these drawings, Barry uses balloons to represent the growing death count of Palestinian children. UN experts say 14,500 children have been killed by Israel's military since early May following the Oct. 7 Hamas attack that killed at least 33 Israeli children.

Barry's posts are often met with messages of support and empathy from followers. Her activist work has also translated into a fundraising project, with paintings of "Ceasefire Balloons" being sold in support of the Middle East Children's Alliance.

Montreal author and illustrator Sandra Dumais has also taken up a practice of creating comics that reflect her response to the ongoing attacks while simultaneously spreading messages of awareness and solidarity.



A single panel comic reflecting on Palestine by Sandra Dumais. (Dumais' Instagram account @sandrada maisbooks)

In her March 4, 2024, post, Dumais shares a single panel that reflects on the privileged realities of life in the West against the backdrop of what is happening in Gaza. Dumais has also leveraged her artwork as a means of raising funds.

Artists like Barry and Dumais share their responses to the Palestinian genocide from a privileged western perspective that is secondary to the experiences of the Palestinian people who are living through it.

These artists and others use the juxtaposition of text and image to represent the emotional toll of witnessing from afar, while also sharing messages that denounce the actions of the IDF.

By doing so, these webcomics join global calls for a ceasefire and serve as a means of virtual activism by way of community-enacted resistance. Artists and platform users interact with and take up each other's work as a way of creating a digital social movement.

This is reminiscent of what social media scholars studying mental health communities, such as Natalie Ann Hendry, refer to as "being together alone," where people working through experiences find community, solidarity and support in popular online spaces.

These western artists are an example of how comics and social media are working as a conduit for amplifying the experiences of marginalised communities across geographical borders.

Comics not only show what is happening in Gaza through illustration, but also provide an alternative to mainstream perspectives. This means two things: these webcomics are functioning as emotional outlets for the artists, as well as intentional acts of solidarity and resistance. **CT**

Amy Mazowita is a PhD candidate & 2023-2024 Public Scholar, Concordia University, Montreal. This article first appeared at www.theconversation.com.

WE ARE ALL FRIED  

Greg Koenderman



22/2/25
X @FRIEDCARTOONS



RICHARD NORTON-TAYLOR

Are the SAS 'Rogue Heroes' or just rogues?

How many more shocking allegations about the Special Air Services must emerge before the 'Who Dares Wins' regiment is subject to UK transparency laws?

Key evidence held at UK special forces headquarters containing allegations the SAS had killed Afghans in cold blood was destroyed to prevent the military police from seeing it, an inquiry was told at the end of January.

Senior special forces officers and defence officials were so desperate to cover up SAS activities in Afghanistan that the crucial data was deleted from an IT system at the "higher headquarters of special forces," inquiry chairman Lord Justice Haddon-Cave said.

He noted how the data was

wiped before the military police "could seize and examine it." But he revealed that with "independent help," the inquiry had managed to get a back-up copy and intended to restore the data.

It was the latest testimony in an inquiry that has placed an unprecedented spotlight on an elite band of British troops that have a degree of protection from scrutiny greater even than that enjoyed by the security and intelligence agencies – MI5, MI6, and GCHQ.

The SAS has also benefited from naked hypocrisy. Officially there is a blanket ban on reporting the activities of the SAS and its naval equiva-

lent, the Special Boat Service (SBS).

Yet, defence journalists are discreetly encouraged to describe their derring-do, so long as they praise them as heroes, much as they are, in fact and fiction, on television.

Until Haddon-Cave's inquiry, UK special forces enjoyed a total lack of scrutiny even as their role in armed conflict became increasingly significant on "anti-terror" operations in the Middle East.

Haddon-Cave heard evidence from Alan Pughsley, a former chief constable of Kent police, who criticised the "inappropriate and premature" closure of a military police investigation into the SAS.

Pughsley said the probe, called Operation Northmoor, was “a murder investigation, as serious as you can get.”

Northmoor was delayed for years by the military police’s failure to withstand bullying from SAS commanders, and eventually shut down by the last Conservative government.

Yet the truth is gradually emerging, with a former senior special forces officer telling Haddon-Cave’s inquiry that SAS troops in Afghanistan had a “golden pass allowing them to get away with murder.”

The officer, who was granted anonymity, referred to what was called “flat packing” – putting pillows over the heads of detainees before killing them with a pistol. Another SAS officer referred to “blooding new recruits.”

One described how SAS soldiers “dropped” weapons next to unarmed Afghans after they had been killed. Those covering up the crimes were called “Mr Wolf,” after a character in Quentin Tarantino’s film, *Pulp Fiction*.

General Sir Mark Carleton-Smith, a director of UK special forces who became head of the army, was aware of such allegations but failed to share it with the military police, the BBC has reported.

Another General, Gwyn Jenkins, knew of claims the SAS had executed handcuffed detainees in Afghanistan, but locked the evidence in a safe instead of sharing it with

General Gwyn Jenkins, knew of claims the SAS had executed handcuffed detainees in Afghanistan, but locked the evidence in a safe

detectives.

Former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, in his last public appointment before the 2024 election, made Jenkins the UK’s national security adviser. The then cabinet secretary, Simon Case, said Jenkins was “excellently placed” for the job.

Keir Starmer has since cancelled his role.

The SAS is exempt from the Freedom of Information Act. Neither parliament’s intelligence committee nor its defence committee can scrutinise its activities.

Some of the most spectacular examples of hypocrisy surrounding Britain’s special forces have involved D Notices, issued by what is now called the Defence and Security Media Advisory (DSMA) committee.

These involve editors and publishers operating a voluntary system of self-censorship in cooperation with the MoD and the intelligence agencies.

In its official history, Admiral Nicholas Wilkinson, a former secretary of the committee, observes: “Almost all the publicity which the USF (UK Special Forces) has attracted has been inspired directly by USF leakers or through ex-SF leakers.”

The Ministry of Defence was furious when details emerged about how special forces freed British soldiers captured by rebels in Sierra Leone in 2000.

British paratroopers participating in the special forces-led operation “felt no inhibition about talking frankly about their part,” Wilkinson noted.

Lord David Richards, the former chief of defence staff, once told me he had broken the official rule that nothing should be said about the SAS. An enemy’s knowledge of Britain’s special forces, and what they could do, was in itself a powerful weapon, he suggested.

That was before the allegations of war crimes and extra-judicial killings in Afghanistan surfaced. Thanks to the inquiry, the SAS may now be seen in a new light.

The words of the former US Supreme Court judge, Louis Brandeis, come to mind: “Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants; electric light the most efficient policeman.”

It is time Britain’s special forces were held to account by independent watchdogs. **CT**

Richard Norton-Taylor is an editor, journalist, playwright, and the doyen of British national security reporting. He wrote for the Guardian on defence and security matters and was the newspaper’s security editor for three decades. This article was first published at www.declassifieduk.org.

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Faces of the slaves who perished on the *Amistad*

Portraits of enslaved Africans help bring the massive, messy, contested story of slavery down to the scale of individual humans

On the night of July 1, 1839, 53 enslaved Africans revolted aboard the slaving schooner *La Amistad* – Spanish for “Friendship” – while they were being shipped to a plantation in Puerto Príncipe, Cuba.

Kidnapped and trafficked from modern-day Sierra Leone to Havana on a larger vessel, they had been transferred to the smaller *La Amistad* to reach Puerto Príncipe.

A 25-year-old man named Sengbe Pieh led the rebels, who suffered 10 fatalities in the fray. They managed to kill the captain, Ramon Ferrer, and take control of the ship, ordering the surviving crew to return them to Sierra Leone. But the crew instead sailed the vessel north, where it was captured in Long Island Sound.

With the rebels detained in Connecticut, their fate would be decided by the state’s legal system. A remarkable set of 22 drawings reveal the faces of these rebels, providing a rare glimpse into their humanity when they were affirming their right to live free.

I served as the lead historian and researcher for an exhibition where three of these portraits are now on display, *In Slavery’s Wake: Making Black Freedom in the World*, at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

In 1808, the United States, along with a host of other countries, banned the participation of its citizens in the transportation of enslaved people from Africa to the Americas. Nonetheless, at least 2.8 million Africans were brought to the Americas between 1808 and 1866, primarily to work on sugar plantations in Brazil and Cuba. Shippers, plantation owners, merchants and crews reaped massive profits.

But historians know little about the individuals aboard these slave ships. More often than not, their existence was reflected in numbers on ledgers and spreadsheets. Their birth names, birth dates, family histories – anything that would have humanised them – were hard to come by.

Portraits of enslaved people from the 19th century were also unusual. Enslavers often viewed them as mere chattel and not worth the expense and effort of commissioning a painting. If they did appear in art, it was in the background as loyal servants, helpless victims or stereotypical brutes. That’s what makes these drawings, created by Connecticut artist William H. Townsend during the trial, so remarkable.

Historians don’t know why Townsend decided to draw them, only that he lived locally and sat in

the courtroom during the trial. In 1934, these portraits were donated to Yale University’s Beinecke Library by one of Townsend’s descendants.

While his motivations for drawing these portraits remain unclear, the humanity he depicted is clear. The expressions of his subjects often evoke both their resistance and their desire for freedom.

Fuli, one of several captives who had stolen water on board the vessel and had been ordered flogged by Captain Ferrer during the voyage, gazes at the viewer with a solemn, self-possessed air. It’s easy to imagine him as a leader steeled by all the suffering he experienced over the course of his journey.

Marqu – or Margru – was one



‘Fuli,’ by William H. Townsend.

Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University



John Warner Barber's illustration depicting the death of Captain Ferrer during the Amistad revolt, 1839

of the three young girls who were aboard the Amistad. In her portrait, she gently smiles – a glint of a personality that's persevered despite the trauma of the voyage and her time spent in prison awaiting trial.

Grabo – or Grabeau – was second-in-command to Pieh in the revolt. He was a rice planter and was married at the time of his capture, and was enslaved to repay a debt his family owed. In his portrait, he gazes with his eyebrows raised – inquisitive, proud and at ease.

Despite their different facial expressions, the three appear to be united in their collective determination to be agents in their own libera-

tion. In Pieh's words: "Brothers, we have done that which we purposed. ... I am resolved it is better to die than to be a white man's slave."

The lawyers – Roger S. Baldwin, Theodore Sedgwick and Seth Staples – who were hired by abolitionists to represent the 53 surviving rebels argued that they rebelled because "each of them are natives of Africa and were born free, and ever since have been and still of right are and ought to be free and not slaves."

Eventually, the case made it to the US Supreme Court, which found

that because the captives aboard the Amistad were free at the time of their capture in Long Island, they could not be considered property of Spain.

The verdict became a landmark case for litigating the illegal slave trade, which continued to expand over the next two decades until finally ending in the 1860s. The Amistad rebels inspired other captives: In 1841, as the American ship Creole travelled between Richmond, Virginia, and New Orleans, those on board revolted, wresting control of the ship and sailing it to the Bahamas, where they eventually gained their freedom.

These portraits, like the testimony in court and the revolt onboard the Amistad, bring the massive, messy, contested story of slavery down to the scale of individual humans.

Their visages call upon present and future generations to collectively imagine not only the horrors of the slave trade, but also the power of individual dignity and collective resistance.

They light the darkness – in the 1840s and in the world today. **CT**

Kate McMahon is Historian of Global Slavery, at Smithsonian Institution. This article was first published at www.theconversation.com.



Grabo, second-in-command of the rebels aboard the Amistad, by William H. Townsend. Library of Congress



Marqu, drawn by William H. Townsend, was one of three enslaved girls aboard the Amistad. Library of Congress

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