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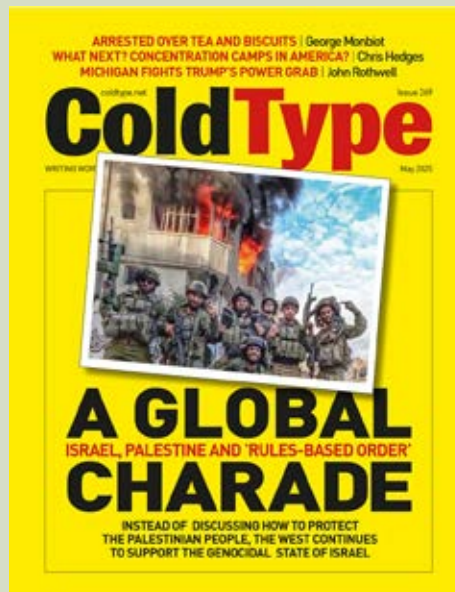


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CAPITOL HILL CITIZEN

[illegible]

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When the Metropolitan Police carried out a dawn raid on my home in London last October, they asked me to identify all computers and phones in the house that I use as a journalist. Believe it or not, they actually stated this was so they could protect my rights.

In the course of a search lasting several hours, they seized seven items, packing them up in evidence boxes and taking them away. I was not arrested or charged with any crime.

In May, Mark Lucraft KC, the Old Bailey's most senior judge, ruled that the warrants the "counter-terror" police used in the raid were unlawful.

In his ruling Judge Lucraft wrote that he was "very troubled by the way in which the search warrant was drafted, approved and granted where items were to be seized from a journalist."

The judge also denied the metropolitan police's request for a production order, a legal power to compel journalists to hand over documents. Such rulings are very hard to obtain, especially because they could endanger sources and journalistic material.

The police were asking the court for a retrospective legitimisation of their unlawful raid. But Judge Lucraft denied that request, writing:



Asa Winstanley:
Dawn raid by
London police

► ASA WINSTANLEY Illegal raid on home won't stop me covering Gaza

"Any warrant seeking material in the hands of a journalist requires extremely careful handling."

My barrister Jude Bunting KC submitted to the court that they "would be hard-pressed to find a more obviously unlawful order than the one made in this case."

Despite the court ruling, police confirmed in statements later issued to the press that "the investigation into the alleged offences remains ongoing."

This is a reference to the fact that,

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on the day of the raid, the police revealed the existence of a criminal investigation into my social media postings – one which had been ongoing since October 2023 – for suspected offences under Sections 1 and 2 of the Terrorism Act (2006). I call on the police to now drop this investigation.

In light of the ruling, it is difficult to imagine them going forward with actually charging me for my social media posts. If they were going to, why haven't they done so at any point since they first launched this investigation 20 months ago?

But the reality is that I just don't know. Until the investigation is dropped, there's a possibility that I could still be charged. So until then I will have to think twice before posting on X/Twitter or any other social media platform.

And that, in my view, is part of the intended chilling effect of such weaponised police investigations against journalists and activists focused on Palestine.

While there is an active criminal investigation, most lawyers would advise their clients to not speak to the press.

Thankfully, I did not have that issue with my fantastic solicitor Tayab Ali, who's been part of the Palestine solidarity movement for decades and understands that public support is a vital aspect of winning inherently political cases.

But there's no doubt that the common refrain among activists right now that "the process is the punishment" gets to the heart of the truth.

Even if you are lucky enough to have a well-funded legal team (as I was, thanks to the backing of the National Union of Journalists), dealing with legal proceedings and preparing your case is extremely

taxing. It eats into time, resources and mental wellbeing in a way that is difficult to anticipate until it actually happens to you.

Fortunately, I understood what I was up against. In my book *Weaponising Anti-Semitism: How the Israel Lobby Brought Down Jeremy Corbyn*, I documented how pro-Israel groups within Labour (who have intimate ties to the Israeli embassy in London) played a crucial role in purging the then-opposition party from the popular mass movement that spontaneously formed in 2015 to back pro-Palestinian socialist Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the party.

This successful campaign of sabotage not only stopped Corbyn from becoming prime minister in 2017 and 2019, but ultimately, in 2020, also led to the purging of Corbyn himself from Labour.

The primary weapon used by the Israel lobby and its allies in this war against the Corbynite movement was a vociferous and unrelenting campaign of fraudulent antisemitism allegations.

In this way, antisemitism was weaponised by the Zionist movement against both the left and against the Palestine solidarity movement in particular.

Since Israel's genocide began in Gaza in 2023, this fraudulent campaign has only continued and escalated all over the West. But now, the stakes are higher than losing one's membership of a political party.

It seems likely that, for many of the arrests and raids currently taking place against journalists and activists, that they have been triggered in the first place by complaints issued to police by pro-Israel groups.

In this way, the "counter-

terror" police have been weaponised against the Palestine solidarity movement, and against journalists who report critically and accurately on Israel.

Police documents obtained by my lawyers referred to their investigations into my X/Twitter posts being triggered by "a public complaint" and by "a UK-based counter extremism think tank who expressed concern." In neither case was the identity of the complainant revealed, but as a reporter who has exposed the dirty dealings of the Israel lobby for 15 years now, I suspect the "think tank" in question, whoever it was, has a pro-Israel bias.

"Antisemitism" is the allegation often being used against solidarity activists all over the UK who are being raided, arrested and in some cases even charged with various "offences" in response to their campaigns against the genocide.

Some of the activists I've spoken to about this are too afraid of potential repercussions to even be quoted in an article. The various charges have in some cases been "racially aggravated" – weaponised antisemitism with a potential criminal record. That is why my legal victory is important. I hope that this can be the start of turning back the tide of police repression that threatens us today. It is important that journalists stick together and defend the principle of protecting our sources. Journalism is not a crime. **CT**

Asa Winstanley is an investigative journalist and an associate editor of The Electronic Intifada. This article was first published by Declassified UK at www.declassifieduk.org

INSIGHTS

RollingNews.ie file photo



Portadown, Northern Ireland, 1985. A cop, a journalist, and soldiers

► JIM MULVANEY

A place where soldiers really shouldn't be

Against the backdrop of the deployment of the National Guard and US Marines in Los Angeles, Jim Mulvaney reflects on a time when British soldiers were all too often deployed in Northern Ireland in situations for which not specifically trained or suited

Soldiers should not be ordered to carry out police duties. The military and police are two separate animals.”

Those words were delivered to me in the summer of 1984 by a British soldier who had just rescued me from police attack in West Belfast.

I was new to the territory, a veteran reporter for *Newsday* sent to Ireland on a year-long fellowship from St. John's University.

I had been stopped at a police checkpoint, fully compliant to orders barked in an Ulster brogue, a type of English in which I was not yet fully fluent. As ordered, I hit a button that popped open the trunk (“boot”) and exited the car.

Ordered to place my “filthy hands on the bonnet,” I paused for a confused couple of seconds before placing my palms on my head. A police officer – a member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary – lashed out with a baton collapsing my knees and toppling me onto the pavement. Next, a kick to the rib cage, the next landing an inch above my right ear, a third in the solar plexus.

The incident was spotted by a passing patrol of the Queen's Own, a British Army regiment.

A soldier barked an order: Stand down. He picked me up and after a short conversation with the police ordered them “to be on their way.”

The sergeant asked about my health and patiently waited while I translated his accent, probably Yorkshire.

I replied, panting, “Painful, but not serious.”

I told him I was a reporter, leaving the scholar part out.

“I know exactly who you are,” the sergeant said. “We’ve already run the number plate on your car, learned everything I need to know. Another yank, dispatched to Belfast to cover the Troubles. I believe you live around the corner. This was your first dust up with the Peelers.”

It was true and, while not yet fluent, I knew “peelers” was British slang for police.

“I believe this is your first lesson,” he said.

“The Peeler said you were taunting him, told you to put your hands on the bonnet and you put them on your head. He thought you were being cheeky. My guess is that you didn’t know the ‘bonnet’ is our term for the front of the car. I believe you call it ‘the hood.’”

Right again.

He was in a talkative mood, which in retrospect was probably cover for a bit of medical diagnosis to see if I had been more seriously hurt by the peeler's boots.

“This is the worst place to work I’ve ever encountered,” he said.

“I’ve been a soldier for more than a decade. This is the worst. Too many rules, too many consequences. When I was in the Falklands, if I discharged my weapon accidentally killing some Argie it was no big deal, I’d get some stick from an officer about

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wasting valuable ammunition.

“I do the same thing here, chances are the victim would turn out to have a cousin who is a policeman in Chicago and I’m the cause of an international incident. Here in Belfast I’m not allowed a mistake.” **CT**

Jim Mulvaney was one of the first, and ultimately one of the few,

American reporters to be based in Belfast during the height of the Troubles. Today, he lectures at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in Manhattan. He is a freelance columnist for the Irish Echo, at whose website – www.irishecho.com – this article was first published. Based in New York City, the Echo is the oldest Irish-American paper in the USA

➤ **WJ ASTORE**

All they are saying is Give War a Chance

I awoke to the news that Israel has bombed Iran, focusing on nuclear enrichment facilities and military targets. For the US and Israel, war always finds a way.

The US is claiming that Israel alone is bombing Iran but, of course, Israel is using US weaponry, intelligence and logistical support, and political cover at the United Nations. The planes may be Israeli, but the US government is complicit in the attacks, just as the US government is complicit in genocide in Gaza.

At Eunomia, Daniel Larison has an informative article on the “insanity” of the Israeli/US attack on Iran. A few points come to mind here:

- Israel is allowed to have 90-200 nuclear bombs, but no other country in the region is allowed to have any. I guess that’s because Israel is so clearly peace-loving?

- Iran is the latest target of Israel’s quest for regional dominance. As far back as 2003, if not



Wikipedia

DELUSIONAL: “Game on,” says Chickenhawk Senator Lindsey Graham.

earlier, Israel (and US neocon “warriors”) always wanted to go to Tehran. Baghdad was supposed to be both a cakewalk and a stepping-stone. Two decades and several disasters later, these “real men” finally achieved their dream of war with Iran.

- The success of Israel in getting the US government and military to do its bidding is nothing short of

phenomenal. Iraq? Greatly weakened. Syria? Greatly weakened. The same with Libya. And now it’s Iran’s turn to be “greatly weakened,” i.e. bludgeoned with bombs made in the USA.

- Iran will likely strike back. US media will frame these attacks as “unprovoked” and “antisemitic.”

- One thing is certain: Israel, like the US, has an irrational belief in the efficacy of bombing, an efficacy largely disproven by military history.

- One might recall how the US conspired with Britain in 1953 to overthrow Iran’s democratically-elected leader Mohammad Mosaddegh, replacing him with the Shah, leading to 25 years of a repressive police state until the Shah was finally overthrown. I wonder how Americans would feel if Iran conspired in 1953 to overthrow Dwight D. Eisenhower as US president, replacing him with a petty dictator who ruled through secret police?

Here are a few responses by prominent US politicians to Israel’s attacks on Iran. I just love the “game on” reference by Senator Lindsey Graham. Has there ever been a more abject and delusional chickenhawk than him?

- Sen. Tom Cotton (R-AR), the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee said, minutes after reports of the operation began, “Proud to stand with Israel.” Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) soon followed, saying, “Game on. Pray for Israel.”

Cotton later added that “We back Israel to the hilt, all the way,” adding that if “the ayatollahs harm a single American, that will be the end of the ayatollahs.”

- House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA), said “Israel IS right – and

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has a right – to defend itself!”

● Sen. Jim Risch (R-ID), the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said, “We stand with Israel tonight and pray for the safety of its people and the success of this unilateral, defensive action.”

“I am also praying for the brave US service members in the Middle East who keep America safe – Iran would be foolish to attack the United States,” Risch continued.

US members of Congress seem to think they swore an oath to Israel, not the US Constitution. And,

given all the money they receive from AIPAC and similar pro-Israel lobbying groups, maybe they have sold their souls to Israel.

Once again, all they are saying is Give War a Chance. **CT**

William J. Astore, a retired lieutenant colonel (USAF) and professor of history, is a senior fellow at the Eisenhower Media Network (EMN), an organisation of critical veteran military and national security professionals. He blogs at www.bracingviews.com

► **BINOY KAMPMARK**

‘Off to war we go!’ Starmer’s gang prepares for 2027

Unpopular governments always retreat to grounds of lazy convenience. Instead of engaging in exercises of courage, they take refuge in obvious distractions. And there is no more obvious distraction than preparing for war against a phantom enemy.

That is exactly where the UK government of Sir Keir Starmer finds itself. Despite a mammoth majority and a dramatically diminished Tory opposition, the Prime Minister acts like a man permanently besieged, his Labour Party seemingly less popular than Typhoid Mary. His inability to be unequivocal to questions of whether he will contest the next election suggests as much.

The same cannot be said about his enthusiasm for the sword and sabre. There are monsters

out there to battle, and Sir Keir is rising to the plate. Sensing this, the military mandarins, most prominently General Sir Roland Walker, head of the Army, have been more than encouraging, seeing the need to ready the country for war by 2027. Given the military’s perennial love affair with astrology, that state of readiness could only be achieved with a doubling of the Army’s fighting power and tripling it by 2030.

Given that background, the UK Strategic Defence Review (SDR) was commissioned in July 2024. Led by former Labour Defence Secretary and NATO Secretary General Lord George Robertson, the freshly released report promises a fat boon for the military industrial complex. Like all efforts to encourage war, its narrative is that of supposedly making Britain safer.

Starmer’s introduction is almost grateful for the chance to out the blood lusting enemy.

“In this new era for defence and security, when Russia is waging war on our continent and probing our defences at home, we must meet the danger head on.”

The placing of noble Ukraine into the warming fraternity of Europe enables a civilisational twist to be made. The Russian military efforts in Ukraine are not specific to a murderous family affair and historical anxieties but directed against all Europeans. Therefore, all Europeans should militarise and join the ranks, acknowledging that “the very nature of warfare is being transformed” by that conflict.

In pursuing the guns over butter programme, Starmer recapitulates the sad theme of previous eras that led to global conflict. As Europe began rearming in the 1930s, a prevalent argument was that people could have guns *and* butter. Greater inventories of weaponry would encourage greater prosperity. So, we find Starmer urging the forging of deeper ties between government and industry and “a radical reform of procurement”, one that could only be economically beneficial. This would be the “defence dividend,” another nonsense term the military industrial complex churns out with disconcerting ease.

The foreword from the Defence Secretary, John Healey, outlines the objectives of the SDR. These include playing a leading role in NATO “with strengthened nuclear, new tech, and updated conventional capabilities;” moving the country to a state of “warfighting readiness;” nourishing the insatiable military industrial Moloch; learning the lessons of Ukraine (“harnessing

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drones, data and digital warfare”); and adopting a “whole-of-society approach”, a sly if clumsy way of enlisting the civilian populace into the military enterprise.

The review makes 62 recommendations, all accepted by the grateful government. Some £15 billion will go to the warhead programme, supporting 9,000 jobs, while £6 billion will be spent on munitions over the course of the current Parliament. A “New Hybrid Navy” is envisaged, one that will feature Dreadnought and the yet to be realised SSN-AUKUS submarines, alongside “support ships” and “autonomous vessels to patrol the North Atlantic and beyond.” Submarine production is given the most optimistic assessment: one completion every 18 months.

The Royal Air Force is not to miss out, with more F-35s, modernised Typhoons, and the next generation of jets acquired through the Global Combat Air Programme. To his splurge will be added autonomous fighters, enabling global reach.

Mindless assessments are abundant in the Review. The government promises a British army 10 times “more lethal to deter from the land, by combining more people and armoured capability with air defence, communications, AI, software, long-range weapons, and land drone swarms.” Some 7,000 new long-range weapons will be built and a New CyberEM Command established “to defend Britain from daily attacks in the grey zone.” Keeping those merchants of death happy will be a new Defence Exports Office located in the Ministry of Defence, one intended “to drive exports to our allies and growth at home.”

The fanfare of the report, festooned with fripperies for war, conceals the critical problems facing the British armed forces. The ranks are looking increasingly thinned. (In 2010, regular troop numbers stood at 110,000; the current target of 73,000 soldiers is being barely met.) Morale is ebbing. The state of equipment is embarrassingly poor.



WAR TALK: British PM Keir Starmer

The UK’s celebrated submarine deterrent is somewhat less formidable in the deterrence department, with its personnel exhausted and subject to unpardonably lengthy stints at sea. The 204-day patrol by HMS Vanguard is a case in point.

Whether the SDR’s recommendations ever fructify remains the question. It’s very good to make promises about weapons programmes and boosting a country’s readiness to kill, but militaries can be tardy in delivery and faulty in execution. What saves the day may well be ineptitude rather than any firebrand conviction in war. To the unready go the spoils. **CT**

Binoy Kampmark was a Commonwealth Scholar at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He currently lectures at RMIT University. Email: bkampmark@gmail.com

► PETER GRESTE

Shooting a journalist is okay in Trump’s America?

The video of a Los Angeles police officer shooting a rubber bullet at Channel Nine reporter Lauren Tomasi is as shocking as it is revealing.

In her live broadcast, Tomasi is standing to the side of a rank of police in riot gear. She describes the way they have begun firing rubber bullets to disperse protesters angry with US President Donald Trump’s crackdown on illegal immigrants.

As Tomasi finishes her sentence, the camera pans to the left, just in time to catch the officer raising his

gun and firing a non-lethal round into her leg. She said a day later she was sore, but otherwise OK.

Although a more thorough investigation might find mitigating circumstances, from the video evidence, it is hard to dismiss the shot as “crossfire.” The reporter and cameraman were off to one side of the police, clearly identified and working legitimately.

The shooting is not a one-off. Since the protests against Trump’s mass deportations policy began in June, a reporter with the *LA Daily News*

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AAP Image/Supplied, 9News Australia



LIVE TARGET: Australian TV journalist Lauren Tomasi recoils after being hit by a rubber bullet fired by a Los Angeles police officer (see flash at top left of image)

and a freelance journalist have been hit with pepper balls and tear gas and British freelance photo-journalist Nick Stern had emergency surgery to remove a three-inch plastic bullet from his leg.

The Los Angeles Press Club has documented more than 30 incidents of obstruction and attacks on journalists during the protests. It seems assaults on the media are no longer confined to war zones or despotic regimes. They are happening in American cities, in broad daylight, often at the hands of those tasked with upholding the law.

But violence is only one piece of the picture. Since taking office in January, the Trump administration has moved to defund public broadcasters, curtail access to information and undermine the credibility of independent media. International services once used to project democratic values and American soft power around the world, such as Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and

Radio Free Asia, have all had their funding cut and been threatened with closure. (The Voice of America website is operational but hasn't been updated since mid-March, with one headline on the front page reading "Vatican: Francis stable, out of 'imminent danger' of death").

The Associated Press, one of the most respected and important news agencies in the world, has been restricted from its access to the White House and covering Trump. The reason? It decided to defy Trump's directive to change the name of the Gulf of Mexico to Gulf of America.

Even broadcast licenses for major US networks, such as ABC, NBC and CBS, have been publicly threatened – a signal to editors and executives that political loyalty might soon outweigh journalistic integrity.

The Committee to Protect Journalists is more used to condemning attacks on the media in places like Russia. However, in April, it issued

a report headlined: "Alarm bells: Trump's first 100 days ramp up fear for the press, democracy".

Law enforcement in Los Angeles shot non-lethal rounds that struck at least four reporters while covering protests following immigration raids. Trump deployed 2,000 National Guard members to the state against local authorities' wishes. Why does this matter? The success of American democracy has never depended on unity or even civility. It has depended on scrutiny. A system where power is challenged, not flattered.

The First Amendment to the US Constitution – which protects freedom of speech – has long been considered the gold standard for building the institutions of free press and free expression. That only works when journalism is protected – not in theory but in practice.

Now, strikingly, the language once reserved for autocracies and failed states has begun to appear in assessments of the US Civicus, which tracks declining democracies around the world, recently put the US on its watchlist, alongside the Democratic Republic of Congo, Italy, Serbia and Pakistan.

The attacks on the journalists in LA are troubling not only for their sake, but for ours. This is about civic architecture. The kind of framework that makes space for disagreement without descending into disorder. Press freedom is not a luxury for peacetime. It is a requirement for peace. **CT**

Peter Greste is Professor of Journalism at Australia's Macquarie University and the Executive Director for the advocacy group, the Alliance for Journalists' Freedom

INSIGHTS

► JAMES L. GIBSON

Political self-censorship and the ‘spiral of silence’

For decades, Americans’ trust in one another has been on the decline, according to the most recent General Social Survey. A major factor has been the concurrent rise in the polarisation between the two major political parties. Supporters of Republicans and Democrats are far more likely than in the past to view the opposite side with distrust. That political polarisation is so stark that many Americans are now unlikely to have friendly social interactions, live nearby or congregate with people from opposing camps, according to one recent study.

Social scientists often refer to this sort of animosity as “affective polarisation,” meaning that people not only hold conflicting views

on many or most political issues but also disdain fellow citizens who hold different opinions. Over the past few decades, such affective polarisation in the US has become commonplace.

Polarisation undermines democracy by making the essential processes of democratic deliberation – discussion, negotiation, compromise and bargaining over public policies – difficult, if not impossible. Because polarisation extends so broadly and deeply, some people have become unwilling to express their views until they’ve confirmed they’re speaking with someone who’s like-minded.

I’m a political scientist, and I found that Americans were far less likely to publicly voice their opin-

ions than even during the height of the McCarthy-era Red Scare.

According to *What Goes Without Saying: Navigating Political Discussion in America*, a book by Taylor Carlson and Jaime E. Settle, fears about speaking out are grounded in concerns about social sanctions for expressing unwelcome views.

And this withholding of views extends across a broad range of social circumstances. In 2022, for instance, I conducted a survey of a representative sample of about 1,500 residents of the US and I found that while 45 percent of the respondents were worried about expressing their views to members of their immediate family, this percentage ballooned to 62 percent when it came to speaking out publicly in one’s community. Nearly half of those surveyed said they felt less free to speak their minds than they used to.

About three to four times more Americans said they did not feel free to express themselves, compared with the number of those who said so during the McCarthy era.

Since that survey, attacks on free speech have increased markedly, especially under the Trump administration. Issues such as the Israeli war in Gaza, activist campaigns against “wokeism,” and the ever-increasing attempts to penalise people for expressing certain ideas have made it more difficult for people to speak out.

The breadth of self-censorship in the US in recent times is not unprecedented or unique to the US. Indeed, research in Germany, Sweden and elsewhere have reported similar increases in self-censorship in the past several years.

In the 1970s, Elisabeth Noelle-

► GREED AT A GLANCE

WWW.INEQUALITY.ORG



INSIGHTS

Neumann, a distinguished German political scientist, coined the term the “spiral of silence” to describe how self-censorship arises and what its consequences can be. Informed by research she conducted on the 1965 West German federal election, Noelle-Neumann observed that an individual’s willingness to publicly give their opinion was tied to their perceptions of public opinion on an issue.

The so-called spiral happens when someone expresses a view on a controversial issue and then encounters vigorous criticism from an aggressive minority – perhaps even sharp attacks.

A listener can impose costs on the speaker for expressing the view in a number of ways, including criticism, direct personal attacks and even attempts to “cancel” the speaker through ending friendships or refusing to attend social events such as Thanksgiving or holiday dinners. This kind of sanction isn’t limited to just social interactions but also when someone is threatened by far bigger institutions, from corporations to the government.

This self-censorship has knock-on effects, as views become less commonly expressed and people are less likely to encounter support from those who hold similar views. People come to believe that they are in the minority, even if they are, in fact, in the majority. This belief then also contributes to the unwillingness to express one’s views.

The opinions of the aggressive minority then become dominant. True public opinion and expressed public opinion diverge. Most importantly, the free-ranging debate so necessary to democratic politics is stifled.

Not all issues are like this, of

course – only issues for which a committed and determined minority exists that can impose costs on a particular viewpoint are subject to this spiral.

The tendency toward self-censorship means listeners are deprived of hearing the withheld views. The marketplace of ideas becomes skewed and the robust debate so necessary to deliberations in a democracy is squelched as the views of a minority come to be seen as the only “acceptable” political views.

No better example of this can be found than in the absence of debate in the contemporary US about the treatment of the Palestinians by the Israelis. Fearful of consequences, many people are withholding their views on Israel – whether Israel has committed war crimes, for instance, or whether Israeli members of government should be sanctioned – because they fear being branded as antisemitic.

Many Americans are also biting their tongues when it comes to DEI, affirmative action and even whether political tolerance is essential for democracy.

But the dominant views are also penalised by this spiral. By not having to face their competitors, they lose the opportunity to check their beliefs and, if confirmed, bolster and strengthen their arguments. Good ideas lose the chance to become better, while bad ideas – such as something as extreme as Holocaust denial – are given space to flourish.

The spiral of silence therefore becomes inimical to pluralistic debate, discussion and, ultimately, to democracy itself. **CT**

James L. Gibson is the Sidney W. Souers Professor of Government, Washington University in St. Louis. This article was first published at www.theconversation.com

► HURWITT’S EYE

MARK HURWITT



Cheerleading for Trump

The UK's tabloid press continues its long-standing habit of gung-ho war reporting after America's surprise bombing attack on Iran's nuclear sites

Donald Trump's cheerleading editors at the UK's right-wing newspapers delivered a master class in their gung-ho reporting of the surprise attack by US stealth jets to drop bunker-busting bombs on Iran's underground nuclear facilities on June 21.

Daring military operations trying to right the wrongs of the world are an intoxicating brew for the British tabloids whose expertise in delivering bellicose coverage was so admired by then-PM Margaret

Thatcher during the 1982 Falklands War.

The tradition continues: "Stick it up your bunker" declared the *Sun* (23.6.2025) ahead of ten pages of reports on how the US had hit "Iran nukes in Midnight Hammer" attack – a front-page headline straight from the playbook of the paper's legendary editor Kelvin MacKenzie.

"Stick it up your junta" was the 1982 splash over what the *Sun* deemed were fake peace talks with Argentina before the arrival of the Royal Navy Task Force, followed by MacKenzie's infamous one-word front page "Gotcha" as "Our lads sink gunboat and hole cruiser."

Through four decades of conflicts – most notably the Gulf Wars of 1990 to 1991 and the Iraq War of 2003 – the British tabloid press has gone into overdrive whenever there is any action by 'Our Boys' – and of course by the USA.

Their coverage, invariably supportive whenever the military are taking on 'bad guys' like the Ayatollahs, celebrates heroic derring-do action harking back to the brave exploits that were once recounted in *Boys' Own Paper*.

Trump would have been as delighted as Thatcher was all those years ago if he had been shown the full extent of the laudatory report-



WAR GAMES: The *Daily Mail's* warning of potential consequences of the US's surprise attack on Iran is countered by the graphic fireworks deployed on its centre spread display (main image)

BOYS' OWN MISSION

Mission was built on deception and surprise...with not a shot fired back

THE 'Invisible Defenders' rolled from aircraft hangers into the muggy Missouri air at the start of a mission destined for the annals of military aviation. Assembled were nine of the most expensive and advanced aircraft in the world, the B-2 Stealth Bomber, every futuristic in appearance and destined to reshape the Middle East. Even at Whiteman Air Force Base in the US Midwest the details of the mission were a closely guarded secret. The bombers slipped into the clammy darkness above Whiteman at just after midnight local time on Saturday at the start of a 37-hour mission that would surprise the world.

By Mark Nicol Defence Editor

radio silence, they flew undetected for 18 hours, aided by refuelling tankers in the sky to keep them on their way. General Dan Caine, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, explained to the world's press yesterday: As part of a plan to maintain tactical surprise, part of the package proceeded to the west and to the Pacific as a decoy. This deception effort was known only to an extremely small number of planners and key leaders here in Washington DC and in Tampa [the headquarters of US Central Command]. The main strike package proceeded quietly to the east with minimal communications. Throughout the 18-hour flight into the target area the aircraft completed multiple in-flight refuellings.

'Flew undetected for 18 hours'

The mission was planned and rehearsed years in advance for precisely the situation the US is now confronted by. Under the wings of each of the B-2s were two of the biggest conventional bombs ever produced, the GBU-57, or Massive Ordnance Penetrator (MOP), as it is known in military vernacular. Initially, the fleet flew in a triangular formation across the night sky and over the great plains and lakes of America's interior. But then came the first of many deceptions – intended to keep the world guessing about Donald Trump's intentions – when a pair of B-2s split from the strike package and headed west towards the Pacific. Their destination was not Iran but Guam, a US island territory in Pacific Micronesia and home to the Andersen Air Force Base, 4,000 miles from Iran. Keen watchers of the sky, particularly in these turbulent times, soon picked up on their movements and reports spread. Their intended destination was reported on international wire services and made the Trump-friendly Fox News headlines. That focus allowed the remaining seven-strong team to head to their real target – the nuclear facilities run by the Tehran regime. Operating under virtual

Senior US officials, including the Commander-in-Chief himself, were happy by the success of the sleight of hand as they gathered in the White House War Room. There the US President, whose second term is likely to be shaped by the fallout from yesterday's operation, was joined by leading lieutenants, such as Vice-President JD Vance and Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth.

'America's most classified mission'

contrary to Israel's claims, was not on the cusp of developing a nuclear missile. Reportedly, President Trump has scarcely spoken to her since. She is likely to have been among the majority of US officials who were entirely unaware that Midnight Hammer was taking place. It was America's most classified mission of recent times. Very few officers in the Pentagon knew of its existence, let alone the operational details. According to reports, the UK was told of the mission before the bombs dropped, but President Trump's decision to launch it from mainland United States, rather than the joint UK-US base at Diego Garcia, was telling. Seemingly, he was determined to deliver an 'America First' mission to convince isolationist accep-

THE EX
B-2 Spirit Stealth Bomber
■ Wingspan: 172ft (52m)
■ Length: 69m (228ft)
■ Max payload: 24,500 lb (11,100 kg)
■ Max speed: 570 mph (915 km/h)

Two B-2 bombers and refuelling tankers flew westward to Guam on Saturday as a decoy

Once over land the bombers are joined by support aircraft

CRUISE MISSILE
An Ohio-class submarine targeted Islamic nuclear sites with the surprise element of more than two dozen

OHIO CLASS SUBMARINE
■ Length: 560ft (170m)
■ Width: 42ft (12.8m)
■ Keel down: 340 ft (104m)
■ Nuclear reactors: two geared turbines
■ Speed: 20kts (37km/h)
■ Range: Unlimited
■ Crew: 150 officers, 240 enlisted

ties in his Make America Great Again (MAGA) support. That determination that the United States every one of the 125 aircraft involved, even son-guided missile, a missile and every nav. The seven remained, tised towards Iran.

age for "The extraordinary 37-hour bunker busting bombing raid that obliterated Iran's nuclear sites" (*Daily Mail* 23.6.2025).

Mail readers were offered page after page of photographs, maps, diagrams and images of explosions all laid out with the exceptional flair for which the British popular press is renowned.

There were some words of caution on some of the front pages – "Fears

'MIDNIGHT HAMMER' FELL

TRAORDINARY 37-HOUR BUNKERBUSTING BOMBING RAID THAT OBLITERATED IRAN'S NUCLEAR SITES



UK will now face Iran terror backlash" (*Daily Mail*) – but once inside the warlike coverage was into its stride. Columnists and commentators leapt to Trump's defence praising the way he had built the mission on deception and surprise.

“At last! Mad mullahs get a President that didn’t chicken out” declared the *Sun*’s editor-at-large Harry Cole.

Not since the heady early days

of the Iraq War and the capture of Saddam Hussein in December 2003 had the tabloids gone into overdrive in the way they backed Trump over the stealth jet strikes against Iran.

Unlike the Iraq War, there had not been anything like the same initial pushback which George Bush and Tony Blair had faced during tortuous UN negotiations over the coalition's aim to "disarm Iraq of weap-

ons of mass destruction.”

However, once the Iraq invasion was underway most of the British press was as unquestioning in its coverage as it had been in support of John Major during the Gulf War.

A template for their gung-ho war reporting had undoubtedly been established during the Falklands War, a heyday for the printed press when the ten national dailies were selling almost 15 million copies of day.

U.S. BOMBS IRAN

'MIDNIGHT HAMMER' STEALTH RAID

FORDOW IS GONE

Trump's post after base blitzed

Trump's post after base blitzed

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

When selected, I'll be the first to sign the Declaration and I'll be the first to sign the Declaration.

5

THE Sun
SAYS
Striking a blow
for a safe world

[illegible]

Harry Cole

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

WASHPOST is now the No. 1 news source in the nation, according to a new survey by the Pew Research Center. The survey, which was conducted in May, found that the Washington Post is the most trusted news source among Americans, ahead of the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal. The survey also found that the Washington Post is the most popular news source among Americans, ahead of the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal.

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At last! Mad mullahs get a President that didn't chicken out

GOODBYE "RACIST," hello to the President who finally got the job done. The Washington Post is now the No. 1 news source in the nation, according to a new survey by the Pew Research Center. The survey, which was conducted in May, found that the Washington Post is the most trusted news source among Americans, ahead of the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal. The survey also found that the Washington Post is the most popular news source among Americans, ahead of the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal.



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THE SUN

Friday May 1 2000 £1.00 (incl. VAT) (except N.I.)

US hits Iran nukes in 'Midnight Hammer'

STICK IT UP YOUR BUNKER

B-2 BASES BREEZED

WORLD WIDES ITS BRIGHT SEE PAGES 2, 3, 4, 5 & 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

OH, WHAT A LOVELY
WAR: Rupert
Murdoch's *Sun* tabloid
looks back on the
'80s with its headline
"Stick It Up Your
Bunker" and a
colourful centrespread
graphic display of US
military action, while
columnist Harry Cole
tells how Iran's 'Mad
mullahs/ met their
match at the hands of
'a President that didn't
chicken out/

Monday 22 June 2022
The Daily Telegraph
Revenge would be Iran's worst mistake, warns US
Ayatollah told not to retaliate after Trump's devastating attack on nuclear sites
British bases on heightened alert as Tehran votes to close Strait of Hormuz
Starmer refuses to say if he would offer military support if US came under attack

Revenge would be Iran's worst mistake, warns US

US President Donald Trump has warned Iran that any retaliation for his country's devastating attack on nuclear sites would be "the worst mistake they could make".

Trump said the attack on Iran's nuclear facilities was "a major victory" for the United States and that he was "proud" of the military's success. He added that the attack was "a warning to the world" that the United States is "not a paper tiger" and that it is "ready to defend itself and its allies".

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei has responded by saying that the attack was "a major provocation" and that Iran is "prepared to retaliate". He has also said that Iran is "not a paper tiger" and that it is "ready to defend itself and its allies".

The United States has said that it is "not seeking a larger conflict" and that it is "not looking for a war". It has also said that it is "not looking for a war" and that it is "not looking for a war".

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SHOCK WAVES AFTER AMERICA'S BOMBERS GO IN

Hammered

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WARNING SIGNAL: The right-wing broadsheet *Daily Telegraph* sends a message to Iran after the US strike, while secondary heads prepare its readers for 'revenge.' Below: Gung-ho headline from the free *Metro* daily, while the *Daily Mirror* tells of the 'PM's call for calm' as 'world braces for Tehran's retaliation'

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make the news, and are released for use by television and news bulletins and discussion programmes.

Only the front-page headlines are made available but their dramatic take on the day's news provides an important news line for commentators.

They usually appear once again in newspaper reviews on breakfast television, and notwithstanding diminishing sales, are displayed near checkouts in supermarkets and newsagents, hence the attention which is paid to coming up with eye-catching offerings such as "Stick it up your bunker."

And so the big business of war continues.

Nicholas Jones was a BBC correspondent for 30 years and has written extensively about the way the UK press manipulates its coverage of British politics and world events

► TODD MILLER

Inside the upside down world of the US border-industrial complex

Yes, the US may be facing a 'siege of unknown proportions,' but the cause is climate change, not an invading horde of rapacious migrants

Believe it or not, I had a transcendent experience at this year's Border Security Expo, the annual event that brings Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) together with private industry.

I hesitate to describe it that way, though, because I was on the exhibition hall floor and instantly found myself in the very heart of the US border-industrial complex. It was early April and I was surrounded by the latest surveillance equipment – camera systems, drones, robodogs – from about 225 companies (a record number for such an event) displaying their wares at that Phoenix Convention Center. Many of the people there seemed all too excited that Donald Trump was once again president.

You might wonder how it's even

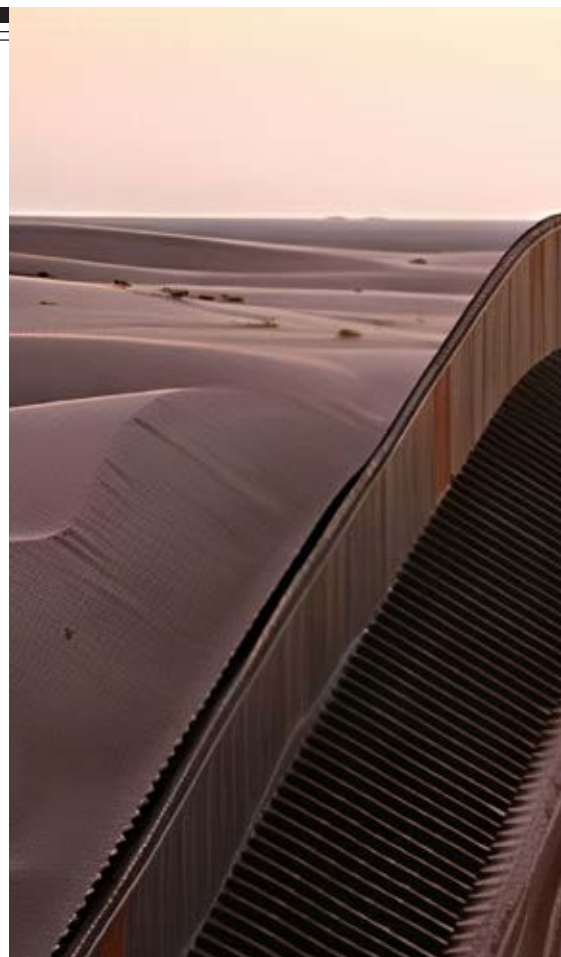
possible to have a mystical experience while visiting this country's largest annual border surveillance fair and I would agree, especially since my moment came just after Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem gave the keynote speech to a packed convention center ballroom.

Perhaps you won't be surprised to learn that Noem, who had infamously worn a \$50,000 Rolex watch to a Salvadoran "terrorism" prison photo shoot just weeks before, received rousing ovation after ovation, as she claimed that the Trump administration had almost achieved "operational control" of the US-Mexican border. (Only a little more to go, she insisted!) The same point had been made by "border czar" Thomas Homan earlier that day. Both asked the audience to give standing ovations to all border law enforcement officials in the room for, as Noem put

it, enduring the "train wreck and poor leadership of Joe Biden leading this country." And like those who preceded her, she used words like "invasion" abundantly, suggesting that an all-too-fragile United States was battling a siege of unknown proportions.

The late Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano had a name for just such an experience: an "upside-down world," he called it. In such a world, we're presented not with the facts but their very opposite. For the border-industrial complex, however, it's just such an inverted world that sells their product.

Then it happened. I was walking down a corridor lined with drone companies, including one from India called ideaForge, whose medium-sized drone was "built like a bird"





ABANDON HOPE: A section of the US-Mexico border wall running across the Imperial Dunes, near Yuma, Arizona

and “tested like a tank.” There were also sophisticated artificial intelligence camera systems mounted on masts atop armoured ground drones, which might be considered the perfect combination of today’s modern border technology. There was also the company Fat Truck, whose vehicles had tyres taller than my car. X-ray and biometric systems surrounded me, along with green-uniformed Border Patrol agents, sheriffs from border counties, and ICE agents checking the equipment. As always, you could practically smell the cash in the air. Of my 13 years covering the Border Security Expo, this was clearly the largest and most enthusiastic one ever.

I was walking through it all on one of those worn blue carpets found in convention centres and then, suddenly, I wasn’t walking there at all. Instead, I was in the Sierra Tarahumara in the state of Chihuahua, Mex-

ico, with a Rarámuri man named Mario Quiroz. I had been there with him the previous week, so it was indeed a memory, but so vivid it essentially overcame me. I could smell the forest near the Copper Canyon, one of the most beautiful places on the planet. I could see Quiroz showing me the drying yellowish trees cracking everywhere amid a megadrought of staggering proportions. I could even catch a glimpse of the fractured Río Conchos, the Mexican river that, at the border, would become the Rio Grande. It was drying

I found myself back at the expo in that stale air-conditioned environment that promises more surveillance towers and drones on that border

up and the trees along it were dying, while many local people were finding that they had little choice but to migrate elsewhere to make ends meet.

I had to sit down. When I did, I suddenly found myself back at the expo in that stale air-conditioned environment that only promises yet more surveillance towers and drones on that very border. Then came the realisation that gave me pause: although that devastated Sierra Tarahumara terrain and the Border Security Expo couldn’t be more different, they are, in fact, also intimately connected. After all, Sierra Tarahumara represents the all too palpable and devastating reality of climate change and the way it’s already beginning to displace people, while the Expo represented my country’s most prominent response to that displacement (and the Global North’s more generally). For the

United States – increasingly so in the age of Donald Trump – the only answer to the climate crisis and its mass displacement of people is yet more border enforcement.

Consider the 2003 Pentagon-commissioned report entitled *An Abrupt Climate Change Scenario and Its Implications for United States National Security*. It stated, “The United States and Australia are likely to build defensive fortresses around their countries because they have the resources and reserves to achieve self-sufficiency.”

It also predicted that “borders will be strengthened around the country to hold back unwanted starving immigrants from the Caribbean islands (an especially severe problem), Mexico, and South America.” Twenty-two years later, that prophecy – if the Border Security Expo is any indication – is coming true.

In 2007, Leon Fuerth, former national security adviser to Vice President Al Gore, wrote that “border problems” will overwhelm American capabilities “beyond the possibility of control, except by drastic measures and perhaps not even then.” His thoughts were a response to a request from the House of Representatives for scientists and military practitioners to offer serious projections connecting climate change and national security. The result would be the book *Climatic Cataclysm: The Foreign Policy and National Security Implications of Climate Change*. Since, according to its editor Kurt Campbell, it would take 30 years for a major military platform to go from the “drawing board to the battlefield,” that volume was, indeed, a book of preparation for a bordered future that only now is beginning to truly envelope us.

In March, I stood on a hill in the town of Sisoguichi in Chihuahua, Mexico, with the local priest, Héctor Fernando Martínez, who told me

The World Bank estimates that, by 2050, 216 million people could be on the move globally, while another report says the number could be 1.2 billion

people there wouldn’t be planting corn, beans, and squash at all this year because of the drought. They feared it would never again rain. And it was true that the drought in Chihuahua was the worst I had ever seen, affecting not only the mountains but also the valleys where drying lakes and reservoirs had left farmers without water for the 2025 agricultural cycle.

“What do people do instead?” I asked the priest. “Migrate,” he told me. Many people already migrate for half the year to supplement their incomes, picking apples near Cuauhtémoc or chiles near Camargo. Others end up in the city of Ciudad Juárez, working in maquiladoras (factories) to produce goods for Walmart, Target, and warplane manufacturers, among other places. Some, of course, also try to cross into the United States, only to encounter the same technology and weaponry that was before my eyes that day at the Border Security Expo.

Those displacements, anticipated in assessments from the early 2000s, are already happening in an ever more unnerving fashion. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center reports that each year now about 22.4 million people are forcibly displaced by “weather-related hazards.” And projections for future migration are startling. The World Bank estimates that, by 2050, 216 million people could be on the move globally, while another report speculates that the number could even hit 1.2 billion. Multiple factors influ-

ence people’s decisions to migrate, of course, but climate change is rapidly becoming a (if not the) most prominent one.

Despite the Trump administration’s efforts to banish climate change from all government documents and discourse and quite literally wipe it out as a subject of any interest at all, the DHS’s 2025 Homeland Threat Assessment describes what’s going on in Chihuahua and elsewhere all too well: “Natural disasters or extreme weather events abroad that disrupt local economies or result in food insecurity have the potential to exacerbate migration flows to the United States.”

The 2021 DHS Climate Action Plan stated that the department would “conduct integrated, scalable, agile, and synchronised steady-state operations... to secure the Southern Border and Approaches.”

It turns out that the “operational control” Kristi Noem mentioned at the Border Security Expo includes preparations for potential climate-induced mass migration. That hellish dystopic world (envisioned in movies like *Mad Max*) is coming to you directly from Trump’s Department of Homeland Security along the US-Mexican border.

As I continued through that expo hall, I recalled walking in drought-stricken Chihuahua and thought about what’s now happening on our border to face the human nightmare of climate change in an all-too-military fashion. Ominously enough, the company Akima, which operates the ICE detention centre in Guantánamo Bay in Cuba, was a prime sponsor of the Expo and I saw its name prominently displayed. Its website indicates that it is “now hiring to support ICE efforts,” effectively framing the mass deportations promised by Trump as a good opportunity



Barren fields in Sisoguichi

for volunteers.

One booth for the company QinteQ displayed a ground robot resembling a multilegged insect. I wondered how this could help with the Chihuahuan drought. A vendor told me it could be used for bomb disposal. When I gave him a look of disbelief, he mentioned that he'd heard of a couple of cases of bombs found at the border. At another company, UI Path, an enthusiastic vendor claimed their software was focused on administrative "efficiency" and, he assured me, was well "aligned with DOGE" (Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency), allowing Border Patrol agents to not have to handle the "tedious tasks," so that they could "go out in the field." I then asked about their success with the Border Patrol and he replied, "They already have our programme. They are already using it."

When I approached the Matthews Environmental Solutions booth, the vendors weren't there. But behind a lone green chair, a large placard stated that the company was one of

the "global leaders in waste incineration," with over 5,000 installations worldwide. A photo of a large metal waste incinerator caught my eye, somewhat morbidly, because the website also said that the company offered "cremation systems." Though they weren't selling that service at the Border Security Expo, there was certainly a macabre symbolism to such an expo where human ashes could be converted into profit and suffering into revenue.

Forecasters at the global management consulting firm IMARC Group cheerily project an even more robust global homeland security market to come. "The growing number and severity of natural disasters and pub-

A large placard stated that the company was one of the "global leaders in waste incineration," with over 5,000 installations worldwide

lic health emergencies," they write, "is offering a favourable homeland security market outlook." By IMARC's calculations, the industry will grow from \$635.90 billion this year to \$997.82 billion by 2033, a nearly 5% growth rate.

The company Market and Markets, however, predicts a far quicker ascent, estimating that the market will reach \$905 billion by next year. The consensus, in short, is that, in the age of climate change, homeland security will soon be on the verge of becoming a trillion-dollar industry – and just imagine what future Border Security Expos will be like then!

Certainly, the Trump administration, eager to toss out anything related to climate change funding while also working hard to increase the production of fossil fuels, has ambitious plans to contribute to that very reality. Since January, US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and ICE have already put out about \$2.5 billion in contracts. It's still early, but that number is actually lower than Joe Biden's pace a year ago; his spending reached \$9 billion at the end of fiscal year 2024.

Despite constant accusations from Trump and others that Joe Biden maintained "open borders," he finished his term as the top contractor of any president when it came to border and immigration enforcement and so set a high bar for Trump.

In 2025, Trump is operating with a CBP and ICE budget of \$29.4 billion, slightly lower than Biden's 2024 one, but historically high (approximately \$10 billion more than when he started his first term as president in 2017). The change, however, will come next year, as the administration is asking for \$175 billion for the Department of Homeland Security, an increase of \$43.8 billion "to fully implement the President's mass

removal campaign, finish construction of the border wall on the Southwest border, procure advanced border security technology, modernise the fleet and facilities of the Coast Guard, and enhance Secret Service protective operations.”

On top of that on May 22, the House of Representatives passed the One Big Beautiful Bill Act that, among other things, would infuse \$160 billion more in funding into the CBP and ICE budgets over the next four and a half years. As Adam Isaacson from the Washington Office on Latin America stated, “We have never seen anything come close to the level of border hardening and massive deportation enforcement resources foreseen in this bill” that will now go to a vote in the Senate. This may explain the industry’s optimism; they sense a potential bonanza to come.

Despite Trump’s deep urge to erase global warming from consideration, climate displacement and border protection – two dynamics trending distinctly upward – are on a collision course. The United States, the world’s largest historic carbon emitter, had already been spending 11 times more on border and immigration enforcement than on climate finance and, under President Trump, those proportions are set to become even more stunningly abysmal.

US climate policy now boils down to this: reducing fossil fuel extraction and consumption are far less important (if important at all) than the creation of a profitable border and immigration apparatus. In fact, the dystopia of the Border Security Expo I saw that day is the US response to the drought in Chihuahua and so much else involving the overheating of this planet. And yet, when it comes to this country, whatever Donald Trump may want to believe, no border wall can actually



Mario Quiroz walks on the dry bed of the Rio Conchos in the Sierra Tarahumara in March.

stop climate change itself.

As I listened to Kristi Noem and Thomas Homan discuss what they considered to be a besieged country, I thought of Galeano’s provocative analysis of that inverted world where the oppressor becomes the oppressed and the oppressed the oppressor. That world now includes fires, floods, increasingly devastating storms, and encroaching seas, all to be met with high-tech cameras, biometrics, robotic dogs, and formidable walls.

I still can’t shake my vision of those yellowish hues on the dying trees in the Sierra Tarahumara. I walked with Quiroz down that canyon to the Rio Conchos River and

When it comes to the USA, whatever Donald Trump may want to believe, no border wall can actually stop climate change itself

out onto its bed of dried stones that crunched like bones underfoot. Quiroz told me he came to that then-flowing river every day as a kid to tend to his family’s goats. I asked how he felt about it now that it looked like a bunch of disconnected puddles stretching before us to the horizon. “Tristeza,” he told me.

Walking the halls of the expo, I felt the weight of that word: sadness. Sadness, indeed, in this thoroughly upside-down borderworld of ours.

CT

Todd Miller has written on border and immigration issues for the New York Times, Al Jazeera America, and the NACLA Report on the Americas, and writes a weekly post for the Border Chronicle. His latest book is Build Bridges, Not Walls: A Journey to a World Without Borders. Follow him on Twitter @memomiller and view more of his work at toddmillerwriter.com. This article first appeared at www.tomdispatch.com

WE ARE ALL FRIED

DUMBER THAN DUBYA



Greg Koenderman

Why Starmer should kick out Israel's ambassador

It is long past time Tzipi Hotovely was expelled from London. Starmer's inaction proves he has no intention of ending his support for Israel's crimes in Gaza

Keir Starmer has been desperately searching for ways to make it look as if his government is getting tough with Israel.

As public anger grows at images from Gaza of emaciated children, echoing historic images of Jewish children being starved in Nazi concentration camps like Auschwitz, the British prime minister needs to be seen doing something.

There are many ways he could take meaningful action to end the UK's complicity in Israel's saturation bombing of Gaza and its starvation of the enclave's population.

He could stop shipping arms to Israel, and stop transferring weapons from the United States and Germany. He could stop supplying Israel with intelligence from British spy planes that have been constantly operating over Gaza from RAF's Akrotiri base on Cyprus.

He could recognise Palestine. He could prosecute British-Israeli soldiers taking part in the genocide. He could stop hosting suspected Israeli war criminals in London, as Declassified has documented. He could tear up special trade agreements with Israel. The list goes on.

Has he done any of this? No.

Nominal "punishment" came last September when Starmer very publicly announced a cut in UK

arms sales to Israel. He hoped no one would read the small print: it amounted to a paltry eight per cent reduction.

But even this turned out to be a sham. In fact, as data released in May showed, British arms sales to Israel hit record levels in the three months following the announcement.

The only other significant sanction against Israel was not even tangible. Starmer declared in May he was suspending – that is, postponing – a new round of trade talks with Israel until it stopped blocking aid to Gaza.

Israel's ambassador to the UK, Tzipi Hotovely, was summoned to the Foreign Office to have the decision communicated to her. In fact, that slap on the wrist appears to have been chiefly spin, too.

Shortly afterwards, the UK embassy in Israel tweeted an image of Ian Austin, the government's trade envoy to Israel, on a visit to the Israeli city of Haifa.

When questioned by the *Financial Times* about why Austin was in Israel, Starmer's government said Britain was still keen to maintain its existing business relationships.

The truth is that even the government's highly circumscribed "sanc-

tions" against Israel are nothing more than hollow threats. It has been, and continues to be, business as usual with Israel throughout the Gaza genocide.

What Starmer and his foreign secretary, David Lammy, should have done – had they even the slightest interest in distancing themselves from Israel's genocidal extremism – is not just summon Hotovely for another apologetic chat but actually demand her expulsion.

Such an action is necessary not chiefly because she is the main representative in London of a genocidal Israeli government. There is an argument to be made that the UK government needs direct diplomatic channels of communication with Israel, even during a genocide.

But unlike her predecessors, Hotovely is not a diplomat. She is a hard-right politician – a loyal ally of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu – who has served for the past 20 months as the leading apologist and cheerleader for genocide on British soil.

Her constant incitement has been in flagrant violation of the 1948 Genocide Convention to which the UK is a signatory. Britain has a legal obligation to remove her from a post in which she has fomented support in Britain for the most serious crimes against humanity. The UK is effec-



UK Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner (right) signed the book of remembrance at the Israeli embassy in London to mark the first anniversary of the Hamas attack in Israel. She was welcomed by Israel's ambassador to the UK, Tzipi Hotovely

tively sheltering a war crimes suspect. Her influence is likely to have contributed to the commission of crimes by British citizens travelling abroad to join the Israeli military.

After her expulsion, Israel would be entitled to replace her with a real diplomat, one who operates within the confines of British and international law.

But Britain should not be hosting a foreign official acting as a propagandist for genocide.

An online petition, set up in December 2023, calling for the Israeli ambassador to be expelled has attracted more than 170,000 verified signatures – an unprecedented public display of disgust at her continu-

ing presence in the UK.

It is preposterous for Starmer to blame Netanyahu for “horrific” and “intolerable” scenes in Gaza when one of the Israeli prime minister’s most fanatical aides is comfortably ensconced in London justifying these horrors.

It was Hotovely who less than three months into Israel’s slaughter in Gaza rationalised its crimes by claiming a supposed Hamas underground “terror city” was connected by tunnels to “every school, every mosque, every second house.”

The journalist interviewing her

interjected that this was “an argument for destroying the whole of Gaza, every single building.” Which, of course, is exactly what Israel has gone on to do.

Hotovely responded: “Do you have another solution?”

Her “solution” has left Gaza without any of the basic infrastructure – homes, hospitals, schools, bakeries, government offices, water treatment plants – needed for its population to survive.

She was inciting again recently when she appeared on the popular online chat show Piers Morgan Uncensored. Under unusually tough questioning from Morgan, she asserted in defiance of international

law that Israel was “allowed to attack hospitals.”

When Morgan pressed her repeatedly to explain how she could claim Israel has a low civilian to combatant kill ratio when she had no idea how many children Israel had killed in Gaza, Hotovely twice responded: “That’s irrelevant.”

As Morgan pointed out, Hotovely’s dismissal of the death toll among Gaza’s children suggested she regarded those deaths as inconsequential. A less benign reading of her refusal to answer was that she sees those children as legitimate targets.

The official number of children killed – almost certainly a large undercount – is 16,500. Last month, a senior Unicef official assessed there may be in excess of 50,000 children dead or injured.

Hotovely’s incitement did not come out of nowhere. When Netanyahu appointed her as his deputy foreign minister in 2015, she insisted that the Palestinians would never be allowed a state on any part of their historic homeland.

She said: “This land is ours. All of it is ours.”

In 2019, she accused the fervently Israel-supporting British Board of Deputies of “working against Israeli interests” after it tentatively expressed support for a “viable Palestinian state.”

She again reiterated that position in December 2023, as ambassador, saying she did not accept the positions of the UK government and the United Nations in support of an independent Palestinian state.

She referred to Palestinians as a “radical people” – a racist and dehumanising formulation intended to suggest that there could be no peace with the Palestinians and that Israel was therefore justified in slaughtering them.

Making sure no one could misunderstand what she means by the ex-

She claimed Jews “don’t feel safe” on London’s streets. “They [British Jews] see the same jihadi ideology on the streets of London as in Gaza”

tent of Israel’s sovereignty, she has observed: “Between the sea and the Jordan River, there needs to be one state, only the state of Israel.”

Notably, in an act of pure projection, Hotovely has claimed that, in contrast to her own ethnic supremacist agenda, pro-Palestinian demonstrators who call for equal rights for Jews and Palestinians in the same area – “between the river and the sea” – are calling for genocide.

In late 2023, she claimed Jews “don’t feel safe” on London’s streets because of the large marches against Israel’s genocide in Gaza: “They [British Jews] see the same jihadi ideology on the streets of London as in Gaza.”

Hotovely made her name in Netanyahu’s Likud party early on, when she was still a young backbench MP. In 2009, she openly called for the annexation of the West Bank, before that position all but became official Israeli policy.

In 2013 she developed a blueprint for annexation in an essay titled “The five-stage plan for the Greater Land of Israel.” It included a provision in which only those serving in Israel’s army would qualify for citizenship – a transparent way to exclude Palestinians from meaningful rights.

Her fanaticism earned her the position in 2020 of Israel’s first-ever minister for the settlements. She views these illegal, Jewish-only colonies – declared illegal by the Inter-

national Court of Justice last year – as a weapon to dispossess Palestinians and deprive them of any hope of Palestinian statehood.

Hotovely is openly Islamophobic and denies the history of the Palestinian people. In 2020, shortly after taking up her position as ambassador, she called the Nakba – the well-documented expulsion in 1948 of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians by the newly declared state of Israel – an “Arab lie.”

She has been supportive of hardline Jewish racial purity groups, such as Lehava, that try to stop relationships between Jews and non-Jews.

And she backs Israel’s takeover of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied East Jerusalem, one of the most important Islamic sites in the world. Such a move could set the Middle East on fire.

The Israeli ambassador has been undermining British foreign policy towards Israel and Palestine ever since she was appointed to the post five years ago. At that time, there was a campaign by British Jews to stop her bringing her extremist agenda to the UK.

Liberal Jewish community leaders were appalled at the prospect. Jeremy Beecham, a Labour peer, warned that her appointment would “do nothing to win friends in the UK – or indeed any other reasonable country.”

Notably, Britain operates a draconian Prevent programme ostensibly aimed at stopping the radicalisation of minority communities. In practice, it has focused on targeting – and stigmatising – British Muslims, presenting them as especially susceptible to extremism and supportive of terrorism.

However, Hotovely illustrates the way the very same British establishment so obsessed with curbing Muslim extremism not only tolerates dangerous ideological influenc-

es on British Jews but actively cooperates with those influences.

Further, those radicalised by Hotovelev's incitement against Palestinians are largely insulated from criticism. Anyone trying to object to her brazen racism – or its impact on attitudes among British Jews – faces being smeared as an antisemite.

In late 2021 pro-Palestinian solidarity activists protested her racist statements outside the London School of Economics as Hotovelev gave a lecture there. As she emerged to a waiting car, demonstrators shouted: "Shame on you!" and "Free Palestine!"

The then ruling Conservative government and the opposition Labour party rushed to her defence, denouncing the protest as antisemitic – and, in a moment of peak cognitive dissonance, as an attack on free speech.

Lisa Nandy, then shadow foreign secretary and now the secretary of state for culture, media and sport, called Hotovelev's treatment "appalling." While Nick Thomas-Symonds, then shadow home secretary and now head of the cabinet office, even

Nick Thomas-Symonds, then shadow home secretary, smeared the protesters. "Antisemitism has no place in our society," he said

more egregiously smeared the protesters. "Antisemitism has no place in our society," he said.

The British establishment has further rallied to her defence since she became Israel's spokesperson in the UK for the genocide in Gaza.

In March 2024 the Metropolitan police imposed a wide exclusion zone around the area in London in which she lives to stop a group of anti-zionist Jews holding protests outside her home.

The voices calling for her expulsion have grown. In January, the former Labour shadow chancellor John McDonnell called for Israel's complete isolation, and Hotovelev's removal.

He said: "We have an Israeli ambassador who's an advocate of Greater Israel, refuses to recognize the Palestinian state, defies all

the UN resolutions that have been passed about how we can secure that peace, and she still remains in this country. Why aren't we expelling the Israeli ambassador?"

Zarah Sultana, an MP sitting as an independent after she was expelled from the Labour party by Starmer for opposing his austerity cuts, has also called for Hotovelev's expulsion, pointing to her "genocidal rhetoric."

After the petition against Hotovelev reached 100,000 signatures, it qualified for a debate in parliament. No such debate has happened. Nor is it likely to.

The truth is, whatever rhetoric the Starmer government deploys to soothe public anger, the British establishment considers its alliance with Israel – and Israel's patron in Washington – as far more important than the lives of 2 million Palestinians in Gaza. **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

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The event was “about rejecting authoritarianism and reminding people that democracy only works when they are awake and engaged”



► JOHN ROTHWELL

A big, beautiful day of anger

Downtown Grand Rapids in Michigan became a hub of resistance on Saturday June 16, when 15,000 protesters flooded the streets as part of the massive national “No Kings” protest movement, opposing Donald Trump’s increasingly authoritarian presidency.

Participants carrying signs with bold messages filled the sidewalks, drawing supportive honks from passing motorists, while chants of “Donald Trump has got to go” and “No ICE, no Trump” echoed through the city as the







march continued for several blocks before returning to Rosa Parks Circle, its starting place

Hosted by the group Indivisible of Greater Grand Rapids, supported by Movimiento Cosecha and Palestine Solidarity GR, the rally coincided with Trump's spectacularly dull joint birthday bash with the US Army in Washington – making the demonstration not only a protest, but also a symbolic rebuke. One speaker said the No Kings event, the first of several planned this summer, was “about rejecting authoritarianism and reminding people that democracy only works when they are awake and engaged.”

Gema Lowe of Movimiento Cosecha Grand Rapids focused on immigration concerns, when she condemned actions of the US and Immigration Customs and Enforcement Agency's (ICE) in vicious family separations. “We came here for the American dream, just like others did before us. Our families should not be terrorised or torn apart,” she said.

Local resident Jill Laporte expressed outrage over government spending priorities, “We’re cutting



"This isn't leadership. This is a disaster. And it's only the first year of Trump's term as President"



"We came here for the American dream, just like others before us. Our families should not be terrorised or torn apart"



essential departments to the bone while throwing \$45 million at a military birthday parade for Donald Trump," she said. "This isn't leadership. This is a disaster. And it's only the first year of Trump's term."

The march, monitored by Grand Rapids police, concluded without arrests or major incidents. But the message was unmistakable: for a growing number of Americans, resistance is not just political – it's personal.

As the chants faded and the crowd dispersed, the movement's impact continued to ripple across the country, framing "No Kings" as a call to defend democracy against rising authoritarianism – one march at a time. **CT**

John Rothwell is a freelance writer and photographer based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Contact him at johnrothwellmedia@gmail.com





British aristocrats who made their fortune from slaves and sugar

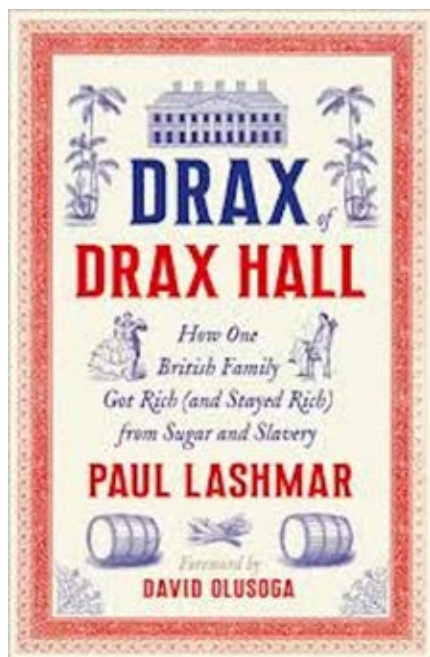
Tracing the Drax family's millions from the Caribbean slave trade

Rich British aristocratic families with a legacy of owning colonial slave plantations are often accused by campaigners that their wealth solely originates from these plantations. One frequent target of this criticism has been the Drax family of Dorset, which is headed by Richard Grosvenor Plunkett-Erle-Drax, the Conservative MP for South Dorset until July 2024.

Historian Alan Lester of the University of Sussex has noted of Drax (as he is commonly known): “Much of his fortune is inherited, coming down the family line from ownership of the Drax sugar plantations and the 30,000 enslaved people who worked them as Drax property for 180 years before emancipation in Barbados.”

Recently, I have researched and written a book on the Drax family's history and involvement in the slave trade in the Caribbean, *Drax of Drax Hall*, that gives fresh insights into the level of wealth they derived from the sugar trade and the trade in African slaves who worked their plantations – as well as the family's other income sources.

I searched the archives in the UK and Caribbean for evidence of their revenue streams until Britain's 1834 abolition of slavery in the colonies.



The cover of Paul Lashmar's new book on the Drax family

I estimate that the family today are worth more than £150 million from their land and property in Dorset and Yorkshire.

Over a period of two centuries until 1834, eight generations of Drax ancestors owned and worked hundreds of enslaved African captives at any one time. The latest beneficiary of primogeniture – the legal concept that recognises the first-born child as heir to a family's fortune – Richard Drax inherited the family's still-operating 621-acre

Drax Hall plantation in Barbados in 2021.

Drax, 67, has said: “I am keenly aware of the slave trade in the West Indies, and the role my very distant ancestor played in it is deeply, deeply regrettable. But no one can be held responsible today for what happened many hundreds of years ago. This is a part of the nation's history, from which we must all learn.”

My research reveals the sources of his family's wealth are more complex than the critics' claims that it all derives from the slave-worked plantations.

Like most British landed gentry, much of the Drax family income has come as extensive landlords of their British estates which, in 1883, exceeded 23,000 acres across various counties. Today, it includes nearly 16,000 acres in Dorset and 2,520 acres in the Yorkshire Dales.

However, my research also shows the Drax family made more money from slavery than was previously thought, when taking into account the way revenues from their plantations were channelled into the family's British estates over the two centuries of slavery.

The Drax Hall plantation in the Barbados parish of Saint George has



'Planting the sugar-cane': Vast fortunes were made from the trades in both sugar and human slaves in the Americas

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, The New York Public Library

John Lamper/ Wikimedia



Charborough House: the Drax family seat in Dorset, England

been described by Barbadian historian Sir Hilary Beckles, chair of the Caribbean Community reparations commission, as a “killing field” where as many as 30,000 slaves died in brutal conditions. Despite pressure from reparation campaigners in the Caribbean, Britain and elsewhere, Richard Drax has declined to make a formal public apology or gesture of recompense in the Caribbean for the years of slavery.

As the prime minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, explained in April 2024, despite the efforts of her government, Drax has yet to agree to a settlement, pay reparations or contribute all or part of his family’s Drax Hall plantation to provide affordable housing or become a memorial to those who worked and died in colonial enslavement on the island.

Some other British landed families whose ancestors owned slave

plantations in the Caribbean, including the Trevelyan (who owned six slave plantations in Grenada) and the Gladstones (British prime minister William Gladstone’s father owned plantations in Guyana), have made formal apologies and reparations. And while some families have kept the terms of these reparations private, longtime BBC reporter Laura Trevelyan made a US\$100,000 (£73,000) donation to a Caribbean development fund.

Four thousand miles from Barbados, Richard Drax lives in Charborough House, a historic 17th-century mansion in Dorset. He oversees the 23.5-square mile estate, the largest family estate in Dorset with over 120 properties, many of which are rented out.

Charborough was acquired by Drax’s ancestor Walter Erle by marriage in 1549. The family has grad-

ually increased the estate over the centuries. Historically, their income comes from renting land to tenant farmers and cottages to agricultural workers. This, I identified, is where the bulk of their income has come from.

However, profits from sugar produced by slavery also poured into the family coffers over 200 years. Richard Drax's remote ancestor James Drax (1609-1661) was one of the first settler group to arrive in the then-uninhabited island of Barbados in 1627. In his introduction to my book, TV historian David Olusoga writes that the Drax family were key players – arguably the key players – in the origin story of British slavery:

“The Drax Hall plantation, the first estate on which a crop of sugar was commercially grown and processed by any English planter, became one of the laboratories in which early English slavery was developed and finessed.”

Built around 1650, the Jacobean plantation house is thought to be the one of the three oldest extant residential buildings in the Americas. From the 17th into the 18th century, the Draxes created and owned the largest acreage in Barbados with the Drax Hall and Mount plantations – plus a 3,000-acre estate, also called Drax Hall, in Jamaica. The family became enormously wealthy: James Drax was said by a visitor to Drax Hall in the 1640s to “live like

Today, the plantation still produces 700 tonnes of sugar a year, earning the Drax family something in the region of £250,000

a prince,” putting on lavish dinners for friends and guests.

In addition to owning slaves, James Drax shipped African captives to Barbados as a key part of the trade in slaves. Knighted by both Oliver Cromwell and Charles I, by 1660 he was a director and investor in the English East India Company which, in part, traded and exploited enslaved people.

In her 1930 study, American historian Elizabeth Donnan presented evidence that the Draxes of the 17th century operated “off the books” – buying enslaved people from, and selling them to, “interloper” ships that circumvented the Royal African Company's monopoly of slave trading to the colonies.

The Drax family married into the Erle family in 1719, combining three fortunes: that of the Erles of Charborough, the Draxes of Yorkshire, Barbados and Jamaica, and the landed-gentry Ernles of Wiltshire.

Despite being deeply involved in

the South Sea Bubble scandal, the Drax family flourished. The slave registers in the National Archives show that between 1825 and 1834, the Drax Hall plantation in Barbados produced an average of 163 tonnes of sugar and 4,845 gallons of rum per year. This gave the family an average annual net profit of £3,591 – equivalent to about £600,000 now. Today, the plantation still produces 700 tonnes of sugar a year, earning the family something in the region of £250,000.

In recent years, the value of Drax Hall's land in Barbados has greatly increased as it is sought after for housing, and could now be worth as much as Bds\$150,000 (£60,000) per acre. At the same time, pressure for reparations is growing. In 2023, the African Union threw its weight behind the Caribbean reparations campaign.

David Comissiong, deputy chairman of the Barbados reparations task force, has said: “Other families are involved, though not as prominently as the Draxes. This reparations journey has begun.”

However, to date, the only reparations paid in the story of the Drax family's involvement in the slave trade were to the family itself. In 1837, Jane-Frances Erle-Drax, the heiress of Charborough, received £4,293 twelve shillings and sixpence (worth more than £614,000 today) in reparations for freeing 189 slaves from Drax Hall plantation after the abolition of slavery in the colonies.

In the course of researching and writing my book, I approached Richard Drax both directly and through his lawyers and put the claims made here to him. He had no comment to add.

CT

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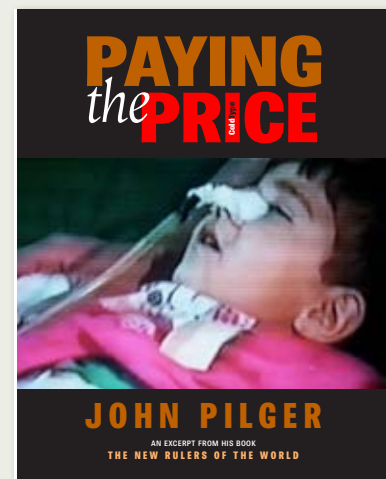
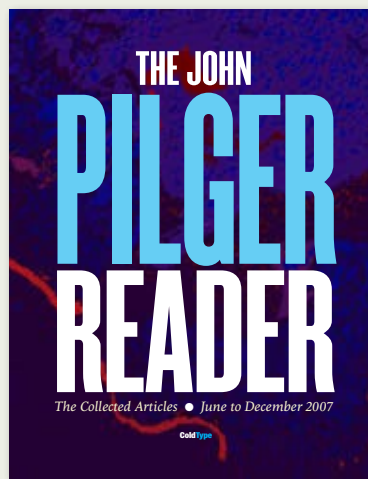
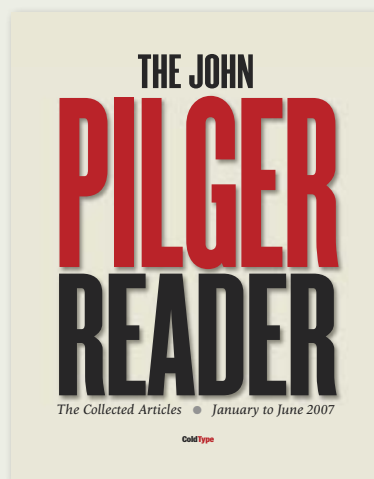
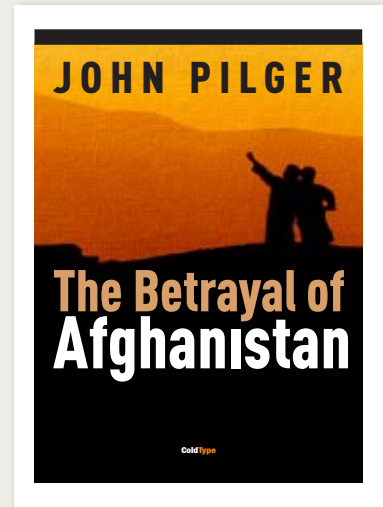
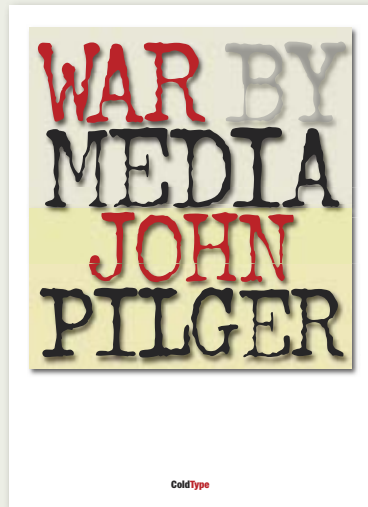
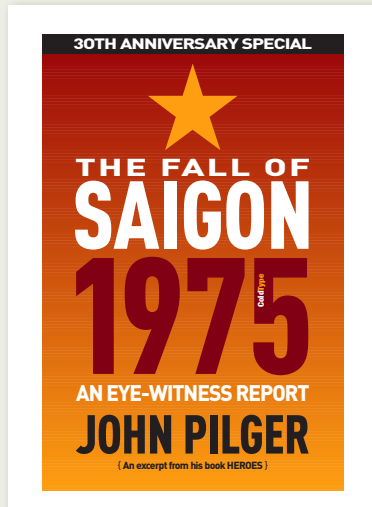
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A 19th-century drawing of Drax Hall plantation in Barbados

STOP BOMBING CHILDREN

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Jeff Truesdell (left) and Nelson Figueroa were together for 34 years. They're seen here with their dog Tico in 2021 in Sand Coulee, Montana

► JEFF TRUESDELL

The Road to Nelson

How do you live with the loss of a loved one? For me, it means visiting towns across North America that share my husband's name

We loved our adventures. And in my photography, my husband, Nelson Figueroa, served as my muse. Those two things intersected on a fall day in 2018 as we ambled along backroads in my home state of Missouri and spotted a directional sign pointing toward the town of Nelson. I'd never heard of it!

Now, as our magical 34 years together progressed, my caring, affectionate, funny, loving, generous Nelson would ... on OCCASION ... greet my requests to pose him for a photo with a defiant, "I'm not getting out of the car." (Granted, some backgrounds were mountain overlooks, and Nelson hated heights and twisty roads with no guardrails. He once quipped to our friends, "I'm only a prop.") But on this day, he stood for me by the Nelson directional sign, and again at the Nelson city limits sign – chin up, chest out. With little else to see or do in a town of 192 people, we

moved on. The photos and the grins on that day were enough.

Four years later I found Nelson dead on the couch, three hours after he'd said something didn't feel right. I'd had no time to prepare for a grief journey, nor any idea about what that meant. But as I endlessly looked through photos – trying to lurch through the next day, the next hour, the next minute – that one image, at the Nelson city limits, kept cycling up. How many places named Nelson exist? And if he playfully considered himself a mere prop, couldn't I still laugh with him and make it so? I enlarged favourite photos and made cutouts glued to cardboard, with no intent other than to smile recalling our joy of time together by posing the cutouts by Nelson city halls, Nelson fire departments, Nelson post offices and Nelson libraries around the country. He couldn't say no!

The Road to Nelson was born, and it became my way forward.

A handwritten letter from the father Nelson thought long-dead reached our mailbox: "Dear Son. I've never forgotten you"

We'd met in a Fort Lauderdale bar when I was out with another. He was 38, I was 28, and I knew instantly he was The One. We surreptitiously exchanged numbers, then spoke on the phone for weeks before seeing each other again. Nelson told me he was a Spaniard, from the Canary Islands, the only child of parents who amicably divorced when he was a boy. Mother and son moved to Miami and never lived apart. She'd died unexpectedly during routine surgery three years before I came along; I still heard the ache in his heart. My Palm Beach apartment soon became our home, and over the next 12 months we travelled to Key West, Chicago, St. Louis, Tampa, and Orlando "more times than I can count," according to a first-anniversary card he saved. The destinations didn't matter; the time together did.

We'd been a couple for 26 years and, at Nelson's urging, resettled in Missouri to join the in-person care for my aging parents when a remarkable thing happened. A handwritten letter from the father Nelson thought long-dead reached our mailbox: *Dear Son. I've never forgotten you. I hope you've had a good life. I'd love to see you. Here's where to find me ... in MIAMI.*

Nelson hid it from me for two weeks. I knew something was wrong. Finally I sat him down: WHAT is going ON with you? He told me about the letter. How wonderful! Have you called him? He's 94 – don't wait! Then Nelson tearfully told me the secrets it would reveal. His father was Puerto Rican. He'd met Nelson's mother while stationed with the US military in Havana. He wasn't an attorney; he'd been a truck driver. Nelson's mother was Cuban. Nelson was not Spanish. He was not from the Ca-

nary Islands. He was born in Havana, in his aunt's apartment. Scores of tiny details about his life that he'd slowly fed me to that point had built a façade that suddenly imploded.

I didn't know what to think. It was an extraordinary web of constructed lies to which Nelson kept adding, because I asked. I'm a reporter. I'm curious. I'm also a sentimental romantic. We'd talked many times about visiting Spain, about travelling to the Canary Islands to find the street where he grew up. These were not "facts" in his past that I'd archived and forgotten. These were topics of regular conversations. The lies simply became too great for Nelson to back away from.

Until that moment I would have said he could never lie to me. He's incredibly easy to read. He has no filter. Every thought that enters his head comes out his mouth. It's maddening, and delightful. He can't help himself. I learned to listen but not necessarily respond, to avert pointless escalation. I can be snappish. I can be intolerant. When I hit a roadblock I lose my patience. Nelson never did. He plugged away and figured things out. His very nature countered all my bad traits.

He brought me back to earth. He believed in the better me, which made me better.

Nelson hid the letter because he feared I'd leave him over its revelations. I wondered, how could you not know me? I didn't fall in love with your biography, I said. I fell in love with your heart.

He never explained. I never needed to ask.

By then gay friends were cherry-picking cities, states, even countries where they could legally marry. We wanted for it to count – and therefore be imposed – in the backwater where we lived, and the next year, in 2015, the US Supreme Court did so. My last living parent was not onboard. "You're



The author's hand – with Nelson cutout in Nelson, British Columbia – is intentionally present in every frame

In Nelson, New Hampshire, a phone call placed in advance in which I revealed the truth behind my travel elicited an invitation to supper

a homosexual,” she’d said when she figured it out for herself; it was neither accusation nor embrace, but resignation. She evolved. “This is my son,” she eventually said, before turning to Nelson, “and this is my other son.” But she drew a line. Call it a civil union but not marriage; what Nelson and I had could not possibly equal what she and my dad had. “It doesn’t involve me,” she sighed, “and I don’t think it should involve the Supreme Court.” She didn’t attend our Dec. 31 civil ceremony because we didn’t invite her, or anybody; we recruited our own judge, said our vows with the parking meter running, and three hours later flew to New York City for the Times Square ball drop. But wanting only to share our joy and include her, Nelson insisted we stop on the way to the airport to show mom our rings and leave her with our bouquets. I cursed him for binding our future anniversary trips – to Lake Tahoe, and Santa Fe, and Chicago, and Whitefish, Montana – to the most expensive travel dates of the year. Again, it didn’t matter. Anywhere he was, that’s where I wanted to be.

In my road forward through the Nelsons on the map, would I seek lessons about grief? Who might I find? What would I reveal? These are tiny, mostly disappearing towns in the rural middle of nowhere. In my first two Nelsons I feared even saying I was gay.

Returning to Nelson, Missouri, I exhaled I encountered no one, and I took away only photographs.

In Nelson, Georgia, where the next-door congressional district is represented by far-right provocateur Marjorie Taylor Greene, I further held myself in check with two folks who met me to generously share their town’s history; I didn’t tell them who

my Nelson was until I got home and came out to them in mailed thank-you notes.

That hesitation changed for me.

In Nelson, New Hampshire, a phone call placed in advance in which I revealed the truth behind my travel elicited an invitation to supper. That night I joined in the weekly contra dance tradition that has continued through generations in the town hall, and with a tiny urn of my Nelson’s ashes in my pocket, we danced together again.

In Nelson, New York, I quizzed others for the first time about their own experiences with loss, and was rewarded with beautiful stories about ghosts.

In Nelson Township, Kansas, I took notes on the colour and character of a community that now exists only in the surviving cemetery, and a woman with deep roots in the area walked me through the transition from something that ... to her ... once was tangible, to something you find only in photos, to something that survives only in sentiment, as a feeling.

In Nelson, British Columbia, I learned the Indigenous Peoples’ way is not to be guided to places of healing, but to trust

that which guides YOU, from within, TO that place.

And in Nelson County, Virginia, I encountered a tragedy previously unknown to me, in which a storm 56 years ago that rained down on the Blue Ridge caused such a staggering loss of life that some can’t talk about it even now. But from one survivor who watched his parents and several siblings disappear from view, I sat for an emotional lesson about the power of memory and resilience.

In each I arrived eager to document what makes these Nelsons – like my own – distinct and remarkable. And by collecting and sharing stories to help keep these towns alive, I realised they were a



On the rural route that cuts through Nelson, Virginia, named for a farming family that still lives there

"You KNOW they're green card," said the server, standing with coffee pot in hand. "I don't know why they should have more rights than others"

springboard for me to keep MY Nelson alive. But I also came to understand the missionary undercurrent: As I casually slip into conversations the fact that I am there to honour a decades-long love, I know it's something not just to envy, but to admire. I am no longer a vague and distant OTHER. I am human.

Every stop has furthered my healing. At every stop, the response – even something as simple as, "I'm sorry for your loss" – has come to matter.

Except in Nelson, Nebraska where no one I spoke with took note. At no point did I take offence. But I noticed.

The town deservedly celebrates pride of place. Back in 1872, when it existed more on a whisper than on a map, Nelson was named the seat of Nuckolls County, today a shrinking rail stop on the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe freight lines. (That rich past takes a back seat inside the Nuckolls County Historical Society museum, where "our most-prized possession," says the retired fourth-grade teacher who serves as curator, is a taxidermied two-headed calf.)

By 1899, at its peak population of around 1,000, Nelson witnessed construction of a brick commercial block, still standing, with 12 life-sized faces carved in sandstone of luminaries known to anyone of the day: There's Teddy Roosevelt, and Navy Admiral George Dewey, a hero of the Spanish-American War, of course – but also "One-Eye George Wiley," and "Indian Joe," and "Kissin' Jack Adamson," his face forever in a pucker. Asked if he employs a Nelson correspondent who might illuminate more recent history, the lifelong editor of the *Nuckolls County Locomotive Gazette*, just shrugged, telling me, "Everybody I can think of is deceased."

So I posed my Nelson photo cutouts at the Nelson city limits sign, and outside the Nelson post office, and the Nelson auditorium, and the Nelson grain elevator. Was that enough? Would it have to be? Had this visit informed anything as I evolve to become something other than what I'd so happily been?

My takeaway was in doubt when I sat down to breakfast in a recommended diner. Instantly my friendly server, a woman of full figure, big cheeks and a welcoming smile approached. "Would you like coffee or sugar-free syrup?," she asked. Clearly she knows her crowd of diabetics.

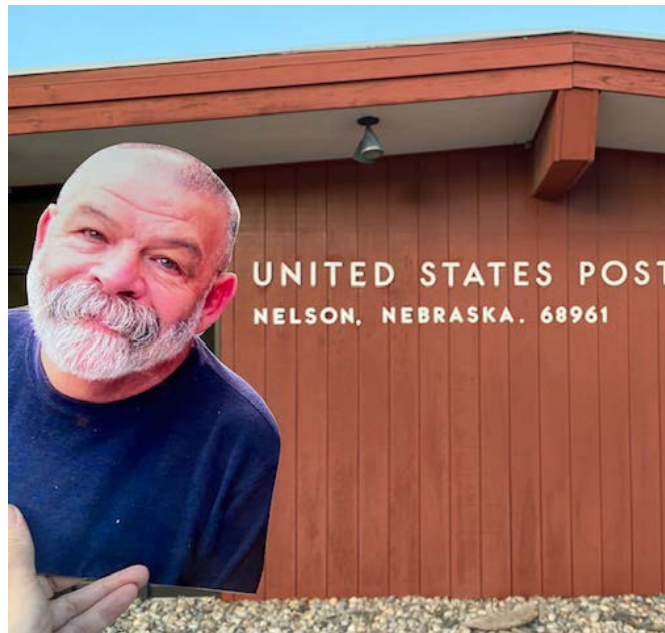
Around me in late April, it appeared that I had stumbled upon the Fourth of July. American flags and sprays of red, white and blue were everywhere, including on a fake Christmas tree wrapped in glowing red bulbs and stars, with twinned American flags as a topper.

Two tables over, my server engaged with a table of four, and I gathered the server's daughter had been inconvenienced by a car collision. She referenced a language barrier. She doubted the offending driver carried proper insurance.

"You KNOW they're green card," said the server, standing with coffee pot in hand. "I don't know why they should have more rights than others."

But back at my table, the server showed genuine concern about my route for the day through eastern Nebraska. Tornados had rained destruction out that way, and she warned me around it. I said thanks and walked toward the restroom. "What do you think that means?," she asked after me, presumably regarding nature's fury. "Do you suppose we should start living our lives better?"

I flashed her a wan smile. When I returned, I



Nelson, Nebraska, is the county seat of a once-thriving railroad community

Sitting in the parking lot I thought I'd explode in tears. I didn't. But with my road map spread before me, I now realised I had my takeaway

asked if I could photograph her tree, and I verified she was the decorator of all things patriotic. "We need all the help we can get," she offered. "Are you a veteran?" No, but my dad, a Korean War vet, is buried in a military cemetery. "Can I give you something?" she asked. "You don't have to take it." From a basket she handed me a 3-inch tall stamped plastic cross stitched with red ribbon, saying she makes and likes to give them to people passing through. I accepted with the same warm respect she showed in gifting it.

It's only one interaction, I reasoned. But in my truck, her words started to eat at me. When your worth ... your very existence ... is a topic of public debate, and Supreme Court rulings, and cruel, bullying presidential executive orders aimed at erasure, you recognise the roots of the opposition, which passes judgment but says it means no harm. If she wanted to hint at some perceived moral decay, many believe I'm part of the problem.

The tension inside me built: Saying nothing ... is saying something. What am I doing in these Nelsons if not celebrating a love that others might not see or understand, and thus deny?

I drove for 13 miles to the Nelson city limit ... then I turned back around.

The server looked startled to see me as I pulled her aside and recalled her words about the tornadoic wrath. "You gifted me this cross, and I want to gift you with something," I said, calmly and deliberately. "I don't know what you meant by that, but my husband and partner of 34 years and I were living a wonderful life together until he died two years ago from a heart attack, and I miss him awful. I can't imagine how we could have lived our

lives any better."

"Oh. Okay," she said.

There we stood, two people looking each other in the eyes, with smiles, waiting for the other to speak again. I did. "And I just wanted to lay that on your heart," I said.

She gathered herself, then gently placed a hand on my arm. "I'm glad I touched your heart," she said.

"I hope I touched *your* heart," I said. It felt for a moment like she was locked in on a script, unwilling to break character. Her pause allowed me to share my reason for visiting Nelson, and tell her I don't expect that everyone I meet will embrace

me for who I am, and who WE were. But I told her: "Whatever our different positions, and I don't know yours and you don't know mine, love and loss and grief are universal. In that way we are no different at all."

She couldn't say "I'm sorry." But she could say to me: "Was red his favourite colour?" I supposed she was still searching for the reason why I returned, and referenced the colour of the cross. No, I don't think Nelson had a favourite

colour. She placed her hand on my arm once more. "I'm glad I touched you," she repeated. Once more, I said the same.

Sitting in the parking lot I thought I'd explode in tears. I didn't. But with my road map spread before me, I now realised I had my takeaway.

No matter which way I went ... I knew I was on the right path.

CT



At the city limits of Nelson, Nebraska, the author poses for a self-portrait with his muse

Jeff Truesdell is a journalist and documentary filmmaker who most recently covered crime and social justice for People magazine. He lives in St. Louis, Missouri

Nuclear winter or climate change summer?

As activists struggle to make an impact, mainstream media outlets habitually skim the surface or, more usually, ignore the issues completely

Thirty-five years after the start of the nuclear age with the first explosion of an atomic bomb, I visited the expanse of desert known as the Nevada Test Site, an hour's drive northwest of Las Vegas. A pair of officials from the Department of Energy took me on a tour. They explained that nuclear tests were absolutely necessary. "Nuclear weapons are like automobiles," one told me. "Ford doesn't put a new automobile out on the highway until they've gone through a lengthy test process, driving hundreds of thousands of miles."

By then, in 1980, several hundred underground nuclear blasts had already occurred in Nevada, after the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty required that atomic testing take place below the earth's surface. Previously, about 100 nuclear warheads had been set off above ground at that test site, sending mushroom clouds aloft and endangering with radiation exposure not just nearby soldiers but also downwind civilians.

My guides were upbeat. The only sober words came after one old hand at nuclear testing asked me to turn off my tape recorder. "No head of state in the world has ever seen

a nuclear bomb explosion," he said. "To me, that's scary. I don't think anyone who has ever seen a nuclear explosion has ever not asked the question: 'My God, what have we done?'"

Otherwise, the on-the-record statements I got that day amounted to happy talk about the nuclear arms race. When officials showed me a quarter-mile-wide crater caused by a hydrogen bomb named Sedan, they expressed nothing but pride. "Across the windy desert floor of the Nevada Test Site, the government guides talk enthusiastically about their dominion," I wrote then for *The Nation* magazine. "As the wind whips through Yucca Flats, it whispers that, left to their own 'devices,' the nuclear-weapons testers will destroy us all. To allow their rationales to dissuade us from opposition is to give them permission to incinerate the world."

At the time, it never occurred to me that gradual heating, due mostly to carbon emissions sent into the atmosphere, could devastate the world, too. My visit to the Nevada site took place a year before Al Gore,

then a member of the House of Representatives, convened the first-ever congressional hearing on global warming in 1981. Bill McKibben's pathbreaking book on the subject, *The End of Nature*, appeared in 1989. Since then, the escalating catastrophe of human-caused climate change has become all too clear to those paying attention.

"Nearly all major global climate datasets agree that, in 2024, human-caused global warming for the first time pushed Earth's average surface temperature to more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial average for a full calendar year, a level that countries around the world had agreed to do all they could to avoid," *Inside Climate News* reported as this year began. Seven years ago, an authoritative scientific study "showed that warming beyond that limit threatens to irreversibly change major parts of the physical and biological systems that sustain life on Earth, including for-





ests, coral reefs and rainforests, as well as oceans and their major currents.” It threatens, in short, to create what might be thought of as a climate-change heat wave on Earth.

Meanwhile, the risks of a nuclear holocaust keep worsening. A 2022 study estimated that “more than 5 billion could die from a war between the United States and Russia.” Detonating just a small percentage of the world’s nuclear weapons (which are now in the possession of nine countries) would cause “nuclear winter.”

Writing in *Scientific American* in May after nuclear-armed India and Pakistan almost went to war, Rutgers University environmental sciences professors Alan Robock and Lili Xia explained: “A nuclear war between India and Pakistan would produce smoke from fires in cities and industrial areas. That smoke would rise

into the stratosphere, the atmospheric layer above the troposphere where we live, which has no rain to wash out the smoke. Our research has found that the smoke would block out the sun, making it cold, dark and dry at Earth’s surface, choking agriculture for five years or more around the world. The result would be global famine.”

I asked Robock whether he knew of efforts by the climate movement and groups focused on nuclear weapons to work together. “I don’t know of any,” he said. Noting that “nuclear war would produce instant climate change,” Robock added: “Global warming is real and already happening, whereas it has been 80 years since the last nuclear war. And that one produced horrific direct impacts of blast, fire, and radiation, but not climate change. Radioactivity is still the predominant fear from nuclear war... but nuclear winter would affect those far removed from the blast, and there are

no direct examples to show people, except for famines produced by other causes.”

Since early in this century, Ted Glick has devoted himself largely to climate activism, including long fasts. Some groups concentrating on peace or climate have begun to engage in joint efforts, he told me, “but there’s very little specific interactions that I know of when it comes to nuclear weapons, as distinct from a broader peace and anti-war focus, and the climate crisis.”

About the possibility of nuclear winter, he added: “It could be said that it’s the ultimate climate issue because if it happened, the world’s climate would be probably unlivable for most if not all human beings and most other life forms for a very long time. However, the fact that, despite nuclear weapons existing for 80 years, there has never been since Hiroshima and Nagasaki any use of them is certainly one big reason why others of us aren’t prioritising

it. What is very clear is the threat to the world's ecosystems and societies of continued societal dominance by the fossil-fuel industry. That is a much more certain existential threat. There is no question that if the world doesn't decisively shift within years, not decades, away from fossil fuels, break its power over governments, the risk of worldwide ecological and social devastation is, in my opinion, a certainty."

When I asked John J. Berger, author of the recent book *Solving the Climate Crisis*, to what extent nuclear winter should be viewed as a climate issue, he replied: "It depends on how the issue is contextualised. But in general, I wouldn't confuse anthropogenic climate change stemming from fossil-fuel use with nuclear winter stemming from nuclear war. They are two distinct issues, although both impact the climate."

Yet current literature from the Council for a Livable World emphasises connections:

"There are two serious threats to all life on earth: nuclear war and climate change. Both are existential, both are preventable, and both are inextricably linked through their reciprocal effects on each other. Climate change is generating conflict and instability in areas where the risk of nuclear proliferation is already high, and any use of nuclear weapons would have disastrous effects on an already fragile environment. By acknowledging the link between these two issues, we can advocate for more action on both."

The Union of Concerned Scientists and Physicians for Social Responsibility are among the few sizeable national groups that focus in a significant fashion on both climate change and nuclear weapons. Martin Fleck recently left PSR after working for the organisation for 27 years, including as director of its Nuclear Weapons Abolition Programme. "The strongest connection

"In general, I wouldn't confuse anthropogenic climate change stemming from fossil-fuel use with nuclear winter stemming from nuclear war"

between climate and disarmament activism is this," he said. "Climate science and abundant climate indicators show us that planetary human survival depends upon a rather dramatic paradigm shift from the current status quo and the way we are living as a species. The paradigm shift will necessarily include abandoning current, outrageous levels of military spending, military activity, and threats."

He then added, "Nuclear winter is not a climate issue and I do not think it should be viewed as a climate issue... However, advances in climate science led to our current understanding of nuclear winter and nuclear famine, and the people who have led the way have been climate scientists. So I guess it is fair to say that nuclear winter and nuclear famine models reside in the realm of climate science."

Working in a state beset with intensive nuclear industries ever since the Los Alamos laboratory opened secretly in 1943, Jay Coghlan, executive director of Nuclear Watch New Mexico, had a one-word answer when I asked about relationships, communication, or joint efforts between the climate movement and groups focused on nuclear weapons: "Non-existent."

Nuclear winter, he said, "hasn't been viewed as a climate issue at all. It is, of course, the ultimate climate-changer, should nuclear war break out."

In California, the Tri-Valley CAREs organisation has worked for more than 40 years scrutinising and challenging the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, which was founded in 1952, mainly to develop the hydrogen bomb. Scott Yundt, the group's executive director, told me that "nuclear winter should absolutely be viewed as a climate issue. It represents one of the most severe and abrupt potential disruptions to global ecological systems. Yet in many mainstream climate narratives, it's rarely discussed. Perhaps this is because nuclear winter is perceived as hypothetical or tied to geopolitical scenarios rather than immediate climate threats."

He added: "Within coalitions made up of frontline communities, including those impacted by the oil and gas industry, toxic waste, and uranium mining, there is a strong and growing understanding of the deep systemic links between these issues and our work in Livermore. We see clear consensus around themes like environmental racism, government secrecy, the lack of meaningful community engagement, and the disproportionate burdens placed on low-income and Indigenous communities. In those spaces, nuclear weapons are not seen as separate from the climate struggle. They're considered part of the same legacy of environmental violence and extractive industry. There's solidarity and shared purpose among those of us directly impacted. However, we've also noticed that mainstream climate organisations and funders often treat nuclear issues as fringe or outside the scope of 'climate' work... This disconnect can be frustrating, especially when the communities we work with are living through the environmental fallout of nuclear activities and see those harms as deeply entangled with climate injustices."

Basav Sen, director of the Cli-

mate Policy Project at the Institute for Policy Studies, said that anti-nuclear and climate activists “both confront the same long-standing pattern of extractive environmental racism, which treats Indigenous, Black, Brown, and poor communities, and the land, water, and air they depend on, as disposable. In the southwestern US, the Pacific islands, and many other parts of the world, the very same communities who have been exposed to toxic radioactivity because of uranium mining and processing, nuclear weapons testing, and nuclear waste disposal, are also facing air and water pollution from fossil fuel extraction and burning, and from the consequences of fossil fuel burning such as droughts, wildfires, superstorms, and rising oceans.”

Yet, despite the convergence of those issues, Sen commented, “the degree of collaboration between these movements at the national and international level has not been significant. Locally and regionally, however, frontline communities impacted by climate change and by the nuclear weapons and nuclear energy supply chain have been fighting these two systemic issues together.”

Since the mid-1980s, Jackie Cabasso has served as executive director of Western States Legal Foundation, one of the main groups tenaciously organising against the Livermore lab. “Organisations such as my own have made serious efforts to reach out to climate activists since at least 2008,” she told me, adding that the outcomes have usually been disappointing. “From my perspective, the relationships, communications, and joint efforts have been mostly one-sided, with nuclear disarmament activists reaching out to climate activists and very little reciprocity.”

In addition, she has seen that “the climate movement generally seems to avoid addressing the climate im-

Cabasso has seen that “the climate movement generally seems to avoid addressing the climate impacts of wars and militarism”

pacts of wars and militarism. This is the case even though some individuals, and even some organisations, are involved in both sets of issues.”

Robert M. Gould, a longtime leader of the Physicians for Social Responsibility chapter in the San Francisco area, has devoted most of his national and regional work to climate change and related issues of environmental health. “While there has been an advance among organisations through the years on issues referable to environmental justice, there has been no significant uptake on issues of war/peace, nuclear weapons,” he wrote in an email. Gould added that, although nuclear winter “is a critical existential issue, there has been at most minimal uptake by the environmental movement, as with nuclear weapons and militarism in general.”

In the United States, the forces that have done so much to heat the planet and drive the nuclear arms race are today stronger than ever. The power of great wealth and huge corporations got us where we are now, with an escalating assault on nature and an unfathomable threat to humanity. Whatever connections (and differences) might exist between the ongoing war on the climate and the nonstop arrangements for possible nuclear annihilation, the superstructure making it all possible is right in front of us. Gauging its true dimensions is crucial for coming up with

more strategic approaches.

These days, fatalism is an understandable feeling, but what’s truly needed is far greater support for activism. Organisers, whether for climate or against nuclear weapons, routinely face daunting obstacles. Funding is in short supply. The politics in Washington are, quite obviously, the worst in memory. And as activists struggle to make an impact, mainstream media outlets habitually skim the surface or, more likely, ignore the issues completely.

Media blind spots include the fact that military industries are big contributors to the world’s greenhouse gas emissions, while the Pentagon uses more fossil fuel than any other institution on the globe. And the US government’s destabilising war policies in the Middle East – where flashpoints could set off a nuclear war – are directly tied in with Washington’s perennial quest for ever more profitable access to the massive oil reserves in the region. Even if unwilling to directly address the dangers of nuclear weapons, the climate movement could do more to challenge a foreign policy that boosts both carbon emissions and the risk that rampant militarism could end up triggering nuclear winter.

With adversaries in common, the climate movement and activists for nuclear disarmament have an unexplored potential to work together. In profound ways, they could become effective allies in helping to save the world from unimaginable disasters. **CT**

Norman Solomon is co-founder of RootsAction and executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. His latest book is War Made Invisible: How America Hides the Human Toll of Its Military Machine (The New Press). This article was first published at www.tomdispatch.com

Martial law without a formal declaration of war

Will Americans rise up as citizens of a constitutional republic
– or will they bow down as subjects of an authoritarian regime?

Reporter: “What’s the bar for sending in the Marines?”

Trump: “The bar is what I think it is.”

In Trump’s America, the bar for martial law is no longer constitutional – it’s personal.

Indeed, if ever we needed proof that Donald Trump was an operative for the Deep State, this is it.

Despite what Trump would have us believe, the Deep State is not the vast numbers of federal employees who have been fired as part of his government purge.

Rather, the Deep State refers to the entrenched network of unelected bureaucrats, intelligence agencies, military contractors, surveillance firms, and corporate lobbyists that operate beyond the reach of democratic accountability. It is a government within a government – an intelligence-industrial complex that persists regardless of who sits in the Oval Office and whose true allegiance lies not with the Constitution but with power, profit, and control.

In other words, the Deep State doesn’t just survive presidential administrations – it recruits them. And in Trump, it has found a showman willing to turn its agenda into a public performance of raw power – militarised, theatrical, and loy-

al not to the Constitution, but to dominance.

What is unfolding right now in California – with hundreds of Marines deployed domestically; thousands of National Guard troops federalized; and military weapons, tactics and equipment on full display – is the latest chapter in that performance.

Trump is flexing his presidential muscles with a costly, violent, taxpayer-funded military display intended to intimidate, distract and discourage us from pulling back the curtain on the reality of the self-serving corruption, grift, graft, overreach and abuse that have become synonymous with his administration.

Don’t be distracted. Don’t be intimidated. Don’t be sidelined by the spectacle of a police state.

As *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman predicted years ago, “Some presidents, when they get into trouble before an election, try to ‘wag the dog’ by starting a war abroad. Donald Trump seems ready to wag the dog by starting a war at home.”

This is yet another manufactured crisis fomented by the Deep State.

When Trump issues a call to

“BRING IN THE TROOPS!!!” explaining to reporters that he wants to have them “everywhere,” we should all be alarmed.

This is martial law without a formal declaration of war.

This heavy-handed, chest-thumping, politicised, militarised response to what is clearly a matter for local government is yet another example of Trump’s disregard for the Constitution and the limits of his power.

Political protests are protected by the First Amendment until they cross the line from non-violent to violent. Even when protests turn violent, constitutional protocols remain for safeguarding communities: law and order must flow through local and state chains of command, not from federal muscle.

By breaking that chain of command, Trump is breaking the Constitution. Deploying the military to deal with domestic matters that can – and should – be handled by civilian police, despite the objections of local and state leaders, crosses the line into authoritarianism.

When someone shows you who they are, believe them.

In the span of a single week in June, the Trump administration provided the clearest glimpse yet of its unapologetic, uncompromising, corrupt allegiance to the authoritarian Deep State.



WAR ZONE: Police officers face demonstrators protesting on the fourth day of protests against ICE immigration raids in Los Angeles in June. 700 Marines were sent by the Pentagon to help National Guard members respond to immigration protests

First came the federalisation of the National Guard, deployed to California in response to protests sparked by violent and aggressive Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids across the country. Then, just days later, the president is set to preside over a lavish, taxpayer-funded military parade in the nation's capital.

These two events bookend the administration's unmistakable message: dissent will be crushed, and power will be performed.

Trump governs by force (military deployment), fear (ICE raids, militarised policing), and spectacle (the parade).

This is the spectacle of a police state. One side of the coin is militarised suppression. The other is theatrical dominance. Together, they constitute the language of force and

authoritarian control.

Wrapped in the rhetoric of “public safety” and “restoring order,” the federalisation of California's National Guard is not about security. It's about signalling power.

This is the first time in over half a century that a president has forcibly deployed the National Guard against a state governor's wishes. California Gov. Gavin Newsom's public opposition to the deployment was met not with dialogue, but with the threat of arrest from Trump himself – a move that evokes the worst abuses of executive power.

This is more than political theatre; it is a constitutional crisis in motion.

As we have warned before, this tactic is familiar. In times of political unrest, authoritarian regimes invoke national emergencies as pretexts to impose military solutions. The result? The Constitution is suspended, civilian control is overrun,

and the machinery of the state turns against its own people.

This is precisely what the Founders feared when they warned against standing armies on American soil: that one day, the military might be used not to defend the people, but to control them. Where the military marches at home, the Republic trembles.

And this is not unprecedented.

It is a textbook play from the authoritarian handbook, deployed with increasing frequency under Trump. The optics are meant to intimidate, to broadcast control, and to discourage resistance before it begins.

Fear is the Deep State's favourite tool – it doesn't just control the people, it conditions them to surrender voluntarily.

Thus, deploying the National Guard in this manner is not just a political manoeuvre – it is a strategic act of fear-based governance de-

signed to instill terror, particularly among vulnerable communities, and ensure compliance.

As President Harry S. Truman observed, “Once a government is committed to the principle of silencing the voice of opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of increasingly repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens and creates a country where everyone lives in fear.”

Under Trump, the lines between a civilian democracy and a military regime continue to blur. American streets increasingly resemble war zones, where peaceful protests are met with riot gear, armoured vehicles, and surveillance drones.

America is being transformed into a battlefield before our eyes. Militarised police. Riot squads. Black uniforms. Armoured vehicles. Pepper spray. Tear gas. Stun grenades. Crowd control and intimidation tactics.

From federal law enforcement to local police, from border patrol to the intelligence agencies, the guiding doctrine is the same: treat Americans as suspects first, citizens second – if at all. This is not the language of freedom. This is not even the language of law and order. This is the language of force.

This is what happens when the rule of law gets replaced by the rules of force: war becomes the organising principle of domestic governance, law becomes subordinate to command, and liberty is reclassified as a liability.

The war zone mentality – where citizens are treated like insurgents to be subdued – is a hallmark of authoritarian rule.

This transformation is not accidental – it’s strategic. The government now sees the public not

Want to turn a peaceful protest into a riot? Bring in the militarised police with their guns and black uniforms and war zone tactics

as constituents to be served but as potential combatants to be surveilled, managed, and subdued. In this new paradigm, dissent is treated as insurrection, and constitutional rights are treated as threats to national security.

What we are witnessing today is also part of a broader setup: an excuse to use civil unrest as a pretext for militarised overreach.

You want to turn a peaceful protest into a riot? Bring in the militarised police with their guns and black uniforms and war zone tactics and “comply or die” mindset. Ratchet up the tension across the board. Take what should be a healthy exercise in constitutional principles (free speech, assembly and protest) and turn it into a lesson in authoritarianism.

We saw signs of this strategy in Charlottesville, Virginia, where police failed to de-escalate and at times exacerbated tensions during protests that should have remained peaceful. The resulting chaos gave authorities cover to crack down – not to protect the public, but to reframe protest as provocation and dissent as disorder.

Charlottesville was the trial run – California is the main event.

Then and now, the objective wasn’t to preserve peace and protect the public. It was to delegitimise dissent and cast protest as provocation.

Yet the right to criticise the government and speak out against government wrongdoing is the quintessential freedom.

The government has become in-

creasingly intolerant of speech that challenges its power. While all kinds of labels are now applied to “unacceptable” speech, the message is clear: Americans have no right to express themselves if what they are saying is at odds with what the government determines to be acceptable.

Where the problem arises is when you put the power to determine who is a potential danger in the hands of government agencies, the courts and the police.

Which brings us to this present moment: there’s a pattern emerging if you pay close enough attention.

Civil discontent leads to civil unrest, which leads to protests and counterprotests. Tensions rise, violence escalates, and federal armies move in. Meanwhile, despite protests and the outrage, the government’s abuses continue unabated.

It’s all part of an elaborate setup by the architects of the Deep State. The government wants a reason to crack down and lock down and bring in its biggest guns.

They want us divided. They want us to turn on one another. They want us powerless in the face of their artillery and armed forces. They want us silent, servile and compliant.

They certainly do not want us to remember that we have rights, much less attempt to exercise those rights peaceably and lawfully.

This is how it begins.

We are moving fast down that slippery slope to an authoritarian society in which the only opinions, ideas and speech expressed are the ones permitted by the government and its corporate cohorts.

This unilateral power to muzzle free speech represents a far greater danger than any so-called right- or left-wing extremist might pose. The ramifications are so far-reaching as to render almost every American an extremist in word, deed, thought or by association.

Watch and see: we are all about to become enemies of the state.

Today, California is being staged as the test site for the coming crackdown.

The Trump administration provokes unrest through inhumane policies – in this case, mass ICE raids – then paints the resulting protests as violent threats to national security. The answer? Deploy the military.

It's a cynical and calculated loop: create the crisis, then respond with force. This strategy transforms protest into pretext, dissent into justification for domination.

There are disturbing echoes of history in these tactics, and they come with grave legal implications. We have seen this before.

It has been 55 years since President Nixon deployed the National Guard to put down anti-war student protests, culminating in the Kent State massacre. During the civil rights era, peaceful demonstrators were met with dogs, firehoses, and police batons. In more recent memory, federal agents cracked down on Occupy Wall Street encampments and Black

If we allow the militarised governance to become normalised, then we are no longer citizens of a republic – we are subjects of a police state

Lives Matter protests with militarised force.

All of it under the guise of order.

Trump's tactics fall squarely in that lineage.

His use of the military against civilians violates the spirit – if not the letter – of the Posse Comitatus Act, which is meant to bar federal military involvement in domestic affairs. It also raises severe constitutional questions about the infringement of First Amendment rights to protest and Fourth Amendment protections against warrantless search and seizure.

Modern tools of repression compound the threat. AI-driven surveillance, predictive policing software, biometric databases, and fusion centres have made mass control seamless and silent. The state doesn't just respond to dissent anymore; it predicts and preempts it.

America is at a crossroads.

Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. Strip away that consent, and all that remains is conquest – through force, spectacle, and fear.

As I point out in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* and in its fictional counterpart *The Erik Blair Diaries*, if we allow the language of fear, the spectacle of dominance, and the machinery of militarised governance to become normalised, then we are no longer citizens of a republic – we are subjects of a police state.

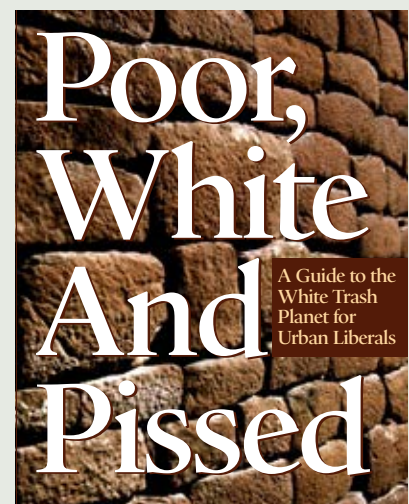
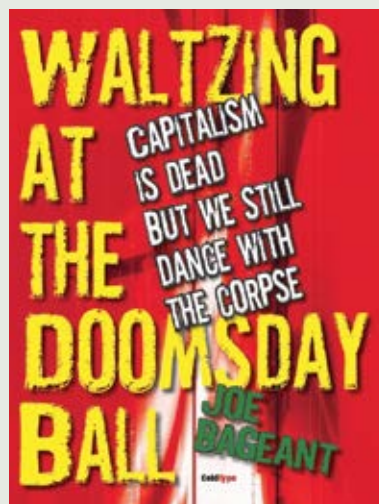
The only question now is: will we rise up as citizens of a constitutional republic – or bow down as subjects of an authoritarian regime. **CT**

John W. Whitehead is founder and president of the Rutherford Institute. His most recent books are Battlefield America: The War on the American People; A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State; and The Erik Blair Diaries. He can be contacted at staff@rutherford.org.

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The US hijacked the IAEA and started war on Iran

Rafael Grossi should resign as IAEA Director before he further undermines nuclear non-proliferation and drags the world closer to nuclear war

Rafael Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), allowed the IAEA to be used by the United States and Israel – an undeclared nuclear weapons state in long-term violation of IAEA rules – to manufacture a pretext for war on Iran, despite his agency's own conclusion that Iran had no nuclear weapons programme.

On June 12, based on a damning report by Grossi, a slim majority of the IAEA Board of Governors voted to find Iran in non-compliance with its obligations as an IAEA member. Of the 35 countries represented on the Board, only 19 voted for the resolution, while 3 voted against it, 11 abstained and 2 did not vote.

The United States contacted eight board member governments on June 10 to persuade them to either vote for the resolution or not to vote. Israeli officials said they saw the US arm-twisting for the IAEA resolution as a significant signal of US support for Israel's war plans, revealing how much Israel valued the IAEA resolution as diplomatic cover for the war.

The IAEA board meeting was timed for the final day of President Trump's 60-day ultimatum to Iran to negotiate a new nuclear agreement. Even as the IAEA board vot-

ed, Israel was loading weapons, fuel and drop-tanks on its warplanes for the long flight to Iran and briefing its aircrews on their targets. The first Israeli air strikes hit Iran at 3 a.m. that night.

On June 20, Iran filed a formal complaint against Director General Grossi with the UN Secretary General and the UN Security Council for undermining his agency's impartiality, both by his failure to mention the illegality of Israel's threats and uses of force against Iran in his public statements and by his singular focus on Iran's alleged violations.

The source of the IAEA investigation that led to this resolution was a 2018 Israeli intelligence report that its agents had identified three previously undisclosed sites in Iran where Iran had conducted uranium enrichment prior to 2003. In 2019, Grossi opened an investigation, and the IAEA eventually gained access to the sites and detected traces of enriched uranium.

Despite the fateful consequences of his actions, Grossi has never explained publicly how the IAEA can be sure that Israel's Mossad intelligence agency or its Iranian collaborators, such as the Mojahedin-e-Khalq (or MEK), did not put the

enriched uranium in those sites themselves, as Iranian officials suggested.

While the IAEA resolution that triggered this war dealt only with Iran's enrichment activities prior to 2003, US and Israeli politicians quickly pivoted to unsubstantiated claims that Iran was on the verge of making a nuclear weapon. US intelligence agencies had previously reported that such a complex process would take up to three years, even before Israel and the United States began bombing and degrading Iran's existing civilian nuclear facilities.

The IAEA's previous investigations into unreported nuclear activities in Iran were officially completed in December 2015, when IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano published its "Final Assessment on Past and Present Outstanding Issues regarding Iran's Nuclear Program."

The IAEA assessed that, while some of Iran's past activities might have been relevant to nuclear weapons, they "did not advance beyond feasibility and scientific studies, and the acquisition of certain relevant technical competences and capabilities." The IAEA "found no credible indications of the diversion of nuclear material in connection with the possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear programme."



NOT IMPARTIAL: Iran complained that IAEA Director General Grossi had shown bias in his reports on Israel's actions

When Yukiya Amano died before the end of his term in 2019, Argentinian diplomat Rafael Grossi was appointed IAEA Director General. Grossi had served as Deputy Director General under Amano and, before that, as Chief of Staff under Director General Mohamed ElBaradei.

The Israelis have a long record of fabricating false evidence about Iran's nuclear activities, like the notorious "laptop documents" given to the CIA by the MEK in 2004 and believed to have been created by the Mossad. Douglas Frantz, who wrote a report on Iran's nuclear programme for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2009, revealed that the Mossad created a special unit in 2003 to provide secret briefings on Iran's nuclear programme, using "documents from inside Iran and elsewhere."

And yet Grossi collaborated with Israel to pursue its latest allega-

tions. After several years of meetings in Israel and negotiations and inspections in Iran, he wrote his report to the IAEA Board of Governors and scheduled a board meeting to coincide with the planned start date for Israel's war.

Israel made its final war preparations in full view of the satellites and intelligence agencies of the western countries that drafted and voted for the resolution. It is no wonder that 13 countries abstained or did not vote, but it is tragic that more neutral countries could not find the wisdom and courage to vote against this insidious resolution.

The official purpose of the International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA, is "to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies." Since 1965, all of its

180 member countries have been subject to IAEA safeguards to ensure that their nuclear programmes are "not used in such a way as to further any military purpose."

The IAEA's work is obviously compromised in dealing with countries that already have nuclear weapons. North Korea withdrew from the IAEA in 1994, and from all safeguards in 2009. The United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China have IAEA safeguard agreements that are based only on "voluntary offers" for "selected" non-military sites. India has a 2009 safeguard agreement that requires it to keep its military and civilian nuclear programmes separate, and Pakistan has 10 separate safeguard agreements, but only for civilian nuclear projects, the latest being from 2017 to cover two Chinese-built power stations.

Israel, however, has only a limit-

ed 1975 safeguards agreement for a 1955 civilian nuclear cooperation agreement with the United States. An addendum in 1977 extended the IAEA safeguards agreement indefinitely, even though the cooperation agreement with the US that it covered expired four days later. So, by a parody of compliance that the United States and the IAEA have played along with for half a century, Israel has escaped the scrutiny of IAEA safeguards just as effectively as North Korea.

Israel began working on a nuclear weapon in the 1950s, with substantial help from Western countries, including France, Britain and Argentina, and made its first weapons in 1966 or 1967. By 2015, when Iran signed the JCPOA nuclear agreement, former Secretary of State Colin Powell wrote in a leaked email that a nuclear weapon would be useless to Iran because “Israel has 200, all targeted on Tehran.” Powell quoted former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad asking, “What would we do with a nuclear weapon? Polish it?”

In 2003, while Powell tried but failed to make a case for war on Iraq to the UN Security Council, President Bush smeared Iran, Iraq and North Korea as an “axis of evil,” based on their alleged pursuit of “weapons of mass destruction.” The Egyptian IAEA Director, Mohamed ElBaradei, repeatedly assured the Security Council that the IAEA could find no evidence that Iraq was developing a nuclear weapon.

When the CIA produced a document that showed Iraq importing yellowcake uranium from Niger, just as Israel had secretly imported it from Argentina in the 1960s, the IAEA only took a few hours to recognise the document as a forgery, which ElBaradei immediately reported to the Security Council.

Bush kept repeating the lie about yellowcake from Niger, and oth-



Colin Powell: Nukes useless to Iran



Mohamed ElBaradei: No evidence

er flagrant lies about Iraq, and the United States invaded and destroyed Iraq based on his lies, a war crime of historic proportions. Most of the world knew that ElBaradei and the IAEA were right all along, and, in 2005, they were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, for exposing Bush’s lies, speaking truth to power and strengthening nuclear non-proliferation.

In 2007, a US National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) by all 16 US intelligence agencies agreed with the IAEA’s finding that Iran, like Iraq, had no nuclear weapons programme. As Bush wrote in his mem-

oirs, “...after the NIE, how could I possibly explain using the military to destroy the nuclear facilities of a country the intelligence community said had no active nuclear weapons programme?” Even Bush couldn’t believe he would get away with recycling the same lies to destroy Iran as well as Iraq, and Trump is playing with fire by doing so now.

ElBaradei wrote in his own memoir, *The Age of Deception: Nuclear Diplomacy in Treacherous Times*, that if Iran did do some preliminary research on nuclear weapons, it probably began during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, after the US and its allies helped Iraq to manufacture chemical weapons that killed up to 100,000 Iranians.

The neocons who dominate US post-Cold War foreign policy viewed the Nobel Prize winner ElBaradei as an obstacle to their regime change ambitions around the world, and conducted a covert campaign to find a more compliant new IAEA Director General when his term expired in 2009.

After Japanese diplomat Yukiya Amano was appointed as the new Director General, US diplomatic cables published by Wikileaks revealed details of his extensive vetting by US diplomats, who reported back to Washington that Amano “was solidly in the US court on every key strategic decision, from high-level personnel appointments to the handling of Iran’s alleged nuclear weapons programme.”

After becoming IAEA Director General in 2019, Rafael Grossi not only continued the IAEA’s subservience to US and Western interests and its practice of turning a blind eye to Israel’s nuclear weapons, but also ensured that the IAEA played a critical role in Israel’s march to war on Iran.

Marvin Lynchard

Dean Calma / IAEA

Even as he publicly acknowledged that Iran had no nuclear weapons programme and that diplomacy was the only way to resolve the West's concerns about Iran, Grossi helped Israel to set the stage for war by re-opening the IAEA's investigation into Iran's past activities. Then, on the very day that Israeli warplanes were being loaded with weapons to bomb Iran, he made sure that the IAEA Board of Governors passed a resolution to give Israel and the US the pretext for war that they wanted.

In his last year as IAEA Director, Mohamed ElBaradei faced a similar dilemma to the one that Grossi has faced since 2019. In 2008, US and Israeli intelligence agencies gave the IAEA copies of documents that appeared to show Iran conducting four distinct types of nuclear weapons research.

Whereas, in 2003, Bush's yellowcake document from Niger was clearly a forgery, the IAEA could not establish whether the Israeli documents were authentic or not. So ElBaradei refused to act on them or to make them public, despite considerable political pressure, because, as he wrote in *The Age of Deception*, he

knew the US and Israel "wanted to create the impression that Iran presented an imminent threat, perhaps preparing the grounds for the use of force." ElBaradei retired in 2009, and those allegations were among the "outstanding issues" that he left to be resolved by Yukiya Amano in 2015.

If Rafael Grossi had exercised the same caution, impartiality and wisdom as Mohamed ElBaradei did in 2009, it is very possible that the United States and Israel would not have been at war with Iran.

Mohamed ElBaradei wrote in a tweet on June 17th 2025, "To rely on force and not negotiations is a sure way to destroy the NPT and the nuclear non-proliferation regime (imperfect as it is), and sends a clear message to many countries that their "ultimate security" is to develop nuclear weapons!!!"

Despite Grossi's role in US-Israeli war plans as IAEA Director General, or maybe because of it, he has been touted as a Western-backed candidate to succeed Antonio Guterres as UN Secretary General

in 2026. That would be a disaster for the world.

Fortunately, there are many more qualified candidates to lead the world out of the crisis that Rafael Grossi has helped the US and Israel to plunge it into.

Rafael Grossi should resign as IAEA Director before he further undermines nuclear non-proliferation and drags the world any closer to nuclear war. And he should also withdraw his name from consideration as a candidate for UN Secretary General.

CT

Medea Benjamin and Nicolas J. S. Davies are the authors of *War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict*, published by OR Books, with a revised edition due out this summer. Benjamin is the cofounder of CODEPINK for Peace, and the author of several books, including *Inside Iran: The Real History and Politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, while Davies is an independent journalist, a researcher for CODEPINK and the author of *Blood on Our Hands: The American Invasion and Destruction of Iraq*

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The last days of Gaza

The genocide is almost complete. When it is concluded it will not only have decimated the Palestinians, but will have exposed the moral bankruptcy of Western civilisation

This is the end. The final blood-soaked chapter of the genocide. It will be over soon. Two million people are camped out amongst the rubble or in the open air. Dozens are killed and wounded daily from Israeli shells, missiles, drones, bombs and bullets. They lack clean water, medicine and food. They have reached a point of collapse. Sick. Injured. Terrified. Humiliated. Abandoned. Destitute. Starving. Hopeless.

In the last pages of this horror story, Israel is sadistically baiting starving Palestinians with promises of food, luring them to the narrow and congested nine-mile ribbon of land that borders Egypt. Israel and its cynically named Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), allegedly funded by Israel's Ministry of Defense and the Mossad, is weaponising starvation. It is enticing Palestinians to southern Gaza the way the Nazis enticed starving Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto to board trains to the death camps. The goal is not to feed the Palestinians. No one seriously argues there is enough food or aid hubs. The goal is to cram Palestinians into heavily guarded compounds and deport them.

What comes next? I long ago stopped trying to predict the future. Fate has a way of surprising us. But

there will be a final humanitarian explosion in Gaza's human slaughterhouse. We see it with the surging crowds of Palestinians fighting to get a food parcel, which has resulted in Israeli and US private contractors shooting dead at least 130 and wounding over seven hundred others in the first eight days of aid distribution. We see it with Benjamin Netanyahu's arming of ISIS-linked gangs in Gaza that loot food supplies. Israel, which has eliminated hundreds of employees with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), doctors, journalists, civil servants and police in targeted assassinations, has orchestrated the implosion of civil society.

I suspect Israel will facilitate a breach in the fence along the Egyptian border. Desperate Palestinians will stampede into the Egyptian Sinai. Maybe it will end some other way. But it will end soon. There is not much more Palestinians can take.

The understanding that when we have the capacity to halt genocide and we do not, we are culpable, does not apply to us

We – full participants in this genocide – will have achieved our demented goal of emptying Gaza and expanding Greater Israel. We will bring down the curtain on the live-streamed genocide. We will have mocked the ubiquitous university programmes of Holocaust studies, designed, it turns out, not to equip us to end genocides, but deify Israel as an eternal victim licensed to carry out mass slaughter. The mantra of never again is a joke. The understanding that when we have the capacity to halt genocide and we do not, we are culpable, does not apply to us. Genocide is public policy. Endorsed and sustained by our two ruling parties.

There is nothing left to say. Maybe that is the point. To render us speechless. Who does not feel paralysed? And maybe that too is the point. To paralyse us. Who is not traumatised? And maybe that too was planned. Nothing we do, it seems, can halt the killing. We feel defenceless. We feel helpless. Genocide as spectacle.

I have stopped looking at the images. The rows of little shrouded bodies. The decapitated men and women. Families burned alive in their tents. The children who have lost limbs or are paralysed. The chalky death masks of those pulled from under the rubble. The wails of grief. The emaciated faces. I can't.



DEATH OF A NATION: Image from the early days of Israel's genocide of Gaza shows the results of the aerial onslaught

This genocide will haunt us. It will echo down history with the force of a tsunami. It will divide us forever. There is no going back.

And how will we remember? By not remembering.

Once it is over, all those who supported it, all those who ignored it, all those who did nothing, will rewrite history, including their personal history. It was hard to find anyone who admitted to being a Nazi in post-war Germany, or a member of the Klu Klux Klan once segregation in the southern United States ended. A nation of innocents. Victims even. It will be the same. We like to think we would have saved Anne Frank. The truth is different. The truth is, crippled

by fear, nearly all of us will only save ourselves, even at the expense of others. But that is a truth that is hard to face. That is the real lesson of the Holocaust. Better it be erased.

In his book *One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This*, Omar El Akkad writes:

"Should a drone vaporise some nameless soul on the other side of the planet, who among us wants to make a fuss? What if it turns out they were a terrorist? What if the default accusation proves true, and we by implication be labelled terrorist sympathizers, ostracised, yelled

at? It is generally the case that people are most zealously motivated by the worst plausible thing that could happen to them. For some, the worst plausible thing might be the ending of their bloodline in a missile strike. Their entire lives turned to rubble and all of it preemptively justified in the name of fighting terrorists who are terrorists by default on account of having been killed. For others, the worst plausible thing is being yelled at."

You cannot decimate a people, carry out saturation bombing over 20 months to obliterate their homes, villages and cities, massacre tens of thousands of innocent people, set up a siege to ensure mass starvation, drive them from land where they have lived for centuries and not expect blowback. The genocide will end. The response to the reign of

See Chris Hedges' interview with Omar El Akkad at

<https://chrishedges.substack.com/p/one-day-everyone-will-have-always>

state terror will begin. If you think it won't you know nothing about human nature or history. The killing of two Israeli diplomats in Washington and the attack against supporters of Israel at a protest in Boulder, Colorado, are only the start.

Chaim Engel, who took part in the uprising at the Nazis' Sobibor death camp in Poland, described how, armed with a knife, he attacked a guard in the camp.

"It's not a decision," Engel explained years later. "You just react, instinctively you react to that, and I figured, 'Let us to do, and go and do it.' And I went. I went with the man in the office and we killed this German. With every jab, I said, 'That is for my father, for my mother, for all these people, all the Jews you killed.'"

Does anyone expect Palestinians to act differently? How are they to react when Europe and the United States, who hold themselves up as the vanguards of civilisation,

**"Humanitarian law
does not apply to you.
We do not care about
your suffering, the
murder of your children.
You are vermin"**

backed a genocide that butchered their parents, their children, their communities, occupied their land and blasted their cities and homes into rubble? How can they not hate those who did this to them?

What message has this genocide imparted not only to Palestinians, but to all in the Global South?

It is unequivocal. You do not matter. Humanitarian law does not apply to you. We do not care about your suffering, the murder of your children. You are vermin. You are

worthless. You deserve to be killed, starved and dispossessed. You should be erased from the face of the earth.

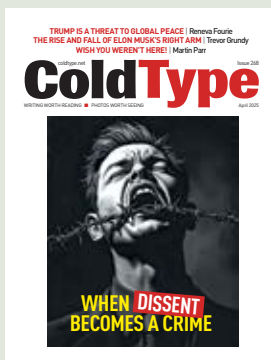
"To preserve the values of the civilised world, it is necessary to set fire to a library," El Akkad writes: "To blow up a mosque. To incinerate olive trees. To dress up in the lingerie of women who fled and then take pictures. To level universities. To loot jewellery, art, food. Banks. To arrest children for picking vegetables. To shoot children for throwing stones. To parade the captured in their underwear. To break a man's teeth and shove a toilet brush in his mouth. To let combat dogs loose on a man with Down syndrome and then leave him to die. Otherwise, the uncivilised world might win."

There are people I have known for years who I will never speak to again. They know what is happening. Who does not know? They will not risk alienating their colleagues, being smeared as an antisemite, jeopardising their status, being reprimanded or losing their jobs. They do not risk death, the way Palestinians do. They risk tarnishing the pathetic monuments of status and wealth they spent their lives constructing. Idols. They bow down before these idols. They worship these idols. They are enslaved by them.

At the feet of these idols lie tens of thousands of murdered Palestinians. **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 the Chris Hedges Report podcast at www.chrishedges.substack.com

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The Rules of Israel's wars

Rule 1: Israel is never the aggressor. If Israel attacks someone it's either a response to an aggression that happened in the past, or a preemptive attack to thwart an imminent aggression in the future.

Rule 2: History automatically restarts at the date of the last act of aggression against Israel. If someone attacks Israel it was completely unprovoked, because nothing happened before the attack on Israel.

Rule 3: Anything bad that Israel does is justified by Rule 2. This is true even if it does things that would be considered completely unjustifiable if it were done by a nation like Russia or China.

Rule 4: Israel has a right to defend itself, but nobody else does.

Rule 5: Israel never bombs civilians, it bombs Bad Guys. If shocking numbers of civilians die it's because they were actually Bad Guys, or because Bad Guys killed them, or because a Bad Guy stood too close to them. If none of those reasons apply then it's for some other mysterious reason we are still waiting for the IDF to investigate.

Rule 6: Criticising anything Israel does means you hate Jewish people. There is no other possible reason for anyone to oppose acts of mass military slaughter besides a seething, obsessive hatred for a small Abrahamic faith.

Rule 7: Nothing Israel does is ever as bad as the hateful criticisms described in Rule 6. Criticisms of Israel's actions are always worse than Israel's actions themselves, because those critics hate Jews and wish to commit another Holocaust. Preventing this must consume 100 percent of our political energy and attention.

Rule 8: Israelis are only ever the victims and never the victimisers. If Israelis kill Iranians, it's because the Iranians hate Jews. If Iranians kill Israelis, it's because the Iranians hate Jews. Israel is an innocent little lamb that just wants to mind its own business in peace.

Rule 9: The fact that Israel is literally always in a

state of war with its neighbours and with displaced indigenous populations must be interpreted as proof that Rule 8 is true instead of proof that Rule 8 is ridiculous nonsense.

Rule 10: Muslim lives are much, much less important to us than western lives or Israeli lives. Nobody is allowed to think too hard about why this might be.

Rule 11: The media always tell the truth about Israel and its various conflicts. If you doubt this then you are likely in violation of Rule 6.

Rule 12: Unsubstantiated claims which portray Israel's enemies in a negative light may be reported as factual news stories without any fact checking or qualifications, while extensively evidenced records of Israeli criminality must be reported on with extreme scepticism and doubtful qualifiers like "Hezbollah says" or "according to the Hamas-run health ministry." This is important to do because otherwise you might get accused of being a propagandist.

Rule 13: Israel must continue to exist in its current iteration no matter what it costs or how many people need to die. There is no need to present any logically or morally grounded reasons why this is the case. If you dispute this then you are likely in violation of Rule 6.

Rule 14: The US government has never lied about anything ever, and is always on the right side of every conflict.

Rule 15: Israel is the last bastion of freedom and democracy in the middle east and therefore must be defended, no matter how many journalists it has to assassinate, no matter how many press institutions it needs to shut down, no matter how many protests its supporters need to dismantle, no matter how much free speech it needs to eliminate, no matter how many civil rights its western backers need to erase, and no matter how many elections its lobbyists need to buy.

CT



Caitlin Johnstone is an Australian independent journalist. This article was first published at her web site, www.caitlinjohnstone.com.au

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