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Issue 272

WRITING WORTH READING ■ PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

August 2025

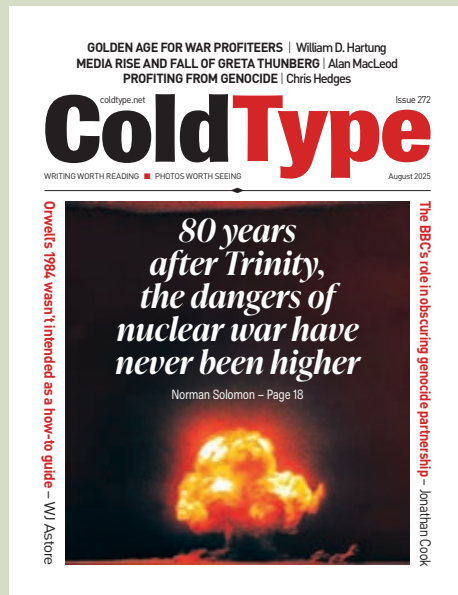
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*80 years
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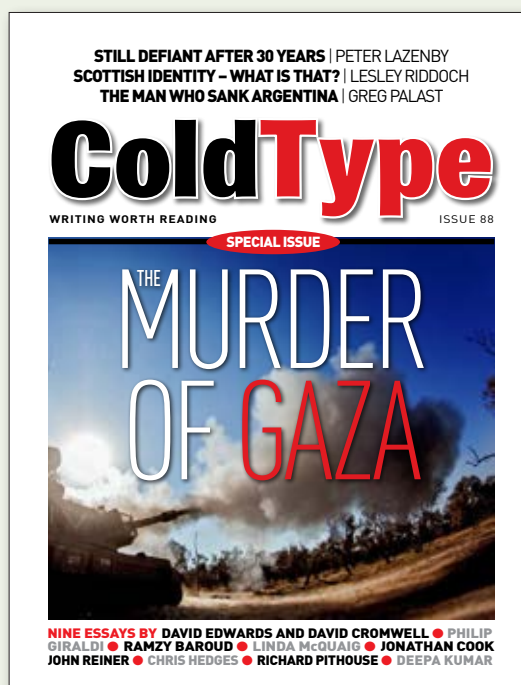
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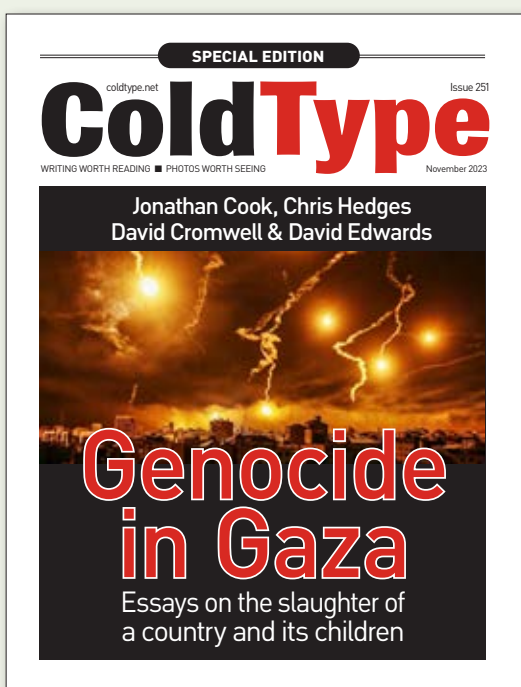
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Cover Photo: This is the only colour photograph of the first Trinity nuclear test explosion on July 16, 1945. It was taken by Jack W. Aeby, a civilian worker at Los Alamos laboratory in New Mexico, working under the aegis of the Manhattan Project

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INSIGHTS

► JEFF COHEN

Axing of *Colbert Show* is an assault on dissent

When media critic A.J. Liebling wrote in *The New Yorker* 65 years ago that “freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one,” he might have glimpsed a media system dangerously dominated by a small number of companies.

But it’s unlikely he could have foreseen a president as authoritarian as Donald Trump, and media conglomerates eager to capitulate to him.

Thanks to the Paramount conglomerate and its greed-fuelled boss, Shari Redstone, the *Late Show with Stephen Colbert* will vanish next year. After the Trump administration responds by approving the Paramount merger with Skydance, Redstone will be roughly \$2 billion richer than she is today, and Paramount/CBS may become even more Trump-friendly.

Months ago, when I predicted the demise of *Colbert* or *The Daily Show*, another Paramount property, it sounded paranoid. But now it’s reality. (*The Daily Show* may be next on the chopping block.)

In recent months, we’ve seen one media conglomerate after another offer what amounted to multimillion-dollar bribes to Trump by settling frivolous Trump lawsuits that these com-

panies could not possibly have lost in court.

Last December, the Disney Company paid Trump a thinly-disguised bribe – \$15 million to Trump’s future presidential library – to settle a harassment lawsuit against ABC News over a segment mentioning E. Jean Carroll’s victorious case against Trump.

In January, Mark Zuckerberg’s Meta made a payment of \$25 million to Trump to settle a ridiculous lawsuit after the company followed its own well-understood guidelines and suspended Trump from Facebook and Instagram for inciting violence on January 6, 2021 at the Capitol. (Zuckerberg dined with Trump at Mar-a-Lago in November and Meta donated \$1 million to Trump’s 2025 inaugural fund.)

But there was a snag in settlement negotiations between Paramount and Trump over an even more laughable suit he could never win in court. This one concerned how CBS *60 Minutes* had edited an interview with Kamala Harris, a suit that Paramount had called “meritless.”

During negotiations, respected executive producer of *60 Minutes* Bill Owens resigned over Paramount meddling, soon followed by the resignation of the CEO of CBS News. But that wasn’t enough to get the suit settled, and it was far from sufficient to get the Trump administration to approve the Paramount merger. That’s when I worried that Colbert or Jon Stewart would have to be sacrificed to placate the authoritarian-in-chief and get Paramount and Redstone the



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riches that a merger would bring.

At the beginning of July, Paramount agreed to pay Trump \$16 million to settle the suit, amid rumours of side-deals that content would shift at the new Paramount. And now Colbert, one of Trump's most effective critics, is being shown the door. A few days later, Colbert carried on at length, making fun of what he called Paramount's "big, fat bribe."

Colbert is funny. What's not funny is that our country's democratic experiment is on the verge of collapse – and it has less to do with Trump than with the capitulation of corporate liberals and corporate centrist institutions to Trump.

Big universities have capitulated. Big law firms have capitulated. Big media companies have capitulated.

The lesson to be learned from today's political reality is that big corporate institutions don't care about democracy or free speech. They will bend the political system toward their own economic benefit – and be complicit with authoritarianism if it keeps getting them wealthier.

The conglomerates that dominate our media and our society have one and only one value: profit-maximisation. This was pretty-much admitted by Shari Redstone's late father, Sumner, who built the Viacom (now Paramount) media conglomerate. Sumner Redstone was considered a liberal, a son of Massachusetts who'd been friendly with Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry, the 2004 Democratic candidate for president. But Redstone famously endorsed George W. Bush for president in 2004.

As Redstone explained: "I vote for what's good for Viacom. I vote, today, Viacom. . . I don't want to denigrate Kerry, but from a Viacom standpoint, the election of a Republican administration has stood for many

things we believe in, deregulation and so on."

I know I'm not the only progressive who has survived the Trump years with my sanity intact thanks in large part to TV comedians employed by media conglomerates: Colbert (Paramount), Jon Stewart and team (Paramount), Jimmy Kimmel (Disney), Seth Meyers (Comcast); and the best investigative journalist on mainstream TV, John Oliver (Warner Discovery).

There's a quote usually attributed – perhaps inaccurately – to George Orwell: "In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act."

I've offered a twist on this quote for the Trump era: "In a time of political

craziness, keeping one's sanity is a revolutionary act."

It's hard to stay sane without laughter, and the comedians listed above are often uplifting. But just as we've moved to independent news outlets out of distrust for corporate news, we're likely to be looking outside the media conglomerates for our comedy when many a truth is truly spoken in jest. **CT**

Jeff Cohen is co-founder of RootsAction.org, a retired journalism professor at Ithaca College and author of Cable News Confidential: My Misadventures in Corporate Media. In 1986, he founded the media watch group FAIR

► **BRETT WILKINS**

Stateless Palestinian tells of suffering in ICE detention

A newlywed Palestinian woman from Texas released from US Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention in early July says she was shackled for long periods, denied food and water, and subjected to other human rights abuses during nearly five months in ICE custody – all because she is a stateless person.

Ward Sakeik, 22, was born in Saudi Arabia to Palestinian parents from Gaza. Because Saudi Arabia does not grant birthright citizenship to the children of foreign nationals, Sakeik was officially stateless when her family legally emigrated to the United States

when she was 8 years old.

Sakeik's parents subsequently applied for – and were denied – asylum in the US but were allowed to remain legally in the country pending routine check-ins with ICE.

After graduating high school and the University of Texas, Arlington, starting a wedding photography business, marrying a US citizen, and beginning the process of obtaining a green card, Sakeik and her husband went on their honeymoon in the US Virgin Islands. She was detained shortly after arriving back in the United States after Customs and Border Protection agents flagged her for flying over

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international waters – a move that Department of Homeland Security officials said violated immigration policy.

“After a few hours from returning from our honeymoon, I was put in a gray tracksuit and shackles,” Sakeik said at a press conference following her release. “I was handcuffed for 16 hours without any water or food on the bus. I have moved around like cattle. And the US government attempted to dump me in a part of the world where I don’t know where I’m going and what I’m doing or anything.

“We were not given any water or food, and we could smell the driver eating Chick-fil-A,” she continued.

“We would ask for water, bang on the door for food, and he would just turn up the radio and act like he wasn’t listening to us.”

Sakeik said unhygienic conditions at the Prairieland Detention Center in Alvarado, Texas, caused widespread illness among detainees.

“The restrooms are also very, very, very unhygienic,” she said. “The beds have rust everywhere. They’re not properly maintained. And cockroaches, grasshoppers, spiders, you name it, are all over the facility. Girls would get bit.”

“I wouldn’t wish this upon anybody,” Sakeik said during an interview on CNN. “It was very hard, very traumatising, and very, very difficult.”

Eric Lee, an attorney for Sakeik, told CNN that immigration officials dismissed Sakeik’s account as a “sob story.”

“I guess what we would ask the American people is, ‘Who are they gonna believe, their lying eyes or the statements of the people who are responsible for carrying out



Ward Sakeik, a stateless Palestinian woman married to a US citizen, was detained for nearly five months by ICE amid the Trump administration's crackdown on immigrants

what are really crimes against humanity here in the United States?” Lee added.

Sakeik said she now plans to advocate on behalf of women and girls imprisoned by ICE.

“I... want the world to know that the women who do come here come here for a better life, but they’re criminalised for that,” she said. “They are dehumanised, and they’re stripped away from their rights. We have been treated as a ‘less-than’ just simply for wanting a better life.” **CT**

Brett Wilkins is a staff writer for Common Dreams – www.commondreams.org – where this article was first published

➤ **WILLIAM LEGRANDE & GEOFF THALE**

No change in Trump’s hostility towards Cuba

President Trump’s new National Security Presidential Memorandum (NSPM) on Cuba, announced on June 30, reaffirms the policy of sanctions and hostility he articulated at the start of his first term in office. In fact, the new NSPM is almost identical to the old one.

The policy’s stated purpose is to “improve human rights, encourage the rule of law, foster free markets and free enterprise, and promote democracy” by restricting financial flows to the Cuban government. It reaffirms Trump’s support for the 1996 Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, which explicitly requires regime change – that Cuba

become a multiparty democracy with a free market economy (among other conditions) before the US embargo will be lifted.

The policy outlined in the NSPM has yet to be translated into legally binding regulations, so it’s too early to tell if restrictions on US trade or travel to Cuba will tighten. But the bottom line is that Trump’s new Cuba policy is not “new” at all. It’s just the latest variation on the embargo imposed on Cuba in 1962. For the next 63 years, Washington tried to bend the Cuban government to its will by crippling the Cuban economy, all to no avail. Cuba today is no closer to being a capitalist multiparty democracy than it was in 1962 or 1996.

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As we argue in a recent Quincy Institute brief, US policy toward Cuba needs a major reset, a shift toward a policy of pragmatic engagement – not as a favour to the Cuban government, but because engagement better serves the interests of the United States and the Cuban people.

Advancing US interests sometimes requires setting aside old animosities and engaging with former adversaries, as President Trump has done with Syria, Russia, China, and others. The president defines his “America First” foreign policy as one that champions “core American interests” and “puts America and its interests first.” US policy toward Cuba in recent years has failed that test. Sanctions have increased the risks to US national security on issues that the president has identified as US priorities for the Western Hemisphere: migration, narcotics trafficking, access to strategic minerals, and the rising influence of China and Russia.

Conditions in Cuba today are far different than when President Trump issued his first NSPM in 2017, so US Cuba policy needs to be reconsidered. Cuba is experiencing an unprecedented economic and social crisis rooted in the government’s mismanagement of the economy, the impact of the COVID pandemic, and crippling US economic sanctions. Cubans are enduring shortages of all basic necessities, deteriorating government services, and repeated electrical blackouts.

As a result, the crisis has produced the largest emigration in Cuban history – nearly a million people in the past three years, 75 percent of whom have come to the United States.

Cuban society is also undergoing profound social change. The legalisa-

tion of private enterprises has given rise to a dynamic private sector despite restrictive government regulations. The expansion of internet access and social media has led to a more robust civil society despite government censure and intimidation.

Cuba’s crisis is rapidly raising the costs to the United States of sanctions policy by stimulating migration, opening the door to geopolitical rivals China and Russia, blocking US access to Cuba’s strategic minerals,



Donald Trump: Sanctions risk to US

hurting US relations with allies, and threatening cooperation with Cuba on issues of mutual interest, including counter-narcotics cooperation.

As internal processes of change evolve in Cuba, disengagement leaves the United States on the sidelines, unable to exercise any positive influence on the trajectory of that change.

The United States needs to take the initiative to reset US-Cuban relations to safeguard US interests and ease the suffering of the Cuban people. The immediate goals of a new policy should be to relieve migration pressures by making immediate regulatory changes that would aid the recovery of the Cuban economy and encourage the growth of the Cu-

ban private sector, which is among the NSPM’s stated aims. The Cuban private sector is real and growing, forming the cornerstone of a revitalised economy and civil society despite operating in an increasingly hostile business environment.

Its success is critical to the Cuban people and the Cuban economy. US sanctions add another layer of obstacles for it to overcome. Tangible support requires relaxing, not tightening, restrictions on US trade, investment, and financial transactions, especially with the private sector. Taken together, these measures would significantly reduce migration pressures.

Expand commercial and cultural engagement to compete with the influence of China and Russia. The United States is a natural economic partner for Cuba – a potential source of trade, tourism, and investment far beyond what Russia or China can offer. Moreover, a robust economic relationship with the United States would give Cuba an incentive to limit its military and intelligence cooperation with US adversaries.

In addition, Cubans have far greater cultural affinity with the United States than with Russia or China, a comparative advantage that should be built upon by loosening, not tightening, restrictions on cultural and educational exchanges, and travel.

Reengage with the Cuban government diplomatically to advance cooperation on issues of mutual interest, reduce bilateral tensions, and address human rights and property issues. Engagement facilitates cooperation and opens diplomatic channels in hopes of finding common ground. Making unilateral demands of Cuba on contentious issues has never produced results, whereas engagement

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has led to successful cooperation on counter-narcotics operations, migration, and environmental protection, among other issues.

The United States should continue to voice its support for basic human rights and condemn the Cuban government when it violates them. However, demanding Cuban concessions on human rights as a precondition for improving bilateral relations has never worked. No US policy can force the Cuban government to adhere to high standards of human rights, but engagement creates incentives for the Cuban government to be responsive to Washington's concerns.

A policy of engagement needs to be grounded in realistic expectations. It will not erase the fundamental differences between the United States and Cuba, and it is not an alternative path to regime change.

The pace and extent of this engagement ultimately depend on

the Cuban government's interest in improving relations. But the initial steps recommended here are ones the United States can and should take unilaterally, because they advance US policy interests and offer the opportunity to set US-Cuban relations on a better path for the future. **CT**

William M. LeoGrande is a Non-Resident Fellow at the Quincy Institute and Professor of Government, and Dean Emeritus of the School of Public Affairs at American University in Washington, DC Geoff Thale is an independent analyst and the former President of the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA). Thale has followed Central America issues since the mid-1980s, and founded WOLA's Cuba program in 1995. This article was first published by Responsible Statecraft at www.responsiblestatecraft.org

gered by the ongoing conflict, plus the after-effects of the climate crisis, and the negative spillover from the three-year long Covid-19 pandemic.

While needs are sky-high, resources have hit rock bottom. The WFP says it requires \$22.2 billion to reach 152 million people in 2022.

However, with the global economy reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic, the gap between needs and funding is bigger than ever before.

"We are at a critical crossroads. To avert the hunger catastrophe the world is facing, everyone must step up alongside government donors, whose generous donations constitute the bulk of WFP's funding...

... Private sector companies can support our work through technical assistance and knowledge transfers, as well as financial contributions. High net-worth individuals and ordinary citizens alike can all play a part, and youth, influencers and celebrities can raise their voices against the injustice of global hunger," the Rome-based agency said.

In 2019, Russia and Ukraine together exported more than a quarter (25.4 percent) of the world's wheat, according to the Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC).

Danielle Nierenberg, President and Founder, Food Tank told IPS the amount of food that is wasted the world is not only a huge environmental problem – if food waste were a country, it would be the third largest emitter of greenhouse gas emissions.

But food waste and food loss are also moral conundrums. It's absurd to me that so much food is wasted or lost because of lack of infrastructure, poor policymaking, or marketing regulations that require food be thrown away if it doesn't fit certain standards.

This is especially terrible now as

► **THALIF DEAN**

Millions hungry as \$billions of food is landfilled

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 22, 2022 (IPS) – *The ominous warnings keep coming non-stop: some of the world's developing nations, mostly in Africa and Asia, are heading towards mass hunger and starvation. – World Food Programme (WFP)*

The World Food Programme (WFP) warned in July that as many as 828 million people go to bed hungry every night while the number of those fac-

ing acute food insecurity has soared – from 135 million to 345 million – since 2019. A total of 50 million people in 45 countries are teetering on the edge of famine.

But in what seems like a cruel paradox the US Department of Agriculture estimates that a staggering \$161 billion worth of food is dumped yearly into landfills in the United States.

The shortfall has been aggravated by reduced supplies of wheat and grain from Ukraine and Russia trig-

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we face a worldwide food crisis—not only because of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, but multiple conflicts all over the globe.

“We’ve done a good job over the last decade of creating awareness around food waste, but we haven’t done enough to actually convince policymakers to take concrete action. Now is the time for the world to address the food waste problem, especially because we know the solutions and many of them are inexpensive,” she said.

Better regulation around expiration and best buy dates, policies that separate organic matter in municipalities, fining companies that waste too much, better date collection around food waste, more infrastructure and practical innovations that help farmers.

“And there are even more solutions. We can solve this problem and we have the knowledge. We just need to implement it,” said Nierenberg.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said last November food waste in the United States is estimated at between 30-40 percent of the food supply.

“Wasted food is the single largest category of material placed in municipal landfills and represents nourishment that could have helped feed families in need. Additionally, water, energy, and labour used to produce wasted food could have been employed for other purposes’, said the FDA.

Professor Dr David McCoy, Research Lead at United Nations University International Institute for Global Health (UNU-IIGH), told IPS the heartbreaking image of food being dumped in landfills while famine and food insecurity grows, must also be juxtaposed with the ecological harms caused by the dominant

modes of food production which in turn will only further deepen the crisis of widespread food insecurity.

“The need for radical and wholesale transformation to the way we produce, distribute and consume food has been recognised for years. However, powerful actors – most notably private financial institutions and the giant oligopolist corporations who make vast profits from the agriculture and food sectors – have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo...



Antonio Guterres: Glimmer of hope

... Their resistance to change must be overcome if we are to avoid a further worsening of the hunger and ecological crises, he warned.”

Frederic Mousseau, Policy Director at the Oakland Institute, told IPS that according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), global food production and stocks are at historic high levels in 2022, with only a slight contraction compared to 2021.

“Skyrocketing food prices seen this year are rather due to speculation and profiteering than the war in Ukraine. It is outrageous that WFP has been forced to expand its food relief operations around the world due to speculation, while also having to raise more funds as the costs of pro-

viding food relief has increased everywhere,” he said.

Mousseau pointed out that WFP’s costs increased by \$136 million in West Africa alone due to high food and fuel prices, whereas at the same time, the largest food corporations announced record profits totalling billions. Louis Dreyfus and Bunge Ltd had respectively 82.5 percent and 15 percent jump in profits so far this year. Cargill had a 23 percent jump in its revenue.

Profits of a handful of food corporations that dominate the global markets already exceed \$10 billion this year – the equivalent of half of the \$22 billion that WFP is seeking to address the food needs of 345 million people in 82 countries.

At a press conference in Istanbul, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres held out a glimmer of hope when he told reporters August 20 that more than 650,000 metric tons of grain and other food are already on their way to markets around the world.

“I just came back from the Marmara Sea, where Ukrainian, Russian, Turkish and United Nations teams, are conducting joint inspections on the vessels passing through the Black Sea on their way in or out of the Ukrainian ports. What a remarkable and inspiring operation.

“I just saw a World Food Program-chartered vessel – Brave Commander – which is waiting to sail to the horn of Africa to bring urgently needed relief to those suffering from acute hunger. Just yesterday, I was in Odessa port and saw first-hand the loading on a cargo of wheat onto a ship, he said, adding that he was “so moved watching the wheat fill up the hold of the ship. It was the loading of hope for so many around the world.

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“But let’s not forget that what we see here in Istanbul and in Odessa is only the more visible part of the solution. The other part of this package deal is the unimpeded access to the global markets of Russian food and fertilizer, which are not subject to sanctions.”

Guterres pointed out that it is important that all governments and the private sector cooperate to bring them to market. Without fertiliser in 2022, he said, there may not be enough food in 2023.

Getting more food and fertiliser out of Ukraine and Russia is critical to further calm commodity markets

and lower prices for consumers

“We are at the beginning of a much longer process, but you have already shown the potential of this critical agreement for the world.

“And so, I am here with a message of congratulations for all those in the Joint Coordination Centre and a plea for that vital life-saving work to continue. “You can count on the full commitment of the United Nations to support you,” he declared. **CT**

Thalif Dean wrote this article for Human Wrongs Watch. It was first published by IPS News UN Bureau at www.ipsnews.net

stant state of war preparations that infect and influence our minds. Our “leaders” talk about “all options being on the table” when the only option they consider is military force. We are what we “invest” in. And weapons ‘r’ us.

In US politics, strong and wrong is seen as far better than “weak” and right. And just about every politician inside the DC Beltway appeases the military-industrial complex, Israel, or both. That’s how you end up with disastrous wars of choice in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere, together with full-throated support for genocide in Gaza.

Who cares about right and wrong when might always makes right?

An anecdote: I have a friend who works in the belly of the beast (the DoD). He told me his job makes him think of Winston Smith in George Orwell’s 1984. The Pentagon under Pete Hegseth has become an exercise in eliminating DEI bad speak and replacing it with doubleplus-good warrior-ethos speak. Lots of time is wasted sending “bad” terms and names down the memory hole.

Even as the DoD’s language is purged of bad speak about DEI, the Pentagon’s embrace of a permanent war economy is tightened. The very idea of a “peace dividend,” floated by Republican President George H.W. Bush in the aftermath of the Soviet Union’s collapse, is seemingly ancient history, an idea never to be considered again, not in Trump and Hegseth’s warrior-USA.

Preparing constantly for war is a powerful way to ensure more war. Overspending on esoteric and genocidal weaponry is a powerful way to hollow out one’s country while establishing the conditions for global mass death.

► **WJ ASTORE**

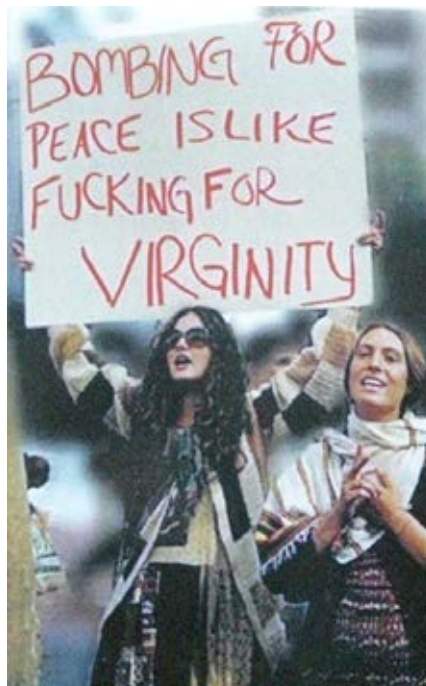
Orwell’s 1984 wasn’t intended as a how-to guide

In an ever-changing world, the one constant in Universe USA is rising Pentagon budgets. For President Trump, a trillion-dollar war budget is something to crow about. Of course, it’s sold as “peace through strength.” For what is more peaceful than more weaponry, especially nuclear-tipped ICBMs and SLBMs?

America is always arming, up-arming, re-arming for war, allegedly to prevent war. The problem is arming for war usually leads to yet more war. You don’t “invest” in weaponry to keep it on a shelf, rusting away in armouries.

Excuse my language, but Vietnam vets and war protesters put it well: Fighting (or bombing) for peace is like fucking for virginity.

More telling, however, is the con-



Vintage 1969. Makes sense, right?

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Perhaps our “leaders” need to recall that Orwell’s 1984 was meant to be a warning of what to avoid, not a how-to guide for authoritarian rule and perpetual war. **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

► **CHARLES GLASS**

Resisting injustice in Gaza and the wider world

Egyptian-born Omar El Akkad had studied in the United States and been 10 years a journalist when, in the summer of 2021, he became an American citizen. Covering the War on Terror in Afghanistan and at the US detention centre in Guantanamo Bay exposed him to the “deep ugly cracks in the bedrock of this thing they called “the free world.” Yet he believed the cracks could be repaired – “Until the fall of 2023. Until the slaughter.”

The slaughter was Israel’s razing of Gaza following Hamas’s rampage into Israel on October 7, 2023. The

Israeli assault escalated to include massive bombardment, enforced hunger, destruction of hospitals and schools, bulldozing of dwellings deprivation of medical care, torture and the slaughter of tens of thousands of men, women and children. The onslaught caused Akkad to despair for Gaza’s Palestinians and for his adopted country, whose financing and weapons enabled it. He channelled that despair into the rage that inspired this excellent and troubling book.

One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This is neither polemic nor memoir, although it

contains elements of both.

Akkad’s prose is an appeal to readers not to wait for “one day” in the distant future to resist injustice not only in Gaza, but in the wider world: “In the coming years there will be much written about what took place in Gaza, the horrors that have been meticulously documented by Palestinians as they happened and meticulously brushed aside by the major media apparatus of the western world.” When the killing ceases, as with genocides of native Americans, Tasmanians, Namibia’s Hereros and Namas, Armenians, Jews and Tutsis, it will be too late.

Akkad’s condemnation of US policy in the formerly-colonised world sits uneasily beside his choice to live and raise his children in the land that torments people who, like him, are brown or Muslim or doomed to live under American-supported Arab dictators or Israeli occupation. His rationale is as simple as it is understandable: “I live here because it will always be safer to live on the launching side of the missiles. I live here because I am afraid.”

He is unafraid to speak against the Biden administration’s veto of

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Edward S. Herman**

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INSIGHTS

United Nations resolutions calling for ceasefires in Gaza (“untroubled when they say a ceasefire resolution represents a greater threat to lasting peace than the ongoing obliteration of an entire people”) and its termination of funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) that was the primary supplier of food, medical care and education to Palestinian refugees. Yet speaking out seems futile. As the author of the award-winning novel *American War* and sometime columnist, he does not spare himself and other writers for political impotence: “What is this work we do? What are we good for?”

He quotes Egyptian-American poet Marwa Helal:

*this is where the
poets will say: show, don't tell
but that
assumes most people
can see.*

Too many seek refuge in propaganda that what is being done to Palestinians is necessary.

Akkad quotes an Israeli newspaper post’s headline from seven months before October 7: “When Genocide is Permissible.” Palestinians are killed every day in Gaza, “but the unsaid thing is that it is all right because that’s what those people do, they die.”

This book is not devoid of hope, which he finds in resistance that can be positive (“showing up to protests and speaking out”) and negative (“refusing to participate”). He praises students “risking expulsion and defamation, risking their livelihoods, their entire careers” and Jewish protestors “being arrested on the streets of Frankfurt, blocking Grand Central Station in New



York, fighting for peace.”

Their efforts, however ineffective, absolve them of the culpability of waiting for everyone else to be “against this.” **CT**

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► HURWITT'S EYE

MARK HURWITT



The media rise and fall of Greta Thunberg

How the Swedish climate activist widened her focus to the capitalist system and Israeli genocide in Gaza and lost the attention of the corporate press.

Once the favoured child of the establishment, Greta Thunberg has been dropped by the global elite. A *MintPress News* study finds that coverage of Thunberg in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* has dwindled from hundreds of articles per year to barely a handful, precisely as she widens her focus from the environment to the capitalist system that is causing climate breakdown, and the Israeli attack on Gaza, which the Swedish activist has labelled a “genocide.”

Greta Thunberg was once a media darling. Organising a climate strike at her local school when she was just 15, she shot to fame and was quickly embraced by the establishment. In 2019, she was invited to the Euro-pean Union Parliament and received a standing ovation from the politicians and diplomats in attendance.

She also spoke in front of the British government. Yet even as she told them that they were a pack of “liars” responsible for “one of the greatest failures of humankind,” the young Swede was applauded in a patronising manner.

The then-Environmental Secretary Michael Gove admitted being moved by her words, stating, “When I listened to you, I felt great admi-

ration, but also responsibility and guilt. I am of your parents’ generation, and I recognise that we haven’t done nearly enough to address climate change and the broader environmental crisis that we helped to create.”

Her message of the urgent need to address the impending climate crisis was one that was palatable to authorities, who attempted to co-opt her with access and accolades.

In 2019, despite being only 16 years old, she won the Swedish Woman of the Year award and was named by *Forbes* magazine as one of the world’s 100 most powerful women. *Time* magazine even awarded her its prestigious Person of the Year cover for, in their words, “sounding the alarm about humanity’s predatory relationship with the only home we have . . . bringing to a fragmented world a voice that transcends back-

Coverage of Thunberg in elite media outlets has plummeted to almost nothing, even as she continues to fight for global causes

grounds and borders,” and for “showing us all what it might look like when a new generation leads.”

While conservatives were hostile to her from the start, more liberal institutions showered her with attention and praise. The *New York Times*, for example, described her as “a modern-day Cassandra for the age of climate change,” and noted that her work had “inspired huge children’s demonstrations” across the planet.

Yet Thunberg refused to be turned into a mascot for the elites, and the co-option failed. As a result, coverage of her in elite media outlets has plummeted to almost nothing, even as she continues to fight for global causes and risks her life trying to break the illegal blockade of Gaza.

This phenomenon can be seen by studying the coverage of Thunberg in the *New York Times* and The *Washington Post*. Shooting to public attention in 2018, Thunberg and her activities were, at first, given copious coverage in both newspapers, amounting to hundreds of articles per year in each outlet. Yet this has dwindled to virtually nothing by 2025, with only three *Times* and two *Post* articles even mentioning Thunberg, and only one in each covering her in any detail beyond a passing reference.



SPEAKING OUT: Environmental activist Greta Thunberg, wearing a keffiyeh, on Nov. 16, 2024, protests in front of the UN office in Yerevan over UN climate conference being set in Baku, Azerbaijan, “an authoritarian petrol state”

The data was compiled by searching for the term “Greta Thunberg” in the *New York Times* archive and Dow Jones Factiva news database, a tool that records the content from more than 32,000 US and international media outlets.

Dr. Jill Stein, a three-time presidential candidate for the United States Green Party, was not surprised by the findings. “It comes with the territory when you go from inside the box to outside the box, and it is a real sign of integrity when the media stops covering you,” she told *MintPress*. “Greta has been cancelled, like

many of the best activists I know of.”

The precipitous drop in corporate media interest closely correlates with Thunberg’s increasingly radical stances. In 2022, she identified capitalism as a prime cause of climate collapse and explained the need for a comprehensive global revolution, stating that, “What we refer to as ‘normal’ is an extreme system built on the exploitation of people and the planet. It is a system defined by colonialism, imperialism, oppression, and genocide by the so-called global North to accumulate wealth that still shapes our current world order.”

At the same public event, she dismissed the United Nations Climate

Change Conferences as a waste of time, and merely an opportunity for “people in power... to [use] greenwashing, lying and cheating.”

She has also gone out of her way to support workers’ struggles against their bosses. Last year, she visited the GKN auto parts factory in Florence, Italy, a site that striking workers have occupied.

“Climate justice equals workers’ rights,” she explained, noting that, “[E]very necessity to choose between the struggle for labour and the struggle for climate justice is abolished. The territory defends the factory, the factory defends the territory. The fight to get to the end of the month is the same fight against

the end of the world.”

She has spoken out against the Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara, in support of striking Indian farmers, and against the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Undoubtedly, however, it is her solidarity with the Palestinian people and their cause that has earned her the most flak.

In 2021, she shared a social media post accusing Israel of carrying out war crimes, adding that it was “Devastating to follow the developments in Jerusalem and Gaza,” adding the hashtag #SaveSheikhJarrah to her post. In the wake of the Oct. 7 attack and the Israeli bombardment that followed it, she called for an immediate ceasefire and for freedom and justice for Palestine. And last year, she was arrested while protesting Israel’s inclusion in the Eurovision Song Contest. For these actions, she has been vocally condemned by many of the same outlets that, only a few years previously, had celebrated and promoted her.

Just days after her calls for a ceasefire, *Forbes* magazine ran a story headlined “Greta Thunberg’s stand with Gaza is a problem for the climate change movement,” which claimed that sharing “controversial opinions that only serve to alienate entire demographics” does not “advance an environmental cause,” and “only weakens her ability to advocate and harms the overall climate change movement.”

Another *Forbes* article described her career arc as a “tragedy” and claimed that she was driven by an all-encompassing “hatred of Israel” and a determination to “destroy the Jewish state.” Meanwhile, influential German publication *Der Spiegel*, which had awarded her its “Person of the Year” accolade in 2019, branded her an “antisemite.”

The fight for a greener world is inseparable from the struggle for political and economic freedom: “There is no way of distinguishing the two”

For Stein, Thunberg’s media excommunication cannot simply be explained by the notion that the exploits of a 22-year-old organiser are less newsworthy than those of a precocious teenager.

Rather, it was her public stances against capitalism, imperialism, and Israel’s actions in Gaza that angered them.

“Each of those [stances] were a step-down in the eyes of mainstream media and the oligarchy they defend,” she said. “You could see the pushback against her starting when she began to speak about climate, social and economic justice. But when she began to take a stand on Gaza, that was the last straw, and you didn’t see her getting mainstream media coverage after that,” she added.

Thunberg sees the fight for a greener world as inseparable from the struggle for political and economic freedom. “For me, there is no way of distinguishing the two,” she said, adding, “We cannot have climate justice without social justice. The reason why I am a climate activist is not because I want to protect trees. I’m a climate activist because I care about human and planetary well-being, and those are extremely interlinked.”

Dimitri Lascaris, a lawyer and former Green Party of Canada leadership candidate who has sailed on multiple “freedom flotillas” attempting to break the Gaza blockade, said that the shunning of Thunberg also represents “an indictment of the environmental movement.” As Las-

caris told *MintPress*: Before Greta took an incredibly courageous stand for the victims of Israel’s genocidal regime, she was the darling of the movement, but many of those same ‘environmentalists’ who lionised her have fallen silent as she risks her life to draw attention to the suffering of Palestinians. Environmental justice and human rights are inextricably linked. If you will not stand with Greta now, then you have no right to call yourself an ‘environmental activist.’”

In addition to her political trajectory, Thunberg recently took a physical journey, sailing on an aid ship to Gaza in an attempt to break the Israeli blockade. She was one of 12 public figures to board the *Madleen* at the Sicilian port of Catania. Others included *Game of Thrones* actor Liam Cunningham and French politician Rima Hassan.

The ship was carrying urgently-needed supplies, including flour, rice, and other staples, as well as baby formula, feminine hygiene products, medical supplies, crutches, prosthetic limbs, and water desalination kits.

The *Madleen* is a small vessel, and the aid was but a drop in the ocean of what authorities say is needed. Organisers, however, emphasised the symbolic importance of breaking the blockade from the outside.

“We are doing this because no matter what odds we are against, we have to keep trying, because the moment we stop trying is when we lose our humanity,” Thunberg explained. The volunteers and crew were sailing unarmed and had been trained in non-violence.

Corporate media largely ignored the *Madleen*’s voyage. The *New York Times*, for example, had not covered it at all [until June 8, after Israel made big news by intercepting

the ship].

[By June 6, several days after the ship had begun its journey] the *Washington Post* had dedicated a single article to it. Other outlets, bitterly denounced the operation. “Greta Thunberg’s narcissism has escalated to terrifying levels,” ran the headline [on June 2] in Britain’s *Daily Telegraph*, which labelled it a “self-serving stunt masquerading as a daring act of charity.”

Some commentators displayed even more hostility to the mission. US Senator Lindsey Graham, for instance, stated that he hoped “Greta and her friends can swim,” openly suggesting the aid ship should be attacked.

In May, the Israeli military attacked another boat attempting to deliver lifesaving aid to Palestine, firing missiles at the vessel just outside Maltese waters. The incident was largely ignored in the Western press.

Stein was impressed by Thunberg’s bravery, telling *MintPress*: “It is heroic, it is inspirational, and it is galvanising to have this example of her and the others on the Freedom Flotilla. Their incredibly courageous, compassionate humanitarian example is the polar opposite of this horrific genocide. They are risking their lives and they know it... But they refuse to accept a genocide, or to be powerless in the face of it.”

The lack of press attention likely does not surprise Thunberg, who identified Western corporate media as active participants in the slaughter.

“Our governments, our institu-



SOUNDING THE ALARM – Thunberg was *Time* magazine's Person of the Year in 2019

tions, our companies are supporting this genocide... It is our tax money. It is our media who are continuing to dehumanise Palestinians,” she said. “On behalf of the international community, the so-called Western world, I am so sorry that we have betrayed you by not supporting you enough,” she added.

The manner in which the ruling class has collectively dumped Thunberg is far from an isolated incident. Elite liberal forces have historically

The lack of press attention likely does not surprise Thunberg, who identified Western corporate media as participants in slaughter

attempted to defang and dilute radical challenges to the status quo, such as Black Lives Matter, the LGBT liberation movement, and the Occupy Wall Street protests, offering their leaders access and privileges.

If this strategy fails, figures and movements are shunned, rebuked, or attacked. While Martin Luther King focused his attention on racist Southern sheriffs, he was treated with respect. But after his anti-war “Beyond Vietnam” speech, where he trained his guns on the “triple evils of racism, extreme materialism and militarism,” he became public enemy number one, and was ignored, denounced, and, ultimately, assassinated.

Thunberg shows no sign of backing down. “We are standing up for justice,

sustainability, liberation for everyone. There can be no climate justice without social justice,” she said. That is precisely the kind of talk that got her ejected from elite polite society in the first place. **CT**

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80 years after Trinity, the dangers of nuclear war have never been higher

To act as though US-Russia relations could escalate geopolitical conflicts while restoring nuclear-arms treaties is the political equivalent of magical thinking

The dangers of nuclear war have never been higher, but political pressure to prevent it is at low ebb. Eighty years after the atomic age began with the Trinity bomb test in New Mexico on July 16, 1945, words can't possibly be adequate to describe the extent of global horrors that today's nuclear arsenals are capable of inflicting. But mainstream US media outlets and partisan politics are routinely oblivious to the threat of oblivion.

Despite the efforts of individuals and groups striving for arms control, the national discourse ignores the likely results of nuclear buildups – which continue to boost the actual risks of annihilation. Pronouncements from the nuclear establishment about a need to “maintain deterrence” and “modernise” usually go unquestioned as to the underlying assumptions. Senators and representatives praise nuclear systems with components produced in their state or district.

Even well-informed and dedicated advocates of halting the arms race are often reduced to arguing for fiscal responsibility. Within the narrow confines of regular “national security” debates, the wisest lobbying tactic appears to be a focus on ex-

orbitant costs of “modernising” nuclear weapons. Yet cost-cutting arguments bypass how the weapons push the world closer to doomsday.

Northrop Grumman – the contractor for the new Sentinel ICBM, which is meant to replace the current Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles – has racked up such huge cost overruns that the project at times seemed to be in jeopardy of cancellation. Meanwhile, the political response detoured around the unique dangers of ICBMs, which (as land-based missiles vulnerable to attack) remain on hair-trigger, “use them or lose them” alert. Given the long record of false alarms, such hyper vigilance is a possible tripwire for an accidental apocalypse.

Getting trapped in an argument about the cheapest way to keep ICBMs operational in their silos is ultimately no-win,” Daniel Ellsberg and I wrote for *The Nation* in autumn 2021. We added: “Better sooner than later, members of Congress will need to face up to the horrendous realities about intercontinental ballistic missiles. They won't do that unless peace, arms-control, and disarmament groups go far beyond the cur-

rent limits of congressional discourse – and start emphasising, on Capitol Hill and at the grassroots, the crucial truth about ICBMs and the imperative of eliminating them all.”

More than 700 scientists signed a letter last summer going beyond the focus on cost to urge the complete elimination of America's ICBMs. The letter, organised by the Union of Concerned Scientists, explained that “the US could eliminate the land-based leg of the triad tomorrow and the US public would only be safer for it.”

Progressives working to defund new weapons systems recognise that massive military spending is, in the words of Martin Luther King Jr., a “demonic, destructive suction tube” – depleting enormous resources that should be devoted to meeting human needs instead of destroying lives and threatening survival. But for typical Congress members of either party, disputes about how to get the most bang for the buck are affirming the arms race rather than impeding it. Certain firms might lose specific contracts if some Strangelovian projects are sufficiently exposed as boondoggles, but the nuclear-arms industry and overall military business remain on a steep upward trajectory.



CHANGING THE WORLD: After the displacement of the local inhabitants, 67 nuclear tests were carried out from 1946 to 1958, including the explosion of the first H-bomb (above) in 1952 at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands in the Pacific Ocean

Congresspeople are accustomed to juggling billions of “defense” dollars. What they aren’t accustomed to acknowledging – and what constituent pressure should demand they face – is that the latest weapons systems further endanger human life on Earth.

The history of the last eight decades tells us that Americans will go along with astronomical spending for nuclear weaponry if they believe it makes them safer. Unless we ef-

fectively make the case that the opposite is true, the nuclear arms race will continue to play out in media and politics as a pricey necessity.

In recent years, numerous activists and groups have given priority to calling for abolition of nuclear weapons. It’s a position that occupies the highest moral ground, famously seized by the Nobel laureate scientist George Wald in a widely reprinted 1969 anti-war speech at MIT. “Nuclear weapons offer us nothing

but a balance of terror, and a balance of terror is still terror,” he said. “We have to get rid of those atomic weapons, here and everywhere. We cannot live with them.”

During the past several years, accelerating work by activists for abolition has drawn inspiration from the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, now signed by 94 countries, and visionary organisations like the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

Unfortunately, campaigning for the abolition of nuclear weapons does not have any evident capacity to hinder the US government’s leading role in propelling the momentum of the arms race. No matter how heartfelt and imbued with wisdom, pleas for abolition do not present a threat to the unrestrained and voracious power of the military-industrial complex.

A truly horrific reality in 2025, and for the realistically foreseeable future, is that nuclear weapons will remain on this planet, brandished against the entire human species. The word “realistically” may cause some to bristle. But a lack of such distasteful realism can divert resources, time, and energies away from where they’re most needed.

Desperate needs include far greater activism, public messaging, and political organising to avert the worst. The top of the agenda should include: renewal of US-Russia New START treaty set to expire next February; reinstatement of three vital nuclear-arms pacts cancelled by the US government, the Anti-Ballistic Missile, Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces, and Open Skies treaties; and initiation of step-by-step disarmament measures that can sometimes involve wise unilateral actions by the US government,

as in the case of ICBMs.

“We are closer to nuclear catastrophe today than at any point since the Cold War,” Representative Jim McGovern said this spring when reintroducing a House resolution “urging the United States to lead the world back from the brink of nuclear war and halt and reverse the nuclear arms race.” With 21 co-sponsors, the resolution “calls on the president” to take major steps toward sanity, none of which Joe Biden chose to take and none of which Donald Trump shows any indication of taking.

Looking at the names on the non-binding resolution, a reason for discouragement is that only 10 percent of House Democrats and not a single Republican signed on. A less obvious problem is that the signers are not speaking out for vigorous American diplomacy to end the Ukraine war, which may be a prerequisite for restarting any semblance of dialogue on nuclear dangers between Washington and Moscow.

For more than three years, ever since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, congressional Democrats have rarely advocated the kind of diplomatic efforts that might stop the war’s carnage. Such efforts could supply a scaffold for rebuilding the arms-control architecture.

But the default role for even progressive Democrats on the Hill has been to support no-strings arming of the Ukrainian military (“let’s you and them fight”) while depicting the Kremlin as incapable of serious negotiations. Yet the McGovern resolution says that the United States should lead a worldwide effort to prevent nuclear war by “in particular, pursuing and concluding new nuclear arms control and disarmament arrangements with the Russian Federation to prevent a build-

For those of us who have lived in the era of nuclear bombs for many decades, still being alive can seem close to miraculous luck

up of nuclear forces beyond current levels.”

So while some congressional Democrats are emphatic that the United States should directly negotiate with Russia to prevent nuclear war, those same lawmakers are not willing to push for US negotiations with Russia to end the Ukraine war.

In reality, thawing the deep freeze of the new Cold War is essential to halt and reverse the race toward annihilation. Voicing hope that nuclear-arms negotiations can be successful in tandem with belligerence toward Russia may seem politic, but it is not realistic.

While hawkish legislators make no pretence of interest in any step toward détente, it’s important that at least a minority of Democrats at the Capitol are urging diplomatic talks aimed at preventing nuclear war. Yet it’s hard to imagine those Democrats sounding anything like President Lyndon B. Johnson at the close of his summit with Russian Premier Alexei Kosygin in mid-1967 in Glassboro, New Jersey, when LBJ said, “We have made further progress in an effort to improve our understanding of each other’s thinking on a number of questions.”

Today, the Democrats who talk about the need to avoid nuclear war do not seem especially interested in “an effort to improve our understanding” of the Russian leadership’s thinking. The rote storyline – that Vladimir Putin is evil, end of story – blends in smoothly with US news media and the punditocracy. What it also does is give more fuel

to the momentum toward nuclear holocaust.

Many who justifiably derided President George W. Bush after 9/11 for his Manichean view of the world are now largely replicating it. Implicit in the current worldview is that – after decades of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, causing deaths into the millions, and now while continuing to serve as the crucial accomplice for ongoing genocide in Gaza – the US government is clearly virtuous, in complete contrast with the Russian government because of its own unconscionable aggression in Ukraine.

The prevailing reflex, to act as though US-Russia relations could roll along on two tracks – escalating geopolitical conflicts while restoring and concluding major nuclear-arms treaties – is the political equivalent of magical thinking, if not simply craven expediency.

Meanwhile, for the corporate beneficiaries of a trillion-dollar Pentagon budget and an out-of-control nuclear weapons programme, the more hostility toward Russia and China the better. And the country that brought atomic weapons into the world is still lead the way toward thermonuclear destruction.

For those of us who have lived in the era of nuclear bombs, still being alive can seem close to miraculous luck and collective efforts for sanity must have been factors. Now, the generations with most of their lives potentially ahead are in a world that could instantly make that impossible. The heightened militarism of American politics is threatening to seal their fate. **CT**

Norman Solomon is the executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy, the author of War Made Invisible: How America Hides the Human Toll of Its Military Machine, and a cofounder of RootsAction.org



Israel's **starvation of**
Palestinians forced at least

18,741 children

to be treated for **acute**
malnutrition in Gaza during the
first six months of 2025

VISUALIZING **PALESTINE**

SOURCE United Nations Office for the Coordination
of Humanitarian Affairs – Occupied Palestinian Territory.
Gaza humanitarian response update, 8–21 June 2025.

JULY 2025
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Sly Stone turned isolation into inspiration

He changed the process of making music forever
– in the funkiest way possible

In the fall of 1971, Sly and the Family Stone's *There's a Riot Goin' On* landed like a quiet revolution.

After two years of silence following the band's mainstream success, fans expected more feel-good funk from the ensemble. What they got instead was something murkier and more fractured, yet deeply intimate and experimental. This was not just an album; it was the sound of a restless mind rebuilding music from the inside out.

At the centre of it all was frontman Sly Stone.

Long before the home studio became an industry norm, Stone, who died on June 9, 2025, turned the studio into both a sanctuary and an instrument. And long before sampling defined the sound of hip-hop, he was using tape and machine rhythms to deconstruct existing songs to cobble together new ones.

As someone who spends much of my time working on remote recording and audio production – from building full arrangements solo to collaborating digitally across continents – I'm deeply indebted to Sly Stone's approach to making music.

He was among the first major artists to fully embrace the recording environment as a space to compose rather than perform. Every reverb bounce, every drum machine tick,

every overdubbed breath became part of the writing process.

Sly and the Family Stone's early albums – including *Dance to the Music* and *Stand!* – were recorded at top-tier facilities like CBS Studios in Los Angeles under the technical guidance of engineers such as Don Puluse and with oversight from producer David Robinson.

These sessions yielded bright, radio-friendly tracks that emphasised tight horn sections, group vocals

and a polished sound. Producers also prized the energy of live performance, so the full band would record together in real time.

But by the early 1970s, Stone was burnt out. The dual pressures of fame and industry demands were becoming too much. Struggling with cocaine and PCP addiction, he'd grown increasingly distrustful of bandmates, label executives and even his friends.

So he decided to retreat to his hillside mansion in Bel Air, California, transforming his home into a musical bunker. Inside, he could work on his own terms: isolated and erratic, but free.

Without a full band present, Stone became a one-man ensemble. He leaned heavily into overdubbing – recording one instrument at a time and building his songs from fragments. Using multiple tape machines, he'd layer each part onto previous takes.

The resulting album, *There's a Riot Goin' On*, was like nothing he'd previously recorded. It sounds murky, jagged and disjointed. But it's also deeply intentional, as if every imperfection was part of the design.

In *The Poetics of Rock*, musicologist Albin Zak describes this “composerly” approach to production, where recording itself becomes a



REMEMBERING: Cover of Sly Stone's memoir, *Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin)* which was published in 2023



Sly Stone performs at Keystone Berkeley, California, on April 16, 1982

form of writing, not just documentation. Stone's process for *There's a Riot Goin' On* reflects this mindset: Each overdub, rhythm loop and sonic imperfection functions more like a brushstroke than a performance.

A key part of Stone's tool kit was the Maestro Rhythm King, a preset

drum machine he used extensively.

It wasn't the first rhythm box on the market. But Stone's use of it was arguably the first time such a machine shaped the entire aesthetic of a mainstream album. The drum parts on his track *Family Affair*, for example, don't swing – they

tick. What might have been viewed as soulless became its own kind of soul.

This early embrace of mechanical rhythm prefigured what would later become a foundation of hip-hop and electronic music. In his book *Dawn of the DAW*, music technology scholar Adam Patrick Bell calls this shift “a redefinition of groove,” noting how drum machines like the Rhythm King encouraged musicians to rethink their songwriting process, building tracks in shorter, repeatable sections while emphasizing steady, looped rhythms rather than free-flowing performances.

Although samplers wouldn't happen until years later, Stone's work already contained that repetition, layering and loop-based construction that would become characteristic of the practice.

He recorded his own parts the way future DJs would splice records – isolated, reshuffled, rhythmically obsessed. His overdubbed bass lines, keyboard vamps and vocal murmurs often sounded like puzzle pieces from other songs.

Music scholar Will Fulton, in his study of black studio innovation, notes how producers like Stone helped pioneer a fragment-based approach to music-making that would become central to hip-hop's DNA. Stone's process anticipated the mentality that a song isn't necessarily something written top to bottom, but something assembled, brick by brick, from what's available.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Stone's tracks have been sampled relentlessly. In *Bring That Beat Back*, music critic Nate Patrin identifies Stone as one of the most sample-friendly artists of the 1970s – not because of his commercial hits, but because of how much sonic space he left in his tracks: the open-ended grooves, un-

usual textures and slippery emotional tone.

You can hear his sounds in famous tracks such as 2Pac's *If My Homie Calls*, which samples *Sing a Simple Song*; A Tribe Called Quest's *The Jam*, which draws from *Family Affair*; and De La Soul's *Plug Tunin'*, which flips *You Can Make It If You Try*.

While Sly's approach was groundbreaking, he wasn't entirely alone. Around the same time, artists such as Brian Wilson and The Rolling Stones were experimenting with home and non-traditional recording environments – Wilson famously retreating to his home studio during *Pet Sounds*, and the Stones tracking *Exile on Main St.* in a French villa.

Yet in the world of black music, production remained largely centralised in institutionally controlled studio systems such as Motown in Detroit and Stax in Memphis, where sound was tightly managed by in-house producers and engineers. In

The rise of home recording didn't just change who could make music. It changed what music felt like – a radical act of autonomy

that context, Stone's decision to isolate, self-produce and dismantle the standard workflow was more than a technical choice: It was a radical act of autonomy.

The rise of home recording didn't just change who could make music. It changed what music felt like. It made music more internal, iterative and intimate. Sly Stone helped invent that feeling.

It's easy to hear *There's a Riot Goin' On* as murky or uneven. The mix is dense with tape hiss, drum machines drift in and out of sync, and vocals often feel buried or half-whispered.

But it's also, in a way, prophetic.

It anticipated the aesthetics of bedroom pop, the cut-and-paste style of modern music software, the shuffle of playlists and the recycling of sounds that defines sample culture. It showed that a groove didn't need to be spontaneous to be soulful, and that solitude could be a powerful creative tool, not a limitation.

In my own practice, I often record alone, passing files back and forth, building from templates and mapping rhythm to grid – as do millions of musical artists who compose tracks from their bedrooms, closets and garages.

Half a century ago, a funk pioneer led the way. I think it's safe to say that Sly Stone quietly changed the process of making music forever – and in the funkier way possible. **CT**

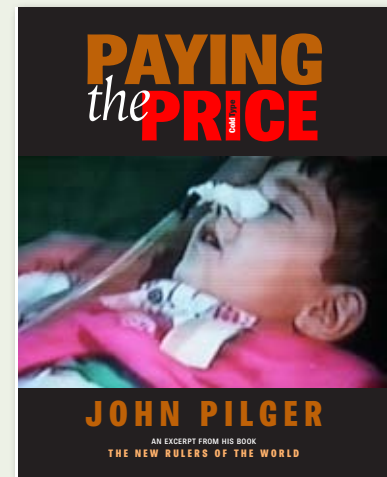
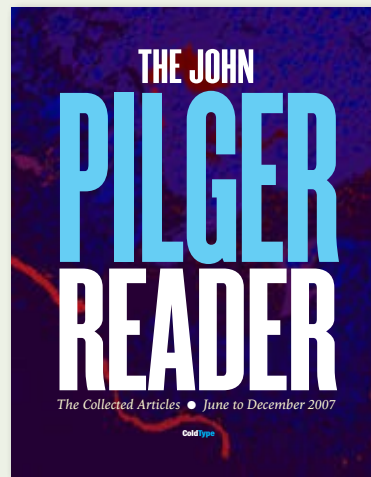
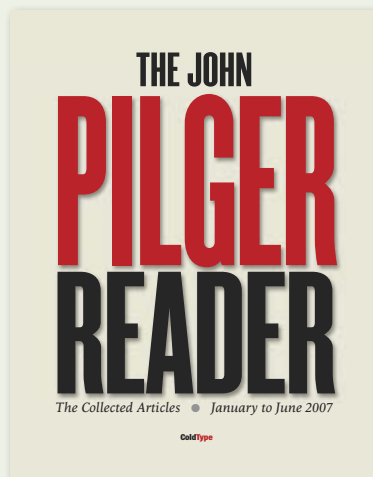
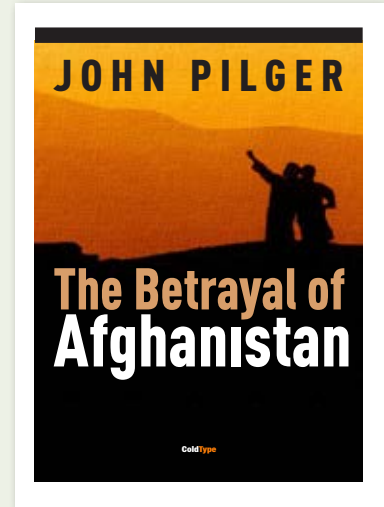
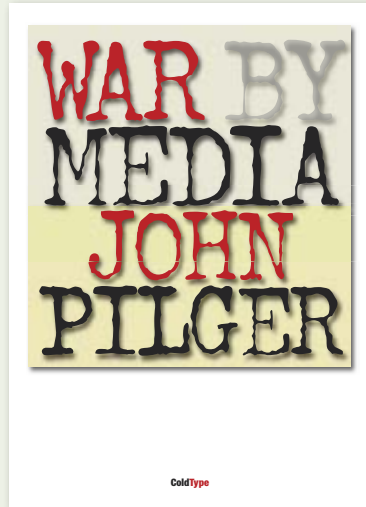
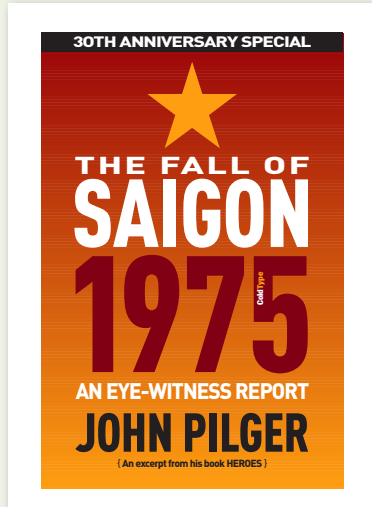
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How the UK government banned Palestine Action

High Court documents reveal serious concerns within the UK government and intelligence service about proscribing activist group Palestine Action

The UK government was secretly advised that Palestine Action is “highly unlikely” to advocate for violence while officials struggled to produce evidence the group posed a national security threat. Despite this, the activist group was banned early last month when Home Secretary Yvette Cooper proscribed it under terrorism legislation, the first time in British history that a direct-action group has been branded a terrorist organisation.

Only 26 MPs voted against the ban, which provoked a wave of civil disobedience across Britain, with protesters holding placards saying: “I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action.”

More than 100 people have now been arrested under the Terrorism Act for allegedly showing support for the group, including an 83-year-old priest and a man holding a cartoon from the satirical magazine *Private Eye*.

Declassified has now seen documents which detail why, how, and when the decision to proscribe Palestine Action was made. They form part of the material relied upon in the group’s High Court challenge to the ban.

The documents detail how the government’s Proscription Re-

view Group (PRG) conceded in March 2025 that a ban on Palestine Action would be “novel and unprecedented.”

This was because “there was no known precedent of an organisation being proscribed... mainly due to its use or threat of action involving serious damage to property.”

The Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC), which is based within MI5, also concluded that “the majority of direct action by Palestine Action would not be classified as terrorism... but does often involve criminality.”

Cooper was nonetheless advised in March by PRG and JTAC that the threshold to ban the group had been met based on three out of a total of 385 incidents, involving “serious property damage” to arms factories.

Lawyers representing the group’s co-founder Huda Ammori argued in court that these activities were not intended to “influence the government” and therefore could not satisfy the statutory test for terrorism.

While one incident involved several alleged assaults, moreover, UK officials broadly recognised that Palestine Action (PA) does not promote or encourage attacks on people.

The JTAC assessment notes how, “PA media channels highly likely will only share footage, or encourage, instances of property damage.

PA branded media will highly unlikely explicitly advocate for violence against persons.”

The documents also indicate how national security concerns were not a central factor in the Home Office’s decision to proscribe. Indeed, they barely feature in the government’s open evidence.

Ammori’s lawyers argued in court that “no national security justification for the proscription” was articulated by the Home Office, such that Cooper “did not take into account any weighty national security consideration requiring immediate proscription.”

This appears to run contrary to Cooper’s statement to parliament on 23 June, in which she declared: “The UK’s defence enterprise is vital to the nation’s national security and this Government will not tolerate those who put that security at risk.”

Once the ban had been announced, Britain became engulfed in a media firestorm of allegations that Palestine Action might be funded by Iran.

On 23 June, the day of Cooper’s statement to parliament, the *Times* published a report saying “Iran could be funding Palestine Action, Home Office officials claimed.”

It added: “Officials are understood to be investigating its source of donations amid concerns that the Ira-



ARRESTING MOMENT: “It’s a messed up world when opposing genocide makes a peaceful protester in breach of our antiterrorism laws,” said a commentator on X

nian regime, via proxies, is funding the group’s activities given that their objectives are aligned.”

Shortly after, the *Daily Mail* asked: “Does Palestine Action’s cash trail lead all the way to Iran?” with *GB News*, the *Spectator*, and the *Telegraph* also picking up on the story.

Yet the JTAC assessment of Palestine Action’s sources of funding makes no mention of Iran whatsoever, and nor does the Intelligence and Security Committee’s recent report on Iranian state threats to Britain.

The JTAC report, issued on March 7, 2025, simply notes that Palestine Action “is primarily funded by donations, which can be made directly through their website or via crowdfunding. Other forms of revenue include the sale of merchandise.”

The discrepancy between the Home Office press briefings and the official intelligence reports raises the prospect that a state-linked disinformation campaign was waged against Palestine Action in order to manufacture public consent

for proscription.

The documents seen by Declassified also detail clear concerns within Britain’s Foreign Office about proscription.

“Palestine Action, despite engaging in disruptive tactics, is primarily seen by many countries as an activist group rather than an extremist one,” a Foreign Office report dated March 2025 notes.

“Concerns in this respect have been highlighted by posts in Italy, Belgium, the Occupied Palestinian Territories [OPTs] and the Netherlands,” it added. “It is highly unlikely that countries like Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium would take similar action.”

The Foreign Office also expected criticism from the OPTs, while Arab states were seen as “highly likely to question our decision.”

In addition, public disapproval was expected from “some in global civil society organisations who claim the UK is stifling freedom of expression by suppressing Palestinian voices at the expense of supporting Israel.”

The Foreign Office cited a letter sent by UN experts to Prime Minister Keir Starmer in November 2024 which argued that the use of counter-terror legislation against Palestine Action was “unjustified.”

“The letter raised concerns about potential infringements of the fundamental rights of political prisoners and the treatment of activists within Palestine Action,” the Foreign Office noted.

Remarkably, the Foreign Office specifically advised against proscription in March “in response to the breakdown of the ceasefire [in Gaza] and the interaction with Ramadan.”

It noted that proscription at this time risked being “received poorly both domestically and abroad by our partners where it could be perceived as pro-Israel bias after the resump-

ly delayed approving the proscription order until June 2025 citing the Foreign Office's advice, as well as considerations relating to local elections and forthcoming Palestine Action trials.

The incident at RAF Brize Norton, when Palestine Action activists sprayed paint into Voyager aircraft, was therefore the trigger but not the cause of the proscription order, which had been approved months prior. Even then, the Home Office did not seem to be altogether confident in the ban. It included in the proscription order two other organisations, the Maniacs Murder Cult and Russian Imperial Movement, with the apparent goal of lumping Palestine Action together with neo-Nazi groups and making it difficult for MPs to vote against.

The Foreign Office was nonetheless satisfied that the US government would respond positively to the proscription, the documents show.

On March 11, an internal Foreign Office report concluded that the US was "likely to be the most supportive of our Five Eyes partners regarding a UK proscription given the new Administration's position on the OPTs."

This is despite the UK government openly opposing Trump's position on the OPTs.

In February, Trump shocked the world by suggesting that the US could "take over" and "own" Gaza, resettling the entire population in the process, in a clear violation of international law.

UK foreign secretary David Lammy responded to these comments shortly after, saying Britain does "not support forced displacement of Palestinians or any reduction in the territory of the Gaza strip. Palestinians must be able to live and prosper in the OPTs."

There is evidence, moreover, to suggest that Trump may have

WBI was directed by prominent pro-Israel figure Luke Akehurst for 13 years from 2011-24 before he became a Labour MP

weighed in on the issue of Palestine Action's proscription.

On 8 March 2025, Palestine Action activists vandalised the Trump-owned Turnberry golf resort in Scotland, painting the words "Gaza is not 4 sale" on the grass and graffitiing the clubhouse.

Trump took to his Truth Social media platform shortly afterwards to call Palestine Action "terrorists."

He added: "I was just informed by Prime Minister Starmer of the United Kingdom, that they caught the terrorists who attacked the beautiful Turnberry, in Scotland. They did serious damage, and will hopefully be treated harshly."

A Downing Street source told Declassified that Palestine Action was not discussed during either of the prime minister's phone calls with Trump on March 10 and March 30, though separate discussions may have taken place. The UK government was also concerned that a ban on Palestine Action might give credence to claims that the pro-Israel lobby exerts influence over decision-making.

"News reporting has previously alleged that Home Office ministers attempted to influence the police and prosecutors in targeting Palestine Action activists, following meetings with Elbit Systems," the report notes.

Declassified recently revealed that Elbit Systems pushed for a retrial after charges against Palestine Action's co-founders were dismissed. "Other reports documented Israeli embassy officials purport-

edly attempting to get the attorney general's office to intervene in court cases. In the context of such reports, proscription could provide fertile ground for actors attempting to substantiate a pattern of bias," the report continues.

Emphasis was also placed on the impact of proscription on the reputation of Lord Walney, the government's former "independent" adviser on political violence, who has accepted funding from pro-Israel and arms trade lobbyists.

Any ban "could be seen as the partial realisation of Lord Walney's efforts, which dissenting actors could argue were coloured by pro-Israel bias," the report says, while acknowledging that he opposed going so far as to ban the group.

Additionally, it was privately noted that Palestine Action's proscription "could energise further calls from pro-Israel advocates to ban more moderate pro-Palestinian groups, emboldened by the precedent set."

CT

Editor's Note: On July 30, High Court judge Justice Chamberlain granted Palestine Action (PA) co-founder Huda Ammori's application for a judicial review of Yvette Cooper's designation of PA as a terrorist group. The first stage will take place 12 Sept - a secret trial hearing - then moving to judicial review in November.

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His PhD was on Britain's Secret Wars in Colombia between 1948 and 2009, and he is currently working on a documentary about Britain's role in the rise of Augusto Pinochet. This article was originally published at www.declassifieduk.org



STOP BOMBING CHILDREN

The secret life of government cheese

The story of how the US government came to store millions of pounds of cheese begins with the Great Depression

More than 100 feet beneath the ground in Springfield, Missouri, there are expansive, dimly lit limestone caves.

These caves are not filled with either iridescent hanging stalactites nor emerging, rocky stalagmites. Instead, the football-field-sized caverns are stuffed to the brim with American-made cheese: cheddar, Swiss, provolone, and even a room dedicated to Wisconsin curds. The original owner of these infamous cheese caves? The United States government.

For decades, it was official American policy to purchase and store massive amounts of cheese in Missouri, Wisconsin, and Kansas. In the intervening decades, a company called Springfield Underground has taken over operations. While the USDA itself no longer actively stockpiles cheese in the caves, their use for storing immense amounts of dairy products continues, a quiet testament to the persistent overproduction baked into federal dairy policy.

The story of how the government came to store millions of pounds of cheese underground begins with the Great Depression. As prices for agricultural products collapsed in the 1930s, dairy farmers across the country faced financial ruin. Despite their

pleas, distributors refused to raise their prices, convinced Americans would not pay a premium for a pantry staple. Infuriated, farmers took to the streets, sabotaging milkmen on their delivery routes and pouring gallons of milk on the ground to make their point.

They won: Franklin Delano Roosevelt offered subsidies to farmers who agreed to reduce their production in order to raise milk prices. While FDR's policies planted the seeds of federal agricultural intervention, they would pale in comparison to what came later.

Throughout World War II, the American government touted dairy production as a vital contribution to the national war effort. They shipped dried milk to soldiers overseas, and new research about milk's ability to build muscle mass made it the ideal beverage for the nation's virile self-image. "If you read the literature from the 1940s, there's an almost religious feel to the discussions of dairies' powers," said Andrew Novakovic, E.V. Baker Professor of Agricultural Economics Emeritus at Cornell University. (A glowing pamphlet from the era described cheese as "a food no one should live without.") Soon, this belief became law. In 1946, Congress signed

the 1946 National School Lunch Act, which required every meal served in schools to include milk.

But milk presented a logistical challenge. It was easily perishable, costly to transport, and difficult to store. For many dairy farmers, the precarity of their product necessitated a consistent, stable consumer. To promote production, Congress passed the Agricultural Act of 1949, which included the Milk Price Support Program (MPSP).

The programme guaranteed a minimum price for milk and authorised the USDA to buy the surplus when prices dipped below the support level. With the government as a buyer of last resort, production among dairy farmers soared.

With their newfound certainty, they raced to churn out as much milk and cheese as possible.

That trend intensified under President Jimmy Carter. A peanut farmer from Georgia with deep ties to rural America, Carter viewed price support as a lifeline for struggling farmers, many of whom were being crushed by inflation and rising input costs in the 1970s. While running for president, he promised to raise the price of support for vulnerable dairy farmers and when elected, followed through. The result was a dramatic oversupply of dairy. Since it spoils quickly, the US government encour-



EAT THIS: Millions of tons of cheese are still stored in various “Cheese Caves” around Springfield, Missouri

aged producers to transform their milk into cheese, and the USDA began stockpiling the surplus in warehouses across the country, including deep underground in Springfield, Missouri. At its peak, the government spent over \$2 billion a year to store the excess, much of it entombed beneath the Midwest.

When Ronald Reagan took office in 1981 promising to slash federal spending, the cheese stockpile became a symbol of a bloated government.

In an infamous press conference, Reagan’s Secretary of Agriculture, John R. Block, held up a five-pound brick of processed cheese and declared, “We’ve got 60 million of these that the government owns. It’s mouldy, it’s deteriorating ... we can’t find a market for it, we can’t sell it,

and we’re looking to give it away.”

Some critics proposed dumping it in the ocean. Instead, amid rising hunger and a recession, the Reagan administration created a solution: Give it away. The USDA began distributing the surplus through food banks, churches, and welfare offices. This marked the beginning of what became known – often mockingly, sometimes gratefully – as “government cheese.” (Not to be confused with the new TV show of the same name.)

To many, the image of government cheese embodied the contradictions of federal policy. A symbol of waste born from overproduction and bu-

reaucratic miscalculations yet also a lifeline for millions of food-insecure Americans.

The dense, salty cheese was emblematic of the era’s social safety net: essential, flawed, and stigmatized. These contradictions were used to justify sweeping changes. Under Reagan, the federal government began scaling back and privatizing key food assistance programs, leading to a major reduction in SNAP. The public image of food aid shifted from a social right to a begrudging handout.

Today, the former government cheese caves are still operational, but the Department of Agriculture is no longer their primary tenant. The Springfield Underground complex has been transformed into a vast in-

dustrial logistics hub, with over 3 million square feet of temperature-controlled storage leased to corporations like Kraft Heinz, PepsiCo, and Nestlé. Some of the same companies that benefited from USDA dairy surplus purchases during the program's heyday now rent space in the very caverns once used to house that surplus. These artificial caves maintain a steady 58 degrees year-round, making them ideal for storing perishable goods including cheese, which is still housed there, albeit now as private inventory.

While the US government no longer actively stockpiles cheese, the surplus problem hasn't entirely disappeared. In 2022, the USDA reported that commercial inventories of American cheese topped 1.5 billion pounds, the highest level since the 1980s. Though most of that cheese is now stored above ground in refrigerated warehouses, the symbolism of the caves persists and is often invoked during debates over agricultural subsidies and food aid.

Dozens of viral TikTok videos continue to show the Springfield cheese caves with a mix of befuddlement and pride. "This is where our taxes go?!" writes one user; "God Bless America," says another. Despite privatisation, the caves remain a subterranean monument to the country's ongoing struggle to balance food security, farm economics, and public perception.

Government cheese, once a symbol of abundance and attempts to help small farmers, has continued to be a

The symbolism of the caves persists and is often invoked during debates over agricultural subsidies and food aid

symbol of government dysfunction – a stigma that persists to this day.

In President Trump's "one big beautiful bill," which recently passed the US House of Representatives, federal funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) would decrease by more than \$267 billion over 10 years.

The impact of that cut would be enormous: More than 40 million Americans rely on SNAP, including one in five families with children. Like in the 1980s, accusations of government waste have fuelled calls to reduce the social safety net. Once again, dairy is at the centre of the story – but this time, the industry could face a major loss.

According to Mother Jones, the dairy industry still receives nearly \$1 billion a year in subsidies. Perhaps the largest, least visible subsidy flows through federal food programs like SNAP, WIC, and school lunches. A prime example: Every federally reimbursed school meal must still include a carton of milk regardless of whether or not students want it, need it, or can even digest it. Some students have even protested and won lawsuits over the fact that they need a doctor's note to receive soy milk.

This creates an enormous federally subsidised market for dairy. In fact, recent bipartisan legislation proposed by the dairy lobby would expand this requirement to include whole and two percent milk, bringing more milk into

American schools. "Dairy producers understand that they are deeply intertwined with federal food aid programs," said Novakovic. If the Republicans' proposed cuts go through, the benefits could profoundly impact their bottom line. "Many dairy producers who supported [the President] are surprised to see the proposed cuts."

Luis A. Ribera, professor and extension economist at Texas A&M, agrees. "Every dairy producer I work with is aware of this connection [with the federal government] and many are frustrated by it," he said. Most would prefer open international markets as a release valve for their products, selling cheese in places like Canada and Europe, where import restrictions remain tight. Their goal isn't to produce less dairy, despite the fact that fewer Americans are drinking milk than ever before. Activists argue that instead of subsidising a fading industry, federal policy should pivot toward emerging, climate-conscious alternatives like almond, soy, and oat milks.

At a time when federal food aid is once again under attack and claims of government waste abound, it's no surprise that the cheese caves have resurfaced in the public imagination as viral symbols of confusion and government excess. While today's debates may feel new, the entanglement between the dairy industry and the American government is anything but. With dairy exports declining and domestic surpluses rising once more, it's not unthinkable that the government could once again return to the caves or finally shut off the milk spigot once and for all. **CT**

Colleen Hamilton is a journalist covering food, climate, and culture. Her writing has appeared in The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Eater, Teen Vogue, VICE, and other publications



► CHRIS HEDGES

Profiting from genocide

The latest report from Francesca Albanese, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, names hundreds of corporations, banks, technology firms, universities, pension funds and charities that profit from the Israeli occupation and genocide



War is a business. So is genocide. The latest report submitted by Francesca Albanese, Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, lists 48 corporations and institutions, including Palantir Technologies Inc., Lockheed Martin, Alphabet Inc., Amazon, International Business Machine Corporation (IBM), Caterpillar Inc., Microsoft Corporation and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), along with banks and financial firms such as Blackrock, insurers, real estate firms and charities, which in violation of international law are making billions from the occupation and the genocide of Palestinians.

The report, which includes a da-

tabase of over 1,000 corporate entities that collaborate with Israel, demands these firms and institutions sever ties with Israel or be held accountable for complicity in war crimes. It describes "Israel's "for-ever-occupation" as "the ideal testing ground for arms manufacturers and Big Tech – providing significant supply and demand, little oversight, and zero accountability - while investors and private and public institutions profit freely."

The post-Holocaust industrialists' trials and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission laid the legal framework for recognising the criminal responsibility of institutions and businesses that participate

in international crimes. This new report makes clear that decisions made by the International Court of Justice place an obligation on entities "to not engage and/or to withdraw totally and unconditionally from any associated dealings, and to ensure that any engagement with Palestinians enables their self-determination."

"The genocide in Gaza has not stopped because it's lucrative, it's profitable for far too many," Albanese told me. "It's a business. There are corporate entities, including from Palestine-friendly states, who have for decades made businesses and made profits out of the economy of the occupation. Israel has always exploited Palestinian land, resources and Palestinian life. The profits have continued and even increased as the economy of the occu-

pation transformed into an economy of genocide.”

In addition, she said, Palestinians have provided “boundless training fields to test the technologies, test weapons, to test surveillance techniques that now are being used against people everywhere from the Global South to the Global North.”

The report lambasts corporations for “providing Israel with the weapons and machinery required to destroy homes, schools, hospitals, places of leisure and worship, livelihoods and productive assets, such as olive groves and orchards.”

The Palestinian territory, the report notes, is a “captive market” because of Israeli-imposed restrictions on trade and investment, tree planting, fishing and water for colonies. Corporations have profited from this “captive market” by “exploiting Palestinian labour and resources, degrading and diverting natural resources, building and powering colonies and selling and marketing derived goods and services in Israel, the occupied Palestinian territory and globally.”

“Israel gains from this exploitation, while it costs the Palestinian economy at least 35 per cent of its GDP,” the report notes.

Banks, asset management firms, pension funds and insurers have “channelled finance into the illegal occupation,” the report charges. In addition, “universities – centres of intellectual growth and power – have sustained the political ideology underpinning the colonisation of Palestinian land, developed weaponry and overlooked or even endorsed systemic violence, while global research collaborations have obscured Palestinian erasure behind a veil of academic neutrality.”

Surveillance and incarceration technologies have “evolved into tools for indiscriminate targeting of the Palestinian population,” the report notes. “Heavy machinery pre-

The Palestinian territory, the report notes, is a “captive market” because of Israeli-imposed restrictions on trade and investment

viously used for house demolitions, infrastructure destruction and resource seizure in the West Bank have been repurposed to obliterate the urban landscape of Gaza, preventing displaced populations from returning and reconstituting as a community.”

The military assault on the Palestinians has also “provided testing grounds for cutting-edge military capabilities: air defence platforms, drones, targeting tools powered by artificial intelligence and even the F-35 programme led by the United States of America. These technologies are then marketed as ‘battle proven.’”

Since 2020, Israel has been the eighth largest arms exporter in the world. Its two biggest weapons companies are Elbit Systems Ltd and the state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries Ltd (IAI). It has a series of international partnerships with foreign weapons firms, including “for the F-35 fighter jet, led by United States-based Lockheed Martin.”

“Components and parts constructed globally contribute to the Israeli F-35 fleet, which Israel customises and maintains in partnership with Lockheed Martin and domestic companies,” the report reads. Since October 2023, F-35s and F-16s jets have been “integral to equipping Israel with the unprecedented aerial power to drop an estimated 85,000 tons of bombs, much of it unguided, to kill and injure more than 179,411 Pal-

estinians and obliterate Gaza.”

“Drones, hexacopters and quadcopters have also been omnipresent killing machines in the skies of Gaza,” the report reads. “Drones largely developed and supplied by Elbit Systems and Israel Aerospace Industries have long flown alongside fighter jets, surveilling Palestinians and delivering target intelligence. In the past two decades, with support from these companies and collaborations with institutions such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, drones used by Israel acquired automated weapons systems and the ability to fly in swarm formation.”

Japan’s FANUC companies sell automation products and “provide robotic machinery for weapons production lines, including for IAI, Elbit Systems and Lockheed Martin.”

“Shipping companies such as the Danish A.P. Moller – Maersk A/S transport components, parts, weapons and raw materials, sustaining a steady flow of United States-supplied military equipment post-October 2023.”

There was a “65 per cent surge in Israeli military spending from 2023 to 2024 – amounting to \$46.5 billion, one of the highest per capita worldwide.” This “generated a sharp surge in their annual profits,” while “Foreign arms companies, especially producers of munitions and ordnance, also profit.”

At the same time, tech companies have profited from the genocide by “providing dual-use infrastructure to integrate mass data collection and surveillance, while profiting from the unique testing ground for military technology offered by the occupied Palestinian territory.” They enhance “carceral and surveillance services, from closed-circuit television (CCTV) networks, biometric surveillance, advanced tech checkpoint networks, ‘smart walls’ and drone surveillance, to

cloud computing, artificial intelligence and data analytics supporting on-the-ground military personnel.”

“Israeli tech firms often grow out of military infrastructure and strategy,” the report reads, “as the NSO Group, founded by ex-Unit 8200 members, did. Its Pegasus spyware, designed for covert smartphone surveillance, has been used against Palestinian activists and licensed globally to target leaders, journalists and human rights defenders. Exported under the Defense Export Control Law, NSO group surveillance technology enables ‘spyware diplomacy’ while reinforcing State impunity.”

IBM, whose technology facilitated Nazi Germany’s generation and tabulation of punched cards for national census data, military logistics, ghetto statistics, train traffic management and concentration camp capacity, is once again a partner in this current genocide.

It has operated in Israel since 1972. It provides training for Israeli military and intelligence agencies, especially Unit 8200, which is responsible for clandestine operations, the collection of signal intelligence and code decryption, along with counterintelligence, cyberwarfare, military intelligence and surveillance.

“Since 2019, IBM Israel has operated and upgraded the central database of the Population and Immigration Authority, enabling collection, storage and governmental use of biometric data on Palestinians, and supporting the discriminatory permit regime of Israel,” the report notes.

Microsoft, active in Israel since 1989, is “embedded in the prison service, police, universities and schools – including in colonies. Microsoft has been integrating its systems and civilian tech across the Israeli mili-

IBM provides training for Israeli military and intelligence agencies, especially Unit 8200, which is responsible for clandestine operations

tary since 2003, while acquiring Israeli cybersecurity and surveillance start-ups.”

“As Israeli apartheid, military and population-control systems generate increasing volumes of data, its reliance on cloud storage and computing has grown,” the report reads. “In 2021, Israel awarded Alphabet Inc. (Google) and Amazon.com, Inc. a \$1.2 billion contract (Project Nimbus) – largely funded through Ministry of Defense expenditure – to provide core tech infrastructure.”

Microsoft, Alphabet Inc., and Amazon “grant Israel virtually government-wide access to their cloud and artificial intelligence technologies, enhancing data processing, decision-making and surveillance and analysis capacities.”

The Israeli military, the report points out, “has developed artificial intelligence systems such as ‘Lavender,’ ‘Gospel’ and ‘Where’s Daddy?’ to process data and generate lists of targets, reshaping modern warfare and illustrating the dual-use nature of artificial intelligence.”

There are “reasonable grounds,” the report reads, to believe that Palantir Technology Inc., which has a long relationship with Israel, “has provided automatic predictive policing technology, core defence infrastructure for rapid and scaled-up construction and deployment of military software, and its Artificial Intelligence Platform, which allows real-time battlefield data integration for automated decision-making.”

Palantir’s CEO in April 2025 responded to accusations that Pal-

antir kills Palestinians in Gaza by saying, “mostly terrorists, that’s true.”

“Civilian technologies have long served as dual-use tools of settler-colonial occupation,” the report reads. “Israeli military operations rely heavily on equipment from leading global manufacturers to ‘unground’ Palestinians from their land, demolishing homes, public buildings, farmland, roads and other vital infrastructure. Since October 2023, this machinery has been integral to damaging and destroying 70 per cent of structures and 81 per cent of cropland in Gaza.”

Caterpillar Inc. has for decades provided the Israeli military with equipment used to demolish Palestinian homes, mosques, hospitals as well as “burying alive wounded Palestinians,” and killed activists, such as Rachel Corrie.

“Israel has evolved Caterpillar’s D9 bulldozer into automated, remote-commanded core weaponry of the Israeli military, deployed in almost every military activity since 2000, clearing incursion lines, ‘neutralising’ the territory and killing Palestinians,” the report reads. This year, Caterpillar “secured a further multi-millionaire dollar contract with Israel.”

“The Korean HD Hyundai and its partially-owned subsidiary, Doosan, alongside the Swedish Volvo Group and other major heavy machinery manufacturers, have long been linked to destruction of Palestinian property, each supplying equipment through exclusively licensed Israeli dealers,” the report reads.

“As corporate actors have contributed to the destruction of Palestinian life in the occupied Palestinian territory, they have also helped construction of what replaces it: building colonies and their infra-

structure, extracting and trading materials, energy and agricultural products, and bringing visitors to colonies as if to a regular holiday destination.”

“More than 371 colonies and illegal outposts have been built, powered and traded with by companies facilitating the replacement by Israel of the Indigenous population in the occupied Palestinian territory,” the report concludes.

These building projects have used Caterpillar, HD Hyundai and Volvo excavators and heavy equipment. Hanson Israel, a subsidiary of the German Heidelberg Materials AG, “has contributed to the pillage of millions of tons of dolomite rock from the Nahal Raba quarry on land seized from Palestinian villages in the West Bank.” The quarried dolomite is used to construct Jewish colonies in the West Bank.

Foreign firms have also “contributed to developing roads and public transport infrastructure critical to establishing and expanding the colonies, and connecting them to Israel while excluding and segregating Palestinians.”

Global real estate companies sell properties in colonial settlements to Israeli and international buyers. These real estate firms include Keller Williams Realty LLC, which has “had branches based in the colonies” through its Israeli franchisee KW Israel. Last year through another franchisee called Home in Israel, Keller Williams “ran a real estate roadshow in Canada and the United States, jointly sponsored with several companies developing and marketing thousands of apartments in colonies.”

Rental platforms, including Booking.com and Airbnb, list properties and hotel rooms in illegal Jewish colonies in the West Bank.

Faith-based charities have “also become key financial enablers of illegal projects, including in the occupied Palestinian territory

Chinese Bright Dairy & Food is a majority owner of Tnuva, Israel’s largest food conglomerate, which utilises land seized from Palestinians in the West Bank.

In the energy sector, “Chevron Corporation, in consortium with Israeli NewMedEnergy (a subsidiary of the OHCHR database-listed Delek Group), extracts natural gas from the Leviathan and Tamar fields; it paid the Government of Israel \$453 million in royalties and taxes in 2023. Chevron’s consortium supplies more than 70 per cent of Israeli energy consumption. Chevron also profits from its part-ownership of the East Mediterranean Gas pipeline, which passes through Palestinian maritime territory, and from gas export sales to Egypt and Jordan.”

BP and Chevron also serve as “the largest contributors to Israeli imports of crude oil, as major owners of the strategic Azeri Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and the Kazakh Caspian Pipeline Consortium, respectively, and of their associated oil fields. Each conglomerate effectively supplied 8 per cent of Israeli crude oil between October 2023 and July 2024, supplemented by crude oil shipments from Brazilian oil fields, in which Petrobras holds the largest stakes, and military jet fuel. Oil from these companies supplies two refineries in Israel.”

“By supplying Israel with coal, gas, oil and fuel, companies are contributing to civilian infrastructures that Israel uses to entrench permanent annexation and now weaponis-

es in the destruction of Palestinian life in Gaza,” the report reads. “The same infrastructure that these companies supply resources into has serviced the Israeli military and its energy-intensive tech-driven obliteration of Gaza.”

International banks and financial firms have also sustained the genocide through the purchase of Israeli treasury bonds.

“As the main source of finance for the Israeli State budget, treasury bonds have played a critical role in funding the ongoing assault on Gaza,” the report reads. “From 2022 to 2024, the Israeli military budget grew from 4.2 per cent to 8.3 per cent of GDP, driving the public budget into a 6.8 per cent deficit. Israel funded this ballooning budget by increasing its bond issuance, including \$8 billion in March 2024 and \$5 billion in February 2025, alongside issuances on its domestic new shekel market.”

The report notes that some of the world’s largest banks, including BNP Paribas and Barclays, “stepped in to boost market confidence by underwriting these international and domestic treasury bonds, allowing Israel to contain the interest rate premium, despite a credit downgrade.

Asset management firms – including Blackrock (\$68 million), Vanguard (\$546 million) and Allianz’s asset management subsidiary PIMCO (\$960 million) – were among at least 400 investors from 36 countries who purchased them.”

Faith-based charities have “also become key financial enablers of illegal projects, including in the occupied Palestinian territory, often receiving tax deductions abroad despite strict regulatory charitable frameworks,” the report reads.

“The Jewish National Fund (KKL-

JNF) and its over 20 affiliates fund settler expansion and military-linked projects,” the report reads. “Since October 2023, platforms such as Israel Gives have enabled tax-deductible crowdfunding in 32 countries for Israeli military units and settlers. The United States-based Christian Friends of Israeli Communities, Dutch Christians for Israel and global affiliates, sent over \$12.25 million in 2023 to various projects that support colonies, including some that train extremist settlers.”

The report criticises universities that partner with Israeli universities and institutions. It notes that labs at MIT “conduct weapons and surveil-

Genocide requires a vast network and billions of dollars to sustain it. Israel could not carry out its mass slaughter without this ecosystem

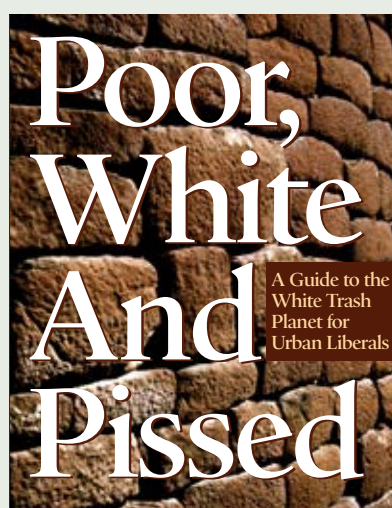
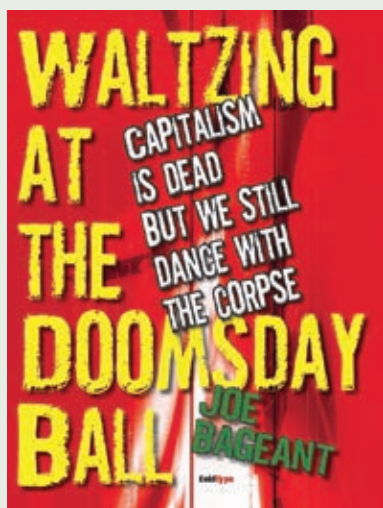
lance research funded by the Israeli Ministry of Defense.” These projects include “drone swarm control – a distinct feature of the Israeli assault on Gaza since October 2023 – pursuit algorithms, and underwater surveillance.”

Genocide requires a vast network and billions of dollars to sustain it. Israel could not carry out its mass slaughter of the Palestinians with-

out this ecosystem. These entities, which profit from industrial violence against the Palestinians and mass displacement, are as guilty of genocide as the Israeli military units decimating the people in Gaza. They too are war criminals, They too must be held accountable. **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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BBC's job is to obscure partnership in genocide

Gaza 'scandals' are designed to browbeat the BBC into greater cravenness. If it was reluctant to give Palestinians a voice, now it will avoid doing so entirely

After months of a confected furore over a BBC documentary supposedly demonstrating pro-Hamas bias, followed by the shelving of a second film on Gaza, an independent review found in July that the broadcaster had not breached impartiality guidelines.

A list of complaints against *Gaza: How to Survive a Warzone* – all pushed for months by the Israel lobby, and amplified by the British establishment media – were dismissed one after the other by Peter Johnston, director of the editorial complaints and review body that reports to the BBC director general.

Not that you would know any of this from the eagerness of BBC executives to continue apologising profusely for the failings the corporation had just been cleared of. It almost sounded as if they wanted to be found guilty.

The row is now set to drag on for many months more after Ofcom, the UK's communications regulator, announced it too would investigate the programme.

All of this is exactly what the Israel lobby and the billionaire-owned media had hoped for. The aim of manufacturing this protracted storm in a teacup was twofold.

First, the furore was designed to distract from what the documentary

actually showed: the horrors facing children in Gaza as they have had to navigate a tiny strip of land in which Israel has trapped them, bombed their homes, levelled their schools, exposed them to relentless carnage for 21 months, destroyed the hospitals they will need in time of trouble, and is starving them and their loved ones.

Second, it was intended to browbeat the BBC into adopting an even more craven posture towards Israel than it had already. If it was reluctant before to give Palestinians a voice, now it will avoid doing so at all costs.

True to form, executives hurriedly removed *How to Survive a Warzone* from its iPlayer catch-up service the moment the lobby went into action.

The BBC's ever greater spinelessness has real-world, and dangerous, consequences.

Israel will feel even freer to intensify what the International Court of Justice already suspected back in January 2024 was a genocide and what leading genocide and Holocaust scholars have subsequently concluded is a genocide.

There will be even less pressure on the British government to stop part-

nering Israel in its genocide by supplying weapons, intelligence and diplomatic cover.

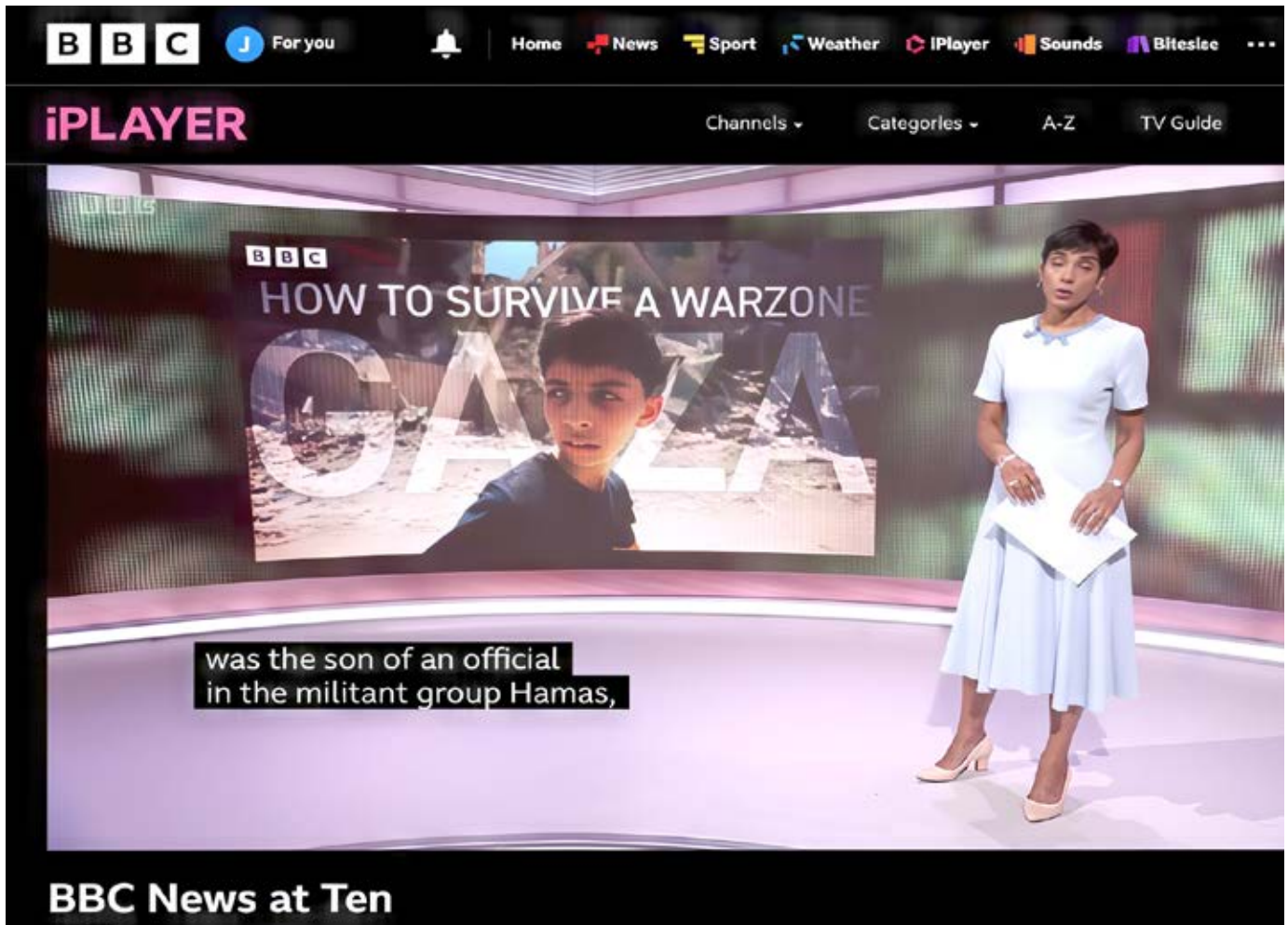
The enduring row will also hand a bigger stick to Rupert Murdoch and other media moguls with which to beat the BBC, making it cower even further.

Signs of the BBC's defensiveness were already all too evident. While it was waiting for the Johnston report, the corporation ditched a separate documentary, *Gaza: Doctors Under Attack*, on Israel's systematic destruction of Gaza's hospitals and murder of some 1,600 health workers. It has since been shown by Channel 4.

The BBC argued that – although this second programme had repeatedly passed its editorial checks – airing it risked contributing to a “perception of partiality.”

What that bit of BBC gobbledygook actually meant was that the problem was not “partiality.” It was the perception of it by vested interests – Israel, its apologists, the Starmer government and the British corporate media – who demand skewed BBC coverage of Gaza so that Israel can carry on with a genocide the British establishment is utterly complicit in.

In other words, truth and accuracy be damned. This is about Israel – and the Starmer government – dictating to the BBC the terms of what



WRONG: BBC presenter Reeta Chakraboti claimed the film's narrator was "the son of an official in the militant group Hamas"

can be said about Israel's treatment of Palestinians.

Which brings us back to the Johnston report. The only significant finding against the BBC was on a single issue in its documentary on *Gaza's children, How to Survive a Warzone*. The film had not disclosed that its 13-year narrator was the son of an official in Gaza's Hamas-run government.

Even in the current febrile atmosphere, Johnston found no grounds to uphold the manifold accusations of a breach by the BBC of impartiality rules. Nothing in the film, he concluded, was unfair to Israel.

Instead, he stated that it was a

breach of "full transparency" not to have divulged the child-narrator's tenuous connection to Hamas through his father's governmental work.

Paradoxically, the BBC's coverage of Johnston's findings has been far more inaccurate about the child-narrator than the original documentary. But there has been no uproar because this particular inaccuracy from the BBC squarely benefits Israel.

On the News at Ten, reporting on the Johnston report, presenter Reeta Chakrabati claimed that the film's narrator was "the son of an official in the militant group Hamas."

He is nothing of the sort. He is the son of a scientist who directed agricultural policy in Gaza's government, which is run by Hamas.

There is zero evidence that Ayman Alyazouri was ever a member of the militant wing of Hamas. He doesn't even appear to have been a member of its political wing.

In fact, since 2018 Israel had set up a system to vet most officials in Gaza like Alyazouri to ensure they were not linked to Hamas before they were able to receive salaries funded by Qatar.

Johnston himself concedes as much, noting that the programme makers failed to inform the BBC of 13-year-old Abdullah's background because their checks showed Alyazouri was a civilian technocrat in the government, not involved in its military or political arms.

The team's only failing was an astounding ignorance of how the Is-

rael lobby operates and how ready the BBC is to cave in to its pressure tactics.

In reality, Johnston's finding against the BBC was over little more than an editorial technicality, one intentionally blown up into a major scandal. Johnston himself gave the game away when he noted in his executive summary the need for "full transparency" when the BBC makes programmes "in such a contested setting."

In other words, special, much stricter editorial rules apply when the BBC intends to make programmes likely to upset Israel. From now on, that will mean that, in practice, such programmes are not made at all.

The double standard is glaring. The BBC aired a documentary last year, *Surviving October 7: We Will Dance Again*, offering eyewitness testimony from Israeli survivors of October 7, 2023 at the Nova music festival, where hundreds of Israelis were killed during Hamas' one-day break-out from Gaza.

Did the BBC insist that the backgrounds of the Israelis interviewed were checked and disclosed to the audience as part of the broadcast? Were viewers told whether festivalgoers had served in the Israeli military, which for decades has been enforcing an illegal occupation and a system of apartheid over Palestinians, according to a ruling last year by the world's highest court?

And what would it have indicated to audiences had the BBC included such contextual information about its Israeli eyewitnesses? That their testimonies had less validity? That they could not be trusted?

If it was not necessary to include such background details for Israeli eyewitnesses, why is it more important to do so for a 13-year-old Palestinian?

And even more to the point, if the BBC needs to give details of 13-year-old Abdullah Alyazouri's back-

Also revealing is who the state broadcaster looks to when deciding how to apply its editorial standards

ground before he can be allowed to read a script written by the programme makers, why is the BBC not also required to give important background about Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu when he appears in reports: such as that he is wanted for arrest by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity.

Exactly how trustworthy a narrator of events in the devastated enclave does the BBC consider Netanyahu to be that it does not think this context needs including?

The gain from this manufactured row for the Israel lobby – and for a Starmer government desperate to silence criticism of its complicity in genocide – were set out in stark detail by the makers of the second documentary, about Israel's destruction of Gaza's health sector.

In an article in the *Observer* newspaper, they recounted a series of startling admissions and demands from BBC executives made in script meetings.

The corporation insisted that *Doctors Under Attack* could not be aired so long as the award-winning investigative reporter leading the programme, Ramita Navai, was given top billing. They demanded that she be downgraded to a mere "contributor" – her role effectively disappeared – because she had supposedly made "one-sided" social media posts criticising Israel for breaking international law.

She was considered unacceptable, according to the BBC, because she had not been "supportive enough of the other side": that is, of Israel and its military carrying out systematic war crimes by destroying Gaza's hospitals, as documented in great detail in her film.

In a statement to *Middle East Eye* on its decision to shelve the documentary, the BBC spokesperson stated that, after Navai appeared on its Today radio programme and "called Israel a 'rogue state that's committing war crimes and ethnic cleansing and mass murdering Palestinians,' it was impossible for the BBC to broadcast the material without risking our impartiality.

"The BBC holds itself to the highest standards of impartiality and it would never be acceptable for any BBC journalist to express a personal opinion in this way. We believe this is one of the reasons we're the world's most trusted news provider. We were left with no choice but to walk away."

Seen another way, offering apologies for genocide, as the BBC has been doing for the past 21 months, is apparently a requirement before the corporation is willing to give journalists a platform to criticise Israel.

Also revealing is who the state broadcaster looks to when deciding how to apply its editorial standards.

BBC executives told the film-makers they should not reference the United Nations or Amnesty International because they were supposedly not "trusted independent organisations."

Meanwhile, the corporation openly and obsessively worried to the film-makers about what fanatically pro-Israel lobbyists – such as social media activist David Collier and Camera, a pro-Israel media monitoring organisation – would say about their film on Gaza.

The team were told BBC News executives were "very jumpy and paranoid" about coverage of Gaza.

This follows a long and dishonourable tradition at the state broadcaster. In their 2011 book *More Bad News from Israel*, media scholars Greg Philo and Mike Berry reported a BBC producer telling them: “We all fear the phone call from the Israeli embassy.”

If you had been wondering why the BBC has been reflexively both-siding a genocide, here is a large part of the answer.

A damning report by the Centre for Media Monitoring last month analysed in detail the BBC’s Gaza coverage in the year following Hamas’ one-day attack on October 7, 2023.

It found a “pattern of bias, double standards and silencing of Palestinian voices”.

These included the BBC running over 30 times more victim profiles of Israelis than Palestinians; interviewing more than twice as many Israelis as Palestinians; asking 38 interviewees to condemn Hamas but asking no one to condemn Israel’s mass killing of civilians, or its attacks on hospitals and schools; and shutting down more than 100 interviewers who tried to refer to events in Gaza as a genocide.

Only 0.5 percent of BBC articles provided any context for what was happening before October 7, 2023: that Israel had been illegally occupying the Palestinian territories for decades and besieging the enclave for 17 years.

Similarly, the BBC has barely reported the endless stream of genocidal statements from Israeli political and military leaders – a crucial ingredient in legally determining whether military actions constitute genocide.

Nor has it mentioned other vital context: such as Israel’s invocation of the Hannibal directive on October 7, 2023, licensing it to kill its own citizens to prevent them being tak-

The BBC has barely reported the endless stream of genocidal statements from Israeli political and military leaders

en captive; or its military’s long-established Dahiya doctrine, in which the mass destruction of civilian infrastructure – and with it, the likelihood of slaughtering civilians – is viewed as an effective way to deter resistance to its aggressions.

In the specified time period, the BBC covered Ukraine with twice as many articles as Gaza, even though the Gaza story was newer and Israeli crimes even graver than Russian ones. The corporation was twice as likely to use sympathetic language for Ukrainian victims than it was for Palestinian victims.

Palestinians were usually described as having “died” or been “killed” in air strikes, without mention of who launched those strikes. Israeli victims, on the other hand, were “massacred,” “slaughtered” and “butchered.”

None of these were editorial slip-ups. They were part of a systematic, long-term skewing of editorial coverage in Israel’s favour – a clear breach of the BBC’s impartiality guidelines and one that has created a permissive environment for genocide.

Journalists at the BBC are known to be in revolt. More than 100 signed a letter – anonymously for fear of reprisals – condemning the decision to censor the documentary *Doctors under Attack*. They said it reflected a mix of “fear” and “anti-Palestinian racism” at the corporation.

The BBC told MEE: “Robust discussions amongst our editorial teams about our journalism are an essential part of the editorial process. We have ongoing discussions about cov-

erage and listen to feedback from staff, and we think these conversations are best had internally.”

The journalists, it seems, would prefer that these discussions are had out in the open. They wrote: “As an organisation we have not offered any significant analysis of the UK government’s involvement in the war on Palestinians. We have failed to report on weapons sales or their legal implications. These stories have instead been broken by the BBC’s competitors.”

And they added: “All too often it has felt that the BBC has been performing PR for the Israeli government and military.”

They could have added, even more pertinently, that in the process the BBC has been doing PR for the British establishment, too.

A former BBC press officer, Ben Murray, gave broader context to the meaning of the corporation’s famed editorial “impartiality.” His role, he wrote, had been a rearguard one to placate the *Times*, *Telegraph*, *Sun*, and most of all, the *Daily Mail*.

Those establishment outlets are owned by corporations and billionaires heavily invested in the very oil, “defence” and tech industries Israel is central to lubricating.

BBC executives, Murray noted, “were rightfully fearful of these publications’ influence, and often reacted in ways to appease them. Their task was to protect the BBC’s funding model, and by extension, their prestigious jobs and generous salaries.”

None of this went against the grain. As Murray pointed out, most senior BBC staff enjoyed private educations, have Oxbridge degrees, and have been “fast-tracked up the corporate ladder.” They see their job as being “to reinforce and maintain establishment viewpoints.”

If this weren’t enough, senior BBC staff also have to look over their shoulders to the British government, which sets the corporation’s funding

through the TV licence fee.

The government, no less than the BBC, needs to keep its main constituencies happy.

No, not voters. Ministers, keen for favourable coverage, similarly dare not antagonise Israel-aligned media moguls. And equally they cannot afford to alienate powerful US administrations that pledge an undying, unshakeable bond to Israel as it projects western power into the oil-rich Middle East.

Which is precisely why Lisa Nandy, the culture secretary, was only too keen to jump on the *Daily Mail* bandwagon in calling for heads to roll at the BBC over the supposed “failings” in its Gaza coverage.

“It makes me angry on behalf of the BBC staff and the whole creative industries in this country,” she said, apparently oblivious to the fact that many BBC journalists’ fury is not over the confected scandals generated by the Israel lobby and billionaire-

Government ministers, keen for favourable coverage, similarly dare not antagonise Israel-aligned media moguls

owned media.

They are appalled at the corporation’s refusal to hold Israel or Nandy’s own government accountable for the genocide in Gaza.

In such circumstances, the BBC’s professed commitment to “impartiality” serves as nothing more than a smokescreen.

In reality, the corporation acts as an echo chamber, amplifying and legitimising the interests of media tycoons, the British government and the Washington consensus, however much they flout the foundational principles of international law, hu-

man rights and basic decency.

Anybody who stands outside that circle of influence – such as the Palestinians and their supporters, anti-genocide activists, human rights advocates, and increasingly the UN and its legal organs, such as the International Criminal Court – is assumed by the BBC to be suspect.

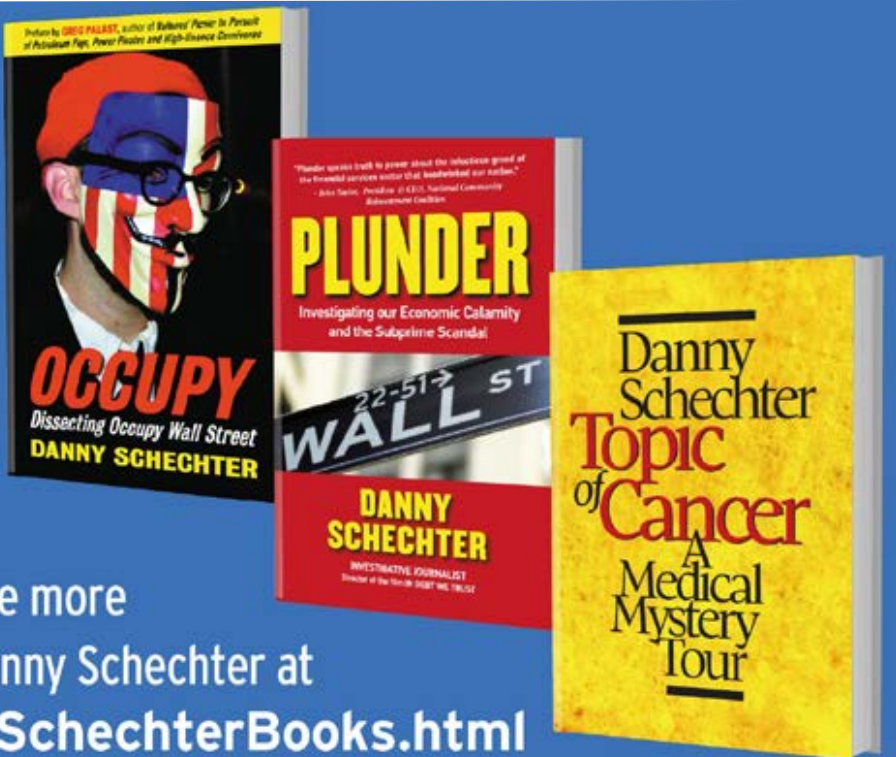
Such voices are likely to be marginalised, silenced or vilified.

The BBC has not failed. It has done exactly what it is there to do: help the British government conceal the fact that there is a genocide going on in Gaza, and one that the UK has been knee-deep in assisting. **CT**

Jonathan Cook’s latest books are Israel and the Clash of Civilizations: Iraq, Iran, and the Plan to Remake the Middle East (Pluto Press) and Disappearing Palestine: Israel’s Experiments in Human Despair (Zed Books). His website is www.jonathan-cook.net

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FUELING GENOCIDE

INSIDE THE GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN THAT DELIVERS JET FUEL TO ISRAEL'S MILITARY

Israel purchases fuel for its military fighter jets with U.S. funds. This fuel, produced by the U.S. energy company **Valero**, is shipped on commercial tanker ships owned by the company **Saltchuk**. Each ship receives **\$6 million in subsidies** through the **U.S. Tanker Security Program**. Recent contract data shows that the **U.S. is increasing delivery of jet fuel** to Israel to support attacks in Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and Iran.



1 IN THE U.S.

In Corpus Christi, Texas, **JP-8 military jet fuel** is loaded onto one of two tanker ships, the **Overseas Santorini** or the **Overseas Sun Coast**.

2 IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

RESUPPLY PORTS

These tanker ships regularly stop to take on fuel and supplies at **Mediterranean ports**.

ENABLING GENOCIDE

Legal experts agree that states and companies facilitating these shipments are **complicit in Israel's genocide**.

GOING DARK

Tanker ships carrying Israeli military jet fuel have obscured their voyage details and **turned off tracking devices when approaching Israel**.



TAKING ACTION TO BLOCK THE BOATS

In July 2024, **dockworkers, civil society groups, and social movements** working together forced one tanker ship, the **Overseas Santorini**, to **abandon its planned stops in Spain and Gibraltar**.

NO SAFE HARBOR

Activists mobilized to deny the ship access to other ports along its route to Israel, including in **Malta, Crete and Cyprus**.

SECRET DELIVERY

The ship **evaded activists by turning off its tracking system** before delivering the **deadly cargo** to Israel.

“The level and speed of... [destruction in Gaza has] not been seen in any other conflict in the 21st century

Amnesty International

3 IN GAZA

One shipment can fuel about **12,000 flights** by Israel's **F-16 and F-35 fighter jets**, which are used to drop bombs on entire families of Palestinians in Gaza.

VISUALIZING PALESTINE

SOURCES bit.ly/vp-fueling-genocide

[WWW.VISUALIZINGPALESTINE.ORG](https://www.visualizingpalestine.org)

JULY 2025



► WILLIAM D. HARTUNG

Entering a golden age for war profiteers

Trump's Washington breathes new life into the military-industrial complex

When, in his 1961 farewell address, President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned of the dangers of the unwarranted influence wielded by a partnership between the military and a growing cohort of US weapons contractors and came up with the ominous term “military-industrial complex,” he could never have imagined quite how large and powerful that complex would become.

In fact, in recent years, one firm – Lockheed Martin – has normally gotten more Pentagon funding than the entire US State Department. And mind you, that was before the Trump administration moved to sharply slash spending on diplomacy and jack up the Pentagon budget to an astonishing \$1 trillion per year.

In a new study issued by the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft and the Costs of War Project at Brown University, Stephen Semler and I lay out just how powerful those arms makers and their allies have become, as Pentagon budgets simply never stop rising. And consider this: in the five years from 2020 to 2024, 54 percent of the Pen-

tagon's \$4.4 trillion in discretionary spending went to private firms and \$791 billion went to just five companies: Lockheed Martin (\$313 billion), RTX (formerly Raytheon, \$145 billion), Boeing (\$115 billion), General Dynamics (\$116 billion), and Northrop Grumman (\$81 billion).

And mind you, that was before Donald Trump's Big Beautiful Budget bill landed on planet Earth, drastically slashing spending on diplomacy and domestic programs to make room for major tax cuts and near-record Pentagon outlays.

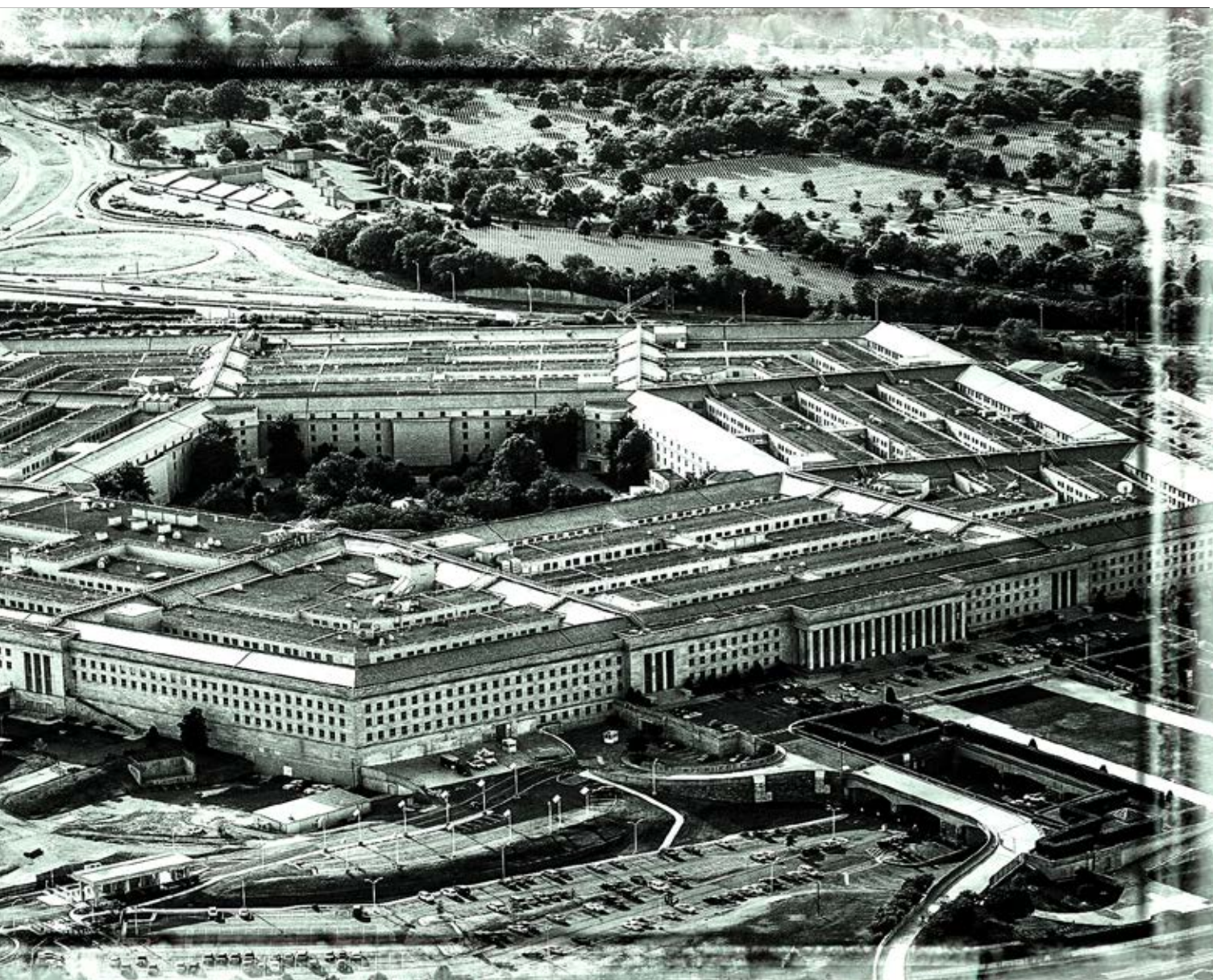
In short, the “garrison state” Eisenhower warned of has arrived, with negative consequences for nearly everyone but the executives and shareholders of those giant weapons conglomerates and their competitors in the emerging military tech sector who are now hot on their trail.

High-tech militarists like Peter Thiel of Palantir, Elon Musk of SpaceX, and Palmer Luckey of Anduril have promised a new, more affordable, more nimble, and supposedly more effective version of the military-industrial complex, as set out in Anduril's “Rebooting the Ar-

senal of Democracy,” an ode to the supposed value of those emerging tech firms.

Curiously enough, that Anduril essay is actually a remarkably apt critique of the Big Five contractors and their allies in Congress and the Pentagon, pointing out their unswerving penchant for cost overruns, delays in scheduling, and pork-barrel politics to preserve weapons systems that all too often no longer serve any useful military purpose. That document goes on to say that, while the Lockheed Martins of the world served a useful function in the ancient days of the Cold War with the Soviet Union,





today they are incapable of building the next-generation of weaponry.

The reason: their archaic business model and their inability to master the software at the heart of a coming new generation of semi-autonomous, pilotless weapons driven by artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced computing. For their part, the new titans of tech boldly claim that they can provide exactly such a futuristic generation of weaponry far more effectively and at far less cost, and that their weapons systems will preserve or even extend American global military dominance into the distant future by outpacing China in the development of

next generation technologies.

Could there indeed be a new, improved military-industrial complex just waiting in the wings, one aligned with this country's actual defense needs that doesn't gouge taxpayers in the process?

Don't count on it, not at least if it's premised on the development of "miracle weapons" that will cost so much less and do so much more than current systems.

Such a notion, it seems, arises in every generation, only to routinely fall flat. From the "electronic battlefield" that was supposed to pinpoint and destroy Viet Cong forces in the jungles of Southeast Asia in the Vi-

etnam War years to Ronald Reagan's failed vision of an impenetrable "Star Wars" missile shield, to the failure of precision-guided munitions and networked warfare to bring victory in Iraq and Afghanistan during this country's Global War on Terror, the notion that superior military technology is the key to winning America's wars and expanding US power and influence has been routinely marked by failure. That's been true even if the weapons work as advertised (which all too often they don't).

And while you're at it, don't forget, for example, that, nearly 30 years later, the highly touted, high-

tech F-35 combat aircraft – once hailed as a technological marvel-in-the-making that would usher in a revolution in both warfare and military procurement – still isn't ready for prime time.

Designed for multiple war-fighting tasks, including winning aerial dogfights, supporting troops on the ground, and bombing enemy targets, the F-35 has turned out to be able to do none of those things particularly well. And to add insult to injury, the plane is so complex that it spends almost as much time being maintained or repaired as being ready to do battle.

That history of technological hubris and strategic failure should be kept in mind when listening to the – so far unproven – claims of the leaders of this country's military-tech sector about the value of their latest gadgets. For one thing, everything they propose to build – from swarms of drones to unpiloted aircraft, land vehicles, and ships – will rely on extremely complex software that is bound to fail somewhere along the way.

Even if, by some miracle, their systems, including artificial intelligence, work as advertised, they may not only not prove decisive in the wars of the future but make wars of aggression that much more likely. After all, countries that master new technologies are tempted to go on the attack, putting fewer of their own people at immediate risk while doing devastating harm to targeted populations.

The use of Palantir's technology by the Israeli Defense Forces to increase the number of targets devastated in a given time frame in their campaign of mass slaughter in Gaza could foreshadow the new age of warfare if emerging military technologies aren't brought under some system of control and accountability.

A further risk posed by AI-driven warfare is the possibility that the

Techno-militarists face obstacles in their quest to reach the top rungs of power and influence, not least the continued clout of old-school weapons

new weapons could choose their targets without human intervention. Current Pentagon policy promises to keep a human "in the loop" in the use of such systems, but military logic runs counter to such claims. As Anduril President and Chief Strategy Officer Christian Brose has written in his seminal book *Kill Chain*, the high-tech wars of the future will hinge on which side can identify and destroy its targets most quickly – an imperative that would ensure slow-moving humans were left out of the process.

In short, two possibilities arise if the US military transitions to the "new improved" military-industrial complex espoused by the denizens of Silicon Valley: complex systems that don't perform as advertised, or new capabilities that may make war both more likely and more deadly. And such dystopian outcomes will only be reinforced by the ideology of the new Silicon Valley militarists.

They see themselves as both the "founders" of a new form of warfare and "the new patriots" poised to restore American greatness without the need for a democratic government in the war-making mix. Their ideal, in fact, would be to ensure that the government got out of the way and let them solve the myriad problems we face alone. Ayn Rand would be proud.

Such a techno-autocracy would be far more likely to serve the interests of a relatively small elite than

aid the average American in any way. From Peter Thiel's quest for a way to live forever to Elon Musk's desire to enable the mass colonisation of space, it's not at all clear that, if such goals could even be achieved, they would be generally available. It's more likely that such opportunities would be restricted to the species of superior beings that the techno-militarists see themselves as being.

Still, the techno-militarists face serious obstacles in their quest to reach the top rungs of power and influence, not least among them, the continued clout of old-school weapons makers. After all, they still receive the vast bulk of Pentagon weapons spending, based in part on their millions of dollars in lobbying and campaign expenditures and their ability to spread jobs to almost every state and district in the country.

These tools of influence give the Big Five far deeper roots in and influence over Congress than the new tech firms. These large, legacy companies also influence government policy through their funding of hawkish think tanks that help shape government policies designed to regulate their conduct, and so much more.

Of course, one way to prevent the ultimate brawl between the Big Five and the emerging tech firms would be to feed them both with ample funding – but that would require a Pentagon budget that would soar well beyond the present trillion-dollar mark. There are, of course, some projects that could benefit both factions, ranging from Donald Trump's pet Golden Dome missile defence scheme, which could incorporate hardware from the Big Five with software from the emerging tech firms, to Boeing's new F-47 combat aircraft program, which calls for unpiloted "wing men" likely to be produced by Anduril or another

military tech firm. So, the question of confrontation versus cooperation between the new and old guard in the military sector has yet to be settled.

If the rival firms end up turning their lobbying resources against each other and going for each other's proverbial throats, it could weaken their grip on the rest of us and perhaps reveal useful information that might undermine the authority and credibility of both sides.

But count on one thing: neither sector has the best interests of the public in mind, so we need to prepare to fight back ourselves regardless of how their battle plays out.

Okay, then, what could we possibly do to head off the nightmare scenario of a world run by Peter Thiel, Elon Musk, and crew?

First, we'll need the kind of "alert and knowledgeable" citizenry that Dwight D. Eisenhower pointed to so long ago as the only antidote to an ever more militarised society. That would mean concerted efforts by both the public and the government (which would, of course, have to be run by someone unlike Donald J. Trump – already a project in itself!).

At the moment, the tech sector is indeed increasingly embedded in the Trump administration and he owes a number of them a distinct debt of gratitude for helping him over the top in the 2024 election. Despite his very public and bitter falling out with fellow narcissist Elon Musk, the influence of the tech sector within his administration remains all too strong, starting with Vice President J.D. Vance, who owes his career to the employment, mentoring, and financial support of Silicon Valley militarist Peter Thiel. And don't forget that a substantial cohort of former employees of Palantir and Anduril have already been given key posts in

The only rational course is to craft policies that maintain American influence in the context of a world where power has been defused

this administration.

Creating a counterweight to those new-age militarists will require a full-scale societal effort, including educators, scientists, and technologists, the labor movement, non-tech business leaders, and activists of all stripes. Silicon Valley workers did, in fact, organise a number of protests against the militarisation of their handiwork before being beaten back.

Now, a new wave of such activism is all too desperately needed.

Just as many of the scientists who helped build the atomic bomb spent their post-Hiroshima and Nagasaki lives trying to rein in or abolish nuclear weapons, a cohort of scientists and engineers in the tech sector needs to play a leading role in beginning to craft guardrails to limit the military uses of the technologies they helped develop.

Meanwhile, the student movement against the use of US weapons in Gaza has begun to expand its horizons to target the militarisation of universities writ large. In addition, environmentalists need to double down on criticisms of the immense energy requirements needed to power AI and crypto, while labour leaders need to reckon with the consequences of AI destroying jobs in the military and civilian sectors alike.

All of this has to happen in the context of a far greater technological literacy, including among congressional representatives and workers in government agencies charged with regulating the suppli-

ers of new military technologies.

None of that is, of course, likely to happen except in the context of a resurgence of democracy and a committed effort to fulfill the unmet rhetorical promises that undergird the myth of the American dream.

And speaking of contexts, here's one that anybody preparing to protest the further militarisation of this society should take into account: contrary to the belief of many key figures from the Pentagon to Wall Street to Main Street, the peak of American military and economic power has indeed passed, never to return.

The only rational course is to craft policies that maintain American influence in the context of a world where power has been defused and cooperation is all too essential.

Such a view, of course, is the polar opposite of the bombastic, bullying approach of the Trump administration, which, if it persists, will only accelerate American decline. And in that context, the key question is whether the widespread harm inherent in the new budget bill – which will only continue to wildly enrich the Pentagon and big arms firms of both kinds, while hitting the rest of us across the political spectrum – could prompt a new surge of public engagement and a genuine debate about what kind of world we want to live in and how this country could play a constructive (rather than destructive) role in bringing it about. **CT**

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The wearable trap: A new way to control citizens

Once symbols of personal wellness, they are becoming digital cattle tags – badges of compliance tracked in real time and regulated by algorithm

Bodily autonomy – the right to privacy and integrity over our own bodies – is rapidly vanishing.

The debate now extends beyond forced vaccinations or invasive searches to include biometric surveillance, wearable tracking, and predictive health profiling. We are entering a new age of algorithmic, authoritarian, control, where our thoughts, moods, and biology are monitored and judged by the state.

This is the dark promise behind the newest campaign by Robert F. Kennedy Jr, President Trump's Secretary of Health and Human Services, to push for a future in which all Americans wear biometric health-tracking devices.

Under the guise of public health and personal empowerment, this initiative is nothing less than the normalisation of 24/7 bodily surveillance – ushering in a world where every step, heartbeat, and biological fluctuation is monitored not only by private companies but also by the government.

In this emerging surveillance-industrial complex, health data becomes currency. Tech firms profit from hardware and app subscriptions, insurers profit from risk scoring, and government agencies profit from increased compliance and behavioural insight.

This convergence of health, technology, and surveillance is not a new strategy – it's just the next step in a long, familiar pattern of control.

Surveillance has always arrived dressed as progress. Every new wave of surveillance technology – GPS trackers, red light cameras, facial recognition, Ring doorbells, Alexa smart speakers – has been sold as a tool of convenience, safety, or connection. But each became a mechanism for tracking, monitoring, or controlling the public.

What began as voluntary has become inescapable and mandatory. The moment we accepted the premise that privacy must be traded for convenience, we laid the groundwork for a society in which nowhere is beyond the government's reach – not our homes, not our cars, not even our bodies.

RFK Jr's wearable plan is just the latest iteration of this bait-and-switch: marketed as freedom, built as a cage. According to Kennedy's plan, which has been promoted as part of a national campaign to "Make America Healthy Again," wearable devices would track glucose levels, heart rate, activity, sleep, and more for every American.

Participation may not be officially mandatory at the outset, but the im-

plications are clear: get on board, or risk becoming a second-class citizen in a society driven by data compliance. What began as optional self-monitoring tools marketed by Big Tech is poised to become the newest tool in the surveillance arsenal of the police state.

Devices like Fitbits, Apple Watches, glucose trackers, and smart rings collect astonishing amounts of intimate data – from stress and depression to heart irregularities and early signs of illness. When this data is shared across government databases, insurers, and health platforms, it becomes a potent tool not only for health analysis – but for control. Once symbols of personal wellness, these wearables are becoming digital cattle tags – badges of compliance tracked in real time and regulated by algorithm.

And it won't stop there. The body is fast becoming a battleground in the government's expanding war on the inner realms. The infrastructure is already in place to profile and detain individuals based on perceived psychological "risks."

Imagine a future in which your wearable data triggers a mental health flag. Elevated stress levels. Erratic sleep. A skipped appointment. A sudden drop in heart rate variability. In the eyes of the surveillance state, these could be red flags – justification for intervention,



inquiry, or worse.

RFK Jr.'s embrace of wearable tech is not a neutral innovation. It is an invitation to expand the government's war on thought crimes, health noncompliance, and individual deviation. It shifts the presumption of innocence to a presumption of diagnosis. You are not well until the algorithm says you are.

The government has already weaponised surveillance tools to silence dissent, flag political critics, and track behaviour in real time. Now, with wearables, they gain a new weapon: access to the human body as a site of suspicion, deviance, and control. While government agencies pave the way for biometric control, it will be corporations – insurance companies, tech giants, employers – who act as enforcers for the surveillance state.

Wearables don't just collect data.

They sort it, interpret it, and feed it into systems that make high-stakes decisions about your life: whether you get insurance coverage, whether your rates go up, whether you qualify for employment or financial aid.

As reported by ABC News, a JAMA article warns that wearables could easily be used by insurers to deny coverage or hike premiums based on personal health metrics like calorie intake, weight fluctuations, and blood pressure.

It's not a stretch to imagine this bleeding into workplace assessments, credit scores, or even social media rankings.

Employers already offer discounts for "voluntary" wellness tracking – and penalise non-participants. In-

surers give incentives for healthy behaviour – until they decide unhealthy behaviour warrants punishment. Apps track not just steps, but mood, substance use, fertility, and sexual activity – feeding the ever-hungry data economy.

This dystopian trajectory has been long foreseen and forewarned.

In *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley (1932), compliance is maintained not through violence but by way of pleasure, stimulation, and chemical sedation. The populace is conditioned to accept surveillance in exchange for ease, comfort, and distraction.

In *THX 1138* (1971), George Lucas envisions a corporate-state regime where biometric monitoring, mood-regulating drugs, and psychological manipulation reduce people to emotionless, compliant biological units.

Gattaca (1997) imagines a world

in which genetic and biometric profiling predetermines one's fate, eliminating privacy and free will in the name of public health and societal efficiency.

In *The Matrix* (1999), written and directed by the Wachowskis, human beings are harvested as energy sources while trapped inside a simulated reality – an unsettling parallel to our increasing entrapment in systems that monitor, monetise, and manipulate our physical selves.

Minority Report (2002), directed by Steven Spielberg, depicts a pre-crime surveillance regime driven by biometric data. Citizens are tracked via retinal scans in public spaces and targeted with personalised ads – turning the body itself into a surveillance passport.

The anthology series *Black Mirror*, inspired by *The Twilight Zone*, brings these warnings into the digital age, dramatising how constant monitoring of behaviour, emotion, and identity breeds conformity, judgment, and fear. Taken collectively, these cultural touchstones deliver a stark message: dystopia doesn't arrive overnight.

As Margaret Atwood warned in *The Handmaid's Tale*, “Nothing changes instantaneously: in a gradually heating bathtub, you'd be boiled to death before you knew it.” Though Atwood's novel focuses on reproductive control, its larger warning is deeply relevant: when the state presumes authority over the body – whether through pregnancy registries or biometric monitors – bodily autonomy becomes conditional, fragile, and easily revoked. The tools may differ, but the logic of domination is the same.

What Atwood portrayed as reproductive control, we now face in a broader, digitised form: the quiet erosion of autonomy through the

Taken collectively, these cultural touchstones deliver a stark message: dystopia doesn't arrive overnight

normalisation of constant monitoring. When both government and corporations gain access to our inner lives, what's left of the individual?

We must ask: when surveillance becomes a condition of participation in modern life – employment, education, health care – are we still free? Or have we become, as in every great dystopian warning, conditioned not to resist, but to comply?

That's the hidden cost of these technological conveniences: today's wellness tracker is tomorrow's corporate leash.

In a society where bodily data is harvested and analysed, the body itself becomes government and corporate property. Your body becomes a form of testimony, and your biometric outputs are treated as evidence. The list of bodily intrusions we've documented – forced colonoscopies, blood draws, DNA swabs, cavity searches, breathalyser tests – is growing.

To this list we now add a subtler, but more insidious, form of intrusion: forced biometric consent.

Once health tracking becomes a de facto requirement for employment, insurance, or social participation, it will be impossible to “opt out” without penalty. Those who resist may be painted as irresponsible, unhealthy, or even dangerous.

We've already seen chilling previews of where this could lead. In states with abortion restrictions, digital surveillance has been weaponised to track and prosecute individuals for seeking abortions – using period-tracking apps, search

histories, and geolocation data.

When bodily autonomy becomes criminalised, the data trails we leave behind become evidence in a case the state has already decided to make.

This is not merely the expansion of health care. It is the transformation of health into a mechanism of control – a Trojan horse for the surveillance state to claim ownership over the last private frontier: the human body. Because ultimately, this isn't just about surveillance – it's about who gets to live.

Too often, these debates are falsely framed as having only two possible outcomes: safety vs. freedom, health vs. privacy, compliance vs. chaos. But these are illusions. A truly free and just society can protect public health without sacrificing bodily autonomy or human dignity.

We must resist the narrative that demands our total surrender in exchange for security. Once biometric data becomes currency in a health-driven surveillance economy, it's only a matter of time before that data is used to determine whose lives are worth investing in – and whose are not.

We've seen this dystopia before.

In the 1973 film *Soylent Green*, the elderly become expendable when resources grow scarce. My good friend Nat Hentoff – an early and principled voice warning against the devaluation of human life – sounded this alarm decades ago. Once pro-choice, Hentoff came to believe that the erosion of medical ethics – particularly the growing acceptance of abortion, euthanasia, and selective care – was laying the groundwork for institutionalised dehumanisation.

As Hentoff warned, once the government sanctions the deliberate ending of certain lives, it can become a slippery slope: broader swaths of the population would eventually be deemed expendable.

Hentoff referred to this as “naked utilitarianism – the greatest good for the greatest number. And individuals who are in the way – in this case, the elderly poor – have to be gotten out of the way. Not murdered, heaven forbid. Just made comfortable until they die with all deliberate speed.”

That concern is no longer theoretical. In 1996, writing about the Supreme Court’s consideration of physician-assisted suicide, Hentoff warned that once a state decides who shall die “for their own good,” there are “no absolute limits.” He cited medical leaders and disability advocates who feared that the poor, elderly, disabled, and chronically ill would become targets of a system that valued efficiency over longevity.

Today, data collected through wearables – heart rate, mood, mobility, compliance – can shape decisions about insurance, treatment, and life expectancy. How long before an algorithm quietly decides whose suffering is too expensive, whose needs are too inconvenient, or whose body no longer qualifies as worth saving?

This isn’t a left or right issue. Dehumanisation – the process of stripping individuals or groups of their dignity, autonomy, or moral worth – cuts across the political spectrum.

Today, dehumanising language and policies aren’t confined to one ideology – they’re weaponised across the political divide. Prominent figures have begun referring to political opponents, immigrants, and other marginalised groups as “unhuman” – a disturbing echo of the labels that have justified atrocities throughout history.

As reported by *Mother Jones*, J.D. Vance endorsed a book by influencer Jack Posobiec and Joshua

The goal is no longer simply to monitor behaviour but to reshape it – to preempt dissent, deviance, or disease before it arises

Lisec that advocates crushing “unhumans” like vermin. This kind of rhetoric isn’t abstract – it matters.

How can any party credibly claim to be “pro-life” when it devalues the humanity of entire groups, stripping them of the moral worth that should be fundamental to civil society?

When the state and its corporate allies treat people as data, as compliance issues, or as “unworthy,” they dismantle the very notion of equal human dignity. In such a world, rights – including the right to bodily autonomy, health care, or even life itself – become privileges doled out only to the “worthy.”

This is why our struggle must be both political and moral. We can’t defend bodily sovereignty without defending every human being’s equal humanity.

The dehumanisation of the vulnerable crosses political lines. It manifests differently – through budget cuts here, through mandates and metrics there – but the outcome is the same: a society that no longer sees human beings, only data points.

The conquest of physical space – our homes, cars, public squares – is nearly complete. What remains is the conquest of inner space: our biology, our genetics, our psychology, our emotions. As predictive algorithms grow more sophisticated, the government and its corporate partners will use them to assess risk, flag threats, and enforce compliance in real time.

The goal is no longer simply to monitor behaviour but to reshape

it – to preempt dissent, deviance, or disease before it arises. This is the same logic that drives *Minority Report*-style policing, pre-crime mental health interventions, and AI-based threat assessments.

If this is the future of “health freedom,” then freedom has already been redefined as obedience to the algorithm.

We must resist the surveillance of our inner and outer selves.

We must reject the idea that safety requires total transparency, or that health requires constant monitoring. We must reclaim the sanctity of the human body as a space of freedom – not as a data point.

The push for mass adoption of wearables is not about health. It is about habituation. The goal is to train us – subtly, systematically – to accept government and corporate ownership of our bodies.

We must not forget that the USA was founded on the radical idea that all human beings are created equal, “endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,” among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

These rights are not granted by the government, the algorithm, or the market. They are inherent. They are indivisible. And they apply to all of us – or they will soon apply to none of us. The Founders got this part right: their affirmation of our shared humanity is more vital than ever before.

The task before us is whether we will defend that humanity – or surrender it, one wearable at a time. Now is the time to draw the line – before the body becomes just another piece of state property. **CT**

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Peace and development beat austerity and war

As military rhetoric and spending by the US and its allies continue to intensify, it is clear that the world must stand up and carve out an alternative path – one rooted in peace and development

Reason seems to have been gradually abolished by the language of bombs. As weapons systems get ‘smarter’ and ‘smarter,’ the range of diplomatic instruments used by the Global North states becomes blunter and blunter.

US and European diplomats have returned to the old colonial habit of speaking loudly and brusquely, lecturing the natives about what they should or should not do while they themselves do whatever they want. If the natives do not agree, then the old colonial rulers simply threaten to cut off their hands or bomb their homes.

When the International Criminal Court tried to open a file to investigate US atrocities in Afghanistan, Washington reacted by revoking the prosecutors’ visas and threatening to sanction their families. More recently, the United States government sanctioned UN Special Rapporteur

Francesca Albanese for her report on corporate complicity in the Israeli genocide against the Palestinian people.

This gangster-like behaviour reflects the longstanding attitude of colonial rulers, indicating a return to a period when the West sent its gunboats to threaten our countries to trade as they wanted us to trade rather than to trade as equals.

During the colonial period, that form of behaviour was called gunboat diplomacy. What we have now is an updated version: nuclear missile diplomacy.

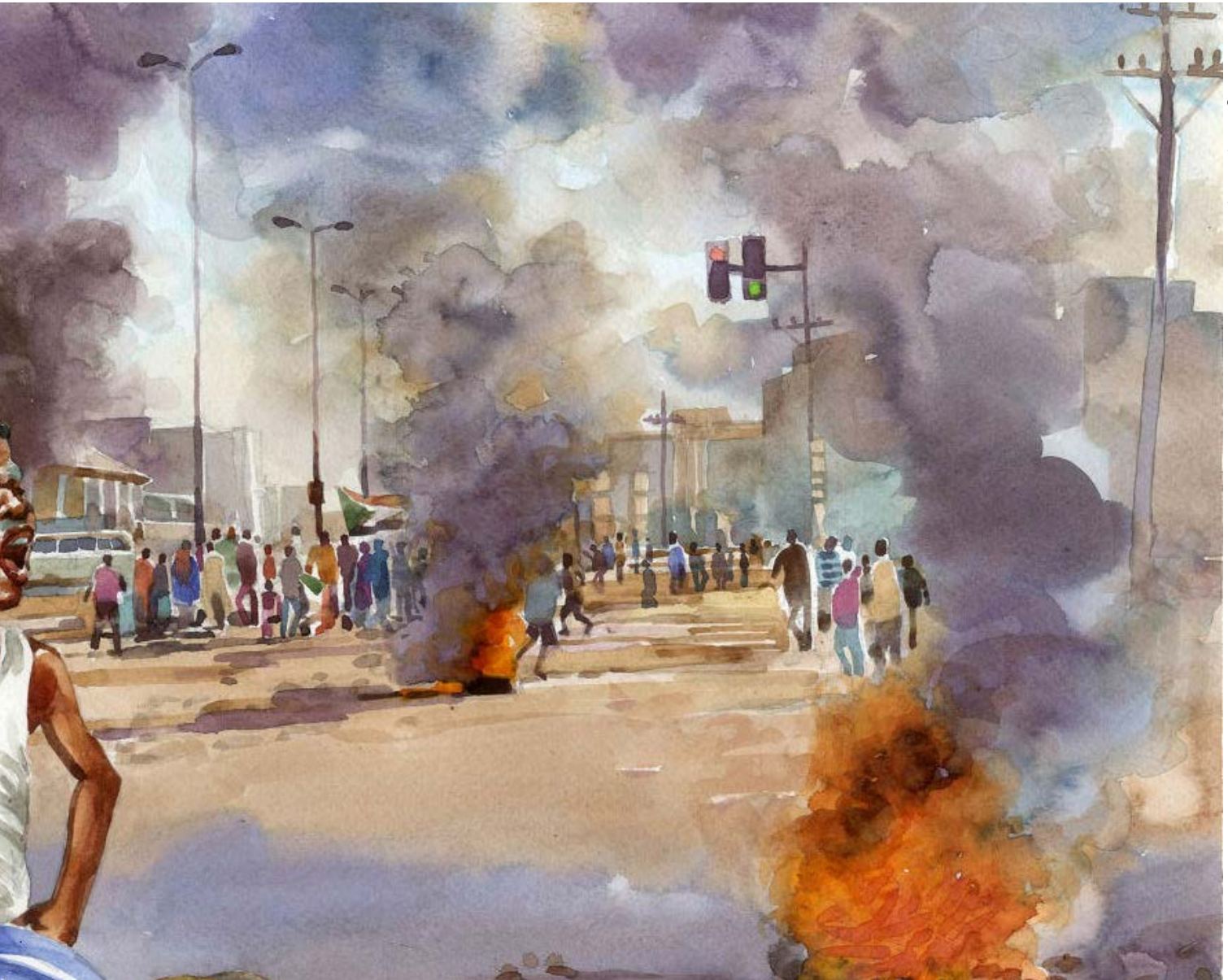
The 2025 North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) summit at The Hague offers yet another example of this nuclear missile diplomacy. The final communiqué was the shortest produced at any NATO meeting, with only five points, two of which were about money.

The Hague Declaration was only 425 words, whereas the Washington



Declaration, issued at the 2024 summit, was 5,419 words (44 paragraphs). This time there was no granular detail about this or that threat, nor was there a long and detailed assessment of the war in Ukraine or how NATO supports that war without limit.

While the 2024 declaration asserted that “Ukraine’s future is in NATO,” his position was nowhere to be found in the 2025 statement. It was clear that the United States simply would not allow a laundry list of NATO’s obsessions. Instead, it was the US obsession that prevailed: that Europe increase its military spending to pay for the US protective shield around the continent.



Under US pressure, NATO states formally agreed to increase their military spending to 5 percent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2035. Since many NATO members have not even met the previous 2 percent target, this move will likely spark serious domestic debates across the alliance.

By our calculations, NATO states currently spend \$2.7 trillion on war making. As they move to increase military spending to 5 percent of their GDP, that number will rise to \$3.8 trillion – a good \$1 trillion more than in previous years.

What else could be done with \$1 trillion? For one, global hunger could

be eradicated in 20 to 25 years, hunger among children could be eradicated immediately, or the entire \$11.4 trillion external debt of developing countries could be paid off in just over a decade.

As it stands, the United Nations (UN) has warned that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will not be met by their target year of 2030 and might in fact be delayed by decades, if not a century. One of the most alarming areas of backsliding is *SDG 2: Zero Hunger*.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that, absent major inflation shocks or geopolitical and geological disruptions,

it would take an extra \$40 to \$50 billion per year to end global hunger. Instead, that money is being spent to blow up food systems rather than build them.

In 2024, global military expenditure reached \$3.7 trillion. That same year, the United Nations approved an annual budget of just \$3.72 billion (which includes peacekeeping). The UN budget, therefore, is only 0.1 percent of the global arms budget. It is difficult to look at these figures and not feel the futility of advancing an agenda for peace between peoples and diplomacy between states. There is so much that needs to be solved and yet so little that is being done in

this dispensation – however limited – to solve these problems.

NATO states agreed to US President Donald Trump's mandate to increase military spending to 5 percent of their GDP without any dispute. Because of their various neoliberal debt brakes, they will have to cut social spending in order to pay for their increased arms production and purchases.

Germany, which has the largest GDP in Europe, is nonetheless mired in deep social problems; for instance, 21.1 percent of the German population faces the risk of poverty or social exclusion. The German government, led by Chancellor Friedrich Merz, has pledged €650 billion over the next five years toward military spending in order to reach the 5 percent target by 2035 – an amount even the *Financial Times* finds to be 'staggering'. To meet this pledge, Germany will need to raise about €144 billion per year, primarily through budget reallocations – ie, austerity – and increased borrowing – ie, debt (raising taxes is unlikely, even in the form of regressive value-added taxes on consumption).

In other words, what Europe and the United States have adopted is the path of austerity and war. That is their promise to the world for the period ahead.

Meanwhile, at the 17th BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), the BRICS+ countries – which now include Indonesia – opted for a different worldview. The BRICS+ statement called for programmes 'for the benefit of our people through the promotion of peace, a more representative, fairer international order, a reinvigorated and reformed multilateral system, sustainable development, and inclusive growth'. The key words here are peace and development.

That is the choice that has been laid out before us: austerity and war on the one hand, or development and

That is the choice: iron or peace, bullets or development. There is no peace through guns, no development through bullets

peace on the other.

Faced with this choice, we rage, we weep, we take to the streets and refuse to allow for any direction other than peace. This was how the Iraqi poet Badr Shakir al-Sayyab (1926–1964) felt in 1953 after he was expelled from Iraq for his participation in the failed 1952 Iraqi Intifada against the monarchy. Later that year, in Tehran, he witnessed the CIA-backed coup that removed Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq from power and restored the Shah of Iran.

In 1954, he wrote the long poem *Weapons and Children* – a passage from it reads:

'Iron'
*Who is all this iron for?
For a chain twisting around a wrist
A blade held to breast or vein
A key to the prison door for
those that are not slaves
A noria that scoops blood.
'Bullets'
Who are all these bullets for?
For miserable Korean children
Hungry workers in Marseille
The people of Baghdad and the rest
Whoever wants to be saved
Iron
Bullets
Bullets
Bullets
Iron...
I hear the merchant
And the laughing children,
And like the blade before the
victim notices,
Like lightning scattered in my mind
Like a screen, like a wound
gushing blood –*

*I see craters rumbling –
Filling the horizon – flames,
and blood
Pouring down like rain showers,
filling the expanse
Bullets and fire. The face of the sky
Scowls whenever iron shakes it
Iron and fire, fire and iron...
Then the impact, then the bomb!
Thunder everywhere,
Lifeless body parts, and the rubble
of a home.
Old iron for a new battle
Iron... to level this waterless desert,
Where children drew in the sand
And where older folks thought
it was safe.
'Peace'
As if the spark in the letters
Is covered over by the darkness
of caves,
With the hopes of the first man.
What picture did he inscribe
on the stones,
Spurred on by death: is it a victory,
A longing for the best of worlds?*

That is the choice: iron or peace, bullets or development. There is no peace through guns, no development through bullets. This is a choice. You must participate in making this choice. Your silence leads to guns and bullets and war; your voice, if it is loud enough alongside the voices of others, might take us to peace and development, the laughter of children as they play without fear in the dusk. **CT**

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Gaza isn't starving. It's being starved

Malnutrition-related deaths in Gaza are beginning to climb, with the health ministry reporting 18 in a single 24-hour period. Doctors report that people are “collapsing” in the street, and Gaza journalist Nahed Hajjaj is warning the world not to be surprised if the remaining reporters in the enclave are soon silenced by starvation.

Unless something drastically changes, things can be expected to get much worse very rapidly.

Meanwhile Israeli forces are setting new records with their massacres of starving civilians seeking aid, with 85 killed in a single day recently.

If this isn't evil, then nothing is evil. If Israel isn't evil, then nothing is.

So what's the plan here? Do we just sit and watch Israel starve Gaza to death with the support of our own governments?

And then what? We just go along with our lives, knowing that that happened? That this is what we are as a society? That our civilisation is comfortable allowing something like that to happen? And that our rulers could do the same thing to another inconvenient population at any time?

We're just meant to be cool with that? And go on living like it's normal? I'm genuinely curious. How exactly is everyone planning to go about living their lives after that point? How does that work, exactly?

I'm asking because I don't know. I mean, I know what my own government and its allies should do, but I don't know what we as ordinary members of the public are supposed to do.

You'll see western pundits and politicians asking “How do we get a ceasefire in Gaza?” or “How do we end hunger in Gaza?” as though it's some kind of ineffable mystery, which is kind of like a man strangling a child to death while saying “The child is being strangled, but HOW do we stop the child's strangulation from occurring?”

It's not some mystery how to get a ceasefire in Gaza; the empire is the fire. It simply needs to cease

firing. Israel's holocaust in Gaza is made possible only by the support of its western backers, primarily the United States.

Numerous Israeli military insiders have acknowledged that none of this would be possible without US support. If the United States and its western allies ceased backing Israel's onslaught in Gaza, a ceasefire would have to occur.

Likewise, it is not a mystery how to get food into Gaza. You just drive the food on in and give it to people. They've got roads and gates right there. The only reason people in Gaza are starving is because western governments (including my own Australia) conspired to pretend to believe that UNRWA is a terrorist organisation to justify cutting off critical aid, while doing nothing to pressure Israel into allowing aid to flow freely.

And now Israel and the US empire are monopolising the delivery of “aid” through the so-called Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, whose facilities now see civilians massacred every day for the crime of attempting to obtain food.

The organisations, funding and delivery systems to feed Gaza are all 100 percent fully available (at no cost to Israel, by the way). They're just not being allowed to provide aid because the goal is to remove all Palestinians from Gaza via death or displacement. The people of Gaza are starving because the west is helping Israel starve Gaza. It really is that simple.

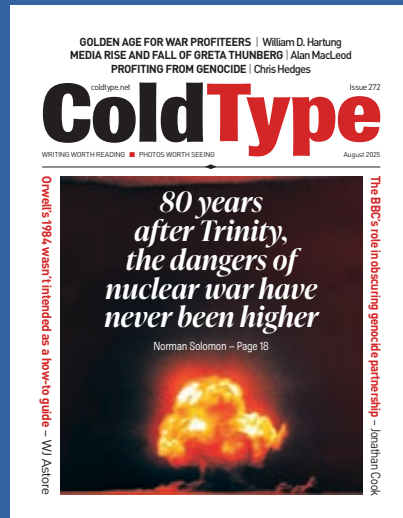
This isn't some kind of unfortunate famine caused by a drought or natural disaster. It is a deliberately manufactured starvation campaign, implemented with genocidal intent.

To paraphrase Utah Phillips, Gaza isn't starving, it is being starved. And the people who are starving it have names and addresses.

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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