



The Peace Issue . . .

The Newsletter of Just Peace Queensland Inc

Issue No. 45

December 2013

Just Peace Meetings: all members and supporters are welcome at our meetings.
When: 2nd Tuesday of each month
Time: Start @ 07:00pm
Where: 2nd Floor, QCU Building
 Cnr Grey & Peel Streets
 South Brisbane

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War by Democracy

By **Tim Pascoe**
 Posted Thursday, 19 September 2013

When Barack Obama signalled his intent to seek Congressional approval for military action in Syria, the decision was met with derision and the President accused of timidity. Indeed, former Assistant Secretary of Defence, William Beecher, claimed the act characterised Obama as the cowardly lion. However, referring authorisation for the use of military force from the executive to the legislature provides for more accountable, democratic and transparent decision-making on the path to war.

Declaring war is the most grave action that a nation can undertake. It is therefore necessary to ensure that such deployments are considered, serve a purpose and are in accordance with the national interest. Legislative authorisation for the application of military force ensures debate regarding the necessity and merit of any proposed deployment, resulting in a more reasoned basis for declaring war, while conferring greater credibility and political force on any deployment decision.

Incoming Prime Minister Tony Abbott should take note of Obama's democratic referral. In Australia, the Prime Minister maintains the right to authorise the nation's involvement in a conflict and declare the deployment of armed forces without Parliamentary approval. A future Prime Minister could commit Australia to a conflict of dubious national interest, in defiance of public opinion and expert advice, and in breach of international law. The irony of the executive's war prerogative has been previously noted; the Australian Prime Minister has the power to declare war on whomever he or she desires, yet if the same individual sought to add a cent in tax to the cost of cigarettes they would face a proverbial legislative

"war" in Parliament.

Debate concerning Australia's war-making process is not new. For several decades Australian politicians and citizens have proposed constraints to the freedom of executive government in external policy. In 2009, the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee tabled a bill that would require both houses of Parliament to authorise overseas warlike deployments. While the Committee noted unequivocal support for the principle that the executive should not be able to make such a decision without reference to, or endorsement by, the Australian Parliament, the report expressed two prohibiting concerns; the use of classified material and potential constraints on deployment.

First, the Committee claimed that providing Parliament with the intelligence necessary for an informed debate would compromise the security of potential operations. The implication is that while the government of the day can be trusted with classified material, the opposition, minor parties and independents cannot. This line of reasoning undermines two major components of Australian democracy: that the opposition is a "government in waiting" and that all elected representatives are imbued with the trust of their constituency. Furthermore, as exemplified in the lead up to Iraq, a government in favour of war can selectively utilise and interpret intelligence to introduce a range of largely unsubstantiated threat scenarios as justification for military action. Moreover, the tactical level intelligence that would endanger Australian operations is immaterial to Parliamentary debate on the necessity and merits of an overseas warlike deployment: the information that there was no evidence of chemical or

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time, that can be used by a variety of US weapons systems, including drones. Pine Gap is part of America's drone killing program. If targets are selected anywhere in east Asia or the western Pacific, we are complicit in such actions.

Of greater significance still, Pine Gap information is now used to help target and to perfect America's anti-ballistic missile system. China has 250 nuclear warheads, America has 7700. China, committed to a no-first-use policy from the start, may be concerned about the adequacy of its present programs, because the ABM system being put in place by America and Japan will seriously limit China's deterrent nuclear force. Pine Gap is integral in such developments.

In any conflict in the western Pacific, because of the the Darwin taskforce and Pine Gap, it would be impossible to say that we are not involved. Therefore, if America goes to war in the western Pacific, we also will be at war. Washington will determine whether Australia goes to war or not, just as Britain and the empire did in days of old.

We should be finding ways of asserting Australian sovereignty and establishing strategic independence, as Canada has, for example. It did not participate in Vietnam or in Iraq.

Our situation will be compounded, and America's hold on Australia's future will be made all the stronger, if an option being pushed by American defence analysts is accepted in Australia. America, short of money, is looking for ways to cheapen its deployments in the western Pacific. The suggestion is that 10 or 12 Virginia-class nuclear-powered submarines would be run and managed by the Australian navy. While they would be used for Australian purposes, a significant function would be to undertake part of patrolling and operations that America regards as important, in the western Pacific. The same reports suggest that tensions are going to rise throughout the region, and that this is an additional reason why we should accept this option.

EDITORIAL:

Since the beginning of Civilisation the "Quest for Absolute Power", has been a permanent thread woven into the very fabric of society at large.

History is strewn with graphic examples of the extent, and of the brutality of struggles which have had as their core objective the prize of absolute and unfettered power. This gives weight to the wise words of Lord Acton: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." I do not doubt that many can recall specific examples of the misuse and abuse of power by Governments, Corporations, Media, and individuals particularly over the past 50-60 years.

Because of the breadth and immensity of the subject matter and the necessary limitations on the space available I will restrict my comments mainly to periods of Government in Queensland where the exercise of "absolute" power is the norm.

Whilst no Queensland Government can claim to be guilt free in respect to the imprudent exercise of power, the Joh Bjelke-Petersen era from the mid 60's to late 80's forged a reputation throughout Australia as being an extreme right wing conservative Government.

Courier Mail Correspondent, Terry Sweetman, in a recent opinion piece described the infamous street march legislation amendments of 1977: "not only was the most iconic and illiberal law of the Bejelke-Petersen era rushed through the House with indecent haste, its hideousness was dressed up as providing "for a speedy procedure" for appeals."

The same description could be applied to much of the legislation, and the actions of Bjelke-Petersen and his Government. Another example of extreme legislation was that dealing with the SEQEB dispute.

The findings, and recommendations, of the Fitzgerald Inquiry which was completed in 1989 was the catalyst for a change of Government, and for major reforms to the criminal justice system, and the Police Service in Queensland.

In March 2012, the Liberal National Party led by now Premier Campbell Newman was elected to Government in Queensland with a massive majority. After nearly two years in power, the Newman Government is making the Bjelke-Petersen junta look like caring left wingers.

Whilst Newman does not waste time properly consulting stake holders, or having Parliamentary Committees investigate important and major Bills before presentation to the Parliament, or allow reasonable time for debate, he does do what most Conservative Governments do.

He seeks to create and cultivate a sense of fear, insecurity, and loathing, in the hearts and minds of constituents. He makes them feel/believe that their lives/lifestyles are being threatened, and that the actions of his Government are just and reasonable and done in their best interests.

A brief review of the Newman scorecard so far reveals:

- Sacked over 14,000 Public Servants and changed recruitment rules
- Passed 1st batch of anti-union laws, with more to come!
- Undermined the Crime & Misconduct Commission, (CMC) replaced the permanent Chairman with an Acting Chairman
- Acting Chairman forced to correct the record on discussions he had with the Newman Government, before he supported the anti-bikie laws
- Sacked the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee (PCMC) for alleged bias against Acting Chair CMC, appointed 4 first term LNP backbenchers to a reconstituted PCMC
- Passed draconian so called Bikie Laws, with mandatory sentencing, 23 hours a day solitary confinement, special jails, offence if more than 3 alleged bikie members associate, and a raft of other activities that now constitute criminal offences
- Has given the Attorney General (Politician) the power to override a Judge's decision on certain matters, in breach of the doctrine of the separation of powers between the Executive and Judiciary
- Increased police powers, first steps to a Police State?
- Trashed existing laws, and passed new laws destructive to the environment, and opened up the way for a resumption of uranium mining

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JUST PEACE ACTIVITIES

Over the past 6 months our committee and members have contributed their energy on a range of events with a focus on the decade of war in Iraq and the continuing struggle of Palestinian people to end the occupation and secure their human rights.

The year 2013 marked a decade of war in Iraq. We held a number of events radio interviews etc earlier in the year and continued in the 2nd half of the year with a range of events.

Public meeting 12/7 Preparing for Peace: Australian lessons from the Iraq War keynote speaker Vincent Emanuele from the Iraq Veterans Against War or IVAW. Vince gave a very political talk to a well-attended meeting on US militarism, past present and projected. Vince also spoke on ABC 612, at a film screening of *On the Bridge*, St Marys in exile and Channel 7 Sunrise before traveling to Rockhampton to again speak out. Our thanks to Vince for working so hard during his visit to Brisbane.

22/7 Ms Victoria Leon indigenous peace activist from Guam visited Brisbane where she attended a dinner and had a meeting with a number of Union leaders. Vicki also was inspirational. The people of Guam have been used and abused for so long. They host a large US air and naval base and now the US wants a base for 10000 Marines threatening the population and environment as well as increasing tensions in the region.

6/8 Hiroshima day-68 years since the first military use of nuclear weapons. The rally was held at Speakers corner in front of Government House. This is an important day to commemorate and I felt the location and passing people traffic made it a good location. Just Peace provided a speaker and helped to promote the rally.

26/8 Just Peace committee member Ross Gwyther addressed a gathering of around 100 people at a U3A seminar series on contemporary Australian politics. Ross spoke on behalf of Just Peace and the

Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) about the history of Australian engagement in foreign superpowers wars. This was an excellent example of opportunities that exist for raising our vision for an independent and peaceful future. If you know of other organisations which might be interested in having a speaker from Just Peace /IPAN please let us know.

21/9 United Nations International Day of Peace Lecture St John's Cathedral. At this second annual event the keynote speaker was retired high court judge Michael Kirby who attracted a large number of people. This event is designed to highlight the UN Resolution 55/282 which calls for the 21st September to be a day of ceasefire and communities around the world to take action in the pursuit of peace. Just Peace works with the principal organiser United Nations Assn Australia Qld on this event.

4/11 public forum on Palestine with Dr Mustapha Bargouti. The opportunity arose to have Dr Bargouti come to Brisbane after he spoke at the AFOPA Edward Said lecture in Adelaide. Just Peace and APAN in Brisbane were privileged to host him and introduce him to a large audience as well as meet with a range of Union leaders and Politicians. Dr Bargouti shared with us the current situation in the West Bank and talked about the organisation he leads, the **Palestinian National Initiative** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestinian_National_Initiative

1/12 Just Peace AGM. The new committee includes 3 new members. Welcome Margid, Margot and Willy! The Convenors report is available to those who would like a copy sent.

Our keynote speaker was Dr Alison Broinowski from the **Campaign for an Iraq War Inquiry**. The title of her talk was **Iraq War Inquiry – why do Australian governments not want one?** Alison spoke extensively on what she terms *The Deep State*. With the recent publicity on invasive electronic surveillance of the public and leadership of Indonesia this was a very informative lecture outlining how we have a parallel state as well as our elected one. We thank Alison for taking the time to come to Brisbane.

Just Peace for Palestine Sub Committee- the members of this group have maintained a monthly stall in the Queen St Mall with a petition calling for the Australian Government to take action on a UNICEF report which both describes and condemns the incarceration and torture of Palestinian youth. We have now sent the petition with almost 800 signatures to Maria Vamvakianou MP to present in the National Parliament in this United Nations designated Year of Palestine.

<http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/UN-rings-in-The-Year-Of-Palestine-by-passing-six-resolutions-condemning-Israel-333286>

Just Peace is a member of the **Australian Palestinian Advocacy Network**. For information on the activities of APAN <http://apan.org.au/>

The **Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN)** Just Peace is working with state representatives of IPAN to organise the **Canberra Peace Convergence** between Easter and Anzac Day. The week of activity will start with a presence at the National Folk Festival over the Easter weekend to be followed by a National Conference on Tuesday 22nd April and a range of other activities outlined in the flyer included with the newsletter. **You are encouraged to attend the Peace Convergence.** For more information, contact Annette (0431597256) or Ross (0408782983).

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Many more changes have been made, with other drastic changes pending such as full scale privatisation, and other Costello Commission of Audit recommendations.

Historic facts are clear that when Conservative Governments, led by Howard, Bjelke-Petersen, and Newman, have "absolute" power over the Parliamentary System, the Human Rights, Civil Liberties, working conditions, welfare necessities, and public services for ordinary Australians are abolished or reduced, so as to increase the wealth and power of corporations, billionaires, and the privileged few.

All caring Australians should be seriously concerned about their basic rights and

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CAN AUSTRALIA CLAIM TO BE A SOVEREIGN NATION?

October 21, 2013

By **Malcolm Fraser**

The increasing American attention to the Pacific is bad news for Australians.

Anyone who has a sense of pride in Australia as an independent nation, as a nation that can make up its own mind, whose values are worth supporting, should be disheartened.

We have followed the United States into three wars: Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. Vietnam and Iraq were costly and tragic failures. Afghanistan is a failure in waiting. US policies have failed in the Middle East. As a consequence, that region is in greater turmoil and America's influence has greatly diminished.

The US is now turning its attention to the western Pacific, the famous "pivot", the policy of containment of China. If American policy is no more successful in the western Pacific than it has been in the Middle East, then those of us who live in this part of the world are in for a rough time.

America claims that a growing and more powerful China is being assertive, some even say aggressive. However, that charge could equally be laid at the door of the US.

Powerful American taskforces, of which we are at times a part, through the deployment of escort vessels with the USS George Washington, parade through the East and South China seas. An American spy ship, the USNS Impeccable, is anchored close to a Chinese submarine base on Hainan Island. The Chinese would certainly have regarded this act as provocative. The build-up of US arms, from Japan to Australia and involving the Philippines and Singapore, and strategic discussions with other nations, many would regard as aggressive, in a region that has had a long period of peace. Certainly, compared with the Middle East, where the US has been most active, the western Pacific has been peaceful indeed, much of that due to the efforts of Indonesia and other ASEAN countries.

The increasing American attention to the Pacific is not good news for

Australia. Iraq was far away and did not affect our regional relationships in any significant way. But if present US policies are pursued, there is a possibility of conflict ultimately between China and the US. If we are involved, our relationships with all countries of the region would be affected.

A conflict could be begun by a newly militaristic Japan seeking to change the status of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. It could be caused by the Philippines, believing they would have American support and behaving aggressively as a consequence. While the Americans claim not to take sides in disputes in the East and South China seas, their statements, their dispositions and deployments, suggest they have sided with Japan.

These events affect Australia deeply. We have little or no capacity for independent action or decisions. If America is involved in conflict, our hosting a powerful Marine air-ground taskforce in Darwin, capable of deploying power anywhere throughout the region, makes us complicit in whatever that taskforce may do. Australians have been deceived by statements in Australia, belittling the significance of that deployment, but outside Australia, US secretaries of defence have spoken more openly of its capacities.

Perhaps more important, Pine Gap, whose initial purpose was to gather intelligence concerning the performance of Soviet missiles, now provides information, virtually in real time, that can be used by a variety of US weapons systems, including drones. Pine Gap is part of America's drone killing program. If targets are selected anywhere in east Asia or the western Pacific, we are complicit in such actions.

Of greater significance still, Pine Gap information is now used to help target and to perfect America's anti-ballistic missile system. China has 250 nuclear warheads, America has 7700. China, committed to a no-first-use policy from the start, may be concerned about the adequacy of its present programs, because the ABM system being put in place by America and Japan will seriously limit China's deterrent nuclear

force. Pine Gap is integral in such developments.

In any conflict in the western Pacific, because of the the Darwin taskforce and Pine Gap, it would be impossible to say that we are not involved. Therefore, if America goes to war in the western Pacific, we also will be at war. Washington will determine whether Australia goes to war or not, just as Britain and the empire did in days of old.

We should be finding ways of asserting Australian sovereignty and establishing strategic independence, as Canada has, for example. It did not participate in Vietnam or in Iraq.

Our situation will be compounded, and America's hold on Australia's future will be made all the stronger, if an option being pushed by American defence analysts is accepted in Australia. America, short of money, is looking for ways to cheapen its deployments in the western Pacific. The suggestion is that 10 or 12 Virginia-class nuclear-powered submarines would be run and managed by the Australian navy. While they would be used for Australian purposes, a significant function would be to undertake part of patrolling and operations that America regards as important, in the western Pacific. The same reports suggest that tensions are going to rise throughout the region, and that this is an additional reason why we should accept this option.

If tensions rise, it will be a consequence of America's increased militarisation of the western Pacific.

Many countries in east and south-east Asia have shown a remarkable capacity to overcome old enmities and to work together in peaceful association. The members of ASEAN, without American support, have shown how this can be done effectively in the Asian way. All the countries of this region, not merely Australia, should be concerned with the current posture and activities of the US. We, above all, should be concerned because of the Marine air-ground taskforce and because of the activities of Pine Gap.

We must find a way to reassert our own sovereignty.



THE SECTARIAN WAR AT HAND

Published on Thursday, October 24, 2013 by [Common Dreams](#)

Redrawing the Middle East Again

by **Ramzy Baroud**

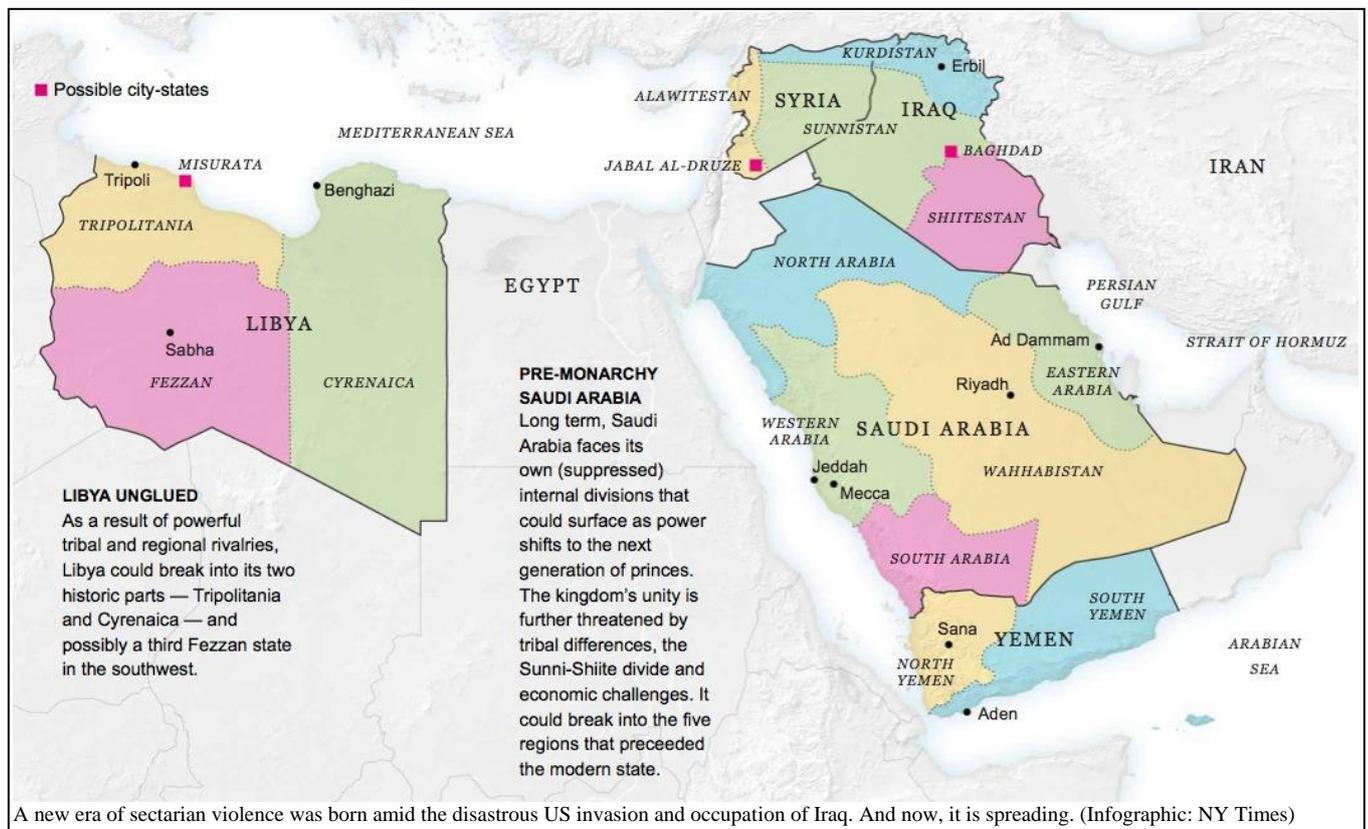
The warm waters of the Gulf look quiet from where I am sitting, but such tranquility hardly reflects the conflicts this region continues to generate. The euphoria of the so-called Arab Spring is long gone, but what remains is a region that is rich with

revolutions gone stray, as in Egypt, or uprisings turned into most-destructive civil wars as in Syria. Conversely, those who are for now spared the agony of war, are very much involved in funding various war parties, transporting weapons, training fighters and leading media campaigns in support of one party against another. No such elusive concept as media objectivity exists anymore, not even in relative terms.

Yet in some instances, the lines are not drawn with any degree of certainty

numerous other groups that operate based on their own agendas, or unified under different military platforms with no allegiance to any political structure, not those in Istanbul or elsewhere.

It is easy however to associate perpetual conflict with the supposedly inherently violent Middle East. For nearly two decades, many warned that American military intervention in Iraq would eventually ‘destabilize’ the entire region. The term ‘destabilize’ was of course a relevant one, since Israel has



resources and burdened with easily manipulated history that is in a state of reckless transition. No one can see what the future will look like, but the possibilities are ample, and possibly tragic.

In my many visits to the region, I have never encountered such a lack of clarity regarding the future, despite the fact that battle lines have been drawn like never before. Governments, intellectuals, sects and whole communities are lining up at both sides of many divides. This is taking place to various degrees everywhere in the Middle East, depending on the location of the conflict.

Some countries are directly engulfed in bloody and defining conflicts -

either. Within the ranks of Syria’s opposition to the Ba’ath regime in Damascus, the groups are too many to count, and their own alliances shift in ways that few in the media seem to notice or care to report. We arbitrarily write of an ‘opposition’, but in reality there are no truly unifying political or military platforms, whether it be the Supreme Military Council, the Syria National Council or the Syrian National Coalition. In an interactive map, formulated by Al Jazeera mostly on what seems like wholesale conclusions, the military council “claims it commands about 900 groups and a total of at least 300,000 fighters.” The claim of actual control over these groups can be easily contended, and there are

done more than its fair share to destabilize several countries, occupy some and destroy others. But the prospects of political destabilization were much more ominous when the world’s most powerful country invested much of its might and financial resources to do the job.

In 1990-91, then again in 2003, and once more in 2006, Iraq was used as a giant field of experimentation for war, ‘state building’ and US-provoked civil war. The region had never experienced such division to accommodate sectarian lines as it did then. The discourse that adjoined the US war was brazenly sectarian of the Shia-majority oppressed
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by the Sunni-minority. They rearranged one of the most complex political landscapes in the world within a few weeks, based on a blueprint imagined by Washington-based 'experts' with little real life experience. Not only was Iraq torn into shreds, but it was remade repeatedly to accommodate America's inept understanding of history.

Iraq continues to suffer, even after the US purportedly withdrew its military. Thousands have perished in Iraq in recent months, with victims labeled as members of one sect or another. But the Iraqi ailment has now become a regional condition. And like the US when it invades sovereign countries and rearranges political borders, groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) operate wherever they find their calling with no respect for geographical borders. Formed in Iraq in 2006 as a platform for various Jihadi groups like al-Qaeda in Iraq, ISIS has been a powerful component of the savage war underway in Syria. Despite its bad reputation, it seems to have little problem finding access and resources. Worse, in parts of Syria it actually operates a somewhat stable economy that gives it greater privilege than homegrown Syrian groups.

Such groups would have never existed in Iraq, or move with relative ease to other countries, if it had not been for the US invasion. They operate like private armies, divided into smaller bands of battle-hardened fighters that are capable of navigating their way through borders and taking control over entire communities. Al-Qaeda, once a barely known group 12-years-ago, has now become a stakeholder in the future of entire Middle Eastern countries.

For countries that are not undergoing the type of upheaval being experienced in Syria and Iraq, they however understand that it is too late to play the role of the spectator. It is an all-out war in the making, and there is no time for neutrality. Worrying predictions of the changing physical landscape of the region are well underway and few countries seem to be spared.

Robin Wright's recent piece in the *New York Times*, "Imagining a Remapped Middle East" is a typical speculation made by American political and media elites about the Middle East. They applied it in earnest before and after the US invasion of Iraq, where they carved the Arab country into whatever amalgamation that suited US interests, in a typical divide and rule formula. This time however, the prospects are frighteningly serious and real. All the major players, even if ostensibly opposing one another, are in fact contributing to the plausible division. According to Wright, not only could countries become a few smaller ones, some of the carved territories could tie into the cut pieces of neighboring countries.

Even "city-states - oases of multiple identities like Baghdad, well-armed enclaves like Misurata, Libya's third largest city, or homogeneous zones like Jabal al-Druze in southern Syria - might make a comeback, even if technically inside countries," he wrote. The accompanying infographic was entitled: "How 5 Countries Could Become 14."

Whether such events will ever actualize, the prediction is itself telling of the undeniably shifting nature of conflict in the Middle East, where countries are now embroiled in war. The new battle lines are now sectarian, carrying symptoms of Iraq's relentless civil war. In fact, the players are more or less the same, except that the 'game' has now been spread to exceed Iraq's porous borders into much wider spaces where militants have the upper hand.

From here, the warm waters of the Gulf look quiet, but deceptively so.

Ramzy Baroud (www.ramzybaroud.net) is an author and editor of PalestineChronicle.com. His work has been published in many newspapers, journals and anthologies around the world. His is the author of *The Second Palestinian Intifada: A Chronicle of a People's Struggle* (Pluto Press, London). His latest book is *My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story* (Pluto Press, London).

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future prospects under the Newman and Abbott Governments, for the evidence is clear that they will be targeted.

The apathy, and complacency, of ordinary German citizens, during the mid-1930's, caused Pastor Martin Neimoller, to issue a profound and prophetic warning in 1937 about the dangers of Nazism. (The full text is repeated in every edition of "The Peace Issue")

I believe that in the current political environment prevailing in Queensland there are valuable and relevant lessons to be learned from the 1950's campaign by US TV broadcaster Edward R Murrow, against the fanatical fear-and-smear anti-communist crusade of Senator Joe McCarthy.

The following quotes are extracts from scenes in the movie, "Good Night, and Good Luck", quote;

"The line between investigating and persecuting is a very fine one (and) we must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. We must remember always that accusation is not proof, and that conviction depends upon evidence and due process of law.

"We will not walk in fear, one of another. We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason, if we dig deep in our history and doctrine, and remember that we are not descended from fearful men-not men who feared to write, to speak, to associate, and to defend causes that were for the moment unpopular."

For those of us who have feelings of anger, frustration, and grave concerns about the transition of Queensland to a totalitarian State, we should remind ourselves of Mary Meads quote; *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."*

Norm Bullen

January 2014

"It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones."

"When a man is denied the right to live the life he believes in, he has no choice but to become an outlaw."

-- Nelson Mandela --

**SYRIA POLICY HAS BEEN SUNK****US/British Policy on Syria has Been Sunk, and Nobody Noticed***Free Syrian Army a Complete Pawn to Foreign Intelligence Agencies*

World View: The West's favoured faction is on the run, while the Riyadh-backed rebels steadily gain ground

By **Patrick Cockburn**

December 15, 2013 "Information Clearing House - "The Independent"

The final bankruptcy of American and British policy in Syria came 10 days ago as Islamic Front, a Saudi-backed Sunni jihadi group, overran the headquarters of the Supreme Military Council of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) at Bab al-Hawa on the Syrian side of the border with Turkey. The FSA, along with the Syrian National Coalition, groups that the United States and Britain have been pretending for years are at the heart of Syrian military and political opposition, has been discredited. The remaining FSA fighters are in flight, have changed sides, or are devoting all their efforts to surviving the onslaught from jihadi or al-Qa'ida-linked brigades.

The US and Britain stopped the delivery of non-lethal aid to the supply depot at Bab al-Hawa as the implications of the disaster sank in. The West's favourite rebel commander, General Salim Idris, was on the run between Turkey and his former chief supporter and paymaster, Qatar. Turkey closed the border, the other side of which is now controlled by the Islamic Front. The so-called moderate wing of the Syrian insurgency has very limited influence, but its representatives are still being urged by Washington and London to attend the peace conference in Geneva on 22 January to negotiate Bashar al-Assad's departure from power.

Confusion over what is happening is so great that Western leaders may not pay as much of a political price at home as they should for the failure of their Syrian policy. But it is worth recalling that the Syrian National Coalition and the FSA are the same people for whom the US and UK almost went to war in August, and saw as candidates to replace Assad in power in Damascus. The recent debacle shows how right public opinion

in both countries was to reject military intervention.

Who are the winners in the new situation? One is Assad because the opposition to him – which started as a popular uprising against a cruel, corrupt and oppressive dictatorship in 2011 – has become a fragmented movement dominated by al-Qa'ida umbrella organisation the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Isil); the other al-Qa'ida franchisee, the al-Nusra Front; and the Islamic Front, consisting of six or seven large rebel military formations numbering an estimated 50,000 fighters, whose uniting factor is Saudi money and an extreme Sunni ideology similar to Saudi Arabia's version of Islam.

The Saudis see this alliance as capable of fighting pro-Assad forces as well as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, but Riyadh's objections to the latter appears to be based on its independence of Saudi control rather than revulsion at its record of slaughtering Shia, Alawi, Christians, Armenians, Kurds, Turkomans or any dissenting Sunni.

The allegation of Saudi control is becoming easier to substantiate. Until a year ago, the Saudis stayed somewhat in the background when it came to funding the Syrian rebels, in which the leading role was played by Qatar in association with Turkey. But the failure of the rebels to win and US anger that the Qataris and Turks had allowed much of the aid to go to jihadis led to an important change this summer, when Saudi Arabia took over from Qatar as chief supporter of the rebels.

An interesting example of just how hands-on this Saudi direction has become is illustrated by a fascinating interview given by a top defector from the FSA to Isil, Saddam al-Jamal. Commander of the Liwa Allah Akbar battalion, he was until recently the top FSA commander in eastern Syria, much of which is under rebel control. He recalls that "we used to meet with the apostates of Qatar and Saudi Arabia and with the infidels of Western nations such as America and France in order to receive arms and ammo or cash". He says Western intelligence operatives had of late been worried about the growing influence of al-Qa'ida affiliates and repeatedly asked him why he was growing a beard.

Jamal gives an account of a recent three-day meeting between the FSA commanders from northern and eastern Syria with Western, Saudi, Qatari, Emirati and Jordanian intelligence operatives. This appears to have been soon after the Saudis took over the Syria file from the Qataris. He says the FSA commanders, including General Idris, had a meeting with Prince Salman bin Sultan, the Saudi deputy defence minister who was the leading figure at the meeting. Jamal says that Prince Salman "asked those who had plans to attack Assad positions to present their needs for arms, ammo and money".

The picture that Mr Jamal paints is of an FSA that was a complete pawn to foreign intelligence agencies, which is one reason why he defected. The Saudis subsequently decided that the FSA would not serve their purposes, and were frustrated by America backing away from war in Syria and confrontation with Iran. They set about using their limitless funds to attract into alliances rebel brigades such as the Islamic Front which would be Sunni fundamentalist, committed to the overthrow of Assad, against political negotiations, but distinct from al-Qa'ida. In reality, it looks highly unlikely that Saudi money will be enough to bring down or even significantly weaken Assad though it may be enough to keep a war going for years.

The old, supposedly moderate, opposition has been marginalised. Its plan since 2011 has been to force a full-scale Western military intervention as in Libya in 2011 and, when this did not happen, they lacked an alternative strategy.

The US, Britain and France do not have many options left except to try to control the jihadi Frankenstein's monster that they helped create in Syria and which is already helping destabilise Iraq and Lebanon. Turkey may soon regret having given free passage to so many jihadi on their way to Syria. Ankara could close its 500-mile border with Syria or filter those who cross it. But Turkish policy in Syria and Iraq has been so dysfunctional in the past three years that it may be too late to correct the consequences of wrongly

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**PALESTINE: THE END OF HOPE**

As Bedouin villages are destroyed, so too are hopes for Palestinian peace deal

by **Jonathan Cook**

December 10th, 2013

As United States envoys shuttle back and forth in search of a peace formula to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a matter supposedly settled decades ago is smouldering back into life.

In what was billed as a “day of rage” last month, thousands of Palestinians took to the streets to protest against a plan to uproot tens of thousands of Bedouin from their ancestral lands inside Israel, in the Negev.

The clashes were the worst between Israeli police and the country’s large Palestinian minority since the outbreak of the second intifada 13 years ago, with police using batons, stun grenades, water cannon and arrests to deter future protests.

Things are only likely to get more heated. The so-called Praver Plan, being hurried through parliament, will authorise the destruction of more than 30 Bedouin villages, forcibly relocating the inhabitants to deprived, overcrowded townships. Built decades ago, these urban reservations languish at the bottom of every social and economic index.

Bedouin leaders, who were ignored in the plan’s drafting, say they will oppose it to the bitter end. The villages, though treated as illegal by the state, are the last places where the Bedouin cling to their land and a traditional pastoral life.

But the Israeli government is equally insistent that the Bedouin must be “concentrated” – a revealing term employed by Benny Begin, a former minister who helped to formulate the plan. In the place of the villages, a handful of Jewish towns will be erected.

The stakes are high, not least because Israel views this battle as a continuation of the 1948 war that established a Jewish state on the ruins of Palestine.

Avigdor Lieberman, the foreign minister, argued last week that the fight over the Negev proves “nothing has changed since the days of the tower and stockade” – a reference to heavily fortified outposts the Zionists

aggressively built in the 1930s to evict Palestinians from the land they had farmed for centuries.

These outposts later became land-hungry farming communities that gave the Jewish state its territorial backbone.

Mr Lieberman’s view reflects that of the government: “We are fighting for the lands of the Jewish people, against those who intentionally try to rob and seize them.”

The labelling of the Bedouin as “squatters” and “trespassers” reveals much about the intractability of the wider conflict – and why the Americans have no hope of ending it as long as they seek solutions that address only the injustices caused by the occupation that began in 1967.

In truth, both Israel and the Palestinians understand that the war of 1948 never really finished.

Suhad Bishara, a lawyer specialising in Israeli land issues, has called the Praver Plan a “second nakba”, in reference to the catastrophic events of 1948 that stripped the Palestinians of their homeland.

Israel, meanwhile, continues to conceive of its 1.5 million Palestinian citizens – however peaceable – as just as alien and threatening to its interests as the Palestinians in the occupied territories. The roots of the Praver Plan can be traced to one of Zionism’s earliest principles: “Judaisation”. There are cities across Israel, including Upper Nazareth, Karmiel and Migdal Haemek, founded as Judaisation communities next to large Palestinian populations with the official goal of “making the land Jewish”.

Judaisation’s faulty premise, in the pre-state years, was the fantasy that Palestine was “a land without a people for a people without a land”. Its sinister flip side was the cheery injunction to Zionism’s pioneers to “make the desert bloom”, chiefly by driving out Palestinians.

Nowadays, the term “Judaisation”, with its unpleasant overtones, has been discarded in favour of “development”.

There is even a minister for “developing the Negev and the Galilee” – Israel’s two areas with large concentrations of

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convincing itself that Assad would fall.

The Geneva II peace conference on Syria looks as if it will be born dead. In so far as the FSA and its civilian counterparts ever represented anyone in Syria they do so no longer. The armed opposition is dominated by Saudi-sponsored Islamist brigades on the one hand and by al-Qa’ida affiliates on the other. All US, British and French miscalculations have produced in Syria is a re-run of Afghanistan in the 1980s, creating a situation the ruinous consequences of which have yet to appear. As jihadis in Syria realise they are not going to win, they may well look for targets closer to home.

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Palestinians. But officials are interested only in Jewish development.

Last week, in the wake of the clashes, the Israeli *Haaretz* daily published leaked documents showing that the World Zionist Organisation – an unofficial arm of the government – has been quietly reviving the Judaisation programme in the Galilee.

In an effort to bring another 100,000 Jews to the region, several new towns are to be built, for Jews only, dispersed as widely as possible in contravention of Israel’s own national master plan, which requires denser building inside existing communities to protect scarce land resources.

All this generosity towards Israel’s Jewish population is at the expense of the country’s Palestinian citizens. They have not been allowed a single new community since Israel’s founding more than six decades ago. And the new Jewish towns, as Arab mayors complained last week, are being built intentionally to box them in.

For officials, the renewed Judaisation drive is about asserting “Israeli sovereignty” and “strengthening our hold” over the Galilee, as if the current inhabitants – Israeli citizens who are Palestinian – were a group of hostile foreigners. *Haaretz* more honestly characterised the policy as “racism”.

Judaisation casts the conflict between

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ISRAEL: IS THERE HOPE?

Published on Thursday, December 26, 2013 by [Common Dreams](#)

Majority of Israeli Public Wants to Teach Peace: Poll

'It would seem that the public is more open to the Palestinian narrative than some of its political leaders'

- Common Dreams staff

A new survey out Wednesday found that, contrary to the actions of their political leaders, the majority of the Israeli public favors teaching peace in schools and believes the Palestinian narrative should be presented to students.

According to the findings, which were presented at an education conference at Tel Aviv University, 64.5 percent of those polled agree with the notion that the Palestinian narrative should be introduced to the students and 51 percent agree that schools must present information describing Palestinian culture and society favorably in an attempt to expand knowledge about them.

Similarly, 60.2 percent are opposed to the ban on teaching “the events connected to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict showing the Jews in a negative light,” writes *Haaretz* reporting on the survey conducted last week by Hamidgam Project Ltd.

“It would seem that the public is more open to the Palestinian narrative than some of its political leaders,” said Prof. Daniel Bar-Tal of Tel Aviv University, one of the conference organizers. The seminar was held to discuss the extent to which the Israeli school system should teach peace.

According to Bar-Tal, these findings contradict recent actions of the country's education leaders.

“In recent years,” he said, “the Education Ministry has rejected textbooks that tried to present both narratives, and every time some right-wing politician thought that Jewish schoolchildren were exposed to a different narrative, he or she would raise a hue and a cry, to the extent that one couldn't utter the word “nakba” [“disaster” in Arabic, referring to the establishment of Israel.]”

Haaretz continues:

The results of the survey indicate that 82.5 percent of the public agrees that teaching openness and critical thinking must be a major goal of the school system, while 71.3 percent oppose the assertion that it is necessary to wait with such education “as long as the conflict with the Palestinians is unresolved, in order not to undercut our position.”

A similar number, 72.9 percent, believes that Israel and the Palestinian Authority must coordinate their tuition, in order to present the other side in a more positive light and to begin teaching for peace before an agreement is reached. In addition, 67.9 percent are convinced that the school system should regularly arrange meetings between Jews and Arabs as part of the curriculum.

However, *Haaretz* reports that along the “surprising” support for peace, 65.5 percent of the respondents said they also believe that the school system must “teach Jewish and Zionist values without taking a critical stance” and 81.1 percent oppose the idea of teaching the younger generation that Judea and Samaria in the occupied West Bank are not a part of the State of Israel—stances that Bar-Tal said

resemble the “positive attitude in principle that the Jewish public shows towards democracy, which comes to an abrupt end when we're talking about giving equal rights to Arabs who are citizens of the State of Israel.”

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Israelis and Palestinians in zero-sum terms, and thereby makes it unresolvable. In considering its Palestinian citizens, Israel speaks not of integration, or even assimilation, but of their enduring status as a “fifth column” and the Jewish state's “Achilles heel”.

That is because, were principles of justice and equality ever to be enforced, Palestinians in Israel could serve as a gateway by which millions of exiled Palestinians might find their way back home.

With the policy of Judaisation revoked, the Palestinian minority could end the conflict without violence simply by pulling down the scaffolding of racist laws that have blocked any return for the Palestinians since their expulsion 65 years ago.

This is why Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu demands as part of the current peace negotiations that the Palestinians sanctify the Judaisation principle by recognising Israel as a Jewish state. It is also why the talks are doomed to failure.

Jonathan Cook is a writer and journalist based in Nazareth, Israel. He won this year's Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His latest books are *Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East* (Pluto Press) and *Disappearing Palestine: Israel's Experiments in Human Despair* (Zed Books).

“To Alef, the letter that begins the alphabets of both Arabic and Hebrew—two Semitic languages, sisters for centuries.

May we find the language that takes us to the only home there is - one another's hearts.

...
Alef knows
That a thread
Of a story
Stitches together
A wound.”

Ibtisam Barakat, *Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood*



A mural promotes peace in Palestine. (Photo: mkream/ cc via Flickr)



ASA JOINS BDS

Published on Monday, December 16, 2013 by [Common Dreams](#)

'Historic': US Scholars Stand with Palestinians in Boycott of Israel

'This stance in solidarity with Palestinian freedom is historic and signals a new era of engagement with colonized populations'

- Sarah Lazare, staff writer



Apartheid Wall near Bethlehem, Palestine (Photo: Delayed Gratification / Flickr / Creative Commons)

An association of 5,000 academics on Monday became the largest U.S. scholarly organization ever to join the boycott of Israeli academic institutions.

The American Studies Association, which calls itself "the nation's oldest and largest association devoted to the interdisciplinary study of American culture and history," announced Monday that its membership passed a resolution stipulating the organization "endorses and will honor the call of Palestinian civil society for a boycott of Israeli academic institutions."

The resolution, which was introduced last year and unanimously endorsed by the ASA's national council on November 4th, attracted an unprecedented number of voters, with 66.05% endorsing the resolution, 30.5% against, and 3.43% abstaining, according to the ASA statement.

"The overwhelming majority that voted in favor of the resolution illustrate that we refuse to lend complicity to Israel's aggression," Steven Salaita, associate professor of English at Virginia Tech and a member of the ASA Activism

Caucus, told *Common Dreams*. "This stance in solidarity with Palestinian freedom is historic and signals a new era of engagement with colonized populations."

The resolution passed with an outpouring of support from ASA members, including renowned activist, author, and scholar Angela Davis. "The similarities between historical Jim Crow practices and contemporary regimes of segregation in Occupied Palestine make this resolution an ethical imperative for the ASA," she wrote. "If we have learned the most important lesson promulgated by Dr. Martin Luther King—that justice is always

indivisible—it should be clear that a mass movement in solidarity with Palestinian freedom is long overdue."

The ASA has faced an onslaught of criticisms and attacks from pro-Israel forces, including calls from former Harvard president and Obama administration official Larry Summers for a boycott of the ASA on grounds that the resolution violates academic freedom and perpetuates anti-Semitism.

Yet Alex Lubin, Director of the Center for American Studies and Research at the American University of Beirut, slammed such accusations writing last month in *The Nation*,

Academic freedom means very little when it takes place in a context of segregation and apartheid. Change came to the Jim Crow South not through academic dialogue, but through protest and, in some cases, through boycotts of the institutions that fostered segregation. Change came to South Africa's apartheid system not through academic dialogue, but through protest, resistance, and an international boycott. Those of us who value academic freedom must always struggle to ensure that the world surrounding academia provides the

basic human rights that enable academic life.

"The boycott resolution is intended to address a profound case of discrimination against Palestinians and is consistent with the ASA's previous endorsement of anti-racist positions in other areas," Lubin stated upon endorsing the resolution. "The resolution does not target Israelis, Jews, or any individuals; indeed, the ASA's support for the boycott affirms its opposition to all forms of racial discrimination, including, but not limited to, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia."

The call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel emerged from Palestinian civil society organizations in 2005 in a bid to win human rights, self-determination, and freedom from occupation for Palestinians, using tactics similar to those levied to transform apartheid South Africa.

Palestinian activist Omar Barghouti writes in *The Nation* that 2013 has seen great strides in the academic wing of this BDS movement:

Days ago, in a letter of support to the ASA, the University of Hawaii Ethnic Studies department became the first academic department in the west to support the academic boycott of Israel. In April, the Association for Asian-American Studies endorsed the academic boycott—the first professional academic association in the United States to do so. Around the same time, the Teachers' Union of Ireland unanimously called on its members to "cease all cultural and academic collaboration" with the "apartheid state of Israel," and the Federation of French-Speaking Belgian Students (FEF), representing 100,000 members, adopted "a freeze of all academic partnerships with Israeli academic institutions." Also this year, student councils at several North American universities, including at the University of California Berkeley, called for divestment from companies profiting from Israel's occupation.

"Peace can happen in 24 hours...just like war can happen in 24 hours."
— Sari Nusseibeh



THE NUCLEAR SHADOW

Escape route from the nuclear shadow over the Middle East

By Neve Gordon

Posted Tuesday, 17 December 2013

Across the globe headlines pronounced that a "breakthrough agreement" had been reached in Geneva. Iran's atomic ambitions had been curbed in exchange for limited sanctions relief, thus deflating the longstanding military standoff. The deal hammered out between Iran and the United States, France, Germany, Britain, China and Russia stipulates that Tehran will halt progress on enrichment capacity, stop developing its heavy water reactor at Arak, and open access to international weapons inspection. While this deal paves the way for Iran's reintegration into the family of western nations, and is therefore can be conceived as a real milestone, in terms of the Middle East nuclear problem any robust agreement will have to include Israel.

Within Israel, speaking about the nuclear program in Dimona is taboo. Mysteriously, however, there is also a broad-based agreement to keep silent about it in DC and in most European capitals. This despite claims made by independent analysts who have estimated that Israel likely has around 80 warheads today and is believed to be the only state in the region that has produced separated plutonium, and possibly highly enriched uranium, the key ingredients in nuclear weapons. Indeed, it may now have enough plutonium, including the plutonium already in weapons, for up to 200 nuclear warheads.

So why are politicians and mainstream media outlets concentrating on Iran and its decision to embark on a nuclear program instead of adopting a more ambitious framework that considers the steps needed to make the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction? To be sure, I am against Iran developing a nuclear weapon, but I am also opposed to Israel having a nuclear arsenal, which at 200 warheads would be larger than the arsenal of Britain. There is, after all, a connection between the two

and this connection needs to be spelled out if a broader framework is to be adopted.

A Framework for a Nuclear Free Zone

Creating a nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East is actually not a new idea. Ironically, it was first proposed in the United Nations General Assembly in 1974 by no other than the major "culprit" in the recent fray – Iran. Together with Egypt, these two countries attempted to roll back Israel's acquisition of nuclear weapons and to restrain further proliferation in the region by having all states join the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In 1990, Egypt broadened the proposal to include a ban on chemical and biological weapons; namely, to create a Weapon of Mass Destruction free zone in the region.

Yet, as everyone knows, nothing came of these initiatives, even though nuclear weapon free zones have been established in five regions: Latin America and the Caribbean (in force since 2002), the South Pacific (1986), South-East Asia (1997), Africa (2009) and Central Asia (2009). Today, nuclear weapon free zones cover the Southern hemisphere and have a combined membership of 97 states, more than half the states in the international community.

Why, one might ask, should the Middle East be any different?

A Middle East Free Zone

The problem, of course, is that the Middle East has emerged as a nuclear proliferation hotbed. Israel has held on to its nuclear weapons, refused to join the NPT, significantly expanded its stockpile of fissile material for weapons, and developed advanced delivery systems. Clandestine nuclear-weapon programs were revealed in Iraq in 1991, in Libya in 2003, and in Syria in 2007 – all while these countries were signatories to the NPT. In 2003, Iran was discovered to have an undeclared uranium enrichment research and development program as well as a reactor under construction that could potentially be used for plutonium production for weapons.

Targeting one country will not solve this regional problem. In a bold report, put out by the International Panel on Fissile Materials (IPFM) based at the Program on Science and Global Security at Princeton University a group of nuclear experts

suggest introducing measures of collective restraint regarding fissile material production and use in order to foster confidence that all nuclear activities in the region are indeed peaceful in intent and not being pursued as a camouflage for developing nuclear-weapon options.

The IPFM experts emphasize that Israel must take initiatives to demonstrate that it is seriously interested in a regional zone free of weapons of mass destruction. The experts propose a series of steps: Israel should begin by ending any further production of plutonium and highly enriched uranium, declaring the size of its stocks of these materials and placing portions of its fissile material stocks under IAEA safeguards for elimination. By the time a Middle East zone came into force, Israel would need to have eliminated all of its nuclear weapons and placed all of its fissile materials under international safeguards – as South Africa did when it gave up its nuclear weapons in the early 1990s.

Simultaneously, the experts from Princeton suggest that Iran, as the only country in the Middle East with a national civilian enrichment program, could play a pioneering role precisely by advancing a global shift away from national enrichment plants. Countries in the region with plans to construct nuclear power plants (so far, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt) could join in the management of Iran's enrichment plants and help set the goals for the program and fund any expansion. This would create a major barrier to Iran using its enrichment plants for making nuclear weapon material.

Regional Inspections

To keep everyone honest, the IPFM proposes that discussions be launched among the members of a possible Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction on the design of regional verification arrangements strong enough so that all countries in the region can have confidence in the absence of secret nuclear weapon programs and that countries are complying with the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions.

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This regional inspection system would be in parallel to the international verification systems associated respectively with the NPT and the Chemical Weapons Convention. There is currently no international system to verify the Biological Weapons Convention.

Obviously, transforming the region into a free zone of weapons of mass destruction is in the interests of all of the people living in the Middle East. Consider the current fear that different groups in Syria will get their hands on chemical weapons and use them for chemical terrorism in the region and elsewhere. All those involved seemed to agree that the best and indeed the only guarantee that this will not happen is by destroying the weapons. The destruction of these weapons should neither be seen as a solution relevant for Syria alone-as it currently is-or as being limited to chemical weapons. Rather the call for the end of all weapons of mass destruction should be an inclusive regional demand.

The experience of creating nuclear free zones following the end of the Cold War suggests that progress can be made in the absence of a larger or more comprehensive settlement of political conflicts and disputes. Indeed, progress on such issues can contribute to confidence building and improved relations among states and may even serve as the impetus for wider regional rapprochement.

This article was first published in *Al Jazeera*.

Neve Gordon is an Israeli activist and the author of *Israel's Occupation*



IRAN-US AGREEMENT

Iran-US Interim Agreement: Historic Breakthrough or Historic Sellout?

by **James Petras**

December 8th, 2013

The recent interim accord between the six world powers and Iran has been hailed as an “historic breakthrough”, a “significant accomplishment” by most leading politicians, editorialists and columnists (*Financial Times*, (FT) 11/26/13, p. 2), the exceptions being notably Israeli leaders and the Zionist power brokers in North America and Western Europe (FT 11/26/13, p. 3).

What constitutes this “historic breakthrough”? Who got what? Did the agreement provide for symmetrical concessions? Does the interim agreement strengthen or weaken the prospects for peace and prosperity in the Gulf and the Middle East? To address these and other questions, one also has to include the powerful influence wielded by Israel on US and European policymakers (Stephen Lendman, 11/26/13; 11/27/13). Equally important, the current ‘interim’ agreement is just that – it is a first, limited agreement, which does not in any way spell out the strategic objectives of the major imperial powers. Any realistic appreciation of the significance of the interim agreement requires putting it into historical perspective.

The Historical Record: Past Precedents

For over a decade the major US intelligence agencies have published detailed accounts of Iran’s nuclear program (see especially the National Intelligence Estimate 2007 (NIE). The common consensus has been that Iran did not have any program for developing nuclear weapons (National Intelligence Estimate 2004, 2007). As a consequence of this ‘absence of evidence’, the entire Western offensive against Iran had to focus on Iran’s “potential capacity” to shift sometime in the future towards a weapons program. The current agreement is directed toward undermining Iran’s potential ‘capacity’ to have a nuclear weapons program: there are no weapons to destroy, no weapon plans exist, no war

plans exist and there are no strategic offensive military operations on the Iranian ‘drawing board’. We know this, because repeated US intelligence reports have told us that no weapons programs exist! So the entire current negotiations are really over weakening Iran’s ongoing peaceful, legal nuclear program and undermining any future advance in nuclear technology that might protect Iran from an Israeli or US attack, when they decide to activate their “military option”, as was pulled off in the war to destroy Iraq.

Secondly, Iran’s flexible and accommodating concessions are not new or a reflection of a newly elected President. As Gareth Porter has pointed out: Nearly ten years ago, on November 15, 2004, Iran agreed “on a voluntary basis to continue and extend an existing suspension of enrichment to include all enrichment related and reprocessing activities” (Gareth Porter, Inter Press Service, 11/26/13). According to Porter, Iran was ending “all manufacturing, assembly, installation and testing of centrifuges or their components”. Despite these generous concessions, on March 2005, the Europeans and the US refused to negotiate on an Iranian proposal for a comprehensive settlement that would guarantee against enrichment toward weapons grade. Iran ended its voluntary suspension of all enrichment activity. The US, led by Zionists embedded in Treasury, (Stuart Levey) then escalated sanctions. Europe and the UN Security Council followed in kind. The practice of the US and Europe first securing major concessions from Iran and then refusing to reciprocate by pursuing a comprehensive settlement is a well established diplomatic practice. Iran’s flexibility and concessions were apparently interpreted as “signs of weakness” to be exploited in their push toward ‘regime change’ (An Unusual Success for Sanctions Policy, FT 11/27/13, p. 10). Sanctions are seen as “effective” political-diplomatic weapons designed to further weaken the regime. Policy-makers continue to believe that sanctions should be maintained as a tool to divide the Iranian elite, disarm and dismantle the country’s defensive capacity and to

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prepare for “regime change” or a military confrontation without fear of serious resistance from the Iranians.

The entire charade of Iran’s ‘nuclear weapons as a threat’ has been orchestrated by the Israeli regime and its army of ‘Israel Firsters’ embedded in the US Executive, Congress and mass media. The ‘Big Lie’, promoted by Israel’s propaganda machine and network of agents, has been repeatedly and thoroughly refuted by the sixteen major US Intelligence Estimates or NIE’s, especially in 2004 and 2007. These consensus documents were based on extensive research, inside sources (spies) and highly sophisticated surveillance. The NIEs categorically state that Iran suspended all efforts toward a nuclear weapons program in 2003 and has not made any decision or move to restart that program. However, Israel has actively spread propaganda, based on fabricated intelligence reports, claiming the contrary in order to trick and push the US into a disastrous military confrontation with Israel’s regional rival. And the President of the United States ignores his own intelligence sources in order to repeat Israel’s ‘Big Lie’!

Given the fact that Iran is not a ‘nuclear threat’, now or in the past, and given that the US, European and Israeli leaders know this, why do they continue and even increase the sanctions against Iran? Why do they threaten to destroy Iran with pre-emptive attacks? Why the current demands for even more concessions from Tehran? The current negotiations and ‘agreement’ tell us a great deal about the ‘ultimate’ or final strategic aims of the White House and its European allies.

The ‘Interim Agreement’: A Most Asymmetrical Compromise

Iran’s negotiators conceded to the ‘5 plus 1’ all their major demands while they received the most minimum of concessions (FT, 1/25/13, p. 2).

Iran agreed (1) to stop all enrichment to 20 percent, (2) reduce the existing 20 percent enriched stockpile to zero, (3) convert all low enriched uranium to a form that cannot be enriched to a higher level, (4) halt progress on its enrichment capacity, (5) leave inoperable half of its

centrifuges at Natanz and three-quarters of those at Fordow, and (6) freeze all activities at Arak heavy water facility which when built could produce plutonium. Iran also agreed to end any plans to construct a facility capable of reprocessing plutonium from spent fuel. The Iranian negotiators agreed to the most pervasive and intensive “inspections” of its most important strategic defense facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency, which has been closely allied with the US and its EU counterparts. These “inspections” and data collection will take place on a daily bases and include access to Natanz and Fordow. The strategic military value of these inspections is inestimable because it could provide data, heretofore unavailable, for any future missile strike from the US or Israel when they decide to shift from negotiations to the ‘military option’. In addition, the IAEA inspectors will be allowed to access other strategic facilities, including sites for developing centrifuges, uranium mines and mills. Future “negotiations” may open highly sensitive military defense sites such as Parchin, where conventional missiles and warheads are stored.

Obviously, there will not be any reciprocal inspections of the US missile sites, warships and military bases in the Persian Gulf, which store weapons of mass destruction aimed at Iran! Nor will the IAEA inspect Israel’s nuclear weapons — facilities in Dimona — despite Israeli threats to attack Iran. No comparable diminution of “military capacity” or nuclear weapons, aimed at Iran by some members of the ‘5 plus 1 and Israel’ is included in this “historic breakthrough”.

The ‘5 plus 1’ conceded meager concessions: Unfreezing of 7% of Iranian-owned assets sequestered in Western banks (\$7 billion of \$100 billion) and ‘allowing’ Iran to enrich uranium to 5 percent — and even that “concession” is conditioned by the proviso that it does not exceed current stockpiles of 5% enriched uranium. While the Iranian negotiators claim they secured (sic) ‘the right’ to enrich uranium, the US refused to even formally acknowledge it!

In effect, Iran has conceded the maximum concessions regarding its strategic national defenses, nuclear facilities and uranium enrichment in what is supposedly the ‘initial’ round of negotiations, while ‘receiving’ the minimum of reciprocal concessions. This highly unfavorable, asymmetrical framework, will lead the US to see Iran as ‘ripe for regime change’ and demand even more decisive concessions designed to further weaken Iran’s defensive capacity. Future concessions will increase Iran’s vulnerability to intelligence gathering and undermine its role as a regional power and strategic ally of the Lebanese Hezbollah, the current beleaguered governments in Syria and Iraq and the Palestinians under Israeli occupation.

The ‘Final Settlement’: Decline and Fall of the Islamic Nationalist Republic?

The real goals of the US sanctions policy and the recent decision to enter into negotiations with Iran have to do with several imperial objectives. The first objective is to facilitate the rise of a neo-liberal regime in Iran, which would be committed to privatizing major oil and gas fields and attracting foreign capital even at the cost of strategic national defense.

President Rohani is seen in Washington as the Islamic version of the former Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev. Rohani, like his ‘model’ Gorbachev, ‘gave away the store’ while expecting Iran’s imperial adversaries to reciprocate.

The ‘5 plus 1’, mostly veterans of the ‘imperial shake down’, will take all of Rohani’s concessions and demand even more! They will “allow” Iran to recover its own frozen assets in slow droplets, which the neo-liberals in Tehran will celebrate as ‘victories’ even while the country stagnates under continued sanctions and the people suffer! The US Administration will retain sanctions in order to accommodate their Israeli-Zionist patrons and to provoke even deeper fissures in the regime.

Washington’s logic is that the more concessions Teheran surrenders, the more difficult it will be to reverse the process under public pressure from the

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Iranian people. This ‘rift’ between the conciliatory government of Rohani and the Iranian people, according to CIA strategists, will lead to greater internal discontent in Iran and will further weaken the regime. A regime under siege will need to rely even more on their Western interlocutors. President Rohani ‘relying on the 5-plus-1’ will be like the condemned leaning into the hangman’s noose.

Rohani and the Neo-Liberal Collaborators

The ascendancy of Rohani to the Presidency brings in its wake an entire new political-economic leadership intent on facilitating large-scale, long-term penetration by Western and Chinese oil and gas companies in the most lucrative sites. Iran’s new oil minister, Bijan Namdar Zangeneh, has made overtures to all the oil majors, and offers to revise and liberalize the terms for investment and provide concessions designed to greatly enhance multinational profits, in the most lucrative fields (FT, 11/27/13, p. 2). Zangeneh has kicked out the nationalists and replaced them with a cohort of liberal economists. He is preparing to eventually lay-off tens of thousands of public sector oil employees as an incentive to attract foreign corporate partners. He is prepared to lower fuel subsidies for the Iranian people and raise energy prices for domestic consumers. The liberals in power have the backing of millionaires, speculators and political power brokers, like Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani head of the key Expediency Council, which drafts policy. Many of Rafsanjani’s followers have been appointed to key positions in President Rohani’s administration (FT, 11/26/13, p.3).

Central to the ‘Troika’s (Rohani-Rafsanjani-Zangeneh) strategy is securing the collaboration of multinational energy corporations. However that requires lifting the US-imposed sanctions against Iran in the shortest time possible. This explains the hasty, unseemly and one-sided Iranian concessions to the ‘5-plus-1’. In other words, the driving force behind Iran’s giveaways is not the “success of sanctions” but the ascendancy to power of the Iranian comprador class and its

neo-liberal ideology which informs their economic strategy.

Several major obstacles confront the ‘Troika’. The major concessions, initially granted, leave few others to concede, short of dismantling the entire nuclear energy infrastructure and lobotomizing its entire scientific and technical manpower, which would destroy the legitimacy of the regime. Secondly, having easily secured major concessions without lifting the sanctions the ‘5-plus-1’ are free to escalate their demands for further concessions, which in effect will deepen Iran’s vulnerability to Western espionage, terrorism (as in the assassination of Iranian scientists and engineers) and preemptive attack. As the negotiations proceed it will become crystal clear that the US intends to force the ‘Troika’ to open the gates to more overtly pro-western elites in order to eventually polarize Iranian society.

The end-game is a weakened, divided, liberalized regime, vulnerable to internal and external threats and willing to cut-off support to nationalist regimes in the Middle East, including Palestine, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. The US recognized and seized upon the rise of the new neo-liberal Rohani regime and secured major unilateral concessions as a down payment to move step-by-step toward bloody regime change. Washington’s “end game” is the conversion of Iran to a client petro-state allied with the Saudi-Israeli axis.

As far-fetched as that appears today, the logic of negotiations is moving in that direction.

The Israeli-US Differences: A Question of Tactics and Timing

Israeli leaders and their Zionist agents, embedded in the US government, howl, pull out their hair and bluster against the ‘5-plus-1’ transitional agreement with Iran. They downplay the enormous one-sided concessions. They rant and rave about “hidden agenda”, “deceit and deception”. They fabricate conspiracies and repeat lies about secret “nuclear weapons programs” beyond the reach (and imagination) of any non-Zionist inspector. But the reality is that the “historic breakthrough” includes the dismantling of a major part of Iran’s nuclear infrastructure, while retaining sanctions – a huge victory of the Zionists! The ‘5-plus-1’ negotiated a deal which

has secured deeper and more extensive changes in Iran while strengthening Western power in the Persian Gulf than all of Netanyahu’s decade-long campaign of issuing ‘military threats’.

Netanyahu and his brainwashed Zionist-Jewish defenders in the US insist on new, even harsher sanctions because they want immediate war and regime-change (a puppet regime). Echoing his Israeli boss Netanyahu, New York Senator Chuck “the schmuck” Schumer, commenting on the interim agreement brayed, “The disproportionality of this agreement makes it more likely that Democrats and Republicans will pass additional sanctions” (Barrons, 12/2/13 p14) This is the same stupid policy that the embedded Zionists in Washington pursued with Iraq. Under the Bush Presidency, top neo-con Zionists, like Wolfowitz, Ross, Indyk, Feith, Abrams and Libby, implemented Ariel Sharon’s war dictates: (1) murdered Saddam Hussein (regime change) (2) destroyed Iraq’s economy, society and modern infrastructure, and (3) provoked ethnic fragmentation and religious war – costing the US over 2 trillion dollars on the war, thousands of US lives (millions of Iraqi lives) and at a cost of hundreds of billions in high oil prices to US consumers – further shattering the US domestic economy.

Among the few moderately intelligent and influential Zionist journalists, Gideon Rachman, who realizes the strategic value of the step-by-step approach of the Obama regime, has called for the White House “to take on the Israel lobby over Iran” (FT, 11/26/13, p. 10). Rachman knows that if Israel’s howling stooges in the US Congress drag the country into war, the American people will turn against the Israeli lobby, its fellow travelers and, most likely, Israel. Rachman and a few others with a grain of political sophistication know that the Rohani regime in Tehran has just handed over key levers of power to the US. They know that the negotiations are moving toward greater integration of Iran into the US orbit. They know, in the final instance, that Obama’s step-by-step

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diplomatic approach will be less costly and more effective than Netanyahu's military 'final solution'. And they know that, ultimately, Obama's and Israel's goal is the same: a weak neo-liberalized Iran, which cannot challenge Israel's military dominance, nuclear weapons monopoly, annexation of Palestine and aggression against Lebanon and Syria.

Conclusion

Having secured a "freeze" on Iran's consequential nuclear research and having on site intelligence on all Iran's major national defense and security facilities, the US can compile a data base for an offensive military strategy whenever it likes. Iran, on the other hand, receives no information or reports on US, European or Israeli military movement, weapons facilities or offensive regional capabilities. This is despite the fact that the '5-plus-1' countries and Israel have recently launched numerous devastating offensive military operations and wars in the region (Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Libya and Syria). Having set the agenda for negotiations as one of further unilateral concessions from Iran, the US can at any point, threaten to end negotiations – and follow up with its 'military option'.

The next step in the unilateral disarmament of Iran will be the US demand to close the strategic Arak heavy water plant. The US will demand that Iran produce a basic minimum amount of uranium and retain a stock pile to cover a few days or weeks for energy, research or medical isotopes. Washington will strip Iran of its capacity to enrich by imposing quantitative and qualitative limits on the centrifuges that Iran can possess and operate. During the next round of negotiations, the US will preclude Iran from undertaking the reprocessing of uranium at Arak or any other site. The US will tell 'the Troika' that the "right" (sic) to enrich does not extend to the right to reprocess. The US will demand stringent "transparency" for Iran, while maintaining its own high level secrecy, evasion and ambiguity with regard to its military, diplomatic and economic sanctions policy.

In a word, the US will demand that Iran surrender its sovereignty and subject

itself to the colonial oversight of an imperial power, which has yet to make a single move in even reducing economic sanctions. The loss of sovereignty, the continued sanctions and the drive by the US to curtail Iran's regional influence will certainly lead to popular discontent in Iran – and a response from the nationalist and populist military (Revolutionary Guards) and the working poor. The crisis resulting from the Troika's adoption of the "Gorbachev Model" will lead to an inevitable confrontation. Overtime the US will seek out an Islamist strongman, an Iranian version of Yeltsin who can savage the nationalists and popular movements and turn over the keys to the state, treasury and oil fields to a "moderate and responsible" pro-Western client regime.

The entire US strategy of degrading Iran's military defenses and securing major neo-liberal "reforms" depends on President Rohani remaining in power, which can only result from the Obama regime's compliance in lifting some of the oil and banking sanctions (FT, 12/1/13, p. 6). Paradoxically, the greatest obstacle to achieving Washington's strategic roll-back goal is Netanyahu's power to block sanction relief – and impose even, harsher sanctions. The result of such an Israel Firster victory in the US would be the end of negotiations, the strengthening of Iran's nuclear program, the demise of the oil privatization program and added support to regional nationalist movements and governments. President Rohani desperately needs western imperial reassurance of the benefits (sanction relief) of his initial giveaways. Otherwise his credibility at home would be irreparably damaged.

The imperial prize of a militarily weakened and neo-liberalized Iran, collaborating in maintaining the status quo in the Middle East, is enormous but it clashes with the Zionist Power Configuration, which insists on all power to the Jewish state from the Suez to the Persian Gulf!

James Petras, a former Professor of Sociology at Binghamton University, New York, owns a 50-year membership in the class struggle, is an adviser to the landless and jobless in Brazil and Argentina, and is co-author of *Globalization Unmasked* (Zed Books). Petras' most recent book is *The Arab Revolt and the Imperialist Counterattack*. He can be reached at: jpetras@binghamton.edu.

GERMANY SAYS NO TO WEAPONIZED DRONES

by David Swanson

November 15th, 2013

Germany had planned to buy a fleet of "Euro Hawk" killer drones — perhaps in an effort to bring the European Union up to speed with certain other Nobel Peace laureates.

But something happened on the way to the celestial colosseum.

Of course, Captain Drone Man himself undoubtedly learned the news first, unless the NSA misplaced some of Frau Merkel's emails under a pile of exchanges among nonviolent activists planning the upcoming drone summit in DC.

What happened was public pressure within a nation dedicated to peace and — at the moment — more resistant than Japan to being turned back toward war. Germany has now said nein, nein, and hell nein to killer flying robots. And not just to the use of weaponized drones within what Americans might call Der Homeland, but to Germany's use of remote control murder planes against human beings anywhere on earth.

Earlier this month at the United Nations, several nations, including most prominently Brazil, denounced the criminality of murdering people around the globe with drones. Now Germany has taken a serious step in the direction of condemning armed drones to the status of land mines, poison gas, and nuclear weapons. If Germany can do it, we can all do it.

David Swanson is an anti-war activist and blogger at [War Is a Crime](http://WarIsaCrime.com).



Consider it a record. For the period since September 11, 2001, we're number one... in obliterating wedding parties! (Photo: via Ebay)

**AFGHANISTAN CALAMITY**

Mission Accomplished? Afghanistan is a Calamity and our Leaders Must be Held to Account

British troops haven't accomplished a single one of their missions in Afghanistan. Like Iraq and Libya, it's a disaster

By Seumas Milne

December 21, 2013 "Information Clearing House - "The Guardian"

Of all the mendacious nonsense that pours out of politicians' mouths, David Cameron's claim that British combat troops will be coming home from Afghanistan with their "mission accomplished" is in a class all of its own. It's almost as if, by echoing George Bush's infamous claim of victory in Iraq in May 2003 just as the real war was beginning, the British prime minister is deliberately courting ridicule.

But British, American and other Nato troops have been so long in Afghanistan – twice as long as the second world war – that perhaps their leaders have forgotten what the original mission actually was. In fact, it began as a war to destroy al-Qaida, crush the Taliban and capture or kill their leaders, Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar.

That quickly morphed into a supposed campaign for democracy and women's rights, a war to protect our cities from terror attacks, to eradicate opium production and bring security and good governance from Helmand to Kandahar. With the exception of the assassination of Bin Laden – carried out 10 years later in another country – not one of those goals has been achieved.

Instead, al-Qaida has mushroomed and spread throughout the Arab and Muslim world, engulfing first Iraq and now Syria. Far from protecting our streets from attacks, the war has repeatedly been cited as a justification for those carrying them out – most recently by Michael Adebolajo, who killed the Afghan war veteran Lee Rigby on the streets of London in May.

The Taliban is long resurgent, mounting 6,600 attacks between May and October this year and negotiating for a return to power. Mullah Omar remains at liberty. Afghan opium production is at

a record high and now accounts for 90% of the world's supply. Less than half the country is now "safe for reconstruction", compared with 68% in 2009.

Meanwhile, women's rights are going into reverse, and violence against women is escalating under Nato occupation: 4,000 assaults were documented by Afghan human rights monitors in the first six months of this year, from rape and acid attacks to beatings and mutilation. Elections have been brazenly rigged, as a corrupt regime of warlords and torturers is kept in power by foreign troops, and violence has spilled over into a dangerously destabilised Pakistan.

All this has been at a cost of tens of thousands of Afghan civilian lives, along with those of thousands US, British and other occupation troops. But it's not as if it wasn't foreseen from the start. When the media were hailing victory in Afghanistan 12 years ago, and Tony Blair's triumphalism was echoed across the political establishment, opponents of the invasion predicted it would lead to long-term guerrilla warfare, large-scale Afghan suffering and military failure – and were dismissed by the politicians as "wrong" and "fanciful".

But that is exactly what happened. One study after another has confirmed that British troops massively increased the level of violence after their arrival in Helmand in 2006, and are estimated to have killed 500 civilians in a campaign that has cost between £25bn and £37bn. After four years they had to be rescued by US forces. But none of the political leaders who sent them there has been held accountable for this grim record.

It was the same, but even worse, in Iraq. The occupation was going to be a cakewalk, and British troops were supposed to be past masters at counter-insurgency. Opponents of the invasion again predicted that it would lead to unrelenting resistance until foreign troops were driven out. When it came to it, defeated British troops were forced to leave Basra city under cover of darkness.

But six years later, who has paid the price? One British corporal has been convicted of war crimes and the political elite has shuffled off

responsibility for the Iraq catastrophe on to the Chilcot inquiry – which has yet to report nearly three years after it last took evidence. Given the dire lack of coverage and debate about what actually took place, maybe it's not surprising that most British people think fewer than 10,000 died in a war now estimated to have killed 500,000.

But Iraq wasn't the last of the disastrous interventions by the US and Britain. The Libyan war was supposed to be different and acclaimed as a humanitarian triumph. In reality not only did Nato's campaign in support of the Libyan uprising ratchet up the death toll by a factor of perhaps 10, giving air cover to mass ethnic cleansing and indiscriminate killing. Its legacy is a maelstrom of warring militias and separatist rebels threatening to tear the country apart.

Now the west's alternative of intervention-lite in Syria is also spectacularly coming apart. The US, British and French-sponsored armed factions of the Free Syrian Army have been swept aside by jihadist fighters and al-Qaida-linked groups – first spawned by western intelligence during the cold war and dispersed across the region by the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

The wars unleashed or fuelled by the US, Britain and their allies over the past 12 years have been shameful. Far from accomplishing their missions, they brought untold misery, spread terrorism across the world and brought strategic defeat to those who launched them. In the case of Afghanistan all this looks likely to continue, as both the US and Britain plan to keep troops and bases there for years to come.

By any objective reckoning, failures on such a scale should be at the heart of political debate. But instead the political class and the media mostly avert their gaze and wrap themselves in the flag to appease a war-weary public. The first sign that this might be changing was the unprecedented parliamentary vote against an attack on Syria in August. But the democratisation of war and peace needs to go much further. Rather than boasting of calamitous missions, the politicians responsible for them must be held to account.

**AFRICA IN THE CROSS-HAIRS***Any More U.S. "Stabilization" and Africa Will Collapse*

By Peter Van Buren

December 25, 2013 "Information Clearing House - History is just one of those hard things to ignore, especially in South Sudan.

In 2011, the U.S. midwived the creation of a new nation, South Sudan. Though at the time Obama invoked the words of Dr. Martin Luther King speaking about Ghana ("I knew about all of the struggles, and all of the pain, and all of the agony that these people had gone through for this moment") in officially recognizing the country, many were more focused on the underlying U.S. motives, isolating the rest of Sudan as part of the war on terror, and securing the oil reserves in the south for the U.S. The State Department rushed to open an embassy in South Sudan, and U.S. money poured in to pay for the new government. Like his counterparts from Iraq and Afghanistan when the U.S. was still in charge of those places, the new South Sudan president was brought to the White House for photos, all blithely pushed out to the world via the Voice of America. The two leaders were said to have discussed "the importance of maintaining transparency and the rule of law."

In 2012 then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited the nation as part of an extended effort at creating B-roll footage for her 2016 campaign, and Obama publicly applauded a deal brokered between Sudan and South Sudan on oil pipeline fees that the White House claimed would "help stem the ongoing violence in the region."

However, like in Iraq, Afghanistan and so many other places that fell apart while being democratized and stabilized by the U.S. (one also thinks of Libya, itself part of the African continent), the rush to mediagenic proclamations without addressing the underlying fundamentals led only to catastrophe. A scant few years later, South Sudan is at the brink of civil war and societal collapse, the U.S. is evacuating another embassy and indeed one variety or another of "rebels" are shooting at U.S. military aircraft arriving in their country in violation of

their national sovereignty. Those who believe that the U.S. efforts in South Sudan do not involve special forces on the ground and drones overhead no doubt will have a nice Christmas waiting up to catch a glimpse of Santa.

Obama, apparently unwilling to remember how he stood aside while an elected government recently fell apart in Egypt, went on to double-down on hypocrisy by stating in regards to South Sudan, "Any effort to seize power through the use of military force will result in the end of long-standing support from the United States and the international community."

The Militarization of Africa

If the U.S. efforts in South Sudan were isolated, that would be tragedy enough. However, the U.S. militarization of Africa paints such a sad, similar picture that it bears a recapping here. The always on-track Nick Turse reported:

– In recent years, the US has trained and outfitted soldiers from Uganda, Burundi and Kenya, among other nations. They have also served as a proxy force for the US in Somalia, part of the African Union Mission (Amisom) protecting the U.S.-supported government in that country's capital, Mogadishu.

– Since 2007, the State Department has given about \$650-million in logistics support, equipment and training for Amisom troops. The Pentagon has given an extra \$100 million since 2011.

– The U.S. also continues to fund African armies through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership and its Pentagon analogue, now known as Operation Juniper Shield, with increased support flowing to Mauritania and Niger in the wake of Mali's collapse. In 2012, the State Department and the US Agency for International Development poured approximately \$52 million into the programs and the Pentagon chipped in another \$46 million.

– In the Obama years, U.S. Africa Command has also built a sophisticated logistics system, officially known as the Africom Surface Distribution Network, but colloquially referred to as "the new spice route". Its central nodes are in Manda Bay, Garissa and

Mombasa in Kenya; Kampala and Entebbe in Uganda; Bangui and Djema in the Central African Republic; Nzara in South Sudan; Dire Dawa in Ethiopia; and the Pentagon's showpiece African base, Camp Lemonnier.

– In addition, the Pentagon has run a regional air campaign using drones and manned aircraft out of airports and bases around the continent including Camp Lemonnier, Arba Minch airport in Ethiopia, Niamey in Niger and the Seychelles Islands in the Indian Ocean, while private contractor-operated surveillance aircraft have flown missions out of Entebbe. Recently, Foreign Policy reported on the existence of a possible drone base in Lamu, Kenya.

– Another critical location is Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, home to a Joint Special Operations Air Detachment and the Trans-Sahara Short Take-Off and Landing Airlift Support Initiative that, according to military documents, supports "high-risk activities" carried out by elite forces from Joint Special Operations Task Force — Trans-Sahara.

The Failure of the Militarization of Africa

Libya is in flames, Benghazi the only point of attention for Americans while chaos consumes a once-stable country. Egypt, again on the continent though perhaps not of it, saw its brief bit of democracy stamped out by a military coup. The governments of Mauritania and Niger fell to their militaries. Chad experienced a coup, albeit unsuccessful. Fighting continues in Mali and the Central African Republic. In October 2011 the U.S. invaded, albeit in a small way, the Central African Republic. In December 2012, the U.S. evacuated its diplomats and civilians. 2011 also saw a U.S.-backed Kenyan invasion of Somalia. U.S. troops are hunting humans in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Like ghosts from the 18th century, pirates haunt the waters off East Africa. The U.S. admits to having 5,000 troops in ten African countries when once there were none.

And So, Why?

The basic rule for any investment is what do you gain in return for risk? It

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applies to buying stocks as well as investing a nation's blood, resources and prestige.

In the case of Africa, the U.S. investment has been a disaster. Chaos has replaced stability in many places, and terrorists have found homes in countries they may have once never imagined. The U.S., in sad echo of 19th century colonialism, has militarized another region of the world.

Every rebel and terrorist the U.S. kills creates more, radicalizes more, gives the bad guys another propaganda lede. The more we kill, the more there seem to be to kill. America needs fewer people saying they are victims of America. The Chinese are building cultural ties and signing deals all over Africa, and we're just throwing up barbed wire. Why?

ENDING WAR AND TERROR

Saying No To War Crimes

by **Tom McNamara**

December 20-22, 2013

"I'm afraid that they will forget about the moral and legal issues raised by this war"

-Captain Michael J. Heck, B-52 pilot, speaking in 1973 after being discharge from the US Air Force for refusing to bomb civilians in North Vietnam.

Between December 18 and 29, 1972, the United States carried out an intense bombing campaign over North Vietnam (it would later become known as the "Christmas Bombings"). Its aim was to destroy North Vietnam's infrastructure and bring general terror to her civilian population. At least 20,000 tonnes of explosives were dropped, mostly on the city of Hanoi.

While bombing was halted on Christmas Day (Author's Note: one could imagine for reasons of Christian charity), on the days both before and after the celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, the US Air Force (USAF) saw fit to fly 729 night-time sorties, bringing death and terror (just as designed) to the civilian population of North Vietnam. Communist officials at the time said the dead numbered about 1,600, but many believe the actual death toll was much higher.

On the day after Christmas, December 26, 1972, Captain Michael Heck, airborne commander for a group of three B-52s, was informed that bombing raids over North Vietnam were to recommence. It was at this time that he notified his commander that he would be refusing to take part in the bombing of North Vietnam. On 175 previous occasions, Capt. Heck had flown his missions without question or incident. But this day would be different. Capt. Heck told his superior officers that he would not be taking part in any more bombing missions and that this refusal was based on "moral considerations and matters of conscience." When asked by his commander if he was a conscientious objector he confirmed that he was. For his actions Capt. Heck would be charged with "refusing to obey a lawful order," and it was recommended that he be court martialed. He was eventually discharged from the USAF under less than honourable terms.

Captain Heck was believed to have been the first USAF pilot to refuse to take part in a bombing mission in America's war in South East Asia.

In the days immediately following his act of insubordination, Captain Heck said, "I came to the decision that any war creates an evil far greater than anything it is trying to prevent" and that "the goals do not justify the mass destruction and killing." "I'm just a tiny cog in a big wheel. I have no illusions that what I'm doing will shorten the war, but a man has to answer to himself first."

Since America was attacked on September 11, 2001, she has been engaged in a Global War on Terror (GWOT), a war that is, conveniently, undeclared and has no end date. A major component in this "war" is the use of attack drones. And while President Obama assures us that drones are not being used "willy nilly," facts on the ground might lead one to another conclusion.

On December 12, 2013, it was reported that 15 people were mistakenly killed in a drone attack in Yemen. The victims were on their way to a wedding when their party was spotted and attacked in the belief that they were an al-Qaeda convoy. This is not the first

mistake, nor the most serious. Back on October 30, 2006, at least 82 people were killed, many of them young children, when a madrassa (i.e. school) was attacked by a drone on the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan. It is believed to be the single deadliest attack carried out by the US to date in Pakistan. In March of 2011, a series of attacks were carried out that killed between 26 and 42 people in the North Waziristan region of Pakistan, during a jirga (tribal council) that was arranged to help resolve a local mining dispute. Even more disturbing are reports that first responders and rescuers arriving to the scenes of drone strikes have themselves been targeted in immediate follow up attacks on the same location (a practice known as a "double tap"). There is even evidence that attacks have been carried out on mourners attending funerals. An estimated 18 to 45 civilians were killed in an attack on a funeral in 2009, again in North Waziristan.

For their part, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism has estimated that up to 951 civilians (including up to 200 children) have been killed in Pakistan by CIA drone attacks alone between 2004 and 2013 (Author's Note: A good question to ask might be, "Why does the CIA have its own fleet of attack drones?").

Human Rights Watch has said that the US killing of civilians with drones is a violation of international law. Of this there can be no doubt. One only has to ask, "What would we say if China, Russia or Iran were engaging in the exact same behaviour, but closer to American shores – say in the jungles of Central or South America?"

It is clear that the US and her citizens would recognize these actions for what they really are. War crimes and terror of the highest order. One can only hope that the day will come when the US servicemen and women who are taking part in these actions will realize this for themselves, and refuse to take part in these crimes. Just as one man courageously did 41 years ago this week.

Tom McNamara is a former Visiting Lecturer at the French National Military Academy at Saint-Cyr, Coëtquidan, France.



SO MANY SECRETS IN THE EAST CHINA SEA

By **Pepe Escobar**

It's been a source of endless fascination to follow the game of geopolitical Go being played since China declared an air defense identification zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea.

The spin in the United States is relentless; this was no less than "saber-rattling", a "bellicose" posture and a unilateral "provocation". The meeting last week between Chinese President Xi Jinping and US Vice-President Joe Biden in Beijing may have done nothing to dispel it.

This [web link] is what the White House says Xi and Biden talked about; Beijing did not release a transcript. In the hysteria front, this op-ed [web link] in the Financial Times - reflecting a warped consensus in the City of London - even managed to crank it up to pre-World War II levels.

Now compare it with the official Chinese media view, from a more conciliatory take in China Daily [web link] to a no-holds barred assertion of sovereignty in the in the Global Times [web link].

Which brings us to the scenario that the original provocation may have been actually Japanese, and not Chinese.

Mr Xi, tear down this wall

The whole drama is far from being just about a few islets and rocks that China calls Diaoyu and Japan Senkaku, or the crucial access to the precious waters that surround them, harboring untold riches in oil and natural gas; it concerns no less than the future of China as a sea power rivaling the US.

Let's start with the facts on the sea. Meiji-era documents prove without a doubt that the Japanese government not only admitted that these islands were Chinese (since at least the 16th century) but was also plotting to grab them; that's exactly what happened in 1895, during the first Sino-Japanese war, a historical juncture when China was extremely vulnerable.

After the Japanese occupation of China and World War II, Washington was in control of the territory. A document

signed by the Japanese promised the return of the islands to China after the war. It was never fulfilled. In 1972, the US handed over their "administration" to Japan - but without pronouncing itself about who owned them. A gentlemen's agreement between Chinese premier Zhou Enlai and Japanese prime minister Kakuei Tanaka was also in effect. It was also ignored.

Tokyo ended up buying the islands from a private landowner, the Kurihara family, nationalizing them in September 2012 only a day after a summit between then Chinese President Hu Jintao and PM Yoshihiko Noda, and this after Hu had told Noda not to change the status quo.

Recently, to make matters worse, the Obama administration issued yet one more of its absurd "red lines", affirming it would support Japan in the event of a war revolving around the islands.

Geostrategically, it's even more complex. Virtually all of China's sea trade flows through choke points whose borders are either controlled by close US allies or nations that are not exactly allied with China.

Imagine yourself as a Chinese naval strategist. You look at the seascapes around you and all you see is what strategists call the First Island Chain. That virtual arc goes from Japan and the Ryukyu islands and the Korean peninsula, in the north, moving southwards via Taiwan, Philippines and Indonesia towards Australia. It's your ultimate nightmare. Assuming any serious confrontation along this arc, the US Navy will be able to move its aircraft carriers around and seriously compromise China's access to its oil transported via the straits of Malacca.

Territorial disputes are the norm in the East and South China Seas. In the East China Sea the focus is on the Diaoyu/Senkaku. In the South China Sea it's the Spratly Islands (China opposed to Taiwan, the Philippines and Vietnam) and the Paracel islands (China opposed to Vietnam). Not to mention other disputes now on the backburner with Malaysia and Brunei.

So from the point of view of our Chinese naval strategist, what is deployed is a sort of Reverse Great Wall, an expression, by the way,

immensely popular in circles such as the US Naval War College. It's like an invisible sea wall from Japan to Australia that can in theory block China's access to the Pacific.

And if - and that's a major, long-term if - there ever would be a US blockade, with its sea trade lanes closed, the Chinese economy would be in tremendous trouble.

They know it in Beijing, and they are willing to do anything to prevent it.

In search of good PR

What Biden, not to mention US corporate media, is not telling world public opinion is how, for Washington, this has a lot to do with Okinawa - the key hub from which the US is capable of projecting power west of Japan. It's as if Okinawa was the US's Hadrian's wall.

In reverse, Okinawa is also essential for Japan to remain indispensable to the US. It's as if Tokyo was employing the Pentagon as mercenaries - as much as the Pentagon uses mercenaries in its global shadow wars. Talk about a low cost/high return business model. Japan thus keeps its defense spending at 1% of GDP (yet it's now rising while for most countries this may be at 3% or more).

Were Beijing to actually enforce for good its aerial jurisdiction around the Diaoyu islands, that would be the beginning of the breach of this aquatic Hadrian's wall. For the moment, though, ADIZ is a message to Washington, part of the much-vaunted *xinxing daguo guanxi* - the "New Type of Great Power Relations" being implemented slowly but surely by President Xi Jinping.

Beijing may be right on principle and certainly does want to create facts on the sea. What happened was essentially a PR disaster - an inability convincingly to "sell" the ADIZ to world public opinion. Absolutely nothing will convince any Chinese administration that this is not about Japan encroaching upon a territory and sphere of sovereignty that have been Chinese for centuries.

Instead of the usual ritualistic pilgrimages to revere "heroes" in shrines accused of committing hair-raising massacres, Tokyo could easily
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defuse the problem by admitting to its appalling imperial adventures in Asia. Tokyo could also redefine its role in Asia by behaving like an Asian power - and not some obedient Western appendix, as it's perceived by millions across the continent, and not only by the Chinese.

Ultimately, the only way to defuse the Diaoyu/Senkaku/ADIZ problem would be for Beijing and Tokyo to sit at the table and work out a security treaty for these East China Sea lanes - ideally arbitrated by the United Nations. The problem is Tokyo simply does not admit there is a problem. Now Beijing's strategy is to force the Japanese to do it. Perhaps Beijing should consider hiring an American PR agency, like everyone does.

Pepe Escobar is the author of *Globalistan: How the Globalized World is Dissolving into Liquid War* (Nimble Books, 2007), *Red Zone Blues: a snapshot of Baghdad during the surge* (Nimble Books, 2007), and *Obama does Globalistan* (Nimble Books, 2009).

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COLLAPSIISM

America's foreign policy hawks are no longer counting on Iran to collapse, but North Korea and Cuba remain the "Teetering Twosome."

By **John Feffer**

October 16, 2013.

When small children want something to go away, they close their eyes. Poof! The monster disappears. The spoonful of spinach vanishes. The spilled milk evaporates.

Except that they don't.

U.S. policymakers indulge in a similar variety of child's play called collapsism. They close their eyes when they want a particularly despised adversary to go away. And poof! Kim Jong Eun's North Korea eventually disappears. Raul Castro's Cuba eventually vanishes.

Except that they haven't.

Of course, the United States doesn't simply ignore North Korea and Cuba. Both countries have been under stringent economic sanctions and a tight military

cordon practically since their creation. But attempts at military rollback like the Bay of Pigs fiasco are history. Today, other than tightening the screws from time to time, Washington has largely been content with a waiting game.

Even diplomatic engagement is often predicated on expectations of eventual collapse. For instance, when the Clinton administration negotiated the Agreed Framework with North Korea in 1994, it sold the agreement to Congress with the argument that the regime in Pyongyang wouldn't be around by the time the United States finished building the two promised light-water nuclear reactors. Some favor economic engagement with Cuba only to hasten the exit of the Castros.

Kim Il Sung died, and so did his son, Kim Jong-Il. But the regime lives on. In Cuba, meanwhile, Fidel Castro stepped aside in favor of his brother Raul. But the regime lives on. And Washington is locked in a foreign policy drama that only Samuel Becket could have written: a lot of waiting and nothing much happening.

There's no point, according to the prevailing wisdom among collapsists, to engage with North Korea or Cuba as long as the governments there are teetering on the edge. This was the argument also used with China in 1989 and with Iran during the Green movement uprising in 2009. Both those countries stabilized themselves through the time-honored approach of repression. With China, Washington has largely abandoned collapsism in favor of some kind of carrot-and-stick engagement. With Iran, the current debate is over the ultimate end of the sanctions regime: to bring down the current government or to apply pressure to achieve a nuclear deal. The recent election of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and the tentative signs of U.S.-Iranian rapprochement have pushed collapsism to the back burner for the time being at least.

North Korea and Cuba, however, remain the Teetering Twosome. In Pyongyang, the young leader Kim Jong Eun has defied early predictions that a Swiss education and a fondness for basketball could somehow combine to create a Gorbachev of the East. Hey, I

knew Gorby, and let me tell you this kid is no Mikhail Sergeyevich. After a long-range missile test last year and a third nuclear test this year—not to mention his shake-up of the high-ranking military staff and his hardball negotiations with South Korea—Kim has signaled that for now he's not Mr. Perestroika.

Pundits and policymakers have now concluded that, having declared itself a nuclear power, North Korea has given up on the strategy of trading its bomb-making capabilities for a golden ticket of entry into the international community. The Obama administration failed to advance the promising initiatives that had gained steam in the last years of the Bush administration. Last year, on leap day, the United States and North Korea came to an agreement trading food aid for a moratorium on uranium enrichment and missile tests as well as a return of inspectors to the plutonium facility at Yongbyon. North Korea's subsequent satellite launch scotched that deal. Pyongyang recently rejected a non-aggression pact that Secretary of State John Kerry offered in exchange for denuclearization.

Engagement with North Korea is major political risk in Washington, and the Obama team certainly doesn't want to expose its flank when it's making headway with another adversary, Iran. So, what's left? Waiting for collapse.

Or, to paraphrase a recent RAND report that is all the rage among Korea hands, *preparing* for collapse. For myriad reasons, from economic decline to increased flow of information into the country, the RAND report concludes that North Korea is again close to the edge. Although the date of collapse remains frustratingly obscure, the United States and South Korea in particular should ramp up their contingency planning. This planning, as outlined in the report, boils down to: sending in ground forces at the first sign of instability, securing weapons of mass destruction, providing humanitarian aid to discourage out-migration, and putting down all signs of military resistance.

Making plans is an admirable exercise. No one wants to be caught with pants down if the Kim Jong Eun

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regime suddenly implodes. But the RAND report makes some important analytical errors. It refuses to consider the most likely scenario of change in North Korea: the military taking over in a relatively smooth *coup d'etat*. It also concludes that the benefits of military intervention in the case of chaos north of the 38th parallel outweigh the costs.

And, perhaps most importantly, by suggesting that collapse and intervention form the most likely future scenario—not if, but when—the report implicitly recommends that the U.S. and South Korean governments should abandon diplomatic engagement that might lead to a peaceful and perhaps more gradual rapprochement on the Korean peninsula (a “far less likely outcome,” according to the report). The furthest the report goes in the direction of diplomacy is to suggest that Washington and Seoul would be wise to sit down with Beijing to coordinate a division of responsibilities in the case of collapse.

Worse, by proposing to reshape policy in Washington and Seoul around an imminent collapse/intervention scenario that requires early action for its success, the RAND report encourages policymakers and intelligence services not only to seek out signs of instability in Pyongyang but encourage them as well. “If a collapse really is likely at some point in the future,” author Bruce Bennett writes in the report, “actions to prepare for it are really more likely to accelerate a collapse rather than cause it.”

The situation with Cuba is slightly different. Instead of a nuclear program to attract the attention of Washington, there is geographic proximity. The Obama administration made some moves toward an easing of the tight embargo on the island, for instance lifting some restrictions on travel and remittances and beginning negotiations on the resumption of direct mail service after 50 years. An earlier piece of legislation allowed

states to negotiate agricultural export deals with Cuba, which has sent over \$4.3 billion in food from 2001 through 2012.

Further attempts to chip away at the blockade, however, have come up against significant political resistance. Republican Party moderates once indicated a willingness to reconsider. As Richard Lugar said in 2009, “We must recognize the ineffectiveness of our current policy and deal with the Cuban regime in a way that enhances U.S. interests.” But Lugar got tea-partied out of the Senate, and Republican Party moderates are an endangered species (though, interestingly, Paul Ryan (R-WI) over in the House has voted three times to lift the embargo).

The collapsists have not secured the kind of consensus in Washington that seems to exist around North Korea. They face U.S. business interests and Cuban-American entrepreneurs that want fewer trade restrictions with the island and a cross-section of the policymaking community that prefers the stable status quo to a risky collapse scenario. Unlike North Korea, Cuba is close to home—only a two-day swim if you’re Diana Nyad—so spillover effects of regime change like refugee flows can’t be blithely ignored. So, the Cuba hawks continue to wait and watch for Raul Castro’s economic reforms to peter out, for Venezuelan aid to dry up, and for the long-awaited collapse to happen.

North Korea and Cuba cannot be simply wished away. They have both survived economic squeeze and military punch. Yes, some day, things will change dramatically in Pyongyang and Havana. The questions are: how will they change and what can be done to ensure a minimum of suffering and a maximum of public participation? Sudden collapse, followed by outside military intervention, is not the best-case scenario in this regard.

We’ve been stuck in a Samuel Beckett play for some time. The last thing we want at this point is a Quentin Tarantino ending.

John Feffer is co-director of Foreign Policy In Focus.

A POEM ON GAZA

By Tala Rameh, July 7, 2011

Pomegranates

Was it pomegranates we used to eat?

I can’t quite remember
it was before all the bombs
fell everywhere even on that church
in the backyard of grandma’s house,
when grandma did not believe in Jesus
and pushed her little sister
off of the window sill,
then her mother got pregnant again.

The new daughter got the dead
daughter’s name;
it was Aisha-the living one.

I think they were pomegranates,
we’d pick them, you and I mom,
from the tree,
red pearls they were
perfect sets of teeth.
we’d eat them so well
and stain our shirts with the mess.

It was nice then mom,
before the bombs, before you got sick.

Oh, the pomegranates
my cousin—who three days later,
got shot in the lungs—
reached for the highest one.

Mom I told you,
if we put a band aid on his chest,
he get better.

Mom are you sure they were pomegranates?

Somehow I keep thinking of little figs
you’d break your arm to reach,
as they grew ripe and plump.
You’d sneak outside, past midnight,
and hum as you swallow
their little strings of joy.

Mom remember how it was only
the pomegranate tree
that remained standing
when you leaped off of the couch
and over my body screaming.

“I swear I will come up there
to your damn chopper
and scope your eyes out
if one inch of this missile
pierces the edges of my daughter.”

Yes mom, it was pomegranates you couldn’t
chew,
when your body got infested with morphine,
when you spent July sleeping
before you slept forever in august.

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A WAR WITHOUT PURPOSE

The Horrors of the "Great" War

by **Robert Fisk**

December 16, 2013

Why do we want to commemorate the centenary of the Great War? Because it marked the destruction of the "flower of English manhood"? An odd thought, since it also marked the crushing of the "flower" of French and German manhood. The war's ultimate tragedy, of course, is that it led – quite directly – to the even more terrible Second World War. In other words, the 1914-1918 war was to no purpose. Its unparalleled suffering led the British and French to believe that they could never fight again; but for the Germans, their very failure to win convinced them they must have another war to prove that the Great War was not fought in vain.

Max Hastings has already told us that we were right to go to war in 1914. But that's not the point. We wanted to go to war, much as we wanted to invade Afghanistan in 2001. Indeed, next year's appearance of even greater numbers of that grotesque poppy on the lapels of MPs and television presenters – inspired by the equally pro-war poem by John McCrae – will be rather like supporting George Bush in his invasion of Iraq. "If ye break faith with us who died," McCrae's fallen soldiers tell the reader, "we shall not sleep, though poppies grow/In Flanders fields." That was exactly Bush's argument for continuing his war in Baghdad: if Americans withdrew from Iraq, he said, they would dishonour those who had already died.

The Great War was a strange war, in almost every way. Though it is now called the First World War, it was primarily a European and Middle-Eastern war. More than half of the Earth remained untouched, though far from unaffected. Australia and Canada and the US (a latecomer, as usual) remained safe, though their soldiers – like India's – died in their tens of thousands in Mesopotamia (Iraq), Gallipoli and in France. Indian battalions were among the first to fight in Flanders and one of the first major naval engagements was fought off the Falklands, now of Thatcher fame. Who now remembers that long before Saddam, Allenby used

gas in the Middle East, in a Sinai-Gaza battle against the Turks? Or that the Brits brought almost 100,000 Chinese workers to service the armies of the Western Front?

I fear we will concentrate on the Somme and Passchendaele next year, forgetting the millions from other lands who died. Many a camera will pan across the Great War cemeteries and on the headstones of British soldiers "known unto God". In their neat lines with their fresh roses, it's easy to believe that beneath these graves lay the perfect skeletons of those "glorious dead" whose identities were, somehow, mislaid. Alas, beneath these particular headstones, there are sometimes just bits of human beings, torsos without heads, legs and heads without bodies, mere scraps of bones.

It's worth reading the two-volume history of the Canadian army in the Great War by Ottawa historian Tim Cook, who describes the horrific circumstances in which soldiers crouching under fire were often hit by pieces of their own dead, long decomposed friends. One soldier of the time told how he was wounded in the back of the head by the teeth of the comrade decapitated just behind him. After that, beware any comforting cenotaph solemnity.

Strangely, while our poets and painters became masterly artists of this war after 1916 (Owen, Sassoon, Nash), our novelists never caught up. The best novels came from French soldiers: Henri Barbusse, for example, or Georges Duhamel, who so impressed Sassoon. As that wonderful observer of war-time English-language literature Samuel Hynes was to observe, no novel by Galsworthy or Conrad or James was published in 1916. In fact, Galsworthy spent much of his time declaring war on the avant garde. Masfield and Hardy were silent. Yet in the Second World War, the poets – save for Keith Douglas and a few others – did not capture a world at war. Auden bravely wrote from neutral New York.

There were photographers, of course, in the American Civil War and in South Africa, but pictures – and especially film – turned the Great War into "our war". The soldiers look like us and – more to the point – they relate us to the Second World War whose survivors are among our dads. The invention of the steel helmet for British troops on the Western

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I don't know how to make them sweeter,
you never gave me the recipe,
and now I can't ask you about them,
or about anything,
so I grab one and stare at its shell,
and wonder if that's how the earth is now
harsh on the surface,
but housing your body;
your limbs now pearls
and you are the lightest pomegranate
the reddest there is.

Front turned the helmet itself into an art form. Minus their puttees, the soldiers we see at Ypres look almost identical to the soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force on the beaches of Dunkirk. The familiar rimmed helmet, which saved so many tens of thousands of lives, made them men of the same generation, which they sometimes truly were.

And then there were the veterans. Among those who shaped our own destiny just before our birth, many had also fought in the Great War: Churchill and Hitler, Eden and Montgomery and Rommel and de Gaulle and Attlee, who introduced the health system which is still so much a part of Britain's political iconography.

And I think there is another reason why the Great War seems so close to us; because when it broke out, Britain and the rest of Europe had already reached that stage of industrialisation which was to make the landscape so long-lasting in shape and recognition. The dead of the Great War – if they could come morbidly back to life – would still recognise and be able to find their way around London or Paris. They would have little difficulty in identifying Victoria station, from which so many of them left on their final journey to Folkestone and France. The very hotel in which some of them stayed on the night before their departure still stands. Our villages and our railway lines would be familiar to them. And so we still walk and travel in their same land.

Why did it start? AJP Taylor remains

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NUCLEAR WAR

Published on Tuesday, December 10, 2013
by [Common Dreams](#)

Nuclear War Could Mean 'Extinction of the Human Race'

New report issues 'red flag about the threat to humanity' posed by nuclear weapons; calls for global disarmament

- **Andrea Germanos**, staff writer

A war using even a small percentage of the world's nuclear weapons threatens the lives of two billion people, a new report warns.

The findings in the report issued by International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) and Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) are based on studies by climate scientists that show how nuclear war would alter the climate and agriculture, thereby threatening one quarter of the world's population with famine.

Nuclear Famine: Two Billion People at Risk? offers an updated edition to the groups' April of 2012 report, which the groups say "may have seriously underestimated the consequences of a limited nuclear war."

"A nuclear war using only a fraction of existing arsenals would produce massive casualties on a global scale—far more than we had previously believed," Dr. Ira Helfand, the report's author and IPPNW co-president, said in a statement.

As their previous report showed, years after even a limited nuclear war, production of corn in the U.S. and China's middle season rice production would severely decline, and fears over dwindling food supplies would lead to hoarding and increases in food prices, creating further food insecurity for those already reliant on food imports.

The updated report adds that Chinese winter wheat production would plummet if such a war broke out. Based on information from new studies combining reductions in wheat, corn and rice, this new edition doubles the number of people they expect to be threatened by nuclear-war induced famine to over two billion.

"The prospect of a decade of widespread hunger and intense social and economic instability in the world's largest country has immense implications for the entire global community, as does the possibility

that the huge declines in Chinese wheat production will be matched by similar declines in other wheat producing countries," Helfand stated.

The crops would be impacted, the report explains, citing previous studies, because of the black carbon particles that would be released, causing widespread changes like cooling temperatures, decreased precipitation and decline in solar radiation.

In this scenario of famine, epidemics of infectious diseases would be likely, the report states, and could lead to armed conflict. From the report:

Within nations where famine is widespread, there would almost certainly be food riots, and competition for limited food resources might well exacerbate ethnic and regional animosities. Among nations, armed conflict would be a very real possibility as states dependent on imports attempted to maintain access to food supplies.

While a limited nuclear war would bring dire circumstances, the impacts if the world's biggest nuclear arms holders were involved would be even worse. "With a large war between the United States and Russia, we are talking about the possible—not certain, but possible—extinction of the human race," Helfand told *Agence-France Presse*.

"In this kind of war, biologically there are going to be people surviving somewhere on the planet but the chaos that would result from this will dwarf anything we've ever seen," Helfand told the news agency.

As Helfand writes, the data cited in the report "raises a giant red flag about the threat to humanity posed."

Yet, as Dr. Peter Wilk, former national executive director of PSR writes in an op-ed today, the "threat is of our own creation."

As a joint statement by 124 states delivered to the United Nations General Assembly in October stated: "It is in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances."

"Countries around the world—those who are nuclear-armed and those who are not—must work together to eliminate the threat and consequences of nuclear war," Helfand said.

"In order to eliminate this threat, we must eliminate nuclear weapons."

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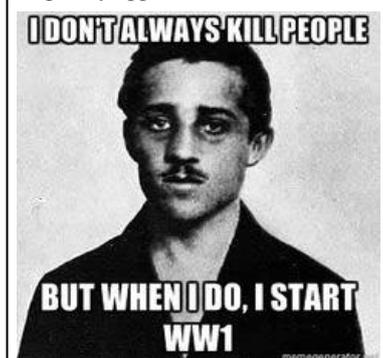
my favourite. A meticulous complex of peace treaties that appealed to historians as much as politicians ensured that a balance of competing alliances would lock Europe into peace. But Gavrilo Princip's infamous shot in Sarajevo caused the Austro-Hungarians to declare war on Serbia, and thus Russia had to mobilise and then Germany had to declare war on Russia and ...

Like our own carefully nurtured security pacts, all was well until an individual – say bin Laden instead of Princip – took things into their own hands. A giant, magnificently constructed electrical system that lit up all of Europe, it suddenly short-circuited.

Next year, I think, we should find a new way of understanding what happened between 1914 and 1918. That would be our memorial to grandfathers and great grandfathers and in a few cases – including mine – fathers.

I will dig a trench of my own to avoid seeing all over again those tired, familiar Imperial War Museum photographs (some fake) of the Somme, of Brits in the mud at Passchendaele, of the battleships of Jutland, of the nincompoop Kitchener telling us that our country needs us. Abandon clichés along with the poppies. Maybe the British helmet – which saved lives rather than imitated the blood of Flanders – should be the new logo of Our Great War.

Robert Fisk writes for the *Independent*, where this column originally appeared.



**OBITUARIES: THEY WERE
FREEDOM FIGHTERS**

“Defined Voices”: Giap, Wallace, and the
Never-Ending Battle for Freedom

by **Ramzy Baroud**

October 10th, 2013

“Nothing is more precious than freedom,” is a quotation attributed to Vo Nguyen Giap, a Vietnamese General who led his country through two liberation wars. The first was against French colonialists, the second against the Americans. And despite heavy and painful losses, Vietnam prevailed, defeating the first colonial quest at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu (1954) and the second at Ho Chi Minh Campaign (1975).

General Giap, the son of a peasant scholar, stood tall in both wars, only bowing down to the resolve of his people. “Any forces that would impose their will on other nations will most certainly face defeat,” he once said. His words will always be true.

He died on Friday, October 4, at the age of 102.

On the same day, the former Black Panther Herman Wallace, who had spent 41-years of his life in solitary confinement in Louisiana State Penitentiary, died from incurable liver cancer at the age of 71. Just a few days before his death, Judge Brian Jackson had overturned a charge that robbed Herman of much of his life. According to Jackson, Herman’s 1974 conviction of killing a prison guard was ‘unconstitutional.’

Despite the lack of material evidence, ‘discredited’ witnesses and a sham trial, Wallace, who was a poet and lover of literature, and two other prisoners known as the Angola Three, were locked up to spend a life of untold hardship for a crime they didn’t commit.

Now that Wallace is dead, two remain. One, Robert King, 70, was freed in 2001, and the other, Albert Woodfox, 66, is still in solitary confinement and “undergoes daily cavity searches,” reported the UK *Independent* newspaper.

“When his conviction was overturned it cleared the slate – he could die a man not convicted of a crime he was innocent of,” King said of the release of Wallace, who died few days later.

One of the last photos released while on his hospital bed, showed Wallace raising his clinched right fist, perpetuating the legendary defiance of a whole generation of African Americans and civil rights leaders. While some fought for civil rights in the streets of American cities, Wallace fought for the rights of prisoners. The four decades of solitary confinement were meant to break him. Instead, it made it him stronger.

“If death is the realm of freedom, then through death I escape to freedom” Wallace quoted Frantz Fanon in the introduction to a poem he wrote from prison in 2012.

In “A Defined Voice”, Wallace wrote:

***They removed my whisper from
general population,
To maximum security, I gained a
voice;
They removed my voice from
maximum security,
To administrative segregation, My
voice gave hope;
They removed my voice from
administrative segregation,
To solitary confinement, My voice
became vibration for unity ...***

“Literature can and must elevate a man’s soul,” General Giap once said. The son of the ‘peasant scholar’ was right, as Wallace’s own words attest:

“The louder my voice the deeper they bury me,

“I SAID, THE LOUDER MY
VOICE THE DEEPER THEY BURY
ME!...”

There was so much in common between Giap and Wallace, and surely the two men knew it even though they had never met.

Giap fought colonial powers and died free. Wallace, known as the “Muhammad Ali of the Criminal Justice System”, spent most of his life a prisoner, but never lowered his clasped fist, not until he died. But then again, “If death is the realm of freedom, then through death I escape to freedom.”

The words of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish can always find space in any discussion concerning freedom:

It is possible...

It is possible at least sometimes...

It is possible especially now

To ride a horse

Inside a prison cell

And run away...

It is possible for prison walls

To disappear,

For the cell to become a distant land

Without frontiers ...

Can death be that ‘distant land without frontiers’, where Fanon, Darwish and Wallace meet and exchange notes on freedom and resistance?

Of the thousands of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, 1,200 suffer from various illnesses, and among them, according to UFree Network, 44 suffer from cancer. Among the nearly 5,000 prisoners, 320 are children. There is little doubt that each of these children sees Nelson Mandela as a hero. Herman Wallace is also a hero.

“Free all political prisoners, prisoners of war, prisoner of consciousness.” Wallace ended his poem. His words were not directed at himself and his prison mates. From Palestine, to Afghanistan, to Guantanamo, to Louisiana, his words are loaded with meaning, and relevance.

“When we started out we weren’t thinking about ourselves, we were dealing with the system. That goes on,” said Robert King. And it will go on, because, as Giap had said, there is nothing more precious than freedom.

And those who fight against the ‘system’, any ‘system’, need to understand that without unity no battle can be won, not those of liberation wars, as in Palestine, nor those fought from solitary confinements.

In an interview with CNN in 2004, Giap, speaking of the US war on Iraq said that a nation that stands up and knows how to unite will always defeat a foreign invader. “When people have the spirit to reach for independent sovereignty ... and show solidarity, it means the people can defeat the enemy,” the Vietnamese general said.

Like Wallace, Giap, 102, was expectedly very frail. Yet, along with Wallace, these ‘defined voices’ continue to define history.

Ramzy Baroud is an author and a journalist. He can be reached at ramzybaroud@hotmail.com

**OBITUARY: NELSON MANDELA***Supreme Hypocrisy, At the Mandela Memorial Service***Obama, Prince of War**

by Norman Pollack

POTUS [ed: *President of the United States*], self-appointed voice of global democracy, is a sham; worse, delusional if he swallows his rhetoric, cruelly opportunistic if, as I believe, he doesn't. The analogy that comes to mind here, fortunately a hypothetical, would be J. Edgar Hoover, at a service for Dr. King. Blood on his hands, Obama the inversion of Mandela at every turn, yet ringing the changes of freedom, democracy, peace, while the Behemoth of global interventionism, like a massive steamroller, plows forward, the Middle East and China flashpoints in a comprehensive hegemonic framework. The world's ranking militarist, in point of "assets," expenditures, arsenals, geostrategic planning, preens before the world audience, speaking power to truth, rather than the reverse, even stooping to the deception of a handshake with Raul Castro knowing full well the contrived symbolism of standing in Mandela's shadow has no bearing whatever on the half-century embargo of Cuba, the sanctions representing a vain attempt at destroying an alternative form of social life which has brought only unnecessary suffering to a proud people.

Showmanship is cheap; if I were Raul I would have spit in his eye, and told him to move on. No, courtesy and protocol have no place where oppressors are involved.

I will quote only sparingly from Obama's address—what's the use, when honeyed words fly on serpent's wings? The striking point is how much he is in denial, his words applied to Mandela (meant really to justify his own actions) become razor-like indictments of his record. There is his use of the word "ubuntu," identified with Mandela, eliciting applause, which signifies that "we are all bound together in ways that are invisible to the eye; that there is a oneness to humanity; that we achieve ourselves by sharing ourselves with others, and caring for those around us." That by itself, the vulgarization of ubuntu—through the use of demonization of all who contest American rulership, worse still, whose sharing and caring by US forces translates as drone



missiles on funerals and other "collateral damage"—sets the stage for self-congratulation as a caring leader solicitous of the welfare of all Americans.

The speech is as much about himself (not surprising, given his absolute control of his image, witness a *Times* op-ed, Dec. 12, by an AP photojournalist describing White House image-management) as a tribute to Mandela. Commenting on the latter's passing as "a time of mourning, and a time to celebrate a heroic life," Obama adds: "But I believe it should also prompt in each of us a time for self-reflection. With honesty, regardless of our station, or our circumstances, we must ask: How well have I applied his lessons in my own life? It's a question I ask myself, as a man and as a President." We know the answer.

Egotist extraordinaire, except when the exercise of self-flagellation suits his purpose, the false modesty passing for "cool," Obama almost unwittingly portrays a world of ongoing struggles for societal betterment which, in fact, reveals the very problems plaguing America on his watch: "The struggles that follow the victory of formal equality or universal franchise may not be as filled with drama and moral clarity as those that came before, but they are no less important. For around the world today, we still see children suffering from hunger and disease [and drone strikes (mine)]. We still see run-down schools. We still see young people without prospects for the future. Around the world today, men and women are still imprisoned for their political beliefs [Obama's use of the Espionage Act directed against whistleblowers, more than all previous presidents combined (mine)]...." One wonders, does he ask himself, "as a man and as a President," about these conditions? In passing, education expenditures are a small fraction of that for defense. As for

unemployment, estimates for young people range from 20%-40%, and that fails to account for those who have dropped out of the labor force through discouragement.

It only gets better, i.e., vainglorious: "And so we, too, must act on behalf of justice. We, too, must act on behalf of peace. There are too many people who happily embrace Madiba's [Mandela's patrilineal name] legacy of racial reconciliation, but passionately resist even modest reforms that would challenge chronic poverty and growing inequality. There are too many leaders who claim solidarity with Madiba's struggle for freedom, but do not tolerate dissent from their own people." Tell that to Snowden and Manning, and tell all of us about the widest class differentiation in American history—i.e., class differences in income, wealth, and power—and the burdens especially falling on the black community. Then the flicker of self-flagellation, or false modesty, which makes everything alright: "And there are too many of us on the sidelines, comfortable in complacency or cynicism, when our voices must be heard." A final quotation suffices: "The questions we face today—how to promote equality and justice; how to uphold freedom and human rights; how to end conflict and sectarian war—these things do not have easy answers... We can choose a world defined not by conflict, but by peace and justice and opportunity."

As the battleships plow the seas, the long-range bombers remain finely tuned, the joint maneuvers with "friends and allies" continue on schedule, the status-of-forces agreements protect our "noble warriors" from punishment for crimes in the lands we have invaded, etc. etc.

Rather, let's turn to the record, the solid wall on which the words are tacked up. Foremost, militarism, embodied in a global network of bases, a vast outpouring of appropriations, constant modernization of weaponry to ensure greater lethality, arms-financing to "friends and allies" which in turn furthers US geostrategic aims at the

(continued on Page 26...)



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same time putting down dissidents in recipients' countries, and for good measure, espionage on a heretofore undreamt of scale, eavesdropping practically universalized, plus the selective use of cyber warfare—and not a military aficionado, I'm sure I left out plenty. Also, where does one put counterterrorism beyond its most salacious (here, not sexual but depraved, sadistic) form, purposeful assassination as itself a weapon of terror, as manifested in widespread civilian casualties, including children's deaths? Militarism, in fact, infuses the whole structure of policy and thought, coinciding with the hierarchical shaping of the business system and capitalist values—gradations of worth, some people more equal than others, and "enemies" the legitimate target of disdain and worse.

Then there is America itself, the record of permissive capitalism run amuck, poisoning the wells of human identity (this condition of course predates Obama, but his absolute disconnect from mass deprivation, while waving aloft a liberal banner, muddies political consciousness, giving way to Voltarean belief in the best of all possible worlds) through extolling business leadership, consumerism, the glories of war, as representing democracy. Here he gives us Fortress America, better yet, the National Security State, where foreign eavesdropping has its counterpart in, again, broadest ever, massive surveillance.

A Police State in-the-making, still wrapped in a liberal flag. Here too, we see (if I may use the term "logical" or even "brilliant") consistency: the savaging of the social safety net as the prerequisite to a compliant as well as complicit populace willing to accept corporatism at home and the aggressive pursuit of hegemony abroad. At this moment of writing, there are vast demonstrations in Bangkok and Kiev, each numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Where, what about, New York, Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles, where equally if not greater grounds for dissatisfaction exist—instead, abject silence?

Yet we see pretend democratic leadership, Obama in the shadow of

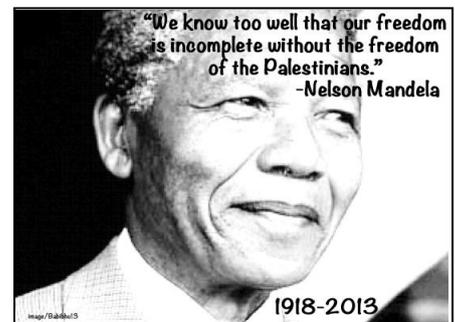
Mandela. A case might be made that "liberal" leadership is ultimately more dangerous than undisguised repression, for in *that* case the people have at least the chance of shaking off their stupor, perceiving reality for what it is, unvarnished lies to cushion reactionary social-economic policies, and begin to fight back. For now, self-imprisonment in the myths of patriotic dedication—to flag, country, JPMorgan Chase, Boeing, carrier battle groups, the whole configuration of American might and influence, in which government and business are fused inseparably—becomes indispensable background allowing Obama to prance about the world stage as a progressive figure, to which we remain blind as the rest of the world slowly catches on. My *New York Times* Comment on Nicholas Kristof's excellent article, "How to Truly Honor Mandela," which criticizes Obama for not "speaking up adequately on behalf of political prisoners," Dec. 12, follows (same date):

"Mr. President, you can't blame John Boehner for that." Exactly right. The "that" is not only the force feeding of Samir Naji al-Hasan Moqbel. It is also an authoritarian, nontransparent regime—yes, regime, rather than government in the true democratic sense—which uses the excuse of Republican intransigence (accepted as a rationale by most Democrats, including liberals and progressives) to hide an infamous record of intervention, targeted assassination, JSOC-CIA paramilitary operations, and, in still larger terms, the containment of China leading to ultimate confrontation through the Obama Pacific-first strategy supplemented by the Trans-Pacific partnership. And that "that" doesn't begin to tap the domestic abuses centered on a dismal record of deregulation, with SEC, FDA, just about all agencies and departments (e.g., Interior) bending to the ground in worship of banking, business, and myriad vested interests.

Viewing Obama at the memorial service for Nelson Mandela makes one want to puke, so fraudulent were his words. The Prince of War, not Peace, on Terror Tuesdays perusing the "hit list" personally authorizing whom to kill next, presiding over a foreign-policy apparatus steeped in visions of global

hegemony, and, domestically, offering little to counteract unemployment, foreclosure, malnutrition. By rights, there should be demonstrations throughout America protesting the cynicism and manipulation of the whole governing edifice—instead, aimless discontent.

Norman Pollack is the author of *The Populist Response to Industrial America* (Harvard) and *The Just Polity* (Illinois), *The Humane Economy*, *The Just Polity*, ed. *The Populist Mind*, and co-ed. with Frank Freidel, *Builders of American Institutions*. Guggenheim Fellow. Prof. Emeritus, History, Michigan State. He is currently writing *The Fascistization of America: Liberalism, Militarism, Capitalism*. E-mail: pollackn@msu.edu.



"If there is a country that has committed unspeakable atrocities in the world, it is the United States of America. They don't care for human beings."

"There is no doubt that the United States now feels that they are the only superpower in the world and they can do what they like."

"If the United States of America or Britain is having elections, they don't ask for observers from Africa or from Asia. But when we have elections, they want observers."

"The current world financial crisis also starkly reminds us that many of the concepts that guided our sense of how the world and its affairs are best ordered, have suddenly been shown to be wanting."

"No single person can liberate a country. You can only liberate a country if you act as a collective."

Quotes by **Nelson Mandela**, 1918-2013



BOOK REVIEW: THEY WERE SOLDIERS

Got His Gun: Lost His Legs, Arms, and Penis

by David Swanson

October 27th, 2013

Ann Jones' new book, *They Were Soldiers: How the Wounded Return from America's Wars: The Untold Story*, is devastating, and almost incomprehensibly so when one considers that virtually all of the death and destruction in U.S. wars is on the other side. Statistically, what happens to U.S. troops is almost nothing. In human terms, it's overwhelming.

Know a young person considering joining the military? Give them this book.

Know a person not working to end war? Give them this book.

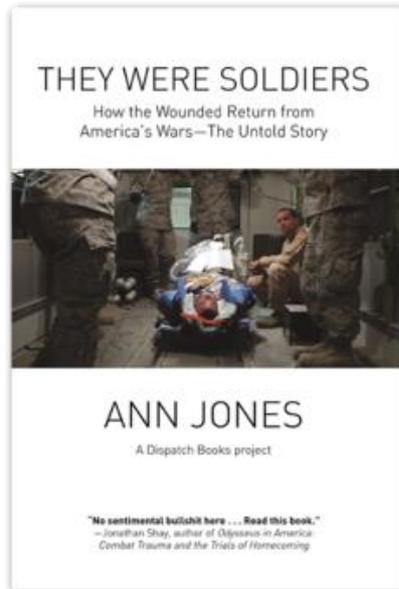
Jones presents the choice before us in the clearest terms in the introduction:

Contrary to common opinion in the United States, war is not inevitable. Nor has it always been with us. War is a human invention — an organized, deliberate action of an anti-social kind — and in the long span of human life on Earth, a fairly recent one. For more than 99 percent of the time that humans have lived on this planet, most of them have never made war. Many languages don't even have a word for it. Turn off CNN and read anthropology. You'll see.

What's more, war is obsolete. Most nations don't make war anymore, except when coerced by the United States to join some spurious 'coalition.' The earth is so small, and our time here so short. No other nation on the planet makes war as often, as long, as forcefully, as expensively, as destructively, as wastefully, as senselessly, or as unsuccessfully as the United States. No other nation makes war its business.

Jones begins her book with that distinguishing feature of war: death. The U.S. military assigns specialists in "Mortuary Affairs" to dispose of the dead. They dispose of their own sanity in the process. And first they dispose of their appetite. "Broiled meat in the chow hall smells much the same as any charred Marine, and you may carry the smell of the dead on a stained cuff as you raise a fork to your mouth, only to

quickly put it down." Much of the dead is — like the slop at the chow hall — unrecognizable meat. Once dumped in landfills, until a *Washington Post* story made that a scandal, now it's dumped at sea. Much of the dead is the result of suicides. Mortuary Affairs scrubs the brains out of the port-o-potty and removes the rifle, so other troops don't have to see.



Then come, in vastly greater numbers, the wounded — Jones' chapter two. A surgeon tells her that in Iraq the U.S. troops "had severe injuries, but the injuries were still on the body." In Afghanistan, troops step on mines and IEDs while walking, not driving. Some are literally blown to bits. Others can be picked up in recognizable pieces. Others survive. But many survive without one or two legs, one or two testicles, a penis, an arm, both arms — or with a brain injury, or a ruined face, or all of the above. A doctor describes the emotion for a surgical team the first time they have to remove a penis and "watch it go into the surgical waste container."

"By early 2012," Jones writes, "3,000 [U.S.] soldiers had been killed by IEDs in Iraq and Afghanistan, and 31,394 wounded. Among the wounded were more than 1,800 soldiers with severe damage to their genitals." Doctors treat an injured soldier's limbs first, later their genitals, later still their brains.

Back in the states, two young parents and "two pretty adolescent girls," step up "to sit on the padded platforms in the center of the room. They move with the

tentative sobriety of shock. Aides wheel in a gurney that bears a bundle in a flannel sheet. They gather the edges of the sheet and swing the package over the platform into the very heart of the family. Carefully they lower it and then begin to peel away the wrapping. There, revealed, restored to the family, is the son, their boy, not dead, but missing both arms, both legs, and some part — it's impossible to tell how much — of his lower torso. The director calls out a cheery greeting, 'Hi Bobby! How are you doing today?' Bobby tries to answer but makes no sound. He flops on the platform, an emaciated head, eyes full of fear, his chest all bones under a damp grey ARMY tee shirt..."

Be all that you can be.

In training you're ordered into a poison gas chamber and exposed to a bit of it. If Assad trained his troops that way, we'd murder a half million Syrians to get even. But U.S. military training is training in blind subservience, usually properly resented when it's too late. Up goes your chances of being dead, injured, guilt-ridden, traumatized, homicidal, and suicidal. Jones recounts the story of a soldier who murdered two Iraqi prisoners, came home convinced he was a murderer, laid out the two dead Iraqis' dog tags, wrapped a hose twice around his neck, and hung himself. Twenty-two a day: that's the count of U.S. veteran suicides according to the V.A. The rate is 4.7 times higher than normal, according to the Austin-American Statesmen's investigation of Texas veterans. That doesn't count recklessly crashed cars and motorcycles. And it doesn't count the epidemic of overdoses of the drugs meant to solve the problem.

How to help such suffering? Therapists used to ask people to talk and now ask them to take drugs. In either case, they don't ask them to honestly deal with their guilt. Between 2001 and 2007 homicides committed by active duty and veteran U.S. troops went up 90 percent. The military looks for problems in soldiers' family lives to explain such troubles, as if they all suddenly began marrying the wrong spouses just when their country deployed them into the stupidest war yet waged. Jones tells the story of one

(continued on Page 30...)



POETRY: FROM A GERMAN WAR PRIMER

AMONGST THE HIGHLY PLACED
It is considered low to talk about food.
The fact is: they have
Already eaten.

The lowly must leave this earth
Without having tasted
Any good meat.

For wondering where they come from and
Where they are going
The fine evenings find them
Too exhausted.

They have not yet seen
The mountains and the great sea
When their time is already up.

If the lowly do not
Think about what's low
They will never rise.

THE BREAD OF THE HUNGRY HAS ALL BEEN EATEN
Meat has become unknown. Useless
The pouring out of the people's sweat.
The laurel groves have been
Lopped down.
From the chimneys of the arms factories
Rises smoke.

THE HOUSE-PAINTER SPEAKS OF GREAT TIMES TO
COME
The forests still grow.
The fields still bear
The cities still stand.
The people still breathe.

ON THE CALENDAR THE DAY IS NOT
YET SHOWN
Every month, every day
Lies open still. One of those days
Is going to be marked with a cross.

THE WORKERS CRY OUT FOR BREAD
The merchants cry out for markets.
The unemployed were hungry. The employed
Are hungry now.
The hands that lay folded are busy again.
They are making shells.

THOSE WHO TAKE THE MEAT FROM THE TABLE
Teach contentment.
Those for whom the contribution is destined
Demand sacrifice.
Those who eat their fill speak to the hungry
Of wonderful times to come.
Those who lead the country into the abyss
Call ruling too difficult
For ordinary men.

WHEN THE LEADERS SPEAK OF PEACE
The common folk know
That war is coming.
When the leaders curse war
The mobilization order is already written out.

THOSE AT THE TOP SAY: PEACE
AND WAR
Are of different substance.
But their peace and their war
Are like wind and storm.

War grows from their peace
Like son from his mother
He bears
Her frightful features.

Their war kills
Whatever their peace
Has left over.

ON THE WALL WAS CHALKED:
They want war.
The man who wrote it
Has already fallen.

THOSE AT THE TOP SAY:
This way to glory.
Those down below say:
This way to the grave.

THE WAR WHICH IS COMING
Is not the first one. There were
Other wars before it.
When the last one came to an end
There were conquerors and conquered.
Among the conquered the common people
Starved. Among the conquerors
The common people starved too.

THOSE AT THE TOP SAY COMRADESHIP
Reigns in the army.
The truth of this is seen
In the cookhouse.
In their hearts should be
The selfsame courage. But
On their plates
Are two kinds of rations.

WHEN IT COMES TO MARCHING MANY DO NOT
KNOW
That their enemy is marching at their head.
The voice which gives them their orders
Is their enemy's voice and
The man who speaks of the enemy
Is the enemy himself.

(continued on Page 29...)

**TWO CHRISTMAS ANNIVERSARIES**

December 25, 2013

*The Virtues of Mutiny and Desertion*by **Clancy Sigal**

Yesterday was the date in 1945 General Eisenhower authorized the execution of Pvt. Eddie Slovik the only American GI ever shot for desertion in World War Two. Tonight's Christmas Eve also marks the famous 1914 "Christmas truce" when British and German soldiers crossed No Man's Land to shake hands, play soccer, exchange souvenirs and sing carols to each other. The High Commands and politicians on both sides swiftly put an end to that foolishness. Where would such handshakes end? Peace? Unthinkable. The war went on killing many millions.

Just before being strapped to the firing squad post at Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines an unrepentant Eddie Slovik told his killers, "They're not shooting me for deserting the United States Army, thousands of guys have done that. They just need to make an example out of somebody and I'm it because I'm an ex-con. I used to steal things when I was a kid, and that's what they are shooting me for. They're shooting me for the bread and chewing gum I stole when I was 12 years old."

Eddie had an acute sense of class justice. He was also scared of dying in the Hurtgen Forest battle which military historians call an "Allied defeat of the first magnitude" because the commanding generals, Eisenhower, Bradley and Courtney Hodges, foolishly insisted on the fatal World War One tactic of hurling American soldiers again and again into what became a butcher's shop of terrain held, and zeroed in by, the Germans. No general was ever court martialled let alone shot for his stupidity. Only poor Eddie had to pay the price.

His widow petitioned seven U.S. presidents to posthumously pardon Eddie; all refused.

Eddie was very clear that he refused to die in a battle that soon would produce, unnecessarily, 33,000 dead and wounded Americans. Call it a one man mutiny...or cowardice, depending on your bias.

Front line mutiny is the anti-Christ, a curse word, to rear echelon generals and politicians who send men and now women to their deaths. Half the French combat divisions mutinied in 1917 after the bloody

failure of the so-called Nivelles Offensive. Many of the mutineers were veterans of trench warfare who didn't see any more sense in "going over the top" into storms of deadly German machinegun fire. The mutinies were kept secret from the public although many mutineers were courtmartialled and shot. (See Kirk Douglas and Stanley Kubrick's amazing 'Paths of Glory'.)

In Staffordshire, England there's a WW1 'Shot At Dawn' monument honoring the 306 British and Commonwealth soldiers executed for desertion or "cowardice" under fire. The monument was funded by relatives of the dead soldiers seeking to remove the stigma of coward. Then-prime minister John Major refused by saying that pardoning the 'deserters' would be an insult to those who died honourably on the battlefield. Ernest Hemingway, in *A Farewell to Arms*, has a lot to say about this business of dying "honorably". His World War One hero, Lt Henry, deserts at the height of a fierce battle.

We know about Vietnam where army, navy and Marine Corps mutinies probably did more to end the war than our peace movement. Since then the Pentagon wised up and ended the draft in favor of an all-volunteer army which in Bush and Obama's war in Iraq and Afghanistan has seen nothing like Vietnam's impressive "GI resistance". (Back then, in one year alone, the equivalent of three full combat divisions went "over the hill".)

There won't be a Christmas Truce in Syria or Sudan or Central African Republic nor will the Taliban or Sunni-Shiites pause for Yuletide mercy. Still, I can't help fantasizing how fewer people would be killed if there were more desertions and more army mutinies whose basic aim always is to remind authorities of the reality of who dies for whom.

Clancy Sigal is a screenwriter and novelist. His latest book is *Hemingway Lives*. Sigal and Doris Lessing lived together in London for several years.

*(continued from Page 28...)***IT IS NIGHT**

The married couples
Lie in their beds. The young women
Will bear orphans.

GENERAL, YOUR TANK IS A POWERFUL VEHICLE

It smashes down forests and crushes a hundred men.
But it has one defect:
It needs a driver.

General, your bomber is powerful.
It flies faster than a storm and carries more than an elephant.
But it has one defect:
It needs a mechanic.

General, man is very useful.
He can fly and he can kill.
But he has one defect:
He can think.

Bertolt Brecht**GERMAN PEACE PRIZE****Yoko Ono Awarded German Peace Prize**

"Now is time for action and action is peace. Think peace, act peace, spread peace, and let's make it all together."

- **Andrea Germanos**, staff writer

Yoko Ono was awarded a distinguished German peace prize on Thursday.

The Theodor Wanner Award, given by the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations since 2009, was presented to Ono in Berlin "for her lasting artistic and peace promoting political work."

Receiving the award, the 80-year-old artist, peace activist and widow of John Lennon said, "This prize is a message to me from you that what I've been doing was understood by you."

"Now is time for action and action is peace. Think peace, act peace, spread peace, and let's make it all together," she said.

Ono gave her [10,000-euro prize money] to Boniface Mwangi, an award-winning Kenyan photographer, activist and founder of Pawa254, an organization that brings journalists, artists and activists together to foster social change.

October 18, 2013



(continued from Page 27...)

Marine who killed his wife but kept her body on the couch to watch TV with him for weeks. "I killed the only girl who ever loved me," he later lamented. Chances are good he had killed other people who were loved as well — he'd just done so in a context in which some people praised him for it.

One wounded warrior tells Jones he loves war and longs to get back into it. "Blowin' shit up. It's fucking fun. I fuckin' love it." She replies, "I believe you really mean that," and he says, "No shit. I'm trying to educate you." But an older Army officer has a different view: "I've been in the army 26 years," he says, "and I can tell you it's a con." War, he believes in rather Smedley Butlerish fashion, is a way to make a small number of people "monofuckinmentally rich." He says his two sons will not serve in the military. "Before that happens I'll shoot them myself." Why? "War is absurd," he says. "Boys don't know any better. But for a grown man to be trapped in stupid wars — it's embarrassing, it's humiliating, it's absurd."

"I heard you in the other room asking your mother, 'Mama, am I a Palestinian?' When she answered 'Yes' a heavy silence fell on the whole house. It was as if something hanging over our heads had fallen, its noise exploding, then - silence. Afterwards...I heard you crying. I could not move. There was something bigger than my awareness being born in the other room through your bewildered sobbing. It was as if a blessed scalpel was cutting up your chest and putting there the heart that belongs to you...I was unable to move to see what was happening in the other room. I knew, however, that a distant homeland was being born again: hills, olive groves, dead people, torn banners and folded ones, all cutting their way into a future of flesh and blood and being born in the heart of another child...Do you believe that man grows? No, he is born suddenly - a word, a moment, penetrates his heart to a new throb. One scene can hurl him down from the ceiling of childhood onto the ruggedness of the road." — Ghassan Kanafani

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Editorial Thank you. Thank you also to all those Just Peace members who sent in articles, and other contributions and suggestions. We try to use as much of this material as we can. But we reserve the right to edit articles where necessary to fit the layout of the newsletter. Such editing will be done in a way that, hopefully, doesn't change the essence of the articles. The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the individual members of Just Peace.

First they came for the Communists
but I was not a Communist -
so I said nothing.
Then they came for the Social Democrats
but I was not a Social Democrat -
so I did nothing.
Then they came for the trade unionists
but I was not a trade unionist.
And then they came for the Jews
but I was not a Jew -
so I did little.
Then when they came for me
there was no one left
who could speak out for me.

Pastor Martin Neimoller, 1937