

Bernie Sanders's Hopes and Regrets

Bernie Sanders hopes to hold a President Hillary Clinton to the Democratic platform's commitment to progressive policies, but the Vermont senator may be having doubts and possibly regrets, writes Joe Lauria.

By Joe Lauria

Leading protests and stirring up trouble in the Senate might be all that's left for Bernie Sanders to do in contesting Hillary Clinton's administration if, as many expect, it deviates from her public embrace of some Sanders positions if and when she becomes President.

"I won't stay silent if Clinton nominates the same old, same old Wall Street guys," Sanders said this week. "The leverage that I think I take into the Senate is taking on the entire Democratic Party establishment, and, you know, taking on a very powerful political organization with the Clinton people. We won 22 states and 46 percent of the pledged delegates, 13.4 million votes . . . and a majority of the younger people, the future of the country. . . . That gives me a lot of leverage, leverage that I intend to use."

Looking forward to Clinton's expected election on Nov. 8, the 75-year-old Vermont senator said he's begun to draft some of his planks that were accepted into the Democratic platform into legislation: on climate change, minimum wage and breaking up big banks. But given what we now know about what the Clinton machine thinks of him, it's debatable how much leverage he'll have.

It's not hard to imagine Sanders contemplating what could have been as he sees the two most unpopular candidates in modern history beset by ever deepening scandals: Clinton from Wikileaks revelations and Trump from exposure of alleged sexual misconduct.

Sanders now knows for certain how the Democratic National Committee undermined his candidacy when it was supposed to remain neutral. And he knows from Wikileaks' disclosure of Clinton's Wall Street speeches, which he repeatedly demanded that she make public, how cozy she is with plutocrats.

A Third-Party Run

In the context of these revelations, is it not reasonable to assume that if Sanders had taken Jill Stein's offer to head the Green Party ticket that such a team would have gotten 15 percent in the polls and a place at the debates? Wouldn't Sanders's presence at the debates have given an alternative to voters who detest both Trump and Clinton and at least a chance to build a viable third-

party movement?

Sanders said he supports Clinton because an independent or a third-party run could have handed the election to Trump. "I don't want to end up like Ralph Nader," Sanders told journalist Chris Hedges. Nader is blamed for handing the 2000 election to George W. Bush over Al Gore with his Green Party run, which kept the vote in Florida close enough for Bush, with the help of five Republicans on the U.S. Supreme Court, to claim its electoral votes and thus the presidency. [For how a full Florida recount would have given Gore the White House, see Consortiumnews.com's "Gore's Victory" and "So Bush Did Steal the White House."]

But it is questionable whether Sanders would have divided the Clinton vote to make Trump president. Millions of angry voters from an eroding middle class could have supported Sanders instead of Trump. In other words, Sanders could have taken away just as many and perhaps more votes from Trump, as both were insurgency candidates against the Establishment's choice.

Sanders who hasn't even a whiff of corruption about him might well be soaring above both of them in the polls by now.

It also appears that Sanders made his decision to support Clinton almost wholly based on domestic issues, which he focused nearly exclusively on during his primary campaign. On immigration, climate change, gun control and a number of other issues, Sanders aligns with Clinton rather than Trump.

And, Sanders rightly feared Trump's xenophobia, Islamophobia, misogyny, racism and demagoguery. But Sanders overlooked Trump's conciliatory approach toward Russia and Clinton's warmongering on Syria and her open hostility toward Russia. Given Sanders's accurate critique of Clinton's fondness for "regime change" wars, a Sanders's victory would have likely offered a greater hope for peace.

In other words, Sanders had an historic opportunity and, arguably, an obligation in the face of the ruin of the American middle class and the danger of looming global conflict, but he failed to seize it. He either did not take seriously or failed to understand the urgency of the situation. He talked about a "revolution" to upend the status quo but ended up supporting a status quo candidate for President.

Given his comments this week, he might well be regretting his decision.

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Women Call for Israel-Palestine Peace

Though the Israel-Palestine conflict has been mostly off the mainstream media's radar recently, this long-running crisis drew the attention this month of two women Nobel Peace Prize winners, reports Ann Wright.

By Ann Wright

On Oct. 5, two women Nobel Peace Laureates were at opposite ends of Israel, each working for peace in different ways. One was walking in Israel with Israeli and Palestinian women with hopes for peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the other sailed on the [Women's Boat to Gaza](#) to challenge the Israeli blockade of the 1.8 million Palestinians trapped in the crowded Gaza Strip.

Mairead Maguire, the 1977 Nobel Peace Laureate from Northern Ireland who had sailed 1,000 miles in nine days with 13 women from 13 countries, was stopped in international waters by the Israeli military, taken into custody and brought to the southern Israeli port of Ashdod.

On the same day, Leymah Gbowee, the 2011 Nobel Peace Laureate from Liberia, was to the north, on the Israeli border with Lebanon and spoke at the beginning of a two-week "Walk for Hope" through Israel with approximately 5,000 Israeli and Palestinian women.

Gbowee also spoke [at the closing ceremony](#) of the walk on Oct. 19 in Jerusalem at a rally in a square near Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's residence.

"If you cannot see hope, if you cannot see peace, then you are blind," Gbowee said. "You must reject the narrative that war is the destiny of our children. War is easy, making peace is hard. But sisters, today you've made history! No one will be able to ignore your call for peace any more."

In [an interview](#) with the Haaretz newspaper, Gbowee added: "Men try to demean women's activism as if it isn't important, as if it isn't 'the real stuff.' But guns and bombs are not aimed only at men. Women suffer real pain – and we have real things to say. And women have the ability to come together and bridge our divides – and that is very real, very political and very powerful."

Many other women's voices from Israel and Palestine were heard at the Oct. 19 rally.

Women's Power

Hind Khoury, an economist who was the Minister of Jerusalem Affairs in the Palestinian Authority and the delegate general of the Palestinian Liberation Organization to France from 2006 until 2010, said, "This is women's power at it's best. But will you last? Will you do the hard work? The hard part begins tomorrow – will you keep up the hope in our region that is plagued with violence and despair? The 50 years of rule over the Palestinian people, from cradle to grave, cannot go on. Our people are ready for peace. President Abbas is ready for peace. We women have come together to tell all our leaders to work towards a negotiated agreement."

Fadwa Shear from Ramallah said, "We cannot count on men to create peace. We will have to do it by ourselves. We are political women calling on our leaders to reach a political agreement. I am very proud to be here."

The voices of Israeli women were also heard. According to the Haaretz [article](#), "Hadassah Froman, widow of Rabbi Menachem Froman, and her daughter-in-law Michal, who was pregnant when she was wounded in a stabbing attack by a Palestinian in January, 2016, both spoke at the demonstration. The two women, who live in the West Bank settlement of Tekoa, were reportedly warmly welcomed by the crowd. 'There is great energy here, and it can bring us to a new way, to change,' said Hadassah Froman.

"As she held her infant daughter, Michal Froman added, 'I believe that peace, as we want it to be, will come from a place where we can see what is possible and what is impossible. The right can be part of peace, too. Life will be better here if we stop seeing ourselves as the victims of terror or the victims of the occupation. We all have to get over this and begin to work hard.'"

Peace Reciprocity

The goal of working across religious and ethnic lines was echoed by Palestinians as well. Huda Abuarqoub, regional director of the Alliance for Middle East Peace and a resident of Hebron, said, "I came as a Palestinian woman from the Occupied Territories to say, enough is enough! It's time for peace and security for both people. ... You saw this morning how many Palestinian women joined you. I am here

as Palestinian to say clear and loud – you have a partner



Hamutal Gouri, a women’s activist and a Women Wage Peace leader, ended the rally at Qasr al-Yahud, “Motherhood is not only the act of bearing and rearing our own children. Motherhood is a spiritual and ethical position of responsibility for the world and for future generations.”

Gouri told Haaretz, “The world does not need another peace plan. There are already many excellent plans. What we need is true intent to make peace. And that is what we women are demanding from our leaders: determination and courage to engage in peace negotiations.”

Women Wage Peace, the organizer and sponsor of the “Walk for Hope,” is a non-partisan women’s group founded in 2014 at the end of Operation Protective Edge, the 51-day Israeli attack on Gaza in which some 2,300 Palestinians and 72 Israelis (66 soldiers and six civilians) were killed.

Women Wage Peace calls for an agreement between Israel and Palestine that will be respectful, non-violent and accepted by both sides. Organizers say the group is funded mainly by small donations from Israel and abroad, as well as by the Women Donors Network in the United States.

The Palestinian Authority provided political and financial support to the walk including chartering buses, and purchasing water and hats with a dove logo that the women wore, many over their hijabs.

More than 2,500 Jewish and Arab Israeli women arrived on buses and were joined by more than 1,000 Palestinian women from the West Bank. Over the next week, Women Wage Peace will set up a “peace tent” at Qasr al-Yahud, the historic baptism site on the Jordan River.

Maguire's Account

Regarding the 1,000 mile voyage of the Women's Boat to Gaza, Mairead Maguire described what happened as the boat approached Gaza: "myself and all of the women who sailed on the Women's Boat to Gaza have been arrested and are in detention in Israel. We were arrested, kidnapped illegally in international waters, and taken against our wish into Israel.

"This has happened to me before. We will be deported and, tragically, not allowed back to see our friends in Palestine and in Israel. This is totally illegal. As men and – as women from many countries, we uphold our freedom of movement in any part of our world. So, ... work for the freedom and human rights, the lifting of the blockade against the people of Gaza and for the freedom for the Palestinian people and peace in the Middle East. We can all do this together. It is not a dream. And we are here in person because we care for human rights, for human dignity for the Palestinian people."

While on the high seas on the voyage to Gaza on the Women's Boat to Gaza, Maguire wrote: "As in Gaza, so too around our world, millions of children are suffering because of government policies of militarism and war and violence of armed struggles. This cycle of escalating violence must be broken, least it spin out of control. It is not too late, we can turn around from war to peace, from force to friendship, from hate to forgiveness and love, it is a choice. We are powerful each in our own way. We can, when we believe passionately in love, change to a non-killing nonviolent world."

As a participant with Mairead Maguire on the Women's Boat to Gaza, I wish the Israeli government would have allowed the 13 women from 13 countries on our boat to join the "Walk for Hope," but I guess that was too much to "hope" for!

Ann Wright served 29 years in the US Army/Army Reserves and retired as a Colonel. She also served in the US diplomatic corps for 16 years and resigned in 2003 in opposition to the war on Iraq. She was the boat leader of the Zaytouna-Olivia, her fourth mission with the Gaza Freedom Flotilla coalition to challenge the illegal Israeli blockade of Gaza.

US Impunity Erodes World Justice

The International Criminal Court charges only Africans with human rights crimes while granting impunity to U.S. officials and their allies, undermining what had been a noble idea of universal justice, writes Nicolas J S Davies.

By Nicolas J S Davies

In the past week, Burundi and South Africa have joined Namibia in declaring their intention to withdraw from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC). They are likely to be followed by a parade of other African countries, jeopardizing the future of an international court that has prosecuted 39 officials from eight African countries but has failed to indict a single person who is not African.

Ironically, African countries were among the first to embrace the ICC, so it is a striking turnaround that they are now the first to give up on it.

But it is the United States that has played the leading role in preventing the ICC from fulfilling the universal mandate for which it was formed, to hold officials of all countries accountable for the worst crimes in the world: genocide; crimes against humanity; and war crimes – not least the crime of international aggression, which the judges at Nuremberg defined as “the supreme international crime” from which all other war crimes follow.

As the ICC’s founding father, former Nuremberg prosecutor Benjamin Ferencz, lamented in 2011, “You don’t have to be a criminologist to realize that if you want to deter a crime, you must persuade potential criminals that, if they commit crimes, they will be hauled into court and be held accountable. It is the policy of the United States to do just the opposite as far as the crime of aggression is concerned. Our government has gone to great pains to be sure that no American will be tried by any international criminal court for the supreme crime of illegal war-making.”

The U.S. has not only refused to accept the jurisdiction of the ICC over its own citizens. It has gone further, pressuring other countries to sign Bilateral Immunity Agreements (BIA), in which they renounce the right to refer U.S. citizens to the ICC for war crimes committed on their territory.

The U.S. has also threatened to cut off U.S. aid to countries that refuse to sign them. The BIAs violate those countries’ own commitments under the ICC statute, and the U.S. pressure to sign them has been rightly condemned as an outrageous effort to ensure impunity for U.S. war crimes.

Resistance to U.S. Impunity

To the credit of our international neighbors, this U.S. strategy has met with substantial resistance. The European Parliament overwhelmingly passed a resolution stating that BIAs are incompatible with E.U. membership, and urged E.U.- member states and countries seeking E.U. membership not to sign them.

Fifty-four countries have publicly refused to sign BIAs, and 24 have accepted cut-offs of U.S. aid as a consequence of their refusal. Of 102 countries that have signed a BIA, only 48 are members of the ICC in any case, and only 15 of those countries are on record as having ratified the BIAs in their own parliaments.

Thirty-two other ICC members have apparently allowed BIAs to take effect without parliamentary ratification, but this has been challenged by their own country's legal experts in many cases.

The U.S. campaign to undermine the ICC is part of a much broader effort by the U.S. government to evade all forms of accountability under the laws that are supposed to govern international behavior in the modern world, even as it continues to masquerade as a global champion of the rule of law.

The treaties that U.S. policy systematically violates today were crafted by American statesmen and diplomats, working with their foreign colleagues, to build a world where all people would enjoy some basic protections from the worst atrocities, instead of being subject only to the law of the jungle or "might makes right."

So current U.S. policy is a cynical betrayal of the work and wisdom of past generations of Americans, as well as of countless victims all over the world to whom we are effectively denying the protections of the U.N. Charter, the Geneva Conventions, the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child and other multilateral treaties that our country ignores, violates or refuses to ratify.

Avoiding the jurisdiction of international courts is only one of the ways that the U.S. evades international accountability for its criminal behavior. Another involves an elaborate and well-disguised public relations campaign that exploits the powerful position of U.S. corporations in the world of commercial media.

Major Propaganda Funding

The U.S. government spends a billion dollars per year on public relations or, more bluntly, propaganda, including \$600 million from the Pentagon budget. The work of its P.R. teams and contractors is laundered by U.S. newspapers and repeated and analyzed ad nauseam by monolithic, flag-waving TV networks.

These profitable corporate operations monopolize the public airwaves in the U.S., and also use their financial clout, slick marketing and the support of the U.S. State Department to maintain a powerful presence in foreign and international media markets.

Foreign media in allied countries provide further legitimacy and credibility to

U.S. talking-points and narratives as they echo around the world. Meanwhile, Hollywood fills cinema and TV screens across the world with an idealized, glamorized, inspirational version of America that still mesmerizes many people.

This whole elaborate "information warfare" machine presents the United States as a global leader for democracy, human rights and the rule of law, even as it systematically and catastrophically undermines those same principles. It enables our leaders to loudly and persuasively demonize other countries and their leaders as dangerous violators of international law, even as the U.S. and its allies commit far worse crimes.

Double Standards in Syria/Iraq

Today, for instance, the U.S. and its allies are accusing Syria and Russia of war crimes in east Aleppo, even as America's own and allied forces launch a similar assault on Mosul. Both attacks are killing civilians and reducing much of a city to rubble; the rationale is the same, counterterrorism; and there are many more people in the line of fire in Mosul than in east Aleppo.

But the U.S. propaganda machine ensures that most Americans see one, in Mosul, as a legitimate counterterrorism operation (with Islamic State accused of using the civilians as "human shields") and the other, in east Aleppo, as a massacre (with the presence of Al Qaeda's Syrian affiliate, the former Nusra Front, virtually whited out of the West's coverage, which focuses almost entirely on the children and makes no mention of "human shields").

The phrase "aggressive war" is also a no-no in the Western media when the U.S. government launches attacks across international borders. In the past 20 years, the U.S. has violated the U.N. Charter to attack at least eight countries (Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Libya and Syria), and the resulting wars have killed about two million people.

A complex whirlwind of conflict and chaos rages on in all the countries where the U.S. and its allies have lit the flames of war since 2001, but U.S. leaders still debate new interventions and escalations as if we are the fire brigade not the arsonists. (By contrast, the U.S. government and the Western media are quick to accuse Russia or other countries of "aggression" even in legally murky situations, such as after the U.S.-backed coup in 2014 that ousted the elected president of Ukraine.)

Systematic violations of the Geneva Conventions are an integral part of U.S. war-making. Most are shrouded in secrecy, and the propaganda machine spins the atrocities that slip through into the public record as a disconnected series of aberrations, accidents and "bad apples," instead of as the result of illegal

rules of engagement and unlawful orders from higher-ups.

The senior officers and civilian officials who are criminally responsible for these crimes under U.S. and international law systematically abuse their powerful positions to subvert investigations, cover up their crimes and avoid any accountability whatsoever.

Pinter's Complaint

When British playwright Harold Pinter was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2005, he bravely and brilliantly used his Nobel lecture to speak about the real role that the U.S. plays in the world and how it whitewashes its crimes. Pinter recounted a meeting at the U.S. Embassy in London in the 1980s in which a senior embassy official, Raymond Seitz, flatly denied U.S. war crimes against Nicaragua for which the U.S. was in fact convicted of aggression by the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Seitz went on to serve as Assistant Secretary of State, U.S. Ambassador to the U.K., and then Vice-Chairman of Lehman Brothers.

As Pinter explained: "this 'policy' was by no means restricted to Central America. It was conducted throughout the world. It was never-ending. And it is as if it never happened.

"The United States supported and in many cases engendered every right wing military dictatorship in the world after the end of the Second World War. I refer to Indonesia, Greece, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, Haiti, Turkey, the Philippines, Guatemala, El Salvador, and, of course, Chile. The horror the United States inflicted upon Chile in 1973 can never be purged and can never be forgiven.

"Hundreds of thousands of deaths took place throughout these countries. Did they take place? And are they in all cases attributable to US foreign policy? The answer is yes they did take place and they are attributable to American foreign policy. But you wouldn't know it.

"It never happened. Nothing ever happened. Even while it was happening it wasn't happening. It didn't matter. It was of no interest. The crimes of the United States have been systematic, constant, vicious, remorseless, but very few people have actually talked about them. You have to hand it to America. It has exercised a quite clinical manipulation of power worldwide while masquerading as a force for universal good. It's a brilliant, even witty, highly successful act of hypnosis."

If in 2016 the world seems to be more violent and chaotic than ever, it is not because the United States lacks the will to use force or project power, as both

major party candidates for President and their military advisers appear to believe, but because our leaders have placed too much stock in the illegal threat and use of force and have lost faith in the rule of law, international cooperation and diplomacy.

After a century of commercial dominance, and 75 years of investing disproportionately in weapons, military forces and geopolitical schemes, perhaps it is understandable that U.S. leaders have forgotten how to deal fairly and respectfully with our international neighbors. But it is no longer an option to muddle along, leaving a trail of death, ruin and chaos in our wake, counting on an elaborate propaganda machine to minimize the blowback on our country and our lives.

Sooner rather than later, Americans and our leaders must knuckle down and master the very different attitudes and skills we will need to become law-abiding global citizens in a peaceful, sustainable, multipolar world.

Nicolas J S Davies is the author of *Blood On Our Hands: the American Invasion and Destruction of Iraq*. He also wrote the chapters on “Obama at War” in *Grading the 44th President: a Report Card on Barack Obama’s First Term as a Progressive Leader*.

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