

How Trump Fixes Facts Around Policy

President Trump's disdain for inconvenient truth has led to the deletion of climate science from the EPA's web site and other moves to fix the facts around his policies, notes ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

Many of us have had more than our fill of the 100-day assessments of Donald Trump's presidency. Besides the arbitrary nature of this point on the calendar, and besides the sheer overload of the number of attempts at such a first-quarter report card, most of what gets put on such cards does not get at what is most important in evaluating any presidency.

Heavy emphasis gets placed on legislative acts. Although an ability to work with Congress is one attribute we like to see in a president, it is only one and hardly the most important one. Besides, the reasons for lack of legislative accomplishment are apt to be found less in the White House than in obduracy and dysfunction in whoever has majority control at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

The artificial reporting period encourages not only silly claims about accomplishments but also an incentive to give the impression of motion and progress even when substance is lacking. The Trump White House certainly has been no exception to this pattern.

There has been, for example, the counting as an "accomplishment" the appointment and confirmation this early in the presidential term of a Supreme Court justice – without mentioning, of course, that this event was the direct result of the Republican majority in the Senate refusing for a year even to consider the previous president's nominee (and then expanding the "nuclear option" to shove through Trump's nominee). Also added to the count are executive orders that only undo something that President Obama did, or, in many cases, that order a cabinet secretary to study how something that Obama did could be undone.

Reading Trump

It's not just the White House and its supporters who have indulged in the 100-day excesses. There has been much over-analysis, sometimes tinged with either hope or worry, depending on the analyst's policy preferences, that attempts to discern larger substance and implications from individual actions or exclamations from Trump. Such attempts to extrapolate doctrine and direction from this inconsistent presidency are mostly a blood-from-a-turnip exercise.

Some lessons can indeed be drawn from the first 100 days, but with Trump the lessons are less a matter of either doctrine or accomplishment than of whether the habits, and the character and ability or lack thereof, that Trump exhibited during the campaign and in his earlier business career are continuing while he is office.

One of the best summary observations in this regard is from *Washington Post* columnist Steven Pearlstein, who writes on business and financial matters but whose conclusions could apply as well to Trump's handling of a wide range of foreign and domestic matters:

"What we know, first and foremost, is that it hardly matters what Trump says because what he says is as likely as not to have no relationship to the truth, no relationship to what he said last year during the campaign or even what he said last week. What he says bears no relationship to any consistent political or policy ideology or world-view. What he says is also likely to bear no relationship to what his top advisers or appointees have said or believe, making them unreliable interlocutors even if they agreed among themselves, which they don't.

"This lack of clear policy is compounded by the fact that the president, despite his boasts to the contrary, knows very little about the topics at hand and isn't particularly interested in learning. In other words, he's still making it up as he goes along."

Reasons to Worry

Many elements of dismay can follow from the fact of having this kind of president. We are apt to get a better idea of which specific things are most worthy of dismay as the rest of this presidency unfolds. I suggest, however, that a prime, overarching reason to worry is Trump's utter disregard for the truth. Not just a disregard, actually, but a determination to crush the truth and to instill falsehood in the minds of as many people as possible.

The *Post's* fact checker, Glenn Kessler, summarizes the situation by noting that "the pace and volume of the president's misstatements" are so great that he and other fact checkers "cannot possibly keep up." Kessler also observes how Trump's handling of falsehoods is qualitatively as well as quantitatively different from the garden variety of lying in which many politicians indulge: "Many will drop a false claim after it has been deemed false. But Trump just repeats the claim over and over."

It is a technique reminiscent of the Big Lie that totalitarian regimes have used, in which the repetition and brazenness of a lie help lead to its

acceptance. The problem is fundamental, and relates to a broad spectrum of policy issues both foreign and domestic, because truth – factual reality – is a necessary foundation to consider and evaluate and debate policy on any subject.

Crushing the truth means not just our having to endure any one misdirected policy; it means losing the ability even to address policy intelligently. To the extent that falsehood is successfully instilled in the minds of enough people, the political system loses what would otherwise be its ability to provide a check on policy that is bad policy because it is inconsistent with factual reality.

Ignoring Climate Science

One hundred days is enough time for the Trumpian assault on truth to start to become institutionalized. The process has become plain at the website of the Environmental Protection Agency. Changes at the website since Trump's inauguration include not only what would be expected after a change of administrations in keeping any policy statements consistent with the new regime's preferences; it also has involved expunging the truth.

Specifically, a section of the site that had existed for 20 years and provided detailed data and scientific information on climate change has been removed. The deleted site, according to climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe of Texas Tech University, included "important summaries of climate science and indicators that clearly and unmistakably explain and document the impacts we are having on our planet."

The site was a go-to place for authoritative information about climate change. This is the sort of service one should expect to get from a government agency such as EPA (just like, before I took some recent foreign travel, the website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention served as a go-to site for authoritative information about what inoculations I would need). Now that part of the EPA site is gone.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt approved the deletion because, according to an anonymous staffer under Pruitt, "we can't have information which contradicts the actions we have taken in the last two months."

So instead of defending those actions in a well-informed policy debate based on truth, the administration's approach was to delete the truth. If the policy doesn't conform with reality, then deny the reality and make it as hard as possible for citizens to be informed of the reality.

Orwell's Ministry of Truth may be closer than we thought.

Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency's top analysts. He is author most recently of *Why America Misunderstands the World*. (This article first appeared as a blog post at The National Interest's Web site. Reprinted with author's permission.)

Trump's Next Most Dangerous Possibility

Assuming President Trump doesn't blunder into World War III, the next greatest harm he may do is reverse the modest U.S. steps toward fighting global warming, as ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar explains.

By Paul R. Pillar

With the wide path of destruction that Donald Trump has been cutting – in which the damage is affecting matters ranging from principles of nondiscrimination to ethical integrity of government officials to reliable health care for Americans – it is easy to lose sight of what ultimately would be the most consequential destruction of all: the damage to a habitable planet.

The consequences may not be as immediately apparent, during the first 100 days or even during four years, as some of the other carnage, but the importance to humanity is even greater. As with many other Trump policies, it is not yet clear exactly what the administration will do regarding a specific initiative such as the Paris accord on climate change, but the overall thrust of opposing any serious effort to retard global warming is all too obvious.

The recent demonstrations known as the march for science, although ostensibly not aimed at any one leader, were a salutary expression of concern, given that denial of climate change and the associated opposition against efforts to slow global warming represent one of the most glaring rejections of science, right along with the Seventeenth Century inquisition of Galileo. The rejection is of a piece with Trump's contempt for truth on most any topic.

It is hard to know what goes through the minds of the climate change deniers and skeptics that Trump has installed in his administration. Most likely they are smart enough to know better but are playing out an appallingly selfish, politically narrow-minded, and short-sighted approach toward what sort of world will be left to their children and grandchildren. This is suggested by some of their contrived verbal formulations.

For example, Scott Pruitt, to whom Trump has given the job of presiding over the

evisceration of the Environmental Protection Agency, says, "I think that measuring with precision human activity on the climate is something very challenging to do..." Who's talking about "precision"? That's a false standard.

The overwhelming scientific consensus is that human activity is a major, and probably the major, contributor to what is highly consequential global warming, even if the exact effects cannot be measured or predicted with "precision."

The posture assumed on this issue by the likes of Trump and Pruitt is highly irresponsible. The *Washington Post* editorial page puts it aptly: "Children studying [Trump's] presidency will ask, 'How could anyone have done this?' "

The Why of Climate Denial

Contempt and disdain are proper attitudes to adopt toward the climate change deniers, including the ones in the current administration. They should be shamed either for displaying such inexcusable ignorance or, what is even worse, for displaying selfishness and short-sightedness despite knowing better.

But that is not enough. And the problem goes far beyond Donald Trump. It extends to much of the Republican Party. As the *Post* editorialists observe, the GOP is "a once-great American political party embracing rank reality-denial." James Inhofe was throwing snowballs in the Senate well before Trump was elected.

A savvy response to the deniers is to point out some of the more immediately visible economic and political consequences of the destructive approach toward climate change that the current administration has embraced. One should point out how not being in the forefront of developing renewable energy sources represents regression, not progress, for the U.S. economy, no matter how much false hope is given to Appalachian coal miners about getting jobs back. Former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg is a prominent political leader who commendably is adding his influential voice to this subject.

One also should point out how the Trump administration's degenerate posture on energy and climate change isolates the United States internationally. The posture makes the United States an object of disdain for taking a Dark Ages approach toward an issue in which, more than any other, everyone in the world has a stake. Anyone in the United States who professes to care about U.S. leadership in the world ought to be concerned about this, regardless of attitudes about atmospheric science.

The loss of U.S. leadership is especially evident in comparison with the other of the two biggest emitters of greenhouse gases: China. Although several years ago China had a backward view of the issue of climate change, seeing it as a Western excuse for trying to retard China's economy – a notion that Donald Trump

would later adopt in the reverse direction by describing climate change as a Chinese “hoax” – Beijing is now making a concerted effort to do something about the problem.

China may have already passed, as of four years ago, its peak use of coal. There are no signs that the Trump administration’s back-sliding on the issue has lessened China’s commitment to take a progressive and responsible path on the matter.

Besides revamping its own energy structure, China has become a global leader on the issue. And besides being persuaded by the scientific research that describes how vulnerable China is to damage from climate change, Beijing also sees its progressive posture on the subject as a further way to exercise soft power in the sense of international influence.

Trump’s retrograde attitude toward many aspects of the international order that have served the United States well has already meant surrendering much global leadership to China. His backward attitude on climate change means surrendering still more.

Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency’s top analysts. He is author most recently of Why America Misunderstands the World. (This article first appeared as a blog post at The National Interest’s Web site. Reprinted with author’s permission.)

Coal Miners’ Futures in Renewable Energy

Exclusive: President Trump has scored political points by touting coal-mining jobs, but he could create more real jobs in coal country by recognizing the potential for renewable-energy jobs, says Jonathan Marshall.

By Jonathan Marshall

If President Trump wants to earn a rare legislative victory and take political credit for reviving hard-hit regions of rural America, he should take a close look at how one Kentucky coal company is creating jobs.

Berkeley Energy Group this month announced plans to put coal miners back to work by building the largest solar project in Appalachia on top of a closed mountaintop strip mine near the town of Pikeville. The Eastern Kentucky coal company is partnering with the Environmental Defense Fund, which has helped

develop 9,000 megawatts of renewable energy, to bring jobs and clean energy to the region.

Mining employment in the area has plummeted from more than 14,000 jobs in 2008 to fewer than 4,000 today, owing to mine automation, competition from natural gas, and environmental controls on dirty coal emissions.

Even if Trump's administration and Congress roll back clean air and water rules, most experts agree that coal-mining jobs are not coming back, particularly in Appalachia where production costs are relatively high.

But there is vast potential for the region to reclaim its ravaged landscapes for use in generating solar energy, if federal policy continues to offer incentives. Solar resources in Kentucky, for instance, are favorable enough to power nearly 1,000 homes for every two acres of solar panels.

Reimagining Coal Country

Writing last year in the *Charleston Gazette-Mail*, West Virginia solar entrepreneur Dan Conant wrote, "Our people have given sweat, blood, tears and lives to help build and power America. Reimagining ourselves not as a coal state, but as an energy state – including solar and wind – is critical if we are going to continue powering America. All we need is imagination (and a little encouragement and support) as millennial West Virginians lead the way into the future."

Such visions are still a tough sell in many conservative communities, but many "red" states, whose politicians disdain environmental protection and deny the threat of global climate disruption, are learning to appreciate solar energy. North Carolina, Arizona, Utah, Georgia and Texas rank among the top 10 states for solar electric capacity. Together, their photovoltaic cells power more than a million homes.

In Florida, the state's largest utility just announced plans to add nearly 2,100 megawatts of new solar capacity over the next seven years while shutting down dirty and expensive coal plants. By 2023, it expects to generate four times more energy from solar than from coal and oil combined.

At the same time, the solar industry is sending out more and more paychecks across rural America. Texas alone supports about 9,400 jobs from its solar industry. Nationally, the solar industry added 51,000 jobs last year and now employs over a quarter million people, more than three times as many as the coal industry. Solar jobs are attractive, paying a median wage of \$26 an hour for installers.

Wind Sweeping Down the Plains

Wind energy is another big job engine that appeals to pragmatic conservatives who care more about the economy than the environment. More than three-quarters of Republican congressional districts have operational wind energy projects or active wind-related manufacturing facilities.

Texas, Iowa, and Oklahoma are the three top states for installed wind generation capacity, beating out former industry leader California. Many other red states, like Montana, Nebraska, and Wyoming, have immense untapped potential for low-cost wind generation.

Power Company of Wyoming is building the largest wind project in the country, with a capacity of up to 3,000 megawatts. Montana is also receiving hundreds of millions of dollars in new wind investments. No wonder: a typical wind project in that state supplies electricity at 4.7 cents per kilowatt-hour, compared to 6.8 cents from coal-fired generation.

Rock-ribbed Republican ranchers and farmers enjoy the income they earn from leasing space to turbines while continuing to use their land. In Texas, the wind industry employs more than 22,000 people and pays more than \$60 million a year to lease holders. Those facts can be appreciated even by politicians who don't care that Texas wind energy avoids carbon dioxide emissions equal to 8.3 million cars on the road.

Nationwide, employment in the wind industry topped 100,000 for the first time last year. The industry added jobs at nine times the rate of the overall economy. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the fastest growing occupation in the country is wind turbine technician, with a median wage of \$51,000 a year.

Wind now supplies 5.5 percent of all electricity in the United States, contrary to President Trump's ill-informed claim that "for the most part they (wind turbines) don't work." Wind is now one of the lowest cost sources of electricity, even without federal subsidies, according to newly released estimates by the Department of Energy.

And contrary to Trump's complaint that solar is "so expensive," energy from the sun is now cheaper than new coal or nuclear power. As a result, nearly two-thirds of new U.S. generation capacity in each of the last two years used renewable technologies.

Clean Jobs for Trump

Even if President Trump doesn't yet get it, his Energy Secretary, former Texas

Governor Rick Perry, and his Interior Secretary, former Montana Congressman Ryan Zinke, both seem to quietly appreciate the growing potential of renewable energy. Perhaps they can educate the President, and persuade him to reap big political gains by promoting clean jobs along with clean energy in rural and rust-belt America.

Rather than eliminating funding for the Appalachian Regional Commission, for example, Trump could steer more of its resources into clean energy training and investment programs. A study published last year by scholars at Michigan Technological University and Oregon State University showed that “a relatively minor investment (\$180 million to \$1.8 billion, based on best and worst case scenarios) in retraining would allow the vast majority of U.S. coal workers to switch to solar-related positions.”

Trump could also ramp up funding for the Solar Training Network, established last year by The Solar Foundation with White House support to “improve access to solar training, resources, and careers” and “increase the quality and diversity of the solar workforce and establish nationally consistent training standards.”

In line with Trump’s commitment to rebuilding U.S. manufacturing and competing with China, he could also redouble successful Energy Department programs to support research and development on cutting-edge technologies for solar and wind generation, energy storage, and power grid management.

Such proposals, coming from President Obama, earned widespread Republican scorn. Coming from Trump, they could create a major realignment in Congress by forging an alliance of Democrats with pragmatic Red State legislators who see where the new jobs are.

It can be done; in conservative Wyoming, a leading coal state, legislators recently crushed proposals to impose higher taxes on wind energy. President Trump just needs to follow through for once on his grand promises to blue-collar voters, rather than continuing to act like just another traditional Republican pawn of the fossil fuel industry.

Jonathan Marshall is author of “Dangerous Denial of Global Warming,” “Team Trump Ponders Climate ‘Engineering’,” and “U.S. Media’s Global Warming Denialism.”

Dropping the (Non-Nuclear) Big One

After pounding “war on terror” targets for 15-plus years, the U.S. military dropped its “mother of all bombs” on some caves in Afghanistan, a show-off of

its terrifying weapon, peace activist Kathy Kelly told Dennis J Bernstein.

By Dennis J Bernstein

Just back from Afghanistan, Kathy Kelly, co-founder of Voices for Creative Nonviolence, says the consequences of U.S. military interventions across the Middle East and into Africa now include the spreading of starvation to some 16 million people.

But the U.S. government's reaction has been to drop even more tonnage of bombs on some of these countries, including the deployment of the "mother of all bombs," the world's most devastating non-nuclear explosive dropped on Afghanistan on April 13, the day I interviewed Kelly.

Dennis Bernstein: This is a very troubling day, in U.S. history, and for the people of Afghanistan. The U.S. military has dropped a 21,600 pound bomb on a tunnel complex it says was "used by Islamic State militants in Afghanistan" – that's coming out of the government. The GBU-43B Massive Ordnance Air Blast bomb, or MOAB, known as the mother of all bombs – the largest non-nuclear bomb ever used by the U.S. in a conflict. The massive ordnance was dropped from a U.S. aircraft in Nangarhar Province. The "bunker buster" bomb is so huge it can't be delivered by a normal bomber aircraft, but instead needs to be put in a cargo plane. Its blast radius is up to a mile.

Joining us to talk about this, and a lot that is surrounding it, is Kathy Kelly. You know a lot about what's going on in Afghanistan. You returned from there about a week ago, and you have spent a lot of time there in the past few years. Your response?

Kathy Kelly: I came back from Afghanistan on April 6th. And I think about all the military people who have itchy fingers. They have a huge bomb and they want to experiment with it in some place other than a remote desert. It seems incredibly obscene to imagine that they would pick Afghanistan. Supposedly they have to pick a place where there's a war going on already. And it seems like maybe the President has said I'm really not all that interested in your decisions, or the briefings in the mornings. And so, this was their chance, and they took it. The excuse given is that there are tunnels there.

But you know, many of us can remember when we were told that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and this justified the Shock and Awe bombings. And there weren't any weapons of mass destruction to be found. And, I wonder, maybe those tunnels would never be found because they've all been blasted away. But that kind of rationale, it seems to me is so cruel.

I mean, suppose the United States were to transport its fighters and its weapons

through tunnels, weapons like the one you just described, or weapons like the AC-130 Transport planes, weapons like the Apache helicopters that fire Hellfire missiles, I mean all this weaponry has gone into Afghanistan now since 2001. Suppose it had come in through tunnels, those tunnels would have to be the size of the Grand Canyon. And I'm not saying that we should ever legitimize armed struggle on the part of fighters who might be coming across from Pakistan, or might be coming from other countries, into Afghanistan.

But I think we have to recognize that the warlord that has spent billions of dollars, massive amounts of TNT, displaced millions of people—that's the United States. And now we've hit people during a time when they're already burdened down, on their knees, flattened almost, by environmental problems, by poisoned water, by air that nearly can't be breathed, by 1.5 million refugees inside the country, 1.8 million that might be shoved back in, collapsing health care, collapsing education. And when I was there most recently, and inside refugee camps, it could break your heart to see how wretched the conditions are. And I was with beautiful, bright-eyed little girls. And I thought – what kind of future do they have?

DB: Just to say a little bit more about this bomb because this is fantastic, in the worst sense of it. Reading a little bit more, its principle effect is a massive blast wave said to stretch for a mile in every direction, created by an 18,000lb, I guess explosion, equal to 18,000lb of TNT. And they call it the bunker busting bomb. It's designed to damage underground facilities. The weapon costs \$16 million a shot. What could you do with \$16 million and that camp you were in recently, Kathy?

KK: Well, of course, the expenditure on weaponry at a time when there's so much massive need – I'm in New York because of a fast to call attention to Yemen, which is in a conflict where [there are] near-starvation conditions. And the same is true for three countries near the Horn of Africa: Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria. And for the United States to be spending money on these kinds of bombs...

You know, I think the "mother of all bombs" is greed. Greed is the mother of all bombs...I think the very notion that they would drop this bomb after one of the U.S. soldiers was killed in a special operations raid is also very frightening, this disproportionate response. And when do U.S. people ever get a chance to think about what the night raids are like for the people whose homes are broken into, whose futures might be shattered by just one night raid?

DB: This notion of disproportionate response, I mean, it really does feel like a bit of Israeli influence. You know, the Palestinians shoot a rocket across the border, it misses everything, and then there's 2,000 Palestinians dead. And it's the lesson, it's sort of, I guess, this is the new world order. Trump wants

people to know he's tough and at the same time they can test a lot of their new weapons. Is that too cynical? First I'm crying, you know Kathy, first I'm crying and then the fury sets in, and it's incomprehensible. But, you've been there and you've seen who the people are that we are destroying. And, I don't know. I'm sorry, go on, I interrupted.

KK: Well, you can certainly bet that people are very, very frightened of what's going to be rained down on them from the skies above. As I mentioned, their areas are already terrible. Just on my second to last day there, little Chin, she was so excited, [... she] half pulled me up a hill, the highest hill I've ever climbed in my life. And they wanted me on top of that hill so that I could be with them as they flew kites. And each one of their kites had pictures of drones on the kite. It was Xs over it, or the consequences of drone warfare. They were so excited as those kites became little dots up in the sky. And even the youngest of the girls could tell me what a drone was. Very seriously, shaking their heads, saying "These drones can kill people."

And can you imagine the innocence of these children, and U.S. people have no exposure whatsoever to the communities of families who just want to live and raise their children. And then we pour our resources into bombs like the ones that you've described. Well, if we earn ourselves a reputation as a menacing, fearful country of warlords, we've certainly gotten what we've asked for.

So does this build security? I mean imagine how many rage-filled, angry, traumatized young people might say "Sign me up"...in the next Jihadist group that comes into town.

DB: Yeah. And this...

KK: And, Dennis, can I ask...?

DB: Yes, please.

KK: So, blowing up all the tunnels with this massive penetration bombing, does this mean, then, that they might want to drive the ISIS fighters into the cities? Because they're going to go somewhere. So then you've got...I mean Nangarhar is a very resort area near the border. But Jalalabad is not so far away. What kind of a strategy, in terms of the future, is the military thinking about?

And it's very frightening to see who's in charge of the military now. And to know that the president seems to have just kind of walked away from being informed, or aware of, these different strategies. And I think past presidents have also done plenty of damage in Afghanistan, and in Iraq and in Syria. We should all at least acknowledge that. And they were able to maybe put a better

mask on it. I think President Trump doesn't have much of a mask. But it's certainly going to arouse fury all around the world.

DB: And, just for a moment, to come back to the kids who were flying kites with pictures or paintings of drones on them, I assume that's obviously out of their own experience. I imagine some of those folks actually lost relatives and friends to drone operations...

KK: Well, the young man who organized the day, he got the bus and he helped to make the kites, and invited the children, and the older kids to come on the hilltop, Maldives has a nephew who, every time he hears a drone fly overhead, goes into something like a panic attack, and runs and hides. And so, Maldives said "I had to do something, to try to protect my nephew."

And another thing that I want to point out is that all of this aerial surveillance, it's not just drones, the United States has been experimenting with huge systems for surveillance over Afghanistan, but those systems will never, ever disclose the kinds of questions my young friends ask when they go out to the villages to try to find out who needs the heavy blankets, to try to find out who's most in need of getting a child laborer into school. And they ask "When was the last time your family had enough food" and "What's your source for water?"

And, in the refugee camp, a woman came up to me, she just sobbed on my shoulder, and she said "I have nothing to feed my children for lunch. Nothing to give them for dinner." People run from these wars, they've got nowhere to turn, nowhere to hide. They come to overcrowded cities, like Kabul, where the infrastructure is already crumbling. You begin to wonder, "Is there no mercy? Are there no ethical constraints on the United States, which allies Saudi Arabia, and these other warlords?"

DB: The kinds of comments I've been hearing since the first bombing...but now after this bombing is that—and these are from, I don't know what you'd call them, some people call them liberals—"He's [Trump] getting his act together. This is a positive reversal." I guess, "Getting to the job. Really seeing what it looks like from the inside, really does have the power to transform."

KK: Well, it certainly is the case that he was being labelled as a kind of bumptious fool, as a president, before he took the act of hitting Syria, and now this action, and if that's how you earn your way into the elite salon as a club member, I guess we shouldn't be terribly surprised because at the top of that group are the Directors of Boeing, Lockheed, Martin Marietta, British Aerospace, Raytheon.

The stocks for Raytheon went up after. Raytheon-manufactured Tomahawk cruise missiles hit Syria. This was certainly a sad, sad statement on, I suppose, the way to corral these kinds of dangerous actions becomes more and more confusing. Because we're not really sure who is in charge of governance under the Trump administration.

DB: Kathy, you're in New York, you've said having to do with a fast. Are you fasting now?

KK: Yeah, I'm on day five of a week-long fast. It's been a real gift to be with the community across from the United Nations, at the Isaiah Wall where there's a saying "When shall come a day when they shall beat their swords into plowshares. And their spears into pruning hooks." But we feel so conscious of the alarm that U.N. workers have sounded, have been predicting that these conflict driven, near famine conditions could cost the lives, collectively, if you factor in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria, upwards of 16 million people. And what a terrible, horrible way to die, stranded in the desert with no water and no food.

And, meanwhile, the United States has supported the Saudis in blocking the Port of Hodeidah, in Saudi air strikes. The United States has made air strikes. Very, very expensive weaponry being used, while people are starving.

DB: I believe the Pentagon announced today [4/13/17] actually another air strike in Syria killed 18 of so-called rebels that they're supporting.

KK: The chaos and the upheaval that all of these strikes cause will not be over after the announcements. It will go on and on, imagine people that are maimed and wounded, and in need of health care. Imagine the families that don't have a bread winner. Imagine the desires for revenge that come. The idea that military solutions, so-called solutions, could make a difference in that part of the world is, it seems to me, insane. It seems like the military has been doing [this] decade after decade.

DB: Kathy, we just have a minute or two left, but just for a broader picture, and I always come to you with a question like this. Forgive me, but what does this say about who we are? What we've become? What our government has become? Your thoughts on that?

KK: Well, we're a nation of people who join grassroots groups to non-cooperate with murdering and killing all of the time. And these grassroots groups exist, they're sturdy, they're beckoning for more people to join, in fact they've been more evident since President Trump was inaugurated, and the lead up to that time. And so, I think we are a group of people who can say "No, we don't want to be identified as warlords, as menacing, fearsome people." But, we're going to

have to do everything we can to make that very, very clear.

I think people who will be going to churches, and to synagogues, over this weekend coming up, have a responsibility to say to their communities, and their faith based leaders, "We must speak out in this time, here and now." And not focus on the past or some kind of apocalyptic future. I think that people in universities, there's a big responsibility right now. Educate our young people to understand the consequences of war, otherwise they're completely being robbed of their finances, as they go to the universities.

And I think people are right to think about strikes. Strikes all over the place, working with the BDS campaigns, with Black Lives Matter, with students. I think it's an important time to say "We don't want to cooperate." I haven't paid a dime of federal income tax since 1980, and that's one thing I can say with relief. So, as tax day approaches, what people think, what do you want to pay for? And do you get what you pay for in the USA? And sadly, you do, you get days like today, when we learn about this massive bomb dropped on some of the poorest people in the world.

DB: Kathy Kelly, Voices for Creative Non-Violence, if people want to learn more about that organization, or what you're up to, best way?

KK: Oh, yes please, go to vcnv.org. Also, for the Afghan peace volunteers, seeing video of those kids up on the hillside with their kites at ourjourneytosmile.com. Speaking of Yemen, we're speaking of a fast for Yemen because Yemen is starving. So, Yemen and fast and you'll get to us.

Dennis J Bernstein is a host of "Flashpoints" on the Pacifica radio network and the author of [Special Ed: Voices from a Hidden Classroom](#). You can access the audio archives at www.flashpoints.net.

Team Trump Ponders Climate 'Engineering'

Exclusive: Rather than take prudent steps to reduce the release of global-warming gases, some Trump advisers are pondering risky gambles to re-engineer the Earth's climate, as Jonathan Marshall explains.

By Jonathan Marshall

While President Trump [floors the accelerator](#) to speed up global warming through executive orders and appointments of notorious climate deniers to his

administration, more and more scientists are pinning their hopes on “Plan B”: planetary-wide interventions to engineer ways to avoid global climate disruption. But critics warn that such a prescription, however alluring, may be as bad as the disease.

Now, to compound the irony, members of Trump’s inner circle are touting climate engineering as a cheap way to insure the planet against harm without any need to change lifestyles or curb the oil and coal industries. They resemble compulsive eaters who count on frequent liposuction rather than maintaining strict diets to keep their body fat in check and stay healthy.

Evidence of climate disruption is all around us, including record-high temperatures, record-low sea ice, the die-off of major coral reefs, acidification of the oceans, drought-induced famines, and more extreme storm damage.

At the same time, climate scientists warn that barring breakthroughs in energy technology and adoption of cleaner transportation, industrial and agricultural processes, the world faces severe risks of economic and social disruption over the next half century from potentially irreversible warming.

Such considerations helped motivate more than 100 scientists and policy makers to meet in Washington, D.C., late last month to discuss some largely untested ways to prevent runaway warming by limiting the Earth’s absorption of solar radiation. These measures could include using aircraft to release tiny particles into the upper atmosphere to reflect sunlight, or using fleets of boats to spray the air with saline mist to promote the formation of reflective clouds.

Several prominent Trump supporters are big boosters of such climate engineering. For example, Newt Gingrich, the President’s close adviser and former House Speaker, gushed that it “holds forth the promise of addressing global warming concerns for just a few billion dollars a year. Instead of penalizing ordinary Americans, we would have an option to address global warming by rewarding scientific innovation.”

And Secretary of State Rex Tillerson told investors in 2015, when he was still CEO of Exxon Mobil, “Our plan B has always been grounded in our beliefs around the continued evolution of technology and engineered solutions to address and react to whatever the climate system and its outcomes present to us.”

Dangerous Gamble

Responsible scientists, on the other hand, have little faith in untested proposals to re-engineer the earth’s climate system, even if they back further research into such stop-gap measures.

“Climate intervention is no substitute for reductions in carbon dioxide emissions and adaptation efforts aimed at reducing the negative consequences of climate change,” concluded a two-volume study released by the National Academy of Sciences in 2015. “However, as our planet enters a period of changing climate never before experienced in recorded human history, interest is growing in the potential for deliberate intervention in the climate system to counter climate change.”

Strategies to reflect more solar radiation, it added, “could rapidly cool the planet’s surface but pose environmental and other risks that are not well understood and therefore should not be deployed at climate-altering scales; more research is needed to determine if [such] approaches could be viable in the future.”

In 2013, the American Meteorological Society adopted a policy statement, which declared that climate engineering “must be viewed with caution because manipulating the Earth system has considerable potential to trigger adverse and unpredictable consequences.”

Among those consequences could be severe weather changes for different nations and peoples, “thus raising legal, ethical, diplomatic, and national security concerns.” For example, shifting storm and precipitation patterns could dry out some regions and promote famines while subjecting others to devastating floods. The end result might not seem so promising to Gingrich if the Midwest turned into a dust bowl.

Researchers have also warned that one popular proposal – lacing the upper atmosphere with reflective sulfur dioxide particles – could deplete the Earth’s ozone layer, increasing the penetration of destructive ultraviolet radiation.

Tinkering with the atmosphere to reflect solar radiation could also “distract the public and policy makers from critically needed efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build society’s capacity to deal with unavoidable climate impacts,” the AMS statement continued.

If CO₂ concentrations in the atmosphere were allowed to grow, continued ocean acidification would have a devastating effect on biological systems. And if the world ever let up on its solar radiation management, for whatever reason, global warming would rapidly accelerate in the carbon-rich atmosphere.

Who Would Decide?

Perhaps the single biggest obstacle to climate engineering is not technical but political: who would govern its deployment? Could a mad billionaire take matters into his own hands? Could rogue nations weaponize the technology, trying to fine

tune solar radiation to disrupt the climate of their enemies?

Rutgers University climatologist Alan Robock has even warned about the increased risk of nuclear war: “Because if countries can’t agree on what the temperature should be, and somebody is mad at somebody else for controlling their climate, the situation could escalate into hostilities.”

Harvard physicist David Keith, one of the scientific community’s leading proponents of further climate engineering research, insists that the rapid pace of climate change – and the failure of governments to address it in time – make it imperative to look seriously at every option for preventing runaway global warming.

But he and his colleagues are quick to agree with critics that “fear of solar geoengineering is justified” and that “it would be reckless to deploy solar geoengineering based on today’s limited research.” While stoutly defending the need for more research, they add, “if Trump were to push solar geoengineering while gutting climate science, we believe the only appropriate response is active resistance.”

Jonathan Marshall is author of “Global Warming’s Threat to Trump’s Mar-a-Lago,” “Dangerous Denial of Global Warming,” “To Fight Global Warming, Canada Ponders a Carbon Tax,” and “Global Warming Adds to Mideast Hot Zone.”

US Media’s Global Warming Denialism

Exclusive: Besides nuclear war, arguably the greatest threat to human civilization is global warming, but the U.S. news media virtually ignored the issue in 2016, bowing to economic and political pressures, writes Jonathan Marshall.

By Jonathan Marshall

Emperor Nero may (or may not) have fiddled while Rome burned, but commercial U.S. TV networks definitely fiddled last year on climate coverage while the Earth grew dangerously hot.

An annual climate report issued this month by the World Meteorological Organization confirms that average global temperatures and global sea levels continued their inexorable rise in 2016, setting new records. Global sea ice

dropped to an “unprecedented” extent. Extreme weather conditions, probably aggravated by climate disruption, displaced hundreds of thousands of people, left millions hungry, and caused “severe economic damage.”

Yet in the midst of such frightening changes, and a national presidential campaign with enormous consequences for U.S. climate policy, the four major broadcast networks – ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox News Sunday – significantly *decreased* their coverage of climate issues on evening and Sunday news programs, according to a new analysis by Media Matters. Television programs like these are the major source of news for 57 percent of adult Americans.

The four networks devoted a mere 50 minutes on their evening and Sunday news programs to climate change in all of 2016. That was a two-thirds *drop* from the meager time they gave to perhaps the most important issue of our time in 2015. (These figures reflect deliberate coverage by the networks, not incidental mentions of climate by talk show guests.)

Remarkably, ABC managed to beat even Fox for the least climate coverage last year – only six minutes (down from 13 in 2015). Fox provided a grand seven minutes of coverage. CBS topped the group with 27 minutes, but that was still a sharp drop from the 45 minutes it devoted in 2015.

The networks can hardly claim there was nothing of substance to cover. Audiences love news about political controversy, weather, and disasters – and the issue of climate disruption provided all three. The 2016 election, for example, offered a stark and highly controversial choice between Donald Trump, who dismissed global warming as a “hoax” and promised to revive dirty coal as a fuel of choice in the United States, and Hillary Clinton, who supported major new investments in clean energy.

Yet the major TV network news programs “did not air a single segment informing viewers of what to expect on climate change and climate-related policies or issues under a Trump or Clinton administration,” according to Media Matters.

Similarly, their reporters did not ask even one question about climate change during all of last year’s presidential and vice presidential debates. Instead, they waited until *after* the election to inform viewers about how the country’s vote for Trump would affect the future of climate policy.

Media Matters notes that plenty of other climate-related stories also cried out for attention last year, including, “extreme weather events tied to climate change, like Hurricane Matthew and the record-breaking rainfall and flooding in Louisiana (which the American Red Cross described as ‘the worst natural disaster to strike the United States since Superstorm Sandy’); the signing of the Paris

climate agreement and the U.N. climate summit in Morocco; the official announcement from NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that 2015 was the hottest year on record by far; and investigations by state attorneys general into whether ExxonMobil committed fraud by misleading the public on climate change.”

Ignoring Links

Yet not once last year did NBC or Fox report on the link between climate disruption and extreme weather, such as the record rainfall in Louisiana or the devastating wildfires that consumed more than 100,000 acres across seven states in the Southeast. ABC gave the topic only one news segment.

Fox News Sunday was the only show to address the climate context for the fight by Native American tribes to block construction of the Dakota Access oil pipeline. Several networks offered slightly more coverage of the climate issues surrounding the Keystone XL pipeline, which will transport heavy tar sands oil from Canada, but ABC managed to ignore that topic as well. (The State Department previously reported that completion of Keystone could increase annual greenhouse gas emissions by as much as 27 billion metric tons per year, the equivalent of adding several million passenger vehicles to the roads.)

The Sunday shows did not invite any scientists to discuss climate issues last year. And aside from NBC *Nightly News*, no commercial network covered the link between climate change and public health, including the spread of mosquito-borne diseases like the Zika virus.

PBS *NewsHour* crushed the competition in terms of the frequency, length, and seriousness of its climate coverage. It was the only show to inform voters about the policy impacts of a Trump or Clinton presidency *before* the election. It ran 18 segments on climate science, compared to 11 on all the other evening news shows combined. Perhaps not coincidentally, the Trump administration proposes eliminating funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which supports the *NewsHour*.

The coverage choices of America’s most-watched networks have great ramifications, starting with the election of climate denier Donald Trump. His choice as EPA administrator, Scott Pruitt, is a notorious climate denier, and is surrounding himself with former aides to Oklahoma Senator James Inhofe, an even more notorious denier. His Energy Secretary, Rick Perry, notoriously favored closing that agency altogether. President Trump issued executive orders reviving the Dakota Access and Keystone XL pipelines. He eliminated references to global warming on the White House web site.

The Trump administration also proposes killing the EPA's popular Energy Star program, which helps consumers save money by choosing more energy efficient appliances. His budget also would wipe out clean-tech research and development programs at the Department of Energy.

This week, President Trump plans to sign an executive order instructing the EPA to consider repealing the Clean Power Plan, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from power plants. His order reportedly will also encourage coal-mining leases on public lands, ease oil and gas drilling rules, and direct agencies to find ways to promote more energy production.

These actions not only fly in the face of science, they also run counter to his promises to create new jobs. A new Sierra Club analysis finds that across the nation, "clean energy jobs outnumber all fossil fuel jobs by over 2.5 to 1, and they exceed all jobs in coal and gas by 5 to 1."

In the long run, nothing the Trump administration does about health insurance, tax reform, or military spending – short of getting us into nuclear war – will matter nearly as much as its determined efforts to prevent global action on climate disruption.

"We are moving into uncharted territory at a frightening speed," warned Michel Jarraud, the secretary general of the World Meteorological Organization. "Every year we report a new record in greenhouse gas concentrations. Every year we say that time is running out. We have to act now to slash greenhouse gas emissions if we are to have a chance to keep the increase in temperatures to manageable levels."

Jarraud issued that plea nearly a year and a half ago. Time is, indeed, running out.

Jonathan Marshall is author of "Global Warming's Threat to Trump's Mar-a-Lago," "Dangerous Denial of Global Warming," "To Fight Global Warming, Canada Ponders a Carbon Tax," and "Global Warming Adds to Mideast Hot Zone."

Risks to US from War on North Korea

Exclusive: The murders of Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi – after they surrendered their WMD – taught North Korea's Kim Jong-un not to give up his, setting the stage for a dangerous crisis, explains Jonathan Marshall.

By Jonathan Marshall

When a hostile government, armed with atomic and chemical weapons and the world's fourth largest army, declares "the situation is already on the brink of nuclear war," Americans should sit up and take notice. Compared to North Korea, ISIS and Al Qaeda terrorists are insignificant threats to U.S. security.

Experts agree that within a few years, at most, North Korea will have mastered the ballistic missile technology needed to destroy U.S. cities with nuclear warheads. It recently demonstrated the use of solid-fuel technology in intermediate-range missiles, and earlier this month the regime tested a sophisticated new rocket engine that even South Korea called a technical breakthrough.

The Trump administration did take notice. Although North Korea has never threatened to use nuclear weapons except in self-defense, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson warned this month that the regime must "abandon its development of nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, and other weapons of mass destruction," or face the threat of the United States and its allies using military force to stop it.

More than a few elite pundits have endorsed preemptive war as an option. A recent *Washington Post* editorial conceded that striking North Korea's nuclear and missile facilities could trigger "a potentially catastrophic war," but declared nonetheless that "further steps by North Korea toward deploying nuclear-armed ICBMs might compel such action."

Last fall, the influential Council on Foreign Relations issued a major white paper calling North Korea's weapons program "a grave and expanding threat" and asserting that Washington may have no choice but to "consider more assertive military and political actions, including those that directly threaten the existence of the [North Korean] regime and its nuclear and missile capabilities."

Such threats are foolhardy and counterproductive. As many analysts point out, a pre-emptive attack by the United States cannot guarantee to destroy all of North Korea's hidden nuclear weapons or mobile missile launchers. Missing even a handful would guarantee the incineration of Seoul, Tokyo, and other nearby cities in radioactive fireballs. Even in the best case, North Korea could respond by flattening Seoul with artillery barrages, and killing tens of thousands of Koreans and Japanese with chemical weapons.

How North Korea Could Hit U.S.

An America-First madman in the White House might view such casualties as an

acceptable price to pay for eliminating a latent threat against the U.S. homeland. But hardly anyone has pointed out that North Korea can and almost certainly would retaliate against U.S. cities as well.

Even without long-range missiles, they can simply float atomic bombs into U.S. harbors aboard innocuous-looking commercial freighters. No anti-missile shield can stop them from wiping out big parts of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, or Houston in response to a U.S. attack.

Back in 2000, reporter Sydney Freedberg, Jr., called attention to the near impossibility of detecting a shielded bomb packed into one of the 45,000 shipping containers that enter the United States every day. "Hiding a bomb there would be a lethal needle in a huge haystack," he remarked.

Although major U.S. ports have since installed radiation detectors to prevent bombs from being smuggled into their waters, "if there is highly enriched uranium metal that's shielded and below the water line, it's going to be really tough to detect at long range," said Matthew Bunn, an expert on nuclear terrorism at Harvard University.

Even a small bomb detonation would do immense damage. A 2003 study by Abt Associates for the U.S. Department of Transportation concluded that "The economic impact of even a single nuclear terrorist attack on a major U.S. seaport would be very great . . . A successful attack would create disruption of U.S. trade valued at \$100-\$200 billion, property damage of \$50-\$500 billion, and 50,000 to 1,000,000 lives could be lost. Global and long-term effects, including the economic impacts of the pervasive national and international responses to the nuclear attack . . . are believed to be substantially greater."

Three years later, experts at the RAND Corporation conducted an even deeper analysis of a simulated terrorist attack on the Port of Long Beach with a 10-kiloton nuclear bomb, which is well within the yield of North Korea's current weapons. Among the plausible outcomes it described:

—"Sixty thousand people might die instantly from the blast itself or quickly thereafter from radiation poisoning.

—"One-hundred-fifty thousand more might be exposed to hazardous levels of radioactive water and sediment from the port, requiring emergency medical treatment.

— "The blast and subsequent fires might completely destroy the entire infrastructure and all ships in the Port of Long Beach and the adjoining Port of Los Angeles.

- “Six million people might try to evacuate the Los Angeles region.
- “Two to three million people might need relocation because fallout will have contaminated a 500-km² area.
- “Gasoline supplies might run critically short across the entire region because of the loss of Long Beach’s refineries – responsible for one-third of the gas west of the Rockies.
- “The early costs of the Long Beach scenario could exceed \$1 trillion, driven by outlay(s) for medical care, insurance claims, workers’ compensation, evacuation, and construction.”

Cascading Dangers

And that’s only the beginning. Insurers might stop writing commercial policies. Workers at other ports might flee to avoid a similar attack.

“Given these conditions, all U.S. ports would likely close indefinitely or operate at a substantially reduced level following the attack,” the report noted. “This would severely disrupt the availability of basic goods and petroleum throughout the country.”

Bottom line: a preemptive attack on North Korea’s real WMD would make the Bush administration’s disastrous attack on Iraq’s non-existent WMD look like a cake walk. Millions of people would almost certainly die in South Korea and Japan. Millions more Americans might die from nuclear retaliation against U.S. port cities and infrastructure. Every American would suffer the staggering economic and moral consequences.

That’s why we should all be concerned with Secretary Tillerson’s recent – and entirely unwarranted – rejection of efforts to find a peaceful political and diplomatic solution with North Korea.

The Trump administration appears to hope that stepping up economic sanctions, and bullying China, will miraculously convince North Korea to disarm. But strong-arm measures, which reinforce Pyongyang’s conviction that Washington wants nothing less than regime change, will ensure that war becomes not just one of many options on the table, but the only option.

Someday soon, the only question left may be whether it is North Korea or the United States that initiates all-out war in an insanely reckless attempt at self-preservation.

Jonathan Marshall previously authored “North Korea Fears ‘Regime Change’ Strike,” “Behind the North Korean Nuke Crisis” and “The Negotiation Option With

North Korea.”

Greens' Stein Faults Two-Party System

Some Democrats blame Jill Stein for “siphoning off” crucial votes from Hillary Clinton and thus helping to elect Donald Trump, but Stein insists that the two-party straitjacket is the real enemy of democracy, reports Dennis J Bernstein.

By Dennis J Bernstein

Former Green Party presidential candidate, Dr. Jill Stein, remains undaunted in her belief that the only real and significant change in U.S. politics will come through a third party that can finally break the headlock that the Democrats and Republicans hold on the electoral system.

Stein, who has been running for state and federal office since her unsuccessful run for Governor of Massachusetts in 2002, has yet to win an election and received about 1.4 million votes (or about 1 percent of the total) in the presidential election of 2016.

I spoke with her on March 10 about what comes next for her and the Green Party, as well as her thoughts on the policies of both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

Dennis Bernstein: You are here in San Francisco, doing a bunch of things. But you're going to be participating a little bit later in an action in support of Standing Rock and indigenous rights. And I want to ask you for your gut reaction to seeing that almost the first thing that Donald Trump did was go after the indigenous communities, and get those pipelines pumping heavy crude.

Jill Stein: It's a sign of what we're up against: this incredibly authoritarian, neo-fascist, anti-human rights predator, and who has pretended to be a friend of the working people, and who has really been revealed in all of his glory with his billionaire cabinet composed of people who are attacking the very cabinet departments that they are said to be head of. Who is enlarging the military, expediting the pipelines, expediting all sorts of destructive fossil fuel projects, attacking immigrants. It's really reigning down on all sides.

The issue of indigenous rights, and pipelines and Standing Rock, brings so many of these issues together. With incredible courage, and vision, and passion, that so engaged the hearts and minds all across America, that we all saw that we are

all Standing Rock. That this is where democracy... our rights to protest, indigenous rights, human rights, and our right to air, and water, and the climate that we can live in. They all converge.

And, it's like the match here that lit the fire is just the passion of our indigenous brothers and sisters who are ready to stand up. Not just for them: they're standing up for us all. And that passion is not going away. They may be evicted for now, but the fight is going on. It's continuing in court. It's continuing in the local struggles against, I guess, what's called the Klamath River Pipeline [Pacific Connector Pipeline], and LNG [liquid natural gas] Pipeline, that's going to go under the Klamath River, and put it at great risk.

The important thing here is that we've been successful in stopping fossil fuel projects over the past two years. That has really put the fear of God into this industry. They are in the process of becoming stranded assets. They're trying to hurry up and get them built before they are no longer financially viable.

DB: The price is so low, they can't even sell the stuff.

JS: And so, the important thing here is for us to just... to double down. And to be strengthened, to be encouraged, to get past their propaganda of powerlessness, and to know that we still have the numbers, in spite of the election of Donald Trump, which was an obvious distortion of the system.

But even more than that, it's a system that's become so toxic, so predominated by big money, corporate money, and corporate media, that it's become unhinged. We have an unhinged, toxic political system. Donald Trump represents, really, the breakdown of this bi-partisan system that people have lost faith in.

Polls last year, well, early on in the election, showed 90% of Americans have lost confidence in our political institutions, in the bi-partisan system in Congress, the Executive, and the Judiciary. You can't get more explicit than that, 90%.

At the other end, at the very end of the election, it was 80% of the people who described their feelings towards the election as one of disgust. And the American people are ready to move on. Had we... we were like one open debate from totally throwing out the bums, and moving forward to the future we deserve.

And everything that we're hearing now, both in what the extraordinarily destructive actions of Donald Trump, but it's like the neoliberal runaway that he launched from, the deportation of three million immigrants, the meltdown of the climate, where the White House was signing an end to the export ban of fossil fuel. They were actually signing the dotted line to end that ban. In other words, to enable the export of fossil fuels again, while the Paris Accords were

being signed. So, with one hand they're claiming this great environmental world, with the other they're just massively increasing.

So, the point here is we need to move forward. We need to break up with this abusive political relationship. We need to go forward with the future we deserve, because we're out of time, and it's on us. We're the ones we've been waiting for. We have the power, people are standing up, joining in. Follow the example of Standing Rock. We can fix these problems.

DB: I love that poem by June Jordan, put to music by Sweet Honey in the Rock [...] and I notice that that was sort of the anthem that played in the beginning of the Women's March, in Washington, D.C. June Jordan is of this community, contributed to this show. So, we're happy that she is still being evoked.

Well, let's talk about what's happening today. You have some expertise. We all saw the dangerous possibilities of the ObamaCare program. We're seeing something else go on now. You have some knowledge here, you want to talk about this?

JS: Sure. So, ObamaCare was a very mixed bag. We should have had Medicare For All, a single-payer system. Healthcare is a human right. ObamaCare was basically RomneyCare, writ large. It was essentially a national roll out of what we did in Massachusetts, under Mitt Romney, who launched that RomneyCare movement in order to stop single-payer. That's really where all of this originated, because single-payer was going like gangbusters in Massachusetts. We very nearly won a referendum that was only beat back by about two percentage points, having been outspent by 30 – 1 or 50 – 1, whatever it was, by the industry.

DB: It got really close.

JS: It was, and that's why they came up with this diversionary measure. So, it expanded Medicaid, that was great. It did some other things, no pre-existing conditions, etc. It made care affordable for people who were poor.

But for working people it created this mandate. You shouldn't be funding health care for some people on the backs of other people. We should be funding health care through the incredible abundance of this country. We are not a country of scarcity. We are not a country of austerity.

We are a country that is being bankrupted by a military budget that has just gone hog-wild, which Donald Trump wants to further expand. But it's pretty toxic to start with. It's over 50% of our discretionary dollars. It's almost half of your income taxes going for what? For wars, and regime change that has created failed states, mass refugee migrations, and worse terrorist's threats.

So, this doesn't fix the problem. More of a catastrophic policy of militarism –

we're about to go into Syria now, with ground troops – that's not going to make it better. This, again, is yet another reason why this is a Hail Mary moment [a desperate effort with little chance of success].

And it's not only that our water is at risk, our climate is melting down, and in fact, that melt down is accelerating. An entire generation of young people are locked in debt, jobs are just not sustainable when average wages for workers are barely at the poverty level. We're not going to get out of here alive.

DB: [...] What do you think is going to happen here? What's your best assessment of... we know where the Republicans are going with this. They're hell-bent on passing this stuff. There's going to be some resistance but essentially they're going to be able to get whatever they want. What are the implications?

JS: Well, it's not clear that they will. And back to the subject on the table about TrumpCare. There's not agreement about this, at all. It may not pass either House. And Trump is not a uniter, in spite of what he says. It's very clear he's not a uniter. He doesn't bring people together, doesn't have, kind of, higher order passions and visions.

DB: I haven't seen him smile once since he's been elected.

JS: I know.

DB: You notice that? God, they're disappointed they won.

JS: Not him, and not his wife either, who really looks miserable. The two of them on Election Day... [and] ... on Inauguration Day it looked like they were at a funeral. They did not expect this. Now, he's being progressively cornered. He's had to lose some of his key advisors, he's lost some key cabinet positions, his ratings continue to plummet. They were rock bottom to start with. He is a land mine of liabilities: legal, constitutional and ethical liabilities. There's just case after case, lawsuits against him. His immigrant policy is about to be stopped again, for the second time. So, this is a guy who should not be in office. He's being stopped.

I think it's important for us to remember Richard Nixon, one of the most corrupt and authoritarian presidents in our history. What did we do under the rule of Richard Nixon? We brought the troops home from Vietnam. We established women's right to choose, from a very conservative Supreme Court. We got the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, OSHA, protecting workers' health and safety. How did we do that? We did it because we were out in the streets with a passion knowing that our lives were on the line, because our brothers were being sent to die, to Vietnam.

Well, guess what? Now, we've woken up to find our lives are on the line again, whether it's from poverty and homelessness; a generation locked into unpayable student debt; from the expanding war which is blowing back at us with a vengeance; from the climate [warming] which is now accelerating, given the news last week that the meltdown of permafrost is well established, and is moving forward at horrific speed. And all the dire predictions from Jim Hansen, that we could see 10 or 20 feet of sea level rise, as soon as 2060. That's not far away.

Well, guess what? Those predictions are coming far closer now, because those models did not include the impact of methane. We didn't know when this was going to hit. The meltdown of the permafrost, for those who aren't familiar, it's basically frozen, organic debris, like dinosaur flesh, and plant matter, and stuff like that. It's just... the organic matter, the living creatures and plant life, of the ages, that's been frozen. It's becoming unfrozen. That means it turns into methane, which is one of the most powerful greenhouse gases. This is a major accelerator of climate change.

So, it means that it's time to stand up. It means that we are out of time. It means it's time to take action, now. So, people are getting out, knowing that our lives are on the line, for all these issues. On account of immigrant deportations, and the attack on women, and all the rest.

DB: Let me just stop you there, because that's the other issue I want to hit. I'm referring to it [the bulk-up of US Border and ICE agents] as Trump's jobs program for ex-military. And I was joking when I said to the audience the other day that, I swear, I know I'm going to open Stars and Stripes, the U.S. Army newspaper, and see major ads.

So I got a call right after the show, from a listener who said, "Are you kidding me? Look at page 9, Stars and Stripes, huge, double page ads, \$10,000 and \$9,000, special courts and expanded private prisons." This is really the cutting edge of, if you will, the new civil rights movement.

If we have a responsibility, it is in terms of the incredible attack on brown people in this country. Undocumented workers who do the hardest work, and, of course, the whole Middle East. Anything darker than John Wayne, and you're in trouble. And we're seeing Sikh, the other day, a Sikh man was assassinated, because he was like Osama Bin Laden, or something.

JS: Yes, you're right. And this is where immigrant rights come together with unbridled militarism. Because this refugee crisis... it's a refugee crisis, it's not an immigration crisis, it's a refugee crisis. We create that crisis through our military policies, not only in the Middle East, but also [by] overturning democracies: Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador. Where we, [...] through our U.S.

trained death squads, or through the outright overturning of democracies, we've created this culture of violence that forces people to flee over the border. So militarism, economic exploitation, and the role of NAFTA, which was awful for workers here, as well as farmers south of the border.

These are fixable problems. They can only be fixed together. To my mind, that's what a political party is. A political party is a coalition that's going to work together around an explicit agenda for people, planet and peace, over profit. The time has come. We have to stand up, like our lives depend on it, because they do.

And, now, this is sort of the silver lining behind this awful scary thunder cloud here that has just descended all over us: That our lives are on the line, so we gotta stand up and do it, in the way that we did under Richard Nixon. And then we impeached him. Trump's days are numbered.

We just saw the president of South Korea impeached, today, upheld by the courts. Why did this happen? In part it was millions of people getting out into the street. It happened in Guatemala, two years ago. In East Germany, Chris Hedges tells the story, he was there as an investigative reporter. And the democracy advocates were meeting and saying "How are we going to get rid of this awful, authoritarian government?" And they said "Maybe in ten years." The next week the wall came down, because people came out.

We've just... we're at the breaking point, and we're also at the wake up point, right now. And so, this is going to accelerate resistance. We're not only creating sanctuary communities, but we're actually now building sanctuary institutions, where people will be kept safe, where the ICE agents can't even go. And, there are other plans that may be in the works with some indigenous tribes, and the role that they can play. Because they are essentially independent nations.

So, there are very exciting things here. In the same way that the Muslim community stood up for the Jewish community and raised money in the face of these anti-Semitic attacks, and all the bomb threats that are going on. We're seeing these wonderful, just life-affirming, humanity-affirming alliances. And, as we wake up to the fact that our days are numbered right now, and that it is in our hands. It's only us, we are the ones we've been waiting for. The time has come, enough of the lesser evil. It's time to stand up, and fight for the greater good.

And even this issue of spoiling elections, and splitting the votes. Well, hello, there's a system called ranked-choice voting which Greens have been promoting forever. The state of Maine just passed it by voter referendum.

[California Governor] Jerry Brown just vetoed it [in California]. There was enabling legislation that was passed by the Legislature and Jerry Brown vetoed it because Democrats are at war with the liberation of our votes. They rely on extortion. They rely on intimidation, and fear, in order to hold people back. Why do they do that? Because they know that they can't earn your vote.

Ranked-choice voting calls their bluff. It allows you to actually rank your choices. If your first choice loses, your vote is automatically reassigned to your second choice. That's a win-win on our democracy. There are win-wins for every issue that faces us.

Right now we're looking at a lose-lose [situation], with this corporate-sponsored duopoly. The Democrats might give us ten more years than the Republicans would, of survival, under Democratic policies. But it's a sinking ship, with the duopoly. It's time to get off the ship. Our lives depend on getting off that ship and launching the lifeboat. We've got it, let's make it happen.

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Restoring a Responsible 'Conservatism'

As much as "liberal" has become a dirty word in U.S. politics, the word "conservative" has been ripped from all its honorable traditions and redefined as a dangerous form of radicalism, says ex-CIA official Graham E. Fuller.

By Graham E. Fuller

What is it about the U.S. that makes it virtually the only country in the world where a political Left scarcely exists? We have a center Right – the Democratic Party. And we have a far Right – the Republican Party. In fact, just invoking the L-word "Liberal" can inflict quick political death. Yes, we're safe from the Left here in America.

Having such a stunted political spectrum is bad enough in itself. Still worse is the utter corruption of the word *conservative*. U.S. society has allowed the Republican Party to hijack the word, distort it and redefine it to its own ends,

against its real meaning.

Isn't it time for progressives to stop bashing their heads against the "liberalism" wall? Even the Democratic Party machine itself has barred the gates against progressive Democratic candidates. At this point, we need a rethink.

Wouldn't it make more sense simply to yield up the term *Liberal* to all its many enemies? Put it in the cold freeze? In a doggedly right-of-center country, it might instead be smarter to seize back the term *conservatism* out of Republican hands, re-own it, and restore it to its true meaning.

Conservatism has a venerable history. The very word says a lot. It seeks to *preserve and conserve* fundamental human institutions, values, and lives in a precarious world.

Such as, for example, conserving the planet we live on, its forests, its water, its creatures, its bounty. It's our only home. In fact, preserving and conserving the earth really is the ultimate conservative agenda. We have been given a stewardship over this unique and precious blue orb in the cosmos upon which all life depends.

Indeed, it's the Republicans who are False Conservatives. They place the interests of the corporate world, profit and the welfare of a minority above all else. Their agenda is clear: generating ever more corporate business, clearing more land for "development," installing more robots to make production more efficient – this is a conservative agenda?

Actually it sounds like a very aggressive revolutionary approach to reshaping our entire earthly domicile in economic terms. It risks all in the name of production and profit. What true conservative could buy into that?

What of the preservation of life? Wouldn't prioritizing the preservation of human life over death represent a true conservative agenda as well? How much good does war do for people actually living it on the ground? Nobody is saying that one should never fight in true self-defense, but in the end, it's hard to make the case that war has done a lot of good for most human beings involved.

Can Peace Be 'Conservative'?

Might one even say that almost *any* peace that spares human lives is better than almost *any* war? Might not that be a conservative value? In the U.S. we're used to thinking about fighting wars *over there*. We are spared the need to conceive of war at home. So who among us actually ends up better off as a result of war? Our families? Our streets, our infrastructure, our loyalties, our institutions, our civilities, in the violence and anarchy of war? Yet our nation has been at

almost non-stop war since the collapse of the USSR – following “conservative” values.

Republicans tend to believe that war is heroic, glorious, “our finest fighting men,” pride of the nation, anything to keep our nation safe, huge budget expenditures at the cost of almost everything else. Here’s what founding father James Madison had to say about it:

“Of all the enemies to public liberty war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes ... known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few.... No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.”

So is it a “conservative value” to arm the nation to the teeth and lead the world in arms sales to others? “Conservatives” want to “protect freedom” by advocating the greatest and most intrusive national security surveillance state in history?

When it comes to “national security,” how much do our own communities genuinely benefit from U.S. military encirclement of China and Russia – an incredibly costly, provocative, never-ending undertaking that gins up increased international tensions? For that matter, would the U.S. ever tolerate for one second efforts by Russia or China to “encircle the U.S.” militarily? Is it ““conservative”” to “go abroad to seek monsters to slay,” as John Quincy Adams warned?

And what of the civilian sciences and exploration of space? NASA and non-military scientific research have grown impoverished. Education, surely a prime conservative value, languishes underfunded.

And then there’s the economy. Republicans generally believe that the number one policy goal of the nation is *first and foremost* the health of the economy – read the health of our corporations.

President Calvin Coolidge before the Great Depression famously said, “The chief business of the American people is business.” Republicans have even since managed to persuade faux Democrats to adopt this position. (Remember Bill Clinton – it’s the economy stupid!) But prioritizing the health of the economy gets the priorities wrong: for a genuine conservative the first priority is the health and welfare of our communities and our people.

Now, there is undeniably a relationship between the health of the economy and the general welfare, but they are not one and the same thing at all. Human welfare must be the end goal; a healthy economy, however interpreted, represents

the *means* and says nothing of equitable distribution.) This is another issue that should be denied to the False Conservatism of the Republicans.

Making Progress Work

Preserving our communities should be among the highest conservative priorities. But it's going to be increasingly hard to preserve jobs at home. Robotics above all is seeing to that. And it is more efficient to ship most jobs off to China, Vietnam or Bangladesh.

That's why many creative Western thinkers are now seriously examining the concept of a guaranteed national income for all. Once a wildly radical idea maybe, but it's time is coming. Because capitalism *by definition* sends jobs to where they can be most cheaply performed – and it's not in the USA. Sending jobs abroad is not “conservatism.”

Keeping people alive, healthy, and engaged – not alienated or resentful – is the most important social task we face.

Remember, that while capitalism is a powerful productive engine it has no *direct* interest in community welfare. It's not that capitalism is immoral; morality is just outside capitalism's functional purview. Capitalism by definition is about maximizing profit; that's what capitalism does. Yet today most Republicans enshrine free-market capitalism as the Holy Grail over the welfare of the community. They don't worry about poverty and domestic despair. Or even the need to spread profits if society is to function.

Nor is *efficiency* a prime conservative value. Human welfare is. If we pay a dollar more for a loaf of bread that is largely locally produced, don't we all gain in the community?

France, for example, has always sought to keep some elements of small-scale domestic agriculture alive rather than yielding it all to agro-business. They perceive some absolute social good in preserving this way of life, even if it raises costs. Japan does the same thing on growing (expensive) domestic rice that most Japanese support on social grounds. It's kind of a tax for local benefit and welfare, to conserve the community.

Yes, the benefits of globalization can be real, but they need to be viewed in terms of the welfare of all, and not as an absolute ideological good. What good is a cheaper I-Phone when the rest of our standards of human welfare are dropping?

But where do our budget priorities now lie with most members of both parties in the U.S.? Cutting taxes. Yet what of the huge tax levied upon our families by a

U.S. defense budget that is greater than the next seven most powerful nations put together? And going up. Have we become safer in a more stable world as a result?

Healthy communities also reflect a pride and exercise of artistic accomplishment. Is it *conservative* to dismiss cultural resources such as the Public Broadcasting System or the National Endowment for the Arts as economically without value? Or local arts?

Do you think the French or the Russians or Canadians don't place high community and national value on preservation of their national arts – which is unprofitable from a business perspective but central to national pride and cohesiveness?

And what of privatization of public lands? How do Republicans get away with calling that “conservative?” Doesn't “public” mean for the *community*? Is there no longer such a thing as the “public good?”

So let's maybe give up the “L-word” as a hopeless cause and instead work to restore the real meaning of what conservatism should be. This has been the colossal hoax the Republican Party (and some faux Democrats) have perpetrated upon this nation – utterly twisting and redefining conservatism to their own ends. We must take the word back.

It is unconscionable – and incomprehensible – that conservatism today has come to stand for profit, the welfare of the military-security-industrial complex, and the massive corruption of our political order through their “political contributions.” Or that Republicanism should celebrate conservatism by throwing away social safety nets and sowing religious and ethnic fears.

And in the end there just might be some gain for the embattled progressive community in reclaiming the word: it could do better at the polls.

Graham E. Fuller is a former senior CIA official, author of numerous books on the Muslim World; his latest book is *Breaking Faith: A novel of espionage and an American's crisis of conscience in Pakistan*. (Amazon, Kindle) grahamefuller.com

Global Warming's Threat to Trump's Mar-a-Lago

Exclusive: President Trump's war on President Obama's regulations may kill off rules to reduce leaks of the global-warming gas methane, a partisan scheme with

grave consequences for Mar-a-Lago and the world, writes Jonathan Marshall.

By Jonathan Marshall

There's a reason – besides escaping the rising rancor of Washington – that it made sense for President Trump to hop on Air Force One and visit his Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida, three times during his first five weeks in office: he needs to enjoy it while he can. If global warming continues apace, in just 30 years, its ritzy grounds will be flooded most of the year due to rising sea levels, according to an analysis by Coastal Risk Consulting.

However, sticking to his “alternative facts,” Trump still insists that global warming is a hoax. Faced with the recent confirmation by government scientists that 2016 was the hottest year on record, following two previous record-breaking years, the Trump administration seeks to slash funding for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration by 18 percent.

Besides shooting the messenger, the White House also aims to shoot down previously proposed solutions to the problem. Of particular note, Trump's new leadership at the Environmental Protection Agency is working with conservatives in Congress to dismantle Obama-era programs to restrict methane (natural gas) emissions from oil and gas drilling operations across the country.

This policy reversal will have grave consequences. Methane is an exceptionally potent greenhouse gas, capable of trapping 84 times more heat than comparable quantities of carbon dioxide. Scientists now estimate that it accounts for as much as 25 percent of the Earth's warming.

While global carbon dioxide emissions have leveled off over the past three years, methane emissions are soaring, according to an alarming study published in December in the journal *Environmental Research Letters*. Methane concentrations in the air grew about 20 times faster in 2014 and 2015 than they did in the early 2000s, jeopardizing international efforts to limit global warming to a manageable level.

The Methane Threat

The reasons aren't yet clear, but human activities create about 60 percent of all methane emissions each year. The biggest sources are agriculture, including rice cultivation and cattle ranching, and industry, led by oil and gas drilling and pipeline operations.

An international team of scientists, who evaluated some 400 potential measures for limiting greenhouse gas emissions, reported in *Science* magazine several

years ago that reducing methane leakage from drilling and pipeline operations would be one of the most potent and cost-effective ways to fight global warming. They estimated that the benefits of curbing such emissions would exceed the cost by anywhere from \$450 to *several thousand dollars* per metric ton.

Impressed by such findings, the United Nations sponsored the Oil & Gas Methane Partnership, a collaboration of governments and industry to help the environment by saving the tens of billions of dollars' worth of natural gas wasted each year to leaks and intentional flaring.

In the United States, the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) teamed with industry partners and academics to study the extent of gas leaks and to develop new technologies to detect them. The Obama White House endorsed these initiatives in a 2014 action plan to slash methane emissions from agriculture, landfills, coal mines, and the oil and gas sector.

What all of these initiatives have in common is the enthusiastic participation of large oil companies, gas utilities, and other companies – proving that fighting global warming doesn't have to come at the expense of jobs or business.

I saw this first-hand while working several years ago at one of EDF's leading industrial partners: San Francisco-based Pacific Gas and Electric Company. With 6,750 miles of gas transmission pipelines, 42,000 miles of smaller gas distribution pipelines, and more than four million customers, PG&E is one of the country's largest gas utilities.

Industry/Consumer Cooperation

With roots in environmentally conscious Northern California, PG&E was a natural partner for EDF. More important, however, was the utility's concern with stopping gas leaks that could pose a threat to public safety. In 2010, PG&E was responsible for one of the nation's worst pipeline explosions, which killed eight people in the city of San Bruno.

Taking advantage of new detection technology developed in Silicon Valley – 1,000 times more sensitive than traditional tools – PG&E was able last summer to finish surveying one million individual properties for gas leaks in just under two years. Crews drove a fleet of 10 detection vehicles 60,000 miles to find and repair 80 percent more leaks in less time than with older methods. The American Gas Association honored this program in 2015, signaling strong industry support for the initiative.

This December, PG&E became the first energy company to pilot another new, low-cost laser detection technology developed for EDF's Methane Detectors Challenge program by a San Francisco startup. Statoil, an international energy company, is

testing another similar technology at one of its Texas production facilities.

As of 2014, an estimated 76 U.S. companies were manufacturing, selling and supporting methane control technologies in some 46 states. The number has surely soared since then, boosted by the energy industry's growing realization that the 10 million metric tons of natural gas it loses every year represent \$2 billion down the drain.

The Trump administration could support new jobs and energy savings by taking nascent methane-control programs to the next level and encouraging more partnerships between government, industry and environmentalists to curb greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, its knee-jerk rejection of anything connected to President Obama threatens to needlessly damage America's economy along with the Earth's environment for decades to come.

That's a lose-lose proposition none of us can afford. And it could even prove disastrous to Trump's pride and joy, Mar-a-Lago, although Trump – who would be 100 years old in 30 years – may not expect to live long enough to see his fancy club inundated by the sea.

Jonathan Marshall is author of "Dangerous Denial of Global Warming," "To Fight Global Warming, Canada Ponders a Carbon Tax," and "Global Warming Adds to Mideast Hot Zone."
