

PATRICK LAWRENCE: Why the Dust Won't Settle After Mueller's Report

It won't be "full and thorough" and Democrats will continue to look for political payoff from Russia-gate, writes Patrick Lawrence.

By **Patrick Lawrence**

Special to Consortium News



Last week gave us mounting indications that Robert Mueller has finished his two-year probe into alleged Russian interference in the 2016 elections and is about to issue his long-awaited report.

But those who hope to read the results of the "full and thorough investigation" promised when Mueller was appointed special counsel should adjust their expectations. After spending upward of \$12 million, Mueller is almost certain to hand Attorney General William Barr a light-on-evidence document that dodges many more questions than it resolves. Neither is it clear whether the AG will make all, part, or none of the Mueller report public.

There are two certainties we can rely upon as we await Mueller's final word, none a cause for relief.

- The special counsel's office did not undertake a credible investigation of the two core charges related to the 2016 elections—that Russian intelligence hacked Democratic National Committee email servers while colluding with Donald Trump as he sought the presidency. Mueller failed to call numerous key witnesses, and

failed to pursue alternative theories, a duty of any investigator in Mueller's position. These omissions are more or less fatal to the legitimacy of Mueller's work.

- Among the mainstream Democrats who have incessantly hyped the "Russia-wrecked-our-elections" story, there is no remorse for the damage it has done to our governing institutions, our foreign policy, and our national security. Russia-gate has consolidated Cold War II. The chance to rebuild mutually beneficial relations with Moscow has been damaged.

Sequence of Events

There is a sequence of events leading up to the completed Mueller report that is important to follow. Earlier this month the House Judiciary Committee announced that it has requested documents from 81—yes, 81—government agencies, entities such as *Wikileaks*, and (mostly) individuals. These last include the president's two sons, Eric and Donald Trump Jr.; Jared Kushner, his son-in-law; Allen Weisselberg, the Trump Organization's chief financial officer; former AG Jeff Sessions, and former White House Counsel Douglas McGahn.

The committee purports to be looking for obstructions of justice, collusion with Russia, and other possible transgressions—this after Mueller spent two years investigating the same things. It is not hard to read this for what it is: the first indication that the Democrat-controlled House wants enough grist to keep the post-Mueller Russia-gate mill running for its political advantage.

"Russia-gate," in short, is not about to pass into history. It looks now as if this political spectacle will be

sustained as long as President Trump remains in office.

Numerous other signs that Mueller is folding his tent have followed. Various members of his investigative team have either left or will do so soon. Last week Mueller relieved Michael Flynn, once and briefly Trump's national security adviser, of further questioning. A federal judge then gave Paul Manafort, Trump's one-time campaign manager, his final sentence: He gets seven and a half years in prison on financial fraud charges. This now looks like the biggest fish Mueller has caught—and never mind that Manafort's crimes had nothing to do with either the Trump campaign or allegations of Russian interference.

Last Thursday the House voted 420–0 (with four abstentions) to back a resolution calling for Justice to make the full Mueller report public once it goes to Barr's office. “Mission accomplished” is the only way to read all this. Now what?

It is not yet clear what Justice will do with Mueller's report. In the Republican-controlled Senate, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is not saying whether he will back a make-it-public vote. He blocked a bipartisan resolution similar to the House's earlier this year. Barr is obliged only to show some of what is in the Mueller report to the House and Senate Judiciary Committees.

For his part, Trump has been all over the place as to what Barr should do. Last Friday he insisted Mueller “should never have been appointed and there should be no Mueller report.” A day later the president claimed he told House Republicans to back the make-it-public resolution, as they

did. "Makes us all look good and it doesn't matter," the president said in a Twitter message Saturday.

The Mueller report is in for endless spin no matter what is in it. In a weekend opinion item carried in *The Guardian*, the usually sensible Robert Reich, a former U.S. Labor secretary, suggested the impending report leaves the president trapped and desperate. "So what does a cornered president do?" Reich asked. "For starters, he raises the specter of violence against his political opponents."

Setting aside such paranoiac hyperbole, Trump's second thought—publish it all—is the wiser. It is next to impossible that Mueller found hard evidence to support either of the two primary allegations that have driven the special counsel's investigations.

First and very conspicuously, Mueller's investigators never consulted those who could have shed light on these assertions. These include Julian Assange, the *WikiLeaks* founder; Christopher Steele, who wrote the now-infamous dossier purporting to establish evidence of Russian collusion, and prominent technical and forensic scientists who have done extensive work on the digital trail left by those responsible for the theft of email from Hillary Clinton's campaign chairman and the Democratic National Committee.

Second and yet more persuasively, the just-noted technical and forensic experts have demonstrated that the mail operations in mid-2016 were not hacks — by Russians or anyone else — but leaks executed by someone with access to the Podesta and DNC emails who used a storage device such as

a memory key. Mueller's office has never examined this work in pursuit of alternative evidence in the email case. There is no legitimate justification for this dereliction.

Last week **Consortium News** published the latest report from Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, which does its own forensic work while also coordinating with various independent forensic investigators. There are now three layers of evidence indicating that the 2016 mail compromises were an inside job: the speed of the downloads, the manipulation of files to implant Russian "fingerprints," and – this most recently – the numerical codes on the stolen files, which demonstrate that the probability of a remote hack via the internet is 1-in-2 to the 500th power.

None of those working on the stolen mail's metadata, including Bill Binney, formerly a technical director at the National Security Agency and the lead scientist at VIPS, has ever been contacted by the special counsel's investigators. "Nobody wants to talk about evidence," Binney said by telephone over the weekend. "What Mueller's doing now is clearing the report of anything that conflicts with the forensics already produced. Given this work has been done, he can't afford to allege collusion or Russian involvement, so there'll be nothing substantive in the report about either."

If Binney is right, the Mueller report will resemble the "Intelligence Community Assessment" published in January 2017. Virtually devoid of evidence, the ICA was more or less fraudulent in its reliance on loosely reasoned inferences and innuendo.

If this proves the outcome after Mueller's two-year effort, we may never know who was responsible for the 2016 email thefts or the role of U.S. law-enforcement and intelligence agencies since then; countless other questions will go unanswered. "The sole objective is to perpetuate 'Russia-gate,'" Binney said last weekend. That will come at a high price when measured by the distortions of our political institutions, our judiciary and our foreign policy priorities.

Patrick Lawrence, a correspondent abroad for many years, chiefly for the *International Herald Tribune*, is a columnist, essayist, author, and lecturer. His most recent book is "Time No Longer: Americans After the American Century" (Yale). Follow him @thefloutist. His web site is www.patricklawrence.us. Support his work via www.patreon.com/thefloutist.

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WILLIAM BLUM: Sucking Liberals into a New Cold War

Out of fury against President Trump, many liberals have enlisted in the ranks of the New Cold War against Russia,

seeming to have forgotten the costs to rationality and lives from the first Cold War, warned the late William Blum.

A memorial service was held on Sunday in Washington for William Blum, a former State Department official whose disillusionment with the Vietnam War turned him into a fierce critic of U.S. foreign policy. In books such as Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II; Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire and Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower, as well as on his blog, [The Anti-Empire Report](#), Blum educated a generation of Americans about the rapacious aims of the U.S. abroad, debunking the myth of Washington's good intentions for the peoples of the world. Blum died on December 9, 2018. He was a contributor to Consortium News and we reprint one of his last articles that appeared here. Originally published on Dec. 6, 2017.

By [William Blum](#)

Cold War Number One: 70 years of daily national stupidity.
Cold War Number Two: Still in its youth, but just as stupid.

“He said he absolutely did not meddle in our election. He did not do what they are saying he did.” – President Trump re Russian President Vladimir Putin after their meeting in Vietnam. [*Washington Post*, Nov. 12, 2017]

Putin later added that he knew “absolutely nothing” about Russian contacts with Trump campaign officials. “They can do what they want, looking for some sensation. But there are no sensations.”

Numerous U.S. intelligence agencies have said otherwise.

Former Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, responded to Trump's remarks by declaring: "The president was given clear and indisputable evidence that Russia interfered in the election."

As we'll see below, there isn't too much of the "clear and indisputable" stuff. And this of course is the same James Clapper who made an admittedly false statement to Congress in March 2013, when he responded, "No, sir" and "not wittingly" to a question about whether the National Security Agency was collecting "any type of data at all" on millions of Americans. Lies don't usually come in any size larger than that.

Virtually every member of Congress who has publicly stated a position on the issue has criticized Russia for interfering in the 2016 American presidential election. And it would be very difficult to find a member of the mainstream media who has questioned this thesis.

What is the poor consumer of news to make of these gross contradictions? Here are some things to keep in mind:

How do we know that the tweets and advertisements "sent by Russians" -- those presented as attempts to sway the vote -- were actually sent by Russians? The Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS), composed of National Security Agency and CIA veterans, recently declared that the CIA knows how to disguise the origin of emails and tweets. The *Washington Post* has as well reported that Twitter "makes it easy for users to hide their true identities." [Washington Post, Oct. 10, 2017]

Russians! Russians! Russians!

Even if these communications were actually sent from Russia, how do we know that they came from the Russian government, and not from any of the other 144.3 million residents of Russia?

Even if they were sent by the Russian government, we have to ask: Why would they do that? Do the Russians think the United States is a Third World, under-developed, backward Banana Republic easily influenced and moved by a bunch of simple condemnations of the plight of blacks in America and the Clinton “dynasty”? Or clichéd statements about other controversial issues, such as gun rights and immigration? If so, many Democratic and Republican officials would love to know the secret of the Russians’ method. Consider also that Facebook has stated that 90 percent of the alleged-Russian-bought content that ran on its network did not even mention Trump or Clinton. [*Washington Post*, Nov. 15, 2017]

On top of all this is the complete absence of even the charge, much less with any supporting evidence, of Russian interference in the actual voting or counting of votes.

After his remark suggesting he believed Putin’s assertion that there had been no Russian meddling in the election, Trump – of course, as usual – attempted to backtrack and distance himself from his words after drawing criticism at home; while James Clapper declared: “The fact the president of the United States would take Putin at his word over that of the intelligence community is quite simply unconscionable.” [*Reuters*, Nov. 12, 2017]

Given Clapper’s large-size lie referred to above, can Trump be faulted for being skeptical of the intelligence

community's Holy Writ? Purposeful lies of the intelligence community during the first Cold War were legendary, many hailed as brilliant tactics when later revealed. The CIA, for example, had phony articles and editorials planted in foreign newspapers (real Fake News), made sex films of target subjects caught *in flagrante delicto* who had been lured to Agency safe houses by female agents, had Communist embassy personnel expelled because of phony CIA documents, and much more.

The *Post* recently published an article entitled "How did Russian trolls get into your Facebook feed? Silicon Valley made it easy." In the midst of this "exposé," The *Post* stated: "There's no way to tell if you personally saw a Russian post or tweet." [*Washington Post*, Nov. 2, 2017]

A Case or Not?

So ... Do the Cold Warriors have a case to make or do they not? Or do they just want us to remember that the Russkis are bad? So it goes.

An organization in Czechoslovakia with the self-appointed name of European Values has produced a lengthy report entitled "The Kremlin's Platform for 'Useful Idiots' in the West: An Overview of RT's Editorial Strategy and Evidence of Impact." It includes a long list of people who have appeared on the Russian-owned TV station RT (formerly *Russia Today*), which can be seen in the U.S., the U.K. and other countries. Those who've been guests on RT are the "idiots" useful to Moscow. (The list is not complete. I've been on RT about five times, but I'm not listed. Where is my Idiot Badge?)

RT's YouTube channel has more than two million followers and

claims to be the “most-watched news network” on the video site. Its Facebook page has more than 4 million likes and followers. Can this explain why the powers-that-be forget about a thing called freedom-of-speech and treat the station like an enemy? The U.S. government recently forced *RT America* to register as a foreign agent and has cut off the station’s Congressional press credentials.

The Cold War strategist, George Kennan, wrote prophetically: “Were the Soviet Union to sink tomorrow under the waters of the ocean, the American military-industrial establishment would have to go on, substantially unchanged, until some other adversary could be invented. Anything else would be an unacceptable shock to the American economy.”

Writer John Wight has described the new Cold War as being “in response to Russia’s recovery from the demise of the Soviet Union and the failed attempt to turn the country into a wholly owned subsidiary of Washington via the imposition of free market economic shock treatment thereafter.”

So let’s see what other brilliance the New Cold War brings us. ... Ah yes, another headline in the *Post* (Nov. 18, 2017): “British alarm rising over possible Russian meddling in Brexit.” Of course, why else would the British people have voted to leave the European Union? But wait a moment, again, one of the British researchers behind the report “said that the accounts they analyzed – which claimed Russian as their language when they were set up but tweeted in English – posted a mixture of pro-‘leave’ and pro-‘remain’ messages regarding Brexit. Commentators have said that the goal may simply have been to sow discord and division in society.”

Was there ever a time when the *Post* would have been embarrassed to be so openly, amateurishly biased about Russia? Perhaps during the few years between the two Cold Wars.

In case you don't remember how stupid Cold War Number One was ...

- 1948: The *Pittsburgh Press* published the names, addresses, and places of employment of about 1,000 citizens who had signed presidential-nominating petitions for former Vice President Henry Wallace, running under the Progressive Party. This, and a number of other lists of "communists," published in the mainstream media, resulted in people losing their jobs, being expelled from unions, having their children abused, being denied state welfare benefits, and suffering various other punishments.
- Around 1950: The House Committee on Un-American Activities published a pamphlet, "100 Things You Should Know About Communism in the U.S.A." This included information about what a communist takeover of the United States would mean: ?Q: What would happen to my insurance?? A: It would go to the Communists.? Q: Would communism give me something better than I have now?? A: Not unless you are in a penitentiary serving a life sentence at hard labor.
- 1950s: Mrs. Ada White, member of the Indiana State Textbook Commission, believed that Robin Hood was a Communist and urged that books that told the Robin Hood story be banned from Indiana schools.
- As evidence that anti-communist mania was not limited to

the lunatic fringe or conservative newspaper publishers, here is Clark Kerr, president of the University of California at Berkeley in a 1959 speech: "Perhaps 2 or even 20 million people have been killed in China by the new [communist] regime." One person wrote to Kerr: "I am wondering how you would judge a person who estimates the age of a passerby on the street as being 'perhaps 2 or even 20 years old.' Or what would you think of a physician who tells you to take 'perhaps 2 or even twenty teaspoonsful of a remedy'?"

- Throughout the cold war, traffic in phony Lenin quotes was brisk, each one passed around from one publication or speaker to another for years. Here's *S. News and World Report* in 1958 demonstrating communist duplicity by quoting Lenin: "Promises are like pie crusts, made to be broken." Secretary of State John Foster Dulles used it in a speech shortly afterward, one of many to do so during the cold war. Lenin actually did use a very similar line, but he explicitly stated that he was quoting an English proverb (it comes from Jonathan Swift) and his purpose was to show the unreliability of the bourgeoisie, not of communists. "First we will take Eastern Europe, then the masses of Asia, then we will encircle the United States, which will be the last bastion of capitalism. We will not have to attack. It will fall like an overripe fruit into our hands." This Lenin "quotation" had the usual wide circulation, even winding up in the *Congressional Record* in 1962. This was not simply a careless attribution; this was an out-and-out fabrication; an extensive search, including by the Library of Congress and the United States Information

Agency failed to find its origin.

- A favorite theme of the anti-communists was that a principal force behind drug trafficking was a communist plot to demoralize the United States. Here's a small sample: Don Keller, District Attorney for San Diego County, California in 1953: "We know that more heroin is being produced south of the border than ever before and we are beginning to hear stories of financial backing by big shot Communists operating out of Mexico City." Henry Giordano, Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 1964, interviewed in the *American Legion Magazine*: Interviewer: "I've been told that the communists are trying to flood our country with narcotics to weaken our moral and physical stamina. Is that true?" Giordano: "As far as the drugs are concerned, it's true. There's a terrific flow of drugs coming out of Yunnan Province of China. ... There's no question that in that particular area this is the aim of the Red Chinese. It should be apparent that if you could addict a population you would degrade a nation's moral fiber." Fulton Lewis, Jr., prominent conservative radio broadcaster and newspaper columnist, 1965: "Narcotics of Cuban origin – marijuana, cocaine, opium, and heroin – are now peddled in big cities and tiny hamlets throughout this country. Several Cubans arrested by the Los Angeles police have boasted they are communists." We were also told that along with drugs another tool of the commies to undermine America's spirit was fluoridation of the water.
- Mickey Spillane was one of the most successful writers of the 1950s, selling millions of his anti-communist

thriller mysteries. Here is his hero, Mike Hammer, in "One Lonely Night," boasting of his delight in the grisly murders he commits, all in the name of destroying a communist plot to steal atomic secrets. After a night of carnage, the triumphant Hammer gloats, "I shot them in cold blood and enjoyed every minute of it. I pumped slugs into the nastiest bunch of bastards you ever saw. ... They were Commies. ... Pretty soon what's left of Russia and the slime that breeds there won't be worth mentioning and I'm glad because I had a part in the killing. God, but it was fun!"

- 1952: A campaign against the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) because it was tainted with "atheism and communism," and was "subversive" because it preached internationalism. Any attempt to introduce an international point of view in the schools was seen as undermining patriotism and loyalty to the United States. A bill in the U.S. Senate, clearly aimed at UNESCO, called for a ban on the funding of "any international agency that directly or indirectly promoted one-world government or world citizenship." There was also opposition to UNESCO's association with the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights on the grounds that it was trying to replace the American Bill of Rights with a less liberty-giving covenant of human rights.
- 1955: A U.S. Army 6-page pamphlet, "How to Spot a Communist," informed us that a communist could be spotted by his predisposition to discuss civil rights, racial and religious discrimination, the immigration laws, anti-subversive legislation, curbs on unions, and peace. Good Americans were advised to keep their ears

stretched for such give-away terms as "chauvinism," "book-burning," "colonialism," "demagogy," "witch hunt," "reactionary," "progressive," and "exploitation." Another "distinguishing mark" of "Communist language" was a "preference for long sentences." After some ridicule, the Army rescinded the pamphlet.

- 1958: The noted sportscaster Bill Stern (one of the heroes of my innocent youth) observed on the radio that the lack of interest in "big time" football at New York University, City College of New York, Chicago, and Harvard "is due to the widespread acceptance of Communism at the universities."
- 1960: U.S. General Thomas Power speaking about nuclear war or a first strike by the U.S.: "The whole idea is to *kill* the bastards! At the end of the war, if there are two Americans and one Russian, we win!" The response from one of those present was: "Well, you'd better make sure that they're a man and a woman."
- 1966: The Boys Club of America is of course wholesome and patriotic. Imagine their horror when they were confused with the DuBois Clubs. (W.E.B. Du Bois had been a very prominent civil rights activist.) When the Justice Department required the DuBois Clubs to register as a Communist front group, good loyal Americans knew what to do. They called up the Boys Club to announce that they would no longer contribute any money, or to threaten violence against them; and sure enough an explosion damaged the national headquarters of the youth group in San Francisco. Then former Vice President Richard Nixon, who was national board chairman of the Boys Club, declared: "This is an almost classic example

of Communist deception and duplicity. The 'DuBois Clubs' are not unaware of the confusion they are causing among our supporters and among many other good citizens."

- 1966: "Rhythm, Riots and Revolution: An Analysis of the Communist Use of Music, The Communist Master Music Plan," by David A. Noebel, published by Christian Crusade Publications, (expanded version of 1965 pamphlet: "Communism, Hypnotism and the Beatles"). Some chapters: Communist Use of Mind Warfare ... Nature of Red Record Companies ... Destructive Nature of Beatle Music ... Communist Subversion of Folk Music ... Folk Music and the Negro Revolution ... Folk Music and the College Revolution
- 1968: William Calley, U.S. Army Lieutenant, charged with overseeing the massacre of more than 100 Vietnamese civilians in My Lai in 1968, said some years later: "In all my years in the Army I was never taught that communists were human beings. We were there to kill ideology carried by – I don't know – pawns, blobs, pieces of flesh. I was there to destroy communism. We never conceived of old people, men, women, children, babies."
- 1977: Scientists theorized that the earth's protective ozone layer was being damaged by synthetic chemicals called chlorofluorocarbons. The manufacturers and users of CFCs were not happy. They made life difficult for the lead scientist. The president of one aerosol manufacturing firm suggested that criticism of CFCs was "orchestrated by the Ministry of Disinformation of the KGB."
- 1978: Life inside a California youth camp of the ultra anti-communist John Birch Society: Five hours each day

of lectures on communism, Americanism and "The Conspiracy"; campers learned that the Soviet government had created a famine and spread a virus to kill a large number of citizens and make the rest of them more manageable; the famine led starving adults to eat their children; communist guerrillas in Southeast Asia jammed chopsticks into children's ears, piercing their eardrums; American movies are all under the control of the Communists; the theme is always that capitalism is no better than communism; you can't find a dictionary now that isn't under communist influence; the communists are also taking over the Bibles.

- The Reagan administration declared that the Russians were spraying toxic chemicals over Laos, Cambodia and Afghanistan – the so-called "yellow rain" – and had caused more than ten thousand deaths by 1982 alone, (including, in Afghanistan, 3,042 deaths attributed to 47 separate incidents between the summer of 1979 and the summer of 1981, so precise was the information). Secretary of State Alexander Haig was a prime dispenser of such stories, and President Reagan himself denounced the Soviet Union thusly more than 15 times in documents and speeches. The "yellow rain," it turned out, was pollen-laden feces dropped by huge swarms of honeybees flying far overhead.
- 1982: In commenting about sexual harassment in the Army, General John Crosby stated that the Army doesn't care about soldiers' social lives – "The basic purpose of the United States Army is to kill Russians," he said.
- 1983: The U.S. invasion of Grenada, the home of the Cuban ambassador is damaged and looted by American

soldiers; on one wall is written "AA," symbol of the 82nd Airborne Division; beside it the message: "Eat shit, commie faggot." ... "I want to fuck communism out of this little island," says a marine, "and fuck it right back to Moscow."

- 1984: During a sound check just before his weekly broadcast, President Reagan spoke these words into the microphone: "My fellow Americans, I am pleased to tell you I have signed legislation to outlaw Russia, forever. We begin bombing in five minutes." His words were picked up by at least two radio networks.
- 1985: October 29 BBC interview with Ronald Reagan: asked about the differences he saw between the U.S. and Russia, the President replied: "I'm no linguist, but I've been told that in the Russian language there isn't even a word for freedom." (The word is "svoboda.")
- 1986: Soviet artists and cultural officials criticized Rambo-like American films as an expression of "anti-Russian phobia even more pathological than in the days of McCarthyism." Russian filmmaker Stanislav Rostofsky claimed that on one visit to an American school "a young girl trembled with fury when she heard I was from the Soviet Union, and said she hated Russians."
- 1986: Roy Cohn, who achieved considerable fame and notoriety in the 1950s as an assistant to the communist-witch-hunting Sen. Joseph McCarthy, died, reportedly of AIDS. Cohn, though homosexual, had denied that he was and had denounced such rumors as communist smears.
- 1986: After American journalist Nicholas Daniloff was arrested in Moscow for "spying" and held in custody for two weeks, New York Mayor Edward Koch sent a group of 10

visiting Soviet students storming out of City Hall in fury. "The Soviet government is the pits," said Koch, visibly shocking the students, ranging in age from 10 to 18 years. One 14-year-old student was so outraged he declared: "I don't want to stay in this house. I want to go to the bus and go far away from this place. The mayor is very rude. We never had a worse welcome anywhere." As matters turned out, it appeared that Danilooff had not been completely pure when it came to his newsgathering.

- 1989: After the infamous Chinese crackdown on dissenters in Tiananmen Square in June, the U.S. news media was replete with reports that the governments of Nicaragua, Vietnam and Cuba had expressed their support of the Chinese leadership. Said the *Wall Street Journal*: "Nicaragua, with Cuba and Vietnam, constituted the only countries in the world to approve the Chinese Communists' slaughter of the students in Tiananmen Square." But it was all someone's fabrication; no such support had been expressed by any of the three governments. At that time, as now, there were few, if any, organizations other than the CIA which could manipulate major Western media in such a manner. [Sources for almost all of this section can be found in William Blum, *Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire* (2005), chapter 12; or the author can be queried at bblum6@aol.com]

NOTE: It should be remembered that the worst consequences of anti-communism were not those discussed above. The worst consequences, the ultra-criminal consequences, were the abominable death, destruction, and violation of human rights that we know under various names: Vietnam, Chile, Korea,

Guatemala, Cambodia, Indonesia, Brazil, Greece, Afghanistan, El Salvador, and many others.

William Blum (1933-2018) was an author, historian, and renowned critic of U.S. foreign policy. He is the author of *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* and *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*, among others. [This article originally appeared at the Anti-Empire Report, <https://williamblum.org/> .]

VIDEO: Pro and Anti-Venezuela Coup Protestors Face Off in Front of White House

UPDATED: Demonstrators for and against regime change in Venezuela converged on the White House on Saturday and there were some angry scenes as D.C. mounted police took their positions in Lafayette Park.

Updated to include video of the entire anti-coup rally below.

**By [Joe Lauria](#)
in Washington**

Special to Consortium News

Rising tensions in Venezuela boiled over in front of the White House on Saturday as a protest rally against U.S. intervention to overthrow the elected government in Caracas was met by counter-demonstrators who asked Donald Trump, at home in the president's mansion, for help in overthrowing the government of Nicolas Maduro.

Washington's open support for self-declared president Juan Gaidó has so far failed to dislodge Maduro from office as the Venezuelan military digs in and U.S. officials strongly hint that American military intervention could be next. After a week of nation-wide power failures blamed by the Venezuelan government on U.S. cyber attacks, American Airlines abruptly cancelled all flights into and out of the country.

Among the speakers denouncing Washington's attempted coup were activists Cindy Sheehan, Medea Benjamin, Lee Camp and Brian Becker, who called the Trump administration's moves a naked grab for the world's largest oil reserves in Venezuela. The anti-coup protestors, numbering about 2,000, later marched through the streets of the capital, stopping in front of the Trump International Hotel, where Becker denounced the billionaire president for serving billionaires' interests while ignoring those of the Venezuelan and American people.

"This is what Trump really wants: the triumph of wealth over people," Becker said. "Donald Trump: that is a fantasy. The coup is rejected by the people of Venezuela. "

The protestors then marched to the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church where they were addressed via Skype by Pentagon Papers whistleblower Dan Ellsberg and Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein, as well as by activist groups who traveled to Washington from around the country.

The following 17-minute video by **Consortium News** Editor Joe Lauria shows confrontations by protestors from both sides and then moves from the counter-demonstration to the anti-

coup rally, which is addressed by journalist Max Blumenthal.

Watch the entire anti-coup rally here (1 hour, 38 minutes):

Watch the anti-coup protestors converge on the Trump International Hotel (3 min.):

US and Iranian Hardliners Continue the Suffering

Ann Wright reports on a citizen peace delegation's recent trip to Iran, which included a meeting with the country's foreign minister.

By Ann Wright

Special to Consortium News



We knew that a CODEPINK: Women for Peace delegation to Iran would wind up in the crosshairs of the Trump administration. While he was campaigning, Donald Trump made his animosity toward Iran very clear by referring to the Obama administration's nuclear agreement with Iran as the "worst deal ever."

Despite the International Atomic Energy Agency's evidence that Tehran was complying with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, one of Trump's first actions upon becoming president was pulling the U.S. out of the treaty and imposing brutal sanctions on the people of Iran.

These sanctions have resulted in the slashing of purchasing power of the national currency by two-thirds. We knew that U.S citizens going to Iran to talk with Iranians about the impact of the sanctions would not be popular with the Trump administration.

Despite the visas that Tehran issued to our delegation, we knew our delegation would also be under Iranian scrutiny while we were there. American journalists, IT professionals, retired UN officials and retired and former U.S. government officials have been imprisoned.

Despite such considerations, our group still takes these trips. We endure the suspicions of governments to travel as citizen diplomats to areas of the world where our government does not want us to see the effects of U.S. policies on the lives of people in targeted countries.

As citizen diplomats, we have been labeled as “naïve tools of repressive governments” when we visited Iran, North Korea, Gaza, Egypt, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Yemen, countries where U.S. interference, invasion, occupation or support for other countries’ wars, have made life miserable and dangerous for their citizens. We encounter ordinary citizens who are concerned about the future of their children, their health and education because of military conflict or sanctions touted as a humane substitute for military conflict. We return with their stories, determined to resolve whatever political disagreement is occurring between the U.S. and the particular country.

The Knives Were Out

The knives of journalists and pundits were out for Women

Cross the DMZ in 2015 when we – 30 women from 15 countries, including two Nobel Peace Laureates – returned from North Korea after holding a peace conference with 250 North Korean women and peace marches with 5,000 women in Pyongyang and 2,000 women in Kaesong.

The anti-Semitism label was thrown at us when we visited Israeli-blockaded Gaza and witnessed the illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian land in the West Bank and dared to speak and write about them. We were called the tool of the Pakistani Taliban when we talked with families of civilians assassinated by U.S. drones in the border area of Pakistan-Afghanistan.

Our delegation's meeting with the foreign minister of Iran has already provoked harsh words from U.S. and Israeli media of collaborating with the Iranian government and FBI warning us about being agents of a foreign government.

In the nine days we were in Iran, from Feb. 26 to March 6, we talked with Iranians in schools, bazaars and markets, on squares and in mosques. Many people in Iran speak English. English is taught from elementary school. Young students ran up to us to practice their English. The Trump administration's travel ban on Iranians means that students who have been accepted to U.S. universities cannot get student visas to study in the U.S. Families with members in the U.S. cannot visit them. Iranians are turning to Europe and Asia. The U.S. travel ban on Iran and the six other countries may have been intended to isolate Iran, but instead America is isolating itself.

A surprising number of people, particularly outside of

Tehran, the capital, spoke openly about their disagreements with their own government.

'We Like You, Not Your Government'

At a museum in Isfahan we talked with other visitors who were Iranian. Spotting small banners pinned to our backs that read "Peace with Iran" in English and Farsi, people came up to us, invariably beginning with, "We like Americans, but we don't like your government." Many of them added, "and we don't like our government either." The reasons that we heard for disliking their own government included graft, corruption, those in power living the high life, too much money spent on other countries which should be used at home, mistakenly trusting the United States to lessen or end the sanctions after signing the nuclear agreement.

Iranians we met were open about the effect of the latest stringent U.S. sanctions on their daily life. The U.S.-sponsored closure of Iran's access to the international financial system means that ordinary businesses have less access to funds to purchase goods. Apps on mobile phones for paying bills or arranging for car-share rides no longer function. Marriages are postponed as families lack money for the obligatory dowries and wedding celebrations. Purchases of big-ticket items of everything from refrigerators to cars are delayed due to the hyper-inflation of the rial, Iranian currency.

From the foreign minister to the ordinary Iranians we met, all reminded us with great pride of the 2,500-year history of their country. Many spoke of the pressures from

neighboring countries and destructive wars waged by neighbors and by countries from afar: the United States, Britain and Russia.

Seven countries are direct neighbors: Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Armenia. Seven more are within 100 miles: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen. Three more are within 300 miles: Georgia, Russia and Uzbekistan.

By contrast, only Canada and Mexico directly border the U.S. and its possessions and only a few countries are within 100 miles: the Bahamas, Cuba and Russia across the Bering Sea, as Alaska geography expert Sarah Palin famously reminded us with her "I can see Russia from here" comment.

In the past 25 years, from the 1991 Gulf War onwards, the U.S. has been involved in military conflict in six of the countries surrounding Iran: Kuwait, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen. Hundreds of thousands have died from U.S. military wars in the region. Two million Iraqis and 3 million Syrians have fled U.S.-sponsored violence and are now refugees in other countries in the region.

From 1980 to 1988, the U.S. supported Iraq with intelligence and chemical weapons in its horrific eight-year war on Iran, which began one year after the Iranian revolution overthrew the U.S. backed government of the Shah of Iran. The Shah had come to power as a result of the American-Anglo orchestrated overthrow of the elected president of Iran in 1953.

Massive Cemetery

On the way from Tehran to Isfahan, we were asked to visit the massive cemetery outside of Tehran with the graves of tens of thousands of Iranians killed during the Iraqi war on Iran. It is estimated that one million Iranians died defending their country from the Iraqi attacks and that between 250,000-500,000 Iraqis died. The road leading to the cemetery has flower stands along the route for visitors to arrive with flowers to place on the graves. Thousands of Iranians visit the cemetery each day. We spoke with one older woman who said she comes to the cemetery each day as all of her sons are buried here. The entire country including very young kids were mobilized to stop the Iraqi invasion of Iran.

The cemetery is the equivalent of Arlington National cemetery outside of Washington, D.C., where many international guests visit to see the history of the United States through the graves of those who were killed in many U.S. wars.

The U.S. military bases surrounding Iran are a constant reminder of the U.S. military threat. U.S. combat aircraft and drones fly daily from U.S. air bases in the region. Not shown on the map are the fleet of U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships that since the 1970s have had a permanent presence in the waters off the coast of Iran in the Persian Gulf.

One incident weighs on the minds of Iranians, much as the events of 9/11 do on Americans. On July 3, 1988, the USS Vincennes, a U.S. guided-missile cruiser, used two radar-guided missiles to shoot down an Iranian civilian passenger aircraft, Iran Air flight 655, that had taken off from the coastal city of Bandar Abbas, Iran. The flight was still

climbing on its regularly scheduled flight to Dubai when it was blown to pieces. Iran Air flight 655 was still in Iranian airspace, on its prescribed routine daily flight route on established air lanes, emitting by radio the standard commercial identifying data when the missiles struck. Two hundred and ninety passengers and crew, including 66 children, were killed.

Earlier in the day on July 3, 1988, the captain of the USS Vincennes, Will Rogers III, had sunk in Iranian waters, two Iranian gunboats and damaged a third. Captain David Carlson of the U.S. Navy frigate "*Sides*" that was also on patrol in the Persian Gulf, later told investigators that the destruction of the airliner by the missiles of the USS Vincennes "marked the horrifying climax to Rogers' aggressiveness." Incredibly, in 1990, Rogers was awarded the Legion of Merit decoration "for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service as commanding officer ... from April 1987 to May 1989." The citation made no mention of the shoot-down of Iran Air 655.

'Never Apologize'

As vice president, George H.W. Bush argued at the United Nations that the U.S. attack on Iranian Airbus flight 655 had been a wartime incident and that the crew had acted appropriately to the situation at the time. He famously and tragically said: "I'll never apologize for the United States of America, ever. I don't care what the facts are." It was not until 1996 that the U.S. agreed to a \$132 million out-of-court settlement in a case brought by Iran in 1989 against the U.S. in the International Court of Justice. The U.S. paid additional compensation for the 38 non-Iranian

deaths.

While the vice president of the United States would not make an apology to the people of Iran, our delegation did.

Barbara Briggs-Letson, a member of our delegation, created a beautiful book expressing our heartfelt remorse. It contains several poems and the name of each person on the flight written in Farsi. We showed the book to Foreign Minister Zarif during our meeting with him and he was very moved by our gesture. A few days later, we gave the book to the Tehran Peace Museum where it will be on permanent display.

The effect of U.S. sanctions on Iran, particularly in the medical field, were brought home to us vividly by people who told us of family members who have died because they were unable to get proper treatment with the most efficient drugs due to sanctions.

Sanctions Block Medical Equipment

Dialysis patients who could be helped by state-of-the-art equipment from Europe or the U.S. are denied that equipment by the sanctions. The financial sanctions block purchase of medicines and medical equipment. Insurance companies in the U.S. and Europe are blocked from paying directly to hospitals medical bills of citizens who need emergency medical care.

While in Iran, a member of our own delegation had chest pains and was taken to hospital where he was diagnosed with heart artery blockage. His family in the U.S., the medical doctor in Iran and a medical doctor on our delegation recommended that he not try to return to the U.S. without

determining the extent of blockage and that he have an angioplasty procedure in Iran. The angioplasty showed dangerous blockage of three arteries. Stents made in the United States were placed in his arteries during the angioplasty procedure to open up the arteries. He would not have been able to travel safely back to the U.S. without the stents.

When the family and the U.S. Interests Section at the Swiss Embassy contacted the patient's insurance carrier, Kaiser Permanente, they were told that due to the sanctions, the insurance company could not pay the Iranian hospital directly, but the patient could be reimbursed after his return to the United States. The U.S. Embassy in Switzerland made a loan through the U.S. Interests section at the Swiss Embassy in Tehran to pay for the medical procedure, which the patient will repay.

Sanctions were a topic of discussion when we had the opportunity to meet with Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif. In a 90-minute talk on our first morning in Tehran, Zarif reminded us that that Iran's 80 million people have lived for the past 40 years under some level of U.S. sanctions. U.S. sanctions on Iran began soon after the 1979 revolution and the student seizure of the U.S. Embassy and holding of 52 U.S. diplomats for 444 days.

Zarif told our delegation: "...the U.S. difficulty with Iran is not because of the region, not because of human rights, not because of weapons, not because of the nuclear issue – it's just because we decided to be independent – that's it – that's our biggest crime. Iranians are resilient people who will resist the arbitrary actions of the Trump

administration in dumping the nuclear agreement and intimidating European partners from honoring the commitments of the agreement to loosening sanctions.”

Zarif said that Iran had worked with the United States in the days after 9/11 to provide information on the Taliban, al Qaeda and other groups in Afghanistan. Iranian cooperation was “rewarded” three months later by the Bush administration, no doubt led by National Security Advisor John Bolton, with placement on Bush’s Axis of Evil list: Iran, Iraq and North Korea.

In an overview of military budgets and spending, he said Saudi Arabia spends \$67 billion buying weapons from the U.S. “Last year, the West sold \$100 billion of weaponry to GCC countries – these small emirates in the Persian Gulf. The entire population of these countries, I don’t think would reach 40 million. A hundred billion dollars in weapons. I don’t, I don’t believe with all due respect they know how to use them. Because they have not been able to defeat basically defenseless people in Yemen. For four years. The war in Yemen, this April, will be 4-years-old.”

Yemen Ceasefire Efforts

Zarif also spoke of his efforts with the U.S. in 2015 to broker a ceasefire to stop the brutal Saudi bombing and blockade on Yemen. The Saudis, after first agreeing to a ceasefire, backed out of the agreement and then the United States, he said, blamed Iran, not Saudi Arabia.

“When the war started, I was involved in the most difficult stage of the negotiations on the nuclear case. Because if you remember in 2015, Congress set a deadline that unless we

had a framework agreement on the nuclear issue by April first, Congress would impose sanctions that the U.S. administration would not be able to waive. We were running against a deadline in Lausanne (Switzerland) when we had that stage of negotiations. And yet, John Kerry and I spent two days from that precious time talking about how to end the war in Yemen although that was not my mandate, but I thought the war in Yemen was so disastrous that we should bring it to an end.”

Zarif continued, “John Kerry and I reached an understanding that we need to end this war. At that time the current minister of state of Saudi Arabia, Adel al-Jubeir, was U.S. ambassador–Saudi ambassador to the U.S. After we reached an agreement on April second or third, John Kerry went back to Washington and talked to Adel al-Jubeir. He went back to Saudi Arabia and got an OK for a ceasefire in Yemen. And he informed me that we can have a ceasefire. I immediately contacted the Houthis and got them to agree to a ceasefire. This is April 2015. In a few days it will be four years.”

He added, “Then I was boarding a plane to Indonesia...I told my deputy – wait for a call from Secretary Kerry, he’ll tell you that the final agreement has arrived. We arrived in Indonesia eight hours later, I called Secretary Kerry and said what happened? He said, ‘Saudis reneged, because they believed they could have a military victory in three weeks.’ I told him they won’t be able to have a military victory, not in three weeks, not in three months, not in three years. But he said, ‘what can I do? I’m fed up with them, they won’t budge.’” I said, ‘Fine, we tried.’ ”

Zarif shook his head and said, “The next day, the very next

day, President Obama, of all people, made a public statement accusing Iran of interfering in Yemen. The very next day. I told them, OK – you couldn't get it (the ceasefire) from your allies, why are you blaming us? You don't want to blame your allies, fine – but, why are you blaming us?"

Much to our surprise, Zarif resigned as foreign minister only a few hours after speaking to our delegation. Reportedly, he resigned after his exclusion from a meeting held with Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad the previous day. Other senior regime officials, including President Rouhani, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force commander Gen. Qassem Soleimani had met with the Syrian dictator Assad in Tehran without Zarif being present.

Less than 24 hours later, Rouhani rejected Zarif's resignation, saying that it would be "against national interests" to accept it.

In an Instagram posting announcing his resignation to the public, Zarif wrote that the Iranian people were displeased with the results of his work on the nuclear framework, giving up thousands of centrifuges and allowing inspections of its nuclear facilities in exchange for lifting of sanctions and a return to normal business around the world. But the U.S. had broken the agreement and had placed heavier sanctions on Iran and extreme pressure and sanctions on any government or financial entity doing business with Iran. Zarif felt he had let the Iranian people down.

Hardliners in both the Iranian and the U.S. governments make the opportunity for dialogue and negotiations very difficult

resulting in the people of Iran continuing to suffer the burden of both Iranian and American ideologies and politicians that have returned international relations to a standstill.

In a move by the hardliners of Iran, on March 12, 2019, Iranian human rights lawyer [Nasrin Sotoudeh was sentenced](#) to at least seven years' imprisonment and perhaps up to 33 years and 148 lashes.

Sotoudeh won the Sakharov Prize in 2012 and was convicted following a trial held in absentia. Her husband Reza Khandan was sentenced to six years' imprisonment in January 2019. The European Union has stated that the right to protest peacefully, as well as the right to express opinion in a non-violent manner, are cornerstones of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a party.

Ann Wright was in the U.S.Army/Army Reserves for 29 years and retired as a colonel. She was a U.S. diplomat for 16 years and served in U.S. embassies in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Micronesia, Afghanistan and Mongolia. She resigned from the U.S. government in March 2003 in opposition to Bush's war on Iraq.

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US Regime Change Blueprint Proposed Venezuelan Electricity Blackouts as 'Watershed Event'

The group that trained Juan Guaidó and his allies laid out plans for galvanizing public unrest in a 2010 memo, Max Blumenthal reports for Grayzone.

By [Max Blumenthal](#)

[Grayzone](#)



A [September 2010 memo](#) by a U.S.-funded soft power organization that helped train Venezuelan coup leader Juan Guaidó and his allies identifies the potential collapse of the country's electrical sector as "a watershed event" that "would likely have the impact of galvanizing public unrest in a way that no opposition group could ever hope to generate."

The memo has special relevance today as Guaidó moves to exploit nationwide blackouts caused by a major failure at the Simon Bolivar Hydroelectric Plant at Guri dam – a crisis that Venezuela's government blames on U.S. sabotage.

It was authored by [Srdja Popovic](#) of the Center for Applied Non-Violent Action and Strategies (CANVAS), a Belgrade-based "democracy promotion" organization funded by the U.S. that has trained thousands of U.S.-aligned youth activists in countries where the West seeks regime change.

This group reportedly hosted Guaidó and the key leaders of his Popular Will party for a series of training sessions, fashioning them into a "Generation 2007" determined to

foment resistance to then-President Hugo Chavez and sabotage his plans to implement “21st century socialism” in Venezuela.

In the 2010 memo, published by WikiLeaks, CANVAS’s Popovic declared, “A key to Chavez’s current weakness is the decline in the electricity sector.” Popovic explicitly identified the Simon Bolivar Hydroelectric Plant as a friction point, emphasizing that “water levels at the Guri dam are dropping, and Chavez has been unable to reduce consumption sufficiently to compensate for the deteriorating industry.”

Speculating on a “grave possibility that some 70 percent of the country’s electricity grid could go dark as soon as April 2010,” the CANVAS leader stated that “an opposition group would be best served to take advantage of the situation and spin it against Chavez and towards their needs.”

A key to Chavez’s current weakness is the decline in the electricity sector. There is the grave possibility that some 70 percent of the country’s electricity grid could go dark as soon as April 2010. Water levels at the Guri dam are dropping, and Chavez has been unable to reduce consumption sufficiently to compensate for the deteriorating industry. This could be the watershed event, as there is little that Chavez can do to protect the poor from the failure of that system. This would likely have the impact of galvanizing public unrest in a way that no opposition group could ever hope to generate. At that point in time, an opposition group would be best served to take advantage of the situation and spin it against Chavez and towards their needs. Alliances with the military could be critical because in such a situation of massive public unrest and rejection of the presidency, malcontent sectors of the military will likely decide to intervene, but only if they believe they have sufficient support. This has been the pattern in the past three coup attempts. Where the military thought it had enough support, there was a failure in the public to respond positively (or the public responded in the negative), so the coup failed.

Flash forward to March 2019, and the scenario outlined by Popovic is playing out almost exactly as he had imagined.

On March 7, just days after Guaidó return from Colombia, where he participated in the failed and demonstrably violent Feb. 23 attempt to ram a shipment of U.S. aid across the Venezuelan border, the Simon Bolivar Hydroelectric Plant

experienced a major and still unexplained collapse.

Days later, electricity remains sporadic across the country. Meanwhile, Guaidó has done everything he can “to take advantage of the situation and spin it” against President Nicolas Maduro – just as his allies were urged to do over eight years before by CANVAS.

Rubio Vows ‘Period of Suffering’

Venezuela has placed the blame squarely on Washington, accusing it of sabotage through a cyber-attack on its electrical infrastructure. Key players in the U.S.-directed coup attempt have done little to dispel the accusation.

In a tweet on March 8, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo framed the electricity outage as a pivotal stage in U.S. plans for regime change:

The power outage and the devastation hurting ordinary Venezuelans is not because of the USA. It’s not because of Colombia. It’s not Ecuador or Brazil, Europe or anywhere else. Power shortages and starvation are the result of the Maduro regime’s incompetence.

– Secretary Pompeo (@SecPompeo) March 8, 2019

At noon on March 7, during a hearing on Venezuela at the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee, Sen. Marco Rubio explicitly called for the U.S. to stir “widespread unrest,” declaring that it “needs to happen” in order to achieve regime change.

“Venezuela is going to enter a period of suffering no nation in our hemisphere has confronted in modern history,” Rubio proclaimed.

Around 5 p.m., the Simon Bolivar Hydroelectric Plant experienced a total and still unexplained collapse. Residents of Caracas and throughout Venezuela were immediately plunged into darkness.

At 5:18 p.m., a clearly excited Rubio took to Twitter to announce the blackout and claim that “backup generators have failed.” It was unclear how Rubio had obtained such specific information so soon after the outage occurred. According to Jorge Rodriguez, the communications minister of Venezuela, local authorities did not know if backup generators had failed at the time of Rubio’s tweet.

Back in Caracas, Guaidó immediately set out to exploit the situation, just as his CANVAS trainers had advised over eight years before. Taking to Twitter just over an hour after Rubio, Guaidó declared, “the light will return when the usurpation [of Maduro] ends.” Like Pompeo, the self-declared president framed the blackouts as part of a regime change strategy, not an accident or error.

Two days later, Guaidó was at the center of an opposition rally he convened in affluent eastern Caracas, bellowing into a megaphone: “Article 187 when the time comes. We need to be in the streets, mobilized. It depends on us, not on anybody else.”

Article 187 establishes the right of the National Assembly “to authorize the use of Venezuelan military missions abroad or foreign in the country.”

Upon his mention of the constitutional article, Guaidó’s supporters responded, “Intervention! Intervention!”

Exploiting Crisis

As Dan Cohen and I reported here at [the Grayzone](#), Guaidó's rise to prominence – and the coup plot that he has been appointed to oversee – is the product of a decade-long project overseen by the Belgrade-based CANVAS outfit.

CANVAS is a spinoff of Otpor, a Serbian protest group founded by [Srdja Popovic](#) in 1998 at the University of Belgrade. Otpor, which means “resistance” in Serbian, was the student group that worked alongside U.S. soft power organizations to mobilize the protests that eventually toppled the late Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic.

CANVAS has been [funded](#) largely through the [National Endowment for Democracy](#), a CIA cut-out that functions as the U.S. government's main arm of promoting regime change.

According to leaked internal [emails](#) from Stratfor, an intelligence firm known as the “[shadow CIA](#),” CANVAS “may have also received CIA funding and training during the 1999/2000 anti-Milosevic struggle.”

A [leaked email](#) from a Stratfor staffer noted that after they ousted Milosevic, “the kids who ran OTPOR grew up, got suits and designed CANVAS... or in other words an ‘export-a-revolution’ group that sowed the seeds for a NUMBER of color revolutions. They are still hooked into U.S. funding and basically go around the world trying to topple dictators and autocratic governments (ones that U.S. does not like ;).”

Stratfor subsequently revealed that CANVAS “turned its attention to Venezuela” in 2005, after training opposition movements that led pro-NATO regime change operations across Eastern Europe.

In September 2010, as Venezuela headed for a parliamentary election, CANVAS produced a series of memos outlining the plans they had hatched with “non-formal actors” like Guaidó and his cadre of student activists to bring down Chavez. “This is the first opportunity for the opposition to get back into a position of power,” Popovic wrote at the time.

In his memo on electricity outages, Popovic highlighted the importance of the Venezuelan military in achieving regime change. “Alliances with the military could be critical because in such a situation of massive public unrest and rejection of the presidency,” the CANVAS founder wrote, “malcontent sectors of the military will likely decide to intervene, but only if they believe they have sufficient support.”

While the scenario Popovic envisioned failed to materialize in 2010, it perfectly describes the situation gripping Venezuela today as an opposition leader cultivated by CANVAS seeks to spin the crisis against Maduro while calling on the military to break ranks.

Since the *Grayzone* exposed the deep ties between CANVAS and Guaidó’s Popular Will party, Popovic has attempted to publicly distance himself from his record of training Venezuela’s opposition.

Today, however, Popovic’s 2010 memo on exploiting electricity outages reads like a blueprint for the strategy that Guaidó and his patrons in Washington have actively implemented. Whether or not the blackout is the result of external sabotage, it represents the “watershed event” that CANVAS has prepared its Venezuelan cadres for.

Max Blumenthal is an award-winning journalist and the author of books including best-selling "[Republican Gomorrah](#)," "[Goliath](#)," "[The Fifty One Day War](#)" and "[The Management of Savagery](#)," which will be published in March 2019 by Verso. He has also produced numerous print articles for an array of publications, many video reports and several documentaries including "[Killing Gaza](#)" and "[Je Ne Suis Pas Charlie](#)." Blumenthal founded the *Grayzone* Project in 2015 to shine a journalistic light on America's state of perpetual war and its dangerous domestic repercussions.

THE ANGRY ARAB: Why Ilhan Omar is a Dangerous Woman for the US

Washington doesn't like its Muslims or Arabs to take pride in their heritage or oppose the Israeli occupation, writes As'ad AbuKhalil.

By [As'ad AbuKhalil](#)

Special to Consortium News



Washington was not expecting the arrival of Reps. Ilhan Omar or Rashida Tlaib. The nation's capital has seen Arabs and Muslims before but they were not like these two new assertive and defiant members of Congress.

The White House, under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, hosted Iftar dinners for Ramadan and invited a variety of Muslims (including of course the Israeli ambassador because he is wildly popular among the world's Muslims), but they were of a different brand. The Bush

administration even employed Muslim Arabs or Muslim-born Americans who preached Bush's doctrine to anyone who would listen in the Middle East.

But those were different Arabs. They were the "non-threatening" Arabs who made Westerners feel comfortable in their racism and bigotry. The Arabs who are welcomed in the halls of Congress are usually mimics of the late president of Egypt, Anwar Sadat, and the current king of Jordan. They are the type of Arabs who praise Western wars and downplay Arab anger at the long record of Israeli occupation and aggression.

Some of those Arabs in D.C. are employed as correspondents for Gulf-regime media. Some had even received their training at the research arm of the Israeli lobby, while others work for racist Congress people. They are the kind of Arabs who are paraded before Western audiences to show them that there are Muslim Arabs who are exceptions: the ones who are willing to insult other Arabs and Muslims, and who tell tales about how they were saved from the terrorism of the religion or the culture of the region.

But Minnesota's Ilhan Omar and Michigan's Rashida Tlaib are different. The Muslims whom Washington has been used to receiving from Lebanon or from Gulf embassies are Muslims who are embarrassed about their religion and about their culture. They are the Muslims who apologize day and night for the terrorism of Muslims, as if all Muslims are responsible for the crimes of the few. (The blaming of all Jews for the crimes of Israel is certainly anti-Semitic—just as the blaming of all Muslims for the crimes of the few Muslims is Islamophobic.)

Ilhan Omar, from the second she entered Congress, has made her audience feel uncomfortable, and the press has had a hard time dealing with her.

Acceptable Extremism

Acceptable and subservient Muslims or Arabs are allowed to hold extremist views and to express hatred and hostility to Jewish people as long as they don't offend Israel or Western governments. Anwar Sadat's background as an anti-Semitic Nazi was never an issue for Israel or Western Zionists. In fact, Stuart Eizenstat, Jimmy Carter's domestic policy advisor, downplays the Nazi sympathy of Sadat and attributes it dismissively to anti-British sentiments, in his [recent book](#), "President Carter."

And when Mahmoud Abbas, the president of Palestine, agreed after the assassination of Yasser Arafat to serve Israeli occupation interests, his anti-Semitic past (his PhD dissertation in Moscow contained Holocaust denial) was also forgiven. The Saudi regime, the largest-by far-purveyor of anti-Semitic propaganda among Muslims in the last century is also forgiven.

It is not about anti-Semitism, as evidenced by Israeli alliances with evangelical Christians and European far-right groups. Zionists object to anti-Semitism—real or concocted as is the case with Omar—when there is criticism of Israel and calls for boycott, divestment and sanctions on Israel, or BDS.

Ilhan Omar also doesn't look the part. Westerners prefer whiskey-drinking Muslims who are willing to mock fellow Muslims, and who are willing to denigrate Palestinian

political aspirations for the amusement of the Zionist think-tank crowd in D.C.

And what is rarely mentioned about Ilhan Omar is that she wears the veil. At least in France, where Islamophobia has become the national secular religion of the republic, the hostility to the veil has become unmasked at all points of the political spectrum, left, right and center.

Hostility to the veil has been less vocally expressed in D.C. (veiled Muslim women have numerous stories of harassment and abuse to tell). But Congress had to change its rules to allow Omar to wear the veil under its roof, even though exceptions to the longstanding hat ban had reportedly been made for the wearing of yarmulkes.

It would have been less irksome for Omar's haters if she did not wear the veil. Westerners prefer Muslims to be atheists or non-practicing Muslims. (In the second teaching position I held at Tufts University, the most senior member of the department of political science once rushed to my office and asked me hurriedly: "You are not Muslim, are you?" I said: "Well, I am from a Muslim family but I am personally an atheist." He said: "Oh, that is good," and left.)

Unacceptable Candor

And Omar speaks in a refreshingly candid language that does not stick to the rhetorical clichés of D.C. politicians.

By contrast, New York's Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has learned to censor herself. Ever since she was attacked for previous remarks she had made about Palestinians, Ocasio-Cortez has resorted to speaking in the vague generalities

that U.S. diplomats also use to avoid the wrath of Israel and its supporters. She no longer seems to even utter the word Palestine. She has become too aware of the price to be paid.

Omar and Rashida Tlaib have also supported BDS, which is the biggest sin, as far as Israel and AIPAC are concerned. The U.S. has made it very clear that BDS has emerged as the second danger to Israel after the threat of military resistance to Israeli occupation and aggression.

The endorsement of BDS by two members of Congress bestows official legitimacy on a movement that Israel has been desperately trying to paint as an anti-Semitic reincarnation of Nazism. But this has been the history of Israeli propaganda: all enemies of Israel, communists, Arab nationalists, Palestinian nationalists, rightists, leftists, have been labeled as anti-Semitic. Even the secular Arab nationalist leader, the late Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, was accused of anti-Semitism by Israel when none of his speeches ever contained an anti-Semitic word.

And now, the U.S. Congress, which sat silent about the wave of Islamophobia unleashed during and after the Trump campaign, suddenly sees the need to issue a proclamation against religious bigotry and racism.

It is a bitter irony that the U.S. Congress has, for the first time, condemned Islamophobia in a statement widely understood to be an attempt to discipline the first Muslim American female member of Congress. The resolution had nothing to do with ostensible congressional outrage against Islamophobia. (Since Sept. 11, many members of Congress have

become vocal anti-Islam bigots, as is U.S. President Donald Trump, who advocated a ban on all Muslim visitors to the country). The reference to Islamophobia was added to appease those new progressive members of Congress and the African American members who protested against a very selective standard of outrage.

Weeks after Omar's election to Congress, the Zionist lobby succeeded in turning her into a caricature. They inserted the word "Jewish" every time she spoke against support for Israel (she did not once refer to Jews in her discourse about Israel and its supporters).

The word "trope" is now a convenient tool to turn someone's criticisms of Israel into grotesque anti-Semitic hatred. Even the progressive Michele Goldberg, one of the few refreshingly courageous columnists in *The New York Times*, insisted that Omar resorted to anti-Semitic "tropes."

The Israeli lobby and the government want to send a clear message through the mistreatment and abuse of Ilhan Omar: that progressive members of Congress, especially if they are Muslim Arab women of color, won't be allowed to express their views on Israel without mobilizing the entire AIPAC machinery in Congress against them.

Ilhan Omar is indeed dangerous. She has broken taboos, along with her colleague Rashida Tlaib. She is dangerous to the hegemony imposed on the nation's capital by the supporters of Israel (and evangelical Christian, not Jews, are now the most fanatical Zionists in U.S. politics). Because Omar is seen as dangerous, the abuse won't end. It has just started.

As'ad AbuKhalil is a Lebanese-American professor of political science at California State University, Stanislaus. He is the author of the "Historical Dictionary of Lebanon" (1998), "Bin Laden, Islam and America's New War on Terrorism (2002), and "The Battle for Saudi Arabia" (2004). He tweets as [@asadabukhalil](https://twitter.com/asadabukhalil)

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Labour's Fight Over Israel Long Time in Coming

The party is being dragged into the modern world by Corbyn's anti-racist leadership towards Palestinians, writes Jonathan Cook.

By [JonathanCook](#)

Jonathan-Cook.net



An announcement this week by the Jewish Labour Movement that it is considering splitting from the British Labour Party could not have come at a worse moment for Jeremy Corbyn. The Labour leader is already besieged by claims that he is presiding over a

party that has become “institutionally anti-Semitic.”

The threats by the JLM should be seen as part of concerted efforts to oust Corbyn from the leadership. They follow on the heels of a decision by a handful of Labour MPs last month to set up a new faction called the Independent Group. They, too, cited anti-Semitism as a major reason for leaving.

On the defensive, Corbyn was prompted to write to the JLM expressing his and the shadow cabinet’s “very strong desire for you to remain a part of our movement”. More than 100 Labour MPs, including members of the front bench, similarly pleaded with the JLM not to disaffiliate. They apologized for “toxic racism” in the party and for “letting our Jewish supporters and members down.”

Their letter noted that the JLM is “the legitimate and long-standing representative of Jews in the Labour party” and added that the MPs recognized the importance of “calling out those who seek to make solidarity with our Jewish comrades a test of foreign policy.”

That appeared to be a swipe at Corbyn himself, who is the first leader of a British political party to prioritize Palestinian rights over the U.K.’s ties to an Israeli state that has been oppressing Palestinians for decades.

Just this week the Labour leader renewed his call for Britain to halt arms sales to Israel following a UN report that said the Israeli army’s shooting of Palestinian protesters in Gaza’s Great March of Return could amount to war crimes.

Evidence Ignored

Despite the media attention, all the evidence suggests that Labour does not have a problem of “institutional anti-Semitism,” or even a problem of anti-Semitism above the marginal racism towards Jews found in the wider British population. Figures show only 0.08 percent of Labour members have been disciplined for anti-Semitism.

Also largely ignored by the British media, and Corbyn’s opponents, is the fact that a growing number of Jews are publicly coming out in support for him and discounting the claims of an “endemic” anti-Semitism problem.

Some 200 prominent Jews signed a letter to *The Guardian* newspaper calling Corbyn “a crucial ally in the fight against bigotry and reaction. His lifetime record of campaigning for equality and human rights, including consistent support for initiatives against antisemitism, is formidable.”

At the same time, a new organization, Jewish Voice for Labour, has been established to underscore that there are progressive Jews who welcome Corbyn’s leadership.

In the current hysterical climate, however, no one seems interested in the evidence or these dissenting voices. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that Corbyn and his supporters are on the back foot as they face losing from Labour an affiliate group of 2,000 members who represent a section of the UK’s Jewish community.

But paradoxically, the loss of the JLM may be inevitable if Labour is serious about becoming a party that opposes racism in all its forms, because the JLM has proved it is incapable of meeting that simple standard.

While the Labour Party has been dragged into an increasingly fractious debate about whether anti-Zionism – opposition to Israel as a Jewish state – equates to anti-Semitism, everyone has been distracted from the elephant in the room. In fact, it is political Zionism, at least in the hardline form adopted by groups such as the JLM, that is racism – towards Palestinians.

Zionism, we should recall, required the ethnic cleansing of 750,000 Palestinians to engineer a “Jewish state” on the ruins of Palestinians’ homeland. It fueled Israel’s hunger for an enlarged territory that led to it occupying the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, and further dispossessing the Palestinians through illegal settlement building.

Zionism has made it impossible for any Israeli government to offer meaningful concessions to Palestinians on statehood to create the conditions necessary for peace. It has justified policies that view “mixing between the races” – between Jews and Palestinians – as dangerous “miscegenation” and “assimilation.”

Furthermore, Zionism has kept Israel’s Palestinian citizens a segregated minority, hemmed up in their own ghettoized communities, denied rights to almost all land in Israel, and corralled into their own separate and massively inferior school system.

Efforts to Oust Corbyn

All of these policies were instituted by Israel’s Labor Party, the sister organization of the JLM in Britain. The JLM not only refuses to oppose these policies, but effectively shields Israel from criticism about them from

within Britain's Labour Party.

The JLM has remained mute on the structural violence of Israel's occupying army, and the systematic racism – encoded in Israel's laws – towards the fifth of its population who are Palestinian citizens.

Meanwhile, the JLM's mother body, the World Zionist Organization, has a division that – to this day – finances the establishment and expansion of settlements in the West Bank, in violation of international law.

Added to this, an *Al Jazeera* undercover documentary broadcast in 2017 showed that the JLM was covertly working with an Israeli government official, Shai Masot, to damage Corbyn because of his pro-Palestinian positions.

Israel, remember, has for the last decade equated to the ultra-nationalist government of Benjamin Netanyahu. His coalition allies seek not a two-state solution, but the takeover of most of the occupied territories and ultimately their annexation, again in violation of international law.

Ella Rose was appointed director of the JLM in 2016, straight from a post at the Israeli embassy.

Relic of Old Politics

Times – and politics – move on. The JLM is a relic of a period when it was possible to claim to be anti-racist while turning a blind eye to the oppression of the Palestinian people. Social media and Palestinians armed with camera

phones – not just Corbyn – have made that evasion no longer possible.

Labour giving pride of place to groups such as the JLM or Labour Friends of Israel – to which 80 of its MPs proudly belong – is, in the current circumstances, as obscene as it would have been 40 years ago for British parties to host their own Friends of South Africa groups.

The Labour Party bureaucracy is being dragged, kicking and screaming, into the modern world by its members, who have felt liberated by Corbyn's leadership and his history of supporting all kinds of anti-racism struggles, including the Palestinian one.

While Britain has major and pressing issues to tackle, from dealing with its exit from Europe to imminent climate collapse, Labour's energies have been sidetracked into a civil war about Israel, of all things.

The old guard want to be allowed to support Israel, even as it heads towards full-blown fascism, while much of the membership want to dissociate from what looks increasingly like another apartheid state – and one whose leaders are seeking to stoke conflict across a volatile region.

Redefining anti-Semitism

Israel's most ardent supporters, and Corbyn's enemies, in Labour will play dirty to protect Israel and their own role from scrutiny, as they have been doing all along.

The JLM led moves last year intended to divide the party by insisting that Labour redefine anti-Semitism to include criticism of Israel.

Rumblings of dissatisfaction from the JLM will be cited as further evidence of the membership's anti-Semitism, because that is the most powerful weapon they have to silence criticism of Israel and deflect attention away from their role in shielding Israel from proper scrutiny within Labour.

Politics is about choices and values. Labour has for many decades sided exclusively with Israel and ignored the rights of Palestinians.

In 1944 – four years before Israel's creation – Labour's annual conference recommended that the natives of Palestine, a large majority population, be ethnically cleansed to advance the goals of European Zionists colonizing their land. The resolution declared: "Let the Arabs be encouraged to move out, as the Jews move in."

That is exactly what Israel did by expelling 750,000 Palestinians, more than 80 percent of the Palestinian population, in events we now call the Nakba (Catastrophe).

For decades after Israel's creation, Labour Party members happily travelled to Israel to toil in agricultural communes, such as the kibbutz, that were built on stolen Palestinian land and which, to this day, refuse to allow any of the country's 1.7 million Palestinian citizens to live in them.

In a speech in 1972, after Israel seized yet more Palestinian lands, including East Jerusalem, Labour leader Harold Wilson urged Israel to hold on to these conquered territories: "Israel's reaction is natural and proper in refusing to accept the Palestinians as a nation."

This is the dark, dishonorable underbelly of Labour racism, and the party's decades-long support for colonialism in the Middle East.

Labour created a hierarchy of racisms, in which concern about hatred towards Jews enjoyed star billing while racism towards some other groups, most especially Palestinians, barely registered.

Under Corbyn and a much-expanded membership, these prejudices are being challenged in public for the first time – and that is justifiably making the party an “unsafe” space for groups such as the JLM and Labour Friends of Israel, which hang on to outdated, hardline Zionist positions.

The JLM's claim to speak for all Jews in Labour has been challenged by anti-racist Jews like those of the Jewish Voice for Labour. Their efforts to defend Corbyn and Labour's record have been widely ignored by the media or, encouraged by JLM, dismissed as “downplaying” anti-Semitism.

The JLM's discomfort may be unfortunate, but it cannot be avoided. It is the price to be paid for the continuing battle by progressives to advance universal rights and defeat racism. This battle has been waged since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was published in 1948 – paradoxically, the year Israel was established by violating the core principles of that declaration.

Israel's racism towards Palestinians has been indulged by Labour for too long. Now history is catching up with Israel, and with groups such as the JLM.

Labour MPs have a choice. They can stand on the wrong side

of history or they can recognize that it is time to fully enter the modern era – and that means embracing a program of anti-racism that encompasses everyone, including Jews and Palestinians.

Jonathan Cook is a freelance journalist based in Nazareth. He blogs at <https://www.jonathan-cook.net/blog/>.

Royal Wedding Got Triple the Media Coverage of Yemen in 2018

That ratio is symptomatic of negative trends at the major networks, writes Jim Lobe.

By [Jim Lobe](#)

[Inter Press Service](#)



The ongoing war in Yemen, called the world’s “worst humanitarian disaster” by the United Nations and independent aid agencies since early last year, received a grand combined total of 20 minutes of coverage on the ABC, NBC, and CBS weekday evening news programs in 2018.

That compared to a total of 71 minutes that the three major networks devoted to the British royal wedding and a combined total of 100 minutes dedicated to the rescue of a dozen young cave explorers from flooding in Thailand, according to the latest annual compilation by the [authoritative Tyndall Report](#).

By contrast, the brutal murder of *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in

September received a total of 116 minutes of coverage by the three networks, making it one of the very few foreign-based stories to make it into the top 20 most-covered network news events in 2018.

Although the Thai cave rescue was clearly a dramatic, emotional and easily accessible story of the kind that lends itself very well to television news, the number of lives at stake were a tiny fraction of those estimated to have been killed in Yemen (50,000-80,000 combatants and non-combatants), not to mention the deaths of well over 100,000 more civilians, including at least 80,000 children under the age of 5 who have succumbed to malnutrition or disease.

The lack of coverage of the Yemen disaster is symptomatic of negative trends regarding foreign news coverage by the major networks, which together remain the biggest single source of international news in the United States

Some 360,000 children there are currently suffering from severe acute malnutrition, while some 20 million Yemenis are unable to “reliably feed themselves or their families [and] almost 10 million are just one step away from famine,” UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said last week. The latter figure amounts to nearly half the population of the Arab world’s poorest nation.

Falling Foreign Coverage

Overall, the lack of coverage of the Yemen disaster is symptomatic of negative trends regarding foreign news coverage by the major networks, which together remain the biggest single source of international news in the United States. An average of more than 22 million households tune

into the nightly newscasts, or about four times the number of those that watch any of the three major cable channels—Fox News, MSNBC, and CNN—on a given evening.

Indeed, this year's Tyndall Report found that network coverage from overseas fell to the lowest point since its publisher, Andrew Tyndall, began systematically tracking and coding the three weeknight newscasts in 1988. Altogether, foreign datelines accounted for only 7.5 percent of all the news generated by those programs (1,092 minutes out of 14,354 minutes) in 2018. (Each half-hour newscast contains an average of roughly 22 minutes of news content.)

“Foreign bureaus have never been so little used,” noted Tyndall in his latest report. “2018 marked a general abdication of the traditional role of the nightly newscasts, which used to provide a daily summary of major national and international news developments,” he told LobeLog in an email.

“Of particular note,” he added, “the top 30 foreign news stories [covered by the three networks' newscasts] contained no mention of the two major western hemisphere elections—in Brazil and Mexico—and none of the major crisis in Europe; namely Brexit.”

Moreover, he wrote in his email,

the overarching international crisis facing the globe as a whole —climate change — was little covered as such, although its symptoms such as wildfires and hurricanes were presented prominently. These symptoms were confined to their domestic occurrence, however, rather than the

manifestations of climate change on a global scale.

I am very pessimistic about the nightly newscasts reforming themselves and ever reverting to their traditional global mission.

Precisely because of its unparalleled reach and the influence of its major sponsors (compared to cable news advertisers), network news has always been designed to appeal to the greatest number of viewers. In important ways, the network news agenda – as shallow, superficial, sensationalistic, and increasingly inward as it is – reveals how Americans see and understand events and trends overseas.

What Did and Didn't Get Attention

The single most network-covered story of the year, according to Tyndall's tally, was the nomination and confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh at 426 minutes, followed by the ongoing probes into alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 election (332 minutes).

Three of the next four biggest stories involved extreme weather and its consequences – the California wildfires (242), severe winter weather (234), and Hurricane Florence in the Carolinas (203). Hurricane Michael in Florida was the 11th biggest story (134 minutes). But, as in past years, these reports, totaling over 800 minutes, were focused almost exclusively on the anticipation and immediate impact of these events rather than the possible relationship between them and climate change.

Aside from the Russian investigations, North Korean-U.S. summitry was the top foreign-policy story, clocking in at

212 minutes, making it the year's fifth-biggest story overall. The detention of migrant children (189) ranked seventh, tied with the Parkland High School mass shooting in Florida, which was followed in turn by coverage of school safety and violence prevention more generally (184). The prosecution of President Trump's lawyer, Michael Cohen, (164) ranked 10th, the winding down of the campaign against the Islamic State in Syria (133) ranked 12th, followed by coverage of the flu season (130) and accusations of partisan bias by the FBI and Khashoggi's assassination (116 minutes each). Police killings of civilians and the federal budget and deficit (112 each), followed by the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics (111), the Facebook controversy (107), and coverage of the Christmas holiday season (105), rounded out the top 20.

As for foreign stories, all things Russia-related – including the alleged election interference (332), U.S.-Russia diplomacy including the Helsinki summit (92); Russian-British diplomacy and the poisoning of the Russian ex-spy (54); and U.S.-Russian spy-related events (23) – led the pack with a total of 501 minutes, or a little over 3 percent of total nightly newscasts.

Immigration-related coverage accounted for nearly the same amount of coverage (493 minutes). It included the detention of migrant children (189), border restrictions and “the wall” (96), immigration reform more generally (75), Central American migrants and caravans (50), DACA Dreamers seeking permanent status (36), crackdowns on undocumented immigrants and deportations (27), and asylum-seekers (20).

The Koreas were the top foreign-policy story: In addition to

the 212 minutes devoted to the summit between President Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un, inter-Korean diplomacy accounted for 48 minutes, and North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programs for another 42 minutes, bringing the total to just over 300 minutes (or about 2 percent of total programming), not counting the 111 minutes on the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang.

The Syrian civil war and Trump's (now-modified) decision to withdraw U.S. troops were the next most-covered foreign-related stories (133), followed by Khashoggi's assassination (116), the cave rescue in Thailand (100), the royal wedding (71), ongoing fighting in Afghanistan (54), U.S.-China trade frictions (52), and steel and aluminum import tariffs (37).

The Israel-Palestinian conflict, NATO-U.S. diplomacy (notably Trump's trip to Brussels), and the Iran nuclear deal, including Washington's withdrawal from it, each earned a grand total of 29 minutes of coverage by the three networks, while the earthquake in Indonesia (26) and the eruption of the volcano in Guatemala (23) gained more than Yemen's 20 minutes in the network spotlight, one minute more than was devoted to Trump's quick visit to London and the Lion Air jet crash (19 minutes each).

Hopes among various humanitarian, human-rights, and peace groups that the media's strong focus on Khashoggi's killing would draw greater public attention to the catastrophic toll suffered by the civilian population during the 4-year-old Saudi-led campaign against Houthi rebels and their allies in Yemen seem to have been disappointed, according to Tyndall's findings. Of the total 20 minutes devoted to Yemen in 2018, 13 minutes preceded the Saudi journalist's death and only

seven minutes followed it. The relatively greater (but still pathetic) amount of attention before the September assassination came mostly as a result of dire warnings issued by the UN earlier in the spring. (Of the 20 minutes, CBS accounted for 11, while NBC and ABC split the remainder.)

The lack of media attention to Yemen post-Khashoggi, however, did not translate into congressional indifference. Motivated in major part by a campaign led by the *Post* itself (as well as other print media), Congress expressed its anger by taking up a series of resolutions that have gained momentum this year to curb U.S. support for the Saudi-led campaign in Yemen.

America's Worldview

If the network evening news provides as good a measure as any of how Americans perceive the world outside U.S. borders, it's not a great picture. As noted by Tyndall himself, South America and sub-Saharan Africa, with a combined population of nearly 2 billion, simply failed to register in the news. The rise of authoritarian movements in Europe also appeared to draw a blank, as did South and Southeast Asia (apart from the cave rescue).

And, despite the multi-trillion-dollar commitment by the United States to stabilizing and securing the Middle East region over the last two decades, there wasn't much evidence of its existence on network television besides the last throes of the campaign against the Islamic State in Syria and the Khashoggi killing. Iraq, to which Washington has sent well over a million troops since the 2003 invasion,

didn't even make the top 30 foreign stories in 2018.

Both Israel and Iran can probably take some satisfaction from their relatively small media footprint last year. The increasingly bellicose fulminations from Trump, National Security Advisor John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo against Tehran are unlikely to get much popular backing – let alone public enthusiasm for a new military conflict in the Middle East – in the absence of far more intense (and negative) coverage of the kind that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has been getting since the Khashoggi murder.

Israel, too, can be happy with its relative obscurity. Despite the hundreds of casualties inflicted by Israeli bullets on Palestinian demonstrators along the Gaza border last year, coverage of Israel-Palestine actually fell by nearly 50 percent, from the 42 minutes the networks devoted to the conflict in 2017, which was already a record low, to a mere 29, according to Tyndall's calculations over the previous 30 years.

This piece was [originally published](#) in Jim Lobe's blog on U.S. foreign policy [Lobellog.com](#)

Jim Lobe joined IPS in 1979 and opened its Washington, D.C., bureau in 1980, serving as bureau chief for most of the years since. He founded his popular blog dedicated to United States foreign policy in 2007. Jim is best known for his coverage of U.S. foreign policy for IPS, particularly the neo-conservative influence in the former George W. Bush administration. He has also written for Foreign Policy In Focus, AlterNet, The American Prospect and Tompaine.com,

among numerous other outlets.

Anti-Semitism vs. Anti-Zionism in France

Lawrence Davidson dismantles Macron's equation of apples and oranges.

By **Lawrence Davidson**

TothePointAnalysis.com



We are at a new stage of the fight to realize Palestinian rights and free both Palestinians and Jews from the consequences of Zionist racism.

There was a time when very few in the West understood the racist nature of the Israeli state. For a long time, the Zionists controlled the public relations message and most people took as fact the fictional account of Israel's founding—such as the one given in Leon Uris's book "Exodus."

After the 1967 war, and Israel's decision to keep even more conquered Palestinian territory, things began to change. Of course, Israel had always been a racist place designed for one group alone. But now the contradictions created by post-war occupation made, and continue to make, that fact harder to hide, and the mythical picture of Israel as a grand democratic experiment has eroded. Increasingly the real, illiberal Israel has become apparent to Western audiences, and particularly to an increasing number of Jews. As a result, Israel has largely lost the public relations battle at the popular level of Western society.

However, the winning of this battle is not to be equated with the winning of the fight mentioned above. The Zionists are still able to maintain Western financial and military support of Israel at obscene levels despite Israel's revealed apartheid nature.

Tactical Shift

To combat the popular criticism to which Israel is now subject, the Zionists have shifted tactics. They have abandoned popular debate and now use their influence with the West's ruling elites to simply criminalize any rhetoric that points out the real discriminatory nature of the Zionist state. The gambit here is to have such criticism legally equated with anti-Semitism.

Last month, on Feb. 20, Emmanuel Macron, the president of the French Republic, addressed the Conseil Représentatif des Institutions Juives de France (CRIF)—the Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions. Macron's topic was the country's "resurgence of anti-Semitism."

Indeed, there has been a rise in anti-Semitic incidents in France over the last couple of decades. Significantly, Macron did not attempt to analyze why this was happening. For instance, while asserting that anti-Semites "are not worthy of the Republic," he did not take note of the historical fact that anti-Semitism has been a major force in France for hundreds of years and through multiple French forms of government. Historically it has ebbed and flowed.

We can trace this trend back to medieval France and the absolutist Catholic culture of that time. While ultimately revolutionary 18th century France (a markedly anti-clerical

period) was the first European country to emancipate Jews, anti-Semitism never disappeared. It again became particularly virulent in France during the Dreyfus Affair in the 1890s and under the Nazi-allied Vichy regime in the 1940s. Thus, the presence in today's France of traditional anti-Semites, those who are prejudiced against Jews qua Jews, should come as no surprise.

The latest outbreak of hostility involving Jews in France is the product of modern historical factors that more than one Paris government has failed to confront. This failure has increased resentment against some French Jews—particularly those who are Zionists. Yet it is important to note that much of this sort of emotion is not a function of anti-Semitism.

For instance, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* has noted that “anti-Semitism” is now “often surfacing among radicalized Muslims” in France. While we can take issue with the notion of “radicalized” Muslims and the description of their sentiments as “anti-Semitism,” we will address the assertion of hostility and ask why should this be so.

It may be because France has treated its citizens of Arab origin very poorly while simultaneously and publicly supporting Israel, which, of course, treats its own Arab population even worse.

France has a long imperial and colonial history in the Arab world and fought a bitter, relatively recent war to hold onto Algeria. When, in 1962, it finally abandoned that effort, there were 150,000 Algerian Arabs who had fought with the French. They were disarmed and then abandoned to

their fate—prevented from emigrating to France by the government of that day. However, “through the kindness of individual French commanders ... several thousand were illegally smuggled to France where on arrival they were confined to primitive rural camps.”

When they were finally let out of the camps, they continued to be segregated and discriminated against. This prevailing prejudice was maintained in the treatment of other African and Middle Eastern immigrants who subsequently made their way to France. One ongoing sign of this can be found in the culture war against Muslims living in the country. Muslim dress, and even halal food, have been deemed dangerous to traditional French culture. The anger of the French Arab population stems from this continuous discrimination, but why would some of it be directed against a portion of France’s Jewish citizens?

The Israeli Connection

It may well be because more and more French Arabs, angry over their discriminatory treatment by French society, increasingly identify with Palestinians, who are also discriminated against by Israeli society. And, they are encouraged in this identification by the fact that, except for a brief period under the leadership of Charles De Gaulle, France has been a strong supporter of Israel.

This is a tradition that Macron accentuated in his address to the CRIF. He told his audience that he will make anti-Zionism the equivalent of anti-Semitism under French law. Macron justifies this move by claiming that “anti-Zionism is one of the modern forms of anti-Semitism.”

What Macron is saying is that in France you cannot speak out against the ideological basis for Israeli racism. If you do so, you yourself will be judged a racist and a criminal. Just how unreasonable this is is elegantly explained in an [“open letter”](#) to Macron by the Israeli historian Shlomo Sand, posted on Feb. 8 in the publication *Jacobin*.

In his letter Sand points out that Zionist Israel is not a republic on the Western model, and certainly not a democracy. It is a “Jewish communalist state.” That is why Sand cannot be a Zionist, because “I am a citizen who desires that the state he lives in should be an Israeli republic, and not a Jewish-communalist state. ... I do not want to live in a state that, according to its own self-definition, makes me a privileged class of citizen.”

Sand goes on to explain that “the Israeli Interior Ministry counts 75 percent of the country’s citizens as Jewish, 21 percent as Arab Muslims and Christians, and 4 percent as ‘others’ (sic). Yet according to the spirit of its laws, Israel does not belong to Israelis as a whole, whereas it does belong even to all those Jews worldwide who have no intention of coming to live there.”

Under these circumstances, one cannot be someone who takes republican and democratic principles seriously and still be a Zionist. So Sand has made his choice: he wants to replace Zionist Israel with “an Israeli republic.” Then he asks,

“Mr. President, do you think that that makes me an antisemite?”

Apparently Macron is oblivious to the logic of Shlomo Sand. Perhaps this is because, at this moment, illogic serves his

political purposes much better. And so, in Macron's France apples become oranges. That is, anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism become the same.

Why is this illogical? It is so because anti-Semitism is directed against Jewish people no matter where they are found and based on nothing other than their religion/ethnicity. On the other hand, anti-Zionism is opposition to a specific political doctrine based on its racist nature and practice in the state of Israel. It is not just many French Arabs who understand this. Many French Jews themselves are anti-Zionist. At the same time, French anti-Semites, who probably dream of an exclusive French "communalist state," want to see all French Jews pack up and move to Israel. This puts these anti-Semites on the same team as avid Zionists.

And what about the French Jews who are anti-Zionist? Macron is putting these Jewish citizens in a position where they can be legally accused of anti-Semitism. As French journalist Dominique Vidal [described the situation](#) to FRANCE 24: "if we consider opposition to Theodore Herzl's theory as anti-Semitic, then we're saying that the millions of Jews who do not wish to live in Palestine and the occupied territories are anti-Semites. ... It's historical illiteracy, or worse, stupidity."

No Shlomo Sand

Macron is not stupid, but neither is he a principled democratic republican like Shlomo Sand. He knows that if, as his party spokesman now puts it, "denying the existence of Israel [that is, Israel as a Jewish state] ... has to be made

a criminal offense,” you are making it illegal to stand with the Palestinians and against the racist nature inherent in a religious and ethnically exclusive state. Macron is using the law to silence popular opposition to Israel. Also, in this way the hostility of French Arabs to Zionist French Jews becomes criminal.

This is exactly the current Israeli strategy in response to having lost the public debate over the true nature of the Zionist project in Palestine—criminalize the arguments of your critics.

No French national leader would support such an anti-democratic strategy unless he or she is a political opportunist who is currying the favor of a politically powerful lobby. In the case of Emmanuel Macron, this is also a maneuver to label his opponents (perhaps France’s Muslims as well as all those protesting “yellow vests”) as anti-Semites.

No French leader would ally with the Zionists in this effort unless they have no problem with corrupting the logic of the law by demanding that apples legally become oranges. And, no French leader would act in this way unless they have little or no interest in dealing with France’s real racial problems by seeking real answers.

It is this last fact that, in the long run, is most dangerous for French culture and politics. As we have seen, anti-Semitism is nothing new in France. It is embedded in a certain French self-image that is, in the end, reluctant to allow entry to anyone not deemed truly French, be they

Muslims or Jews. Unless French leaders are willing to challenge this cultural puritanism, they will find anti-Semitism, and other forms of xenophobic passions, poisoning their national life for the indefinite future.

Lawrence Davidson is professor of history emeritus at West Chester University in Pennsylvania. He has been publishing his analyses of topics in U.S. domestic and foreign policy, international and humanitarian law and Israel/Zionist practices and policies since 2010.

Eric Hobsbawm, the Joy of History and All That Jazz

The writer's global appeal will remain something for the history books, writes Pepe Escobar.

By [Pepe Escobar](#)

[Asia Times](#)



We all lose by not having Eric Hobsbawm absorb the geopolitical dementia of the early 21st century to later refine it in sharp, crisp historical analysis.

A new, exhaustive biography, [“Eric Hobsbawm: A Life in History,”](#) by his former student and [Regius Professor](#) of history emeritus at Cambridge, Richard Evans – out now in the U.K. and in the U.S. in April – allows us to evaluate the extent of our loss.

It all starts with – what else – an undying love of good

books: "In the end, one doesn't just read them, one lives with them. That's civilization." That's so apt coming from someone who in 1940, during the war, read "100 pages of Stendhal on the back of a lorry – a gesture of civilization."

At the time "the English boy" born in Alexandria, Egypt in June 1917, was not contemplating the idea of becoming a professional historian. He'd rather write "proletarian literature." During a stressful – historical – juncture when Hitler announced he expected to take up residence in London within a fortnight, Hobsbawm was already determined that "I want to write so that everyone recognizes the houses and streets, smells the flowers, feels the passions." In the end, he somehow achieved his dream – to be a historian.

Readers in five continents know that Hobsbawm always defined himself as a Marxist. It says a lot about British intelligence that MI5 spent a lot of time and energy tracking Hobsbawm while totally bypassing the "Cambridge Five" who were merrily passing secrets to the USSR – Blunt, Burgess, Cairncross, MacLean and Philby – all of them, unlike Hobsbawm, Brit establishment to the core.

The book details delightful personal vignettes, such as this of Hobsbawm in Paris in the early 1950s, "observing the passing scene from the approved cafes such as the Flore or the Rhumerie" and mingling with, among others, Lucien Goldmann, Roland Barthes and Edgar Morin, the great Henri Cartier-Bresson, going to jazz clubs, and interacting with intellectuals who were either unorthodox Marxists or drifting away from Marxism for good. He got to know Jean-Paul Sartre quite well – sharing the odd mutton curry at La

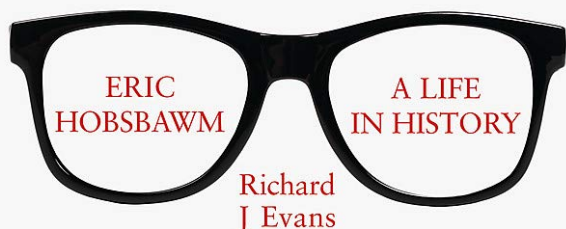
Coupole.

At the time both the French and the British Communist Party were hardcore Stalinist, totally unlike Hobsbawm. No wonder the party in Paris never invited him to any meetings. Hobsbawm was a consummate political pragmatist. He may have been a communist, of course, but never sectarian. His loyalty, above all, was to the broad cause of socialism. As Evans stresses, "he believed consistently in the unity of the Left, not in any kind of Marxist sectarianism."

All That Jazz

The official "Made in the U.S.S.R." party line on jazz was extremely negative during the Stalinist era. Then, rehabilitation ensued. By 1962 jazz was all the rage, for instance, in Czechoslovakia. That's when jazz – and especially the blues – started to be sold across the "real socialism" sphere as the music of the oppressed black working class in capitalist America.

Enter Hobsbawm as jazz critic of the *New Statesman*, under the pseudonym Francis Newton. At the time, late 1950s to early 1960s, journalism was despised by British academia. Swinging from jazz clubs and concerts to the quasi-mythical hipster hangout, the Downbeat Club in Old Compton Street in Soho, Hobsbawm pulled it off as a cultural reporter instead of music critic. Many in academia were oblivious to his alter ego.



Hobsbawm 's jazz criticism is fascinating in itself. He was attracted by the cerebral classicism of the modern jazz quartet, rejecting “the old, full-blooded, spontaneous jazz ... because it reminds them of oppression, illiteracy, of Negroes clowning to wheedle crumbs from the whites.”

He didn't get Miles Davis – “surprisingly narrow technical and emotional range” – or Thelonius Monk – “neither the technical mastery nor the staying power” of Duke Ellington. On the other hand, he found Ornette Coleman “unforgettable.” He would always display a positively gloomy vision of mass-produced pop. Hobsbawm was a marvelous interviewee. I wish I could have asked him back in the 1980s what he thought of David Bowie.

Evans does full justice to the importance of the “Age” trilogy.

‘The Age of Revolution,’ following European history from 1789 to 1848, made a splash with its formidable thesis tracing the simultaneous impact of the “dual revolution,” the French political and ideological and the British

industrial; essentially, the foundation of the modern world.

The concept of “dual revolution” would become seminal in every historical writing and teaching of the past half-century. No one before Hobsbawm had shown that the Industrial Revolution was due to Britannia ruling the waves, which enabled it to create a virtual monopoly of cotton exports to India and Latin America.

He also definitely showed how the French bourgeoisie, as a “coherent social group,” drove political change “when the French monarchy, mired in deep financial crisis following the War of Independence in the U.S., lost the support of the feudal aristocracy.”

By the time ‘The Age of Capital’ was out, in the mid-1970s, Hobsbawm had clinched a triple treat; academic recognition, vast commercial success, full respect and recognition by the British establishment.

“The Age of Empire,” chronicling the “long 19th century” from 1789 to 1914, unveiled a magnificent concept also essential to any future historical scholarship. Arguably the best summary ever of Hobsbawm’s prodigious gifts was offered in a review by Perry Anderson:

“...economy of synthesis; vividness of detail; global scope, yet acute sense of regional difference; polymathic fluency, equally at ease with crops and stock markets, nations and classes, statesmen and peasants, sciences and arts; breadth of sympathies for disparate social agents;

power of analytic narrative; and not least a style of remarkable clarity and energy, whose signature is the sudden bolt of metaphoric electricity across the even surface of cool, pungent argument.”

The Universalist Project

Hobsbawm instinctively knew already in 1989 what would happen after the collapse of the U.S.S.R. At a conference in Sweden, as recalled by French historian Patrick Fridenson, he prophesized: “With the Soviet Union you have had peace; you are going to have war.”

Later on, in 1990, he would write: “The fall of the Soviet-type system, about which all illusion had long gone, is less significant than the apparent end of the dream of which it was the nightmare version.”

No wonder Hobsbawm was a critic of nationalism and identity politics. He always stressed, “the political project of the left is universalist.” Nations were no more than artificial constructs – see, for instance, the British empire arbitrarily demarcating the borders of Afghanistan and Iraq, among others.

Hobsbawm’s “Age of Extremes” turned him into a global superstar. But there are flaws. Essentially, the point of view is centered on Vienna, Berlin and London. There is no comprehensive analysis of the ascension of the American bourgeoisie, or the turbulence across East Asia. The book actually revolves around the history of the decline of a Western civilization that totally betrayed the 19th-century promise of cultural and material flowering.

At dinner parties, Hobsbawm eschewed small talk and behaved as a true political party animal. He wanted to cut to the chase right away. As his editor at Penguin, Stuart Proffitt, recalled: "The quality of his information from around the world, in extreme old age – this must have been when he was 93, 94, something like that – but he knew exactly what was going on all over the world. I mean, he was like a sort of one-man *Economist Intelligence Unit*. It was really, really extraordinary."

Hobsbawm the Brazilian

Hobsbawm may have become widely respected in the U.S., due to his academic stints, and in India, but in Brazil he became larger-than-life. His books sold almost a million copies. He was essential in shaping the political thinking of two former presidents, Cardoso and Lula.

In 1975, during the military dictatorship, he was invited to the first major conference featuring leftist intellectuals such as Arno Mayer from Princeton and Juan Linz from Yale. Talking fluently about Brazilian peasant millenarian movements, he had the guts to declare he was a Marxist historian, planting a seed that would engender the end of the military dictatorship in the following decade.

It's impossible to understand where Eric Hobsbawm was coming from without the essential background provided by Evans. Hobsbawm became acquainted with Marxist theory and an ideal of communism in the early 1930s, when the Communist Party seemed to many young people of his generation to embody the only possible hope of defeating Nazism and building a better world.

So this spectacle of a great mass movement sharing common ideals forged in Hobsbawm a lifelong, visceral emotional sense of belonging, healing the scars in his shattered family life. Evans sums it all up: "This feeling lasted, buried deep in his soul, for the rest of his life."

And that's how we should also understand his passion for jazz – the search for a community that provided some sort of emotional equivalent of a family.

Hobsbawm never followed the party line. Only intellectual amoebas could possibly accuse him of being a Stalinist. He did, consciously, remain part of a global network of fellow leftist intellectuals for the rest of his life. In a nutshell, he was a crossover Marxist, an absolutely unique, polyphonic, intellectual mix shaped by myriad influences.

And the greatest thing is that he was, above all, one helluva writer. It was literature that guided him to history. And that's why, ashes to ashes, his global appeal will remain something for the history books.

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