

Toward a New National Security Policy

During the Cold War, the U.S. avoided large permanent bases in the Islamic world so as not to enflame anti-Western passions. But that changed with the Persian Gulf War, endangering rather than protecting the interests of the American people – and highlighting why a new national security policy is needed, writes Gareth Porter.

By Gareth Porter

The starting point for a citizens' campaign for a new national security strategy should be to call attention to the reality that U.S. wars supposedly against terrorism have produced clear winners and losers.

The winners are the leaders of the military, the Pentagon, the CIA and their private-sector and elected political allies. Aggressive U.S. wars are not merely the result of mistaken policies, but of the national security institutions pursuing their own interests at the expense of the interests of the American people.

The “war on terror” is a means for those institutions to maintain the present allocation of national resources and power to the national security sector for the indefinite future.

The losers are the rest of the American people. This “permanent war state” is now so politically powerful that it can keep the United States at war, even after the rationale for the war has been discredited or become irrelevant and the war has turned into a political and military disaster.

Over the past decade, the permanent war state has captured up to \$1.3 trillion to pay for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as an additional \$2.3 trillion in defense and other national security spending (homeland security, international affairs, etc.) over and above the level of the first post-Cold War decade.

That appropriation by the national security state of an additional \$3.6 trillion in additional resources during a decade of economic decline, accounting for 40 percent of the additional national debt, represents a power grab of immense proportions.

The most urgent reason to demand an end to the super-militarized approach to national security adopted by the U.S. national security state is that it has created extreme anti-Americanism across the Islamic world that ensures that the American people will face the threat of terrorism against the U.S. homeland for

the indefinite future with all the assaults on their freedoms that go with it.

This approach shifts the attention of activists from each individual war policies to the underlying war system and the interests that drive it.

That shift allows an anti-militarism movement to adopt an offensive posture rather than one that is reactive and even defensive in the face of each new move by the national security state.

Provocation of Terrorist Threats

A citizen's campaign to change U.S. national security policy should insist that the United States take the only steps that can sharply reduce and then end the threat of terrorism against the U.S. homeland: the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Islamic countries and an end all military activities being waged in Islamic lands.

During the Cold War, the United States avoided stationing troops in Islamic countries, in large part because of those well-known Islamic sensitivities about the stationing of Western troops in Islamic countries.

It is no accident that the George H. W. Bush administration breached that longstanding injunction by launching the first Gulf War in 1991 and then maintaining a significant U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia just as the end of the Cold War was threatening a drastic reduction in the military budget.

The objective of the war and insertion of U.S. military power into the Middle East was to create a new rationale for Cold War levels of military spending by shifting the focus of military planning to regional adversaries. Saddam Hussein's Iraq was to be the primary exemplar.

Osama bin Laden's argument that the presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia was unacceptable was supported not only by conservative Wahhabi Saudi clerics but by many Islamic clerics throughout the Middle East and even in the predominantly non-Muslim countries.

The clerics urged Muslim faithful to defend Islam against U.S. military incursions on Islamic lands.

Those who responded to that message included the Saudi nationals who would later volunteer to participate in the al Qaeda plan to fly U.S. commercial planes into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, some of whom explicitly discussed the U.S. occupation of Saudi Arabia as the reason for the 9/11 attacks in "martyr videos." [See Robert A. Pape and James K. Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse*; Steve Fainaru and Alia Ibrahim, "Mysterious Trip to Flight 77 Cockpit," *Washington*

Post, Sept. 10, 2002.]

Two bombing attacks on U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia were carried out, apparently by followers of bin Laden in 1995 and 1996, after which bin Laden declared open war against the United States for its military interference in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the region.

But even those dramatic warning signals prompted no rethinking of U.S. military policy. On the contrary, the Pentagon and the Clinton administration continued to maintain a de facto state of war with Iraq through the 1990s punctuated by occasional bombing attacks against Iraqi targets.

Those whose personal and institutional interests are served by aggressive U.S. military policy in the Middle East understood that they were increasing the risk of terrorism.

The neoconservative historian Robert Kagan would later write, "We have pretty good reasons to believe that the Persian Gulf War in 1991, and the continuing presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia after the war, was a big factor in the evolution of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda."

But Kagan, reflecting the views of the national security state, argued that the United States was right to go ahead with such military policies even if they knew they would result in terrorist attacks on the United States.

A "very senior officer" who served on the Pentagon's Joint Staff in the 1990s says he heard "more than once" from colleagues that terrorist attacks were "a small price to pay for being a superpower." [See Richard H. Shultz, Jr., "Nine reasons why we never sent our Special Operations Forces after al Qaeda before 9/11," *The Weekly Standard*, Jan. 26, 2004.]

The George W. Bush administration exploited the 9/11 attacks to pursue the interest of the national security state in making the United States the dominant military power in the Middle East.

It sent forces into Afghanistan not to capture or kill bin Laden but to overthrow the Taliban regime. Then it quickly began planning for the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

For those who were concerned primarily with terrorism, the danger of such a war to the American people was perfectly clear.

In 2002 when the Bush administration was planning the invasion of Iraq, Rand Beers, then one of the two top White House counter-terrorism officials, complained bitterly to his former boss, Richard Clarke, "Do you know how much it

will strengthen al Qaeda and groups like that if we occupy Iraq?" [See Richard A. Clarke's *Against All Enemies*.]

After the U.S. invasion of Iraq, volunteers from all over the Middle East quickly poured into Iraq, giving al Qaeda, previously a small group hiding in the relatively inaccessible Kurdish region of Iraq, a new power and influence both in Iraq and in the Middle East more generally.

In mid-2005 the CIA concluded in a classified assessment that Iraq had assumed the role once played by the jihad against Soviet occupation in Afghanistan in building up a cadre of jihadists with terrorist skills. [See Douglas Jehl, "CIA Describes Iraq as Terrorist Laboratory," *International Herald Tribune*, June 23, 2005.]

Two top former counter-terrorism officials, Cofer Black and Roger Cressey, warned that the jihadists drawn to Iraq would eventually disperse to their home countries after having been trained in techniques of bombings and assassination, which could eventually threaten Americans directly. [Shaun Waterman, "Officials see terror threat from Iraq vets," UPI, June 1, 2005.]

A National Intelligence Estimate issued in April 2006 concluded, "The Iraqi conflict has become the 'cause celebre' for jihadists, breeding deep resentment of U.S. involvement in the Muslim World and cultivating supporters for the global jihadist movement." [Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate "Trends in Global Terrorism", online at http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/Declassified_NIE_Key_Judgments.pdf.]

The former head of the CIA's counter-terrorism center, Robert Grenier, warned that the U.S. war had "convinced many Muslims that the United States is the enemy of Islam, and they have become jihadists as a result of their experience in Iraq." [Josh Meyer, James Gerstenzang and Greg Miller, "Bush Ties Al Qaeda in Iraq to Sept. 11," *Los Angeles Times*, July 25, 2007.]

Public opinion surveys and focus groups in nine Middle Eastern and South Asian Islamic countries in 2009 show that majorities ranging from 52 percent to 92 percent of the respondents believed the United States might threaten their country in the future.

The fear and anger felt in those Islamic countries over U.S. wars and troop presence in Islamic countries translates into support for attacks on the United States by substantial minorities ranging from 9 percent to 14 percent of the populations of those countries. [Steven Kull, *Feeling Betrayed: The Roots of Muslim Anger at America* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2011)]

In a dramatic illustration of the effect on attitudes toward anti-U.S. terrorism

in the tribal area of northwest Pakistan, drone strikes have boosted recruiting for global jihadist groups and six out of 10 respondents support suicide bombings against U.S. military forces. [Jonanthan S. Landay, "U.S. drones: killing Pakistani extremists or recruiting them?" McClatchy Newspapers, April 7, 2009; "Public Opinion in Pakistan's Tribal Regions, September 2010," published by New American Foundation and Terror Free Tomorrow, online at http://newamerica.net/publications/policy/public_opinion_in_pakistan_s_tribal_regions.]

Power Projection

One of the driving forces for U.S. wars since the beginning of the Cold War has been the constant push by the U.S. military and its civilian allies to maintain or expand its network of military bases and alliances across the globe.

In the early to mid-1960s, it was not the fear of "falling dominos" i.e., communism sweeping across Southeast Asia – that motivated top U.S. officials in the Johnson administration to call for war in Vietnam but their fear of Asian accommodation with China.

They were afraid of losing the dominant U.S. military position in the Far East, consisting mainly of U.S. air bases surrounding China and North Vietnam in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines and Thailand. [See Gareth Porter, *Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War*.]

Likewise, the invasion of Iraq was driven by a desire for military bases in that country to ensure U.S. political-military dominance of the entire Middle East/Persian Gulf region by allowing coercion of Iran and Syria.

Thus when the United States invaded Iraq, the Pentagon was already planning to maintain four "enduring bases" meaning, permanent bases – in Iraq. [Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, "Pentagon Expects Long-Term Access to Four Key Bases in Iraq," *New York Times*, April 30, 2003.]

After Iraq insisted in 2008 on complete U.S. withdrawal, the attention of the U.S. military shifted to obtaining permanent bases in Afghanistan.

These permanent facilities are justified in variety of ways: the need to intimidate Iran; the continued war against al Qaeda; the instability in Pakistan; and the general advantage assumed to accompany U.S. military power abroad.

But any use of military force in the vast area where the network of bases is

located would simply make Americans less secure.

The real motive for projecting U.S. military forces abroad is to enhance the power of the military institutions themselves and their Pentagon and other civilian allies, not to protect Americans from any serious threat to their security.

The security of the American people demands that all such bases intended to support wars that are not in the interests of the American people be closed down as part of the transformation of U.S. national security policy from a posture that is provocative to Islamic peoples to one that is non-provocative.

The principle of avoiding military presence that provokes antagonistic responses applies to the complex of U.S. military bases and alliances left over from the Cold War in East Asia.

The national security state argues that these bases are necessary to “shape” the security environment in East Asia. But that network of bases in the Asia-Pacific region still fulfills the same function that it did during the Cold War.

It is a vested interest in search of a rationale. Even after North and South Korea began negotiations on a settlement in the late 1990s, the Pentagon continued to put more military bases in East Asia.

The new rationale for expanding the U.S. military footprint in Asia over the past decade has been to maintain a “hedge” against Chinese regional domination decades in the future.

Such “hedging” in regard to possible war with China is central to the national security state’s demand for extraordinary levels of military spending, without which it could justify wartime expenditures for the Air Force and Navy.

That rationale is bogus; the consensus among intelligence and military analysts has long been that the importance of China’s economic ties to the United States makes it unlikely that China will seek a confrontation with Washington. [See Sam J. Tancredi, “The Future Security Environment, 2001-2025: Toward a Consensus View,” in Michele A. Flournoy, ed., *QDR: Strategy-Driven Choices for America’s Security* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2001).]

A citizens’ campaign should therefore call for a plan to phase out U.S. bases in East Asia over the next decade.

Even if they don’t suck the United States into a war, U.S. military bases abroad are merely empty symbols of illusory power, which are regarded as perquisites of the U.S. military’s power at home and abroad.

The only way to break the cycle of the quest for dominant power provoking conflict and insecurity is to demand that the United States adopt a policy like other major powers, including China, of abjuring foreign military presence.

Once the two main national-security-state dodges of wars against terrorism and power projection abroad are removed, the rationale for most U.S. military spending disappears.

There is no need for a large army, or for anything like the level of air and naval power sought for decades by those military services. The fundamental reform of national security policy should be accompanied by cuts in military spending to a fraction of the level during and after the Cold War.

This fundamental shift in policy from seeking dominant power to defending the homeland will thus require a comprehensive national plan for phasing out the present level of military spending and planning for peacetime economic alternatives in regard to production and employment.

A New National Security Policy

In order to provide a focal point and action objective for a citizens' campaign for a new national security policy, we need a new legislative charter that outlines what must be done to bring about a decisive transition over the next few years from the existing policy to one that truly serves the interests of the American people.

That legislation should state, in part, that "shall be the national policy of the United States":

1. to withdraw all military personnel from Islamic countries through a published timetable and to refrain from stationing troops or carrying out military operations in Islamic countries in the future;
2. to cease to pursue the aim of military dominance in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf and East Asia and to withdraw from military bases in those regions built on premises that are now clearly invalid;
3. to reduce military spending by 40 to 50 percent over the next three years, and to continue to reduce spending further in the subsequent five year period to a level representing no more than 30 percent of the level of military expenditures in FY 2011;
4. to establish a national economic conversion plan to support this reduction in military expenditures.

Gareth Porter is an independent investigative historian and journalist on U.S. national security policy. He was co-director of the Indochina Resource Center in Washington, D.C. during the Vietnam War and is the author of *Perils of*

Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam (University of California Press, 2006).

The Moral Imperative of 'Activism'

Exclusive: On Sept. 18, former CIA analyst Ray McGovern gave a talk about "activism" to a conference in Charlottesville, Virginia, focused on the need to confront the military industrial complex. Now, as the occupation of Freedom Plaza in Washington gets underway, his words take on a special resonance.

By Ray McGovern

The past 50 years have shown that President Dwight Eisenhower was spot on about the Military Industrial Complex and what to expect if Americans were not vigilant, which, of course, we have not been, until maybe now.

An endless train of outrages and indignities can be traced to the inordinate influence of the M.I.C. And a truly formidable challenge awaits those of us determined not to let our democracy be taken away from us by the greed of a small minority.

But the view from where I stand at this podium evokes a powerful feeling of enthusiastic anticipation. The challenges presented by the M.I.C. seem not so daunting as I look out on all you activists.

I'll confess, it took me a while to become comfortable with the sobriquet commonly used these days to introduce me: "intelligence analyst turned activist." In the circles in which I moved for 30 years, the epithet "activist" was usually hurled in a condescending tone. As in what can activists accomplish?

But, there was the Vietnam War, no? Often it takes a while, but activists do change things.

In an interview several months ago, former President George W. Bush referred sneeringly to "activists." Like you all, I have become accustomed to the customary sneers and smears.

And that's precisely why standing here is so important to me. For those given the privilege of looking out at so many gutsy "activists" for Justice, the sneers, smears, and spears lose all their sting.

Hope is reborn, because you give flesh to that hope.

What I think has been especially great is that, over the past days, so many of you have also had the opportunity to be encouraged, fortified by the view from this podium. Perhaps you, too, have found the experience an effective inoculation against despair and a fillip to action.

Paying the Rent

No one has put it better than a precious new friend I met on a “cruise” in the eastern Mediterranean, Alice Walker, who put it this way: “Activism is my rent for living on this planet.”

As some of you know, that attitude found her a passenger on “The Audacity of Hope”, the U.S. Boat to Gaza, this past summer.

On July 1, we made an activist break for the open sea and Gaza but were able to sail only nine nautical miles out of Athens before the Greek government, under extreme pressure from the White House, ordered its Coast Guard to intercept us, threaten to board us, and eventually to impound our boat.

It turned out not so bad. We raised a lot of interest, calling attention to the large open-air prison in which the Likud government in Israel, supported by the taxes we pay, seal off 1.6 million Gazans into the largest open-air prison on the planet.

And, for those who care to look, we exposed our President kow-towing, for the umpteenth time, to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Barack Obama could not get him to agree not to shoot up our boat, as they did the Mavi Marmora in May of last year.

So the White House decided to take the easy way out and bully Greece into issuing an edict that no boats could leave Greek ports for Gaza.

You learn a lot, and often you expose a lot, when you accept the challenge of being an “activist!”

Unreasoned Patience?

I find that people often are conflicted about whether or not to allow themselves to be angry. Thomas Aquinas, who wrote a lot about virtue, got quite angry when he realized there was no word in Latin for just the right amount of anger, for the virtue of anger.

Thomas cited what a famous fourth-century theologian said on the subject: “He or she who is not angry, when there is just cause for anger, sins. Why? Because anger *respicit bonum justitiae*, anger looks to the good of Justice, and if you can live among injustice without anger you are unjust.”

Aquinas added his own corollary; he railed against what he called “unreasoned patience,” which, he said, “sows the seeds of vice, nourishes negligence, and persuades not only evil people but good people to do evil.”

As we look at the effects of the military industrial complex, who will deny that there is just cause for anger, just the right amount of anger, the virtue of anger. And the fact that this is part of what motivates us, well that’s as it should be.

Frankly, I have not thought of us activists being virtuous, but maybe we are, at least in our willingness to channel our anger into challenging and changing the many injustices here and around the world. There should be no room these days for “unreasoned patience.”

Prophets/Activists & Cads

The Hebrew Scriptures feature the witness of prophets channeling the virtue of anger into speaking truth to power. Many of them were eccentric, from the Greek *ek kentron*, off center, out of the mainstream, and they were generally not welcome in their hometowns. Is this beginning to sound a little like you, maybe?

Happily, we don’t have to go back to the eighth-century B.C. prophets for examples. We are surrounded by prophets, although the ones I have in mind would be the last to claim that title.

Earlier today I did a little review of the prophets I’ve run into over the last decade; curiously, all of the ones who came to mind turn out to be women.

Ann Wright, who keynoted us so well on Friday evening, was the first to come to mind. One of the three U.S. diplomats who quit when the U.S. attacked Iraq; mayor of Camp Casey in Crawford, Texas; inspirer and fund raiser for the U.S. Boat to Gaza, with the creative suggestion we name it ,I think after some sort of book, “The Audacity of Hope.”

I’ve had the pleasure of watching Ann up close, and have gotten into the same kind of activist trouble she has.

I remember as one of her finest hours, the one during which she sat quietly as the Senate Judiciary Committee deliberated pompously over whether to approve the appointment of Rumsfeld’s Pentagon lawyer William J. Haynes, II, an Eagle Scout from Waco, alumnus of Harvard Law, and more recently a “justifier” of torture, to be a federal judge.

(The pattern had already been set when Jay Bybee of the Justice Department, who signed off on John Yoo’s many mafia-style memoranda approving torture, was given

a life-time appointment as a federal judge.)

Ann can be quiet in such circumstances for, well, not very long. She stood up and loudly warned those august senators that they were about to give a judgeship to a felon. The committee adjourned that day before it was supposed to, and I think it's pretty clear that the ruckus Ann made was instrumental in defeating Haynes's appointment.

The findings of a subsequent Senate Armed Services Committee report on torture provide chapter and verse about why Haynes and his boss Rumsfeld should be behind bars.

Mentioning John Yoo evokes the example of West Coast prophet Susan Harman, who has made it her business to cling to Yoo like chewing gum. Seeing Susan's familiar face, Yoo now says, "Hello there." Susan responds, "Torture there."

Yoo has enough friends in high places that there are many to choose from were we as brave and conscientious as Susan in bird-dogging. Perhaps we could each choose one.

Speaking of bird-dogging, how could I not mention the gutsy women who lead World Can't Wait's watch-dog group "War Criminal Watch." It was they that got me a ticket to Donald Rumsfeld's speech in Atlanta five years ago; and yet another to be with him more recently at a forum run by the Jewish Policy Center at the 92nd Street Y in New York.

(This time the NYPD threw me out before I could ask Rumsfeld a question, but the bruises were minor compared with those caused by the thugs who brutalized me as I stood silently with my back to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during a speech she gave in February.)

More Prophets

How about Rae Abileah, who got brutalized when she called for justice for Palestine, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was receiving fulsome applause from our bought-and-sold Congresspeople in May.

Or the Code Pink women of Dallas, in the belly of the beast, who do something imaginatively conspicuous every time George W. Bush surfaces for air.

Or Jesselyn Radack, Esq., fired from the Justice Department for insisting that John Walker Lindh, labeled for political purposes as "The American Taliban," be given his rights as an American citizen.

After being blacklisted from her profession, Jesselyn has landed on both feet as National Security and Human Rights Counsel at the Government Accountability

Project, which focuses on protecting/defending whistleblowers.

And she was a terrific support to the successful defense of Thomas Drake, ex-NSA senior executive who was recently subjected to a three-year-long witch-hunt aimed at dissuading anyone from blowing the whistle.

And then there's Cindy Sheehan, who had the courage to ask Bush to explain to her what "noble cause" had taken the life of her son Casey.

And former FBI special agent/attorney Coleen Rowley, who took a huge risk, just one year short of retirement, in blowing a loud whistle about FBI shortcomings before 9/11, and who continues to work, in a variety of imaginative ways, for Justice. (Warning: do not, within earshot of Coleen, call her a prophet.)

Of women prophet/activists I have gotten to know over the past ten years I could go on forever.

The Shibboleth of Success

One trait peculiar not only to the Hebrew prophets of the eighth century but to the ones I just mentioned is that they did not get hung up on the all-too-familiar drive for success.

That drive, I think, is a distinctly American trait. We generally do not want to embark on some course without there being a reasonable prospect of success, do we? Who enjoys becoming the object of ridicule?

The felt imperative to be "successful" can be a real impediment to acting for Justice. A prophet/activist from whom I have drawn inspiration is Dan Berrigan. I'd like to share some of the wisdom that seeps through his autobiography, *To Dwell in Peace*.

Berrigan writes that after he, his brother Phil, and a small group of others had used homemade napalm to burn draft cards in Catonsville, Maryland, in May 1968 at the height of the Vietnam War, Dan mused about why he took such a risk:

"I came upon a precious insight. Something like this: presupposing integrity and discipline, one is justified in entering upon a large risk; not indeed because the outcome is assured, but because the integrity and value of the act have spoken aloud.

"Success or efficiency are placed where they belong: in the background. They are not irrelevant, but they are far from central.

"I was in need of such reflections as we faced the public after our crime. All sides agreed, we were fools or renegades or plain crazy.

“One had very little to go on; and one went ahead nonetheless. Still, the ‘little,’ had at least one advantage. One was free to concentrate on the act itself, without regard to its reception in the world. Free to concentrate on moral preparation, consistency, conscience. Looked at in this light, the ‘little’ appeared a treasure.”

“The act was let go, its truth and goodness were entrusted to the four winds. Indeed, good consequences were of small matter to me, compared with the integrity of the action, the need responded to, the spirits lifted. ”

The more recent prophets and activists I have known have generally been able to do this, to release the truth of the act to the four winds. And I think that helps them avoid taking themselves too seriously.

It seemed to work that way with Dan Berrigan. Here’s how he recounts the immediate aftermath of the action at Catonsville:

“We sat in custody in the back room of the Catonsville Post Office, weak with relief. Three or four FBI honchos entered portentously. Their leader, a jut-jawed paradigm, surveyed us from the doorway. His eagle-eye lit on Philip. He roared out: ‘Him again! Good God, I’m changing my religion!’

“I could think of no greater tribute to my brother.”

The Berrigans help affirm for me that this God of ours is a God of laughter, and we are the entertainment. And that’s just one reason a light touch is often required.

Code Pink knows this well. Watch, for example, <http://codepink.org/article.php?id=5916> the intervention team from War Addicts Anonymous engage President Obama outside the White House. Obama says, “I can quit anytime I want!” But can he?

How I look forward to descending on our own “Tahrir Square” at Freedom Plaza in Washington starting on Oct. 6. In the final analysis we will be confronting the “upper crust,” which my Irish grandmother described as “a bunch of crumbs held together by a lot of dough.”

But will we be successful? Wrong question. We will be faithful, and, I am sure, have a lot of fun in the process. For I believe it is true: the good is worth doing because it is good. Feels good, too.

Ray McGovern works for Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He was an Army officer and a CIA analyst and now is happy to be described as an “activist.”

Occupying the Heart of the Beast

Finally, a truly “populist” movement not like the Tea Party funded by billionaires to serve the interests of billionaires has arisen in America to challenge the growing economic inequities in U.S. society. Phil Rockstroh found his time with the “99 Percent” movement at the newly dubbed Liberty Plaza invigorating.

By Phil Rockstroh

The ongoing exercise in democracy transpiring in and around the Occupy Wall Street site in Lower Manhattan imbues one’s heart with resonances of the real.

Many reasons factor into the phenomenon: Here, for example, one does not feel scammed and demeaned gripped by the sense of futility, even embarrassment, experienced at even the thought of participating in the big money-skewed, sham elections staged in the corporate oligarchic state.

In our era, in which our minds are distracted and circumscribed by relentless, manic formations of instant information and evanescent imagery, we too often dwell in domains devoid of musk and fury, of the implications carried by mind-meeting flesh; therefore, one is often nettled by an abiding hollowness resultant from voluntary exile in these weightless realms of electronic ghosts.

The events unfolding in this place bear little resemblance to contrived reality TV tawdriness or pro sports/corporate rock, empty spectacle. Although some of the events transpiring here have been broadcast, webcast and tweeted in “real time” – in vivid contrast – events are unfolding in time that is real.

In Liberty Plaza, both the winged spirit of commitment and the rag-and-bone shop of the heart abide. Acting upon the human yearning not to live in chains, those assembled here are attempting to navigate their way out of the wasteland of isolation and alienation inflicted by the inverted totalitarianism of the corporate/consumer/national security state.

“Protest that endures, I think, is moved by a hope far more modest than that of public success: namely, the hope of preserving qualities in one’s own heart and spirit that would be destroyed by acquiescence.” ~ Wendell Berry

The barriers: This photo (of Occupy Wall Street protesters entrapped on the Brooklyn Bridge by the NYPD) is emblematic of existence within the constraints

of inverted totalitarianism.

The image is evocative of how the present order works to contain and narrow (if you will, kettle and cage) our conception of both the right to free expression in the public sphere and, by implication, within the psyche of an individual.

For instance: Notice, under "normal circumstances," how even the thought of pamphleteering or making an attempt at public oration in those areas of hyper-commercialized commerce e.g., malls, big-box retail stores and sports arenas – squatting upon most of the landscape of the U.S. is summarily dismissed.

An individual who attempts to exercise his right to free speech and free assembly in those locations is expelled on sight by private security types maintaining that the reach of one's rights to free expression ends where private property begins.

In general, in daily life, living under the inverted totalitarian nature of the corporate state, the walls that imprison an individual are invisible to the eye, even as they create bleak barriers within.

For example, if you are arrested while exercising your (allegedly) constitutionally guaranteed rights during an act of public protest, future employers will be privy to the information and chances are that such information will not be exactly helpful in your attempt to gain employment; hence, many are dissuaded from protest.

Yet, the New York City power elite can be thanked for the following: By actions such as these, captured in photos like this one, they reveal to us the true nature of the society that they have created, both extant and internalized within.

And this is what the implicit oppression of the corporate oligarchic state transforms into when challenged. Take a good look, then, ask yourself, as the song goes, which side are you on?

The agenda of the parasitic corporate and criminal Wall Street elite (whose financial power and political influence have increased unchecked for more than thirty years) has been: to attain maximum profits by maximum exploitation of labor and resources.

To ensure the labor pool remains submissive, the corporate class tyrannizes the workforce with threats to their job security and other Shock Doctrine strategies designed to beat an individual down, as all the while, their PR flacks promulgate the Orwellian doublethink at the empty core of corporate/consumer state propaganda i.e., submission to exploitation will, one day, yield to

financial freedom that the economic shackles that yoke an individual to a life of “free” market-enforced submission are, in fact, his wings of liberty.

And that is something one should bear in mind when considering the subject of the attitudes and actions of the NYPD regarding popular uprisings such as the one ongoing in Lower Manhattan.

In the first few days of the occupation of Liberty Plaza, I stopped by and spoke with protesters and police. (The latter only agreed to speak to me, with much hesitation, and, in a few cases outright contempt, if I promised not to record them or reveal their badge numbers.)

I told them that I understand and experience the sort of fear that such dictates, issued from above, level upon a person. I averred the fear instilled in rank-and-file officers by their “superiors” in the department is similar to the fear that folks in the park possess for police in general.

And the fear is identical to that OWS protesters hold in regard to the power Wall Street exerts over their lives.

In this, we, the beleaguered “99 percenters,” share a common plight – an affinity of fear instilled within us by economic coercion.

One cop told me it was nothing personal: He appreciated the protest because of the overtime pay he was pulling as a result of it.

I asked him if he feared that Wall Street might squander his pension fund, and that, “if you come down with a case of ‘billy club elbow’ from beating on the folks here that the crooks on Wall Street might make off with your medical benefits.”

Moreover, that if he saw a man trying to rob the pizza restaurant on the end of the block, he had the power to make an arrest, and, by that token, would it be possible for him and his crew who it appeared didn’t have a lot to do at Liberty Plaza could see fit to move down the street a bit to where the real criminal activity comes down billion-dollar heists, in fact and make a few arrests when the banksters open for business tomorrow?

He said he couldn’t comment on the subject but I could tell he found the fantasy appealing.

But, bear this in mind, when considering the uncivil attitudes and unconstitutional actions of the NYPD regarding street protest such as the Occupy Wall Street activities ongoing in Lower Manhattan, in particular, and the lack of deference to the rights of the public, in general, displayed by police

agencies, at both the local and federal level: Police forces, by and large, are bureaucratic organizations, comprised of authoritarian personalities who evince a top-down, militarized organizational structure.

Most of the individuals therein harbor a hierarchical concept regarding the exercise of power and possess an unquestioning fealty to the maintenance of order.

Therefore, the police will serve as a *de facto* private security force for the corporate oligarchs and Wall Street elite, as well as the structure of the National Security State. Accordingly, the safeguarding of individual rights and providing security for those groups and individuals bereft of power means little to them.

Even if an individual officer harbors sympathy for those who dissent, his mission is not to protect the powerless; conversely, the mission of police organizations is to maintain the status quo; and the status quo of the present order translates into vast wealth inequity created by an entrenched system in place to protect the powerful (in this case Wall Street Banksters) from the consequences of their criminal activities.

(Apropos, the \$4.6 million with which J.P. Morgan Chase, last week, greased the palm of the NYPD.)

Thus Freedom will be pepper-sprayed and thrown face first upon the pavement, while Wall Street Banksters' Gulf Stream Jets lift off from the ground and slice the clear, thin air.

There is a sign in Liberty Plaza proclaiming, "occupy everything" and its sentiment arrives at the essence of the situation.

Yes, occupy everything, starting with your own heart. Otherwise, it will be commandeered by the forces of the church, the state, the corporation, the bully on your block, the passive-aggressive friend who is "just here to help," even the demands of your own egoist agendas that bore to indifference the heart of the world and soul of the age.

If you don't recognize your humanity, who will? Who is more qualified to occupy your life than you? Who is closer to the situation? Who else is qualified to arrive at an original take of the question at hand?

And you might find the place to make a stand in the struggle to retake your essential self is in public space, among throngs of others engaged in likeminded struggle among others who have heeded a similar call and thus have arrived in those equally troubled locations – the U.S. public arena and the American heart.

Occupy your own heart; the soul of the world longs for your companionship.

“The question is not what am I doing in here, but what are you doing out there?”

– Henry David Thoreau

Phil Rockstroh is a poet, lyricist and philosopher bard living in New York City. He may be contacted at: phil@philrockstroh.com Visit Phil's website <http://philrockstroh.com> / And at FaceBook: <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100...>

Why Palestine Already Is a State

Palestinian officials have appealed for membership at the United Nations, prompting angry retorts from Israel and a veto threat from the Obama administration. But the UN issue is membership, not statehood, which Joe Lauria writes is already a de facto reality.

By Joe Lauria

A combination of mistakes, whether through ignorance or design, and significant omissions of fact have left the American public misinformed about why the Palestinians have gone to the United Nations and what they are trying to achieve.

The biggest error repeated across the media in hundreds of headlines and stories is that the Palestinians are seeking statehood at the U.N. In fact, Palestine is *already* legally a sovereign state and is seeking *membership* of the United Nations, not statehood.

The United Nations does not grant or recognize statehood. Only states can recognize other states bilaterally. The U.N. can only confer membership or non-member observer state status to already existing states. The U.N. Charter is clear. Article 4 says that only existing states may apply for U.N. membership.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon accepted an application for U.N. membership from PLO Chairman and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas on Sept. 23. Ban sent the application to the Security Council, which began deliberating last week.

The very act of the Secretary General accepting the membership application is an acknowledgement from the U.N. that Palestine is already a state, since only states can apply.

The Montevideo Convention of 1933 lays out the requirements for statehood: a population living on a defined territory with a government that can enter into relations with other governments. The Palestinians have all three.

Though its borders with Israel are not set, other countries with border disputes have been admitted as U.N. members, such as Pakistan and India. Trygve Lie, the first U.N. Secretary-General, also wrote a 1950 memo that states do not need universal recognition to apply.

Palestine declared its independence on Nov. 15, 1988, a fact found nowhere in the American mainstream reporting of the past week. A Palestinian walked out of the Al Asqa Mosque that day in Al Quds/Jerusalem and read the declaration aloud, much as someone read the American Declaration of Independence to a crowd in the courtyard of the Philadelphia State House on July 4, 1776.

Almost immediately one hundred nations recognized an independent Palestinian state. Since then 30 more nations have recognized Palestine, some having opened Palestinian embassies in their capitals. This crucial fact too was not reported in the U.S. media. For Palestinians and those countries that recognize them, Israeli troops are occupying a sovereign nation.

It was the same as when Morocco and then France and other nations recognized an independent United States years before the war against Britain was won. For Americans and those nations recognizing America, British troops became an occupation force, not an army defending British territory.

The problem for the Americans then and for the Palestinians now is that the occupying nation and the world's biggest power are not among the 130 who've recognized them.

If there were a United Nations in 1777 the Americans could have applied for membership. And if Britain had a veto on the Security Council then as it does now, it would have blocked that membership.

Today neither the occupying power, Israel, nor the world's biggest power, the U.S., recognizes Palestinian statehood. Thus the U.S. has vowed to veto the Palestinians' membership resolution in the Security Council.

The U.S. had furiously lobbied to prevent the Palestinians from coming to the U.N. at all, including Congress threatening to cut off all aid. Having failed, Washington is now trying to delay a vote as long as possible while lobbying the

several non-permanent members of the Security Council to abstain, or vote against.

But the Palestinians knew from the start the U.N. process would take weeks and have so far not backtracked on their plan one inch.

Membership in the U.N. requires a recommendation from the 15-member Security Council, secured with nine votes in favor and no vetoes. If the recommendation passes, the 193-seat General Assembly must approve with a two-thirds majority. Eight votes in favor or less would kill the Security Council membership resolution, sparing the U.S. from a veto that would cost them dearly on the Arab street.

Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa and Lebanon are among the Security Council members who have formally recognized Palestine and are firm about voting in favor. The U.S. isn't bothering with them. But Nigeria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Colombia and Gabon have also recognized Palestine and are under extreme American, and in the case of Gabon, French pressure to at least abstain.

Falling short of eight votes would be an embarrassment for the Palestinians, but the Security Council route is only the first step. After a sure defeat in the Security Council (since the United States has vowed to use its veto if necessary), two options in the General Assembly remain.

President Abbas told reporters on his plane back home from New York that the Palestinians are willing to wait two weeks for the Security Council to act before going to the next step for membership. That step is to try to circumvent either a U.S. veto or less than nine votes in the Security Council in the General Assembly, employing a Cold War-era resolution known as Uniting for Peace.

It was introduced by the U.S. in 1950 to get around repeated Soviet vetoes on the Korean War. Francis Boyle, a legal adviser to Abbas, told me he has advised the Palestinian president to take this step.

But the Palestinians would have to convince two-thirds of voting Assembly members that Palestinian membership would be a response to a "threat to peace, breach of the peace or an act of aggression" from Israel.

The U.S. and Israel would fight to keep this off the General Assembly agenda. But Boyle, who cautioned that he does not speak for the Palestinians, told me he thinks the Palestinians have the votes to overcome this.

Nevertheless, there seems to be a split in the PLO leadership on whether to use Uniting for Peace. Hanan Ashrawi, a PLO executive committee member, says it is

still a viable option. But the Palestinians' U.N. observer, Riyad Mansour, believes any membership bid must legally go through the Security Council first and there's no getting around it.

Abbas' position on this is not clear. It will be interesting to see if the Palestinians try to use Uniting for Peace and what happens if they do.

If they decide against it or fail, their third option is to try to become a non-member observer state, which needs only a simple majority of 97 votes in the General Assembly which the Palestinians clearly have.

Becoming an observer state would be more than symbolic. It could reshape the balance of power between Israel and the Palestinians. As an observer state, Palestine could participate in Assembly debates, but could not vote, sponsor resolutions or field candidates for Assembly committees.

But more importantly, it would allow Palestine to accede to treaties and join specialized U.N. agencies, such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the Law of the Sea Treaty, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the International Criminal Court (ICC), officials said.

Switzerland joined the ICAO in 1947 when it was still an observer state before becoming a U.N. member in 2002. Denis Chagnon, an ICAO spokesman in Montreal, told me the treaty gives members full sovereign rights over air space, a contentious issue with Israel, which currently controls the airspace above the West Bank and Gaza.

The Palestinians could bring claims of violation of its air space to the International Court of Justice.

If Palestine joins the Law of the Sea Treaty it would gain control of its national waters off Gaza, a highly contentious move as those waters are currently under an Israeli naval blockade. Boyle said he has advised Abbas to accede to treaties, including the Law of the Sea. If they do, the Palestinians could challenge the Israeli blockade at the ICJ as well as claim a gas field off Gaza, currently claimed by Israel.

Even more troubling for Israel and the U.S. would be Palestine joining the International Criminal Court.

Ambassador Christian Wenaweser, president of ICC Assembly of State Parties, said in an interview a Palestine observer state could join the ICC and ask the court to investigate any alleged war crimes and other charges against Israel committed on Palestinian territory after July 2002, including Israel's 2008-2009 Operation Cast Lead war against Gaza that killed 1,400 Palestinian civilians.

Ashrawi says Israeli settlements in Palestine can be challenged as war crimes in the court as a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The Palestinians know they must still negotiate borders, refugees, settlements, the occupation and Jerusalem. Abbas said pushing for U.N. membership did not mean he no longer wants to negotiate. Rather gaining membership or observer state status would give the Palestinians more leverage in those talks, he said.

In an effort to upstage and derail the Palestinians' membership drive, just minutes after Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had finished addressing the General Assembly last Friday the so-called Quartet, the U.S., U.K., Russia and the U.N., announced its vision of a one-year plan for a comprehensive settlement.

The Quartet dropped its repeated call for a settlement freeze and called for no preconditions for talks. The Palestinians, who are demanding a freeze before negotiations based on the pre-occupation 1967 borders, rejected the Quartet's plan. Israel then announced 1,100 new settlements in occupied East Jerusalem.

The Quartet has failed again. Westerners cannot solve this problem. Maybe it's time to make it the Quintet by adding the Arab League, to give voice to the Palestinians. How to get the U.S. media to become interested in more accurately reporting the Palestinian's side of the story is another matter.

Joe Lauria has been a freelance journalist based at the U.N. since 1990, writing for the Boston Globe, the London Daily Telegraph, the Johannesburg Star, the Montreal Gazette and other newspapers. This article originally appeared on Sibel Edmond's BoilingFrogsPost.com.

'Sarah's Key': Enforcing Injustice

As the Occupy Wall Street and other populist protests grow, the role of police in either allowing dissent or crushing it will be at center stage. In that regard, Gary G. Kohls sees valuable lessons from the Holocaust drama, "Sarah's Key."

By Gary G. Kohls

Recently I saw "Sarah's Key," a powerful movie that was made from the novel by the same name, written by French novelist Tatiana de Rosnay. My opinion is that it deserves an Academy Award nomination for Best Foreign Film of 2011.

The movie fictionalizes the horrifying true story of the June 1942 Paris roundups of thousands of Jewish families, who were then held for days in appalling conditions at the Vélodrome d'Hiver outside Paris. These victims were soon to be on their way to the extermination camps on the other side of Germany, specifically Auschwitz, in Poland.



The World War II portion of the story is about the experiences of just one innocent family, the Starzinskis, including 10-year old Sarah and her little brother, as they were brutalized by the murderous police-state repression of Nazi-occupied France and Hitler's emerging "Final Solution of the Jewish Problem."

The latter part of the well-told story (60 years after World War II) is about the experiences of Julia Jarmond, who, as a young American-born woman who had moved to Paris 20 years earlier, was working as a journalist for a French magazine.

Julia's editor assigns her to cover the 60th anniversary of the infamous Vélodrome d'Hiver roundups of around 10,000 Jews.

While doing the research for the article, she learns that the apartment she and her French architect husband were planning to move into was the very apartment that had been acquired in 1942 by her in-law's family immediately after the Starzinski family had been deported to Poland via cattle car.

The family's belongings were confiscated by the Nazis and their French collaborators, of course and sold to help finance Germany's military apparatus. Julia is haunted by the story and, even though her magazine article had already been published, she resolves to find out what actually happened to Sarah.

The Knock on the Door

The film starts with the proverbial "knock on the door at midnight" by French plain-clothes security officials and uniformed French policemen who, as Nazi-collaborators, obediently arrested Sarah's family, except for the four-year-old Michel, whom Sarah had hidden away in a concealed closet.

The rest of the story concerns what ultimately happened to Sarah and Michel.

Using good investigative journalism, Julia eventually uncovers the hidden history of the family. She finds out that Sarah and Michel were the only family members known to have not arrived at Auschwitz with the hope that they could have somehow survived the Holocaust. Julie is driven to persist in her search and finally succeeds in piecing together the whole dramatic story.

One of the disturbing aspects of the story, and a humiliating one for historically anti-German France, was the willingness of the Vichy government and its French policemen to fully cooperate with the Nazis in the roundups, the deportations, the thefts of property and the torturing of the Jewish minority population (in 1942 French Jews only represented a tenth of 1 percent of the population).

This emotional and consciousness-raising film about an important piece of hidden World War II history left me pondering a number of questions, including the classic, "could it (fascism) ever happen here?"

Why couldn't what happened in Paris in 1942 also happen in our militarized America, which some observers also call a quasi-police state? Was there anything unusual about the willingness of 1942 French policemen to obey orders from their superior officers?

Why not our modern police force who are trained to reflexively follow orders in chain-of-command, authoritarian systems?

Many of the Nazis who were convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity following World War II denied responsibility for their participation in the atrocities because they were merely following orders.

They had taken solemn oaths of allegiance to Hitler and, because they thought of themselves as being moral men, they would have considered going back on their oaths as an act of treason.

I think it would be worthwhile if those of us who are potential victims of state-sanctioned police brutality (and that could possibly represent a considerable number of us) start asking ourselves what would prevent our modern-day law-enforcers, our soldiers, policemen and security service members, (as well as our elected officials, politicians and judges, all of whom have taken similar oaths of allegiance) from denying the human and civil rights of dissidents, protestors, conscientious objectors to war, killing, capital punishment and the corporate raping of the earth?

Likewise, what would prevent these armed oath-takers from persecuting outsider minority groups, such as non-white foreigners or non-Christians, and guiltlessly enforce the many unjust, unethical or illegal American laws that are on the

books?

Wall Street Protesters

I think many would agree that there is cause for concern, considering the current examples of police brutality and arrests of the "Occupy Wall Street" activists in New York City who are protesting Wall Street predators, Junk Bond brokers, Big Finance and other assorted white-collar crooks who caused the stock market crash, the debt crisis, the housing crisis, the bankrupting bail-out fiasco and the recession.

In modern times, many American cops and FBI agents have been guilty of persecution, mistreatment, harassment and abuse of nonviolent American protesters against corporate corruption, starting with the protests against the atrocity-producing Vietnam War through the harsh treatment and arrests of protestors at the infamous Chicago Democratic National Convention in 1968; the anti-NAFTA, anti-World Bank, anti-IMF activists in Seattle and Toronto and all around the world; the protesters at the Republican National Convention in St. Paul in 2008; the antinuclear weapons activists at Oak Ridge, Kansas City, Minneapolis and elsewhere; the anti-Keystone-Excel/Tar Sands pipeline activists in front of the non-responsive White House; and etc, etc.

This list could be considerably lengthened if I included examples from the century-long history of the labor movement in the U.S., where there are countless numbers of examples of brutal police repression of striking workers, poor people, suffragettes and racial or religious minorities who were protesting against injustice.

Doesn't it seem curious that the police are always on the side of the ruling elite, the obscenely wealthy, the corporations and the crony capitalists, none of whom ever have felt police nightstick hitting skull?

Given the evidence cited above, I have to wonder if there is an actual stated ethic in American law enforcement that would empower some discerning, ethical and courageous "good cops," "good" FBI and CIA agents, soldiers and judges to disobey unethical and unjust laws that defy the spirit of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the International Criminal Court and the Geneva and Nuremberg Conventions (or the Christian Just War principles, for that matter).

Does anybody see any indication from those in positions of authority and power in our legal system where the oaths that civil servants have to take are still considered sacred oaths (including the promise to defend and uphold the Constitution of the United States, presumably including the First Amendment – the right to free speech)?

Is there any sign that any oath-takers out there might be courageous enough to disobey orders when that is the right thing to do?

I hope so. I hope that our elected civilian officials, who are supposed to have ultimate control of the policies and actions of law enforcement and the military, begin a dialogue about that important question that is critically important to real democracy.

The American Experiment

America's fragile two-century-plus democratic experiment is dangerously close to being drowned in the metaphorical bathtub first promised by the neoconservative, anti-tax guru Grover Norquist and endorsed by the radical right-wing Tea Partiers (funded by cunning billionaires like the Koch brothers), the right-wing think tanks (like the Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute – among about 400 others) and the right-wing Christian theocrats (like Sarah Palin, Michele Bachman, Rick Perry, etc. and their supporters and paymasters).

At one time in America's anti-fascist, pro-democracy past (or was that only a pipedream?), most Americans thought (perhaps falsely) that law enforcement and the legal system was on the side of the little guy, the laborers, the poor, the abused, the "huddled (immigrant) masses yearning to be free" and the marginalized ones whom Jesus called "the least of these my brothers."

But now law enforcement and the courts seem to pointedly avoid prosecuting the criminal activities of predatory lenders (with their high interest rates that force poverty, bankruptcies and foreclosures), the war profiteers (and their ill-gotten gains from selling weapons that are designed for human slaughter), BigPharma (and their toxic, dementia-causing, sickening synthetic drugs) and the various Ponzi scheme operators and junk bond "investment" crooks on Wall Street.

The motto that used to be printed on patrol cars was supposed to articulate the mission of law enforcement, but the "To Protect and To Serve" insignia is now regarded as a joke in way too many cities.

Certainly that ideal of law enforcement may have existed in simpler times, but in times of crisis, ideals often go out the window. The reality that is too often perceived is "To Harass and Abuse."

It is the observation of many peace and justice activists colleagues of mine that most police personnel prefer obeying orders that are given to enforce petty laws that may result in the arrest or ticketing of nonviolent offenders that put the policeman at no substantial risk to health or life.

I totally understand not wanting to get hurt on the job – any job. Most of us

will try to avoid unnecessary risks at work, preferring the less dangerous tasks.

Arresting unarmed Jews in Paris 1942 was that kind of low-risk assignment. Also qualifying for preferential assignments would be the harassing, hand-cuffing, arrest, pepper-spraying or tasing of nonviolent protestors for trespassing at Wall Street, the School of the Americas, the White House, the Pentagon and military recruiting offices.

Raiding homes for the possession of pot, arresting farmers for selling unpasteurized milk, ticketing drivers for parking violations or "speeders" for going 35 mph in a 30 mph zone; etc, etc are other examples of preferred assignments.

Disobeying Unjust Laws

Wealthy crooks, drug kingpins and other violent offenders tend to have guns, live in gated communities or have armed bodyguards. Career criminals may shoot back if they are threatened with arrest (and white-collar criminals may have expensive lawyers who can turn the tables on law enforcement). So these are not on the preferred list of assignments for average policemen.

But what about justice for the powerless victims of unjust laws like in a war-torn nation such as France in 1942? That type of atrocity can only happen if obedient, oath-taking law enforcers forget their humanity and are willing to be the accomplices of a crime that is being perpetrated by someone higher up the chain of command.

Questioning and disobeying unjust laws is always the moral thing to do, but it takes unusual courage. Refusing to obey the orders of the rulers in fascist-leaning or totalitarian societies can get you fired or black-balled or worse.

Not the Nazi Holocaust nor the Vietnam War nor the illegal war in Iraq could have happened if agents of the state whether soldiers or policemen or other cogs in the system had been courageous enough to disobey unjust orders.

Gary G. Kohls is a physician from Duluth, Minnesota, who, prior to his retirement, practiced holistic (non-drug) mental health care. He writes a weekly column for the Reader Weekly of Duluth that deals with topics such as politics, religion, medicine, health, psychiatry, nutrition, war, peace and justice.

The Slippery Slope of Assassinations

With the assassination of Anwar al-Awlaki, a U.S. citizen and al-Qaeda associate based in Yemen, the Obama administration has stepped onto a slippery slope where loosening standards for extrajudicial killings could slide into a terrifying use of government power, the Independent Institute's Ivan Eland writes.

By Ivan Eland

The execution of a potentially innocent Troy Davis last month justifiably horrified many in the United States and around the world. Most of the non-police eyewitnesses had recanted or contradicted their testimony that he killed an off-duty police officer; they alleged that they had been pressured or coerced by the police to implicate Davis.

The case has led to important questions about whether the state should or is competent to kill its own citizens, no matter what heinous crime they are accused of committing. Yet at least Troy Davis got due process (however flawed), as the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution requires, before being executed.

In contrast, there has been no similar outrage that Anwar al-Awlaki, also a U.S. citizen, has been put on a U.S. government assassination list with no due process.

That's because the word "terrorist" has been applied to al-Awlaki, meaning that hysteria reigns at the expense of any constitutional due process. The Fifth Amendment guarantees that a person (you don't even have to be a U.S. citizen to get this protection) cannot be "deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law."

Of course, the proponents of a "war on terror" argue that in wars, the government doesn't try every enemy soldier in a court of law before it attempts to kill them. However, since no war has been declared, even against the perpetrators of 9/11, that excuse shouldn't apply.

"War on terror" advocates will then argue that that is only a technicality, because Congress did pass a resolution authorizing military action against the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks and those who harbored them.

But although al-Awlaki may be part of the group al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula (a franchise of the main al-Qaeda group), has publicly called for the killing of Americans, and may even be linked to certain specific terrorist attacks in the United States, it has not been alleged by Obama administration officials that he planned, authorized, committed, or in any way assisted the 9/11 attacks or

harbored those who perpetrated them.

Thus, killing him is not authorized by the congressional resolution.

His case merely highlights the fact that the administration has secret criteria for putting people, including U.S. citizens, on a hit list. Thus, al-Awlaki wouldn't even have to be informed of how he ran afoul of the U.S. government before he gets whacked.

But why should Americans care about the rights of some guy who hates America and may even be a terrorist? Because if an American president can just declare anyone anywhere, including U.S. citizens, a danger to national security and kill him without any due process or oversight from the other branches of government, the rights of all Americans (and other persons) are in danger.

Even the District Court judge who dismissed a suit by Anwar's father, Nasser al-Awlaki, who tried to argue against the Obama administration's unconstrained authority to kill any American without due process, wondered why the administration required a judge's warrant to target a U.S. citizen overseas using electronic surveillance but not to target that same citizen for death.

The judge dismissed the suit because he said the courts weren't competent to make decisions concerning the "composition, training, equipping, and control of a military force" and that such issues should be left to the branches of government that are periodically subject to electoral accountability.

Perhaps so, but that is not the issue. The issue is whether Congress approved of a war against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula or al-Awlaki. It has not. Therefore, al-Awlaki should be treated as an alleged criminal and be given due process rights under the Constitution.

The courts clearly have a right to comment on this issue. They should prohibit the administration from having a secret kill list and require it to bring suspected terrorists to trial.

Although the death penalty at home is probably constitutional (the Fifth Amendment does speak of "capital" crimes), the fact that since the mid-1970s, 138 death row inmates were later exonerated does raise important questions about the government's ability to competently and justly impose the ultimate sanction.

Given the government's spotty record at identifying murderers, can we be confident that our president can competently identify terrorists and kill them, all the while in violation of the constitutional requirements of due process and checks and balances by other branches of government?

Since many of the prisoners at Guantanamo weren't guilty of any crime, let alone terrorism, the answer to the last question is a resounding "no." Thus, letting the president identify terrorists, using secret criteria, and whack them is dangerous to the Republic.

Ivan Eland is Director of the Center on Peace & Liberty at The Independent Institute. Dr. Eland has spent 15 years working for Congress on national security issues, including stints as an investigator for the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Principal Defense Analyst at the Congressional Budget Office. His books include The Empire Has No Clothes: U.S. Foreign Policy Exposed, and Putting "Defense" Back into U.S. Defense Policy.

Israel's Window to Bomb Iran

Exclusive: Israeli leaders continue to pound the drum about taking out Iran's nuclear program and some hardliners may want to strike soon, fearing the window of opportunity will close if President Barack Obama wins reelection and is less susceptible to political pressures, as ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern observes.

By Ray McGovern

There are mounting signs that the right-wing Israeli government may think the timing is right for an attack on Iran, with growing alarms inside Israel about alleged Iranian progress on building a nuclear bomb and with President Barack Obama fearing loss of key Jewish political support in 2012 if he doesn't go along.

On Sept. 26, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated Iran's alleged progress, telling interviewer Charlie Rose that "time is short" before Iran obtains nuclear weapons and poses a direct threat to Israel and the rest of the world.

Yet, the key factor in any Israeli decision to send its aircraft and missiles to Iran is the degree to which Netanyahu and other hard-line Likud leaders believe that President Obama is locked into giving blanket support to Israel, particularly as Election 2012 draws near.

The Israelis might well conclude that the formidable effectiveness of the Likud Lobby and kneejerk support of the U.S. Congress as well as still powerful neoconservatives in the Executive Branch (and on the opinion pages of major American newspapers) amount to solid assurance of automatic support for pretty

much anything Israel decides to do.

If Israel translates this into a green light to attack Iran, the rest of the world, even Washington, may get little or no warning.

Netanyahu and his associates would presumably be reluctant to give Obama the kind of advance notice that might allow him to consult some adult political and military advisers and thus give him a chance to try to spike Israeli plans.

Consequences of blindsiding? There would be a strong argument in Tel Aviv that past precedent amply demonstrates that there are few if any consequences for blindsiding Obama on Israeli actions.

There is also the precedent of how an earlier generation of Likud leaders reacted to a possible second term by a Democratic president who was suspected of having less than total loyalty to Israel.

In 1980, Prime Minister Menachem Begin was angered by President Jimmy Carter's pressure that had forced Israel to surrender the Sinai in exchange for a peace treaty with Egypt. Begin made clear to his followers at home and abroad that Carter, if freed from the political pressure of facing reelection, might push Israel into accepting a Palestinian state. So, Begin quietly shifted Israel's political support to Republican Ronald Reagan, helping to ensure Carter's lopsided defeat.

Similarly, some Israeli hard-liners suspect that Obama in a second term might be liberated from his fear of Israeli political retaliation and thus renew pressure on Netanyahu to halt Jewish settlements in the occupied territory of Palestine and to reach a true accommodation with the Palestinians.

Under this analysis, a second-term Obama might add to Israel's growing isolation in the Middle East, which even Defense Secretary Leon Panetta noted Sunday, telling reporters that Israel must restart negotiations with the Palestinians and work to restore relations with Egypt and Turkey.

"Is it enough to maintain a military edge if you're isolating yourself in the diplomatic arena?" Panetta asked. "And that's what's happening."

A Very Bad Year

Indeed, 2011 has been the worst year in recent memory for Israel, ushering in a highly unfavorable sea change in its strategic position.

Israel has lost the support of formerly friendly governments in Egypt and Turkey and finds itself increasingly isolated internationally, as the occupation of Palestinian territory begins its 45th year and the plight of the Palestinian

people garners more and more attention and sympathy.

As Netanyahu and his right-wing advisers look at the new constellation of stars, it is a safe bet they discern an imperative to readjust them in Israel's favor.

But, by attacking Iran? Okay, I know it sounds crazy. It is crazy. The question, however, is whether it sounds crazy to Israel's leaders, accustomed as they are to a reality in which the tail can wag a large dog at will.

Besides, the Israelis are sounding increasingly desperate and the notion of attacking Iran and involving the U.S. might well be seen by desperate leaders as a way to stem further erosion of their strategic position, or at least to show they still have a very powerful supporter.

In my view, an attack on Iran would have a two-fold purpose: (1) to set back Iran's nuclear development program and infrastructure, and (2) to mousetrap Washington into an even closer military relationship with Israel. Let's put some context around these one by one.

First, the bugaboo about an Iranian nuclear weapon. Let me say at the outset that I could readily believe that Iran is working on a nuclear weapon. There are all sorts of reasons why one could understand Tehran seeing this as a reasonable course of action.

(As has been pointed out, Iraq had no nukes and we know what happened to it; North Korea has a handful of nukes and we know what did not happen to it.)

Trouble is, it doesn't matter what I, or anyone else, might believe. For substantive analysts faith-based analysis is not an option (or, at least, it didn't use to be). Empirical evidence is the coin of the realm for us.

Unlike Israel, which has refused to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty and has some 200 to 300 nuclear weapons, Iran did sign the NPT and insists it has no interest in nuclear weapons, only enriched uranium for medical research and energy. Unlike Israel, Iran has allowed UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors in to verify compliance with its commitment not to build nukes.

Still, there continue to be "beliefs," and suspicions that Iran, for example, may be laying the groundwork for an eventual break-out capability, and Tehran has not always fulfilled all its obligations under the safeguards regime.

Yet, despite the spin often applied to IAEA reports by the Fawning Corporate Media (FCM) and particularly The New York Times, the IAEA has never detected the diversion of enriched uranium from declared sites for the purpose of building a

nuclear weapon. That is fact.

Intelligence Analysts Thwart War

Beyond that inconvenient truth, some other recent history may be worth bearing in mind.

In 2007, President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney, with full-throated support from Israel and the FCM, were drumming up support for countering what they claimed was Iran's determination to build a nuclear weapon. On Oct. 22, 2007, the Israeli Ambassador to the United States insisted publicly that "very little time" remained to keep Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.

Really? Even were there to have been a nuclear program hidden from the IAEA, no serious observer expected Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon until several years later. Actually, truth be told, every other year since 1995 U.S. intelligence had been predicting that Iran could have a nuclear weapon in about five years.

It became downright embarrassing, like a broken record. The repetition was punctuated by the likes of former CIA Director James Woolsey, a dyed-in-the-wool neocon who kept warning that the U.S. may have no choice but to bomb Iran to halt its nuclear weapons program.

In mid-2006, Woolsey, who has called himself the "anchor of the Presbyterian wing of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs," put it this way: "I'm afraid that within, well, at worst, a few months; at best, a few years; they [the Iranians] could have the bomb." That was five years ago.

The Russians Get It Right

In early October 2007, Russian President Vladimir Putin, unencumbered by the Likud Lobby which enforces Washington's neocon-dominated "group think," publicly mocked the "evidence" that had been adduced to show that Iran intended to make nuclear weapons.

Then, during a visit to Iran on Oct. 16, 2007, Putin sprinkled salt on the wounds of "bomb-Iran" neoconservatives; he warned, "Not only should we reject the use of force, but also the mention of force as a possibility."

This brought an interesting outburst from President Bush the next day at a press conference.

Q. "Mr. President, I'd like to follow on Mr. — on President Putin's visit to Tehran about the words that Vladimir Putin said there. He issued a stern warning against potential U.S. military action against Tehran. Were you disappointed

with [Putin's] message?"

Bush: "I – as I say, I look forward to – if those are, in fact, his comments, I look forward to having him clarify those. And so I will visit with him about it."

Q. "But you definitively believe Iran wants to build a nuclear weapon?"

Bush: "I think so long – until they suspend and/or make it clear that they – that their statements aren't real, yes, I believe they want to have the capacity, the knowledge, in order to make a nuclear weapon. And I know it's in the world's interest to prevent them from doing so. I believe that the Iranian – if Iran had a nuclear weapon, it would be a dangerous threat to world peace.

"But this is – we got a leader in Iran who has announced that he wants to destroy Israel. So I've told people that if you're interested in avoiding World War III, it seems like you ought to be interested in preventing them from have the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon. I take the threat of Iran with a nuclear weapon very seriously."

Honest Intelligence

Just weeks later in November 2007, the U.S. intelligence community completed a formal National Intelligence Estimate in the best tradition of speaking truth to power. The NIE was the fruit of a bottom-up investigation of all evidence over the years on Iran's nuclear activities and plans.

But the NIE's conclusions bore no resemblance to what Bush, Cheney, their Israeli counterparts and the FCM had been claiming about the imminence of a nuclear threat from Iran.

The following is from the paragraph introducing the Key Judgments of the NIE of November 2007 that headed off war with Iran:

"A. We judge with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program; we also assess with moderate-to-high confidence that Tehran at a minimum is keeping open the option to develop nuclear weapons.

"Tehran's decision to halt its nuclear weapons program suggests it is less determined to develop nuclear weapons than we have been judging since 2005. Our assessment that the program probably was halted primarily in response to international pressure suggests Iran may be more vulnerable to influence on the issue than we judged previously."

Having reached these conclusions, it is not surprising that the NIE's authors make a point of saying up front (in bold type) **"This NIE does *not* (italics in**

original) assume that Iran intends to acquire nuclear weapons.”

There being no guarantee that, even with an honest Estimate, reason would prevail in the White House, Joint Chiefs Chairman Mike Mullen and other senior officers like CENTCOM commander Adm. William Fallon took the unusual step of insisting that the Estimate’s key judgments be declassified and made public.

They calculated, correctly, that this would put an iron rod into the wheels of the juggernaut then rolling toward a fresh disaster, war with Iran.

Recall that Adm. Fallon, who became CENTCOM commander in March 2007, let the press know that there would be no attack on Iran “on my watch.” He was fired in March 2008.

His senior military colleagues, while not as outspoken as Fallon, shared his disdain for the dangerously simplistic views of Bush and Cheney on the use of military power.

Bush and Cheney Aghast

What is perhaps most surprising is the disarming (if that is the correct word) candor with which George W. Bush has explained his chagrin at learning of the unanimous judgment of the intelligence community that Iran had not been working on a nuclear weapon since late 2003.

Bush lets it all hang out in his memoir *Decision Points*. Were one to assume that he and Cheney were genuinely worried about a threat from Iran, a long sigh of relief, or at least some follow-up questions, might have been reasonably expected in reaction to the NIE’s judgment.

Instead, Bush complains revealingly that the NIE “tied my hands on the military side,” noting that the NIE opened with the “eye-popping” high-confidence finding that Iran halted its nuclear weapons program in the fall of 2003.

The former president adds that the “NIE’s conclusion was so stunning that I felt it would immediately leak to the press.” He writes that he authorized declassification of the key findings “so that we could shape the news stories with the facts.” Facts?

Sure. New and different “facts.” Did not the experience on Iraq prove that the “intelligence and facts” could be “fixed around the policy,” as the famous Downing Street Memo of July 23, 2002, put it regarding the need for the U.S. and U.K. to cook the intelligence and facts to “justify” attacking Iraq?

On Iran, though, a crestfallen Bush writes, “The backlash was immediate. [Iranian President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad hailed the NIE as a ‘great victory.’”

Bush's apparent "logic" here is to use the widespread disdain for Ahmadinejad to discredit the NIE through association, i.e. whatever Ahmadinejad praises must be false.

But can you blame Bush for his chagrin? Alas, the NIE had knocked out the props from under the anti-Iran propaganda machine, imported duty-free from Israel and tuned up by neoconservatives here at home.

How embarrassing. Here before the world were the key judgments of an NIE, the most authoritative genre of intelligence report, unanimously approved "with high confidence" by all 16 intelligence agencies and signed by the Director of National Intelligence, saying, in effect, that Bush and Cheney had been lying about the nuclear threat from Iran.

Quid Est Veritas?

In his memoir, Bush laments: "I don't know why the NIE was written the way it was. Whatever the explanation, the NIE had a big impact, and not a good one." Spelling out how the Estimate had tied his hands "on the military side," Bush included this (apparently unedited) kicker:

"But after the NIE, how could I possibly explain using the military to destroy the nuclear facilities of a country the intelligence community said had no active nuclear weapons program?"

Well, bummer!

Thankfully, not even Dick Cheney could persuade Bush to repair the propaganda juggernaut and let it loose for war on Iran. The avuncular Cheney has made it clear that he was very disappointed in his protégé. On Aug. 30, 2009, he told "Fox News Sunday" that he was isolated among Bush advisers in his enthusiasm for war with Iran.

"I was probably a bigger advocate of military action than any of my colleagues," Cheney said when asked whether the Bush administration should have launched a pre-emptive attack on Iran before leaving office.

And it is entirely possible that the Iran-war juggernaut would have been repaired and turned loose anyway, were it not for strong opposition by the top military brass who convinced Bush that Cheney, his neocon friends and the Israeli leaders had no idea of the chaos that war with Iran would bring.

Regrettably, Adm. Mullen just retired, and Adm. Fallon was fired in 2008 for speaking truth. It is far from clear that their replacements will be as able to act as counterweight to the neocons who continue to wield extraordinary

influence in Official Washington.

For the record, despite the periodic alarms being raised among the usual suspects about the growing danger from Iran, U.S. intelligence analysts and top officials, to their credit, have continued to play it straight, so far as I can tell.

Although they have pretty much worn out the subjunctive mood in their testimony to Congress, the bottom line is that there is no new intelligence information that would warrant significant change in the judgments of the NIE of November 2007.

There is still no intelligence to “justify” a preventive attack on Iran (as if preventive attacks are ever justified under international law).

And this time senior intelligence officials should be called to testify under oath about the evidence and analytical conclusions, before Israel gets the U.S. embroiled in another catastrophic war that would make Iraq and Afghanistan look like a skirmish.

Mousetrapping the President

I promised, so many paragraphs ago, to address how Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu might see an attack on Iran as “mousetrapping” Washington into an even closer military relationship with Israel.

My own sense is that, despite his recent bravura performance in Washington, which included a speech to a joint session of Congress in which Republicans and Democrats competed to see who could jump to their feet fastest and applaud the loudest at every phrase uttered by the Israeli prime minister, Netanyahu is running scared.

I believe he thinks he needs the U.S. now more than ever. And on that I would have to agree.

This shone through his answers to David Gregory of NBC’s “Meet the Press” on Sept. 25. Gregory could hardly get a word in edgewise, but that was good in a way, since a loquacious Netanyahu provided ample grist for analysis. The Prime Minister seemed to be reaching, and came across, at least to me, as defensive:

GREGORY: “Israel is arguably as isolated as it’s ever been in the midst of Arab spring. Turkey has turned against you, the Arab world has moved away from dictators who supported Israel, had peace treaties with Israel, and is now more negative towards Israel. In this day and age, at this particular moment, despite Israel’s well-known and substantial security concerns, how can you occupy

Palestinian territory at this moment?”

NETANYAHU: “Well, you’ve got two assumptions in your questions, and I want to parse out and actually suggest that they’re wrong. The first one is that we’re isolated. Well, we’re not isolated in this country, which happens to be the strongest country on earth.

“I walked yesterday in the – in, in Central Park. You know, people met me. Jewish-Americans, but many non-Jewish-Americans and they said, ‘Keep the faith. We’re strong. Be strong. We’re with you.’

“A former lieutenant colonel in the Marines who’s now a teacher met me in a restaurant in New Jersey, great view of the United – of New York City. He said, ‘We’re with you all the way. Stay strong.’ A New York NYPD policeman, he says, ‘I’m not Jewish. We support you. Stay strong.’ America supports Israel in unparalleled way, unprecedented ways, number one.

“Every one of the U.S. presidents represents and acts on the tremendous innate friendship of the American people to Israel. And by the way, a piece of news, Israel is the one country in which everyone is pro-American, opposition and coalition alike.

“And I represent the entire people of Israel who say, ‘Thank you, America.’ And we’re friends of America, and we’re the only reliable allies of America in the Middle East.”

However, there can be little doubt with Israel’s loss of key allies in Turkey and Egypt that its strategic position in the region is more tenuous than it has been in recent memory. Grassroots movements are also taking root in America showing sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians, even if Official Washington continues to march in lockstep behind Netanyahu.

Yet what matters most, in my view, is how Netanyahu and his associates read Obama; specifically, how afraid is he of diverging one iota from the pro-Israel stance he has adopted. There is quite enough evidence they feel he is putty in their hands, and it is hardly necessary to rehearse that here.

Let me instead try to draw a lesson from my experience last summer as a passenger on the U.S. Boat to Gaza, “The Audacity of Hope.”

Activism Exposes Cowardice

When we made a break from Greece for the high seas on July 1, it was a mere 33 minutes before a Greek Coast Guard boat intercepted us. After a standoff of well over an hour, black-clad, black-masked commandos showed up in a black rubber

boat, climbed onto the Coast Guard boat, and pointed their machine guns at us.

It was more than a little bizarre: not one of us 37 passengers, 12 media journalists, or five crew flinched, much less hit the deck. When our captain discerned that his delaying tactics would not prevent us from being boarded, he acquiesced to the Greek Coast Guard orders to return to Piraeus, where “The Audacity of Hope” was (and is still) impounded.

We later learned that on that same day, the government of Greece issued a directive without precedent in that legendary seafaring nation. The order prohibited any boat from leaving Greek ports bound for Gaza.

It was clear that the Israeli government was pressuring Athens, in private and in public, to stop the ten boats of this year’s flotilla from setting out for Gaza. It is unlikely, though, that Israel alone would have been able to reverse four millennia of Greek history and embarrass the Greeks so pointedly.

It became obvious to me that it was Washington that brought the most decisive pressure to bear on the Greeks. Why? In short, because Obama has far more influence with Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou than with Netanyahu. And this, despite the \$3 billion the U.S. gives Israel every year.

Before leaving the United States, I was cautioned by a source with access to senior staffers at the National Security Council that not only did the White House plan to do absolutely nothing to protect our boat from Israeli attack or boarding, but that White House officials “would be happy if something happened to us.”

The way this happy message was phrased was that NSC officials would be “perfectly willing to have the cold corpses of activists shown on American TV.” Former UK Ambassador Craig Murray was told essentially the same thing by former colleagues reporting what they had learned from senior State Department officials.

In other words, senior national security and foreign policy officials in Washington were claiming they viewed with equanimity the possibility that we would meet the same type of welcome given by the Israeli Navy to last year’s flotilla to Gaza though, on sober reflection, it appears to me that the Obama administration’s preferred outcome was that we simply be bottled up in Greece.

In last year’s attempt to break the Gaza blockade, Israeli commandos attacked the flotilla on the early morning of May 31, 2010, in international waters. The commandos killed eight Turkish civilians and a 19-year-old American, Furkan Dogan. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan protested, and Turkey continues to demand an Israeli apology, compensation, and an end to the blockade

of Gaza.

In contrast, not a whimper came from President Obama. Actually, it gets worse. The White House and State Department did their level best to duck any responsibility to protect American citizens; instead, Official Washington spread the erroneous notion that Dogan was not a red-white-and blue American but rather some sort of hybrid "Turkish-American."

They knew that was incorrect. He was born in Troy, New York; he never applied for Turkish citizenship.

Blockade's Legality

As for the legality of the Israeli blockade, happily, there remain at the State Department some sticklers for international law, apparently with the courage to quit loudly if State were to give its blessings to the outlandish notion that the Israeli blockade is legal.

There are enough recalcitrant professionals, experts on the Law of the Sea and international conventions, to put their weight down behind the notion that all countries, Israel included, should abide by those laws. Thankfully, their professionalism prevented even further embarrassment from U.S. behavior vis-à-vis international law.

That stubborn professionalism may account for one of the most bizarre State Department press conference I have seen. On June 24, AP reporter Matt Lee and some of his colleagues decided to be more matter-of-fact than diplomatic with State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland, the wife of Robert Kagan, a neoconservative national security adviser to Vice President Cheney from 2003 to 2005 (and now a Washington Post columnist).

Asked directly, three times, whether the U.S. government considers the Israeli blockade of Gaza legal, Ms. Nuland would give no answer.

"I am not a Law of the Sea expert," she insisted (four times). Her talking points were that the U.S. Boat to Gaza should not be a "repeat of what happened last year" (four times). As though last year's flotilla was responsible for the attacks by Israeli naval commandos and this year's flotilla would be considered responsible as well.

It seems likely that, however discreet we passengers on "The Audacity of Hope" tried to be with our messaging, U.S. officials became aware that we were on the verge of making a break for the high seas and Gaza (damn the torpedoes and commandos).

What seems clear in retrospect is that, whereas macho officials at State and the NSC would have been comfortable, as they claimed, seeing our cold corpses on U.S. TV, Obama had the presence of mind to consult his handful of adult advisers who understood that something had to be done, and quickly, since a PR disaster was in the making.

An attack on a U.S.-registered boat endangering us passengers, including author Alice Walker (not to mention the journalists on board from The New York Times, CBS, CNN, Democracynow.org, et al.) was to be avoided at all costs.

Mr. Milquetoast himself could not match Obama in pandering to the Israelis. That said, the President does try to keep to a minimum those times when it is acutely embarrassing to defend the kind of Israeli behavior the rest of the world finds heinous.

If there were a "repeat of what happened last year," it would prove more difficult this time to avoid criticizing Israel (though, when push came to shove, Obama could probably summon the political "courage" to remain silent again).

However, if President Obama could not summon up the courage to ask Prime Minister Netanyahu to ensure safe passage for "The Audacity of Hope," that display of timidity would not be lost on the Israeli leaders; one can imagine them being amused by it.

But if he did ask Netanyahu, Obama apparently received the gesture that seems to have become Netanyahu's trademark in reacting to entreaties from Washington (right thumb on nose, fingers flapping).

In that case, Obama would have been forced to recognize that his influence with Netanyahu is nil, and rather than risk a dust-up with Israel, the safer course would be to put the screws to the less formidable Greeks to bring us back to shore and keep us there.

Fortunately for Obama, considerable leverage was available on Greece since it was in dire economic straits and in need of another fiscal bailout. With bigger fish to fry, so to speak, Greek Prime Minister Papandreou did what he was told and kept us ashore.

The middle-level Greek officials, including some of the Coast Guard, whom we encountered, were very apologetic, virtually holding their noses as they forced us to comply.

So, put yourself in the position of Netanyahu and his colleagues. Try to see Obama as they do and reflect on the various political equities and strategic

considerations mentioned above. If you were Netanyahu, would you worry very much that Obama might get in the way if Israel decided to take a whack at Iran?

Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He served a total of 30 years as a U.S. Army officer and then a CIA analyst, and is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).

The Rise of Modern Barbarism

For several decades, the American Right has been fanning the flames of animosity among white men angered over what they see as their reduced status and other threats from modernity. Now that brush fire is threatening to sweep across the nation engulfing whatever decency remains in U.S. politics, Lawrence Davidson notes.

By Lawrence Davidson

Has anyone noticed that the political air is wafting rancid lately? That is the smell of modern barbarism.

Modern barbarism is a malodorous umbrella concept. Underneath the umbrella are lots of fetid phobias, isms and other behaviors: Islamophobia, homophobia, xenophobia, semi-fascism, scapegoating, stereotyping, bullying, libeling and a growing, aggressive intolerance of everything and everyone who is not to the liking of the modern barbarian. Here are some recent instances of this phenomenon.

Michael Quigley, a Democratic congressman from Chicago, made the New York Times on Sept. 24 by promoting the virtues of tolerance and diversity, and lamenting the suffering that occurs when tolerance fails.

Out and about in his Chicago district, he stopped in at a meeting of the American Islamic Conference. He made a short speech to the 100 or so conferees during which he said "discrimination comes in many forms, many shapes and many guises. You have my pledge to work with you to fight them, and I think it is appropriate for me to apologize on behalf of this country for the discrimination you face."

Rep. Quigley was correct about the growing levels of Islamophobia that confront Muslim Americans. Islamophobia is a delusional mind-set which mistakes the

general for the particular, which condemns an entire group (which happens to have a billion plus members) for the particular actions of a very few. There is no logic to such an overreaching generalization. It is irrational.

Within days of Quigley's brief presentation he came under harsh attack on conservative Web sites, radio shows and TV, with at least one death threat posted at a Fox News site which remained there at week's end despite requests that it be removed. His office also was inundated with hundreds of angry calls, e-mails and faxes.

Then, Bill O'Reilly weighed in, again on Fox, denying that there was anything to apologize for. "What discrimination?" O'Reilly asked. "Statistics don't support claims of bias against Muslim Americans."

O'Reilly was simply wrong about this. As Ahmed Rehab, executive director of the Chicago office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) commented, O'Reilly would "have to be living under a rock" to believe there was no evidence.

Both federal statistics on work-place complaints of discrimination and a recent report issued by the CAIR in conjunction with the Center for Peace and Gender at the University of California at Berkeley have documented the rise of Islamophobia since the 9/11 attacks.

Despite O'Reilly being factually wrong on the issue of rising prejudice against Muslim Americans, Quigley's apology continued to draw scorn. Soon some right-wing spokesmen were trying to use the apology to call attention to what they believed to be the violent nature of Muslim culture.

Ralph Peters, who might be thought of as a professional anti-Muslim, called Quigley, who is just 51 years old, a "silly old fool" and said you might as well "apologize for preventing them [Muslims] from beating their daughters to death for flirting."

First of all such violence is not a trait of Islam. Secondly, the United States could be made to look like hell on earth for women simply by over-concentrating on nationwide instances of spousal abuse. Such is the danger of mistaking the particular for the general.

Cheers and Jeers

At about the same time, Islamophobia was playing havoc with Republican politics in Florida. Nezar Hamze, a long time Republican as well as CAIR's South Florida director, was systematically discriminated against (to the point of the

purposeful changing of local party selection rules) when he stood for election to the Broward County Republican executive committee.

Usually those who want to serve on this committee are automatically accepted. It was "the first time ... anyone could recall ... [someone being turned down] in a county where Republicans complain about being outnumbered by Democrats," according to a McClatchy news article.

When Hamze's membership in the Executive Committee was denied, the 300 or so people present at the meeting "cheered loudly." Those cheers were strikingly similar to the foot stomping and applause that have been heard from the audiences attending the Republican presidential primary debates.

At the Republican debates it is not only Islamophobia that is on display, but rabid reactions to gay rights, scorn for the vulnerability of the uninsured, and calls for the blood of those on death row.

To this you can add the following stances that have come to the fore under the influence of a wave of modern barbarism centered in the ranks of the Republican Party: Tea Party assertions that environmentalism is "unbiblical" and cutting taxes for the rich is righteous; health care reform is "the equivalent of drug dealing" (Rick Santorum); there is a serious threat of America turning into a "secular atheist country ... dominated by radical Islamists" (Newt Gingrich); "those who believe in evolution are part of a cult following" (Michele Bachman); and the friendly embracing of fundamentalists who believe that the Statue of Liberty is a "demonic idol" (Rick Perry).

Who are these people who give tea a bad name and show up at presidential debates only to behave as if they are enjoying a bear-baiting exhibition?

Actually, they are Richard Hofstadter's politically paranoid, Eric Hoffer's true believers, and Ortega y Gasset's revolting masses. They are people who are always with us even in the midst of modernity. And they obviously feel that here in America, it is now their time.

Maybe they are correct. They have captured one of the two main parties in the U.S., taken at least temporary control of the House of Representatives, and fashioned a slate of Republican presidential hopefuls in their own image.

As has been noted in a Concord Monitor editorial, in the midst of the cheering and jeering of these modern barbarians "not one Republican candidate ... spoke up to admonish the crowd and call for civility."

ã€€

For the rest of America to ignore what is going on here is the equivalent of

turning one's back on a mugging in progress. And what is being mugged is the entire country.

Actually, this threat has been building for some time. What do you think Ronald Reagan was doing, in terms of both domestic and foreign policies, if not laying the ground for George W. Bush.

And the Democrats too have done their share to prepare the ground. Bill Clinton helped deregulate the economy to the delight of the devotees of greed and corruption, while simultaneously destroying the lives of millions of Iraqi innocents through draconian sanctions.

President Obama has allied with racists in the Middle East and let go free torturers and war criminals who worked for the U.S. government. Indeed, how many of us, politicians and voters, have turned a blind eye to the repeated bipartisan orgies of blood that sacrificed millions in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, among other places.

Who are these people? Well, intellectually speaking they are our lumpen-proletariat. The one-dimensional thinkers and political savages that, until recently, had dwelled on the fringes of the conservative movement.

However, in another way they are a reflection of all of us and our frustrations with the built in inadequacies of the democratic system. Winston Churchill was right when he said that democracy was the worst political system, except for all the others.

The recurrent corruption, constant double standards, favoritism, and influence peddling can get us all down. But what sets the modern barbarians apart is their simple-minded intention to essentially dismantle government with nothing but a vague and vengeful minimalism in mind as a replacement.

They are, if you will, intimations of our collective political id. So, Dr. Jekyll, meet Mr. Hyde. Who will it be? If you think you really share the character of Dr. Jekyll, then you better assert yourself. Get active, get political, speak out, take a progressive stand. Otherwise, modern barbarism will have its way.

Lawrence Davidson is a history professor at West Chester University in Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Foreign Policy Inc.: Privatizing America's National Interest*; *America's Palestine: Popular and Official Perceptions from Balfour to Israeli Statehood*; and *Islamic Fundamentalism*.

Enduring Terror Double Standards

Exclusive: President Barack Obama ordered the targeted killing of al-Qaeda figure and American citizen Anwar al-Awlaki despite the lack of any legal due process. But the same week, the U.S. government continued to turn a blind eye to a Cuban-American terrorist harbored in Miami, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Former Vice President Dick Cheney may have expressed the pervasive American double standard on human rights best during a NBC "Today" show interview when host Matt Lauer asked if Cheney's support for waterboarding would carry over to its use by a foreign adversary against an American suspected of spying or caught conducting a covert operation.

"We probably would object to it," responded Cheney, "on the grounds that we have obligations towards our citizens and that we do everything we can to protect our citizens."

As for how that attitude matched up with his enthusiastic support for waterboarding detainees in the "war on terror," Cheney explained that "we weren't dealing with American citizens in the enhanced interrogation program." He then added, "the fact is, it worked."

In other words, one set of rules on torture applies to the United States and another set applies to the rest of the world, with gradations depending on how close a country or an individual is to the United States. The only consistency is the hypocrisy, and the only measure is whether something "worked."

Similar double standards were also on display this past week with disparate attitudes applied toward "terrorism" depending on who is doing the terrorizing.

On Friday, President Barack Obama announced the targeted killing of Anwar al-Awlaki, an American citizen of Yemeni extraction who had turned on the United States and joined with al-Qaeda operatives to plot attacks against Americans.

Because Awlaki allegedly collaborated in terrorist attempts to kill Americans, including the botched "underwear" bombing over Detroit on Christmas 2009, he was hunted down and killed by a CIA drone attack with no due process beyond Obama putting Awlaki's name on a "capture-or-kill" list.

However, also last week, with virtually no attention in the U.S. news media, Venezuela expanded on its appeal to the United States to extradite CIA-trained

Cuban terrorist Luis Posada Carriles to face charges of not only masterminding the mid-air bombing of a Cubana airliner in 1976 but engaging in acts of torture and other crimes while serving in a Venezuelan intelligence agency four decades ago.

The United States has been harboring Posada since 2005, with the Bush administration and now the Obama administration refusing to take action to ensure that Posada faces justice for these grave crimes. Instead of extraditing Posada to Venezuela, the U.S. government has bungled minor cases against him for illegal entry and perjury.

As a result, Posada, now 83, has gotten to live out his golden years in relative comfort in Miami supported by the influential Cuban-American community, much as his terrorist co-conspirator Orlando Bosch did.

In being spared punishment for the 1976 Cubana Airline bombing, which killed 73 people including the Cuban youth fencing team, the pair also enjoyed the invaluable assistance of the Bush Family, including George H.W. Bush, Jeb Bush and George W. Bush.

New Charges

Venezuela's new extradition request results from investigations into political repression from the 1960s to the 1980s, including thousands of kidnappings, "disappearances" and acts of torture.

Posada has been implicated in some of these human rights crimes because after receiving CIA training for covert operations aimed at Fidel Castro's Cuba Posada in 1967 went to work for the feared Venezuelan intelligence agency, known as DISIP, where he became chief of operations.

One recently revealed case implicating Posada involved two women Brenda Hernandez Esquivel and Marlene del Valle Esquivel whose home in Maracay was raided in 1973 by state security agents searching for "subversive elements."

In the raid, three men were killed, one after opening the door and two others after surrendering, the complaint alleges. Later, the women were taken to DISIP's local headquarters where they say they were abused by Posada, who was known as "Commissioner Basilio,"

Regarding Brenda Hernandez Esquivel, Posada noted that she was pregnant and told his officers that "the seed must be finished off," which was accomplished by kicking the woman in the abdomen killing the unborn child, according to the complaint. Afterwards, the woman said she barely escaped attempts by the officers to drown her.

Posada is also alleged to have used a lit cigarette and feigned executions to torture Marlene del Valle and her six-month-old child as a means to extract information.

Later, the two women say they were moved to DISIP headquarters in Caracas where they were subjected to further torture until ultimately being released.

Three years later, Posada and Bosch allegedly had a bomb placed onboard a Cubana Airlines plane that was carrying 73 people, including the Cuban youth fencing team from Caracas to Havana. Though Bosch and Posada have formally denied masterminding the Cubana Airlines bombing, evidence in U.S. government files makes the case of their guilt overwhelming.

Declassified U.S. documents show that soon after the Cubana plane was blown out of the sky on Oct. 6, 1976, the CIA, then under the direction of George H.W. Bush, identified Posada and Bosch as the masterminds of the bombing.

But in fall 1976, Bush's boss, President Gerald Ford, was in a tight election battle with Democrat Jimmy Carter and the Ford administration wanted to keep intelligence scandals out of the newspapers. So Bush and other officials kept the lid on the investigations. [See Robert Parry's *Secrecy & Privilege*.]

Secret Cables

Still, inside the U.S. government, the facts were well known. According to a secret CIA cable dated Oct. 14, 1976, intelligence sources in Venezuela relayed information about the Cubana Airlines bombing that tied in Bosch, who had been visiting Venezuela, and Posada, who was his host and was still a senior DISIP officer.

The Oct. 14 cable said Bosch arrived in Venezuela in late September 1976 under the protection of Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez, a close Washington ally who assigned his intelligence adviser Orlando Garcia "to protect and assist Bosch during his stay in Venezuela."

On his arrival, Bosch was met by Garcia and Posada, according to the report. Later, a fundraising dinner was held in Bosch's honor. "A few days following the fund-raising dinner, Posada was overheard to say that, 'we are going to hit a Cuban airplane,' and that 'Orlando has the details,'" the CIA report said.

"Following the 6 October [1976] Cubana Airline crash off the coast of Barbados, Bosch, Garcia and Posada agreed that it would be best for Bosch to leave Venezuela. Therefore, on 9 October, Posada and Garcia escorted Bosch to the Colombian border, where he crossed into Colombian territory."

In South America, police began rounding up suspects. Two Cuban exiles, Hernan Ricardo and Freddy Lugo, who got off the Cubana plane in Barbados, confessed that they had planted the bomb. They named Bosch and Posada as the architects of the attack.

A search of Posada's apartment in Venezuela turned up Cubana Airlines timetables and other incriminating documents.

Posada and Bosch were charged in Venezuela for the Cubana Airlines bombing, but the case soon became a political tug-of-war, since the suspects were in possession of sensitive Venezuelan government secrets that could embarrass President Andres Perez.

A New Day for Terrorists

After President Ronald Reagan and Vice President George H.W. Bush took power in Washington in 1981, the momentum for unraveling the mysteries of the Cuban Airlines bombing and other anti-communist terror plots dissipated. Reagan's ramped-up Cold War trumped any concern about right-wing terrorism.

Indeed, Reagan and Bush found right-wing extremists like Posada useful again and surely weren't eager to offend Miami's politically powerful Cuban community.

In 1985, Posada escaped from a Venezuelan prison where he was awaiting trial. In his autobiography, Posada thanked Miami-based Cuban activist Jorge Mas Canosa for the \$25,000 that was used to bribe guards who allowed Posada to walk out of prison.

Another Cuban exile who aided Posada was former CIA officer Felix Rodriguez, who was close to then-Vice President George H.W. Bush. At the time, Rodriguez was handling secret supply shipments to the Nicaraguan Contra rebels, a pet project of President Reagan.

After fleeing Venezuela, Posada joined Rodriguez in Central America and began using the code name "Ramon Medina." Posada was assigned the job of paymaster for pilots in the White House-run Contra-supply operation.

By the late 1980s, Orlando Bosch also was out of Venezuela's jails and back in Miami. But Bosch, who had been implicated in about 30 violent attacks, was facing possible deportation by U.S. officials who warned that Washington couldn't credibly lecture other countries about terrorism while protecting a terrorist like Bosch.

But Bosch got lucky. Jeb Bush, then an aspiring Florida politician, led a lobbying drive to prevent the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service from

expelling Bosch. In 1990, the lobbying paid dividends when Jeb's dad, President George H.W. Bush, blocked proceedings against Bosch, letting the unapologetic terrorist stay in the United States.

In 1992, also during the Bush-41 presidency, the FBI interviewed Posada about the Iran-Contra scandal for 6 ½ hours at the U.S. Embassy in Honduras. Posada filled in some blanks about the role of Bush's vice presidential office in the secret Contra operation.

According to a 31-page summary of the FBI interview, Posada said Bush's national security adviser, former CIA officer Donald Gregg, was in frequent contact with Felix Rodriguez.

"Posada recalls that Rodriguez was always calling Gregg," the FBI summary said. "Posada knows this because he's the one who paid Rodriguez' phone bill." After the interview, the FBI agents let Posada walk out of the embassy unmolested. [For details, see Parry's *Lost History*.]

Harboring Terrorists

In 2005, when Posada eventually made his way into Miami, then-Florida Gov. Jeb Bush made little effort to capture him. Posada was detained only after he held a news conference.

Then, instead of extraditing Posada to Venezuela to stand trial for a terrorist mass murder, George W. Bush's administration engaged in a lackadaisical effort to have him deported somewhere else for lying on an immigration form.

During a 2007 court hearing in Texas, Bush administration lawyers allowed to go unchallenged testimony from a Posada friend that Posada would face torture if he were returned to Venezuela. The judge, therefore, barred Posada from being deported there.

After that ruling, Venezuelan Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez accused the administration of "a cynical double standard" in the "war on terror." As for the claim that Venezuela practices torture, Alvarez said, "There isn't a shred of evidence that Posada would be tortured in Venezuela."

Posada came to personify the hypocrisy of George W. Bush's famous declaration that harboring a terrorist was no better than being a terrorist.

On May 2, 2008, Posada was feted at a gala fundraising dinner in Miami. Some 500 supporters chipped in to his legal defense fund and Posada arrived to thundering applause. In a bristling speech against the Castro regime, Posada told his supporters, "We ask God to sharpen our machetes."

Venezuelan Ambassador Alvarez protested the Bush administration's tolerance of the dinner. "This is outrageous, particularly because he kept talking about [more] violence," Alvarez said.

Similarly, his alleged co-conspirator in the Cubana Airlines bombing, Orlando Bosch, showed no remorse for his violent past.

In a TV interview, reporter Manuel Cao on Miami's Channel 41 asked Bosch to comment on the civilians who died when the Cubana plane crashed off the coast of Barbados.

Bosch responded, "In a war such as us Cubans who love liberty wage against the tyrant [Fidel Castro], you have to down planes, you have to sink ships, you have to be prepared to attack anything that is within your reach."

"But don't you feel a little bit for those who were killed there, for their families?" Cao asked, noting the presence of Cuba's amateur fencing team that had just won gold, silver and bronze medals at a youth fencing competition in Caracas. "The young people onboard?"

Bosch replied, "I was in Caracas. I saw the young girls on television. There were six of them. After the end of the competition, the leader of the six dedicated their triumph to the tyrant. She gave a speech filled with praise for the tyrant.

"We had already agreed in Santo Domingo, that everyone who comes from Cuba to glorify the tyrant had to run the same risks as those men and women that fight alongside the tyranny."

[The comment about Santo Domingo was an apparent reference to a meeting by a right-wing terrorist organization, CORU, which took place in the Dominican Republic in 1976 and which involved a CIA undercover asset.]

No Outrage

Though Bosch was allowed to die in peace earlier this year, the Obama administration's Justice Department did prosecute Posada on perjury charges (a case that was lost when the jury apparently sympathized with the anti-communist militant).

Still, Obama has shown no interest in seeking justice for the Cubana Airlines victims. To do so would surely have political repercussions in the swing state of Florida in 2012.

The U.S. news media remains similarly blasé about Posada walking free, in contrast to their fury over Libya's supposed role in the mid-air bombing of Pan

Am 103, which killed 270 people in 1988. The widely presumed guilt of Muammar Gaddafi's government was often cited as justification for seeking violent "regime change" in Libya this year.

At leading news outlets, such as the New York Times, Libyan guilt for the Pan Am 103 bombing was stated as flat fact, even though the evidence was much weaker indeed threadbare compared to what exists against Posada and Bosch on the Cubana Airlines case. [For more on the Pan Am 103 case against Libya, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Through the US Media Lens Darkly.](#)"]

There is also a strong U.S. media consensus that President Obama did the right thing in ordering the targeted killing of Awlaki even though there was no criminal indictment, no evidence presented to a grand jury, no formal legal proceeding of any sort.

By contrast, the U.S. government's calculated neglect of Venezuela's repeated requests that Posada be turned over for criminal prosecution for acts of terrorism and torture draws virtually no media attention at all.

Perhaps the true meaning of "American exceptionalism" is that the rules apply to every nation except America. Ultimately, Dick Cheney seems to be right, that the U.S. government feels no obligation to enforce international laws against terrorism and torture if American officials or their friends are the ones implicated.

[For more on these topics, see Robert Parry's *Lost History, Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep*, now available in a three-book set for the discount price of only \$29. For details, [click here.](#)]

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at [neckdeepbook.com](#). His two previous books, *Secrecy & Privilege: The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq* and *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth'* are also available there.

'Occupy Wall Street' Movement Grows

The economic distress caused by out-of-control Wall Street greed finally has prompted a dramatic public response in the form of protesters occupying a park in the Financial District of New York City. Slowly, the movement has attracted broader support, reports Danny Schechter.

By Danny Schechter

There was a rumor on Friday that the band Radiohead would be dropping by the #Occupy Wall Street encampment. They had just been on "The Colbert Report" and their fan base is huge among the very demographic of younger people drawn to the protests now beginning their third week.

And so more people came than organizers expected. Loads of people! Except, alas, for Radio Head. The band had reportedly called to express support that led some to conclude that they were on the way.

This demonstrates again the power of celebrity to draw a crowd. What did impress the activists in Zuccotti Park in the Financial District is that the Radiohead fans actually stuck around and took part in the activities and a march that went north to Police Headquarters protesting the pepper-spraying of activists.

That police action against #Occupy Wall Street protesters had the other unintended consequence of persuading the news media, which had convinced itself that this growing assembly was not worth covering, to cover it.

Soon, thanks to research by the mysterious "Anonymous," activists were able to identify the police commander responsible for using a chemical weapon against female protesters.

His name is Anthony Bologna, and soon his email was hacked and his record of alleged earlier abuse incidents was publicized, apparently along with his online porn collection.

Then, Jon Stewart stepped in Thursday with a report on the cop he called "TONY BALONEY," ridiculing him and the police force.

Perhaps, that is why the NYPD was more restrained Friday night and backed down with threatened arrests of a group of activist bicyclists called Critical Mass, that had shown up to show solidarity.

When it was announced at a nightly meeting (called the "General Assembly") that the bikers were at risk, hundreds of activists rushed out to show some solidarity to them and, then, there were no arrests.

Perhaps this incident was evidence of a sign I saw reading "The power of the people is greater than the people in power."

#Occupy Wall Street has yet to attract the 20,000 militants they had hoped for but it's growing and, more importantly, retaining its sense of community, non-violence, and sense of a tolerant community. It is a decentralized.

Most important is that similar actions are already taking place in other cities like a march on Friday in Boston against the Bank of America. An even bigger one is being planned for Washington in October.

Other organizations are supporting this emerging movement. Local 100 of the Transport Workers Union say they "applaud the courage of the young people on Wall Street" and are planning to turn out their members next week.

I saw tee-shirts of UAW members and met some activists from the Salvadorian community. Already #Occupy Wall Street sent over a hundred people to back a protest by postal workers trying to save their jobs and the Post Office.

The longer this lasts, and is allowed to last, the more it is likely to grow.

Already intellectuals and writers like Chris Hedges are praising the protesters as "the best among us" and are imploring the rest of us to get involved:

"There are no excuses left. Either you join the revolt taking place on Wall Street and in the financial districts of other cities across the country or you stand on the wrong side of history.

"Either you obstruct, in the only form left to us, which is civil disobedience, the plundering by the criminal class on Wall Street and accelerated destruction of the ecosystem that sustains the human species, or become the passive enabler."

Veteran activist Carl Davidson writes:

"Young rebels often manifest a moral clarity that awakens and prods the rest of us. Through their direct actions, they become a critical force, holding up a mirror for an entire society to take a look at itself, what it has come to, and what choices lay before it.

"The historic example is the four young African American students that sat at a lunch counter and ordered a cup of coffee in Greensboro, North Carolina back in 1960. The Wall Street protests are thus a clarion call to the trade unions and everyone concerned with economic and social justice."

This weekend, Occupy Wall Street is promising to make an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and to begin a debate about next steps.

The last two weeks have been a tremendous learning experience for the activists who even doubted their staying power. Now their non-organization has organized with a food committee, media center, sanitation department and task force to encourage more debate.

David Degraw of AmpedStatus.com that pushed for the protests sees the movement defining itself. He told me on my weekly News Dissector Radio Show on Progressive Radio Network that he expects more clarity to emerge from a debate that's already underway.

He writes, "As the occupation of Wall Street moves into its third week, there are many questions about the organizers behind the ongoing protests and the origins of the 99% Movement."

He has encountered resistance from parties unknown to his efforts to encourage a debate.

"As AmpedStatus was pushing for a decentralized global rebellion against Wall Street and actively supporting the Egyptian uprising against the IMF and Federal Reserve, the attacks on the site escalated. In what appeared to be a fatal blow, the entire ISP network that the AmpedStatus.com site was hosted on was knocked offline, hundreds of sites were also affected and the AmpedStatus.com web hosting provider said that they would no longer be able to host the site unless it was moved to a service that was significantly more than we were paying or could afford.

"With a very limited budget, and in complete desperation, AmpedStatus put out a call for help."

The computer whiz Anonymous stepped in and helped the site recover. It is now on the leading edge of the movement. Other sites like Livestream carry the events around the clock the way Al Jazeera reported on the uprising in Egypt.

#OccupyWallStreet disseminates tweets around the clock

Many in the media wrote off the young people in Egypt, and proved to be as out of touch as much of the American media is today. As Bob Dylan sang decades ago to a reporter from Time Magazine, "There's something happening and you don't know what it is, do you"

News Dissector Danny Schechter blogs about the protests on News Dissector.com. His latest film, Plunder The Crime of Our Time" called for protests against financial crime. (Plunderthecrimeofourtime.com) Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org.
