

# Sleepwalking Toward Catastrophe

Because the mainstream U.S. media remains neocon-dominated, there has been little rational debate about the risks of stumbling into nuclear war with Russia, as James W Carden writes.

By James W Carden

One question that the no-doubt intrepid debate moderators of the forthcoming Republican and Democratic debates might bestir themselves to ask the remaining candidates is: Given the fact that the U.S. and Russia are now circling one another on the Black Sea, in Ukraine, and in the skies over Syria, it is possible that policymakers are not completely alive to the risks inherent in such maneuverings?

The question is well worth asking since the world balance in 2016 is not only dangerous, it carries risks far in excess to the last time the great powers accidentally stumbled, into catastrophe. After all, unlike in the summer of 1914, today, *all* the great world powers have nuclear weapons. A brief consideration of The Great War reveals startling parallels with the situation that obtains today.

In the days immediately following the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand no one could have imagined what was ahead – and this points to a lesson that is still very relevant today: that in international affairs the intentions of other nation-states are essentially unknowable. As such, the pre-war status quo collapsed under the weight of that uncertainty.

What followed stands as a vivid example of what the political scientist Robert Jervis has called “the security dilemma.” This posits that when a state undertakes measures to increase its security, those measures will inevitably be seen as offensive rather than defensive by other states, who will then take counter-measures to increase their own security, and so on. In other words, so-called “defensive” weapons are not seen as “defensive” in the eyes of the states against which they are aimed.

As the eminent scholar of Europe, Professor David Calleo, has written, the Germans didn’t see themselves as aggressors. “The Imperial Germans,” he writes, “maintained they were waging war for defensive purposes, they were protecting their national unity from the wrath of the French who were determined to undo it.” The Entente Powers saw things differently.

It is also instructive to note the way democratic societies behaved in the run-up to the First World War. Today, well-funded and influential think tanks

endlessly promote the idea that the U.S. ought to engage in a crusade to promote democracy abroad because “democracies don’t fight each other.” Yet the Great War puts the lie to that assertion, especially when you consider that the voting franchise in Germany was more inclusive than America’s at the time.

Democratic peace theory also purposefully ignores one of democracy’s principal problems: that when it comes to war, its citizens are prone to fall prey to a mob mentality. And a mob mentality and a war fever is exactly what gripped the democracies in Europe in the run-up to the Great War.

In an editorial published a week before hostilities broke out, *The Nation* magazine reported that: “In Vienna, in Paris, in Berlin, in St Petersburg, there were signs of acute mania affecting large bodies of people. Mob psychology often shows itself in discouraging and alarming forms, but is never so repulsive and appalling as when it is seen in great crowds shouting for war. Lest we forget indeed – about nothing does the mob forget so quickly as about war.”

The editorial went on to conclude: “If one looked only at these surface manifestations, one would be tempted to conclude that Europe was about to become a gigantic madhouse.”

Professor Calleo recounts that after Chancellor of Germany, Bethmann-Hollweg, was deposed, he wrote that he too saw the role of public opinion as “the crucial element – how else to explain the senseless and impassioned zeal which allowed countries like Italy, Rumania, and even America not originally involved in the war, no rest until they too had immersed themselves in the bloodbath?”

Today’s rush, likewise senseless and impassioned, to restart the Cold War is largely a product of the mutual admiration society that has sprung up between the Pentagon, hawkish administration officials, and their unscrupulous admirers in the media.

The propaganda churned out by Washington’s ‘military-media-think tank complex’ would have been all too familiar to the poets Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, both of whom served on the front lines of the Great War in France.

Owen’s poem “Dulce et Decorum est” was written at the front in 1917 and describes the death of a fellow soldier who had been gassed by the Germans. In the poem’s final stanza, Owen directly addresses a civilian war propagandist back in England, telling him that if he had seen first-hand the horrors of war:

“My friend, you would not tell with such high zest

To children ardent for some desperate glory,

The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est Pro patria mori

It is sweet and right to die for your country”

Owen was killed at the front a week before the Armistice was signed. His friend Sassoon survived. Unlike Owen, Sassoon lived a long life and produced some of the best known anti-war literature of the day.

At the front he produced what may be his most memorable offering, *Suicide in the Trenches*, in which he too castigated the hearty band of war propagandists cheering from the sidelines:

“You smug faced cowards with kindling eye

Who cheer as soldier lads march by

Sneak home and pray you’ll never know

The Hell where youth and laughter go”

One can’t help but wonder what Owen and Sassoon might have made of the legions of armchair generals and assorted foreign policy hangers-on who make up the ever expanding ranks of the New Cold Warriors in Washington today.

**James W Carden is a contributing writer for The Nation and editor of The American Committee for East-West Accord’s eastwestaccord.com. He previously served as an advisor on Russia to the Special Representative for Global Inter-governmental Affairs at the U.S. State Department. [This article is adapted from a lecture given to students at the Moscow State University in February.]**

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## A Campaign Sinking to New Lows

The Republican presidential campaign has reached new lows for crassness, but Michael Winship sees something more sinister lurking in the ugliness.

By Michael Winship

For a politician or a journalist, there was a time when citing the classics – as long as it wasn’t done in a pedantic or pompous manner – was a mark of wisdom and experience. If a candidate or reporter does it today, there’s a good chance they’ll be trolled and ridiculed for high-handed pretension. Cue Donald Trump shouting, “Loser!”

But in April 1968, there stood presidential candidate Bobby Kennedy, speaking to

an inner city crowd at the corner of 17th and Broadway in Indianapolis. He had just told them the horrific news that Martin Luther King, Jr., had been assassinated. People fell to the ground in shock and despair, others angrily shouted for violence and revenge.

Kennedy calmed the spectators. He spoke – without notes – for nearly five minutes. “What we need in the United States is not division,” he said. “What we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence and lawlessness, but is love, and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or whether they be black.”

He quoted Aeschylus, the poet and dramatist of ancient Greece:

*Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget*

*falls drop by drop upon the heart,*

*until, in our own despair,*

*against our will,*

*comes wisdom*

*through the awful grace of God.*

Kennedy concluded, “Let’s dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world. Let us dedicate ourselves to that, and say a prayer for our country and for our people.” That night, Indianapolis was one of the American cities that did not erupt in bullets and bloodshed.

Fast-forward to 2016. If, as the saying goes, campaigning is poetry and governing is prose, this year’s GOP presidential race has degenerated into a cheesy, dirty limerick. There’s Donald Trump insulting the size of Marco Rubio’s mouth and ears, and Rubio making fun of Trump’s spray tan and small hands. Not exactly the age of Aeschylus, is it?

And here’s Trump’s on-again, off-again, tepid dismissal of former KKK Grand Wizard David Duke’s support for him. On Friday: “David Duke endorsed me? OK, all right, I disavow, OK?”

Two days later: “Just so you understand, I don’t know anything about David Duke, OK? ... I don’t know anything about what you’re even talking about with white supremacy or white supremacists. So I don’t know. I don’t know – did he endorse me, or what’s going on? Because I know nothing about David Duke; I know nothing

about white supremacists.”

Hard to imagine Trump pulling this off on a street corner before an angry black crowd in Indianapolis. (And remember it’s coming from a man who knows damn well who David Duke is; back in 2000, Trump said he abandoned a possible run for president on the Reform Party ticket in part because one of its members was “a Klansman, Mr. Duke.”)

It’s all enough to make you book the next boat to Nova Scotia. As Evan Osnos writes in the current *New Yorker*, “There may be no better measure of the depravity of this campaign season than the realization that it’s not clear whether Trump’s overt appreciation for fascism, and his sustained salute to American racists, will have a positive or negative effect on his campaign.”

Then this, from hardworking journalist Lee Fang at *The Intercept*: “Les Moonves, the chief executive of CBS, celebrated Donald Trump’s candidacy for the second time on Monday, calling it ‘good for us economically.’ Moonves... described the ‘circus’ of a presidential campaign and the flow of political advertising dollars, and stated that it ‘may not be good for America, but it’s damn good for CBS, that’s all I got to say.’

“‘So what can I say? The money’s rolling in, this is fun,’ Moonves continued, observing that the debates had attracted record audiences. The CBS media executive also riffed briefly about the type of campaign advertising spending produced by such a negative presidential campaign. ‘They’re not even talking about issues. They’re throwing bombs at each other and I think the advertising reflects that.’

“Moonves added, ‘I’ve never seen anything like this and this is going to be a very good year for us. ... It’s a terrible thing to say, but bring it on, Donald, go ahead, keep going.’”

Of course, this is not the first time that Moonves has made comments like this; in 2012 he famously said, “Super PACs may be bad for America, but they’re very good for CBS.” And Lee Fang points out that in February Moonves told investors, “Looking ahead, the 2016 presidential election is right around the corner, and, thank God, the rancor has already begun.”

This disintegration of public discourse, egged on by 24/7 news cycle and the media’s lust for cash and the provocative sound-bite, is nothing to cheer about. And of course in Moonves’s case, there is a perverse irony that as head of CBS he runs a company once praised as the Tiffany Network that, among other pursuits of quality, usually valued the integrity and truth telling of its news division above almighty profit or the pinheaded perspective of a bullying charlatan.

It was that network's Edward R. Murrow who in 1954 took on Joe McCarthy, a troglodytic demagogue not unlike Donald Trump, when few were willing to speak up and warn the republic of imminent peril.

When Murrow went on the air and faced down the spittle-flecked allegations of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, who had ruined lives and careers with false charges of treason, he turned the tables on McCarthy, who in one of his rants had quoted Cassius in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, "Upon what meat does this, our Caesar, feed?"

Murrow responded, "And upon what meat doth Senator McCarthy feed? Two of the staples of his diet are the investigation, protected by immunity, and the half-truth."

Then, at the end of his broadcast Murrow said, "The actions of the junior senator from Wisconsin have caused alarm and dismay amongst our allies abroad, and given considerable comfort to our enemies. And whose fault is that? Not really his. He didn't create this situation of fear; he merely exploited it – and rather successfully." Sound like anyone we know?

Murrow quoted a line from Cassius that came just before the quote McCarthy had chosen: "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves."

Point that out to Donald Trump or one of his more fervent supporters and maybe you'll be on the receiving end of one of the candidate's own classical rejoinders – a sneer accompanied by a punch in the face.

**Michael Winship is the Emmy Award-winning senior writer of Moyers & Company and BillMoyers.com, and a former senior writing fellow at the policy and advocacy group Demos. Follow him on Twitter at @MichaelWinship. (This story originally appeared at <http://billmoyers.com/story/when-the-poetry-of-campaigning-becomes-a-cheesy-dirty-limerick/>)**

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## Finding Security by Helping the 'South'

Official Washington's new group think is that more money must be poured into the Military-Industrial Complex to continue wars in the Middle East and hem in Russia and China on their borders. But the real security threats come from mass dislocations in the Third World, says ex-CIA official Graham E. Fuller.

By Graham E. Fuller

It does not take much imagination to see where refugees are taking the world over the longer run. This issue currently lies at the heart of some very ugly American politics. It is also tearing apart one of the noblest political experiments in human history, the European Union. It is radicalizing broad regions of the world and fueling global violence, from Myanmar to Tunisia and South Africa.

The basic conclusion is simple: either the North goes to the South, or the South comes to the North. The meaning of South coming North is already clear: conditions in the South are driving refugees to flee to the North.

Most refugees bring along serious political, social, economic and cultural problems of their homelands which complicate their ready integration into the North. This is especially true in smaller, and hence more culturally fragile countries in Europe, nation-states that possess unique cultural and social balance that *any* major influx of foreigners will disrupt.

There is only one unique Netherlands or Denmark, or Estonia, or Norway. They are not classical immigrant nations□ as are the vast spaces of the U.S., Canada, Australia, even Russia and Latin America.

This larger long-term movement of populations is certain. Existing conditions in large numbers of countries in the South□ are becoming untenable: poverty, disease, misgovernance, conflict, environmental degradation, unemployment.

Many of these blights are locally generated. But the West cannot deny its role in this as well. Western imperialism, remember, took over most of the known world for a good century or more; its sole purpose was to benefit the imperial metropole through resource extraction; the world order was designed to facilitate those gains. Its blessings to the colonized were mixed, to say the least.

But the blame game is not important here as the current reality is that we face a global problem of massive proportions however we ascribe the causes. And affixing blame does not solve the problem either. What is certain is that the problem today has now arrived on the doorstep of the affluent North.

The problem of migration of a billion people or so in decades ahead is daunting. It represents *the paramount security problem* for Western states. We are speaking of economic and social dislocations, a rise in unemployment and crime, the rise of nativist neo-fascism, greater Western involvement in the geopolitical crises and conflicts of the rest of the world. All this threatens the fracturing of the painfully constructed modern European order.

When we speak of malnourishment of hundreds of millions, loss of habitat under global climate change, greenhouse gasses emerging out of the ravished Amazon rain forest, social desperation, pandemics, violent competition for scarce resources, these are surely more urgent security issues for the West than ownership rights over rocks and atolls in the South China sea. Or the balance of military power in the Black Sea Basin. Or the degree of security and insulation that Latvians can be promised from the proximity of a powerful Russian state.

Meanwhile, military budgets continue to rise in the U.S. to fight wars that do not reflect meaningful global reality of the modern interconnected age. Over the last decades the U.S. and Europe have been fundamentally defeated in most Third World conflicts at high cost in blood and treasure, often leaving the situation worse than it was.

More to the point, *what good* has come out these optional U.S. wars of choice, either for the U.S. or for the tortured terrains in which they were devastatingly fought?

There is little to be gained in fine debates over whether the U.S., or NATO, or Russia, or China bear greater blame for global competition. The true geopolitical stakes may be lower today than in anytime in the past. The real issue is whether continued massive funding for such traditional armchair balance-of-power strategies is productively spent and is addressed to the true crisis of the future: gross global inequality of life.

In the U.S. we have (partially) come to understand that the wellbeing of the poor is not just a local problem but a national one. National dimensions require national solutions for the greater wellbeing of all society.

In the end there is no security behind gated communities. Islands of wellbeing in the middle of neglect and hardship are unsustainable and unethical. Nor can Western welfare islands long exist globally, insulated from a world of gross inequities.

They are poor and lazy one might say. But they struggle harder to live each day than the average Western suburbanite. And most people in the world in any case do not really want to leave their homes for some foreign country where they don't know the language or customs. But if things get bad enough, they will come, even at high personal risk as we witness today.

Fences, patrol boats, walls, checkpoints, buying off countries to serve as refugee half-way houses, more draconian immigration laws, feel-good invective against the immigrants lurking just outside our gates, all this is fantasy, just rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic.



If we don't want the South coming North, then the only other option is for the North to go South. No, not in the old punitive way. In many respects the North has already "been South" in past centuries, and it hasn't always been a pretty sight.

This is not to dismiss some fine Western-sponsored technological projects and NGOs like Doctors Without Frontiers. But sadly these contributions are only a drop in the bucket. Vastly more is called for. Remember the hugely generous American Marshall Plan at the end of World War II aimed at rebuilding a devastated Europe, including Germany? It was not conceived as philanthropy but as an integral part of *American security policy*.

How to improve conditions across the developing world? U.S. foreign aid in this capacity has been miniscule *less than 1 percent of the annual U.S. budget*. Yet wasteful and unproductive Pentagon budgets run to some 54 percent of U.S. annual discretionary spending. (More if we consider bloated security and intelligence institutions.)

Are we more secure today? From ISIS? From refugees? From terrorism? From Russia and Chinese border politics on their peripheries? Where are our *security priorities*?

A Marshall Plan for the South wouldn't it be a gross waste, money down foreign rat holes, propping up corrupt elites siphoning off the monies? Partially true, but might not all these terms similarly apply to many U.S. defense expenditures and the vast hangers-on of the military industrial complex with its corruptions, overruns and pork barrel?

So to divert some 50 percent (for starters) of this security budget to Investment in a more stable South might be money well spent. And who loses from a redirection of security spending, other than the huge arms industry, and the think tank acolytes and consultants that feed off them?

There is no easy blueprint on how to render the South more livable so that larger percentages of its populations will not feel compelled to flee to our shores. From Mexico and Central America, from the Middle East and Africa.

The problem is self-evident and multi-faceted, and no, money won't do it all. But a couple of hundred billion "wasted" in Africa and Latin America on infrastructure projects, schools, clinics, roads might actually improve things a lot more than our non-stop wars.

How have the trillions we have wasted in worsening lives in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, served our security needs? Or stopped the refugee flow North? Washington security experts need to develop some real-world thinking about the

implications of how peoples' lives around the world will impact the rest of us.

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

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## Meaning Behind the Republican Bile

There has been little inspirational about the U.S. presidential race, especially on the Republican side where insults have replaced argument and bigotry has become a cheap currency for winning over voters, but there are also significant lessons in this debased debate, writes Lawrence Davidson.

By Lawrence Davidson

As the Republican primary plays itself out, cruelty has become a campaign come-on to voters who say they are frustrated and angry with traditional politics. Frustrated and angry feelings short-circuit critical thinking and create a yearning for the quick emotional release that comes with vengeful speech and acts. Donald Trump has become a master manipulator of this situation.

Trump has the type of personality that lends itself to using such an approach. He is a bully acting out. You can see this when he denigrates his opponents as losers. On the other hand, he is self-aggrandizing, always describing himself as a winner. And, apparently, he has little capacity for self-reflection about his own speech and actions.

Some have described Trump as a textbook case of narcissistic personality disorder. Whether or not that is how you want to label him, he certainly has no problem publicly promoting cruelty. And, a subset of the American population responds positively to his abusive behavior. Here are a few examples:

Trump tolerates and indeed supports physical attacks on opponents who show up at his rallies. He sometimes encourages his supporters to violence by saying that he would like to punch protesters in the face. In the summer of 2015 he promised that if members of Black Lives Matter showed up at his rallies, "they would have a fight on their hands. I don't know if I'll do the fighting myself, or if other people will."

That prediction came true in Birmingham, Alabama, in November of last year, when a Black Lives Matter protester who simply shouted "black lives matter" was

roughed up and insulted during a Trump rally.

The next day Trump justified the actions of his supporters. “He [the protester] was so obnoxious and so loud” that “maybe he should have been roughed up.”

At another rally, this one in Vermont on a frigid January 2016 evening, when confronted with protesters, he told his security people to steal their coats before ejecting them. “Throw them out into the cold. Don’t give them their coats no coats confiscate their coats.”

## **Muslims and Torture**

Those are specific local displays of Donald Trump’s ability to act cruelly and encourage others to do so as well. But this dangerous trend goes on at a larger scale as well. For instance:

Trump has used unwarranted generalizations against groups he is suspicious of – generalizations that place group members in the sort of danger that comes with public stereotyping. This is particularly true when it comes to Muslims on the one hand and Mexicans on the other.

Trump appears to lump all Muslims in the same category as those who, to use his words, are “chopping off our heads in the Middle East.” Those who want “to kill us” and “knock out our cities.” Such a generalization ratchets up an already dangerous level of Islamophobia and sets the stage for other publicly proclaimed positions such as the closing of U.S. borders to all Muslims until such time as “our country’s representatives can figure out what is going on.” Actually, there are a lot of people in and out of the U.S. government who already know what is going on. However, because the answer to this question has to do with longstanding, special-interest-driven foreign policies, “our representatives” have, for political reasons, never moved to rectify matters. And, its questionable whether Trump as president would respond any differently.

Trump’s generalization about Muslims has apparently helped promote popular acceptance of another particularly cruel and misplaced policy proposal – the revival of the use of torture (often euphemistically called “enhanced interrogative methods”). Thus he has recently proclaimed, “Don’t tell me it doesn’t work, torture works. Believe me, it works.” This was followed by a typical Trumpism: “only a stupid person would say it doesn’t work.”

Just how does he know this with such certainty? Has he ever tortured anybody in order to get specific information? Has he ever been tortured for information he held? Indeed, did he do any research on the subject before passing judgment?

The truth about the efficacy of torture is just the opposite. It has been known

not to work at least since the early Eighteenth Century when Cesare Beccaria and other Enlightenment figures began to publicly call attention to the fact that there was no evidence that torture produced truthful confessions or other trustworthy information. Most professional interrogators since that time, with the exception of the small cadre of CIA torturers gathered around George W. Bush, have concluded that someone being tortured will tell their tormentors anything he or she thinks will stop the pain, regardless of its veracity. Obviously the consensus of expert opinion on this matter means as little to Donald Trump as it did to George W. Bush.

### **Mexicans and Mass Deportation**

Donald Trump has declared that he wants to deport just about every illegal resident of the United States – of which there are an estimated 11.3 million. Though he claims that he would do this “humanely,” the size of such an operation would certainly entail the uprooting of thousands of families and the impoverishment of hundreds of thousands of individuals. In other words, it is one of those socio-political operations that cannot help but result in acts of official cruelty and the encouragement of dangerous xenophobic sentiments

Most of the immigrants at risk are people from Mexico who cross the southern U.S. border clandestinely. Trump’s solution is twofold: 1. Build a wall along that roughly 2,000-mile border. “I will build a great wall and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me and I’ll build them very inexpensively. I will build a great, great wall on our southern border, and I will make Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words.” In addition he would add 25,000 new immigration agents and deploy drones to watch the border. 2. Deport all the Mexicans who are illegally resident in the U.S., most of whom, according to Trump, come from the dregs of Mexican society.

“When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best,” Trump said. “They’re sending people that have lots of problems. They’re bringing drugs, they’re bringing crime.” This belies the research that shows that most immigrants are more law-abiding than native citizens.

Trump also works on the assumptions that Mexican immigration increases unemployment and holds down wages. But is this really true? If there is any competition for jobs it would be for underpaid work that Americans, even the undereducated, tend not to want – thus creating the employment opportunities that attracts “illegals” across the Mexican border in the first place.

### **Trump Is Not Alone**

The difference between Trump and the other candidates, both Republican and

Democrat, is that he openly panders to emotions and fears that generate support for cruel actions and policies. Though other candidates might not act this way during the campaign, they might, if given the chance, prove every bit as capable of initiating cruel acts and policies in the name of "American interests." Given her actions in relationship to the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, we know this is certainly true of Hillary Clinton.

It might well be that most presidents have acted cruelly at some point during their term of office. Take for example President Barack Obama, who, on the one hand, put an end to President George W. Bush's practice of torture while, on the other hand, expanded an infamous and on-going campaign of drone murder. Nonetheless, the vast majority of presidents have not personally sought to stir up hatred, though ambitious demagogues and the rightwing media often do.

It is important to understand that there is always a subset of any population, including that in the United States, susceptible to the posturing and rhetorical style of a person like Donald Trump (who, by the way, often strikes poses and speaks in a fashion reminiscent of Benito Mussolini). This susceptible subset is looking for simple answers forcefully presented; they have a longstanding resentment of minorities and immigrants; they distrust the political establishment; and they feel disenfranchised. Their feelings and fears mean more to them than the nation's Constitution or other laws.

The number of such people becomes larger or smaller depending on economic and social circumstances. But they never go away entirely – their numbers never drop to zero.

In the case of Trump's appeal to the American public, my estimate is that this number may currently stand at one-quarter to one-third of the adult population.

The Trump phenomenon stands as a powerful reason why it is in the nation's interest that the government pay attention to issues that hold to a minimum public resentment: issues such as general equality of opportunity, fairness in the market place, tax equity, combating discriminatory practices, the serious problem of special-interest influence in politics, as well as the need to enhance social services ranging from unemployment insurance and Social Security to the right to health care and education.

Trump's popularity also stands as a powerful reason why the government must see to the dissemination of accurate information on such issues as immigrants and the economy, the real consequences of "free trade" treaties, the positive and necessary role of regulation, and last but certainly not least, the positive role of Muslims in America.

To the extent that both the Republicans, as well as the more conservative Democrats have stood in the way of such things, they have bred the frustration and dissatisfaction that Trump now exploits. Thus they have only themselves to blame for the rise of Donald Trump. Of course, that is little solace to the rest of us.

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*.

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## Mystery of the Civil War's Camp Casey

**From the Archive:** U.S. history is distorted by the prism of race, even the Civil War, which was fought over slavery but then enshrined white heroes when Jim Crow racism quickly asserted itself, a reality relevant to Black History Month and to Chelsea Gilmour's investigation into the mystery of Camp Casey.

By Chelsea Gilmour (Originally published on Feb. 26, 2015)

As much as Virginia loves its Civil War history, chronicling and commemorating almost every detail, Camp Casey isn't one of the places that gets glorified or even remembered. Located somewhere in what's now Arlington County, just miles from the White House and U.S. Capitol, Camp Casey was where regiments of African-American troops were trained to fight the Confederacy to end slavery.

While not the largest Union base for training U.S. Colored Troops (USCT), Camp Casey was one of the few located within the boundaries of a Confederate state. Yet, despite its historical significance, or perhaps because of it, Camp Casey has been largely lost to history.

In the decades after the war, as the white power structure reasserted itself across the South including in Virginia, the narrative of the Blue and the Grey took hold, two white armies battling heroically over conflicting interpretations of federal authority, brother against brother. Though slavery was surely an issue, African-Americans were pushed into the background, almost as bystanders.

In Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy, statues of Southern heroes were erected seemingly everywhere. One city street called Monument Avenue is lined with statues starting with one to Gen. Robert E. Lee (erected in 1890) and then

(between 1900 and 1925) others to Gen. J.E.B. Stuart, Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, Navy Lt. Matthew Fontaine Maury and President Jefferson Davis.

If you drive north toward Washington along I-95, you see a gigantic Confederate battle flag flying next to the highway near Fredericksburg, the site of a Confederate victory in 1862, as well as frequent historical markers remembering not only battles but skirmishes. Across Virginia, there are eight national parks dedicated to Civil War battles and events.

The honors bestowed on Confederate leaders reach even into Arlington and Alexandria, though Union forces maintained control of those areas throughout the war. In 1920, at the height of Jim Crow segregation, parts of Route One, including stretches through or near black neighborhoods, were named in honor of Jefferson Davis, an avowed white supremacist who wanted to continue slavery forever. (In 1964, during the Civil Rights era, Davis's name was added to an adjacent part of Route 110 near the Pentagon.)

Throughout Arlington itself, there are markers designating where Union forts and battlements were located. But there are no markers remembering Camp Casey, where the 23<sup>rd</sup> USCT regiment was trained and outfitted to go south to fight for African-American freedom, and where other USCT units bivouacked and drilled on their marches south. Even Camp Casey's precise location has become something of a mystery with county historians offering conflicting accounts.

That haziness itself raises troubling questions, since Camp Casey arguably was the most historically significant Civil War site in Arlington. It was not just some static fort that never was attacked but an active training ground for hundreds of African-Americans to take up arms against the historic crime of black enslavement.

### **Camp Casey's Role**

Named after Major General Silas Casey, who oversaw the training of new recruits near Washington, Camp Casey was in operation from 1862-1865 and served as an important rendezvous point for Union troops, accommodating some 1,800 soldiers. It also housed prisoners of war and included a hospital.

General Casey wrote the *Infantry Tactics for Colored Troops* in 1863, differentiating the training procedures for colored troops based on the racist notion that black soldiers were not as well equipped for combat or to follow orders, and would need to be spurred in order to fight as valiantly as whites.

To give an idea of Camp Casey's significance as a USCT base, a letter from the camp dated Aug. 2, 1864, directs Colonel Bowman of the 84<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania volunteers to forward all recruits for the colored regiments in the Army of the

Potomac to the recruiting rendezvous at Camp Casey instead of Camp Distribution as previously directed.

There were 138 African-American units serving in the Union Army during the Civil War, making up about one-tenth of the federal forces by the war's end in April 1865, and at least 16 of those USCT regiments spent time at Camp Casey from 1864-1865, including the 6<sup>th</sup>, the 29<sup>th</sup>, and the 31<sup>st</sup>.

Camp Casey was the recruiting and training camp for the 23<sup>rd</sup> Regiment U.S. Colored Infantry with many recruits coming from Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania, Virginia, slave country about halfway between Washington and Richmond. In line with the standards of the time, USCT soldiers were not as well trained as white troops, were not given the best equipment, and were not paid as well.

USCT soldiers also faced hostility and mistrust from some white Northern troops, meaning that they often were not placed on the front lines but got assigned to "fatigue duty," such as accompanying wagons and moving supplies. Nevertheless, USCT regiments battled heroically in several major clashes near the war's end and faced special dangers not shared by their white Northern comrades.

When blacks were admitted into the Union Army, Confederate President Jefferson Davis instituted a policy that refused to treat them as soldiers but rather as slaves in a state of insurrection, so they could be murdered upon capture or sold into slavery. The USCT soldiers were trained to expect no mercy and no quarter if wounded or captured.

In accordance with that Confederate policy, U.S. Colored Troops did face summary executions when captured in battle. When a Union garrison at Fort Pillow, Tennessee, was overrun by Confederate forces on April 12, 1864, black soldiers were shot down as they surrendered. Similar atrocities occurred at the Battle of Poison Springs, Arkansas, on April 18, 1864, and the Battle of the Crater in Petersburg, Virginia, on July 30, 1864. In one of the most notorious massacres of black Union soldiers, scores were executed in Saltville, Virginia, on Oct. 2, 1864.

### **Bravery Under Fire**

When the 23<sup>rd</sup> USCT was dispatched to join the battle against General Robert E. Lee's vaunted Army of Northern Virginia, one of Union General George Meade's staff officers wrote in a demeaning letter about them: "As I looked at them my soul was troubled and I would gladly have seen them marched back to Washington. We do not dare trust them in battle. Ah, you may make speeches at home, but here, where it is life or death, we dare not risk it."

However, on May 15, 1864, the 23<sup>rd</sup> USCT engaged in what may have been the first



clash between Lee's army and black troops. A chronology of the 23<sup>rd</sup>'s history cites Noel Harrison at Mysteries & Conundrums describing how the 23<sup>rd</sup> came to the support of an Ohio cavalry unit confronting a Confederate force southeast of Chancellorsville.

According to an account uncovered by historian Gordon C. Rhea, one of the Ohio cavalrymen wrote, "It did us good to see the long line of glittering bayonets approach, although those who bore them were Blacks, and as they came nearer they were greeted by loud cheers." The 23<sup>rd</sup> charged toward the Confederate position causing the Southern troops to withdraw, suffering several dead.

But the lack of faith in the African-American soldiers' commitment and skill would play a decisive role in the disastrous Battle of the Crater. The 23<sup>rd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> USCT regiments, both of which spent time at Camp Casey, were part of Union General Ambrose Burnside's Fourth Division, which was comprised of nine USCT regiments.

These regiments (the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the 29<sup>th</sup>, the 31<sup>st</sup>, the 43<sup>rd</sup>, the 30<sup>th</sup>, the 39<sup>th</sup>, the 28<sup>th</sup>, the 27<sup>th</sup>, and the 19<sup>th</sup>) were to lead the charge against Confederate defenses after a Union-crafted mine explosion blew an enormous crater under Confederate lines. Plans were changed, however, at the last minute when General Meade refused to allow the USCT to lead the advance.

Instead, the war-weary white troops commanded by General James Ledlie (a notorious drunk, whose lack of presence, much less leadership, during the battle was notable) led the way. Instead of charging around the crater, as the U.S. Colored Troops had been trained to do, the unprepared white replacements surged into the crater and were unable to get out. Union troops piled in on top of each other and were completely stuck, serving as easy targets for the Confederate soldiers above.

Finally, the USCT were called forth and served as a last stand against Confederate troops. Since they had initially been trained for the operation, they knew to avoid the crater and search for higher ground. But by that point, the botched attempt to take Petersburg had deteriorated into a massacre.

Lt. Robert K. Beecham, who had helped organize the USCT 23<sup>rd</sup> regiment, wrote about the soldiers' bravery: "The black boys formed up promptly. There was no flinching on their part. They came to the shoulder like true soldiers, as ready to face the enemy and meet death on the field as the bravest and best soldiers that ever lived."

According to the National Park Service, 209 USCT soldiers were killed in the battle with 697 wounded and 421 missing. The 23<sup>rd</sup> USCT from Camp Casey suffered

the heaviest losses, with 74 killed, 115 wounded, and 121 missing. Confederate troops murdered a number of the USCT soldiers as they sought to surrender.

After the Battle of the Crater, soldiers from the 23<sup>rd</sup> were among the Union troops to enter the Confederate capital of Richmond after it fell and were present for General Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865.

### **The Mystery of Camp Casey**

Arlington historians have various takes on why the history of Camp Casey has been so neglected with even its precise location a mystery. The Arlington Historical Society's stance is that it is not unusual to have lost a camp's location, since Arlington and Alexandria were both heavily fortified during the Civil War and there were many camps located throughout the area.

Further, unlike a fort, which would consist of a large physical construction, most training camps had tents pitched in a field with only a few solid wood-framed buildings.

But Franco Brown, a historian with the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington, had a different take on why its location has been mostly lost to history. Calling Camp Casey "one of the biggest mysteries of the Civil War," he has spent the past eight years researching Camp Casey and had encountered many of the same difficulties that I did in finding definitive information.

While acknowledging that Camp Casey was not the biggest USCT base (Camp Penn in Pennsylvania and Camp Nelson in Kentucky were more important training locations), Brown said Camp Casey was largely lost to history because it wasn't significant to the state's dominant historians. They favored the conventional narrative of the Civil War, the storyline of two white armies, brothers fighting brothers.

"This information [about Camp Casey] does not want to be out, it is part of their power," Brown said.

Brown said a key factor to consider when questioning how Camp Casey could have been ignored is to look at the attitudes of Virginians and the South after the war. At the war's conclusion, resentments ran high, and it would have been particularly galling to Southerners loyal to the Confederacy to acknowledge that there were African-American soldiers actively training on Virginian soil to fight for the North.

"After the war you get things like the KKK, which was started by five Confederate generals," Brown said, "and they don't want mixing of the races. The South is still mad about the Civil War. The South is still mad at the black man,

because he helped win the Civil War.”

This explanation takes into account the realities of Virginia’s society and culture following the war and, in many ways, continuing to today. While there may be some truth to the argument that the story of Camp Casey was simply lost in the chaos following the war, it isn’t hard to imagine a concerted effort by resentful whites to diminish the role of black soldiers during the war.

### **Where Was It?**

There even remains the question: where was Camp Casey? When I set out to try to solve that mystery, I found remarkably little information and some of it was conflicting. The National Archives in Washington had little about the camp, mostly letters and muster rolls, and it wasn’t until I asked the Arlington Historical Society’s official historians that they seemed to give the matter much thought.

As far as the exact location of Camp Casey, there are a couple of conclusions. One thing seems certain, that it was located on or near Columbia Pike, then the main thoroughfare from Northern Virginia to Washington D.C.

Some letters from the time suggest that the camp was within sight of the Custis-Lee Mansion overlooking the Potomac River (now known as Arlington House above Arlington National Cemetery). That and other references to landmarks, including its supposed proximity to Freedman’s Village, led some historical investigators to place Camp Casey on the south side of Columbia Pike, not far from the Long Bridge which crossed into Washington.

An advertisement on Sept. 5, 1865, from the *Daily National Republican*, a Washington, D.C. newspaper in circulation from 1862-1866, announced the sale of government buildings at Camp Casey situated “about one and one-half miles from Long Bridge.”

Jim Murphy of the Historical Society explained, “We think it [Camp Casey] would have been between the Long Bridge and Fort Albany, in a field in what is currently the [south] parking lot of the Pentagon. [...] We concluded it was located there after going through letters and dispatches from the camp that discuss the colored troops training next to a field.” (Long Bridge was located near today’s I-395’s 14<sup>th</sup> St. Bridge across the Potomac, and Fort Albany was just south of the current Air Force Memorial on Columbia Pike.) [To see a Civil War-era map of the area with some of the landmarks, [click here.](#)]

The Pentagon-parking-lot location would likely have put it within sight of the Custis-Lee mansion and would place it close to Freedman’s Village, a semi-permanent community for African-Americans freed by President Abraham Lincoln’s

Emancipation Proclamation who escaped the Confederacy and were settled on a portion of Lee's plantation on the north side of Columbia Pike.

But Franco Brown cites other evidence in letters from the soldiers placing Camp Casey in the vicinity of Hunter's Chapel, which no longer exists but was then located at the intersection of Glebe Road and Columbia Pike, about two miles further southwest from the location cited in the newspaper ad.

Brown also has a contemporaneous lithographic depiction that puts Camp Casey on a bluff near an area that looks to be around the intersection of what is now Glebe Road and Walter Reed Drive. "This area is at the highest apex of the surrounding land," Brown said.

Brown also noted that the lithograph shows a tall tower in the distant left-hand background, the Fairfax Seminary, which still stands today as the Virginia Theological Seminary, about four miles further south in Alexandria.

Thus, he concluded that "the general vicinity [of Camp Casey] is likely between the present day locations of Glebe Road, Walter Reed Drive, Columbia Pike, and Route 50 [Arlington Boulevard]." Brown said he is confident in this conclusion saying, "I've got it within 500 yards of the original location."

Brown's location would place Camp Casey about three miles from the Long Bridge, among Fort Albany, Fort Berry and Fort Craig. There is also the possibility that Camp Casey involved several military way stations stretching along Columbia Pike, all known collectively as Camp Casey, which might explain the disparate descriptions of its location. [For an overview map of the forts in the Washington area, [click here.](#)]

Though Arlington County has no plans to honor Camp Casey (or even work to ascertain its exact location), county officials have responded to public pressure to acknowledge Freedman's Village, where Sojourner Truth lived and worked for a time.

Freedman's Village gave freed slaves refuge both during the Civil War and for decades later (until it was razed in 1900). In 2015, Arlington dedicated a new bridge on Washington Boulevard that crosses over Columbia Pike as "Freedman's Village Bridge."

It is a much deserved (albeit meager) recognition of the historic area which became a Freedom Trail for African-Americans, both those escaping slavery by heading northward and those marching southward as soldiers to end it.

**Chelsea Gilmour, a lifelong resident of Arlington, Virginia, is an assistant editor at Consortiumnews.com.**

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# Testing Out Repression in Israel

Jeff Halper, co-founder of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, sees the brutal practice of destroying Palestinian homes and similar tactics as part of an experiment in social repression that can have broader implications as income inequality spreads across the globe, as he told Dennis J Bernstein.

By Dennis J Bernstein

Israeli author and human rights activist Jeff Halper who has challenged the Israeli practice of destroying Palestinian homes (usually for simply building after being denied a permit) attempts to answer the question why the world continues to accept such repeated brutalities perpetrated by the Israelis against a million-plus locked-down, very poor Palestinians.

Halper detects a quid pro quo, a violent marriage of convenience in which "Israel offers its expertise in helping governments pursue their various wars against the people and, in return, they permit it to expand its settlements and control throughout the Palestinian territory."

Halper's latest book, *War Against the People: Israel, the Palestinians and Global Pacification*, focuses on "global Palestine," and "how Israel exports its Occupation, its weaponry, its models and tactics of control and its security and surveillance systems, all developed and perfected on the Palestinians, to countries around the world engaged in asymmetrical warfare, or domestic securitization, both forms of "war against the people."

He contextualizes Israel's globalization of Palestine within the capitalist world system. Inherently unequal, exploitative, violent and increasingly unsustainable, Capitalism must pursue innumerable wars against the people if it is to enforce its global hegemony. These are precisely the types of wars, counterinsurgency, asymmetrical warfare, counter-terrorism, urban warfare and the overall securitization of societies, including those of the Global North, in which Israel specializes.

Halper, whose activism also includes work for over a decade as a community organizer in the working-class Mizrahi (Middle Eastern) Jewish neighborhoods of Jerusalem, is a coordinator of the Wars Against the People project of The People Yes! Network; he has served as the Chairman of the Israeli Committee for Ethiopian Jews; he was an active participant in the first attempt of the Free Gaza Movement to break Israel's crippling economic siege on the Gaza Strip by sailing into Gaza in 2008; he's an active member of the international support

committee of the Bertrand Russell Tribunal on Palestine; and he was nominated by the American Friends Service Committee for the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize, together with the Palestinian intellectual and activist Ghassan Andoni.

Halper spoke recently with Dennis J Bernstein.

DB: Let's talk a little bit about house demolitions, before we get into this book and what you're talking about in terms of the way in which Israel perfects and then exports oppression. Talk a little bit about your work with the houses.

JH: Well, I'm an Israeli activist. I grew up in the States, actually, in Minnesota, but I've lived in Israel now for more than 40 years. I've been involved all those years with the Israeli peace movement. And for the last 20 years I've been the head of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, as you mentioned. We call ourselves ICAHD.

And that's a political organization that's trying to fight the Israeli occupation, and achieve a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians. But [we also operate] in order to give people an idea of what occupation means, which is kind of an abstract term sometimes, and how it works, and what Israel's intentions are.

Now, as an anthropologist, I tried to read political intentions from what the powers are doing on the ground, not from what they're saying. We took the issue of house demolitions as our focal point. Israel has demolished 47,000 Palestinian homes in the occupied territories since 1967, since the occupation began. [T]hat's on the background of about 60,000 homes that were demolished in 1948, in what the Palestinians call the Nakba. Thousands and more are demolished inside Israel all the time, of Israeli citizens, all of whom are Arabs. For example, there is one Bedouin community in the Negev that's been demolished now 90 times, and rebuilt.

DB: Same community.

JH: The same community. And we've all gone out and rebuilt with them, and it's been re-demolished. Because they want to build a military settlement on top. And this is inside Israel. And a lot of these Bedouin men serve in the Israeli army. So one of the points of house demolitions is that we can't really separate the occupation from Israel itself.

We think the two state solution is gone, it's over. And basically Israel has created already one state which is an apartheid state. I mean, there's only one government, one army, one water system, one currency between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River, in the entire country. We don't even call the occupied territories, "occupied," we call them Judea and Samaria. Jerusalem, East

Jerusalem, the Palestinian side has been annexed.

So there is one country today. And what the house demolition issue shows is that, yes, in fact Israel is still demolishing homes, still ethnically cleansing the Palestinian population, after 70 years. And so what we do is we ... first of all, we resist demolitions. I get in front of bulldozers, we resist. We also rebuild homes. We built 189 homes, which takes quite a bit of resources, activists coming from all over the world.

So if you think of it in political terms, 189 political acts of resistance, of Israelis and Palestinians, and Internationals together. I think that is meaningful. And then we take what we learn on the ground, our analysis is genuinely grounded, and we go abroad, like I am now here in the Bay Area, to try to work with the activists. First of all, to update them on what's happening and to give them focus.

But in general, as you are saying, to raise this issue that's so difficult to raise in the mainstream American media, or even in universities. You can get fired for raising this issue.

DB: And you do.

JH: And people have been, that's right. So we're trying to go from the micro to the macro. From actually resisting demolitions on the ground, but really from there with our pictures and our maps and our analyses, to say "Why is Israel demolishing these homes? Where is it going with this whole thing?" And then bringing that analysis forward to try to mobilize the international community to finally end the occupation.

DB: Before we jump into the bigger picture, I want you to paint a little bit more of a picture of the nature of house demolition. So, what happens? Somebody shows up at your house? How's that work?

JH: Well, there are three kinds of demolitions, actually. Just briefly, you know if you think of demolition, you think well, these must be homes of terrorists. That's what Israel leads you to think, but it's not true. Of the 47,000 homes in the occupied territories that have been demolished, about 1 percent were demolished for security reasons. It has nothing to do with security or terrorism or anything like that. Those are what we call punitive demolitions. In fact, Israel demolishes most homes in military incursions.

For example, last summer, the summer of 2014, in the assault on Gaza, 18,000 homes were demolished, and not targeted. It's kind of collateral damage that have not been rebuilt. And you think, "It's the Middle East," but it can be pretty freezing in Gaza in the winter. And these homes have not been rebuilt.

The third way of demolishing, that we work most on, is that Israel simply has zoned ... it uses very dry-grade, Kafkaesque mechanisms to control Palestinians.

So it zoned the whole of the West Bank and East Jerusalem as agricultural land. So, although most of it is desert, the Aegean Desert, when a Palestinian who owns land comes to the Israeli authorities and says, "I want to build a home," their answer is, "Sorry, but this is agricultural land." Of course, if you want to build an Israeli settlement ... I mean there are 600,000 Israelis. They live on that same land in the occupied territory. But, of course, Israelis sit on the planning councils.

So if you want to rezone from agriculture to residential, it takes you a second. So it's really the manipulation of law and planning. And so that's the point. Palestinians since 1967, we're talking about 50 years now, have not been allowed to build new homes. You have children, and your children have children, and you have nowhere to live. And if you build a home, you are building illegally, right, because ... you don't have a building permit. And so immediately you get a demolition order from the Israeli army and they can come any time. They can come tomorrow morning, they can come next week, they can come in five years, maybe you'll win the lottery [and] they'll never come. Who knows? So even if you're living in your home, year after year, you are not living as securely, relaxed. Your home is not your castle.

DB: Because there always could be that knock on the door.

JH: I talked to many Palestinian women that say to me, "The first thing I do when I wake up in the morning is I look out the window, to see if there are bulldozers, the army, police. And if the coast is clear, I get dressed and wake up the kids and start making breakfast."□ That's the psychological state that Palestinians are living in.

DB: Let's talk about this book. Let's talk about how you say Israel uses the occupied territories as a training ground, a weapons and control of people training ground, which is then exported. It's sort of Israel's front line, forward trade. This concept, and these weapons, and this technology, and these techniques, are then sold to the rest of the world. Set that up for us.

JH: Over all the years of my activism, it was kind of a question that was in the back of my mind, nagging me all the time. And that was, "How does Israel get away with this?" After all, we're in the Twenty-first Century, we're well after the period of colonialism. Human rights [and] international law have entered into the public consciousness. I mean, they kind of matter to people.

Here you have a brutal occupation, on T.V. all the time. I mean, this isn't



happening in the Congo or Vietnam. This is in the glare of television cameras, in the Holy Land, no less! How does Israel get away with it? And the usual explanations ... you know, AIPAC [American Israel Public Affairs Committee] and Christian fundamentalists and the Israeli lobby, and guilt over the Holocaust ... it just doesn't work. That doesn't explain why China supports Israel the way it does, and Nigeria, India.

There was some big elephant in the room that we weren't talking about, that I wasn't seeing myself, to explain that. And as I sort of looked up at Israel's place in the world, I suddenly discovered, in a way, that actually, the quid pro pro is that Israel delivers to elites all over the world. Whether you are here in the global north, (the United States or Europe), in the middle, (Brazil, India, China, Turkey, Mexico), or a poor country in the global south, you all have elites, that are struggling for control.

And I put this within the context of the capitalist world system. You have a neoliberal world system. OXFAM came out with a report two weeks ago. Now, 1 percent of the population controls half the resources: most of humanity has been excluded as surplus humanity. You have more and more repression, especially as resources are being extracted from poor people. And they're excluded. So there's more and more resistance. ... You had the Occupy Movement and you've got Black Lives Matter. There's more and more resistance, so that the capitalist world system, itself, and all the different elites that are dependent upon it, somehow have to start looking more and more towards repression.

In other words, capitalism always tried to have a happy face: Ronald McDonald, and Hollywood and Walt Disney. But the more people are starting to see through it, and are starting to see those inequalities ..., the velvet glove over the iron fist has to come [off]. And so the elites are getting more and more insecure. But the kinds of wars they're fighting are not the wars we think of. You know, Rambo and F16s and tanks ... they're not those kinds of wars. They are what generals actually are calling, "Wars Amongst the People." I took that to say what that really is, which is, "War Against the People." In other words, urban warfare, counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism. It's also called asymmetrical wars. There are a million terms.

So, really the elites in every country, and then if you take it within the world system, the capitalist elites certainly, the capitalist part of the corporation, and so on, are looking for, "How do we keep the people under control?" Now, where's a better place to go for a model than Israel? The United States doesn't have that experience. Europe hasn't had colonial wars for 50 years now. So Israel is in the middle of an ongoing century-long war of counterinsurgency against the Palestinian people.

All these years, it has the tactics, it has the methods, it has the weaponry. It has the systems of security, systems of surveillance, all in place to export. And so that's, I think, how you can explain how Israel gets away with it. It delivers for the elites. "We'll deliver you the means of repressing your own populations, and in return you let us keep the occupation."

DB: I'm not sure how to ask this question, but is there evidence of the training ground part of this, in which, say, for instance, weapons are introduced for the first time on the battlefield, or drones, in Palestine? How does this theory [work], in terms of testing the weapons first and then exporting war?

JH: Well, first of all I document it and write about it in my book. There are a thousand footnotes, in the book.

DB: We love footnotes.

JH: But what's interesting is the Israeli arms dealers, security companies are proud of this. I mean we're talking now ... this could be seen in two ways. This could be seen as being critical of Israel, and the capitalist world. I think people understand that that's where we're coming from in this program. But I could be saying the same thing, and I could sound like the Israeli Chamber of Commerce. "Wow, that's great, I mean Israel developing these effective systems, they're helping keep the bad people and the terrorists under control, they're securing us. Wow, that's great." And so [on].

DB: And they are training police departments in the U.S.

JH: That's right, exactly. Especially, not especially, but also in California. So, in other words, the arms companies, and the security companies, (there's about 500 of them in Israel, alone, which is an old country), think this is a great thing. In other words, they're not embarrassed by it, and so the best source of information is just their web sites. Because what's the point of developing a cutting edge surveillance system on Palestinians. You know there are 600 checkpoints in the West Bank. You've got millions of Palestinians that you can use as guinea pigs: literally in a laboratory. No wonder Israel is leading in airport security, and runs airports all over the United States.

But there's no point in developing these systems if you're not marketing them, if you're not selling them, if you're not making a name for yourself. So, in fact, all these 500 companies in Israel that sell this stuff, all have web sites. And they're all blaring their product. So it's not hidden. On the contrary, like I'm saying, if you put it within a certain context, this is actually seen as a positive contribution to the world. If you look at the world, from, you know, the way the media that you mentioned, present it, it's good that

Israel is helping us defend ourselves against terrorists.

But putting it in a critical way within the world system, we show that, in fact, security is not a neutral term. There really isn't security. The security is really defined by the interests of the ruling classes. Writing the book, I'm aware of the fact that that's language that kind of sounds old fashioned. But it really isn't. It really is ... even more today, it's truer than it was before.

The ruling classes are much more organized, they have much more fire power, are much more coordinated with each other, and so on. And actually, with scarcer and scarcer resources, they have a much more focused agenda, in terms of extraction and control. So actually, the term "ruling class" should be more in use today. The ruling classes have their interests and they package it under the word "security" because who doesn't want to be secure? And what I'm saying in the book, and that's why the subtitle talks about global pacification, is I'm saying, "We're actually being pacified."

In other words, we're being repressed to a point where we can't resist. So you wanna be secure? Fine. Do you want to be pacified? And once you start using words like "pacification," that raises questions that the word security doesn't raise. Who's pacifying me? How are they pacifying me? Why are they pacifying me? And so my book, I hope, it gives you sort of a window into the way the large world system works. I call it Globalized Palestine. In a sense, Israel over Palestine is a microcosm of the Global North over everybody else. And so I think it is a very useful book for beginning to understand global realities that we live in.

DB: You know, it's interesting, if you read back some of the literature of the capitalists of the early 50's, the visionaries among them understood about the problems that would be faced in terms of the shrinking resources. And they talked extensively about the kinds of, sort of, defense and weapon systems, and the way in which our way of life would have to be protected. This is just part of that curve.

JH: That's right. And to her credit, the only one that really is using the word capitalism, that word up front in her analysis, is Naomi Klein. With *The Shock Doctrine* and now her new book on climate change and capitalism [*This Changes Everything*]. But it's like that joke: One fish asks another fish, "How's the water?" and the other fish says, "What water?" You know, you are living in this system. And it is so encompassing, and it affects everything that we do. Who our enemies are. How we dress. What our values are. How we talk. What language ... everything. What we eat. And it's an unsustainable system. But it's a system that we've kind of internalized. We don't even think about it anymore.

And so that's, I think, the value of critical analysis, and bringing back that language, including language like pacification, is that really shows us that we're in fact living in a very political water. And not just some normal, everyday reality that is inevitable.

DB: And how would you describe the security relationship, the security sharing relationship, between the United States and Israel?

JH: The United States is the primary global capitalist power. You know, it has a tremendous global reach. American corporations, more than any others, are dependent on the smooth flow of capital coming from what's called the Third World, or the global south. And of course, you've got, with the neoliberalism in the last 50 years, you've got again, within the United States the 99 percent/one percent split. Even here there's a lot of agitation, and people are starting to get it, and so on. And so the United States has a tremendous stake in this. But the United States is locked into the old concept of war.

For example, the Pentagon just spent, I don't know, a trillion dollars on a new F-35: cutting edge stealth bomber. You know, a great toy. But it has no military use whatsoever. Even the generals say, "We don't need [it]." [Robert] Gates, when he was Secretary of Defense, tried to cancel it. But you know how Congress works; you have every congressional district putting together pieces of it. So it's jobs. But you're locked into these huge, expensive weapon systems. ... So that's where Israel comes in.

And, of course, the United States is a tremendous, tremendous supporter of Israel. And I don't think it's just because of shared values. I think it's because Israel really delivers for the United States. It provides very sophisticated, high-tech components, for weapon systems. For example, this F-35, Israel couldn't produce that. But a lot of the cockpit, and the electronics and avionics, and the targeting systems are Israeli. And Israel becomes a kind of a surrogate for the United States, especially in countries where it's hard for America to work. You know, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, the parts of Africa that are rough.

You know, American business people are constrained because there are laws against bribes and giving bribes, and working with the mafias. These countries, a lot of them, are mafia-type countries. Israel doesn't have any of those constraints.

DB: For instance, if you went through Central America in the 1980's and you saw the new Salvadoran death squad army or the Guatemalan death squad, if you didn't look at the main insignia you would think they were wearing Israeli uniforms. They were certainly trained by Israelis.

JH: And they had their Uzis.

DB: And they had their Uzis.

JH: And they were armed. And don't forget Israel was a key part of the Contra-Iran scandal around the Nicaraguan conflict. Israel is really more than an agent of the United States. I think Israel is really providing that key strategic support in "Wars Amongst the People" in a way that the United States really isn't geared to doing. It's too big, the Pentagon is too big, the systems are too fancy. And Israel is supplying that middle- to lower-level type technology that's the most effective.

DB: What do you think of when you hear, "Is there a chance for peace?" Or the Israeli Prime Minister saying he's searching desperately for a partner for peace? What goes through your mind? How do you respond to that? Here in the U.S. press, in the New York Times, they simply quote it like stenographers.

JH: That's right. I think people are getting it. I don't want to say, "even Americans," but it's not easy for you guys, with your media. It's not too easy for you.

DB: It's real hard. You have to really look up something.

JH: Obama, for example, two days ago signed into law a bill giving Israel \$40 billion in new American arms over a ten-year period, 2018-2028, and basically outlawing BDS, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement that people are using like we did with South Africa, to put pressures on Israel, to end the occupation. Now it's American law, or it's going through, at least, to be American law, that the United States won't deal with companies or countries in Europe or other places that support BDS. So it's very actively supporting Israel. It isn't just some generalized thing. And as long as that happens, especially Congress, as long as Congress is in Israel's pocket, uncritically, we have to say here from Bernie Sanders to Trump.

We're talking across the board Israel has nothing to worry about. And so it can pursue these interests of itself, in terms of keeping the occupation. That is why Israel doesn't ... there's no pressure on Israel to end the occupation. Because if it has the American Congress on its side, on the one hand, and Germany on its side in Europe, that keeps Europe in line. Nobody can touch us. We're home free. And they can insult Obama, and they can say terrible things about Kerry. I mean, Netanyahu is a conservative Republican, and he says it.

You know, he can go to Congress, here he gets Republicans to invite him to the American Congress, both sessions of Congress, including the Democrats come. And in his 20-minute talk, this is a number of months ago, his 20-minute talk

against making the agreement with Iran.

So here he's going against the President and American government policy, a foreign head of state, invited by the American Congress including the President's own party, to speak out against an American government policy. And in his 20-minute talk he was given a standing ovation 42 times! The Israeli press was laughing. The Israeli press said it's like the North Korean parliament.

So it's hard, it's almost hard to explain the degree to which Israel has penetrated into American politics. It's almost like a domestic American issue, like apple pie, and that's what makes it very difficult. But I think that Americans aren't aware of how isolated they're becoming, in the world, because of this uncritical support for Israel. Because it isn't only supporting Israel against Palestinians. Palestinians have a special emblematic status among oppressed peoples in the world. Here's a little people that's standing up to Israel, the Israeli army, the American neo-colonialism, Europe, and it's resisting. It hasn't been defeated. So that gives hope to oppressed peoples.

But beyond that, when you are in the U.N. in repeated votes and it's the United States, Israel and Micronesia, against everybody else, including your European allies, you know, it sends a message to the world that the United States is completely out of sync, and it's hostile to human rights. And that I think isolates the United States in a way that the American people don't really appreciate.

DB: Wow. Well, that is all a mouthful Dr. Jeff Halper. We just have 30 seconds left, but let me just ask you this. You must have been arrested. People don't love what you're doing in Israel. Are you afraid to do what you do? Why do you do what you do?

JH: I mean, I always say jokingly, but it's true, "Israel is a vibrant democracy if you are Jewish."□ If you're Jewish you have that privilege. You have that space to do it. Nobody bothers me.

DB: By the way, that's what Jeane Kirkpatrick said about South Africa, she said it's a partial democracy, the whites have a chance to vote.

JH: Exactly. And that's the situation. But if you're not Jewish it's a pretty repressive place to live, pretty violent. And now, of course, there's legislation going through the parliament to marginalize us as well. If we go to parliament the left groups, just the left groups, are going to have to wear a tag. As if we're foreign lobbies.

DB: Maybe a yellow star?

JH: We're playing with what that tag is going to look like. But really it's true. They're not even aware of the background, the implications. You know, Israel is becoming so fascistic, really. I mean I'm not just using that as a slogan, that it's replicating very dark times of other countries. It's an irony that here Israel would do something like that.

DB: So are you afraid?

JH: No, I'm not afraid. I mean, certainly things could happen. And it's getting harder and harder to protest in Israel. But I'm not afraid. You know, I just keep plugging on, what can I tell you?

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

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## VIPS Offers Advice to Candidates

Former Secretary of State Clinton, whose campaign is brimming with establishment foreign policy advisers, has chided Democratic rival Sen. Sanders for lacking a roster of experts. But ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern says an untapped resource for any candidate is the Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity.

By Ray McGovern

A Memo to: Dr. Ben Carson, Hillary Clinton, Ted Cruz, John Kasich, Marco Rubio, Bernie Sanders, Dr. Jill Stein, and Donald Trump

The media brouhaha over naming your campaign advisers on foreign policy prompts this reminder of a unique resource available, gratis, to all of you. That resource is our nonpartisan group Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS). If we were into self-promotion, we would add to our (virtual) letterhead: *"serving satisfied customers since 2003."*

We are about apolitical analysis; we are into spreading unvarnished truth around; we do not shape our analysis toward this or that debating point. Thus, we eschew the moniker "campaign adviser." But that doesn't mean we wouldn't provide apolitical and unvarnished advice to anyone who seeks it.

Unique? We are on the outer edge of atypical in the sense that we are a fiercely nonpartisan, tell-it-like-it-is group of professionals with long experience in intelligence and related fields and with no policy or personal axes to grind. We

are Republicans, Democrats and Independents. Abundant proof that party preference plays no role in our analysis can be seen in our enviable record in the substantive work we have produced over the past 13 years both before and after the ill-advised attack on Iraq in March 2003.

Also distinguishing us from "campaign advisers," none of us in VIPS lust for a high position in a new administration; none are heavily invested in arms industries; none of us ask for a retainer. In other words, there are no strings attached to the substantive analysis we provide to *all* our readers and listeners. If objective, disinterested analysis is your cup of tea, we suggest that you check out VIPS's record, to include the multiple warnings we gave President George W. Bush in the months *before* the attack on Iraq.

In fact, VIPS was founded by a handful of former CIA analysts, including me, for the express purpose of warning President Bush that his small coterie of advisers, led by Vice President Dick Cheney, was adducing *fraudulent not mistaken* "intelligence" in promoting the war on Iraq.

Indeed, in recent years VIPS has been accused of naiveté in failing to understand that Bush, to whom we addressed most of our pre-war memos, was fully aware of how Cheney and his cunning co-conspirators and comen were fabricating the false pretenses for war. We plead guilty to believing that U.S. presidents deserve unspun analysis and to trusting that honest assessments will help presidents act responsibly on behalf of the nation.

Call us old-fashioned, but we just found it hard to believe that any U.S. president would justify war on "evidence" made out of whole cloth. Equally difficult to believe was that our former colleagues would acquiesce in the deception.

So, despite the doubts that Bush really wanted the real story, we rose to the occasion, nonetheless, and issued three corporate VIPS memoranda before the attack on Iraq: (1) "Today's Speech By Secretary Powell At the UN," February 5, 2003; (2) "Cooking Intelligence for War in Iraq," March 12, 2003; and (3) "Forgery, Hyperbole, Half-Truth: A Problem," March 18, 2003.

Our commentary on Secretary of State Colin Powell's UN speech went out on the AFP wire and was widely read abroad. Foreign media followed up with us; U.S. media not so much. (This is the primary reason you may be learning all this for the first time).

During that critical pre-war period we took pains to use whatever entrée we had to influential people. For example, I personally sought to reach then-Sen. Hillary Clinton via a key person on her staff, who assured me that the senator



was being given our op-eds and our analyses to read.

In our memorandum of Feb. 5, 2003, we told President Bush we could give Powell “only a C-minus in providing context and perspective.” As for input from Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s Pentagon, we told the President: “Your Pentagon advisers draw a connection between war and terrorism, but for the wrong reasons. The connection takes on much more reality in a **post-U.S. invasion scenario**. [Emphasis in the original]

“Indeed, it is our view that an invasion of Iraq would ensure overflowing recruitment centers for terrorists into the indefinite future. Far from eliminating the threat it would enhance it exponentially.”

Though it went unheeded 13 years ago, the final paragraph of VIPS’s first Memorandum for the President seems quite relevant to the current discussion regarding “campaign advisers” on foreign policy. In our same-day memo to the President on Powell’s UN speech we noted that he had described what he said as “irrefutable and undeniable.” Our final paragraph started with an allusion to those words:

“No one has a corner on the truth; nor do we harbor illusions that our analysis is irrefutable or undeniable. But after watching Secretary Powell today, we are convinced that you would be well served if you widened the discussion beyond ... those advisers clearly bent on a war for which we see no compelling reason and from which we believe the unintended consequences are likely to be catastrophic.”

Our VIPS memorandum of Feb. 5, 2003, was sent to the President more than two years before the *London Times* published the minutes of a July 23, 2002 briefing at 10 Downing Street, during which Richard Dearlove, the head of British intelligence, reported to British Prime Minister Tony Blair on Dearlove’s talks three days earlier with his U.S. counterpart, CIA Director George Tenet, at CIA headquarters. According to those undisputed minutes, Dearlove said the following:

“Military action was now seen as inevitable. Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. **But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy.**” [Emphasis added]

Our warnings to President Bush also came more than five years before the completion of a five-year investigation by the Senate Intelligence Committee on pre-war intelligence, the results of which were approved by a bipartisan majority. On June 5, 2008, the date of its release, committee chair Jay Rockefeller commented on its findings:

"In making the case for war, the administration repeatedly presented intelligence as fact when in reality it was unsubstantiated, contradicted, or even non-existent. As a result, the American people were led to believe that the threat from Iraq was much greater than actually existed."

### **Just So You Know**

One presidential candidate is said to have "an army of several hundred, perhaps even more than a thousand, foreign policy advisers;" another has been criticized for having no "talent pool" of "trusted experts." Little is known about those advising other candidates or, for example, in which campaign headquarters erstwhile advisers to dropout candidates like Jeb Bush are now hanging their hats.

The purpose of this open letter is merely to ensure that you know that you are welcome to dip into a different and unique "talent pool" Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS). This pool is now several hundred years deep in collective experience and brimming with the kind of knowledge that flows from senior-level work in intelligence and related fields. Our record of memoranda, averaging three per year, speaks for itself.

If nonpartisan, fact-based analysis is your cup of tea, have a look at those memoranda, which we believe are second to none in terms of candor and tell-it-like-it-is analysis. Our work reflects the ethos that earlier guided the work of intelligence community analysts at CIA and elsewhere, a commitment to both objectivity and scholarship.

That was before Director Tenet decided to welcome frequent visits by Vice President Dick Cheney to make sure CIA analysts were finding or fabricating enough "intelligence" to "justify" the launch of an unnecessary war. We take no pleasure in having been correct at the outset, in predicting "the unintended consequences are likely to be catastrophic."

**Ray McGovern served for 30 years as a U.S. Army Infantry/Intelligence officer and then an analyst for CIA, where he prepared and conducted the early morning briefings of the President's Daily Brief and also chaired National Intelligence Estimates. He is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).**

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# Why McConnell Blocks Scalia Replacement

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell says his obstruction of President Obama's nominee to replace Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia is to empower the people, but it's more about making sure that the Citizens United gusher of special interest money keeps pouring into Republican coffers, writes Michael Winship.

By Michael Winship

Many years ago, I worked on a documentary about the how and why of political TV ads. The primary focus was on two media consultants: the late Bob Squier, a Democrat; and Bob Goodman, Republican. One ad of which Goodman was especially proud was for a fellow in Kentucky running against Todd Hollenbach, Sr., the incumbent judge/executive of Jefferson County. Produced in 1977, the spot featured a farmer complaining about taxes that he claimed Judge Hollenbach had raised and then lied about.

As he mucked out a barn and his faithful horse whinnied, the farmer declared, "Maybe Hollenbach ought to have my job, because in my business, I deal with that kind of stuff every day." Then he threw a shovel of manure right at the camera. Hollenbach lost to the candidate who approved this message: Mitch McConnell.

McConnell has been shoveling it ever since, but perhaps never as stunningly as on Tuesday, when he spoke from the floor of the U.S. Senate. The now-majority leader of the so-called greatest deliberative body in the world blustered, as he has several times in the last couple of weeks, that Senate Republicans would never, ever consider an appointment by President Obama to replace the still-dead Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia.

The President, McConnell then said, "has every right to nominate someone, even if doing so will inevitably plunge our nation into another bitter and avoidable struggle."

Excuse me, Senator, the bitter and undeniably avoidable struggle was created by *you* on the Saturday that Scalia's corpse was found. The body was barely cold when you crassly announced that the duly-elected President of the United States should not name the judge's successor but must leave it to the next president more than 300 days from now.

McConnell continued, "Even if he never expects that nominee to be actually confirmed but rather to wield as an election cudgel, he certainly has the right to do that." Again, Senator, it's *you* who is wielding the blunt object.

And then the Majority Leader had the *chutzpah*, as they say down home in his Bluegrass State, to add that Barack Obama also “has the right to make a different choice. He can let the people decide and make this an actual legacy-building moment rather than just another campaign roadshow.”

Oh brother, look who’s talking. Of all the pompous, insincere bloviation; ignoring courtesy, tradition let alone the U.S. Constitution in the name of Senator McConnell’s own misbegotten ambitions.

Psychiatrists call this “projection,” the defensive method by which people take their own negative beliefs or feelings and attribute them to someone else otherwise known as shifting blame. In McConnell’s case, add to it a megadose of the cynical manipulation and crass opportunism characteristic of most of his political career.

Not that it was always so. McConnell began his political life as a liberal Republican remember them?, interning for legendary Kentucky senator and statesman John Sherman Cooper. He supported the Equal Rights Amendment and collective bargaining. Friends say he was pro-Planned Parenthood and he even wrote an op-ed piece in the Louisville *Courier-Journal* favoring campaign finance reform.

Former McConnell press secretary Meme Sweets Runyon told Jason Cherkis and Zach Carter at *The Huffington Post*, “He was kind of a good-government guy. He thought the government could do good and could be a solution.”

But once Mitch McConnell got to Washington as an elected senator and the mood of the Republican Party shifted right, so did he. Delay and obstruction became stepping stones. At the same time, the man who *New York Times* columnist Gail Collins famously described as having “the natural charisma of an oyster,” developed a Jekyll-and-Hyde style of self-serving pragmatism bashing government from Capitol Hill but using all of its perks to bolster support among his constituents.

It’s worth quoting at length what Cherkis and Carter wrote in 2013: “Up until the tea party-led ban on earmarks a few years ago, McConnell played out this dichotomy across Kentucky. In Washington, he voted against a health care program for poor children. In Kentucky, he funneled money to provide innovative health services for pregnant women. In Washington, he railed against Obamacare. In Kentucky, he supported free health care and prevention programs paid for by the federal government without the hassle of a private-insurance middleman.

“This policy ping-pong may not suggest a coherent belief system, but it has led to loyalty among the GOP in Washington and something close to fealty in

Kentucky. It has advanced McConnell's highest ideal: his own political survival.

"McConnell's hold on Kentucky is a grim reminder of the practice of power in America, where political excellence can be wholly divorced from successful governance and even public admiration," the *Huffington Post* reporters continued. "The most dominant and influential Kentucky politician since his hero Henry Clay, McConnell has rarely used his indefatigable talents toward broad, substantive reforms. He may be ruling, but he's ruling over a commonwealth with the lowest median income in the country, where too many counties have infant mortality rates comparable to those of the Third World. His solutions have been piecemeal and temporary, more cynical than merciful."

And so it goes. "He privileges the scoreboard above all," *The New Yorker's* Evan Osnos wrote in 2014. "Asked about his ideological evolution, he explained simply, 'I wanted to win.'"

Tailoring his positions to adjust to the shifting seasons, what sets Mitch McConnell apart is that his motives aren't really ideological but so baldly about holding onto personal power. His opposition to Obama's naming of a Scalia replacement puts the majority leader in solid with the far-right Republicans he purportedly so dislikes but who have threatened his job security over the last few years, both at home and in DC.

What's more, McConnell is desperate to keep a conservative majority on the Court to preserve the unbridled flow of campaign cash that the Citizens United decision let loose and that he so successfully has tapped for himself and the GOP. Unlike the young man who penned that campaign finance reform op-ed back in Louisville, fundraising has become his favorite thing, and he's scary good at it.

As his former Republican Senate colleague Alan Simpson said, "When he asked for money, his eyes would shine like diamonds. He obviously loved it."

And even if a Democrat holds onto the White House next year, chances are McConnell – the man who once said that the most important thing was to make Barack Obama a one-term president – will still play a power broker role in determining which Supreme Court candidate will successively run the 60-vote supermajority gauntlet needed for Senate approval. It's good to be king.

But if he wants us all to wait for a Republican president to choose the next appointment to the Court, he might want to think twice. Donald Trump bows before no man – just ask him – and he shovels muck even better than that farmer who helped Mitch McConnell win his first public office.

**Michael Winship is the Emmy Award-winning senior writer of Moyers & Company and**

BillMoyers.com, and a former senior writing fellow at the policy and advocacy group Demos. Follow him on Twitter at [@MichaelWinship](#). [This story originally appeared at <http://billmoyers.com/story/mitch-mcconnell-has-a-horse-in-the-supreme-court-race-himself/>]

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## Neocon Kagan Endorses Hillary Clinton

**Exclusive:** Hillary Clinton's cozy ties to Washington's powerful neocons have paid off with the endorsement of Robert Kagan, one of the most influential neocons. But it also should raise questions among Democrats about what kind of foreign policy a President Hillary Clinton would pursue, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Prominent neocon Robert Kagan has endorsed Democrat Hillary Clinton for president, saying she represents the best hope for saving the United States from populist billionaire Donald Trump, who has repudiated the neoconservative cause of U.S. military interventions in line with Israel's interests.

In a Washington Post [op-ed](#) published on Thursday, Kagan excoriated the Republican Party for creating the conditions for Trump's rise and then asked, "So what to do now? The Republicans' creation will soon be let loose on the land, leaving to others the job the party failed to carry out."

Then referring to himself, he added, "For this former Republican, and perhaps for others, the only choice will be to vote for Hillary Clinton. The [Republican] party cannot be saved, but the country still can be."

While many of Kagan's observations about the Republican tolerance and even encouragement of bigotry are correct, the fact that a leading neocon, a co-founder of the infamous Project for the New American Century, has endorsed Clinton raises questions for Democrats who have so far given the former New York senator and Secretary of State mostly a pass on her pro-interventionist policies.

The fact is that Clinton has generally marched in lock step with the neocons as they have implemented an aggressive "regime change" strategy against governments and political movements that don't toe Washington's line or that deviate from Israel's goals in the Middle East. So she has backed coups, such as in Honduras (2009) and Ukraine (2014); invasions, such as Iraq (2003) and Libya (2011); and

subversions such as Syria (from 2011 to the present) all with various degrees of disastrous results.

Yet, with the failure of Republican establishment candidates to gain political traction against Trump, Clinton has clearly become the choice of many neoconservatives and “liberal interventionists” who favor continuation of U.S. imperial designs around the world. The question for Democrats now is whether they wish to perpetuate those war-like policies by sticking with Clinton or should switch to Sen. Bernie Sanders, who offers a somewhat less aggressive (though vaguely defined) foreign policy.

Sanders has undermined his appeal to anti-imperialist Democrats by muting his criticism of Clinton’s “regime change” strategies and concentrating relentlessly on his message of “income inequality” for which Clinton has disingenuously dubbed him a “single-issue candidate.” Whether Sanders has the will and the time to reorient his campaign to question Clinton’s status as the new neocon choice remains in doubt.

### **A Reagan Propagandist**

Kagan, who I’ve known since the 1980s when he was a rising star on Ronald Reagan’s State Department propaganda team (selling violent right-wing policies in Central America), has been signaling his affection for Clinton for some time, at least since she appointed him as an adviser to her State Department and promoted his wife Victoria Nuland, a former top aide to Vice President Dick Cheney, to be the State Department’s chief spokesperson. Largely because of Clinton’s patronage, Nuland rose to assistant secretary of state for European affairs and oversaw the provocative “regime change” in Ukraine in 2014.

Later in 2014, Kagan told The New York Times that he hoped that his neocon views which he had begun to call “liberal interventionist” would prevail in a possible Hillary Clinton administration. The Times reported that Clinton “remains the vessel into which many interventionists are pouring their hopes” and quoted Kagan as saying:

“I feel comfortable with her on foreign policy. If she pursues a policy which we think she will pursue it’s something that might have been called neocon, but clearly her supporters are not going to call it that; they are going to call it something else.”

Now, Kagan, whose Project for the New American Century wrote the blueprint for George W. Bush’s disastrous Iraq War, is now abandoning the Republican Party in favor of Hillary Clinton.

Though Kagan’s Post op-ed is characteristically erudite with references to Greek

mythology and the French Revolution, it presents a somewhat skewed account of how the Republican Party lost its way. In Kagan's telling, the problem emerged from its blind hatred of Barack Obama's 2008 victory, "a racially tinged derangement syndrome that made any charge plausible and any opposition justified."

The truth is that the Republican Party has harbored ugly tendencies for decades, including the red-baiting McCarthy era of the 1950s, Barry Goldwater's hostility to civil rights laws in the 1960s, Richard Nixon's "Southern strategy" in 1968, Ronald Reagan's appeal to racial bigotry in the 1980s, George H.W. Bush's race-baiting "Willie Horton commercials" of 1988, and the GOP's more recent support for a New Jim Crow era hostile to black voting and to social programs along with the party's anti-Latino bigotry and hostility to immigrants.

As a Reagan apparatchik who continued to rise with the neocon tide in the 1990s and early 2000s, Kagan doesn't take the Republican exploitation of American fears and prejudices back that far. Instead, he starts the clock with Obama's election, writing, "there was the party's accommodation to and exploitation of the bigotry in its ranks. No, the majority of Republicans are not bigots. But they have certainly been enablers.

"Who began the attack on immigrants, legal and illegal, long before Trump arrived on the scene and made it his premier issue? Who was it who frightened Mitt Romney into selling his soul in 2012, talking of 'self-deportation' to get himself right with the party's anti-immigrant forces?"

"Who was it who opposed any plausible means of dealing with the genuine problem of illegal immigration, forcing Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) to cower, abandon his principles, and his own immigration legislation, lest he be driven from the presidential race before it had even begun?"

"It was not Trump. It was not even party yahoos. It was Republican Party pundits and intellectuals, trying to harness populist passions and perhaps deal a blow to any legislation for which President Obama might possibly claim even partial credit. What did Trump do but pick up where they left off, tapping the well-primed gusher of popular anger, xenophobia and, yes, bigotry that the party had already unleashed?"

In that sense, Kagan argues that "Trump is no fluke. Nor is he hijacking the Republican Party or the conservative movement, if there is such a thing. He is, rather, the party's creation, its Frankenstein monster, brought to life by the party, fed by the party and now made strong enough to destroy its maker."

**An Issue for Democrats**



While Kagan's op-ed surely makes some accurate points about Republicans, his endorsement of Hillary Clinton raises a different issue for Democrats: Do they want a presidential candidate who someone as savvy as Kagan knows will perpetuate neocon strategies around the world? Do Democrats really trust Hillary Clinton to handle delicate issues, such as the Syrian conflict, without resorting to escalations that may make the neocon disasters under George W. Bush look minor by comparison?

Will Clinton even follow the latest neocon dream of "regime change" in Moscow as the ultimate way of collapsing Israel's lesser obstacles – Iran, Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Palestinian resistance? Does Clinton have the wisdom to understand that neocon schemes are often half-baked (remember "the cakewalk" in Iraq) and that the risk of overthrowing Vladimir Putin in Moscow might lead not to some new pliable version of Boris Yeltsin but to a dangerous Russian nationalist ready to use the nuclear codes to defend Mother Russia? (For all Putin's faults, he is a calculating adversary, not a crazy one.)

The fact that none of these life-and-death foreign policy questions has been thoroughly or intelligently explored during the Democratic presidential campaign is a failure of both the mainstream media moderators and the two candidates, Sanders and Clinton, neither of whom seems to want a serious or meaningful debate about these existential issues.

Perhaps Robert Kagan's endorsement of Hillary Clinton and what that underscores about the likely foreign policy of a second Clinton presidency might finally force war or peace to the fore of the campaign.

[For more on the powerful Kagan family, see Consortiumnews.com's "[A Family Business of Perpetual War.](#)"]

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).**

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## How US Helps Al Qaeda in Yemen

**Exclusive:** The Obama administration, eager to assuage Saudi Arabia's anger over the Iran nuclear deal and the failure to achieve "regime change" in Syria, has turned a blind eye to Riyadh's savaging of Yemen, even though that is helping Al Qaeda militants expand their territory, writes Jonathan Marshall.

By Jonathan Marshall

For nearly a year, the Obama administration has turned a blind eye to the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen since Saudi Arabia invaded in March 2015 to crush an Iranian-supported insurgency and restore a discredited former president to power. But Washington cannot so easily ignore the rapid resurgence of a dangerous branch of Al Qaeda that is thriving on the chaos to take control of much of southern Yemen.

The war between indigenous Houthi rebels and Saudi-backed supporters of former President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi has cost more than 6,000 lives and caused more than 35,000 casualties.

What a United Nations report called "widespread and systematic" attacks against civilians by Saudi and Gulf emirate pilots, armed with U.S.-made aircraft and cluster bombs that are banned by international treaty, account for the bulk of civilian deaths and for the wholesale destruction of ancient cities and cultural centers.

In addition, a Saudi-imposed blockade on Yemen, supported by Washington, has allowed only a trickle of relief supplies to reach the country, putting millions of people at risk of starvation.

In the midst of this Hobbesian nightmare, militant followers of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) militants are making a rapid comeback after being crippled in 2012.

Recently seizing numerous towns, including two provincial capitals, AQAP now dominates much of three provinces. And a new report suggests that AQAP insurgents are fighting alongside pro-Saudi forces in a savage battle for control of the large city of Taiz, northwest of the port of Aden.

As *Jane's Intelligence Weekly* reported to its clients recently, "Exploiting a persistent security vacuum and the absence of effective state institutions, AQAP is in the process of asserting itself as the dominant actor across much of southern Yemen. The territory currently controlled by AQAP is larger than the area it held in 2011, when the group's area of control reached its peak" during a popular rising against former President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

A merger of Al Qaeda groups in Yemen and Saudi Arabia formed AQAP in January 2009. AQAP's predecessors in Yemen had bombed the USS Cole in 2000, killing 17 U.S. seamen. Its Saudi members killed nearly two dozen oil field workers during the infamous Khobar massacre in 2004.

Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton formally designated AQAP as a

terrorist organization in December 2009, 11 days before a supporter of the group tried to blow up a U.S. passenger jet headed for Detroit on Christmas Day, with a bomb sewn into his underwear.

The following year, CIA officials concluded that AQAP was the single most urgent threat to U.S. security, surpassing all other Al Qaeda branches, owing to its ongoing determination to hit American targets. The group has vowed to damage the U.S. economy and “bring down America” by mounting small-scale attacks to capitalize on the U.S. “security phobia.” It also took credit for the January 2015 terrorist attack on the French newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*, which killed a dozen people.

Within Yemen, AQAP has also proved formidable. In May 2012, a single suicide bomber killed more than 120 people and wounded 200 during a military parade. A month later, it killed 73 civilians with newly planted land mines. An attack on the country’s defense ministry in December 2013 left at least 56 dead.

The movement was severely weakened by a Yemeni government offensive in 2012 and an intense campaign of drone strikes ordered by the White House. Among the controversial targets were several U.S. citizens, including the prominent imam Anwar al-Awlaki, who reportedly inspired not only the Christmas 2009 “underwear bomber” and *Charlie Hebdo* terrorists but the Fort Hood shooter and even the Boston Marathon bombers. (Two weeks later, another strike killed Awlaki’s son, also a U.S. citizen, though the U.S. government said he was not the target.) In April 2014, two days of “massive and unprecedented” air strikes in southern Yemen reportedly killed dozens more militants, along with at least several civilians.

But taking advantage of the chaos caused by Saudi Arabia’s invasion in March 2015, AQAP mobilized quickly to strike back. That April it conquered the southern port town of Al Mukalla, which allowed jihadists to loot the central bank branch of more than \$120 million, seize an oil terminal and major weapons depot, and free hundreds of inmates from the city’s prison. Through clever coalition building, AQAP members allied with local Sunni tribal leaders to provide security and essential services, winning support from residents.

Last December, AQAP seized the capital of Abyan province near the main port city of Aden. Soon its militants staged a blitzkrieg that seized five towns in a mere two weeks. In the process AQAP managed to link up its forces across much of southern Yemen from Lahij near the Red Sea east to Al Mukalla.

Like followers of Islamic State, AQAP jihadists are now pressing their attacks against government forces in Aden, where they recently killed a general who commanded regional operations.

“The group may well be reconstructing the quasi-state it ruled at the height of its power in 2011 and 2012,” [commented](#) Katherine Zimmerman of the Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute. “AQAP is becoming an ever-more serious threat to American national security, and no one is doing much about it.”

Even allowing for the usual threat inflation from this prominent neoconservative sanctuary, the fact remains that AQAP is successfully exploiting the turmoil of civil war to make significant territorial gains. It has proven adept at governing and is often welcomed by a population that deeply resents the violence brought to Yemen by Houthi insurgents and their Saudi-backed enemies.

Meanwhile, U.S. air strikes against AQAP have accomplished little or nothing. As *The Long War Journal* [observed](#) recently, “Although AQAP has lost several key leaders in American drone strikes since early 2015, this has not slowed al Qaeda’s guerrilla war. . . . Not only has AQAP continued to gain ground, it also quickly introduced new leaders to serve as public faces for the organization.”

Events in Yemen are reaffirming a lesson that should have been learned in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria: Civil wars breed vicious killers who thrive on conflict and jump from battlefield to battlefield with the help of modern technology and zealous supporters. American intervention in those civil wars invariably blows back against us.

By contributing to Yemen’s failure as a state, Washington is creating fertile ground for the renewed growth of anti-American terrorism there. The White House may not care much about the overall havoc wreaked by the Yemen war, as evidenced by [its extensive support for Saudi Arabia’s war crimes](#), but it should be under no illusion that Fox News and Republican members of Congress will go easy when the next terrorist attack by AQAP kills Americans at home or abroad.

**Jonathan Marshall is author or co-author of five books on international affairs, including: [The Lebanese Connection: Corruption, Civil War and the International Drug Traffic](#) (Stanford University Press, 2012). Some of his previous articles for Consortiumnews were [Risky Blowback from Russian Sanctions](#); [Neocons Want Regime Change in Iran](#); [Saudi Cash Wins France’s Favor](#); [The Saudis’ Hurt Feelings](#); [Saudi Arabia’s Nuclear Bluster](#); [The US Hand in the Syrian Mess](#); and [Hidden Origins of Syria’s Civil War](#).**

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