

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 23rd 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 84th 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 6th, the 29th, and the 31st.

Camp Casey was the recruiting and training camp for the 23rd 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 23rd 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 23rd USCT engaged in what may have been the first clash between Lee’s army and black troops. A chronology of the 23rd’s history cites Noel Harrison at Mysteries & Conundrums describing how the 23rd 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 23rd 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 23rd and 29th 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 23rd, the 29th, the 31st, the 43rd, the 30th, the 39th, the 28th, the 27th, and the 19th) 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 23rd 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 23rd 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 23rd 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 14th 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.

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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 quo 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.

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 conmen 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).

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/>]

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](#)).

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.

A Plea for Reason on Israel

Alon Ben-Meir, born to an Iraqi Jewish family and a longtime negotiator between Israelis and Arabs, has faced accusations of over-optimism on the possibilities of peace but has now reluctantly concluded that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has no interest in reconciliation, prompting this open letter called “a plea for reason.”

By Alon Ben-Meir

Dear Prime Minister Netanyahu,

I write this letter to you with a heavy heart as it pains me deeply to see the beautiful dream of a strong and proud Israel, the country that was expected to embrace what is virtuous, moral, and just, now losing its reason for being, as a free and secure Jewish state living in peace and harmony with its neighbors.

The state's social fabric is being torn apart by political divisiveness and economic injustice. The country is increasingly isolated, degenerating into a garrison state surrounding itself with walls and fences, vilified by friends and reviled by enemies.

As the Prime Minister who served longest in this position, the country is virtually crumbling under your watch. The question is, where are you leading the people, and what will be in store for them tomorrow as Israel is now at a fateful crossroad and facing an uncertain future?

Certainly you and those who follow you in good faith will disagree with my analysis, but I urge you to look carefully into the dire issues I am raising here as they unfold, for which you are now more responsible than any of your predecessors.

You conveniently surround yourself with a corrupt political elite, ministers with no morals, no compunction, and nothing but an insatiable lust for power. They are consumed by their personal political agendas and absorbed in domestic corruption and intrigues.

You have several such ministers, among them a Justice Minister, Ayelet Shaked, who endorsed the idea that "the entire Palestinian people is the enemy" which is nothing short of a call for indiscriminate killing that will include "its elderly and its women, its cities and its villages, its properties and its infrastructure"; an Education Minister, Naftali Bennett, who wants to annex most of the West Bank without giving a single thought to the ominous danger that such an ill-fated scheme would inflict on Israel; and a Cultural Minister, Miri Regev, who is out to stifle freedom of the arts and expression, who make a mockery of Israel's democratic foundation and institutions.

You backed three draconian bills: one would suspend Knesset members who deny Israel as a Jewish and democratic state; the second would withdraw funding from cultural institutions deemed "not loyal" to Israel; and the third would require leftwing NGOs who receive foreign funding to label themselves as such in any publication (while exempting privately-funded right-wing NGOs). You are enveloped in an ideological siege with a ghetto mentality and selective religious precepts, supported by a blind chorus of parliamentarians that only echoes your distorted tune.

You manipulate the public with national security concerns and falsely connect security to borders, only to usurp more Palestinian land and defend the ruinous settlement policy.

You delight in facing an inept political opposition, relegated to a permanent state of suspension, and are thrilled to see them decaying with no political plans to challenge you to find a solution to the endemic Palestinian conflict on which you politically thrive. With these lame opposition parties sitting on the fringes of political despair, they have now become easy to co-opt in support of your misguided domestic, foreign, and Palestinian-targeted policies, all in the name of national unity.

You still boast about Israel's economic prowess, when in fact the economy as a whole is in a state of stagnation and labor productivity is the lowest among Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, and a handful of billionaires control the financial heart of the state while tens of thousands of families are scrambling to survive.

More than 1.7 million Israelis are living in poverty, 775,000 of whom are children, while hundreds of millions of dollars are siphoned off to spend on illegal settlements and hundreds of millions more are spent to protect the settlers, leaving Arab villages and towns with mostly Middle Eastern Jews to rot.

The gulf between the rich and poor is widening. The top 10 percent of the population earns 15 times that of the bottom 10 percent, making Israel one of the most unequal countries in the developed world. Tourism is diving, foreign investments are plunging, and the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement is gaining momentum.

The corruption and criminality among top officials is staggering; more than 10 ministers and at least 12 members of the Knesset have been convicted of crimes over the past 20 years alone. Former President Moshe Katsav and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert were sentenced to seven years and 19 months in prison, respectively. Scores more were indicted, but escaped punishment through various legal loopholes often accorded to top officials.

You discriminate against Israeli Arabs (who constitute 20 percent of the population) with your government's policy of unequal treatment, and then question their loyalty to the state. Radical Zionists like you claim that a multi-culturist Israel cannot survive that apartheid, or something like it, is the only viable alternative essentially repeating the argument which was used in earlier European history against the Jews themselves.

I might add with deep sorrow that discrimination is not confined to the Israeli Arabs, but extends to Middle Eastern and Ethiopian Jews four generations after the establishment of the State of Israel. The May 2015 violent clashes between police and Jews of Ethiopian origin only reveal the depth of Israel's social disparity.

Israel's President Reuven Rivlin, from your own Likud Party, could not have made the reality more painfully clear than when he stated, "Protesters in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv revealed an open and bloody wound in the heart of Israeli society. This is a wound of a community sounding the alarm at what they feel is discrimination, racism and disregard of their needs. We must take a good hard look at this wound."

Demographically, the country is facing a grave danger. The number of Israelis emigrating from Israel is roughly equal to the number of those who immigrate to Israel. Nearly one million Israelis, representing 13 percent of the population, emigrated from Israel in the past 20 years. Several polls consistently show that given the opportunity, 30 percent of Israelis would consider leaving the country, mainly for economic reasons and the lack of a prospect of ending the debilitating conflict with the Palestinians.

In particular, the immigration of young American and European Jews to Israel is consistently trending downward. Many of them have lost the sense of pioneering spirit and excitement that gripped their earlier counterparts who wanted to be a part of a historic enterprise unmatched by any in contemporary human experience.

The Palestinians

You treat the Palestinians in the territories like objects, to be used and abused contingent on the call of the hour. You violate their human rights with brazen impunity and never came to grips with the debilitating and dreadful impact of nearly 50 years of occupation.

You scornfully claim, "The Jewish people are not foreign occupiers." You never wanted to understand the meaning of being utterly overpowered by another, of having one's house raided in the middle of the night, terrifying women and children, one's village arbitrarily divided by the building of fences, one's home destroyed, and of losing the sense of having any control over one's life.

Invoking memories of the Holocaust as if to justify the mistreatment of the Palestinians only debases the historical relevance of this unprecedented human tragedy. One would think that those who suffered as much as the Jews would treat others with care and sensitivity. That the victim can become a victimizer is painful to face, but it is a reality nonetheless. Having suffered so much does

not give you the license to oppress and persecute others.

U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro, no less, put it succinctly when he said, "too many attacks on Palestinians lack a vigorous investigation or response by Israeli authorities. ...Too much vigilantism [in the West Bank] goes unchecked, and at times there seems to be two standards of adherence to the rule of law, one for Israelis, and another for Palestinians."

Not that I exempt Palestinians of their role, but by you and your ministers' own actions and policy toward the Palestinians, you are inciting hostility and ultimately fostering violent extremism. You use national security to justify your prejudicial policies, including the mistreatment of the Palestinians and the expansion of settlements that became the mantra of Israel's domestic policy, using old and tired talking points about national security which are dismissed as empty, self-convincing gospel.

You speak in support of a two-state solution, but you have never lifted a finger to advance it; your actions only point to the opposite direction. Yes, although the Palestinians have made scores of mistakes and are likely to make many others that will severely undermine their own national interests, they are here to stay.

Israel must determine its own destiny and not leave it to the Palestinians' whims. You claim that the Palestinians do not want peace, but by being the far more powerful party, you can take a calculated risk, and assume the responsibility to pave the way for eventually reaching a peace agreement instead of further entrenching Israel in the occupied territories. This will make the conflict ever more intractable when coexistence is inevitable under any circumstance.

Time is not on Israel's side, and even though they are suffering, the Palestinians can wait. You cannot freeze the status quo, and given the regional turmoil, violent extremism targeting Israel will only increase.

Without a carefully thought-out plan to gradually disengage from the occupied territories, there will likely be a million settlers within a few years. This will amount to a de facto annexation of the West Bank, from which Israel will be unable to extract itself without perpetual violent confrontations with the Palestinians and risking a civil war, should a decision be made to evacuate a substantial number of settlers.

Ending the occupation is not a charitable gift to the Palestinians. Only by accepting their right to a state of their own will Israel remain a Jewish and democratic state enjoying peace and security, instead of being drawn toward an

abyss from which there is no salvation.

Israel is the only country in the modern era that has maintained, in defiance of the international community, a military occupation for nearly five decades. The Israelis' complacency about the occupation is adversely affecting Jews all over the world, and as long as the occupation lingers, anti-Semitism will continue to rise.

What has added potency to the substantial rise in anti-Semitism in recent years is your disregard of the international consensus about the illegality of the settlements, the policy of the continuing occupation, and your disregard of the Palestinians' suffering and right to self-determination.

Did you consider what would be the ramifications of what you said during the last election, which I believe reflects your true position, that there would be no Palestinian state under your watch? There will be no peace with the Arab states, Jordan and Egypt (regardless of how they feel toward the Palestinians) may well abrogate their peace treaties with Israel under mounting regional and public pressure, the wrath of the European Union will be immeasurable, the U.S. will lose patience (if it hasn't already) and no longer provide Israel with automatic political cover, and the world will blame Israel for feeding into the region's instability; much of this is already happening.

Israel will constantly live in a state of violence and insecurity, but perhaps this is precisely what you want, to spread fear and use scare tactics to foment public anxiety by painting every Palestinian as a terrorist, as if the occupation has nothing to do with Palestinian extremism.

On foreign policy

A sound and constructive foreign policy is foreign to you, which is consequently alienating Israel's allies and bewildering its friends.

You wantonly discard diplomatic conventions and protocol; you willfully undercut President Obama by addressing a joint session of U.S. Congress, challenging him on the Iran deal only to fail miserably, baffling Democratic and Republican leaders alike.

You clashed with U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro for criticizing Israel's policy in the West Bank, and condescendingly called for a credible investigation of Palestinian killings, and publicly sparred with U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, who stated "it is human nature to react to occupation."

You antagonized Secretary of State Kerry, who highlighted "the injustice of settlement building", prompting various U.S. officials to call you "myopic,

entitled, untrustworthy, routinely disrespectful and focused solely on short-term political tactics to keep [your] right-wing constituency in line.”

As the U.S. and E.U. are wholly convinced that the settlements represent the main obstacle to peace, you are now not only inviting criticism but forcing both to take measures to awaken the Israelis to the harsh reality of the settlements and your perilous ideology.

Due to your imprudent policies, Israel has few friends left. Anti-Israel sentiment is on the rise not only in Europe but in the U.S. as well, which provides the last bastion of public support for Israel.

Starting with the E.U.’s demand to label settlement products, you remain typically dismissive, shaming the E.U. and blaming them for applying double standards. You revert to the old narrative of accusing any critics of your policy as being anti-Semitic in order to deflect from your ill-advised actions which are bound to backfire.

E.U. members are growing increasingly skeptical that you will ever seek peace based on a two-state solution, and they will more than likely over time become less restrained to impose sanctions. The E.U. could potentially expand the sanctions on goods manufactured in Israel proper as well and ratchet up its political pressure on Israel to end the oppressive occupation.

The French government is now preparing to convene an international conference to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because they see no hope that you would enter into serious bilateral negotiations if left to your own devices. Your reaction was as always dismissive, using again the worn-out argument that a solution can be found only through direct negotiation. You offer to resume peace talks unconditionally but then refuse to discuss borders first, and still insist that the Palestinians must first recognize Israel as a Jewish state.

And here is the irony of it all, while Iran’s President Rouhani received red carpet treatment in Italy and France, you are being cast as a loathsome leader blinded by a defunct ideology decades past its time.

Israel’s Destiny

Israel’s achievements in science, technology, medicine, agriculture, and many other fields in less than seven decades is nothing short of a miracle. This miracle became a reality due to the incredible resourcefulness, creativity, and dedication of men and women who committed to building a powerful and proud nation that offers a safe haven in perpetuity for the Jews. These unprecedented accomplishments, however, mean little unless Israel can live in peace and all of its citizens can enjoy equality and freedom, which are the pillars on which

Israel's very future rests.

What is your vision of Israel's future? Do you know where the country will be in a decade or even less? I challenge you to provide a clear answer. If you truly take to heart Israel's security and wellbeing, then you must save it from the very self-destructive path that you have paved with fear, anxiety, and bloodshed.

You must focus on reforming Israel's dysfunctional political system instead of capitalizing on it to promote your narrow political agenda.

You must make a supreme effort to bridge the alarming gap between rich and poor, and provide job opportunities for the tens of thousands of young men and women who want financial stability and growth so that they can build a promising future in Israel rather than seek employment abroad.

You must focus on rebuilding the run-down neighborhoods mostly occupied by Israeli Arabs and Jews of Middle Eastern origin, instead of channeling each year surpluses of nearly a quarter of a billion dollars to the settlements.

You must provide adequate funding for hospitals, and health care to the poor whose social security assistance has cruelly and shamelessly been cut in recent years, especially for Holocaust survivors and others who are forced to choose between feeding their families and paying their electric bills, and who can't afford to buy lifesaving medicine they desperately need.

You must allocate more funding for schools that would allow thousands of young men and women to attend colleges, instead of cutting budgets for secular and Christian schools while diverting funds to orthodox students, who enjoy free tuition.

You must now choose to live with the Palestinians in peace and prosper together, or live by the sword and violently consume one another. You must never forget that Israeli and Palestinian destinies are irreversibly intertwined.

You must restore Israel's stature among the community of nations as a true democracy that treats all of its citizens, regardless of sect, ethnicity, or religion, equitably rather than engage in discriminatory policies that will only erode Israel's standing.

You must reach out to the international community, strengthen Israel's alliances, and mitigate differences with its enemies. Remember, Israel will always need the political support of the international community and military and political assistance from the U.S. in particular, not the other way around.

You must recommit to the moral principles that gave birth to Israel, starting with an honest public narrative based on Israel's reality on all fronts instead of engaging in a fictional, self-indulgent narrative that distorts the truth the country and its people are facing.

Having said all this, nothing will make me happier should by some miracle you rise to the historic occasion and heed the call of the hour and answer the plea of the people to end the conflict with the Palestinians, and make Israel proud again for its unsurpassed achievements in all spheres of life.

You have demonstrated tremendous political and leadership skills to reach the pinnacle you currently enjoy, but sadly, you have chosen misguided policies that undermine Israel's security and prospects for peace.

You should use those same qualities to lead the country and realize its destiny as a Jewish, democratic, and secure state on friendly terms with its neighbors. This will not be an aberration; many leaders before you have demonstrated the courage, vision, and capacity to drastically change course that time and circumstances have dictated. You can too if you only will it.

Yitzhak Rabin, Anwar Sadat, Mikhail Gorbachev, F.W. de Klerk, and many others came to recognize the new realities, and decided to take the risks and change course out of conviction that the country and the people need a revolutionary change of direction and deserve a trusted leadership that will guide them to a better and more promising tomorrow.

This is the legacy I would want to leave behind if I were you.

Respectfully yours,

Alon Ben-Meir

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Making Gitmo Today's Spandau Prison

Obstructionists in Congress continue to play to baseless public fears and harmful prejudices by blocking President Obama's plan for finally closing the Guantanamo Bay prison, instead making it a modern-day version of Spandau Prison, writes ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

Spandau Prison in Berlin was a red brick structure, on the western side of the city, constructed in the 1870s with the capacity to hold several hundred inmates. The Nazis later used it to detain some of their political opponents; it became a site of torture administered by the Gestapo before the concentration camps were built.

After World War II the victorious allies took it over to house Nazi war criminals. Only seven such criminals ever were placed there, all of them ranking figures in the Nazi regime who avoided execution but were given prison sentences in the trials at Nuremberg. By 1957 just three of them were left, and as of 1966 only one: the mentally unbalanced former deputy Führer Rudolf Hess. Hess lived in the prison another 21 years before committing suicide in 1987 at the age of 93.

The trouble and expense of maintaining the prison were way out of proportion to its small inmate population. The four allied occupying powers took monthly turns in running the place, with each having to furnish a full complement of military guards and civilian staff. It was generally recognized what a waste of resources this was, but political point-making and symbolism got in the way of substituting any different arrangement.

For the Western allies, the prison was an assertion of Western rights in a Berlin surrounded by Communist-controlled eastern Germany and a scarce instance of post-war four-party cooperation. For the Soviets, who tended to treat the prisoners more harshly than the other rotating prison-keepers did, it was an expression of revenge for the enormous damage that Nazi aggression had inflicted on the USSR.

Spandau was kept in operation not only despite the waste of resources but also despite the negative symbolism of a place that was associated with the Nazis and their inhumane rule. That this was realized by the allies was indicated by their prompt demolition of the prison after Hess's death.

The debris was pulverized and either dumped at sea or buried at a British military base, to avoid any remnant of Spandau becoming a neo-Nazi shrine. A shopping center and parking garage were constructed on the site of the prison.

With the Republican-controlled Congress appearing determined to resist any change in laws that prevent closure of the detention facility at Guantanamo and prevent movement of any of its prisoners to facilities in the United States, the history of Spandau is in the process of being replayed in southeastern Cuba, although the reasons this is so are more ignoble than the reasons the Western

allies had for keeping matters unchanged in Berlin.

The waste of resources alone is substantial: the annual cost of running the Guantanamo prison is \$445 million, which on a per-inmate basis is orders of magnitude greater than the cost of housing inmates at the most maximum of maximum-security prisons in the United States.

The excuses for not closing the facility and moving remaining detainees are clearly without foundation. Any threat of escapes or other security problems with any of those detainees would be as close to zero as it is possible to get if they were housed at any of several stateside facilities. Any incremental threat over what is associated with housing them at Guantanamo is definitely zero.

As for legally disposing of the cases of those against whom such cases can be made, the civilian courts that operate under Article III of the Constitution, especially in highly experienced jurisdictions such as the Southern District of New York, have repeatedly demonstrated their ability to handle terrorism cases effectively, and much better than the less well tried and rather creaky Guantanamo-based military tribunal system.

The flimsy and self-referential nature of opposition to changes to the current system is demonstrated when even Senate Armed Services Committee chairman John McCain, who had been one of the few prominent Congressional Republicans to express some flexibility about Guantanamo, complains that the Obama administration's just-released paper on closing Guantanamo gives only "a vague menu of options."

As administration officials pointed out, the reason greater specificity could not be offered is that among the hand-tying pieces of legislation that Congress has enacted on Guantanamo is a prohibition on the executive branch even doing any planning for closing the prison and moving inmates to a stateside facility. Congress expects a detailed plan from the administration while prohibiting it from preparing one.

The actual dominant motives for the opposition probably are threefold. One is to be associated with something that in a vague way symbolizes toughness on terrorism. A second is to score political points with a public that is encouraged to misbelieve that a detainee who is brought to a stateside prison is liable either to escape or to find a legal loophole for walking out the front door, and then to go kill someone in the neighborhood. And a third is the usual reflexive impulse to oppose any significant initiative by this president.

Meanwhile the symbolic stink of Guantanamo continues. For overseas observers,

especially in Muslim majority countries, the negative symbolism involves association of the detention system centered on Guantanamo both with specific past abuses of prisoners and with the more general notion of the United States being at war with Muslims and, if not killing them, then incarcerating them indefinitely. The risk of radicalization stemming from such perceptions is impossible to calculate but may well be greater than whatever risk of anti-U.S. terrorism is embodied in most (though not all) of those still residing at Guantanamo.

For those of us in the United States, Guantanamo also symbolizes something else: an attempted circumvention of the rule of law. This particular location was selected in an effort (not altogether successful) to keep the people at the detention facility and what is done to them beyond the reach of anyone's law, either America's or any foreign country's.

Any necessary functions performed at Guantanamo can be performed fully and explicitly under the rule of law, which is the right way to do it, in the United States. As noted in the administration's paper, the fear about detainees who were bought stateside taking advantage of provisions in immigration law is groundless; the same new legislation that would be needed to permit such a relocation of detainees could also make explicit that such immigration provisions do not apply to them.

Until and unless a majority in Congress ends the obstruction on this issue, the current administration (and perhaps the next one) will continue to reduce slowly the Guantanamo inmate population on a case-by-case basis with transfers to willing foreign countries and other measures. Gradually the facility will look more and more like Spandau Prison.

Without Congressional action, this process could continue for a long time. Most of the remaining detainees entered Guantanamo at younger ages than the senior Nazis who were put in Spandau.

Let's hope the facility, and with it an unattractive episode in American history, is closed before the Guantanamo version of Rudolf Hess, like the original version, hangs himself as a nonagenarian.

Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency's top analysts. He is now a visiting professor at Georgetown University for security studies. (This article first appeared as a [blog post](#) at The National Interest's Web site. Reprinted with author's permission.)

Sanders the 'Realist'; Hillary the 'Neocon'

Exclusive: Sen. Sanders finds himself on the defensive in his uphill primary fight against Hillary Clinton for the Democratic presidential nomination in part because he shies away from defining himself as a “realist” and asking if she is a “neocon,” writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Hillary Clinton has scored points against Bernie Sanders by tagging him as a “single-issue candidate” who harps again and again on income inequality. Though the “single-issue” charge is false the Vermont Senator actually addresses a wide range of topics from global warming to health care to college costs Clinton’s attack line has been effective nonetheless

It works, in part, because Sanders shies away from thorough discussions about his views on foreign policy while Clinton can tout her résumé as a globetrotter both as First Lady and Secretary of State.

Sanders also has left himself open to attacks from neoconservatives and liberal interventionists that he is a “closet realist.” For instance, The Washington Post’s David Ignatius wrote recently: “Is Bernie Sanders a closet foreign policy ‘realist’? Reading his few pronouncements on foreign policy, you sense that he embraces the realists’ deep skepticism about U.S. military intervention.”

But what if Sanders came out of the closet and “confessed” to being a “realist” while posing the alternative question: Is Hillary Clinton a “closet neocon” who is seen by key neocons as “the vessel” in which they have placed their hopes for extending their power and expanding their policies? Might that question reenergize Sanders’s suddenly flagging campaign and force Clinton to venture beyond a few talking points on foreign policy?

Rather than largely ceding the field to Clinton except in noting her Iraq War vote while he opposed that disastrous war of choice Sanders could say, “yes, I’m a realist when it comes to foreign policy. I’m in line with early presidents Washington, Adams, Jefferson who warned about the dangers of foreign entanglements. While I believe America should lead in the world, it should not go ‘abroad in search of monsters to destroy,’ as John Quincy Adams wisely noted.

“I’m also in agreement with Dwight Eisenhower who warned about the dangers to the Republic from the Military-Industrial Complex and I agree with John Kennedy

who recognized the many legitimate concerns of Third World countries emerging from colonialism. I have learned from my own years in Congress that there's no faster way to destroy a Republic than to behave as an Empire."

Hiding Facts

Sanders could note, too, that the other way to destroy a Republic is to use the secrecy stamp too liberally, to hide too many key facts from the American people, not because of legitimate national security concerns but because it's easier to manipulate a public that is fed a steady diet of propaganda. The American people, he might say, are citizens deserving respect, not mushrooms kept in the dark and fertilized.

On that point, Sanders might even note that he and Hillary Clinton may be in agreement, since the former Secretary of State's team has complained that some of her infamous emails are now being classified retroactively in what her aides complain is an exercise in over-classification. Of course, the key reason for Clinton using a private server was to keep her communications hidden from later public scrutiny.

If Sanders is asked about specifics regarding where the line is between legitimate secrets and propagandistic manipulation, he could cite how President George W. Bush played games with intelligence by hyping claims about Iraq's WMD and Saddam Hussein's ties to Al Qaeda.

Or Sanders could note the case of the sarin-gas attack outside Damascus on Aug. 21, 2013, which almost drew President Barack Obama into a full-scale war in Syria.

If indeed Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was responsible as the Obama administration claimed and the mainstream U.S. news media repeats endlessly then the U.S. government should present the evidence to the American people. Or, if one of the jihadist rebel groups was behind the attack trying to trick the U.S. into joining the war on the jihadist side lay that evidence out even if it means admitting to a rush-to-judgment against Assad's forces. [See Consortiumnews.com's "The Collapsing Syria-Sarin Case."]]

Similarly, on the issue of Ukraine: if the former government of President Viktor Yanukovich was at fault for the Maidan sniper attacks on Feb. 20, 2014, as was widely alleged at the time, put forward the evidence. If the snipers were extremists among the Maidan protesters trying to create a provocation as more recent evidence suggests give those facts to the American people.

The same applies to the shoot-down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014. Yes, the suggestion that Russia was responsible has

proved to be an effective propaganda club to beat Vladimir Putin over the head, but if the tragedy was really the fault of some element of the U.S.-backed Ukrainian regime and if U.S. intelligence knows that fess up. Stop the game-playing.

Who's in Charge?

It should not be the job of the U.S. government to mislead and confuse the American people. That reverses the proper order of a Republic in which "We the People" are the sovereigns and government officials are the servants.

Sanders might say, too, that he realizes neoconservatives believe in tricking the American people to support preordained policies that the neocons have cooked up in one of their think tanks, as happened with the Iraq War and the Project for the New American Century.

But a Sanders administration, he might say, would show respect for the citizenry, putting the people back in charge and putting the think tanks which live off the largesse of the Military-Industrial Complex back in their subordinate place.

Yes, it's true that such a call for democracy, truth and pragmatism would infuriate the mainstream media, which has largely accepted its role as a propaganda organ for the neocons. But Sanders could take on that fight, much as Donald Trump has on the Republican side.

It was Trump who finally confronted the Republican Party with the reality about George W. Bush's negligence prior to the 9/11 attacks and his deceptions about Iraq's WMD. So far, it appears that the Republican base can handle the truth.

The GOP establishment's frantic efforts to sustain the fictions that Bush "kept us safe" and his supposed sincerity in believing his WMD falsehoods fell flat in South Carolina where Trump trounced the Republican field and forced Bush's brother Jeb to drop out of the race.

Does Sanders have the courage to believe that the Democratic base is at least as ready for the truth about Hillary Clinton's entanglement in the serial deceptions that have justified a host of U.S. imperial wars, including the current ones in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria? Sanders might even respond to the accusations that he is a "closet realist" by not just admitting to his foreign policy pragmatism but asking whether Hillary Clinton is a "closet neocon."

After all, Robert Kagan, who co-founded the neocon Project for the American Century, told The New York Times in 2014 that he hoped that his neocon views

which he now prefers to call “liberal interventionist” would prevail in a possible Hillary Clinton administration.

Secretary of State Clinton named Kagan to one of her State Department advisory boards and promoted his wife, neocon Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland, who oversaw the provocative “regime change” in Ukraine in 2014.

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.”

Indeed, with populist billionaire Donald Trump seizing control of the Republican race with victories in New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada, the neocons may find themselves fully siding with Hillary Clinton’s campaign as it becomes the last hope for their interventionist strategies. Ironically, too, many “realists” and anti-war activists may find Trump’s rejection of neocon orthodoxy and readiness to cooperate with Moscow to resolve conflicts more appealing than Clinton’s hopped-up belligerence.

Obviously, many anti-war Democrats would prefer that Sanders step forward as their champion and offer a cogent explanation about how the neocons and liberal hawks have harmed U.S. and world interests by spreading chaos across the Middle East and now into North Africa and Europe. But that would require Sanders embracing the word “realist” and asking whether his rival is a “neocon.”

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).

Dissing George Washington for Reagan

Exclusive: Was Ronald Reagan a greater American leader than George Washington? That is the impression one gets when historic “Washington National Airport” is redubbed “Reagan National.” Are Americans really that anti-historical to have forgotten Washington’s significance, asks Robert Parry on the first President’s 284th birthday.

By Robert Parry

Arguably, George Washington was the one indispensable American. He was commander-in-chief during the American Revolution holding the embattled Continental Army together sometimes by his sheer force of will; at another key turning point, he presided at the Constitutional Convention giving the nation its governing framework; he then served as the first President placing his personal stamp of legitimacy on the fragile, young Republic.

While other Founders played important historical roles John Adams organizing the Revolution, James Madison devising the Constitution, Alexander Hamilton giving substance to the new federal government, etc. it was Washington whose temperament and stature made the entire experiment work.

Later, other American leaders stepped forward to guide the nation through grave crises, such as Abraham Lincoln in the Civil War and Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression and World War II, but Washington was truly the Father of the Country giving the nation life on battlefields up and down the length of the Thirteen Colonies, inside the contentious Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, and in the establishment of a truly unified nation by serving two terms as the first President.

Surely, Washington was not a person without flaws and contradictions, but without him it is hard to imagine what would have happened to the American colonies in the late 1770s or assuming that independence was won to the squabbling states under the ineffectual Articles of Confederation in the 1780s.

At every key turning point in those early years, Washington was there sacrificing for the new nation. He suffered with his troops at Valley Forge; he collaborated with Madison and Hamilton overcoming the national disunion that followed military victory; he agreed to leave his beloved Mount Vernon to serve as the first U.S. President of the United States but then retired after two terms showing that no one person was bigger than "We the People" enshrined in the Constitution's Preamble.

So, it is fitting that Americans honor this great early leader of the American Republic. But what is odd and to me troubling is the ahistorical attitude that essentially expunges Washington's name from what had been "Washington National Airport" to rename it, in effect, "Reagan National" or simply "Reagan."

Whatever one thinks of Ronald Reagan and I rate him one of America's worst presidents for his profligate fiscal policies, his excessive militarism, his atrocious actions on human rights and his contempt for the Constitution as demonstrated by the Iran-Contra scandal it is hard to believe that even dyed-in-

the-wool Republicans and conservatives would rate Reagan as a greater president than George Washington.

Yet, since Reagan's name was shoehorned into the airport's title after Republicans seized control of Congress in 1995 a change signed into law by Democratic President Bill Clinton many U.S. airlines have dropped Washington's name altogether when referring to what had long been "Washington National Airport." It's now referred to commonly as "Reagan National" or "Reagan."

Bizarre and Confusing

Beyond the bizarre suggestion that Ronald Reagan was a more important historical figure than George Washington, there is the practical concern that many people visiting Washington D.C. find it confusing that its airport, which was once named after Washington (who incidentally lived close by at Mount Vernon), is now identified as "Reagan," who spent most of his adult life in California and only lived in Washington during his time in the White House (and then only when he wasn't vacationing back in California).

So, doesn't it make more sense both historically and practically to again refer to National Airport as "Washington National"? And, even if it is currently politically impossible to restore the traditional name given how the reversion would infuriate many Republicans can't we, as a flying public, demand that the airlines go back to combining Washington and National rather than demeaning America's Founding Father by dropping him in favor of Ronald Reagan?

I know my suggestion may be deemed petty by some and quixotic by others, but there is meaning in historical symbolism. That is, after all, why Republicans insisted on elbowing Washington aside in the first place and elevating their recent hero Reagan to such an august position.

But are Americans so historically ignorant that we actually believe that Ronald Reagan was a more important figure in our national existence than George Washington? Do Americans really not know or appreciate how the Republic was created? Are the heroic sacrifices of Washington and his Continental Army so forgotten and disrespected that an actor-turned-politician is given top billing? Do conservatives who call themselves "constitutionalists" have so little regard for Washington and others who crafted the actual Constitution that they relegate them to a subordinate position? Have Republicans forgotten how the Republic got started and who started it?

Really! Regardless of our political persuasions, don't we care enough about America's Founders and America's Founding to tell the commercial airline companies that it's not "Reagan National," it's "Washington National"!

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