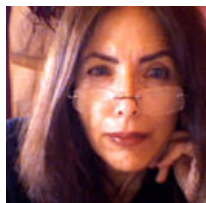


# Russia-gate as Count Dracula

Ann Garrison reviews Stephen F. Cohen's book, "War with Russia? From Putin & Ukraine to Trump & Russiagate."

By **Ann Garrison**

*Special to Consortium News*

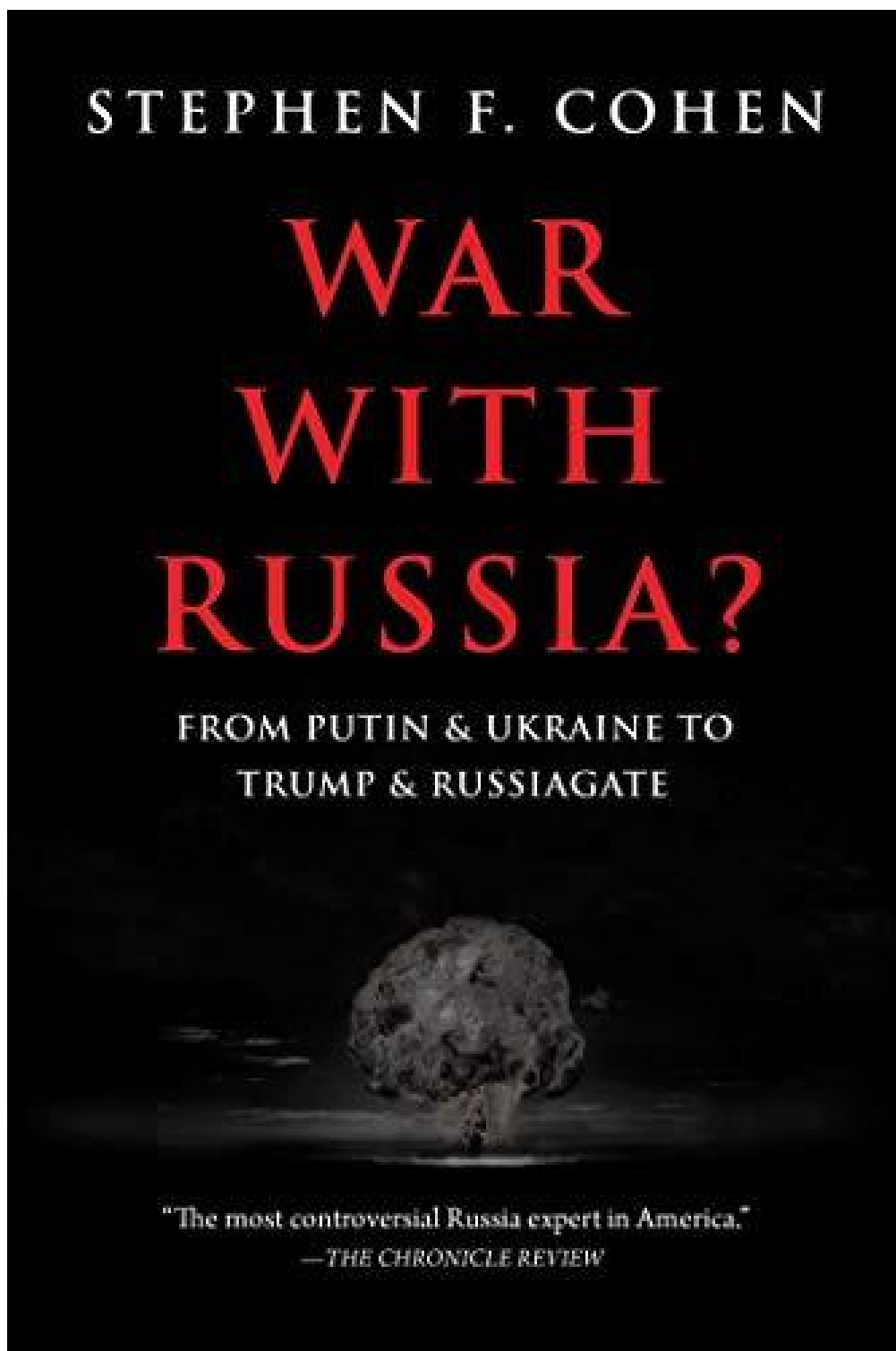


**"Russiagate, like Count Dracula, will never end because new political blood will be fed to this vampire . . . The Russiagate fable – fraud – has become a kind of theocratic cult, and it has millions and millions and millions of self-interested and unwitting followers."**

That was Stephen F. Cohen's comment after Special Counsel Robert Mueller concluded that there was no evidence to convict President Donald Trump or any of his campaign staff of colluding with Russia to steal the 2016 presidential election. He was speaking to nationally syndicated radio host John Batchelor

in one of their broadcasts on Radio WABC-AM, New York City, which have been [archived](#) on the website of *The Nation* for the past five years.

Now, a month later, Democratic elites are still roaming the streets of Washington and the Halls of Congress in search of fresh blood. On May 16, [The Washington Post](#) reported that



House Democrats had begun a marathon public reading of the "Mueller Report" for citizens who don't have time to read the whole thing but might listen to the audio. There's no there there, but they won't let go. Are they serious? Or just mortified, like most vampires, by the light of day? Whichever, they're likely to lose again in 2020, because poll after poll says that Americans don't care; Russia-gate is nowhere near the top of their list of concerns.

Cohen is Russian studies professor emeritus at Princeton and NYU. His latest book, "War with Russia? From Putin & Ukraine to Trump & Russiagate," is a series of essays published in *The Nation* and text elaborations of the radio broadcasts.

Cohen says that Russia-gate has deeply damaged at least four U.S. institutions: the electoral system; the presidency; the "intelligence community;" and the media, meaning most of all the influential "legacy" media; *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the major television and cable news networks. Whichever side of the partisan divide they're on, Americans know they've been lied to by one or more of them. Will they find reason to widely trust any of these institutions again? Will any Washington officials and their staffers, and their allied power brokers and intelligence agents, trust any others from here on?

The Democrats, he says, have created a permanent excuse for failure: "the Russians did it." And what's to keep the Republicans from using the same excuse for their own electoral failures? Or to keep dangerous tension between the U.S. and Russia, the world's two greatest nuclear powers, from ratcheting up all the while?

“War with Russia?” analyzes where we are, how we got here, and where we can go if U.S.-driven military escalation between the U.S. and Russia doesn’t lead to nuclear apocalypse. Cohen still believes that there are options as long as there is human agency, as he wrote in [“Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938.”](#)

## Lost Prominence

That book, published in 1973, made him a prominent voice in both U.S. and Soviet politics until his dissidence about the New Cold War, then Russia-gate, made him persona non grata at *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the network news outlets where he had previously been a welcome commentator.

Since Russia-gate was “ginned up,” as Cohen puts it, he has even been attacked by fellow *Nation* writers. Katrina vanden Heuvel, editorial director of *The Nation* and Cohen’s wife, has, to her credit, defended him, despite [their own disagreements](#) about the Mueller investigation. She opposes the new McCarthyism, but she has said that the investigation is worthwhile insofar as it reveals the corruption of Trump and friends.

Cohen has said that politicians are corrupt – Democrat, Republican and Russian – and that the central reality of the Mueller investigation is its dangerous escalation of U.S.-Russian tensions. He has often said that he doesn’t like Trump, but that Trump is the president we’ve got, for two more years or even six, so any moves he makes toward détente with Russia or military de-escalation anywhere else in the world should be encouraged.

In the introduction to "War with Russia?," Cohen writes: "The book would not have been possible in any way without the support of my wife. Whatever her own opinions, no matter the external pressures, Katrina posted every commentary I wrote."

Again, kudos to Katrina vanden Heuvel, but the fact that Cohen's critique of Russia-gate has stirred such anger even at *The Nation*, the publication that led the opposition to McCarthyism in the 1950s, is evidence of how much ground Russia-gate has gained, even among liberal progressives.

Cohen and Batchelor readily acknowledge their differences as well –Cohen a liberal progressive, Batchelor a libertarian conservative – but they agree on the dangerous folly of the New Cold War. After a lifetime of scholarship and engagement in Russian history, Cohen says that the current state of U.S.-Russian relations is more perilous than any moments of the First Cold War, including the Cuban Missile Crisis. Indeed, one of his concerns is that Trump has been so fraudulently vilified as a puppet of Russian President Vladimir Putin that he may be politically unable to defuse another precipitous confrontation like the Cuban Missile Crisis. Irrational and terrifying as the anti-Communist Red Scare of the 1950s was, he writes, it never led to the claim that a U.S. president was the puppet of a foreign government or that there's been a silent coup leaving the White House in its clutches.

## **Wikileaks**

In February 2017, in a chapter titled "Kremlin-Baiting President Trump," Cohen writes:

“But the crux of pro-Kremlin allegations against Trump was, and remains, the charge that Putin hacked the DNC and disseminated the stolen emails through WikiLeaks in order to put Trump in the White House. A summary of these ‘facts’ was presented in the declassified report [the Steele Dossier] released by the US ‘intelligence community’ and widely published in January 2017.

“Not addressed [in the report] is the point made by a number of American hacking experts that Russian state hackers would have left no fingerprints, as US intelligence claimed they had. Indeed, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity believe that the damaging DNC documents were not hacked but leaked by an insider. If so, it had nothing to do with Russia. (The NSA, which has the capacity to monitor the movement of emails, was only ‘moderately confident’ in the report it co-signed, while the CIA and FBI were ‘highly confident,’ even though the FBI inexplicably never examined the DNC computers.) [Later, Cohen said that a source had told him that, in NSA parlance, “moderately confident” means they don’t know.]

“There is another incongruity. At his final presidential press conference, Obama referred to the DNC scandal as a leak, not a hack, and said he did not know how the emails got to WikiLeaks—this despite allegations by his own intelligence agencies. (No one seems to have asked Obama if he misspoke!) On the other side of this alleged conspiracy, nor is it clear that Putin so favored the clearly erratic Trump that he would have taken such a risk, which if discovered, as I also pointed out earlier,

would have compromised Trump and greatly favored Clinton. (Judging from discussions in Kremlin-related Russian newspapers, there was a serious debate as to which American presidential candidate might be best—or least bad—for Russia.)”

In a May 8 broadcast with Batchelor, Cohen said even more adamantly that Mueller’s a priori assumption that Russians hacked into the DNC emails, his failure to undertake his own forensic investigation, and his failure to interview Bill Binney, a former technical director at the National Security Agency, and Julian Assange himself, should be enough to discredit the whole report.

Amen, and I hope these highlights recommend the book. It’s a page-turner.

**Ann Garrison is an independent journalist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2014, she received the Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza Democracy and Peace Prize for her reporting on conflict in the African Great Lakes Region. She can be reached at [ann@anngarrison.com](mailto:ann@anngarrison.com).**

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## Watch the 14th Vigil for Assange

Julian Assange’s lawyers filed a petition with the Inter-American Court for Human Rights and WikiLeaks is mentioned in a new Mueller indictment unveiled Friday, two of the topics that were discussed on the 14th Vigil on Friday.

**G**uests included Peter B. Collins, John Kiriakou, Brian Becker, Ian Shilling, Craig Murray, Cathy Vogan and Ray

McGovern, hosted by CN Editor-in-Chief Joe Lauria. You can watch it here in its entirety:

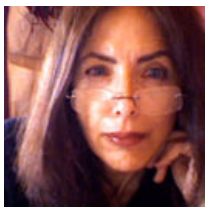
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## Liberté, Égalité, Impérialisme! Vive la France in Black Africa!

“Hotel Rwanda” is a touchstone of interventionist ideology, writes Ann Garrison. Debunking that script helps show why the closure of the assassination case against Rwanda’s President Paul Kagame serves Western interests.

**By Ann Garrison**

***Black Agenda Report***



Most Westerners believe that the Rwandan Genocide was the simple story of good and evil told in the hugely successful film “Hotel Rwanda,” but there is barely a moment of “Hotel Rwanda” that is not carefully constructed propaganda. The film was produced to convince the world that demon Hutus murdered a million innocent Tutsis in 100 days in 1994, that the U.S. and its NATO allies failed to intervene, and that their failure obligates them to intervene “to stop genocide” anywhere in the world from hereon.

Obama’s foreign policy team—most prominently Secretary of State Hillary Clinton; U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice and Samantha Power, a national security advisor—invoked the Rwandan genocide over and over, as did the press, to justify destroying Libya and beginning the aerial bombing war that continues in Syria today. The propaganda has also been used



to justify Rwandan President Paul Kagame's invasions, occupation and resource plunder in the fabulously resource rich Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Western press and governments have portrayed him as Rwanda's savior and characterized his invasions of DRC as the defense of Rwanda against "Hutu genocidaires" who fled into the DRC as he and his army advanced and seized power.

The late Edward S. Herman and his co-author David Petersen deconstructed these lies in "[Enduring Lies: the Rwandan Genocide in the Propaganda System, 20 Years Later.](#)" So did Robin Philpot in "[Rwanda and the New Scramble for Africa, from Tragedy to Useful Imperial Fiction;](#)" Marie-Beatrice Umutesi in "[Surviving the Slaughter, the Ordeal of a Rwandan Refugee in Zaire;](#)" Peter Erlinder in his compendium of primary source documents "[The Accidental Genocide;](#)" and most recently Judi Rever in "[In Praise of Blood: Crimes of the Rwandan Patriotic Front.](#)" But none of these books made bestseller lists, and none could come close to the influence of "Hotel Rwanda."

Essential elements left out of the "Hotel Rwanda" construction include the 1990-1994 Rwandan War and massacres that concluded in the infamous hundred days. The tragedy happened over four years' time, not 100 days, and both Hutus and Tutsis were massacred, Hutus by Kagame's army.

### **Unsolved Crime**

Another missing element is the unsolved crime that triggered the final bloodletting of the final 100 days: the assassination of Rwanda and Burundi's Hutu presidents, when a surface-to-air missile downed their plane as it was

approaching the airport in Rwanda's capital Kigali on April 6, 1994. No one has ever been convicted of the crime, and there is enormous Western pressure to make sure that no one ever is. Overwhelming evidence implicates Kagame, but he is a key U.S. ally and "military partner" in Africa, and the "Hotel Rwanda" story is a key touchstone of Western interventionist ideology.

Kagame has nevertheless been accused and his inner circle indicted in both French and Spanish courts, where French and Spanish citizens claim jurisdiction because their family members died in the plane shoot-down or the ensuing massacres, but both of those cases have been shut down.

Last month, geopolitics trumped international justice again—just in time for Christmas. On Dec. 21, a French court closed the long-running case against Kagame and his inner circle for assassinating Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira, both of whom were Hutus.

Nearly 25 years later, there are still no convictions for the assassinations that turned first Rwanda, then DRC, into a vast killing ground. Not in the International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda, where two investigations of Kagame were shut down, and where a judge told defense attorney Tiphaine Dickson, "We don't investigate plane crashes [or Tutsis, only Hutus]." And not in the French or Spanish courts.

### **The Subtext: Imperial Competition**

The subtext of the Rwandan War and the ensuing Congo Wars was competition between the U.S./U.K. and France. France, which was then the dominant power in the region, had been

the patron of Habyarimana's Hutu government; the U.S. and U.K. backed Kagame's invading Tutsi army, which emerged victorious in 1994, declared that English would from thereon be Rwanda's international business language, then invaded and occupied French-speaking Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) two years later.

France and Rwanda have engaged in a bitter argument off and on for all these years about who was responsible for the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Their embassies have often been closed in one another's capitals, and France pulled out of the 20th anniversary commemoration in Kigali after Kagame once again accused France of participating in the killing.

One of the recurring points of contention is Opération Turquoise, France's emergency relief response, which began on June 23, 1994, several weeks before Kagame, then a general, seized power in Kigali. Some French officials who were in office at the time, most notably former French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé, have maintained that Opération Turquoise created a humanitarian corridor for Rwandan Hutus fleeing into Zaire, for fear of being massacred by General Kagame's advancing Tutsi army. Kagame's government has claimed that France instead provided an escape route for Hutus guilty of genocide, although the vast majority flooding into Zaire were civilians, including women, children, and the elderly. According to the 2010 UN Mapping Report on Human Rights Abuse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1993-2003, Kagame's troops followed the refugees into Zaire and massacred as many as 250,000.

In "Dying to Live: A Rwandan Family's Five-Year Flight Across the Congo," Pierre-Claver Ndayisenga describes how

he and his family and 300,000 more Rwandan Hutus fled Kagame's advancing army all the way through the Congolese jungle, from east to west, as many more died of hardship or were massacred by Kagame's troops along the way.

The authors of the UN Mapping Report said that the massacres in Congo would most likely be ruled a genocide if a case were brought to court, but none has been and none ever will be without a major geopolitical shift in power. In 2013, in one of his many cynical moments, former President Bill Clinton told BBC journalist Komla Dumor that he would not condemn his friend Paul Kagame for murdering the refugees because "it hasn't been adjudicated." (And because it happened on his watch, with his support, as did the 1998 Rwandan and Ugandan invasions of DRC, during which Kagame and Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni became what another UN report called "the godfathers of the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the continuation of the conflict in the DRC.")

### **France Wants Its Share**

France of course wants its share, and French officials now in power have decided to close the case against Kagame in order to secure access to Congo's riches, which he significantly controls. The court's ruling came shortly after Rwandan Foreign Minister Louise **Mushikiwabo** became secretary-general of La Francophonie, an international organization similar to the British Commonwealth, in what was widely perceived to be another concession to smooth French-Rwandan relations and ease France's imperial access in DRC.

Kayumba Nyamwasa, a former Rwandan general, chief of army staff, and chief of military intelligence, was also named as a defendant in the French indictment. Speaking to Jane Corbin in the BBC video "[Rwanda's Untold Story](#)," he said that Kagame most definitely ordered his troops to shoot down the plane carrying the Rwandan and Burundian presidents:

**Jane Corbin:** *Who do you believe was behind the shooting down of the plane?*

**Kayumba Nyamwasa:** *Paul Kagame undoubtedly.*

**JC:** *Paul Kagame?*

**KN:** *Oh yes, oh yes.*

**JC:** *You know that?*

**KN:** *One hundred percent.*

**JC:** *Were you at meetings where it was discussed?*

**KN:** *Well, I know. I was in a position to know, and he knows I was in a position to know. And he knows that.*

**BBC interjection:** *General Nyamwasa has offered to cut a deal with the French judge to testify.*

**JC:** *If you discuss these matters with the judge and it implicates you yourself, are you willing to do that?*

**KN:** *Obviously. If it implicated me? Why not? Because I think that truth is what matters.*

The French court said they were closing the case for lack of

“credible” and “significant” evidence despite abundant such evidence. That does not mean, however, that they acquitted Kagame, Nyamwasa, or anyone else who was in Kagame’s inner circle at the time Habyarimana and Ntaryamira were assassinated. As Rwandan American legal scholar Charles Kambanda said, “This is a political decision which could well be superseded by another political decision to reopen the file when there is additional ‘credible’ and ‘significant’ evidence.” In other words, France has mollified Kagame for now, but it’s kept a knife behind its back.

**Ann Garrison is an independent journalist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2014, she received the [Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza Democracy and Peace Prize](#) for her reporting on conflict in the African Great Lakes Region. She can be reached at [ann@anngarrison.com](mailto:ann@anngarrison.com).**

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## Watch the 11th Online Vigil for Julian Assange

**Consortium News** broadcast the 11th Unity4J vigil for WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange on Friday night. You can watch it [here](#).

Ecuador tries to find a legal way out of its commitment to Assange’s asylum in its London embassy, while Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani says Assange should not be charged.

Watch the three-hour broadcast [here](#):

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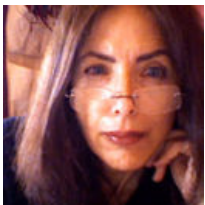
# Latest Odds of a Shooting War Between NATO and Russia

Hungarian scholar George Szamuely tells Ann Garrison that he sees a 70 percent chance of combat between NATO and Russia following the incident in the Kerch Strait and that it is being fueled by Russia-gate.

## ***An Interview with George Szamuely***

by Ann Garrison

*Special to Consortium News*



George Szamuely is a Hungarian-born scholar and Senior Research Fellow at London's Global Policy Institute. He lives in New York City. I spoke to him about escalating hostilities on Russia's Ukrainian and Black Sea borders and about Exercise [Trident Juncture](#), NATO's massive military exercise on Russian borders which ended just as the latest hostilities began.

**Ann Garrison:** George, the hostilities between Ukraine, NATO, and Russia continue to escalate in the Sea of Azov, the Kerch Strait, and the Black Sea. What do you think the latest odds of a shooting war between NATO and Russia are, if one hasn't started by the time this is published?

**George Szamuely:** Several weeks ago, when we first talked about this, I said 60 percent. Now I'd say, maybe 70 percent. The problem is that Trump seems determined to be the anti-Obama. Obama, in Trump's telling, "allowed" Russia to take Crimea and to "invade" Ukraine. Therefore, it will be up to Trump to reverse this. Just as he, Trump, reversed Obama's policy on Iran by walking away from the [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action](#), otherwise known as the Iran nuclear deal. So expect ever-increasing US involvement in Ukraine.

**AG:** NATO's Supreme Commander US General Curtis M. Scaparrotti is reported to have been on the phone with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko "offering his full support." Thoughts on that?

**GS:** There has been a proxy war within Ukraine since 2014, with NATO backing Poroshenko's Ukrainian government and Russia backing the dissidents and armed separatists who speak Russian and identify as Russian in Ukraine's southeastern Donbass region. But in the Kerch Strait the hostilities are between Russia and Ukraine, with NATO behind Ukraine.

A shooting war will begin if it escalates to where NATO soldiers shoot and kill Russian soldiers or vice versa. Whoever shoots first, the other side will feel compelled to respond, and then there'll be a war between Russia and NATO or Russia and a NATO nation.

We don't know whether NATO would feel compelled to respond as one if Russians fired on soldiers of individual NATO nations—most likely UK soldiers since the UK is sending more of its Special Forces and already has the largest NATO military presence in Ukraine. Russia could defeat the UK, but if the US gets involved, all bets are off.

**AG:** It's hard to imagine that the US would allow Russia to defeat the UK.

**GS:** It is, but on the other hand, the US is the US and the UK is the UK. The United States might well be ready to fight to the last Brit, much as the United States is definitely ready to fight to the last Ukrainian. There are already 300 US paratroopers in Ukraine training Ukrainians, but the British would be well advised that words of encouragement from Washington don't necessarily translate into US willingness to go to war.

**AG:** The US Congress passed a law that US troops can't serve under any foreign command, so that would require US command.



**GS:** Yes, and without that, any British military defeat could be blamed on traditional British military incompetence rather than US weakness or foolish braggadocio.

**AG:** This latest dustup between the Russian and Ukrainian navies took place in the Kerch Strait. I had to study several maps to understand this, but basically neither Russian nor Ukrainian vessels, military or commercial, can get to or from the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea without passing through the Kerch Strait. That doesn't mean that neither could get to the Black Sea, because both have Black Sea borders, but they couldn't get from ports in the Sea of Azov to the Black Sea and back.

And neither Ukraine nor Russia can get from the Black Sea to Western European waters without passing through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits in Turkey to the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas, and then further to the Atlantic Ocean through the Strait of Gibraltar, which is bordered on one side by Spain and the British territory of Gibraltar, and on the other by Morocco and the Spanish territory Ceuta. So there are many geo-strategic choke points where Russian ships, naval or commercial, could be stopped by NATO nations or their allies, and Ukraine has already asked Turkey to stop them from passing through the Bosphorus Strait. Thoughts on that?

**GS:** Well, of course Ukraine can ask for anything it likes. There's no way in the world Turkey would try to stop Russian ships going through the Bosphorus Strait. That would be a violation of the 1936 [Montreux Convention](#) and an act of war on the part of Turkey. It isn't going to happen. As for the Kerch Strait, it is Russian territorial water. Ukraine is free to use it and has been doing so without incident since 2014. The only thing the Russians insist on is that any ship going through the strait use a Russian pilot. During the recent incident, the Ukrainian tug refused to use a Russian pilot. The Russians became suspicious, fearing that the Ukrainians were engaged in a sabotage mission to blow up the newly

constructed bridge across the strait. You'll remember that an American columnist not so long ago urged the Ukrainian authorities to blow up the bridge. That's why the Russians accuse Kiev of staging a provocation.



AG: There's a longstanding back channel between the White House and the Kremlin, as satirized in Dr. Strangelove. Anti-Trump fanatics keep claiming this is new and traitorous, but it's long established. Obama and Putin used it to keep Russian and US soldiers from firing on one another instead of the jihadists both claimed to

be fighting in Syria. Kennedy and Khrushchev used it to keep the Bay of Pigs crisis from escalating into a nuclear war. Shouldn't Trump and Putin be talking on that back channel now, no matter how much it upsets CNN and MSNBC?

GS: Well, of course, they should. The danger is that in this atmosphere of anti-Russian hysteria such channels for dialogue may not be kept open. As a result, crises could escalate beyond the point at which either side could back down without losing face. What's terrifying is that so many US politicians and press now describe any kind of negotiation, dialogue, or threat-management as treasonous collusion by Donald Trump.

Remember Trump's first bombing in Syria in April 2017. Before he launched that attack, Trump administration officials gave advance warning to the Russians to enable them to get any Russian aircraft

out of harm's way. This perfectly sensible action on the part of the administration—leave aside the illegality and stupidity of the attack—was greeted by Hillary Clinton and the MSNBC crowd as evidence that the whole operation was cooked up by Trump and Putin to take attention off Russia-gate. It's nuts.

**AG:** Most of us have heard Russia and NATO's conflicting accounts of why the Russian Navy seized several Ukrainian vessels in the Sea of Azov. What's your interpretation of what happened?

**GS:** As I said, I think the Russians had every right to be suspicious of the intent of the Ukrainian vessels. The Ukrainians know that these are Russian territorial waters. They know that the only way to go through the Kerch Strait is by making use of a Russian pilot. They refused to allow the Russians to pilot the ships through the strait. Whatever the Ukrainians' ultimate intent was—whether it was to carry out an act of sabotage, to provoke the Russians into overreaction and then to demand help from NATO, or simply to go through the strait without a Russian pilot in order to enable President Poroshenko to proclaim the strait as non-Russian—whatever Kiev's intent was, the Russians were entitled to respond. The force the Russians used was hardly excessive. In similar circumstances, the US would have destroyed all of the ships and killed everyone on board. Recall, incidentally, Israel has seized Gaza flotilla boats and arrested everyone on board. In 2010, the Israeli Navy shot nine activists dead during a flotilla boat seizure, and wounded one who died after four years in a coma.

**AG:** Don't the US, Ukraine, and the UN Security Council refuse to recognize the Kerch Strait as Russian territory, and insist that Russia's claim to it violates various maritime treaties? I know the UNSC refuses to recognize the Golan Heights as Israeli territory, not that that does Syria any good.

**GS:** According to the 2003 agreement, Russia and Ukraine agreed to consider the strait as well as the Sea of Azov as shared territorial waters. From 2014 on, Russia considered the strait as

Russian waters, though it's made no attempt to hamper Ukrainian shipping. The Azov Sea is still shared by Russia and Ukraine. During the recent incident, the Ukrainian Navy acted provocatively, deliberately challenging the Russians. As for what the UNSC accepts, how would NATO respond if Serbia entered Kosovo on some pretext or other?

**AG:** OK, now let's go back to NATO's Exercise Trident Juncture, a massive military exercise on Russia's Scandinavian and Arctic borders that concluded on November 24, one day before the Kerch Strait incident. The first phase was deployment, from August to October. The second phase was war games from October 25th to November 7th. The war games were based on the premise that Russia had invaded Scandinavia by ground, air, and sea. They included 50,000 participants from 31 NATO and partner countries, 250 aircraft, 65 naval vessels, and up to 10,000 tanks and other ground vehicles, and I hate to think about how much fossil fuel they burned.

The final phase was a command post exercise to make sure that, should NATO forces ever face a real Russian invasion of Scandinavia, their response could be safely coordinated in Norway and in Italy, far from the war zone.

So George, do Scandinavians have reason to worry that Russia might invade any of their respective nations?

**GS:** Not at all. This is ridiculous. It was the largest military exercise since the end of the Cold War, and why? Why did they do this? Russia isn't threatening Scandinavia, but it's more likely that it will if NATO continues conducting war games on its borders. Right now tension between East and West is escalating so fast that a single event could be like a match that triggers an explosion, and then there'll be a war.

**AG:** There was a recent Russian exercise, or joint Russian and Chinese exercise, based on the premise that the US had invaded

Korea, right?

**GS:** Right. But it wasn't anywhere near Europe, so it wasn't threatening the Europeans. It took place in eastern Siberia, so it shouldn't have caused panic in NATO countries. It shouldn't have caused panic in the US either, because the Pacific Ocean separates the US and the Korean Peninsula.

What's striking about Trident Juncture is that it involved Sweden and Finland, both of whom are traditionally neutral. They were neutral during the Cold War, not joining any alliances. Finlandization came to mean a foreign policy that in no way challenged or antagonized the USSR. So now here's Finland rolling back that policy and joining NATO in this massive military exercise to stop nonexistent Russian aggression.

**AG:** Has Russia ever attempted to seize territory outside its own borders since the end of the Cold War?

**GS:** No. Russia never attempted to seize territory outside its own borders. The case cited by the West is Crimea, but that was really an outstanding issue that should have been addressed during the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Boris Yeltsin, the drunken, incompetent stooge that the US installed, just neglected it.

The Russian-speaking and Russian-identified people of Crimea were unhappy about Ukraine claiming sovereignty over them. They had been an autonomous republic within the USSR, and after its dissolution, they still retained their constitutional autonomy. That's what gave them the right to hold a referendum to join the Russia Federation in 2014.

If the West is involved in an uprising, as in Ukraine, it recognizes the "independence" of the government it puts in power. It won't recognize the constitutional autonomy of Crimea, which predated the 2014 Ukrainian revolution or illegal armed coup, whichever you call it, because it wasn't part of their plan.

**AG:** The NATO nations and their allies say that Russia invaded and occupied Crimea, violating Ukrainian sovereignty according to international law. Democracy Now's Amy Goodman referred to the "illegal annexation" of Crimea at least three times after the Kerch Strait incident. How do you explain the presence of Russian soldiers in Crimea prior to the referendum?

**GS:** They didn't invade and occupy Crimea. Their forces were there legally, according to a 25-year lease agreement between Russia and Ukraine.

Crimea had been a part of Russia for more than 200 years. For most of the time, during the USSR era, it was an autonomous republic within the Russian Federation. In 1954, Khrushchev transferred some degree of sovereignty over the Crimean Republic to Ukraine. I'm not entirely sure why he did that, but the issue wasn't that important then because Ukraine, Russia and Crimea were all part of the USSR.

Khrushchev didn't envisage an independent Ukraine walking off with such a prize piece of real estate. Crimea is not only a huge tourist destination, it is also the site of Russia's primary naval base on the Black Sea in Sevastopol. Yeltsin failed to address the problem in 1991. Since then, every time Crimeans talked about holding a referendum on their future, Kiev threatened to use force to stop them. Kiev would have used force again in 2014 if the Russians in the Port of Sevastopol had not left their Crimean base and made their presence known.

**AG:** The US, aka NATO, has an empire of military bases all over the world, and troops right up against Russia's borders as in Exercise Trident Juncture. Does Russia have anything remotely like it?

**GS:** No. Russia does not have military bases outside its borders, which are now more or less as they were in 1939, when the USSR was surrounded by hostile states that were more than happy to join Hitler. So it's ridiculous to tell Russia, "Don't worry about our troops and war games all over your borders because we don't really

mean any harm.” Washington is calling Russia an existential enemy, and the UK is promising to stand shoulder to shoulder with its NATO allies and partners against “Russian aggression,” which is really Russian defense. So now we have an explosive situation on the Ukrainian and Russian borders that could easily turn into a shooting war.

**AG:** I read some US/NATO complaints that Russia was conducting exercises on its own side of the border. And last week NATO accused the Russian military of jamming its signals during its rehearsal for a war on Russia’s borders.

**GS:** Yes, that’s what the US considers Russian aggression, even though its troops and bases are all over the world and all over Russia’s borders.

**AG:** Competition between US and Russian energy corporations is one of the main undercurrents to all this. The US State Department even said that Europe should abandon the Nord Stream-2 gas pipeline project with Russia because of the Kerch Strait incident, but that received a cool response, particularly from Angela Merkel. What are your thoughts about that?

**GS:** Well, obviously, the Trump administration is determined to push the Europeans to give up on natural gas from Russia and to opt, instead, for US liquefied natural gas (LNG). The problem is that LNG shipped across the Atlantic is much more expensive than natural gas piped to Europe from Russia. So it’s clearly not in the interests of the Europeans to have a bigger energy bill. Look what’s happening in France. Ordinary people are not making so much money that they can afford to shell out more for energy, particularly when there is no need to do so. Some countries such as Poland are so imbued with hostility toward Russia that they’re willing to pay more for gas just to hurt Russia, but Germany won’t go down this path.

**AG:** Anything else you’d like to say for now?

**GS:** Yes, I think it's amazing that this many years after the Cold War we've reached a point where there's almost no public criticism of a policy that has led to the US abandoning a major arms control agreement, namely the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty signed in 1987.

There's almost no public criticism of the US getting involved in an armed confrontation on Russia's doorstep, in Ukraine, Syria, Iran, or conceivably even Scandinavia. There's almost no public criticism of roping formerly neutral European powers like Sweden and Finland into NATO military exercises.

Given the fact that the [New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty](#) that went into effect in 2011 will expire in 2021, and given that there's nothing on the horizon to take its place, this is an extraordinarily perilous point in time.

And much of this has to be blamed on the liberals. The liberals have embraced an anti-Russian agenda. The kind of liberal view that prevailed during the Cold War was that we should at least pursue arms control agreements. We might not like the Communists, but we need treaties to prevent a nuclear war. Now there's no such caution. Any belligerence towards Russia is now good and justified. There's next to no pushback against getting into a war with Russia, even though it could go nuclear.

**Ann Garrison is an independent journalist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2014, she received the [Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza Democracy and Peace Prize](#) for her reporting on conflict in the African Great Lakes Region. She can be reached at [ann@anngarrison.com](mailto:ann@anngarrison.com).**

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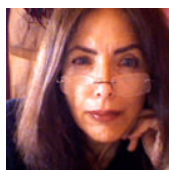
## Congo in the Abyss

The aggression of Western governments has inflicted multiple holocausts on the Congolese people, Congolese historian Bénédicte Kumbi Ndjoko tells Ann Garrison.



**By Ann Garrison**

*Black Agenda Report*



This week I spoke to Swiss Congolese historian and activist Bénédicte Kumbi Ndjoko about recent developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who said, *“In Congo, globalized capitalism creates permanent chaos.”*

**Ann Garrison:** On February 12, 2018, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees reported that there were 4.49 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and 630,500 refugees in neighboring countries. The IDP population had nearly doubled in the previous year alone, mainly as a result of clashes and armed attacks. It sounds like conditions on the ground in Congo are getting worse, much worse.

**Bénédicte Kumbi Ndjoko:** Congo is indeed in a critical situation. We know how much its people have suffered since the genocides in Rwanda and all the displacement they caused, then by the wars that Rwanda and Uganda waged against Congo from 1996 to 1997 and then from 1998 to 2003, with the support of the US, UK, and their allies. Today some observers speak of Congo as a post-conflict country, but it’s still in a low-intensity conflict, off and on, hot and cold. A conflict that drags on like this can become even deadlier than declared war, as it has in the North and South Kivu Provinces bordering Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi. More than a million of the 4.49 million internally displaced people are in North Kivu Province.

In the past two years the situation has also deteriorated in the Kasai region, where people are being exterminated or displaced to Angola. There has also been an increase in attacks against the populations of the former Katanga Province, which was split into the Tanganyika, Haut-Lomami, Lualaba and Haut-Katanga Provinces in 2015. Congo and its people are not on the brink of the abyss, they have long since fallen into it.

***“People are being exterminated in the Kasai region or displaced to Angola.”***

**AG:** It’s hard to know what to say about so much suffering. What would you most like to say about it here?

**BKN:** Suffering should inspire compassion, but compassion should inspire reflection. Is the person who looks at a suffering human being able to ask himself if he is not involved in one way or another in the suffering of the individual in front of him? Can he or she grasp the causes of the crimes perpetrated against that human being and the political implications that arise from these acts? If we stop at the suffering of the Congolese people, we won’t

be able to address its particularities and causes. It will be no different than the depressing and fatalistic images that have shaped the image of Africa in people's minds. We must examine Western governments' imperial aggression against Congo and Africa as a whole.

**AG:** Dr. Denis Mukwege, the Congolese gynecologist who became known as "the man who heals women" for treating the victims of brutal rape in eastern Congo, finally won the Nobel Peace Prize this year. Does that give you any hope?

**BKN:** I had the opportunity to meet Dr. Mukwege in person. I saw this man with women from all over the world who had all been raped during conflicts. They came from Congo, Rwanda, Sudan, Syria, and Iraq. I could see how this man spoke to these women, the concern he had for them and his way of telling them that their word counted. He has all my admiration.

That said, it seems to me that there is also something cynical about presenting him with the Nobel Peace Prize. It's an organized, staged reality that obliterates the imperial aggression in Congo and encourages a global consensus to stop the rapes but continue the war. It makes the Western Nobel Peace Prize audience feel good about themselves and their compassionate response to the victims of African savagery. This was reinforced by Nadia Murad, the Iraqi rape survivor who shared this year's Peace Prize with Dr. Mukwege. She said that she would continue as a global advocate for victims of rape and torture, and for persecuted minorities, like the Kurdish Yazidi minority she belongs to.

***"The Nobel Peace Prize encourages a global consensus to stop the rapes but continue the war."***

The deeply political discourse imposed by the Nobel Committee is intended to bolster, not disturb, the dominant order. It is part of the Western will to write official history, where the important thing is constructing a discourse on the woman, on the brutalities she has to suffer. It's a discourse wholly accepted in Western societies because of the feminist struggles. In this discourse, Dr. Mukwege is the man of an inter-world, a Black man who is meant to become white. He is like the white man who knows how to defend the rights of women against the barbarism of uncivilized men—Black in this case—who are essentially defined by their savagery.

**AG:** Male rape is also a weapon of war in Congo and elsewhere. It's rarely reported, though it was given some attention in "The Nobel committee shines a spotlight on rape in conflict," an October 11 "Economist" report that said it's hard to estimate its frequency because so many men fear to report it because they're so humiliated and may fear being accused of the crime of homosexuality. Uganda's Refugee Law Project explained this profoundly in their film Gender

Against Men , which I recommend to anyone reading this. The rape of both men and women as a weapon to destroy community makes it more clear that there is an ongoing genocide against the Congolese people, not just “femicide.” Could you talk about how the singular focus on violence against women hides that?

**BKN:** I have always been disturbed by the speech of Margaret Wallström, the former UN Special Envoy for violence against women and children in conflict. In 2010, after a stay in Congo, she claimed that this country was the rape capital of the world, and urged the Security Council to act to stop it. This statement associated the crime of rape with a specific nation, Congo, and with all the male individuals within. The word “capital” typically refers to the most central location, the brain and heart of a nation, the carrier of the cultural values. So one of Congo’s cultural values would be rape?

This perception of a pathological Congolese society filled with male rapists is also shared by a lot of Western women who campaign for Congolese women, like Eve Ensler. They even go so far as to call what is happening in Congo a femicide, a war against women. This portrays the Congolese male as an atavistic rapist.

***“The perception of a pathological Congolese society filled with male rapists is also shared by a lot of Western women who campaign for Congolese women.”***

The extreme focus on Congolese women’s bodies is not intended to defend them but is part of a broader discourse on the savagery of Congolese men and Black African male populations in general. Congo is the world capital of rape. Congo is the capital of a savage nation in the heart of Black Africa where Congolese men rape women to destroy them. Who could regret seeing such a deviant society cleared off the face of the earth?

UN envoy Margaret Wallström didn’t call for an end to the imperialist war waged against Congo and Africa in general. She said nothing about the imperial powers who commissioned the war crimes, including rape, against the Congolese people. She did not call on the Security Council to establish a tribunal to prosecute the crimes that were evidenced in the 2010 UN Mapping Report on Human Rights Abuse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1993-2003 , which revealed most significantly the crimes of longstanding US ally Rwanda. Instead, she called Congo the rape capital of the world and called on the Security Council to intervene against savage Congolese men.

**AG:** Some people have proposed that Dr. Mukwege, the most internationally recognized moral authority in Congo, should head a transitional government there. They include our mutual friends Patrick Mbecko and Jean-Claude Maswana, both of whom are highly respected Congolese scholars and activists. What do you think of that idea, and how do you imagine “transitional government” in Congo?

**BKN:** The fact is that I often wonder what people mean when they say that they want a transitional government. I'm sure that our friends Patrick Mbeko and Jean-Claude Maswana have very specific ideas on what it means, but when I read many other Congolese on "transition," it seems that this is a kind of magic bag that would help us get rid of President Joseph Kabila, his troops, and the Rwandan occupiers. It does not in any way address, for example, the problem of neocolonialism or the case of the so-called Congolese opposition. The latter are, in my opinion, people who must be removed from the political sphere in Congo. They have flagrantly participated in sustaining Kabila's tyrannical reign, even when the so-called constitution didn't allow him to stay in power anymore. In addition, they never had the courage to explain to the population what role Rwanda and Uganda were playing in Congo's tragedy. Are we going to include them in that transitional government? The transition presented this way has no appeal to me, even if it is led by Dr. Mukwege.

***"Only a deep and radical rupture would give us the possibility of rebuilding the Congo state."***

I instead subscribe to the thought of another of my friends, Father Jean-Pierre Mbelu. For him, we cannot speak of transitional government in Congo, because it presupposes that there has been a form of democracy that should be restored after a period of crisis. The problem of Congo, however, cannot be summed up by a political crisis. The country is rather subjected to a permanent coup d'état, and only a deep and radical rupture would give us the possibility of rebuilding the Congo state. Calling for transitions has been the solution that the international community has wanted to systematize in several African countries, including Congo, but its results leave much to be desired. The transition away from Kabila puts, in my opinion, too much weight on Kabila. It does not insist enough on revealing who created Kabila and does not inform us on the type of government and society we want to build after Kabila.

**AG:** Liberal Democrats and even leftists in the US are now so horrified by Donald Trump that our politics have been largely reduced to pro- and anti-Trump politics. You have the same problem regarding Kabila in Congo, don't you?

**BKN:** Yes, and it is an eminently dangerous position because it means in fact no choice. It is an enclosure in a dichotomous circle that does not allow any escape or possibility to imagine other systems than the ones that exist. In this case, we are in the middle of a democratic illusion. Democracy according to this meaning is the right to be for or against. It is the right to change between two sides of the same coin while the ideology that creates the coin remains unchanged. This refers to the fundamental problem posed by capitalism. It is indeed a system that organizes a non-choice, that creates the illusion of choice

for the benefit of the oligarchies that rule us. The tragedy of countries like ours is that they run after what they believe to be democracy, a binary system where it is only possible to be pro- or anti-X. It is even sadder because we've forgotten that this binary system never existed on the African continent prior to colonization but forms of real democracy did, especially in the Kongo Kingdom.

**AG:** Kabila should go, as Trump should, but what other forms of organizing are needed to alleviate the suffering and put Congolese on a path to claim their country's enormous wealth and potential?

**BKN:** If we think about change, we need to understand that we all live within the context of globalized capitalism. We need also to understand that capitalism appears in different shapes and forms according to the space it is targeting. In Congo, it creates permanent chaos so as to maintain people in that chaos, with no boundaries to the violence because the state exists only as the most minimal simulacra of Western institutions. These are the prerequisites for plundering the country, draining it of its minerals and other natural resources, some of which have been declared strategic for US security. It not only kills and displaces Congolese but also dismantles their communities and so disorients them that they are unable to understand the global capitalist world and the role that Congo is relegated to within it. It all but eliminates their capacity to defend themselves. One must understand and broaden the understanding of this to fight back effectively and bring about change.

The individual alone, even if he or she understands what is at stake, cannot change anything, but Congo is hammered again and again with the idea that only an individual can change the course of events, so people are waiting for that particular individual. It is therefore not surprising to see the extreme focus on who will be the next president. That focus is fundamentally disorientating. It is a key element of the collaboration between the national comprador class and the imperialists, which summarizes the political history of the Congo since its independence.

***“Political sovereignty can be regained only at a democratic community level, where pro-poor and rights based policies can be elaborated and ultimately shape the future of Congo.”***

So we need to reverse things in a way that distributes power from the base to the top. It is therefore important not for the individual but for the communities to gain a level of control over different aspects of their daily lives. This means that we need strong base-building organizations that will be able to generate power and undertake collective actions to challenge the existing order. Such commitment requires that Congolese come to understand that

power as it exists is a social construct put in place by the colonizers 500 years ago. Political sovereignty can be regained only at a democratic community level, where pro-poor and rights based policies can be elaborated and ultimately shape the future of Congo. And again, Congo has in its past known those forms of community-based organizations, so they have to be recovered and adapted to defeat the realities of neoliberalism as differentiated from formal colonialism and neocolonialism.

It will also be necessary to organize self-defense forces because we must not be fooled. Those who exploit us have weapons, and they are not ready to let go of Congo. This must be a war of liberation.

**AG:** Lastly, could you break down the latest developments in Rwanda's ongoing occupation of Congo? Rwandan political prisoners Victoire Ingabire and Kizito Mihigo were released earlier this month. Then, last week, Rwandan Foreign Minister Louise Mushikiwabo won her bid to head the International Organization of La Francophonie . Also last week, a French prosecutor asked a French judge to dismiss charges against Rwandan Patriotic Army officers for assassinating Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira in 1994.

**BKN:** These last two years, Kabila, who is the proconsul of Kigali in the Congo, has worked to strengthen the Rwandan occupation of the country by appointing senior Tutsi officers in the national army and appointing men like Azarias Ruberwa at the head of the Ministry for Decentralization, which Congolese call the ministry for balkanization. This shows that Rwandan President Paul Kagame and those surrounding him have no intention of withdrawing from the Congo, a country whose wealth allows them to build big shiny buildings in Rwanda's capital, then point to them and as proof of Rwanda's economic growth even though most Rwandans are still very poor and the country still relies on foreign aid for 40% of its annual budget.

Rwanda's shiny surface and the widespread fable about Rwandan economic growth also give Kagame credibility among Africans, and this is why the appointment of Mushikiwabo has been rather well received in Africa. Most Africans are, like the rest of the world, ill-informed about Rwandan realities. They have interpreted Mushikiwabo's appointment as the victory of an African leader against Europe, France in particular. They forget that France plays the leading role in La Francophonie and France chose Mushikiwabo. [See "The ugly facts about the Francophonie." When France says that they want a particular person to lead the organization, they more often than not get their way.

***"Rwandan President Paul Kagame and those surrounding him have no intention of withdrawing from the Congo."***

Having Mushikiwabo as president is a way for France to regain the influence in Central Africa that it lost to the United States after Bill Clinton's arrival in the White House. In this French/Rwandan bargain—because that is what it is—Kagame must have demanded that the long-running French investigation of his attack on Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana's plane be permanently closed because it was an aggravating refutation of the panegyric that he is Rwanda's savior. Some call this a victory for Rwandan diplomacy, but it's more like a small hit man in the middle of an international mafia using blackmail to achieve his ends. On the French side of the bargain, it helps them reestablish France's access to the immensely rich Congolese subsoil.

It is also important for France not to appear to be associated with a brutal regime that imprisons female opponents. Thus Kagame was forced to release political prisoners Victoire Ingabire Umuhiza and Diane Rwigara to polish his image. In a country that boasts of having worked so hard on the advancement of women, these high-profile female political prisoners, both of whom attempted to challenge Kagame for the presidency, hugely stained his image. But the good news is that these two women refused to keep silent about what was happening in Rwanda after their release. They presage a much more difficult future for Kagame and the deadly system he put in place. It is therefore a great joy to see these women free again and more determined than ever. They are among the leaders and organizers that this long suffering region has hoped for.

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## Raining on Trump's Parade

Donald Trump has called for a military parade in Washington DC but a coalition of peace and justice groups hope to stop the parade before it happens, explains Margaret Flowers in this interview with Ann Garrison.

By Ann Garrison

President Trump has asked the Pentagon to plan a military parade in Washington DC on Veteran's Day, November 11. Democrats have decried the cost and authoritarian implication, and antiwar groups are planning a countermarch. I

spoke to Margaret Flowers, medical doctor, Green Party activist, and co-founder of the movement news website Popular Resistance, who is among those organizing the countermarch.

**Ann Garrison:** Margaret, does this countermarch have a name yet, and what can you tell us about the coalition organizing it?

**Margaret Flowers:** So far the coalition is just calling this the “No Trump Military Parade.” Our goal is to get so many people signed up to come that Trump feels compelled to cancel it. If that doesn’t happen, we hope that we can mobilize more people to come to Washington DC to oppose it than Trump can mobilize to support it.

As far as the coalition goes, and this is still fairly young, we found that a number of organizations that Popular Resistance works with were organizing responses to the military parade. ANSWER put out a call for people to show up. Veterans for Peace and some of their allied organizations were organizing a veterans and indigenous peace march during that weekend, with a message to reclaim Armistice Day, which is what Veterans Day was initially. Interestingly, this is the hundred year anniversary of the first Armistice Day, the end of World War I.

World Beyond War was also getting people to sign on to oppose the parade, so we thought, “Why don’t we bring all these people together and make this a big display of opposition to militarization both at home and abroad?” We had our first exploratory call last week and found that there was a lot of energy and a lot of unity in our messaging against US imperialism, militarization, and austerity for public needs. The people who are behind this are all groups who are strongly opposed to the corporate duopoly war party, and who have been working to revive the peace movement in the United States.

**AG:** Some of those who identify as peace activists will no doubt say that this march is a reaction to Trump, not to the wars and weapons production that keep escalating no matter who’s in the White House. What’s your response?

**MF:** Now that President Trump is in office, that’s the concern because that’s what the Democratic Party groups and the party itself do when Republicans are in power. They use these issues for their own ends.

It’s interesting, and I know that you’re aware of this, that the Women’s March was not a march against US militarism. Among the so-called progressive Democratic Party candidates running in this year’s midterms, I haven’t seen anybody who has a strong antimilitarist platform. So there is a possibility that some of these Democratic Party groups will try to latch onto this effort and use



it for their own purposes, but all the people and groups organizing this are opposed to the corporate duopoly war party.

I think it's important for us to make it clear that the United States has a long history of militarism, and that it has been escalating under recent presidents. Obama was worse than Bush. Trump is trying to outdo Obama. It's not a matter of who's in the White House or which party has the majority in Congress. It's that the United States is the largest empire in the world, and we have a very strong military machine that demands to be fed constantly. So even if some of those Democratic Party members sign on, they may be adding numbers, but hopefully not diluting the message.

**AG:** A Women's March on the Pentagon, which is not a reaction to Trump but to war and militarism, is scheduled for October 20-21, the 51st anniversary of the 1967 March on the Pentagon organized by the National Mobilization to End the Vietnam War. Will you be joining or supporting that march as well?

**MF:** We're very excited about the Women's March on the Pentagon. I think, like you, I refrained from participating in the previous Women's Marches because they were organized by people who were part of the power structure. It's been interesting to see what's going on with that because people at the grassroots level didn't seem to be altogether on board with those who were leading those marches. But, again, there was no strong antimilitarism component to those marches. So we were very excited when Cindy Sheehan announced her Women's March on the Pentagon. I felt like, "Wow, now here's a Women's March I'll actually feel comfortable participating in," so Popular Resistance was one of the early organizations to sign on to that. We've been promoting it on our website, and I will be there, and we'll be supporting it in any way we can.

**AG:** Assuming Trump's parade goes forward, there will no doubt be a tremendous amount of international media coverage, and the optics will be grim for much of the world if there's no visible resistance. Will you be working on a media strategy with that in mind?

**MF:** That's one of the main reasons we felt so compelled to organize around Trump's military parade. People around the world keep asking us, "Where is the antiwar movement in the United States? You guys are the aggressors, so why aren't you doing anything about what your country is doing all around the world?" So having this kind of energy around this military parade—this gross display and glorification of militarism—is an opportunity for us in the United States to show the world that there is opposition to US empire and wars of aggression, including these so-called humanitarian interventions that so many progressives are supporting. And, in addition to having protests in Washington DC, we're reaching out to our international allies around the world and asking

them to hold actions on that day as well. And of course there's a lot of international media in DC, and when we do actions on various issues, we tend to get more coverage from the international media than from the US media. So we will definitely be reaching out to them.

**AG:** Do you think a countermarch will be allowed to get anywhere near the Pentagon parade, and have you considered that this might be a dangerous protest?

**MF:** The benefit of having coalition partners who are actually based in Washington DC is that they can apply for permits as soon as the need arises, and permits are handed out on a first come, first serve basis there. As soon as President Trump put out the message that he might have a military parade on Veterans Day, organizations that we work with quickly applied for permits in as many areas as they could think of where such a parade might happen. So we will have permits to be close to the parade, and we even applied for them before any groups that may come to support it.

As to whether it might be dangerous: the police in DC are fairly used to dealing with protest, and most of the them understand our First Amendment right to freedom of expression. That's not always the case; the police were very aggressive around Trump's inauguration, but I think they may regret that. The public is very largely with us, and a lot of people in the military oppose this gross display of militarization, this waste of money and time, as well. If there's a large turnout, that's protective. The police will be a lot less likely to misbehave if there are a lot of people around.

**AG:** The peace movement all but completely faded from view during Obama's eight years in office, despite new US Wars in Libya and Syria, escalation of the US War in Afghanistan, and the expansion of US bases and militarism across the African continent. If the peace movement re-emerges under Trump, do you think it could survive the election of another Democratic Party president?

**MF:** It was difficult to see the antiwar movement all but disappear while Obama was president. Of course we were out there protesting anyway, and when we helped organize the occupation of Freedom Plaza in 2011, it included a very strong antiwar component. It was disappointing to see antiwar protestors get confused by a Democratic president who was such a militarist. So we just have to keep working at reviving and growing the antiwar movement here, and try to demonstrate that this goes across political parties, that both Democrats and Republicans are funded and lobbied by the weapons manufacturers and all the other elements of the military industrial complex. The 2018 military budget is \$700 billion, and it just keeps growing. It now eats up 57% of our discretionary spending, leaving only 43% for education, transportation, housing, and all our other human needs.

We need to demonstrate that this makes us less secure as a nation by creating more animosity towards us around the world and isolating us in the global community. Other nations are finally getting more courage to stand up and say they don't want to be bullied or controlled by us anymore. So this hurts every single person in the United States, as well as the masses of people suffering all the casualties and injuries and agony caused by US wars. No matter who's in office, we have to push the United States to pull back our troops on foreign shores, close down our 800 or more military bases, and redirect our resources to human needs here at home and reparations for all the damage we've done around the world.

**AG:** How can listeners find more information and/or sign on to attend or engage in planning the November 11 countermarch?

**MF:** We just got a website up: [No Trump Military Parade.](#)

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