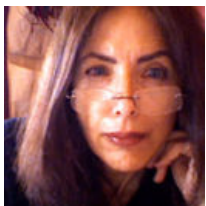


Liberté, Égalité, Impérialisme! Vive la France in Black Africa!

“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 Ndayayisenga 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.

NYT Admits Key Al Qaeda Role in Aleppo

Exclusive: In a backhand way, The New York Times admits that the U.S.-backed "moderate" rebels in east Aleppo are fighting alongside Al Qaeda jihadists, an almost casual admission of this long-observed reality, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

As much as The New York Times and the mainstream U.S. media have become propaganda outlets on most foreign policy issues, like the one-sided coverage of the bloody Syrian war, sometimes the truth seeps through in on-the-ground reporting by correspondents, even ones who usually are pushing the "propo."

Such was the case with Anne Barnard's new reporting from inside west Aleppo, the major portion of the city which is in government hands and copes with regular terror rocket and mortar attacks from rebel-held east Aleppo where Al Qaeda militants and U.S.-armed-and-funded "moderate" rebels fight side-by-side.

Almost in passing, Barnard's [article](#) on Sunday acknowledged the rarely admitted reality of the Al Qaeda/"moderate" rebel collaboration, which puts the United States into a de facto alliance with Al Qaeda terrorists and their jihadist allies, fighting under banners such as Nusra Front (recently renamed Syria Conquest Front) and Ahrar al-Sham.

Barnard also finally puts the blame for preventing civilians in east Aleppo from escaping the fighting on a rebel policy of keeping them in harm's way rather than letting them transit through "humanitarian corridors" to safety. Some of her earlier pro-rebel accounts suggested that it wasn't clear who was stopping movement of civilians through those corridors.

However, on Sunday, she reported: "We had arrived at a critical moment, as Russia said there was only one day left to pass through a corridor it had provided for people to escape eastern Aleppo before the rebel side was flattened, a corridor through which precious few had passed. The government says rebels are preventing civilians from leaving. Rebels refuse any evacuation without international supervision and a broader deal to deliver humanitarian aid."

Granted, you still have to read between the lines, but at least there is the acknowledgement that rebels are refusing civilian evacuations under the current conditions. How that is different from Islamic State terrorists in Mosul, Iraq, preventing departures from their areas – a practice which the Times and other U.S. outlets condemn as using women and children as "human shields" – isn't addressed. But Barnard's crimped admission is at least a start.

Barnard then writes: "Instead [of allowing civilians to move through the humanitarian corridors], they [the rebels] are trying to break the siege, with Qaeda-linked groups and those backed by the United States working together – the opposite of what Russia has demanded."

Again, that isn't the clearest description of the situation, which is stunning enough that one might have expected it in the lede rather than buried deep inside the story, but it is significant that the Times is recognizing that Al Qaeda and the U.S.-backed "moderates" are "working together" and that Russia opposes that collaboration.

She also noted that "Three Qaeda-linked suicide bombers attacked a military position with explosive-packed personnel carriers on Thursday, military officials said, and mortar fire was raining on neighborhoods that until now had been relatively safe. It was among the most intense rounds in four years of rebel shelling that officials say has killed 11,000 civilians."

While she then throws in a caveat about the impossibility of verifying the numbers, the acknowledgement that the U.S.-backed "moderate" rebels and their Al Qaeda comrades have been shelling civilians in west Aleppo is significant, too. Before this, all the American people heard was the other side, from rebel-held east Aleppo, about the human suffering there, often conveyed by "activists" with video cameras who have depicted the conflict as simply the willful killing of

children by the evil Syrian government and the even more evil Russians.

More Balance

With the admission of rebel terror attacks on civilians in west Aleppo, the picture finally is put into more balance. The Al Qaeda and U.S.-backed rebels have been killing thousands of civilians in government-controlled areas and the Syrian military and its Russian allies have struck back only to be condemned for committing “war crimes.”

Though the human toll in both sides of Aleppo is tragic, we have seen comparable situations before – in which the U.S. government has supported, supplied and encouraged governments to mount fierce offensives to silence rockets or mortars fired by rebels toward civilian areas.

For instance, senior U.S. government officials, including President Barack Obama and Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, have defended Israel’s right to defend itself from rockets fired from inside Gaza even though those missiles rarely kill anyone. Yet, Israel is allowed to bomb the near-defenseless people of Gaza at will, killing thousands including the four little boys blown apart in July 2014 while playing on a beach during the last round of what the Israelis call “mowing the grass.”

In the context of those deaths, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power, who has built her career as a supposed humanitarian advocating a “responsibility to protect” civilians, laid the blame not on the Israeli military but on fighters in Gaza who had fired rockets that rarely hit anything besides sand.

At the United Nations on July 18, 2014, Power said, “President Obama spoke with [Israeli] Prime Minister Netanyahu this morning to reaffirm the United States’ strong support for Israel’s right to defend itself.... Hamas’ attacks are unacceptable and would be unacceptable to any member state of the United Nations. Israel has the right to defend its citizens and prevent these attacks.”

But that universal right apparently does not extend to Syria where U.S.-supplied rockets are fired into civilian neighborhoods of west Aleppo. In that case, Power and other U.S. officials apply an entirely different set of standards. Any Syrian or Russian destruction of east Aleppo with the goal of suppressing that rocket fire becomes a “war crime.”

Perhaps it’s expected that the U.S. government, like other governments, will engage in hypocrisy regarding affairs of state: one set of rules for U.S. allies and another for countries marked for U.S. “regime change.” Statements by supposed “humanitarians” – such as Samantha Power, “Ms. R2P” – are no exception.

But double standards are even more distasteful when they come from allegedly “objective” journalists such as those who work at The New York Times, The Washington Post and other prestige American news outlets. When they take the “U.S. side” in a dispute and become crude propagandists, they encourage the kind of misguided “group thinks” that led to the criminal Iraq War and other disastrous “regime change” projects over the past two decades.

Yet, that is what we normally see. A thoughtful reader can’t peruse the international reporting of the U.S. mainstream media without realizing that it is corrupted by propaganda from both government officials and from U.S.-funded operations, often disguised as “human rights activists” or “citizen journalists” whose supposed independence makes their “propo” even more effective.

So, it’s worth noting those rare occasions when The New York Times and the rest of the MSM let some of the reality peek through. When evaluating the latest plans from Hillary Clinton and other interventionists to expand the U.S. military intervention in Syria – via prettily named “safe zones” and “no-fly zones” – the American people should realize that they are being asked to come to the aid of Al Qaeda.

[For more on this topic, see Consortiumnews.com’s [“The De Facto US/Al Qaeda Alliance.”](#)]

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](#)).

The Dangers from ‘Humanitarian’ Wars

The West is rushing toward another major war in the Middle East, in Syria, behind the “responsibility to protect” banner, which may justify endless U.S. military interventions, says Conn Hallinan at Foreign Policy in Focus.

By Conn Hallinan

While the mainstream media focuses on losers and winners in the race between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, a largely unreported debate is going on over the future course of U.S. diplomacy. Its outcome will have a profound effect on how Washington projects power – both diplomatic and military – in the coming decade.

The issues at stake are hardly abstract. The United States is currently engaged in active wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Somalia. It has deployed troops on the Russian border, played push-and-shove with China in Asia, and greatly extended its military footprint on the African continent. It would not be an exaggeration to say – as former U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry has recently done – that the world is a more dangerous place today than it was during darkest times of the Cold War.

Tracking the outlines of this argument is not easy, in part because the participants are not always forthcoming about what they are proposing, in part because the media oversimplifies the issues.

In its broadest framework, “realists” represented by former National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, Harvard’s Steven Walt, and University of Chicago’s John Mearsheimer have squared off against “humanitarian interventionists” like current UN Ambassador Samantha Power. Given that Power is a key adviser to the Obama administration on foreign policy and is likely to play a similar role if Clinton is elected, her views carry weight.

In a recent essay in the New York Review of Books, Power asks, “How is a statesman to advance his nation’s interests?” She begins by hijacking the realist position that U.S. diplomacy must reflect “national interests,” arguing that they are indistinguishable from “moral values.” What happens to people in other countries, she argues, is in our “national security.”

Ambassador Power – along with Clinton and former President Bill Clinton – has long been an advocate for “humanitarian intervention,” behind which the United States intervened in the Yugoslav civil war. Humanitarian intervention has since been formalized into “responsibility to protect,” or R2P, and was the rationale for overthrowing Muammar Gaddafi in Libya. Hillary Clinton has argued forcibly for applying R2P to Syria by setting up “no-fly zones” to block Syrian and Russian planes from bombing insurgents and the civilians under their control.

But Power is proposing something different than humanitarian intervention. She is suggesting that the United States elevate R2P to the level of national security, which sounds uncomfortably like an argument for U.S. intervention in any place that doesn’t emulate the American system.

Facing Off Against the Kremlin

Most telling is her choice of examples: Russia, China, and Venezuela, all currently in Washington’s crosshairs. Of these, she spends the most time on Moscow and the current crisis in Ukraine, where she accuses the Russians of weakening a “core independent norm” by supporting insurgents in Ukraine’s east,

“lopping off part of a neighboring country” by seizing Crimea, and suppressing the news of Russian intervention from its own people. Were the Russian media to report on the situation in Ukraine, she writes, “many Russians might well oppose” the conflict.

Power presents no evidence for this statement because none exists. Regardless of what one thinks of Moscow’s role in Ukraine, the vast majority of Russians are not only aware of it, but overwhelmingly support President Vladimir Putin on the issue. From the average Russian’s point of view, NATO has been steadily marching eastwards since the end of the Yugoslav war. It is Americans who are deployed in the Baltic and Poland, not Russians gathering on the borders of Canada and Mexico. Russians are a tad sensitive about their borders, given the tens of millions they lost in World War II, something of which Power seems oblivious.

What Power seems incapable of doing is seeing how countries like China and Russia view the United States. That point of view is an essential skill in international diplomacy, because it is how one determines whether or not an opponent poses a serious threat to one’s national security.

Is Russia – as President Obama recently told the U.N. – really “attempting to recover lost glory through force,” or is Moscow reacting to what it perceives as a threat to its own national security? Russia did not intervene in Ukraine until the United States and its NATO allies supported the coup against the President Viktor Yanukovich’s government and ditched an agreement that had been hammered out among the European Union, Moscow, and the United States to peacefully resolve the crisis.

Power argues that there was no coup, but U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and the U.S. Ambassador to the Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt were caught on tape talking about how to “mid-wife” the takeover and choose the person they wanted to put in place.

As for “lopping off” Crimea, Power had no problem with the United States and NATO “lopping off” Kosovo from Serbia in the Yugoslav War. In both cases local populations – in Crimea by 96 percent – supported the “takeovers.”

Understanding how other countries see the world does not mean one need agree with them, but there is nothing in Moscow’s actions that suggests that it is trying to re-establish an “empire,” as Obama characterized its behavior in his recent speech to the U.N.

When Hillary Clinton compared Putin to Hitler, she equated Russia with Nazi Germany, which certainly posed an existential threat to our national security. But does anyone think that comparison is valid? In 1939, Germany was the most

powerful country in Europe with a massive military. Russia has the 11th largest economy in the world, trailing even France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy and Brazil. Turkey has a larger army.

Power's view of what is good for the Russian people is a case in point. Although one can hardly admire the oligarchy that dominates Russia – and the last election would seem to indicate considerable voter apathy in the country's urban centers – the “liberals” whom Power is so enamored with were the people who instituted the economic “shock therapy” in the 1990s that impoverished tens of millions of people and brought about a calamitous drop in life expectancy.

That track record is unlikely to get one elected. In any case, Americans are hardly in a position these days to lecture people about the role oligarchic wealth plays in manipulating elections.

View from China

The Chinese are intolerant of internal dissent, but Washington's argument with Beijing is over sea lanes, not voter rolls.

China is acting the bully in the South China Sea, but it was President Bill Clinton who sparked the current tensions in the region when he deployed two aircraft carrier battle groups in the Taiwan Straits in 1995-96 during a tense standoff between Taipei and the mainland. China did not then – and does not now – have the capacity to invade Taiwan, so Beijing's threats were not real.

But the aircraft carriers were very real, and they humiliated – and scared – China in its home waters. That incident directly led to China's current accelerated military spending and its heavy-handed actions in the South China Sea.

Again, there is a long history here. Starting with the Opium Wars of 1839 and 1860, followed by the Sino-Japanese War of 1895 and Tokyo's invasion of China in World War II, the Chinese have been invaded and humiliated time and again. Beijing believes that the Obama administration designed its “Asia pivot” as to surround China with U.S. allies.

While that might be an over simplification – the Pacific has long been America's largest market – it is a perfectly rational conclusion to draw from the deployment of U.S. Marines to Australia, the positioning of nuclear-capable forces in Guam and Wake, the siting of anti-ballistic missile systems in South Korea and Japan, and the attempt to tighten military ties with India, Indonesia, and Vietnam.

“If you are a strategic thinker in China, you don't have to be a paranoid

conspiracy theorist to think that the U.S. is trying to bandwagon Asia against China,” says Simon Tay, chair of the Singapore Institute of International Affairs.

Meanwhile in Latin America...

As for Venezuela, the U.S. supported the 2002 coup against Hugo Chavez and has led a campaign of hostility against the government ever since. For all its problems, the Chavez government cut poverty rates from 54.5 percent of the population to 32 percent, and extreme poverty from around 20 percent to 8.6 percent. Infant mortality fell from 25 per 1,000 to 13 per 1,000, the same as for Black Americans.

And the concern for the democratic rights of Venezuelans apparently doesn't extend to the people of Honduras. When a military coup overthrew a progressive government in 2009, the United States pressed other Latin American countries to recognize the illegal government that took over in its wake. Although opposition forces in Venezuela get tear-gassed and a handful jailed, in Honduras they are murdered by death squads.

Power's view that the United States stands for virtue instead of simply pursuing its own interests is a uniquely American delusion. “This is an image that Americans have of themselves,” says Jeremy Shapiro, research director of the European Council on Foreign Relations, “but is not shared, even by their allies.”

The “division” between “realists” and R2P is an illusion. Both end up in the same place: confronting our supposed competitors and supporting our allies, regardless of how they treat their people. Although she is quick to call the Russians in Syria “barbarous,” she is conspicuously silent on U.S. support for Saudi Arabia's air war in Yemen, which has targeted hospitals, markets and civilians.

The argument that another country's internal politics is a national security issue for the United States elevates R2P to a new level, sets the bar for military intervention a good deal lower than it is today, and lays the groundwork for an interventionist foreign policy that will make the Obama administration look positively pacifist.

Looking Toward November

It is impossible to separate this debate on foreign policy from the current race for the White House. Clinton has been hawkish on most international issues, and she is not shy about military intervention.

She has also surrounded herself with some of the same people who designed the Iraq war, including founders of the [Project for a New American Century](#). It is rumored that if she wins she will appoint former Defense Department official [Michele Flournoy](#) as secretary of defense. Flournoy has called for bombing Assad's forces in Syria.

On the other hand, Trump has been less than coherent. He has made some reasonable statements about cooperating with the Russians and some distinctly scary ones about China. He says he is opposed to military interventions, although he supported the war in Iraq (and now lies about it). He is alarmingly casual about the use of nuclear weapons.

In [Foreign Affairs](#), Stephen Walt, a leading "realist," says that Trump's willingness to consider breaking the nuclear taboo makes him someone who "has no business being commander in chief." Other countries, writes Walt, "are already worried about American power and the ways it gets used. The last thing we need is an American equivalent of the impetuous and bombastic Kaiser Wilhelm II." The Kaiser was a major force behind World War I, a conflict that inflicted 38 million casualties.

Whoever wins in November will face a world in which Washington can't call all the shots. As Middle East expert [Patrick Cockburn](#) points out, "The U.S. remains a superpower, but is no longer as powerful as it once was." Although it can overthrow regimes it doesn't like, "it can't replace what has been destroyed."

Power's framework for diplomacy is a formula for a never-ending cycle of war and instability.

Conn Hallinan can be read at dispatchesfromtheedgeblog.wordpress.com and middleempireseries.wordpress.com. [This article previously appeared at Foreign Policy in Focus, <http://fpif.org/u-s-diplomacy-dangerous-proposal/>]

Magical Thinking in US Foreign Policy

Exclusive: The U.S. foreign policy establishment cloaks its desire for global dominance in the language of humanitarianism and "democracy promotion" even when the policies lead to death and chaos, as James W Carden describes.

By James W Carden

Despite America's myriad problems domestically and internationally, its geo-strategic position remains the envy of the world. Protected in the east by the

Atlantic, in the west by the Pacific, to the north by Canada and to the south by Mexico, the United States is, for all intents and purposes, impervious to a foreign invasion.

Its advanced and mobile nuclear arsenal and conventional force projection capabilities further serve as a deterrent against attacks from rival nation-states. The country's strategic position is enhanced, too, by what Valéry Giscard d'Estaing has referred to as the "exorbitant privilege" – that of possessing the world's reserve currency. As such, the U.S. does not face the same restraints on spending that other nations do.

Because the dollar accounts for so high a proportion of the balance sheets of other countries, the rest of the world is tacitly committed to propping up its value. Taken together, America's isolated and protected geo-strategic position combined with the "exorbitant privilege" of the dollar means, in effect, that the U.S. has an unrivaled geo-strategic position.

Yet since the end of the Cold War, the foreign policy establishment and three successive administrations have committed the U.S. to a dangerous and ill-conceived pursuit of global military and economic hegemony which has only served to undercut the country's economy and security. It is a pursuit that is frequently cloaked in the rhetoric of humanitarianism and "democracy promotion."

United Nations Ambassador Samantha Power recently declared in the pages of the *New York Review of Books* that it is "our self-interest that requires us to get better at improving human security in the service of national security."

Power – like nearly all members of the foreign policy establishment today – believes (or says she believes) that the way foreign governments treat their own citizens "matters because it can have a direct impact on international peace and security – and on our respective national interests."

To bolster her argument she takes the example of the Russian government which, she claims, habitually lies to its own people about what it is really up to in Ukraine. "The elimination of critical voices inside Russia," writes Power, "helps enable acts that are profoundly destabilizing outside of Russia."

Power's claims are part of the widely shared, bipartisan consensus among the post-Cold War foreign policy elites who believe that the problem is not that the United States has intervened around the world too much and too often but rather that it has intervened too little. In Power's view, "we must never be ashamed to ask whether we have been too reticent in pressing certain governments to reform and to respond to the demands of their citizens."

This last point is a curious claim that, I suspect, quite intentionally skirts

the question of whether the U.S., by actively pushing its “pro-democracy” agenda abroad, is itself the instigator of many of those “demands” (by financing and organizing many of the groups clamoring for U.S. intervention).

Financing Destabilization

Efforts – almost too numerous to count – by USAID, the International Republican Institute and the National Endowment for Democracy, often in conjunction with various think tanks, TOR developers (software that enables anonymous communications), and George Soros-funded Open Society Institutes – have sought to materially aid a plethora of opposition groups across the globe. (They, in turn, seek more U.S. intervention to enhance their political positions within their societies.)

Contrary to what the scholar, diplomat George Kennan urged – that diplomacy, properly executed, was necessarily a government-to-government interaction – Power believes that “we need to broaden the spectrum of whom we engage with our diplomacy.”

She writes that diplomats must court “civil society organizations” and other groups such as “teachers association, workers’ unions and leaders in the business community” – never mind the very plain fact that State Department diplomats and Commerce Department officials, among others, have been doing outreach of that sort for some time.

The results of all this U.S. meddling have been little short of disastrous. Take, for instance, the failed state of Ukraine, where USAID and other U.S. institutions spent \$5 billion in the quarter century since the fall of the Soviet Union, according to Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland (and that was before the U.S.-backed overthrow of the elected government in February 2014 and the current civil war which has claimed the lives of some 10,000 Ukrainians).

This generation of American “humanitarian” crusaders, as exemplified by the career of Ambassador Power, continually seeks to sacrifice stability on the altar of “democratic” idealism (even when that involves reversing democratic results and contributing to humanitarian suffering). Further, the problem that these efforts engender for U.S. national security interests are legion: war continues to rage in eastern Ukraine, Libya is completely destabilized, likewise Syria and Iraq.

Contrary to what Power would have us believe, the “democratization” crusade undermines, rather than strengthens U.S. national security. As the Greek statesman Pericles famously observed: “I am more afraid of our own mistakes than

of our enemies' designs."

James W Carden is a contributing writer for The Nation and editor of The American Committee for East-West Accord's eastwestaccord.com. He previously served as an advisor on Russia to the Special Representative for Global Inter-governmental Affairs at the US State Department.

Selling Out Palestinian Rights

Hillary Clinton and other Democrats have led the way in abandoning principles of human rights, democracy and rule of law by pandering to Israel and its powerful lobby, explains Lawrence Davidson.

By Lawrence Davidson

In early March, Professor Richard Falk, former United Nations Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, wrote an essay explaining that American foreign policy generated by Democratic Party presidents has been much to blame for the disastrous fate of the Palestinians.

The Democrats have allowed themselves to be suborned by Zionist special interests for reasons we will explore below. It is Democratic officials who also verbally attack any American who stands up for the rights of Palestinians, and do so, if anything, more strongly than their Republican competitors.

Falk worked tirelessly from 2008 to 2014 to bring about justice for the Palestinian people – something that, if achieved, would have raised the esteem of both the U.N. and the U.S. among millions of Arabs. Officials appointed by Democratic President Barack Obama, including National Security Advisor Susan Rice and current U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Samantha Power, repaid Falk for his efforts with insulting ad hominem attacks.

For instance, Power celebrated Falk's departure from his post by asserting that, "his publication of bizarre and insulting material has tarnished the U.N.'s reputation and undermined the effectiveness of the Human Rights Council. The United States welcomes Mr. Falk's departure, which is long overdue."

It is to be noted that at no time did Professor Falk issue a report, or even make a public statement, that was not based on documented fact and a clear understanding of international law. One suspects that Ambassador Power knew this to be so and that her vitriol against Falk was the act of an amoral political agent of an amoral government.

Professor Falk sees much of the U.S. government's policy in the Middle East as a consequence of a State Department long populated by Zionists along with the power and influence of an Israeli-directed bloc of special interests.

President Obama's own efforts at Middle East policy formulation began, according to Falk, with the rhetorical assertion that the United States is "different because we adhere to the rule of law and act in accord with our values in foreign policy." Yet this claim has always been false, and very quickly, the President's words lost meaning as lobby pressure bent policy (with the singular exception of the Iran nuclear deal) to the will of the Zionist cause.

Hillary Clinton

Watching the distressing kowtowing this past week to that same lobby by Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton has proven Richard Falk undeniably correct. In her speech to the America Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), an organization which, in truth, functions in the U.S. as the agent of a foreign power (Israel), Clinton proclaimed the following:

–That as president she will take the U.S.- Israeli relationship "to the next level," which entails lavishing on that state most of America's latest defensive and offensive weaponry and the negotiating of yet another defense treaty – a "ten-year defense memorandum of understanding."

–This is allegedly necessary because, Israel "faces three evolving threats – Iran's continued aggression, a rising tide of extremism across a wide arc of instability, and the growing effort to delegitimize Israel on the world stage." Here she refers to the boycott or BDS movement. These threats make "the U.S.- Israel alliance more indispensable than ever."

Juan Cole's rebuttal to Clinton's assertions is particularly good. He points out that when the situation is looked at soberly, Israel has no conventional security threats, including from Iran, that necessitates billions of dollars of American weapons and a binding defense memorandum. Cole accurately points out that the "rising tide of extremism" is, to a good extent, a function of the U.S. invasion of Iraq (which both Clinton and the Israelis supported), and the dissolution of Syria (which has become a national security goal of Israel). Finally, by describing BDS as a movement that must be suppressed, she is endangering U.S. constitutional rights.

–Clinton extols the U.S.-Israel alliance as one of "shared values." She describes Israel as "a bastion of liberty." This is de rigueur propaganda and, for the Palestinians, has no convincing connection to reality.

Clinton then qualifies her dubious assertion by asking, "will we, as Americans

and as Israelis, stay true to the shared democratic values that have always been at the heart of our relationship.” She is no doubt including “America” in this question as a reference to the problematic behavior of Donald Trump and his supporters. However, her question, as it applies to Israel, has already been answered.

Gideon Levy

The well-known Israeli journalist Gideon Levy was in Washington, D.C. last week and had an interview with Max Blumenthal. In it he warned of just how far Israel has drifted from “democratic values” as well as how complicit American liberals, such as Hillary Clinton, are in the process of Israeli moral and political corruption.

Levy tells us that “American liberals should know ... that they are supporting the first sign of fascism in Israel. I don’t call it yet fascism, but [the] first signs [are] very clear. ... And America keeps financing it. This should be known and should be recognized by any American, mainly the liberals, who care where their taxpayer money goes, and so much of it.

“I mean, there is no source of hope right now. There’s no alternative to Netanyahu. ... The atmosphere, as I said, is becoming less and less tolerant, and the standing of democracy is minimal and many times very twisted.”

Levy then takes particular aim at the substantial, if unofficial, U.S. support for Israel’s illegal occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and Golan Heights:

“Occupation is American values? Occupation serves the American interest? Doesn’t America see that it pays a hell of a price for this automatic and blind support of Israel and of the occupation project? Is it reasonable that in the 21st century, the United States will finance an apartheid regime in the occupied territories? All those questions should be raised.”

Levy is by no means alone at raising the alarm about where Zionism has led Israeli society. For a more detailed treatment of the intolerance and nascent fascism showing its face, the reader can take a look at Israeli Professor David Schulman’s “Israel: The Broken Silence,” a review of six exposes on Israeli society and behavior. This has just been published in the April 7 edition of *New York Review of Books*.

Schulman concludes that “The far right in Israel very readily opts for totalitarian modes of thinking and acting, and it’s not clear who is left to stop it.” It certainly will not be Hillary Clinton.

Who raises objections to the consequences of U.S. complicity in Israel’s

political disaster? People such as Richard Falk and Gideon Levy do and thereby keep alive some semblance of rational discourse about the place of democratic values in U.S. foreign policy formulation. However, despite their rhetoric, liberal politicians like Hillary Clinton have clearly abandoned those values when it comes to any reference to Israel and its behavior.

What this means is that the substance of Clinton's speech at the AIPAC convention was mere propaganda – an effort to rationalize, or perhaps simply to cover up, deeper and more base motives. Therefore, if supporting “shared democratic values” is not what motivates Clinton's kowtowing, what does?

The answer is naked political opportunism. Here is the formula: (1) American politics runs on domestically garnered money, and lots of it: running for office, just about any office from dog catcher to president, requires constant financial solicitation; (2) special interests, be they economic concerns, professional organizations, or ideologically motivated groups are a major source of these funds; (3) in exchange for their largesse, such interests require political support for their causes.

Here enters, among others, the Zionists, whose deep pockets, ability to shape media messages, and rally voters, both Jewish and Christian, are well known. An alliance with the Zionists is politically profitable while incurring their anger is sometimes politically fatal.

Of course, such an alliance means the abandonment of any objective or even rational consideration of U.S. policy toward Israel and much of the rest of the Middle East. And indeed, the national interest relating to this increasingly dangerous part of the world has long ago been tossed overboard. It has been replaced by the parochial interests of wealthy, well-organized and influential ideologues.

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The Fallacy of ‘Humanitarian’ War

The new excuse for U.S. imperial wars is “humanitarian” or “liberal” interventionism with Hillary Clinton and other proponents citing noble motives for destroying foreign societies, as ex-CIA official Graham E. Fuller discusses.

By Graham E. Fuller

Rajan Menon's new book, *The Conceit of Humanitarian Intervention*, launches a timely argument against a dominant argument lying behind so much of modern American foreign policy – “humanitarian intervention” or “liberal interventionism.”

We are, of course, well familiar with Republican and neocon readiness to go to war, but the reality is that many Democrat Party leaders have been no less seduced into a series of optional foreign military interventions, with increasingly disastrous consequences. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is today one of the leading exponents of the idea, but so are many of the advisors around President Barack Obama.

Menon offers powerful argumentation skewering the concept of “humanitarian intervention,” demonstrating how it operates often as little more than a subtler form of an imperial agenda. Naked imperial ambitions tend to be recognizable for what they are. But when those global ambitions are cloaked in the liberal language of our “right to protect” oppressed peoples, prevent humanitarian outrages, stop genocide, and to topple noxious dictators, then the true motives behind such operations become harder to recognize.

What humanitarian could object to such lofty goals? Yet the seductive character of these “liberal interventionist” policies end up serving – indeed camouflaging – a broad range of military objectives that rarely help and often harm the ostensible objects of our intervention.

Professor Rajan Menon brings a considerable variety of skills to bear in this brief and lucid book. Despite his first-class academic credentials in the field, he also writes in clear and persuasive language for the concerned general reader. Second, Menon is no theoretician: he has worked closely with policy circles for many years and understands the players and operations as well as anyone outside government.

In rejecting the premise of “liberal interventionism,” Menon is not exercising some hard-minded, bloodless vision of policy – quite the opposite. He is deeply concerned for the wellbeing of peoples and societies abroad – who are often among the primary victims of such liberal interventionism. He argues not as an isolationist but rather as an observer who has watched so many seemingly well-minded interventions turn into horror stories for the citizens involved.

From a humanitarian point of view, can the deaths of half a million Iraqis and the dislocation of a million or so more be considered to have contributed to the wellbeing of “liberated Iraq?” As former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright

once said, she regretted the death of 500,000 Iraqi children who, in Saddam's Iraq, had been deprived of medicines under a long U.S. embargo, but, she concluded, "it was worth it." One wonders to whom it was worth it? Where is the humanitarian vision behind such a comment?

Libya too has been transformed from an unpleasant but quiescent dictatorship under Muammar Gaddafi into a nightmare of raging militias, civil war, anarchy and a breeding ground of ISIS and al-Qa'ida. Afghanistan is still mired in conflict. So Menon is arguing not for a hardening of hearts, but for questioning the real-world outcomes of such seemingly "well-intentioned" wars.

Ultimately the case for "humanitarian intervention" is justified by the quest for international justice, protection of civilians, and the broadening of democratization and human rights. The U.S. has regularly invoked these principles in justifying its ongoing – indeed nonstop – wars over the past several decades.

Yet the sad reality is that the *selective nature* of U.S. interventions raises serious questions about the true motivation behind invoking such "universal" values. U.S. calls for "democratization" more often operate as punishment to its enemies ("regime change") but rarely as a gift to be bestowed upon friends ("friendly dictators.")

Menon argues, buttressing his case with striking examples from around the world, that such selective implementation of "universal values" by a global (imperial) power ends up tarnishing and diminishing the very values they are meant to promote; as a result they create broad cynicism around the world among those who perceive them as mere instruments of aggressive U.S. global power projection.

Yet when many genuine humanitarian crises do burst forth, as in Rwanda or in the ongoing agonies of the Congo (five *million* dead and counting) Washington has opted not to intervene because it did not perceive its immediate national interests to be threatened.

In short, the selective and opportunistic character of liberal interventionism ends up giving a bad name to liberalism. And it cruelly deceives many in the West who seek a more "liberal" foreign policy and yet who find that, in the end, they have only supported the projection of greater American geopolitical power – and usually at considerable human cost to the Iraqs, Afghanistans, Somalias, Libyas, and Columbias of the world.

Any reader of the book is eventually forced to confront a deeper question: when is war in fact "worth it"? Few would respond "never," but many might respond "rarely." Yet Menon is not arguing against war as such, so much as forcing us to

acknowledge the faulty “liberal” foundation of our relentless quest for enemies to destroy – in the name of making the world a better place.

The title of the book, *The Conceit of Humanitarian Intervention*, suggests that at the very least such policies are self-deceiving, in other cases perhaps deliberately meant to obfuscate. Menon here poses the question whether, for whatever motivation, great powers can ever sufficiently master the complexity of foreign societies to truly engineer a better life in the countries we target for remodeling. And whether we can afford an enterprise that might take decades at the least.

In the end we become aware of the unhealthy nature of combining broad ideals married to global power. In the case of the British Empire, and now the American, this combination readily leads to the manipulation and then corruption of those ideals – discrediting U.S. prestige and credibility and damaging the lives of those living in troubled areas.

None of this is to say that there is never room for international intervention in arenas of horrific depredations against civilian populations. But it is only when such intervention is truly international (essentially U.N.-sanctioned and not a mere maneuver to insert NATO into another global hotspot) that it can it take on a measure of credibility and international respect. Otherwise it ends up perceived as a U.S. proxy move against Russia, China, Iran or some other adversary.

Menon’s book constitutes essential reading for anyone troubled by the ugly character of so much of the international scene these days, and yet dismayed by its exploitation by policy-makers who cloak invasion, power projections and military operations in the garb of humanitarian effort.

Here is a cogent critique of the recent decades of U.S. foreign policy misadventures in which our military has become the primary instrument of U.S. policy – and justified in the name of humanitarian goals. We rarely get to hear these arguments so clearly presented.

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

Obama, the Hesitant ‘Realist’

President Obama has come partially out of the closet as a foreign policy

“realist,” but he hesitates in the face of Official Washington’s neocon establishment, as ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar explains.

By Paul R. Pillar

Jeffrey Goldberg’s [long article](#) in the *Atlantic* about Barack Obama’s thinking on America’s foreign relations, an article derived from a series of interviews that Goldberg had with the President, ought to be required reading for this year’s presidential candidates and those who wish to advise the next president on foreign policy.

It ought to be so because it lays out some splendidly clear and well-grounded realist principles, expressed by Mr. Obama more directly and in more complete form than we customarily hear or read, and that would form the core of sound foreign policy for the United States to the extent that the U.S. political milieu would permit them to be put into practice.

Also emerging from the interviews, besides the realist approach, is deep substantive insight by Mr. Obama into the nature of some of the principal security problems of the day and a disciplined and unemotional approach toward analyzing those problems, both of which also are critical ingredients to the formulation of sound foreign policy.

The article is not a puff piece written in return for extraordinary access given to the journalist, and Goldberg does not write such puff pieces anyway. Some of what Goldberg writes in this piece exhibits aspects of common Washington thinking that President Obama has been trying to get away from. But Goldberg deserves credit for letting the President’s thinking come through fully, mostly in the President’s own words, and for assembling in one place a portrait of a presidential outlook of which we usually only get fragments in press conferences.

The overall realist direction of that outlook is reflected in Mr. Obama’s professed admiration for the approach toward foreign policy of George H.W. Bush and Brent Scowcroft. Goldberg tells of how when then-Senator Obama was writing the book that would become a campaign manifesto, his adviser Susan Rice had to urge him to include some complimentary words about Bill Clinton’s foreign policy to balance the praise for Bush and Scowcroft. The principal tenets that can be described as realist principles and that come across most clearly in the interviews with Goldberg are the following.

Deal with the world as it is, not as we wish it were. The first step to being a realist is to be realistic. In the discussion of current front-burner issues that dominate the interviews with Goldberg, this principle certainly applies to

the wishful and what-if thinking that is all too common regarding the civil war in Syria, and specifically to the myth that only if the United States had done something more earlier, Syria wouldn't be such a mess.

The President points out that this war pitted from the beginning a professional army that was well armed and supported by two outside allies against a fractured and ragtag rebellion. He correctly observes, "The notion that we could have – in a clear way that didn't commit U.S. military forces – changed the equation on the ground there was never true."

Address specific problems and avoid specific mistakes, rather than subordinating everything under general labels. The strong urge among the commentariat and foreign policy cognoscenti in Washington to talk about foreign policies in terms of a "doctrine" attached to the name of a particular leader or a single "organizing principle" is an unhelpful oversimplification.

Even what is usually called grand strategy, although it has its role, tends to get used and overused in unhelpful ways. Goldberg's article itself reflects the labeling urge by being misleadingly titled "The Obama Doctrine." The world is complicated, and any foreign policy approach that can be simplified to a label or even to a strategy expressed in a single sentence is an oversimplification. Not doing stupid stuff is one (but not the only one) important thing to remember in making foreign policy, bearing in mind how severely U.S. interests have been damaged in the past because stupid stuff was done.

The preceding two concepts are related to a third: *adapt to the differences in different situations*. Not every troublesome dictator is a Hitler, and not every conflict in which civilians die is a Rwandan genocide. The tendency that has to be countered here is perhaps best represented within the Obama administration by Samantha Power, who sometimes does seem to think that every conflict with civilian casualties is another Rwanda and was one of those who argued especially hard for the mistaken intervention in Libya. (Goldberg writes of how during one meeting in which Power was pushing her theme the President had to shush her, saying "I've read your book, Samantha.")

In his comments to Goldberg, the President accurately contrasted Rwanda, where he said "it's probably easier to make an argument that a relatively small force inserted quickly would have resulted in averting genocide," with Syria, where "the degree to which the various groups are armed and hardened fighters and are supported by a whole host of external actors with a lot of resources requires a much larger commitment of forces."

Pay heed to geopolitics. This is closely related to the specific need to take full account of how other states view their interests and the relative priority

they place on those interests – and thus to what extent those states are or are not amenable to changing their policies.

As basic a variable as geographic distance has a lot to do with how interests are defined. This applies to Mr. Obama's analysis of Middle Eastern problems, in which Middle Easterners themselves have a bigger stake than anyone else. It also applies to his perspective on Ukraine; he understands that Ukraine involves core Russian interests but not core American ones, and therefore Russia will always have escalatory dominance there.

Recognizing a problem is not the same as being able to solve it. The all-too-common notion that must be resisted here is one that flows from overoptimistic American exceptionalism. It is a notion that often leads to assumptions that if a situation is identified as a problem then that means it must be "the policy" of the United States to eliminate it somehow.

It is the notion that, in President Obama's words, "if we use our moral authority to say 'This is a brutal regime, and this is not how a leader should treat his people,' once you've said that, once you do that, you are obliged to invade the country and install a government you prefer." As the President correctly observes, "There are going to be times where we can do something about innocent people being killed, but there are going to be times where we can't."

Solving a problem does not necessarily mean it is the United States that should do most of the work in solving it. This is another tendency rooted in American exceptionalism. It is a tendency that causes free-rider problems, which Mr. Obama explicitly wants to avoid. It does not serve U.S. interests for, as he says, the Europeans and Arab states to be "holding our coats" while the United States does "all the fighting."

Trade-offs and hard choices are unavoidable. Not all good things go together, not all important U.S. interests will be well-served by any one policy option, and not all problems can be solved with the same resources. In defining himself as a realist the President said, "we have to choose where we can make a real impact."

States have no permanent friends or allies, only permanent interests. Lord Palmerston's dictum applies just as much to the United States of today as it did to the Britain of his day. President Obama rightly looks beyond the usual ways, sustained by habit and political lobbies, of categorizing other states as allies or adversaries and considers what each state is actually doing for or against U.S. interests, while recognizing that each state is likely to present a mixture of both.

Not being stuck in the usual habit means not needlessly taking sides in other people's quarrels. He says, for example, that the Saudis need to "share" the Middle East with their Iranian rivals. As he explains, "An approach that said to our friends 'You are right, Iran is the source of all problems, and we will support you in dealing with Iran' would essentially mean that as these sectarian conflicts continue to rage and our Gulf partners, our traditional friends, do not have the ability to put out the flames on their own or decisively win on their own, and would mean that we have to start coming in and using our military to settle scores. And that would be in the interest neither of the United States nor of the Middle East."

Besides realist principles for addressing any set of problems, the President's interviews with Goldberg demonstrate a sound substantive understanding of leading current problems. This is partly a matter of accurately perceiving relative importance – that "ISIS is not an existential threat to the United States," for example, while "climate change is a potential existential threat to the entire world if we don't do something about it."

It also is a matter of insight into the underpinnings of any one problem. When Goldberg asked the President a question, having to do with ISIS and insecurity in the Middle East, that made reference to Thomas Hobbes, Goldberg acknowledged that he probably would get laughed out of the room by his fourth estate colleagues if he were to ask the same question at a presidential press conference, where the more accepted way to address such subjects would be – to quote a question actually asked at one such recent press conference – "Why can't we get the bastards?"

Mr. Obama responded fully to Goldberg's version of the question with a reply that touched among other things on trends in social order, what causes order to break down, the influence of tribal affiliations, the stresses associated with globalization, and how extremist groups take advantage of such stresses. It was an answer that indicated profound understanding of the roots of much of what constitutes security problems in the Middle East today.

The interviews with Goldberg also indicate a commitment to careful, rigorous analysis of policy decisions – also essential to sound foreign policy – and a rejection of more emotional approaches. What this means, in the President's words, "is that you care so much that you want to get it right and you're not going to indulge in either impetuous or, in some cases, manufactured responses that make good sound bites but don't produce results. The stakes are too high to play those games."

Goldberg writes that part of what he wanted to find out in his interviews with the President was stimulated by an early speech by Mr. Obama opposing the Iraq

War. "I wanted to learn," says Goldberg, "how an Illinois state senator, a part-time law professor who spent his days traveling between Chicago and Springfield, had come to a more prescient understanding of the coming quagmire than the most experienced foreign-policy thinkers of his party ... not to mention, of course, most Republicans and many foreign-policy analysts and writers, including me."

The workings of the mind revealed in these interviews – a dispassionate, well-informed, realist mind – are enough to provide the explanation Goldberg was seeking.

Impressive though that mind is, we are quickly led to seek explanations for the connection, or what some may consider a disconnect, between the mental processes in the presidential head and foreign policies over the past seven years that have been subject to so much criticism.

Criticism has come not only from the purveyors of attitudes and habits that Mr. Obama explicitly and with good reason rejects, but also from some who would not necessarily disagree with what he is saying but would argue that many of his policies do not reflect what he is saying.

One obvious explanation is that the United States is not a presidential dictatorship. The most glaring current limitation on Mr. Obama's ability to implement policies as prudent as he would like them to be is control of Congress by a political opposition determined to oppose virtually his every move. Even in the instances where he somehow is able to overcome that opposition, such as with the survival (so far) of the agreement to limit Iran's nuclear program, the President has to expend much political capital and to offer "compensation" that goes directly against some of what his realist perspective would say is an unwise way of handling "allies" in the region.

The resistance comes from more than just the reflexive obstructionists. The realist perspective Mr. Obama holds is contrary to a conventional wisdom that is more widely and deeply held, across both parties, in the Washington foreign-policy establishment. The President describes this conventional wisdom in his interviews with Goldberg as a "playbook in Washington that presidents are supposed to follow."

The playbook "prescribes responses to different events, and these responses tend to be militarized responses." The effects of the playbook have been felt within Mr. Obama's administration and among his own advisers, most noticeably in the influence that some advisers had in leading to the intervention in Libya.

Going beyond the establishment and to the general American public, most of that public simply does not subscribe to the realist perspective. Most of the

American public oversimplifies foreign policy problems, has an exceptionalist faith in the American ability to solve the world's problems, sticks to traditional views of friends and foes, and does not delve into the intricacies of geopolitics.

Most Americans also think much more in terms of why we can't get certain sets of bastards than in terms of Hobbesian interpretations of social order, and would quickly tune out any explanation that sounds like the latter. And most Americans are swayed more by emotion-rousing rhetoric than by careful, cool-headed analysis.

Given these attributes of the public mindset, there always will be opposition politicians eager and able to exploit that mindset to score political points and gain political office, and to frustrate the efforts of those who think differently. That is a political reality that even the most diligent and cool-headed realist must contend with.

Any president, even in a second term, must constantly worry about how what he or she does on any one issue will affect the president's influence and ability to get things done on other issues. This means compromises inevitably are made. It also means the president must pick which battles to fight and which not to fight. In that respect a realist president's perspective in dealing with conflict in Washington must parallel the perspective applied to conflicts abroad.

The president does, of course, have the ability to use the prominence and prestige of the office to try to educate the public and to change the public mindset. One is entitled to ask why, as we read the wisdom that President Obama dispenses in his conversations with Goldberg, we haven't been receiving more of a steady diet of such wisdom, featuring as much candor and directness, in a series of presidential statements from Mr. Obama's first days in office.

Part of the answer lies with this particular president's strengths and weaknesses and comfort levels; he acknowledged to Goldberg that "there are times when I have not been attentive enough to feelings and emotions and politics in communicating what we're doing and how we're doing it." Part of the answer concerns the political necessity of doing the sail-trimming, compromising, and battle-picking to cope with conflict in Washington.

Also pertinent is that the persuasive potential of even a communication-skilled president is less than sometimes assumed to be, and probably less today than it has been in the past. Particularly given the reach and variety of modern mass media, today's president has a harder time commanding attention than Theodore Roosevelt with his bully pulpit or Franklin Roosevelt with his fireside chats.

For FDR's listeners, huddled around the radio in the parlor or the kitchen, the President's words were apt to have been about the only thing relevant to public affairs that they heard that evening, despite some competition at other times from communicators with a following such as Father Coughlin. For many listeners and viewers today, a presidential speech may not claim much more of their consciousness than a commentator on Fox News.

The Goldberg interviews reveal a president who, certainly for anyone with a realist perspective, is a wise steward of U.S. foreign policy – wiser than the American political system and political milieu will ever allow him to get credit for.

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.)

Obama's Two-Faced Foreign Policy

Exclusive: President Obama's Syrian strategy is getting roundly denounced as incoherent, which while true is really a reflection of his failure to fully break with neocon-style interventionism even when he realizes the futility of the strategy, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

The mystery of the Obama administration's foreign policy has always been whether President Barack Obama has two separate strategies: one "above the table" waving his arms and talking tough like Official Washington's arm-chair warriors do and another "below the table" where he behaves as a pragmatic realist, playing footsy with foreign adversaries.

From the start, Obama surrounded himself with many hawkish advisers such as Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Gen. David Petraeus, National Security Council aide Samantha Power, etc. and mostly read the scripts that they wrote for him. But then he tended to drag his feet or fold his arms when it came to acting on their warmongering ideas.

Friday's decision to tank the hapless \$500 million training program for "moderate" Syrian rebels is a case in point. Obama joined in the hyperbolic rhetoric against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, lining up with the neocons and liberal interventionists demanding "Assad must go," but Obama has remained

unenthusiastic about their various wacky schemes for overthrowing Assad.

In 2012, Obama resisted plans from Petraeus, Clinton and other hawks to invest significantly in a program for training and arming rebels and to impose a no-fly zone over rebel-controlled territory inside Syria, which would require destroying Syria's air defenses and much of its air force. In other words, it would have been a major act of war with the prospect of the kind of bloody chaos that a similar "responsibility to protect" strategy – pushed by Clinton and Power – unleashed on Libya in 2011 and that continues to the present.

Among other problems of the Petraeus-Clinton scheme for Syria such as being a gross violation of international law the plan would have amounted to support for international terrorism given the thorough terrorist infiltration of the Syrian rebel movement. And it almost certainly would not have achieved the goal of a moderate "regime change." The far more likely outcome would have been even worse sectarian bloodshed and quite possibly a victory for Al Qaeda or a related terrorist band.

In one candid moment, Obama told New York Times columnist Thomas L. Friedman that it was "a fantasy" to think that such a U.S.-backed "moderate" rebel force could do much good. Nevertheless, Obama eventually caved in to political/media pressure and agreed to a "covert" CIA training mission and later to the \$500 million program which, the Pentagon says, put about "four or five" fighters into the field in Syria.

Besides the obvious failure to field a significant Pentagon-trained "moderate" force, there was the additional problem that the "moderate" CIA-trained rebels kept sharing their military skills and weapons with coalitions of Syrian rebels, such as the Army of Conquest dominated by Al Qaeda's Nusra Front, and/or the Islamic State. Many U.S.-supplied weapons ended up in the hands of the Army of Conquest, which used U.S. TOW anti-tank missiles against the Syrian army around the city of Idlib.

Whether intentionally or not, the U.S. policy was advancing the prospects of a Sunni terrorist victory in Syria, which could lead to a bloodbath of Christians, Alawites, Shiites and other "infidels" as well as driving millions more Syrian refugees into Turkey and Europe, thus spreading the destabilization of the Middle East into the middle of Europe.

So, by pulling the plug on the \$500 million training program, Obama was finally facing up to reality that it would be a humanitarian and strategic disaster if Al Qaeda and/or the Islamic State defeated Assad's Syrian army. At his press conference on Oct. 2, Obama even blurted out that most of the "half-baked ideas" for intervening in Syria were just "a bunch of mumbo jumbo."

But Obama could not fully bring himself to repudiate the U.S. military interference, replacing the failed training program with another scheme that would simply give weapons and ammunition to some rebel leaders considered reliable in the battle against the Islamic State a compromise approach that even the hawkish New York Times editorial page deemed “hallucinatory.”

A Schizophrenic Approach

In essence, these inconsistencies between Obama’s words and deeds reflect the schizophrenic nature of Obama’s “above-the-table” and “below-the-table” split personality.

While the “above-the-table” Obama continues to rant against Assad and Russia’s decision to step up its support for his government, the “under-the-table” Obama appears to recognize that the Russian entrance into the war is not the catastrophe that Official Washington, including Obama and his advisers, have made it out to be. Indeed, despite the fiery rhetoric from Obama and his aides, there is a logical correlation between Obama’s core interests in Syria and those of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Obama has resisted the idea of committing hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops to another full-scale war in the Middle East, which might well be the inevitable result of a victorious Islamic State engaging in mass executions of “infidels” in Damascus or of Al Qaeda transforming Syria into a new more central location to plot terror attacks on the West.

The prospects for a terrorist victory are diminished if the Russian air support and Iranian ground assistance can help the Syrian military roll back the gains of the Islamic State and the Army of Conquest, which is dominated by Al Qaeda’s Nusra Front.

So, the logical move for the “under-the-table” Obama would be to cooperate with Putin on a peace initiative that shelve the “Assad must go” rhetoric in favor of practical cooperation with Russia in arranging a political power-sharing government between Assad and the “moderate” Sunni politicians who have lived off U.S. largesse and thus are susceptible to American pressure.

Even more importantly, Obama could finally get serious about clamping down on Saudi, Qatari, Turkish and Israeli support for the extremist Syrian rebels, finally putting some teeth into the theory that support for terrorism is indistinguishable from acts of terrorism.

But the “above-the-table” Obama seems frightened by the domestic political repercussions if he were to make such rational moves, so he continues to rant about Assad as “a brutal, ruthless dictator” who “drops barrel bombs to massacre

innocent children” as if these crude bombs are some uniquely diabolical weapons and as if Assad were targeting “innocent children” when there is no evidence of that. Such crude propaganda is then used to justify Obama repeating his dubious mantra: “Assad must go!”

Obama also fears neocon Sen. John McCain, the former Republican presidential nominee whom Obama defeated in 2008 but who is still invited onto all the U.S. news shows to berate the President for not escalating the Syrian, Ukrainian and other conflicts around the globe.

Plus, Obama sees himself surrounded by his own neocons like Defense Secretary Ashton Carter and liberal interventionists like Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power. He must realize that such ideologues won’t shake their commitment to “regime change” in Syria.

Fear of ‘Softness’

Clearly, Obama is to blame for his administration’s appointees, whether it was the misguided “Team of Rivals” at the start of his presidency or the current mix of mostly non-entities and neocon-lites in his second term. But the low quality of these officials is also a comment on how thin the Democratic foreign-policy bench is after three-and-a-half decades of cowering before Republican and media accusations about the Democrats showing “un-American” softness.

Today’s Democrats are not able to formulate a foreign policy argument that separates enlightened American interests from imperialist adventures. They generally accept the neocon narratives about “bad guys” and then either acquiesce to another “regime change” operation, as Obama and others did in Libya in 2011, or they drag their heels to slow or obstruct the most dangerous schemes.

The vast majority of the Democratic foreign policy “experts” who have survived politically either have become “me-too” echoes of the Republican neocons (the likes of Hillary Clinton) or have adopted a militant “humanitarianism” favoring either coups or war in the name of “human rights” (the likes of Samantha Power).

You do have some establishment Democrats, such as Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State John Kerry, who probably know better but have grown accustomed to accommodating to neocon and liberal-hawk pressures. Biden and Kerry both overrode their better judgments to vote for the Iraq War in 2002 and they have echoed the neocon tough talk about Syria and Ukraine.

But Biden and Kerry probably represent the most realistic of the mainstream Democrats, the most in line with the “under-the-table” Obama. Biden opposed the pointless but bloody Afghan War “surge” in 2009; he also battled Secretary of

State Clinton over her desires for military intervention in Libya and Syria. For his part, Kerry as Secretary of State executed Obama's negotiation of a nuclear deal with Iran, an approach that Clinton had resisted.

Still, the foreign policy realism of Biden and Kerry is spotty at best. Both have run with the neocon/liberal-hawk pack in escalating tensions with Russia over Ukraine, and Kerry rushed to dangerous judgments blaming Assad for the Aug. 21, 2013 sarin gas attack outside Damascus and Russia for the July 17, 2014 shoot-down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over eastern Ukraine.

Not even a progressive like Sen. Bernie Sanders articulates sensible alternatives to the neocon/liberal-hawk narratives, though he did vote against the Iraq War and generally has favored less aggressive actions overseas. Still, no one of prominence in the Democratic Party has charted a comprehensive strategy for a non-imperialist U.S. foreign policy, an incoherence that helps explain the contradictory aspects of Obama's approach to the world.

Whereas the dominant ideology among the Republicans remains neoconservatism, the primary approach of the Democrats is "liberal interventionism," but there really isn't much difference between the two in practical terms. Indeed, arch-neocon Robert Kagan has said he is comfortable calling himself a "liberal interventionist."

Loving 'Stratcom'

Both neocons and liberal interventionists favor "regime change" strategies as a principal feature of U.S. foreign policy, whether through "color revolutions" or "responsibility to protect" military invasions. They also rely heavily on "strategic communications" or "Stratcom," a blend of psy-ops, propaganda and P.R., to bring both the American people and the global public into line.

That's why once a propaganda theme is developed such as blaming Assad for the sarin attack and Russia for the MH-17 shoot-down there are no revisions or corrections even when the evidence leads in a different direction. The false narrative must be maintained because it is useful as a Stratcom weapon to discredit and damage an adversary in the eyes of the public.

Even when Obama knows better, he sticks with the Stratcom, too, all the better to beat up "an enemy." Obama may drop the false allegations from future speeches, but he won't retract what he has said before. Note that he has said little or nothing about either the sarin case or the MH-17 incident after initially wielding them as propaganda clubs against Assad and Putin, respectively.

So, instead of telling the whole truth to the American people, Obama just

replaces the old attack lines with new ones. Obama's latest comments about the Russians in Syria sounded like premature gloating over the prospect of a Russian "quagmire" in Syria, staking out an early "I-told-you-so" position as if being proved right were more important than resolving the crisis.

But does Obama really want the Russian-backed offensive against Al Qaeda's Nusra Front and the Islamic State to fail and for the terrorists to win?

That outcome might make for a great talking point at the think tanks and on the op-ed pages, but a terrorist victory would be a humanitarian catastrophe for the people of Syria and a strategic disaster for the West, where Europe is already under strain from the flood of Syrian refugees.

One might think that a more mature and responsible approach would be for the United States and the European Union to do all they could to help the Russians succeed by cracking down on countries aiding Al Qaeda and the Islamic State and by facilitating serious peace talks between Assad and "moderate" Sunni politicians.

Perhaps the "under-the-table" Obama will move in that direction in the weeks ahead, but the "above-the-table" Obama seems more afraid of committing a social faux pas that will offend Official Washington. He seems to fear that criticism more than he cares about saving lives and bringing peace to Syria.

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](#)). You also can order Robert Parry's trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America's Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).

Explaining Myself

Exclusive: U.S. government propagandists know that the best way to get Americans to support a war is to get them despising and laughing at some "designated villain," though the technique applies to more mundane cases, too. That's when journalists should step in but often they just pile on, says Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

In my four decades in national journalism I started at the Associated Press in

1974 I have grown increasingly concerned about how Americans respond to information, or put differently, how propagandists package their messaging to elicit the desired response. In an age of cynicism, the trick is to get the “big ha-ha!” convincing you to laugh at the target whether deserved or not.

The way the process works is to first generate hatred or contempt toward a person or group and then produce “themes” that make the target a subject of ridicule and derision, demonized to such an extent that pretty much anything goes. Some of this behavior might seem relatively harmless but it can lead to serious unfairness, injustice, even war.

In 2000, I took heat from some colleagues for objecting to the “big ha-ha!” being directed at Vice President Al Gore. It had reached the point where the mainstream media even made up fictional quotes to put in Gore’s mouth like “I invented the Internet” so he could be mocked in favor of the much cooler George W. Bush, who rewarded favored journalists with pet nicknames.

This media hazing of wonky Al Gore carried over to the election in which Gore not only won the national popular vote but if all legal ballots in Florida had been counted, he would have carried that swing state and thus won the White House. But the mainstream U.S. media acted as if the idea of counting the votes and thus denying Bush the presidency was somehow dirty pool.

Very quickly, the conventional wisdom solidified behind the idea that Gore was a “sore loser” who should just get out of the way. That prevailing attitude created political space for five Republican justices on the U.S. Supreme Court to halt the counting of votes in Florida, giving the state and the White House to George W. Bush. The conventional wisdom quickly morphed into the conviction that the media had to protect Bush’s “legitimacy.”

The consequences of that shoddy and biased journalism are hard to quantify. History might have gone off in a much less bloody direction if the U.S. media big shots had stuck up for the basic idea that the American voters should decide who becomes president. But it was so much easier for everyone to go with the flow. Al Gore was such a stiff. Ha-ha! [For details, see [Neck Deep](#).]

Reagan’s World

By 2000, I had already seen this pattern take shape and take control of American journalism. President Ronald Reagan and his skilled team of propagandists were masters at shaping the narrative and, via the media, convincing Americans that impoverished peasants in Central America were a grave threat to the United States and thus needed to be repressed.

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega became “the dictator in designer glasses” and

Sandinista-ruled Nicaragua was “a totalitarian dungeon.” Conversely, U.S. allies no matter how corrupt and cruel were placed on a pedestal. The cocaine-tainted Nicaraguan Contras were the “moral equal of the Founding Fathers.” The blood-soaked dictator of Guatemala Efraín Ríos Montt was a good Christian getting “a bum rap.” [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“The Victory of Perception Management.”](#)]

As the years went by, each international crisis became a replay. Iraq’s dictator Saddam Hussein was “worse than Hitler.” His troops pulled new-born infants out of incubators and smashed them to the floor. Today, it’s Russian President Vladimir Putin riding shirtless. What a macho jerk! Ha-ha!

So, when “white papers” or other government reports detail the offenses of these reviled leaders, who inside the mainstream U.S. media would risk his or her career by checking out the facts and challenging the accusations?

Indeed, you could build your career by going along, maybe becoming the “star reporter” who gets the latest approved “leak” from the U.S. intelligence community “confirming” how terrible the designated villain is. Or you could portray yourself as a “citizen journalist” and use Internet research to vindicate exactly what the U.S. government was claiming. Maybe a mainstream job or a U.S. AID grant awaits.

But I opted out of that game. For many years, I battled inside mainstream news organizations the AP, Newsweek and PBS Frontline trying to get reluctant, hostile or frightened editors to challenge the U.S. government’s propaganda as well as the media’s conventional wisdom. Eventually, I turned to the Internet and founded a Web site, which became Consortiumnews.com.

My job as I saw it was to do what I thought journalism was always supposed to do, i.e., look skeptically at whatever any government or powerful institution claimed to be true. I felt this was particularly important during international crises that carried the potential of war or in the current case of Ukraine the possibility of exterminating all life on the planet.

That doesn’t mean that governments and powerful institutions always lie. But it should mean that journalists demand hard facts and evidence before accepting what they’re told. Sadly, that attitude has become rare as the years have gone by.

It’s now almost expected that the New York Times and Washington Post will march in lockstep with the U.S. government on foreign policy, except perhaps when they bait a leader who shows some geopolitical restraint and doesn’t swagger aggressively into an international conflict. It also goes without saying that mainstream journalists are virtually immune from accountability if they run with

the pack and later turn out to be wrong even if a catastrophic war is the result.

Yet, despite the depths that journalism has reached in the United States and across the Western world, I still believe in its principles. Indeed, the only ism that I do believe in is journalism, which you might define as the assembling of facts within a framework of common sense and presented in a way that the average person can understand.

But I especially don't like the piling-on "ha-ha" tendencies of today's media. Whenever someone gets demonized and that demonization influences how information is handled, that's where the worst violations of journalistic principles usually occur.

Recently, I've applied that skepticism in evaluating claims about Russian guilt in the 2014 shoot-down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 from British blogger Eliot Higgins and Australia's "60 Minutes" or in assessing the extravagant accusations about the Ukraine crisis from U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power.

But the same journalistic principles apply in more mundane matters like the NFL's harsh punishment of New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady in the overblown "Deflategate" case. Many Americans hate Brady and the Patriots, creating an atmosphere in which accusations are readily accepted even if the evidence is weak or manipulated.

While I would argue that my journalism is consistent in this way, I know it tends to offend people who have reached contrary conclusions and don't want to rethink them or others who have a stake in the conventional wisdom. Then, I usually get accused of being someone's apologist a "Sandinista apologist"; an "Al Gore apologist"; a "Saddam apologist"; a "Putin apologist"; or a "Brady apologist."

But it's really that I just don't like the "big ha-ha!"

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Samantha Power: Liberal War Hawk

Exclusive: Liberal interventionist Samantha Power along with neocon allies appears to have prevailed in the struggle over how President Obama will conduct his foreign policy in his last months in office, promoting aggressive strategies that will lead to more death and destruction, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Propaganda and genocide almost always go hand in hand, with the would-be aggressor stirring up resentment often by assuming the pose of a victim simply acting in self-defense and then righteously inflicting violence on the targeted group.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power understands this dynamic having written about the 1994 genocide in Rwanda where talk radio played a key role in getting Hutus to kill Tutsis. Yet, Power is now leading propaganda campaigns laying the groundwork for two potential ethnic slaughters: against the Alawites, Shiites, Christians and other minorities in Syria and against the ethnic Russians of eastern Ukraine.

Though Power is a big promoter of the “responsibility to protect” or “R2P” she operates with glaring selectivity in deciding who deserves protection as she advances a neocon/liberal interventionist agenda. She is turning “human rights” into an excuse not to resolve conflicts but rather to make them bloodier.

Thus, in Power’s view, the overthrow and punishment of Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad takes precedence over shielding Alawites and other minorities from the likely consequence of Sunni-extremist vengeance. And she has sided with the ethnic Ukrainians in their slaughter of ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine.

In both cases, Power spurns pragmatic negotiations that could avert worsening violence as she asserts a black-and-white depiction of these crises. More significantly, her strident positions appear to have won the day with President Barack Obama, who has relied on Power as a foreign policy adviser since his 2008 campaign.

Power’s self-righteous approach to human rights deciding that her side wears white hats and the other side wears black hats is a bracing example of how “human rights activists” have become purveyors of death and destruction or what some critics have deemed “the weaponization of human rights.”

We saw this pattern in Iraq in 2002-03 when many “liberal humanitarians” jumped on the pro-war bandwagon in favoring an invasion to overthrow dictator Saddam

Hussein. Power herself didn't support the invasion although she was rather mealy-mouthed in her skepticism and sought to hedge her career bets amid the rush to war.

For instance, in a March 10, 2003 debate on MSNBC's "Hardball" show – just nine days before the invasion – Power said, "An American intervention likely will improve the lives of the Iraqis. Their lives could not get worse, I think it's quite safe to say."

However, the lives of Iraqis actually did get worse. Indeed, hundreds of thousands stopped living altogether and a sectarian war continues to tear the country apart to this day.

Power in Power

Similarly, regarding Libya, Power was one of the instigators of the U.S.-supported military intervention in 2011 which was disguised as an "R2P" mission to protect civilians in eastern Libya where dictator Muammar Gaddafi had identified the infiltration of terrorist groups.

Urged on by then-National Security Council aide Power and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Obama agreed to support a military mission that quickly morphed into a "regime change" operation. Gaddafi's troops were bombed from the air and Gaddafi was eventually hunted down, tortured and murdered.

The result, however, was not a bright new day of peace and freedom for Libyans but the disintegration of Libya into a failed state with violent extremists, including elements of the Islamic State, seizing control of swaths of territory and murdering civilians. It turns out that Gaddafi was not wrong about some of his enemies.

Today, Power is a leading force opposing meaningful negotiations over Syria and Ukraine, again staking out "moralistic" positions rejecting possible power-sharing with Assad in Syria and blaming the Ukraine crisis entirely on the Russians. She doesn't seem all that concerned about impending genocides against Assad's supporters in Syria or ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine.

In 2012, at a meeting hosted by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, former U.S. Ambassador Peter W. Galbraith predicted "the next genocide in the world will likely be against the Alawites in Syria" – a key constituency behind Assad's secular regime. But Power has continued to insist that the top priority is Assad's removal.

Similarly, Power has shown little sympathy for members of Ukraine's ethnic Russian minority who saw their elected President Viktor Yanukovich overthrown in

a Feb. 22, 2014 coup spearheaded by neo-Nazis and other right-wing nationalists who had gained effective control of the Maidan protests. Many of these extremists want an ethnically pure Ukrainian state.

Since then, neo-Nazi units, such as the Azov battalion, have been Kiev's tip of the spear in slaughtering thousands of ethnic Russians in the east and driving millions from their homes, essentially an ethnic-cleansing campaign in eastern Ukraine.

A Propaganda Speech

Yet, Power traveled to Kiev to deliver a one-sided propaganda speech on June 11, portraying the post-coup Ukrainian regime simply as a victim of "Russian aggression."

Despite the key role of neo-Nazis acknowledged even by the U.S. House of Representatives Power uttered not one word about Ukrainian military abuses which have included reports of death squad operations targeting ethnic Russians and other Yanukovich supporters.

Skipping over the details of the U.S.-backed and Nazi-driven coup of Feb. 22, 2014, Power traced the conflict instead to "February 2014, when Russia's little green men first started appearing in Crimea." She added that the United Nations' "focus on Ukraine in the Security Council is important, because it gives me the chance on behalf of the United States to lay out the mounting evidence of Russia's aggression, its obfuscation, and its outright lies. America is clear-eyed when it comes to seeing the truth about Russia's destabilizing actions in your country."

Power continued: "The message of the United States throughout this Moscow-manufactured conflict and the message you heard from President Obama and other world leaders at last week's meeting of the G7 has never wavered: if Russia continues to disregard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine; and if Russia continues to violate the rules upon which international peace and security rest then the United States will continue to raise the costs on Russia.

"And we will continue to rally other countries to do the same, reminding them that their silence or inaction in the face of Russian aggression will not placate Moscow, it will only embolden it.

"But there is something more important that is often lost in the international discussion about Russia's efforts to impose its will on Ukraine. And that is you the people of Ukraine and your right to determine the course of your own country's future. Or, as one of the great rallying cries of the Maidan put it: *Ukraina po-nad u-se!* Ukraine above all else!" [Applause.]

Power went on: "Let me begin with what we know brought people out to the Maidan in the first place. We've all heard a good number of myths about this. One told by the Yanukovych government and its Russian backers at the time was that the Maidan protesters were pawns of the West, and did not speak for the 'real' Ukraine.

"A more nefarious myth peddled by Moscow after Yanukovych's fall was that Euromaidan had been engineered by Western capitals in order to topple a democratically-elected government."

Of course, neither of Power's points was actually a "myth." For instance, the U.S.-funded National Endowment for Democracy was sponsoring scores of anti-government activists and media operations – and NED President Carl Gershman had deemed Ukraine "the biggest prize," albeit a stepping stone toward ousting Russian President Vladimir Putin. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[A Shadow US Foreign Policy](#)."]]

Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland was collaborating with U.S. Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt how to "midwife" the change in government with Nuland picking the future leaders of Ukraine "Yats is the guy" referring to Arseniy Yatsenyuk who was installed as prime minister after the coup. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[The Neocons: Masters of Chaos](#)."]]

The coup itself occurred after Yanukovych pulled back the police to prevent worsening violence. [Armed neo-Nazi and right-wing militias, organized as "sotins" or 100-man units](#), then took the offensive and overran government buildings. Yanukovych and other officials fled for their lives, with Yanukovych narrowly avoiding assassination. In the days following the coup, armed thugs essentially controlled the government and brutally intimidated any political resistance.

Inventing 'Facts'

But that reality had no place in Power's propaganda speech. Instead, she said:

"The facts tell a different story. As you remember well, then-President Yanukovych abandoned Kyiv of his own accord, only hours after signing an agreement with opposition leaders that would have led to early elections and democratic reforms.

"And it was only after Yanukovych fled the capital that 328 of the 447 members of the democratically-elected Rada voted to strip him of his powers including 36 of the 38 members of his own party in parliament at the time. Yanukovych then vanished for several days, only to eventually reappear little surprise in Russia.

“As is often the case, these myths reveal more about the myth makers than they do about the truth. Moscow’s fable was designed to airbrush the Ukrainian people and their genuine aspirations and demands out of the Maidan, by claiming the movement was fueled by outsiders.

“Yet, as you all know by living through it and as was clear even to those of us watching your courageous stand from afar the Maidan was made in Ukraine. A Ukraine of university students and veterans of the Afghan war. Of Ukrainian, Russian, and Tatar speakers. Of Christians, Muslims, and Jews. ”

Power went on with her rhapsodic version of events: “Given the powerful interests that benefited from the corrupt system, achieving a full transformation was always going to be an uphill battle. And that was before Russian troops occupied Crimea, something the Kremlin denied at the time, but has since admitted; and it was before Russia began training, arming, bankrolling, and fighting alongside its separatist proxies in eastern Ukraine, something the Kremlin continues to deny.

“Suddenly, the Ukrainian people faced a battle on two fronts: combating corruption and overhauling broken institutions on the inside; while simultaneously defending against aggression and destabilization from the outside.

“I don’t have to tell you the immense strain that these battles have placed upon you. You feel it in the young men and women, including some of your family members and friends, who have volunteered or been drafted into the military people who could be helping build up their nation, but instead are risking their lives to defend it against Russian aggression.

“You feel it in the conflict’s impact on your country’s economy as instability makes it harder for Ukrainian businesses to attract foreign investment, deepens inflation, and depresses families’ wages. It is felt in the undercurrent of fear in cities like Kharkiv where citizens have been the victims of multiple bomb attacks, the most lethal of which killed four people, including two teenage boys, at a rally celebrating the first anniversary of Euromaidan.

“And the impact is felt most directly by the people living in the conflict zone. According to the UN, at least 6,350 people have been killed in the violence driven by Russia and the separatists including 625 women and children and an additional 1,460 people are missing; 15,775 people have been wounded. And an estimated 2 million people have been displaced by this conflict. And the real numbers of killed, missing, wounded, and displaced are likely higher, according to the UN, due to its limited access to areas controlled by the separatists.”

One-Sided Account

Pretty much everything in Power's propaganda speech was blamed on the Russians along with the ethnic Russians and other Ukrainians resisting the imposition of the new U.S.-backed order. She also ignored the will of the people of Crimea who voted overwhelmingly in a referendum to secede from Ukraine and rejoin Russia.

The closest she came to criticizing the current regime in Kiev was to note that "investigations into serious crimes such as the violence in the Maidan and in Odessa have been sluggish, opaque, and marred by serious errors suggesting not only a lack of competence, but also a lack of will to hold the perpetrators accountable."

Yet, even there, Power failed to note the growing evidence that the neo-Nazis were likely behind the crucial sniper attacks on Feb. 20, 2014, that killed both police and protesters and touched off the chaos that led to the coup two days later. [A worthwhile documentary on this mystery is "[Maidan Massacre](#)."]

Nor, did Power spell out that neo-Nazis from the Maidan set fire to the Trade Union Building in Odessa on May 2, 2014, [burning alive scores of ethnic Russians](#) while spray-painting the building with pro-Nazi graffiti, including hailing the "Galician SS," the Ukrainian auxiliary that helped Adolf Hitler's SS carry out the Holocaust in Ukraine.

Listening to Power's speech you might not even have picked up that she was obliquely criticizing the U.S.-backed regime in Kiev.

Also, by citing a few touching stories of pro-coup Ukrainians who had died in the conflict, Power implicitly dehumanized the far larger number of ethnic Russians who opposed the overthrow of their elected president and have been killed by Kiev's brutal "anti-terrorism operation."

Use of Propaganda

In my nearly four decades covering Washington, I have listened to and read many speeches like the one delivered by Samantha Power. In the 1980s, President Ronald Reagan would give similar propaganda speeches justifying the slaughter of peasants and workers in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, where the massacres of Mayan Indians were later deemed a "genocide." [See Consortiumnews.com's "[How Reagan Promoted Genocide](#)."]

Regardless of the reality on the ground, the speeches always made the U.S.-backed side the "good guys" and the other side the "bad guys" even when "our side" included CIA-affiliated "death squads" and U.S.-equipped military forces slaughtering tens of thousands of civilians.

During the 1990s, more propaganda speeches were delivered by President George H.W. Bush regarding Panama and Iraq and by President Bill Clinton regarding Kosovo and Yugoslavia. Then, last decade, the American people were inundated with more propaganda rhetoric from President George W. Bush justifying the invasion of Iraq and the expansion of the endless “war on terror.”

Generally speaking, during much of his first term, Obama was more circumspect in his rhetoric, but he, too, has slid into propaganda-speak in the latter half of his presidency as he shed his “realist” foreign policy tendencies in favor of “tough-guy/gal” rhetoric favored by “liberal interventionists,” such as Power, and neoconservatives, such as Nuland and her husband Robert Kagan (whom a chastened Obama invited to a White House lunch last year).

But the difference between the propaganda of Reagan, Bush-41, Clinton and Bush-43 was that it focused on conflicts in which the Soviet Union or Russia might object but would likely not be pushed to the edge of nuclear war, nothing as provocative as what the Obama administration has done in Ukraine, now including dispatching U.S. military advisers.

The likes of Power, Nuland and Obama are not just justifying wars that leave devastation, death and disorder in their wake in disparate countries around the world, but they are fueling a war on Russia’s border.

That was made clear by the end of Power’s speech in which she declared: “Ukraine, you may still be bleeding from pain. An aggressive neighbor may be trying to tear your nation to pieces. Yet you are strong and defiant. You, Ukraine, are standing tall for your freedom. And if you stand tall together no kleptocrat, no oligarch, and no foreign power can stop you.”

There is possibly nothing more reckless than what has emerged as Obama’s late-presidential foreign policy, what amounts to a plan to destabilize Russia and seek “regime change” in the overthrow of Russian President Putin.

Rather than take Putin up on his readiness to cooperate with Obama in trouble spots, such as the Syrian civil war and Iran’s nuclear program, “liberal interventionist” hawks like Power and neocons like Nuland with Obama in tow have chosen confrontation and have used extreme propaganda to effectively shut the door on negotiation and compromise.

Yet, as with previous neocon/liberal-interventionist schemes, this one lacks on-the-ground realism. Even if it were possible to so severely damage the Russian economy and to activate U.S.-controlled “non-governmental organizations” to help drive Putin from office, that doesn’t mean a Washington-friendly puppet would be installed in the Kremlin.

Another possible outcome would be the emergence of an extreme Russian nationalist suddenly controlling the nuclear codes and willing to use them. So, when ambitious ideologues like Power and Nuland get control of U.S. foreign policy in such a sensitive area, what they're playing with is the very survival of life on planet Earth the ultimate genocide.

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](#)). You also can order Robert Parry's trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America's Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).
