

America's Pseudo-Democracy

U.S. pundits mock countries, like Iran or China, where candidates are screened before they go on the ballot, but America has a similar approach, with candidates needing approval from plutocrats and special interests. But that's just one problem of U.S. democracy, says Lawrence Davidson.

By Lawrence Davidson

Given the dangerous results of the recent election in the United States – one that saw the Republicans, a right-wing party increasingly populated with neocon warmongers, reactionaries and plutocrats take control of both houses of Congress – it might be time to take a sober look at U.S. democracy.

We can begin by taking note of the generic observation made by Winston Churchill: "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the other forms that have been tried from time to time." The implication here is that democracy is really not the God-blessed system so many of Americans take it to be.

For instance, the public in a democracy is just as vulnerable to manipulation by various elites and interest groups as are those in non-democratic environments. The difference is that a democracy has a built-in procedure that allows citizens to have second thoughts about past manipulation. Thus they can kick out the bastards they were originally persuaded to kick in – even if it is often only to replace them with a new set of bastards.

This repeated procedure results in a time limit on the damage elected leaders can do. It is, of course, possible that democratically elected politicians can come close to ruining a nation (their own as well as others) even given their limited tenure.

The Recent Election

The recent election results tell us a lot about the weak points of democracy as practiced in the U.S. For instance, there is the fact that, at any particular time, one-half to two-thirds of Americans are paying little or no attention to what is going on in the public realm. They do not know, and maybe they don't care, who is making policy for their community, be it in the mayor's office, the state house or the White House.

Yet, despite this disregard, they can be readily manipulated by their politicians using the media. This is often done through scare tactics involving innuendo and outright lies about things of which the populace is ignorant:

weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, barbarian Russians in the Ukraine, terrorists in Israel/Palestine, and a more recent one, the danger of an allegedly pending Ebola plague in the U.S. The extent to which this sort of misinformation can be used to sway the opinion of an otherwise uncaring public is limited only by how much money candidates and their parties have to spend on media advertising.

Even with millions upon millions of dollars spent on campaigning, moving Americans to the polls, particularly in a mid-term election like the recent one, is like herding cats. In the last election only 36.4 percent of eligible voters turned out, the lowest turnout in 72 years. Such turnouts give an edge to those who have best mobilized their constituency. Both parties certainly do try to do this, but Republicans appear to have an edge.

That edge comes from an ideological orientation that drives many Republicans to actively oppose causes ranging from gun control, to abortion, to the regulatory power of the federal government, all of which is pursued in the name of maximum individual "freedom." To exert such negative influence, hardcore Republican voters will turn out in great numbers, particularly in the U.S. South and Midwest.

There are other unseemly weaknesses as well, such as the gerrymandering of voting districts by whatever party controls a state legislature so as to minimize the number congressional districts controlled by the opposing party. Through gerrymandering you can win most of the congressional seats while losing the overall popular vote. This is actually a form of cheating, but to date it is legal.

And there is a certain level of stupidity that seems particular to the Democratic Party. The Democratic leadership has a real knack for designing platforms and campaigns that ignore the working class, rural poor and much of that part of the U.S. population that is left of center. We know the left-of-center folks are out there and active because during most national elections, a number of progressive local ballot initiatives are passed into law.

In more general terms what does this all tell us of U.S. democracy? Well, it tells us that, just like more authoritarian forms of government, it is a system that is open to officially sponsored deceit. It tells us that this lying and other forms of corruption have been so persistent over time that millions of Americans are alienated from the political process.

And, finally, it tells us that democracies are not immune to the harmful consequences of ideologies that quite often override national needs. One can see this in the influence of those who, for ideological reasons, stand in the way of

rational gun control or seek to prevent the federal government from asserting necessary financial, business and environmental regulation.

Democracy and Foreign Policy

We should also remember Churchill's observation that democracy is not a flawless political system when we consider the dubious claims made for popular government in the realm of foreign policy. For instance, the claim that democracies don't war against each other.

This claim is not well thought through and therefore, at best, an oversimplification. For if democracies do not often wage open war against each other, the stronger ones seem to have no compunction about subverting weaker ones for strategic and/or economic reasons.

This behavior includes frequent efforts to transform independent democracies into compliant dictatorships. The United States has quite a record in this regard – an ironic fact because it proclaims that a central goal of its foreign policy is to spread democracy. If that were true, how would Washington account for the following?

In 1953 the U.S. government destroyed through subversion the democracy in Iran. In 1954 it did the same thing to the democracy in Guatemala. In 1956 the U.S. refused to go along with United Nations-sponsored free elections in Vietnam and instead backed an unpopular authoritarian regime in the south of that country.

In 1958 Washington sent marines onto the beaches of Lebanon to support a minority Christian party's attempt to subvert that country's constitution. In 1973 the U.S. was complicit in the overthrow of the elected government in Chile. Since the late 1990s the U.S. has been engaged in an effort to subvert the democratic government of Venezuela because it disapproved of Hugo Chavez, the elected president, and his successors. And, of course, the U.S. actively subverted the free and fair election held in Palestine in 2006.

There are other examples of this sort of behavior that can be given but these are sufficient to establish the fact that democracies do act with hostility toward one another. Thus, the proposition that if all the world's nations were democracies there would be no armed conflict is very naive.

There is a recent study by researchers at Princeton University that concludes that the U.S. is no longer a democracy of voting citizens. Rather, it is an oligarchy of "rich, well-connected individuals on the political scene [who] now steer the direction of the country, regardless of or even against the will of the majority of voters."

My take on this is only slightly different. Long ago I came to the conclusion that the United States was in fact a “democracy” of competing interest groups whose parochial goals override the national interest and/or those of ordinary citizens.

The average voter is an important constituent of his congressperson, senator, governor, or even mayor only for that short period of time when he or she must be convinced to cast a ballot. When that time is over, the voter recedes into the background and the real constituents are now powerful interest groups with the money to buy political access and influence. Those who control and represent these interest groups are part of this country’s ruling oligarchy.

Such is the pseudo-democracy most Americans hold so dear. It still has its virtues relative to more authoritarian forms of rule. However, these too may be shrinking.

After 9/11 the rule of law and freedom of speech in the U.S. have been compromised. You can still write an essay like this one, but if you work for the government or the mainstream press and divulge the government’s criminal excesses, you are likely to end up in jail or exile. These are precarious times and they don’t show American democracy in a very good light – a sobering picture indeed.

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Treating Netanyahu Like Winston Churchill

When Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu addressed Congress for his second time in 2011, both parties competed in jumping up and down to applaud. Now, Netanyahu’s fans want him back a third time, an honor only bestowed on Great Britain’s Winston Churchill, notes ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

Since the wise setting aside of a negotiation-undermining bill that would have imposed still more sanctions on Iran, some members of Congress have been feeling itchy as a result of not getting their regular fix of votes that they can

portray as support for Israel. Their unease is perhaps a testimony to the continued strength of the lobby that pushes for such votes, despite its recent setbacks on the sanctions bill and a couple of other issues.

So some members of the House of Representatives have sent a letter to their chamber's leadership asking that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu be invited to address a joint session of Congress when he is in Washington next month to speak to AIPAC's annual mass meeting. "Doing so," they say in the letter, "would send a clear message of U.S. support to Israel."

Actually, the support involved would not be to Israel but instead to a particular Israeli government. In any event, one noteworthy attribute of the letter is the partisan make-up of the signatories: 79 Republicans and 17 Democrats.

It is another indication of the increasing association of the lobby with only one side of the aisle, which cannot be very reassuring to the lobby. Possibly once the composition of the signatory list started to become clear some Republicans refrained from signing on to avoid making the partisan split appear even more lopsided.

If Netanyahu were invited to address Congress next month it would be an extraordinary instance of honoring someone who has repeatedly been poking a stick in the eye of the country bestowing the honor. Among other things, he has been doing everything he can to sabotage the current negotiations with Iran, which is one of the most important foreign policy initiatives the United States and its five foreign partners currently have going.

He also has been pursuing policies, including continued colonization of occupied territory and the adding of new demands, likely to ensure failure of another set of negotiations important to the United States, the one involving the Palestinians.

Even if members of Congress were to ignore these factors, one might expect them to be mindful of not cheapening the currency when it comes to one of the few symbolically important ways that Congress can make a foreign policy statement. Ever since the Marquis de Lafayette became in 1824 the first foreigner to address Congress, the privilege has not been profligately bestowed. President Park Geun-hye of South Korea was the only foreign dignitary invited to do so last year. None were invited in 2012.

Now get this: Netanyahu already has addressed Congress twice: in 2011 and during his earlier stint as prime minister in 1996. Only one person has been given the honor of doing so three times: Winston Churchill, twice during World War II and

again in 1952. People want to put the stick-poker on the same level as Churchill?

The preferences of the foreign government Netanyahu heads will get more than enough attention in Washington when he rallies his loyal troops at AIPAC.

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.)

Mystery of a 'Disgraced' War Reporter

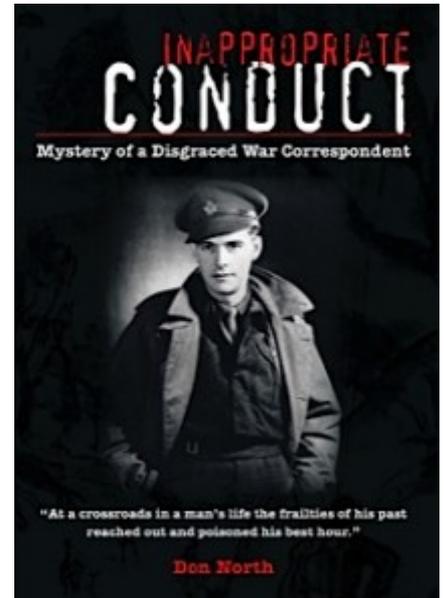
From the Archive: The saying goes: "truth is the first casualty of war." But it's also true that war-time truth-tellers often end up as "collateral damage." A new book, *[Inappropriate Conduct](#)*, tells the story of a World War II correspondent whose career was crushed by the intrigue he uncovered, as Don North reported in 2010.

By Don North (Article originally published on Sept. 28, 2010)

War changes and often harms not only its combatants but its eyewitnesses, including the war correspondents with their unique job of getting as close as possible to a conflict, reporting what they see, and somehow surviving to tell about it.

They risk injury and death while also struggling against those who would censor their truth. It is often a frustrating profession and one that can destroy its best and bravest, which brings us to the tragic story of Paul Morton, a World

War II correspondent for the *Toronto Star*.



By 1944, Morton had covered the war in Italy for a year, mostly by interviewing soldiers and Italian civilians caught between Allied forces and the German Army.

On June 4 of that year, he finally landed a big story: he was in Rome the day it fell to the Allies, but by the time his stories reached Toronto, they were relegated to the back pages because the Allies had landed at Normandy on June 6.

With the invasion of Normandy trumping his story of Rome falling and with the end of the war in Europe now in sight Morton was despondent that he had seen no serious combat. He would be a war correspondent who hadn't really witnessed the war.

So, in July, when the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) asked him to take on a dangerous assignment, parachuting behind Nazi lines and covering the Partisan war in Northern Italy, he jumped at the chance.

Morton's self respect demanded that he share the risk of war, rather than continue living in the relative comfort of Rome. Plus, the Partisan fighting was a virtually uncovered theatre of the war, creating the possibility of a major journalistic scoop.

But the offer also put the journalist in the curious position of collaborating with a secret spy agency, the SOE, which was born in July 1940 on orders from Winston Churchill who was determined to undermine Hitler's Third Reich from within by training and abetting guerrilla groups. In Italy, the SOE helped train and supply the Italian Partisans in order to sabotage the German occupation army.

A Shadow War

Given the remoteness of this shadow war and its clandestine nature there had been little information in the international press about the Italian Partisans' fight. So, Churchill, a former war correspondent himself, decided it was time to change that by publicizing Partisan exploits in the summer of 1944.

At the time, the Partisans were aiding the Allied war effort by tying down at least six German divisions. The British Eighth Army headquarters also felt that news stories about the aggressiveness of the northern Italian Partisans might inspire their less supportive southern countrymen to more vigorously help Allied efforts against the Germans.

Morton, who spoke fluent Italian, endured two weeks of intensive military training and qualified for a parachute jump. But the risks were obvious. Besides the possibility of capture or death at the hands of the Germans, there were doubts about the reliability of the SOE officers who were regarded with suspicion by regular Allied forces.

The SOE did not play by "Marquis of Queensbury rules," and one friend of Morton's had been warned, "Don't cry if you are let down by the SOE. These people have a very bad reputation for doing that if it suits them."

From the beginning of training, Morton felt British senior officers of SOE were not in favor of Churchill's orders. In his memoir written 20 years after the war, Morton noted:

"In a number of subtle and devious ways, they let me know they were against my mission. And why not? Why should they want a civilian newspaper reporter of all things, peering into the clandestine war? Then why pick a Canadian for such a mission?"

"I believe it was to confound Mr. Churchill. However, the British are a fun-loving people. I think they appreciated the absurdity of our position. They felt I was an intruder and a bounder. But I think they knew I knew what they thought, which was to half forgive me. In any case we got along."

Dangerous Assignment

Only two journalists are known to have been embedded into the secret world of the SOE or its American counterpart, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during World War II. Joe Morton of The Associated Press, no relation to Paul, accompanied an OSS mission in Slovenia to rescue downed American aircrews. He was captured and executed in a German concentration camp.

Germans saw little difference between Allied spies and any reporters traveling with them and with some reason. The struggle against Germany and Japan in World

War II seemed as close to a worldwide crusade against evil as any conflict ever fought, and that view strained the journalistic ideals of objectivity and balance.

In *The First Casualty*, a seminal work on war reporting, Philip Knightly wrote:

“It remains hard to reach any conclusion other than that the [Second World] war could have been better reported. The main bar to this was the correspondent’s excusable identification with the cause and his less excusable incorporation into the military machine.”

Further guaranteeing that war correspondents didn’t undermine the war effort by disclosing inconvenient truth, strict censorship was in effect in the war zones. And, by traveling with an intelligence unit, Paul Morton was especially expected to be part of the Allied propaganda team.

Following his training, Morton was given a weapon and thoroughly incorporated into the military machine. He would not only report about the Partisans war but to stay alive he might have to fight as well, pursued by German army units that vastly outnumbered the little guerrilla bands.

Inappropriate Conduct

The night before his drop behind Nazi lines, Morton met a few of his British commando instructors in the Rome officers’ mess for a farewell drink. The conversation turned to how to defend yourself with a .45 Beretta sidearm.

Goaded by his commando friends and well into his cups on Rye whiskey, Morton demonstrated his aim by firing a couple of rounds at bottles on the bar. He was immediately thrown out of the mess.

A few hours later, Morton took off on his mission to be parachuted into Italy. He knew he faced a 50 percent chance of ending either dead or in a German concentration camp.

Morton was accompanied by Captain Geoffrey Long, a South African artist specializing in combat drawings, and Captain Michael Lees, an SOE escort officer.

As the Halifax bomber carrying them approached the drop zone 200 miles inside enemy lines, they looked for their target, which was to be marked by a signal fire set by Partisans awaiting their arrival.

However, instead of one signal fire, they spotted two in the darkness below. They made their choice, picking one with a flashing light. The three men dropped through the floor hatch at an altitude of 1,000 feet.

On the ground, they were met by a band of Partisans, but they were not the Partisans that the SOE had expected. Instead of the British-backed, pro-Monarchist Partisans, the welcoming group consisted of rival Communist Partisans. They had set the second signal fire as a ruse to trick the British plane into dropping weapons to them.

Morton later wrote, "The group, into whose hands we'd fallen called themselves Garibaldi. Their salute was the clenched fist of Communism.

"Just how intensely they followed the Red Star of Russia was one of the mysteries I was sent to uncover. The Garibaldi were mildly apologetic. They frankly admitted trying to steal British arms: bodies they had not expected."

On the Run

Within hours, Morton, Long and Lees were on the run with their Partisan Communist hosts as the German Army closed in to investigate the parachute drop.

Hiding in haystacks and aided by friendly Italian families, they eluded the Germans for several weeks but often found themselves in close quarter firefights. One such encounter was related in Morton's memoir:

"The first German bullets to scythe into the hillside on which we lay started skirting our hidden positions at about seven o'clock in the morning. The undergrowth hid us effectively. Except for the random fusillades of the enemy, we were not uncomfortable as we lay in the shade of the rising Italian sun and waited for death.

"Young Captain Mike Lees, always a responsible British officer, looked shocked. Then a wide grin blanketed Captain Mike's handsome face. He tightened his gun belt, shot a nervous glance at Geoff Long and me, then shouted 'Avanti! Let's pay the bastards back.' And with that, the whole crowd of us took off down the valley side.

"Running where? We were off to attack the German patrol. It was more like a rumble than a skirmish. Had I been a German in that patrol I would have been scared silly."

Morton and his comrades finally found their way to the Monarchist Partisan unit they had originally expected to land among. This force was an amazing cast of characters including escaped British prisoners of war who had joined the Partisans. There also were Allied air crews shot down over Italy who were being cared for by the Partisans.

After almost two months of adventure and close encounters with German forces,

Morton and the artist Long, accompanied by an escaped British soldier and an American Army B-17 gunner, escaped to France.

Evading the Sentries

Morton described walking past German sentries as they made their way toward the French border:

“We reached the bridge across the Raja River. A German sentry stood at the eastern approaches, observing us with what seemed careful attention. Our plan was a simple one: ordered to halt, we were going for our guns. If this were a movie, we’d want to call it ‘High Evening’ with us the villainous four who’d come to take the sheriff.

“Walking towards the sentry was easy. Passing him was rather less so. Walking away from him was downright nerve wracking. It is always uncomfortable to turn one’s back to a man with a gun. I had the uncomfortable feeling he knew we were not simple townspeople, homeward bound from a day’s work.”

Morton and his friends bought a sturdy rowboat from a fisherman friendly to the Partisans in the Mediterranean port of Ventimiglia and rowed west to France. Morton found his way to the Allied headquarters in Nice and finally returned to Rome.

However, in Rome, he was surprised to encounter a cool reception from the British and Canadian headquarters which had dispatched him. Through clenched teeth, they let him write and send a series of nine articles through censors to his *Toronto Star* editors.

Morton soon found himself on what he called a “parade” before the Commander of Canadian Army Public Relations, Col. Bill Gilchrist, and Joseph Clark, the Director of Public Relations for the Canadian Army. They chided Morton for his alleged “inappropriate conduct,” the gunplay in the officers’ mess before he left for his dangerous assignment with the Partisans.

Fired Without Cause

Morton’s accreditation as a Canadian war correspondent was revoked. Within days he was ordered by *The Toronto Star* editor Harry C. Hindmarsh to return to Canada, where he was summarily fired without a reason given. His ten-year career with *The Star*, then the most influential newspaper in Canada, was over.

Morton’s first dispatch to *The Star* was published on Oct. 27, 1944, after he had been fired. It was a glowing report on the contribution and bravery of the Italian Partisans, the type of story he had been sent in to write.

But *The Star* editors claimed the other eight articles were garbled in transmission and were too heavily censored to print. These articles some of which dealt with Morton's time with the Communist Partisans were "spiked," that is, thrown away.

Meanwhile, Morton's reputation was savaged. It was widely rumored in Toronto that he had been fired for fabricating his dispatches from behind Nazi lines. With this suspicion hanging over his head, Morton could never find another job as a journalist.

To this day, Morton's harsh treatment remains a mystery. After all, it was well known that the Canadian Army took a lenient view toward hard-drinking war correspondents, particularly at the front, and that any disciplining was rare. Indeed, lifting the accreditation of drunken reporters would have left few to cover the war.

No records of any charges against Morton nor of the disciplinary proceedings have ever surfaced in the British or Canadian archives. It is possible that many details about the Morton case were expunged from the national archives in Ottawa and London.

Hating Prima Donnas

The reasons for editor Hindmarsh's actions also remain unclear. In the annals of Canadian newspaper history, he remains a bleak and ambiguous individual who was known for firing staff without much cause.

Having famously driven Ernest Hemmingway to quit as a reporter in 1924, Hindmarsh was described by one of his former reporters as someone who "warmed his hands over the fires of other people's lives."

"Hindmarsh hated prima donnas," A.J. Cranston, a *Star* reporter wrote in his book, *Ink on my fingers*. "He was ambitious, cruel and jealous of the success of others. He ruled by fear. He was a sadist who took delight in breaking or humbling men's spirits."

However, I found in the Canadian archives in Ottawa correspondence between *The Star* and the Canadian Army showing that Hindmarsh followed and negotiated every detail of Morton's assignment in Italy. So, Hindmarsh should have known the reality behind Morton's first-hand reporting.

As for Morton, the experience of having risked his life for the story of his career and then being called a liar sent him into a tailspin of depression, emotionally and spiritually. Unable to find work in his profession, Morton moved to the north woods of Ontario to work as a logger. He also became an alcoholic.

Then, in 1964, two decades after his parachute drop into Italy, he received a letter from the former Italian Partisans who asked him to write a memoir of his time with them. He sobered up for a few years and wrote his memoir.

Morton demanded that the British Ministry of War in London confirm that he had been assigned to a mission behind enemy lines and that he had successfully completed his war reportage. In a letter from the British Under-Secretary-of-War James Ramsden, the British confirmed Morton's mission.

Morton also wanted *The Star* to apologize and restore his dignity, honor and reputation as a journalist. But *The Star* never apologized and today claims to have no records or correspondence regarding Paul Morton.

Denied an apology from *The Star* or any real credit for his proudest moment as a journalist, Morton a true Canadian war hero and a brave war correspondent died a broken man in 1992.

New Clues

Only a few months ago, some clues to the mystery of Morton's cruel mistreatment have emerged. A collection of declassified papers – war-time directives and dusty memos of the Allied forces – were sent to me by an Italian historian.

One set of those records, File 10000/136/338 Directive Psychological War Bureau (PWB), read: "ALLIED PROPAGANDA SHOULD NOW PLAY DOWN PARTISAN SERVICES," adding:

"Publicity given the Patriots has grown to a point where it is out of proportion to the war effort in Italy. There is evidence certain elements are making political capital out of the activities of the Patriots. It is incorrect to speak of the Patriots as liberating any particular area; if they are in control of any place it is because the Germans have withdrawn and are not taking action.

"We should remember it is the Allies who are liberating Italy with the help of the Patriots. The Patriots are unable to liberate of their own accord. Play down very gradually the activities of Patriots to liberated Italy and to the rest of the world."

This directive is dated Oct. 13, 1944, two days before Paul Morton arrived back in Rome with his reports of the Partisans' war.

Other directives that I obtained indicate that the Allies were convinced the Partisans were overwhelmingly Communist and needed to be neutralized as the Germans retreated. British General Harold Alexander's headquarters was recommending plans to disarm the Partisans by holding mock victory parades and handing out certificates from Allied generals before seizing the Partisans'

weapons.

This subterfuge was a risky operation and the planners may have regarded Morton as a security risk who might expose the secret plans. His stories also threatened to elevate the status of the Communist-led Partisans who had proved to be a strong and effective fighting force.

So, Morton may have run afoul of a shift in ideological positions. With the defeat of the Nazis within sight and the expectation that the Soviet Union and its Communist allies would become the new enemy, the decision from the high command appears to have been to deny the Communist-led Partisans much wartime credit.

(Ironically, it would turn out that the Italian Partisans were not allied with the Soviet Union, although Italy's Communist Party still became one of the top early targets of Western intelligence in the Cold War.)

Expendable Asset

In the end, Morton was treated as an expendable asset, expected to carry out a dangerous mission (both for his newspaper and the Allies), but then ruined when his reporting proved inconvenient to the Allied brass and his editor.

Paul Morton's friend Douglas How of the *Readers Digest* suggested that Morton may have stepped over that mysterious line which should separate a journalist from his subject, leaving him in a no man's land, not entirely an observer and not fully a participant. How said:

"The final irony may well be that his story could only be told well and sold well in a form which some people seem long to have wrongly thought they were: as fiction."

Or as Morton wrote about his experiences, "I went in behind enemy lines and emerged as a kind of agent. I went in as a reporter and came out a kind of soldier. I sometimes wish I had never gone in at all."

Don North is a veteran war correspondent who has covered conflicts from Vietnam and Central America to Kosovo and Iraq. This article was drawn from North's new book, *Inappropriate Conduct: Mystery of a Disgraced War Correspondent*, which is available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

How America Became an Empire

Exclusive: Director Oliver Stone and historian Peter Kuznick offer a major reexamination of modern American history in “The Untold History of the United States,” which has many strengths amid a few shortcomings, writes Jim DiEugenio in this first of a two-part review.

By Jim DiEugenio

The title of Oliver Stone’s “The Untold History of the United States” is a bit of a misnomer, both as a book and a Showtime series. It’s more precisely a reinterpretation of official U.S. history over the past century or so. You might call it “The Little Understood Back Story of America’s Imperial Era.”

The 750-page book, which seems to be more the work of Stone’s collaborator, American University history professor Peter Kuznick, picks up the tale around the time of the Spanish-American War at the end of the 19th Century, with the U.S. conquest and occupation of the Philippines.

The Showtime series some of which is now on YouTube is narrated by Stone and begins, more or less, with the gathering clouds of World War II and the events that led to the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

What’s relatively “untold” about this history is the impact of some little remembered decisions, such as the Democratic Party’s replacing Vice President Henry Wallace with Missouri Sen. Harry Truman in 1944, and some ideologically suppressed memories, like how the Soviet Union broke the back of Adolf Hitler’s Third Reich in World War II.

While much of this context is interesting, even revelatory for a contemporary audience, if you were expecting Stone to push the envelope on new historical disclosures on important events such as John F. Kennedy’s presidency and his assassination you might find the material a tad thin and disappointing.

The chief point of the book and the series at least the first halves that I’m dealing with here is that U.S. history could have gone in a very different and a much more positive direction if the United States had not locked itself on a course toward worldwide empire.

For instance, Stone and Kuznick imply that if Franklin Roosevelt had lived longer or if his favored subordinate, Henry Wallace, had succeeded him as President the worst aspects of the Cold War might have been averted.

If the United States under Harry Truman hadn’t picked up the mantle of Western

imperialism from the diminished European powers, millions of lives might have been saved; the United States might have more effectively addressed its own economic and social problems; and many people in the Third World might not have been so profoundly alienated from the U.S.

Stone and Kuznick suggest that an alternative future was available to the United States, but that political, economic and ideological pressures sent the nation down a path that transformed the Republic into an Empire.

The Back Story

The back story of the Stone-Kuznick collaboration dates back to 1996, when Kuznick started an American University history class entitled "Oliver Stone's America." That first year, Stone made an appearance as a guest lecturer.

Kuznick and Stone then decided to cooperate on a TV documentary about the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. This idea somehow grew into this ten-hour mini-series and its companion book. [New York Times, Nov. 22, 2012]

In an appearance with Stone on Tavis Smiley's program, Kuznick said this history is told from the point of view of the victims, implying that it was written from the bottom up. Not so.

The book is not a sociological history written from a socio-economic perspective covering things like the plight of minorities. It does touch on those issues, but that is not its prime focus by any means.

The book's real focus is on America's foreign relations of the 20th Century and on the key figures who shaped or failed to shape those policies. One of the volume's major tasks is to re-evaluate two people: Harry Truman and Henry Wallace.

This is an important historical issue because Truman replaced Wallace as Vice President in 1944 and then became President in 1945 when Roosevelt died. If Truman had not replaced Wallace, Wallace would have become President and might have shaped the post-war period very differently, with less antagonism toward the Soviet Union.

Wallace had been Secretary of Agriculture during the New Deal. And according to Arthur Schlesinger, he was very good in that position. (Stone and Kuznick, p. 91) He was then Roosevelt's personal choice for VP in 1940.

According to the authors, FDR said he would refuse to run for President for an unprecedented third term unless Wallace joined him on the ticket. (pgs. 92-93) By all indications, Wallace was a populist.

For instance, the book contrasts the famous Henry Luce quote about the 1900s being the American Century with Wallace's reply that it must be "the century of the Common Man." (p. 101) The authors then contrast Wallace's view of the Soviet Union, which was much closer to Roosevelt's during the war, with that of Truman's belligerence.

The Rise of Truman

How did Truman replace Wallace on the ticket in the first place? FDR's health was already failing in 1944. This meant two things to the party bosses: 1.) He would not make it through a fourth term, and 2.) They had to stop the too-liberal Wallace from becoming President.

Realizing that Roosevelt was in a weakened state, the bosses enacted what came to be known as "Pauley's Coup", since it was led by California millionaire and party treasurer Edwin Pauley. (pgs. 139-40) Pauley was also running the convention and was good friends with Sen. Truman.

Pauley's group put together a list of alternative candidates to Wallace. Truman was the name that was least objectionable to everyone. In spite of the backroom dealings, Wallace still almost survived.

Sen. Claude Pepper of Florida approached the podium to place his name in nomination. If that had been done, Wallace surely would have won by popular acclamation. But before Pepper could do so, the session was adjourned. (p. 143)

For two reasons, the authors see this as a turning point. First, they feel that the atomic bombs would never have been dropped on Japan if Wallace had become President at FDR's death. And second, they feel that the Cold War would never have gone into high gear with Wallace in the White House.

There is certainly a lot of evidence in support of those two arguments. Truman was not really well versed in foreign policy at the time he became President. FDR had largely acted as his own Secretary of State.

And, during the war, Roosevelt had tried to serve as a kind of bumper between Stalin and the hard-line anti-communist Winston Churchill. Roosevelt and Cordell Hull, his cooperative Secretary of State, managed to hold off the hardliners, including Churchill. This arrangement fell apart once Hull retired in late 1944 and Roosevelt died in April 1945.

Suddenly, the thinly qualified Truman was in the White House and was much more malleable in the guiding hands of the hardliners. Little about Truman qualified him for the extraordinary geopolitical and moral issues he would face.

Truman had failed at three businesses before he became the creation of Missouri political boss Tom Pendergast, who started Truman off as a judge, though Truman had never graduated from law school. Pendergast then got Truman elected to the U.S. Senate.

When Roosevelt died, Truman felt overwhelmed, since he had only been VP for three months. Because Roosevelt had been ill during those months, the two men did not see each other very much.

The Hardliners Emerge

Once Roosevelt was dead, the hardliners on the Russia issue took over, including Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, Navy Secretary James Forrestal, Gen. Leslie Groves, and Churchill.

Truman began to favor Churchill and England in the allied relationship, something Roosevelt tried to avoid. (Stone and Kuznick, p. 182) Byrnes, a South Carolina politician with little foreign experience, told Russian Foreign Minister V. H. Molotov that Truman planned on using the atomic bomb to get the USSR to comply with American demands on post-war behavior. (ibid. p. 184)

Wallace, who stayed on as Secretary of Commerce, was being marginalized. Truman nominated financier Bernard Baruch to head the Atomic Energy Commission, which oversaw development of nuclear strategy. Baruch laid down terms that all but eliminated the Soviets from joining in the effort.

Finally, Truman invited Churchill to America to make his famous "Iron Curtain" speech in March 1946. As the authors note, it was that militant, bellicose speech which "delivered a sharp, perhaps fatal blow to any prospects for post-war comity." (p. 191)

A few months later, Henry Wallace tried to counter the sharpness of Churchill's speech at Madison Square Garden. There, appearing with Paul Robeson and Claude Pepper, Wallace pleaded for a foreign policy that tried to understand the fears of Russia, that tried to meet her halfway. After all, he argued, Russia had been invaded twice by Germany in less than 30 years and had suffered over 20 million dead by the blitzkrieg alone.

Wallace also asked that America not follow the British imperial model in the developing world. And he added that the proper body to have far-flung foreign bases around the world was the United Nations, not the United States. (p. 201)

The speech was sharply criticized in the mainstream press as being a straight right cross to the chin of Byrnes. Even though Truman had read the speech in advance, he fired Wallace, thus eliminating one of the few remaining voices for

a more conciliatory approach toward the Soviet Union. (Pgs. 202-04)

The ouster of Wallace also was the death knell for any hope that FDR's more balanced strategy toward the World War II alliance would survive into the post-war era. The same month of Wallace's speech, Elliot Roosevelt published an article in *Look* detailing how Truman and Churchill had derailed his father's plans for peace after the war. (ibid, p. 200) Churchill feared Wallace so much that he placed spies around him. (p. 138)

This aspect of the Stone-Kuznick book directly ties into the decision to use the atomic bomb. The first point to recall is one that is mentioned by the authors in passing, that the Germans had abandoned their atomic bomb research. Yet, that research was the reason that FDR approved the Manhattan Project in the first place. (p. 134)

Therefore, by the time frame of 1944-45, when the testing of this devastating new weapon was approaching, the reason d'Être for the bomb to serve as a deterrent to a German bomb had disappeared. But Truman still used it on the remaining Axis Power belligerent, Japan.

Why Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

The question has always been: Was it necessary to use the bomb to induce Japan into surrendering? Or were diplomacy and a second-front invasion by Russia in 1945 enough to get a surrender without either the bomb or an American invasion? (A particularly good polemic against using the bomb is the late Stewart Udall's *The Myths of August*.)

Soviet leader Josef Stalin had promised Roosevelt that he would open up a second front against Japan three months after Germany was defeated and Stalin kept his promise. On Aug. 8 two days after the first U.S. atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and one day before the second bomb destroyed Nagasaki the Soviets launched a three-pronged invasion of Japanese-held Manchuria.

The Soviet invasion was so successful that the Manchurian emperor was captured, and the offensive spread to Korea, Sakhalin Island and the Kuril Islands. Stone and Kuznick note that Japan, which had already suffered devastating fire-bombings of major cities, seemed less concerned about the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki than the dramatic loss of territory to an old enemy, the Russians. Emperor Hirohito announced Japan's surrender on Aug. 15, after the Russian offensive had secured Manchuria.

The book also notes that in the war's final months, the hardliners in Truman's administration, like Byrnes, insisted on an "unconditional surrender" by Japan. To the Japanese, this meant the emperor had to go and that Japanese society

would have to be completely restructured.

Yet, there were voices outside the White House, like Gen. Douglas MacArthur, who advised Truman to let the Japanese keep the emperor in order to make it easier for them to surrender. MacArthur was confident that maintaining the emperor would be a help and not a hindrance to rebuilding the country.

The irony of this protracted argument is that, after Hirohito's announcement of surrender, the allies *did* let the emperor stay. And he reigned until his death in 1989. Indeed, Hirohito had been looking for a way to surrender since June 1945.

Today it seems fairly clear that the combination of the Soviet invasion and an altering of the unconditional surrender terms could have avoided the hundreds of thousands of deaths and maimings brought on by the two atomic bombs, and perhaps stopped the dawn of the atomic age.

However, both Byrnes and the military commander of the Manhattan Project, Leslie Groves, admitted that they wished to use the weapons not so much to induce Japan to surrender, but to warn the Russians what they were now up against in the post-World War II world. (Stone and Kuznick, p. 160)

As wiser men like Wallace foresaw, this threat backfired. Stalin ordered a ratcheting up of his scientific team to hurry along the Soviet version of the bomb. (ibid, p. 165)

Misreading the Soviets

Truman also miscalculated regarding the Soviet capability to duplicate the U.S. development of a nuclear bomb. When Truman asked the scientific supervisor of the Manhattan Project, Robert Oppenheimer, how long it would take for the Russians to come up with their version of the bomb, Oppenheimer said he was not sure. Truman said, "I'll tell you. Never." (p. 179)

The Russians exploded their first atomic bomb just four years later. The nuclear arms race was off and running.

The other major argument in support of Truman's decision to drop the A-Bombs on two Japanese cities has been that lives were saved by avoiding a U.S. invasion of the Japanese mainland, a project codenamed Downfall and scheduled to begin in December 1945. In other words, there were still several months to negotiate Japan's surrender.

The hurried-up decision to use the bomb seems to stem from the fact that Truman had told Stalin at the Potsdam Conference that the U.S. now had the weapon.

(Stone and Kuznick, pgs. 162-65) So, just four days after the conclusion of Potsdam, the first bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Then, one day after the Russians invaded Manchuria, the second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki.

Still, Stone and Kuznick recognize that their historically well-supported view is considered contrarian to mainstream U.S. history. That's because the political and historical establishment has tried to prop up Truman as something like a good-to-near-great President.

The reason that people like George Will and Condoleezza Rice do so is fairly obvious. To them, the Cold War and the nuclear arms race were things to be thankful for. But the national mythology about Harry Truman goes further. One needs only consider the enormous success of David McCullough's 1992 biography of the man, eponymously called *Truman*. For me, and others, this was a 990-page appeal for Truman's canonization.

To figure that out, one only has to compare how many pages McCullough spent on Truman's dramatic come-from-behind victory in the presidential race of 1948 (a lot) versus how many he spent on the decision to drop the atomic bomb (a lot fewer). But McCullough's book was met with great acclamation. It became a huge bestseller and was made into a TV movie, establishing McCullough as the successor to Stephen Ambrose as the agreed upon historian for the MSM.

A Misleading Claim

The problem with the acclaim is that, as it turned out, McCullough cheated on a key point in defending Truman's decision to use the A-Bomb. As Stone and Kuznick show, in both their book and film, Truman always (unconvincingly) maintained that the reason he dropped the bombs was to avoid an American invasion of the island. Truman thought that hundreds of thousands of American lives, at times he said a million, would have been lost in an amphibious assault.

In his book, McCullough tried to back up Truman's claim, by citing a memorandum by Thomas Handy of Gen. George Marshall's staff saying that an invasion of Japan could cost anywhere from 500,000 to a million lives. McCullough added that this memo showed "that figures of such magnitude were then in use at the highest levels." (McCullough, *Truman*, p. 401)

This memo would certainly fortify Truman's *ex post facto* defense. The problem is that when writer Philip Nobile went looking for the document, he couldn't find it. McCullough had left it out of his footnotes, an omission that grew more suspicious when we learn from Stanford historian Barton Bernstein that no such memo by Handy exists.

Bernstein, an acknowledged authority on Truman, told Nobile that the memo in

question was actually written by former President Herbert Hoover, who was no military expert and failed to sign it. Clipped to the Hoover memo was a critique of Hoover by Handy. The critique repudiated Hoover's estimates as being too high.

In other words, McCullough presented in his book *the opposite* of what Handy's meaning was. Making it even worse for McCullough is the fact that Bernstein had exposed all this Handy/Hoover mishmash twice before, once in a periodical and once in a book. And that was *five years* before McCullough's book was published. (Click here for Nobile's article <http://hnn.us/articles/157.html>)

Yet this shoddy scholarship, if that is what it was, gets ignored in this battle over, as journalist Robert Parry has termed it, the stolen historical narrative of America.

Reconsidering the Eastern Front

Another major theme of the Stone/Kuznick book is that, contrary to what textbooks and Hollywood films like *Saving Private Ryan* imply, World War II in Europe was not actually won by the Americans. Or the British. It was really won by the Russians.

The story of Operation Barbarossa, Hitler's massive invasion of the Soviet Union, has been relatively ignored in high school texts, although college texts have been improving on this as of late. There is little doubt today by any serious military historian that the German defeats on the Eastern Front were the primary reason for the fall of the Third Reich.

In the last 20 years, with the fall of the Soviet Union, there has been much good work done out of the Russian archives which allow historians to etch into the saga of World War II the huge military campaigns on the Russian front from 1941-43. This has allowed for the proper crediting of the importance of Marshal Georgy Zhukov, the commander who was most responsible for thwarting Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union.

For his battlefield successes, Zhukov deserves to be mentioned with the likes of Eisenhower, MacArthur and Montgomery as one of the icons of World War II. Yet, because he was Russian, he is generally ignored.

But it was Zhukov who wisely advised Stalin to abandon Kiev in 1941 and convinced Stalin that Leningrad was the key to their defense. It also was Zhukov whom Stalin sent to save Moscow after the original commanding officer, S. M. Budyonny, could not be located. And, most importantly, it was Zhukov who commanded the counteroffensive at Stalingrad, now widely considered the turning point of World War II. It was also Zhukov who advised the strategy that stopped

the last German offensive in 1943 at the great tank battle at Kursk.

As the book notes, Hitler had arranged an invasion force of nearly four million men to attack Russia in 1941, still the largest invasion in the history of warfare. At one time, the Russians were facing about 200 divisions of the Wehrmacht. The British and Americans never faced even close to that many.

But further, Barbarossa accounted for 95 percent of all Wehrmacht casualties from 1941-44 as five major battles were fought on the Eastern Front: Kiev, Leningrad, Moscow, Stalingrad, and Kursk. After Stalingrad and Kursk, the Germans were so decimated they could launch no more offensives in the East.

The rest of the war in Europe was essentially anti-climactic. The Soviet victories on the Eastern Front had doomed the Nazis, not the fabled battles at Normandy and elsewhere on the Western Front.

Stone and Kuznick note that Stalin pressed for a second front almost immediately after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, and Roosevelt agreed. But Churchill argued for a delay in opening up a second front in France in 1942. Instead he wanted to open up a front in North Africa, which would lead to Egypt and the Middle East, therefore preserving British interest in oil and their colonial mandates there.

As a side effect, the Russians would endure the main brunt of the Nazi war machine longer. (Stone and Kuznick, pgs. 104-05) In the Showtime version, Truman is quoted as saying that in his opinion if Germany was winning the battle, America ought to help Russia. He then added that if Russia started to win, the U.S. should help Germany. Truman said the idea was to kill off as many from each country as possible. This is the man David McCullough has beatified.

Assessing Wilson

Earlier in their book, Stone and Kuznick also trained their guns on another overrated president, Woodrow Wilson. Like Truman, who actually tried to join the Ku Klux Klan at one time, Wilson also was a racist who screened D. W. Griffith's heroic picture about the Klan, *Birth of a Nation*, in the White House.

Wilson, although ostensibly a Democrat and a progressive reformer, was really a wolf in sheep's clothing. He once wrote, "There is nothing in which I am more interested than the fullest development of the trade of this country and its righteous conquest of foreign markets." (Stone and Kuznick, p. 2)

Wilson also clearly favored America getting into World War I on the side of the British. As the book notes, and as Secretary of State Robert Lansing tried to conceal, the Lusitania was carrying arms to England when she was struck by a

German U-boat. (Stone and Kuznick, p. 6) The House of Morgan also had guaranteed so many loans to England during the war that it would have been disastrous for the American banking system if England had been defeated.

Then, once in the war, Wilson did all he could to stifle dissent against it. He set up a propaganda arm called the Committee on Public Information headed by newspaperman George Creel. But Creel also propagandized against the Russians by spreading the lie that both Trotsky and Lenin were German agents. (ibid, p. 9)

The coercion of public opinion became an enduring part of American war culture. Professors who dissented from the war were fired from Columbia University. Socialist politician Eugene Debs was imprisoned. Anti-German attitudes were encouraged and fostered by Creel's outfit, leading to lynchings. (ibid, pgs. 11-16)

And when it was all over, Wilson failed in large part to gain his sacred Fourteen Points, the basis for which Versailles was supposed to be an honorable peace, a peace, as Wilson termed it, for all time.

As the authors note, one reason Wilson failed at Versailles was that he did not make the Fourteen Points part and parcel of the United States entering the war in the first place. If he had he would have had much more leverage.

Although Jon Weiner of *The Nation* has said the Stone-Kuznick book ignores or discounts the influence of Wall Street on historical events, that is not really accurate. In their discussion of the Eisenhower years, for instance, the authors sketch in the background of the Dulles brothers, John Foster who was Ike's Secretary of State and Allen who became Director of the CIA.

Both men came from the giant corporate law firm Sullivan and Cromwell. There John was managing partner and Allen was senior partner. Their interest in corporate affairs influenced the decisions the brothers made while in government. (Stone and Kuznick, pgs. 253-54)

I actually think this subject merited more space since one can make a good case that when Allen Dulles came to power at the Agency, he more or less revolutionized the CIA and the uses to which it would be put. And this could not have been done without the help of his brother at State, for Foster was personally friendly with Ike and he would at times remove ambassadors in countries which resisted the siren song of covert action, one which the brothers found so enthralling.

The Guatemalan Coup

Although I wish the authors had done more with this issue of covert action, the

book does a good job in its description of the first two famous overthrows that the Dulles brothers managed, i.e. in Iran in 1953 and in Guatemala in 1954. The second account is one of the best summaries I have read.

Before he left office Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz accurately stated, "The United Fruit Company, in collaboration with the governing circles of the United States, is responsible for what is happening to us." He then warned, also accurately, that Guatemala would now descend into "twenty years of fascist bloody tyranny."

After the Guatemalan coup, John Foster Dulles applauded the victory of democracy over Soviet communism and stated the Guatemalans themselves had cured the situation. (Stone and Kuznick, p. 265)

In this chapter on the Fifties, the book also accurately states that McCarthyism in reality was supplied by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover. (Ibid, pgs. 231-34) And that its real objective was to eliminate the Left in the United States so there would never be any viable socialist or communist party here.

I wish Stone and Kuznick had explicitly noted that it was not illegal to be a communist in the United States at the time of McCarthy. Therefore, what happened in the Fifties was a collapse of the whole civil liberties system which should have protected his victims from government-directed repression.

For me, the most disappointing chapter in the first half of the book is on John F. Kennedy. The first third of this chapter wraps up the Eisenhower years, devoting attention to Ike's Farewell Address and its warning about "the military-industrial complex." But the authors do not mention the U-2 incident which marred the Paris Peace Conference and may have led to what Eisenhower said in that address. (Stone and Kuznick, p. 289)

The book offers a fairly simplistic account of Kennedy's political career prior to 1960, calling him a Cold War liberal who ran in 1960 as a hawk. This was the first time I felt the book really fell down in its scholarship because to make this rubric stick, there is no mention of Kennedy's battles with Eisenhower and the Dulles brothers in the Fifties over things like Vietnam and Algeria.

The authors then say that, under Kennedy, foreign policy was still in the hands of the Establishment figures from the Council on Foreign Relations, without saying that Kennedy was never in the CFR. Although the book does mention Kennedy's try for a cease-fire in Laos, it completely ignores his efforts to beat back the colonialists in Congo and Indonesia in 1961.

Misreading Mongoose

The authors say Operation Mongoose against Cuba began in November 1961 and that one of the objectives was to assassinate Fidel Castro. (Stone and Kuznick, p. 304) I was really surprised to see that in a book co-authored by Oliver Stone, since the operation did not actually go into effect until February 1962, when CIA officer Ted Shackley arrived in Miami to take over the JM/Wave station. (William Turner and Warren Hinckle, *Deadly Secrets*, p. 126) And as the CIA Inspector General's report on the Castro assassination plots reveals, the killing of Castro was never part of the Mongoose operation.

The book then blames the Missile Crisis on Mongoose. (Stone and Kuznick, p. 304) Yet anyone can see by reading *The Kennedy Tapes* that Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's agenda was really to attain a first-strike capability in order to deal with the question of Berlin. (May and Zelikow, p. 678)

The discussion of Kennedy and Vietnam is also disappointing. The book states that Kennedy was intent on standing up to the communists in Vietnam (Stone and Kuznick, p. 304), to which I would reply, "With what? Fifteen thousand advisers against the combined forces of both the Viet Cong and North Vietnam?"

I was surprised to see some of the sourcing in this chapter. In addition to citing JFK's purported mistress Mimi Alford, a lot of it was to books like David Halberstam's obsolete and discredited *The Best and the Brightest* and to New York Times' correspondent Tim Weiner's *Legacy of Ashes*. There was not one footnote to John Newman's milestone book *JFK and Vietnam*, or to works based on the declassified record like James Blight's *Virtual JFK*. This baffles me.

And the authors fail to mention a wonderful meeting which could have provided an ironic cap to the chapter on Kennedy (which, at least does end with Kennedy seeking détente with the Russians and Cubans.)

This meeting was occasioned by Harry Truman's op-ed in the *Washington Post* on Dec. 22, 1963, a month after JFK's assassination. In that essay, Truman wrote that the CIA had strayed far afield from the mission he had originally envisioned for it, i.e. an emphasis on objective intelligence gathering and analysis.

It turns out that ex-CIA Director Allen Dulles, who at the time was on the Warren Commission investigating JFK's murder, was so upset by the op-ed's implication that he personally visited Truman at his home in April 1964. Dulles tried to get Truman to retract the criticism.

Dulles tried to persuade Truman that newspaper articles at the time of JFK's assassination saying the CIA had taken over Vietnam policy from Kennedy were wrong. (James DiEugenio, *Destiny Betrayed*, Second Edition, pgs. 379-81) That

would have made an ironic and symmetrical tie between Truman, Kennedy and the Dulles brothers.

But despite my various concerns about shortcomings there is much to like in this book. The second part deals with the period from the Johnson administration to Barack Obama's first term. Stay tuned.

Jim DiEugenio is a researcher and writer on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and other mysteries of that era. His new book is *Destiny Betrayed* (Second Edition) from Skyhorse Publishing.

A Brief History of Modern Superpowers

From schoolbooks to popular culture, Americans have been fed a steady diet of propaganda that has led them to support reactionary policies around the globe even while fancying themselves advocates of human progress, as historian William Blum explains.

By William Blum

From the Congress of Vienna of 1815 to the Congress of Berlin in 1878 to the "Allies" invasion of Russia in 1918 to the formation of what became the European Union in the 1950s, the great powers of Europe and the world have gotten together in grand meeting halls and on the field of battle to set the ground rules for imperialist exploitation of Latin America, Africa, Asia and Australasia, to Christianize and 'civilize', to remake the maps, and to suppress revolutions and other threats to great-power hegemony.

They have been deadly serious. In 1918, for example, some 13 nations, including France, Great Britain, Rumania, Italy, Serbia, Greece, Japan and the United States, combined in a military invasion of Russia to "strangle at its birth" the nascent Bolshevik state, as Winston Churchill so charmingly put it.

And following World War II, without any concern about who had fought and died to win that war, the Western powers, *sans* the Soviet Union, moved to create the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. NATO, along with the European Union, then joined the United States in carrying out the Cold War and preventing the Communists and their allies from coming to power legally through elections in France and Italy. That partnership continued after the formal end of the Cold War.

The United States, the European Union and NATO are each superpowers, with extensive military, as well as foreign policy integration, almost all EU members are also members of NATO; almost all NATO members in Europe are in the EU; almost all NATO members have had a military contingent serving under NATO and/or the U.S. in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans and elsewhere.

Together, this Holy Triumvirate has torn apart Yugoslavia, invaded and devastated Afghanistan and Iraq, crippled Iran, Cuba and others with sanctions, overthrown the Libyan government, and are on the verge now of the same in Syria. Much of what the Triumvirate has told the world to justify this wanton havoc has concerned Islamic terrorism, but it should be noted that prior to the interventions in Iraq, Libya and Syria all three countries were secular and modern. Will the people of those sad lands ever see that life again?

In suppressing the Left in France and Italy, and later in destabilizing the governments of Libya and Syria, the Holy Triumvirate has closely aligned itself with terrorists and terrorist methods to a remarkable extent. [For France and Italy, see [Operation Gladio Wikipedia](#); and Daniele Ganser, *Operation Gladio: NATO's Top Secret Stay-Behind Armies and Terrorism in Western Europe* (2005)]

In Syria alone, it would be difficult to name any Middle East terrorist group associated with al-Qaeda, employing their standard car bombings and suicide bombers, that is not taking part in the war against President Assad with the support of the Triumvirate.

Is there anything, legally or morally, the Triumvirate regards as outside its purview? Any place not within its geographical mandate? Britain and France have now joined Turkey and Arabian Peninsula states in recognizing a newly formed opposition bloc as the sole representative of the Syrian people.

"From the point of view of international law, this is absolutely unacceptable," Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev declared. "A desire to change the political regime of another state by recognizing a political force as the sole carrier of sovereignty seems to me to be not completely civilized."

France was the first Western state to recognize the newly formed Syrian National Coalition and was swiftly joined by Britain, Italy and the European Union. [Agence France Presse, Nov. 26, 2012] The neck irons tighten.

The European Union in recent years has been facing a financial crisis, where its overriding concern has been to save the banks, not its citizens, inspiring calls from the citizenry of some member states to leave the Union. I think the dissolution of the European Union would benefit world peace by depriving the U.S./NATO mob of a guaranteed partner in crime by returning to the Union's

members their individual discretion in foreign policy.

And then we can turn to getting rid of NATO, an organization that not only has a questionable *raison d'Ãatre* in the present, but never had any good reason-to-be in the past other than serving as Washington's hit man. [For the best coverage of the NATO monolith, sign up with StopNATO. To get on the mailing list write to Rick Rozoff at r_rozoff@yahoo.com. To see back issues at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stopnato>]

William Blum is the author of *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2*; *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*; *West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir*; *Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire*. Portions of the books can be read, and signed copies purchased, at www.killinghope.org. This article was originally published in Blum's Anti-Empire Report.
