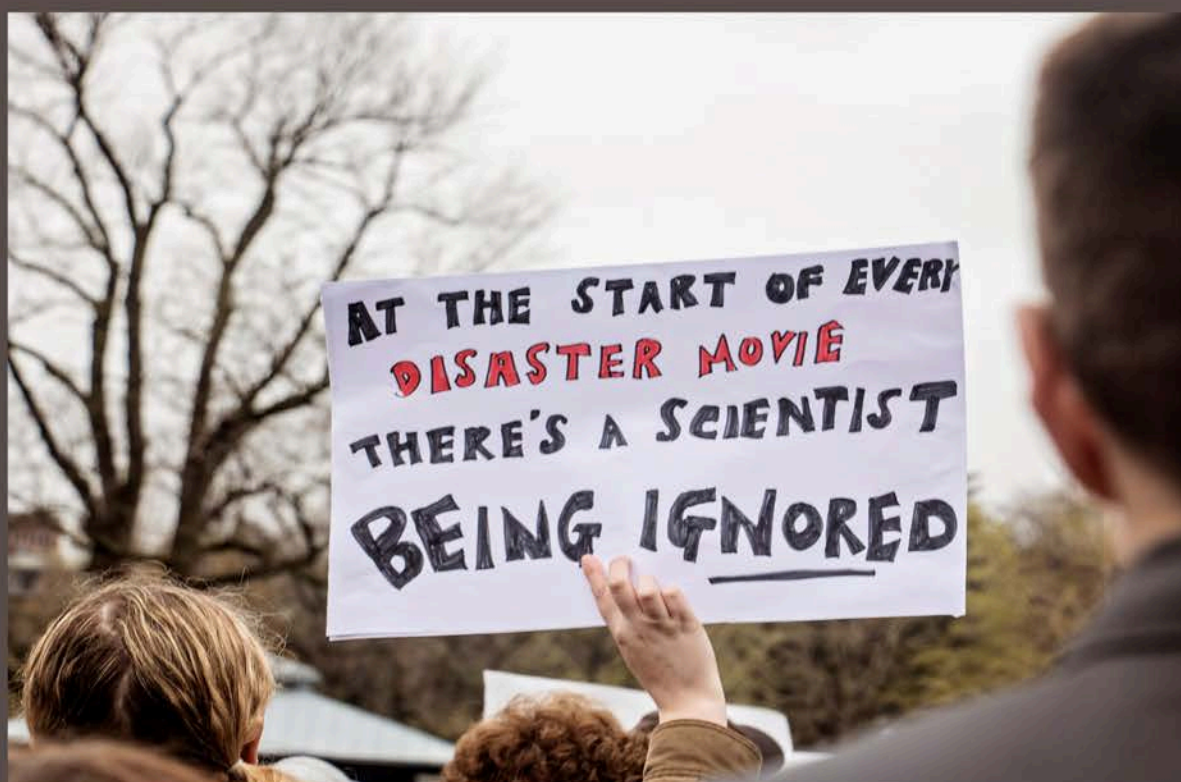




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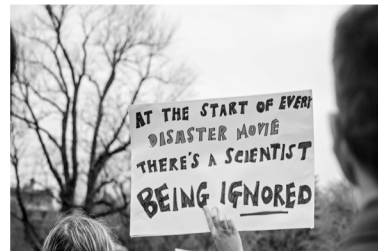
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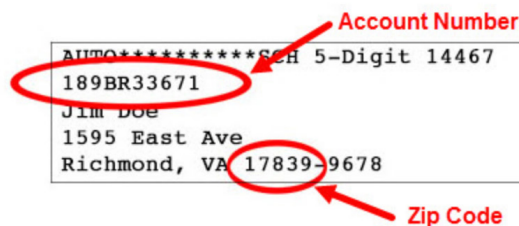
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War Crimes Against Iran

By Marjorie Cohn

Trump has already committed the crime of aggression against Iran, and he is now threatening to commit a war crime if he carries through on his January 4 promise to target Iran's cultural sites. The United States has violated the United Nations Charter's prohibition on the use of military force. This is the time to raise our voices and demand that our congressional representatives put a halt to Trump's illegal war-making.

It should be clear to any legal analyst that Donald Trump's catastrophic decision to order the illegal assassination of Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani

and Iraqi senior military leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis constituted the crime of aggression and violated both the United Nations Charter and the U.S. War Powers Resolution.

The January 2 drone attacks that killed Suleimani, al-Muhandis and al-Muhandis's public relations chief were the deadliest escalation of Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran since his May 18, 2018, withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal. In May 2019, one year after Trump pulled out of the agreement, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo claimed U.S. intelligence had concluded that Iranian-sponsored attacks on U.S. military personnel were "imminent." *The New York Times* said the administration made that allegation "without evidence" to support it.

Now, seven months later, Team Trump is again invoking the threat of an "imminent" Ira-

nian attack to justify its illegal assassination of Suleimani, and once again, it cites no evidence to substantiate such a threat.

The Drone Assassinations Violated the UN Charter

According to international law, the use of military force by one country against another must comply with the UN Charter. Article 2.3 requires that all member states "settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered." Article 2.4 requires all member states to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

There are only two exceptions to the UN Charter's prohibi-



Washington, DC – January 8, 2020: Anti-war activists at the White House protesting the looming war with Iran, by Phil Pasquini/Shutterstock.com



WASHINGTON, DC - JAN. 9, 2020: Rally at U.S. Capitol protesting President Trump's reckless warmongering with Iran, by bakdc/Shutterstock.com

tion of the use of military force: when a country acts in self-defense or with permission of the Security Council. The drone assassinations were not carried out in self-defense and the Security Council did not sanction them.

The Drone Assassinations Were Not Conducted in Self-Defense

Trump's drone killings did not constitute lawful self-defense. Article 51 of the UN Charter establishes the inherent right of self-defense in response to an armed attack by another state. Suleimani was a national of Iran. Neither Iran nor Iraq, where the assassination occurred, had mounted an armed attack on the United States before the fatal U.S. drone strikes.

After a rocket attack in Kirkuk resulted in the death of a U.S.

mercenary, the United States retaliated by launching several airstrikes in Iraq and Syria that killed 24 members of the Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah. In response, members of that militia and their supporters tried to storm the U.S. embassy in Baghdad but there were no casualties.

"The attacks on a US military base in Iraq allegedly by Iraqi-based militias, who were Iraqi non-state actors, do not qualify as an armed attack on the US by Iran," the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL) said in a statement. "Neither does the action by Iraqis who entered the US Embassy in Baghdad, injuring and killing no one, in response to US strikes against these militias (which killed 25 people and injured 55 more) amount to an armed attack by Iran against the US," the IADL added.

Moreover, Agnès Callamard, UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, tweeted that the drone killings were "most [likely] unlawful and violate international human rights law." Callamard said, "Outside the context of active hostilities, the use of drones or other means for targeted killing is almost never likely to be legal." She wrote that "intentionally lethal or potentially lethal force can only be used where strictly necessary to protect against an imminent threat to life."

Thus, Callamard said, the United States would need to demonstrate that the target "constituted an imminent threat to others." Suleimani's "past involvement in 'terrorist' attacks is not sufficient to make his targeting for killing lawful," she added. The anticipatory self-defense Trump claimed during his press conference is not likely legal, according to Callamard, since the necessity for the use of self-defense must be "instant, overwhelming, and leaving no choice of means, and no moment of deliberation."

Rep. Adam Schiff, chair of the House Intelligence Committee, who was briefed after the drone killings, said on CNN's "State of the Union" that he has seen no intelligence indicating that killing Suleimani would prevent future attacks on the United States. He characterized Pompeo's claim that killing Su-

leimani saved lives as “a personal opinion, not an intelligence conclusion.”

Indeed, *New York Times* reporter Rukmini Callimachi tweeted that “two US officials who had intelligence briefings after the strike on Suleimani” told her that “the evidence suggesting there was to be an imminent attack on American targets is ‘razor thin.’”

Likewise, a U.S. government official informed *The New York Times* that the new intelligence indicated that December 30 was “a normal Monday in the Middle East” and Suleimani’s travels constituted “business as usual.” The official said the intelligence was “thin” and Suleimani’s attack was “not imminent” because it had not been approved by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The Assassinations Were Not Authorized by the Security Council

Nor were the drone strikes authorized by the Security Council. The Council has primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security under the UN Charter. Article 39 states, “The Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression” and decide whether to authorize the use of military force under Article 42.

In fact, it was Trump who committed the crime of aggression.

Trump Committed the

Crime of Aggression

Under the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court, individuals can perpetrate an act of aggression in two different ways that are pertinent here. The U.S. bombings that killed Suleimani and al-Muhandis constitute aggression under both criteria.

First, aggression is “bombardment by the armed forces of a State against the territory of another State or the use of any weapons by a State against the territory of another State.” U.S. armed forces conducted a bombing attack in Iraq.

Second, aggression is, “The use of armed forces of one State which are within the territory of another State with the agreement of the receiving State, in contravention of the conditions provided for in the agreement or any extension of their presence in such territory beyond the termination of the agreement.”

Iraq and the United States have a joint military agreement governing the stationing of U.S. troops in Iraq. Adel Abdul-Mahdi, Iraq’s acting prime minister, called the U.S. bombing “a flagrant violation of the conditions for the presence of the American forces in Iraq and their role which is supposed to be limited to training Iraqi forces and fighting ISIS [also known as Daesh] within the international coalition forces, under the supervision and approval of the Iraqi government.”

Following the Holocaust, the International Military Tribunal

at Nuremberg called the waging of aggressive war “essentially an evil thing,” adding, “To initiate a war of aggression ... is not only an international crime; it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.”

The Drone Killings Violated the U.S. War Powers Resolution

The drone killing also violated the War Powers Resolution, which permits the president to introduce U.S. armed forces into hostilities or imminent hostilities only after Congress has declared war, or in “a national emergency created by attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces,” or when there is “specific statutory authorization,” like an Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF).

Iran had not attacked the U.S. or its armed forces and Congress had not declared war on Iran or authorized the use of U.S. force against Iranian targets.

National Security Adviser Robert O’Brien said the killings were justified by the 2002 Authorization for the Use of Military Force Against Iraq. That AUMF authorized the president “to use the Armed Forces of the United States as he determines to be necessary and appropriate in order to— (1) defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq;

and (2) enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.” Once the U.S.-led forces invaded Iraq and eliminated the government of President Saddam Hussein, the 2002 AUMF license ended.

Trump Is Now Threatening to Commit the War Crime of Targeting Iran’s Cultural Sites

Trump promised in a January 4 tweet to target “52 Iranian sites,” some of which are “at a very high level & important to Iran & the Iranian culture,” if Iran retaliates against the drone killings.

The Rome Statute makes it a war crime to intentionally direct “attacks against civilian objects, that is, objects which are not military objectives.” Cultural sites are not proper military targets. It is also a war crime under the Rome Statute to intentionally direct “attacks against buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes [and] historic monuments.”

In addition, the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property prohibits military targeting of cultural sites. Iran has 24 locales on the UN list of cultural world heritage sites.

By promising to target Iran’s cultural sites, Trump threatened to commit a war crime.

Consequences From Suleimani’s Death Are Un-

imaginable

After the drone attacks, Javad Zarif, Iran’s foreign minister, called Suleimani the leader of “the most effective force” in the fight against ISIS and al-Qaida, and called his killing an act of “international terrorism.” Ayatollah Khamenei vowed to take “severe revenge” against those responsible for Suleimani’s death.

Hassan Nasrallah, leader of the Iran-backed group Hezbollah in Lebanon, issued a call to all “resistance fighters” to avenge the killing of Suleimani: “Meting out the appropriate punishment to these criminal assassins ... will be the responsibility and task of all resistance fighters worldwide,” Nasrallah said.

The repercussions from the U.S. killing of Suleimani, whom Ayatollah Khamenei called a “martyr,” are unimaginable. It

may well ignite a lethal conflagration throughout the Middle East.

Suleimani—who was considered the second most powerful figure in Iran after Ayatollah Khamenei—enjoyed nearly folk hero status. As Iran’s top security and intelligence commander, Suleimani “was the architect of nearly every significant operation by Iranian intelligence and military forces over the past two decades, and his death was a staggering blow for Iran at a time of sweeping geopolitical conflict,” according to *The New York Times*.

The government of Iraq is furious at the killings on its soil without its permission. Acting Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi called the attack “an outrageous breach to Iraqi sovereignty” and “a clear breach of the terms of the American forces’ presence.”

In fact, the Iraqi parliament voted in a nonbinding resolu-



Washington, DC – January 8, 2020: Anti-war activists at the White House, by Phil Pasquini/Shutterstock.com

tion to ask the government to terminate the presence of the 5,000 U.S. troops currently in Iraq and the agreement that permitted the U.S. to send troops to Iraq to fight ISIS. Ironically, Joe Lauria wrote at *Consortium News*, “Suleimani was one of the men most responsible for defeating ISIS in Iraq and Syria.”

Iran announced on January 5 that it was suspending all of its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal until the United States lifts the punishing sanctions it has imposed on Iran since the U.S. itself pulled out of the deal in 2018. Under the deal, Iran had agreed to restrict its enrichment of uranium and other nuclear activities in return for relief from U.S. sanctions. Iran had been complying with the agreement. Now there are no limitations on Iran’s development of a nuclear weapons program.

The day after the drone strikes, Trump made the Orwellian statement, “We took action last night to stop a war. We did not take action to start a war.” But start a war is just what Trump’s actions have effectively done. It is up to Congress to exercise its constitutional duty to stop this dangerous presidential overreach.

As Yale law professor Oona A. Hathaway warned in her op-ed in *The Atlantic*, “If Congress fails to effectively press back against this unconstitutional assertion of unilateral authority, it will set a precedent that will put the greatest destructive power the world has ever known in the hands of a single man.”



QUILPUÉ, CHILE - Barricades during protests of the “Evade” movement against the government of Sebastian Piñera, by erlucho/Shutterstock.com

We must pressure our congressional representatives to put an end to Trump’s illegal war-making. Two resolutions have been introduced in Congress: one by Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA) and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) to prohibit funding for war with Iran unless Congress gives its approval. The other is co-sponsored by Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Dick Durbin (D-IL), mandating removal of U.S. troops engaged in hostilities with Iran unless and until Congress approves. Urge your Congressmembers to support them. Peace in the Middle East, and indeed worldwide, is at stake. Z

The Publication of Origin for this article is *Truthout*.

Marjorie Cohn is professor emerita at Thomas Jefferson School of Law, former president of the National Lawyers Guild, deputy secretary general of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers and a

member of the advisory board of Veterans for Peace. Her most recent book is *Drones and Targeted Killing: Legal, Moral, and Geopolitical Issues*.

Why aren’t Americans rising up like the people of Chile and Lebanon?

By Medea Benjamin and Nicolas J S Davies

The waves of protests breaking out in country after country around the world beg the question: Why aren’t Americans rising up in peaceful protest



London, England—Extinction Rebellion demonstration in Parliament Square, London, by Karl Nesh/Shutterstock.com

like our neighbors? We live at the very heart of this neoliberal system that is force-feeding the systemic injustice and inequality of 19th century laissez-faire capitalism to the people of the 21st century. So we are subject to many of the same abuses that have fueled mass protest movements in other countries, including high rents, stagnant wages, cradle-to-grave debt, ever-rising economic inequality, privatized healthcare, a shredded social safety net, abysmal public transportation, systemic political corruption and endless war.

We also have a corrupt, racist billionaire as president, who Congress may soon impeach, but where are the masses outside the White House, banging pots and pans to drive Trump out? Why aren't people crashing the offices of their congresspeople, demanding that they represent the people or resign? If none of these conditions has so far pro-

voked a new American revolution, what will it take to trigger one?

In the 1960s and 1970s, the senseless Vietnam War provoked a serious, well-organized antiwar movement. But today the U.S.'s endless wars just rage on in the background of our lives, as the U.S. and its allies kill and mutilate men, women and children in distant countries, day after day, year after year. Our history has also witnessed inspiring mass movements for civil rights, women's rights and gay rights, but these movements are much tamer today.

The Occupy Movement in 2011 came closest to challenging the entire neoliberal system. It awakened a new generation to the reality of government of, by, and for the corrupt 1%, and built a powerful basis for solidarity among the marginalized 99%. But Occupy lost momentum because it failed to transition from

a rallying point and a decentralized, democratic forum to a cohesive movement that could impact the existing power structure.

The climate movement is starting to mobilize a new generation, and groups like School Strike for the Climate and Extinction Rebellion take direct aim at this destructive economic system that prioritizes corporate growth and profits over the very survival of life on Earth. But while climate protests have shut down parts of London and other cities around the world, the scale of climate protests in the U.S. does not yet match the urgency of the crisis.

So why is the American public so passive?

Americans pour their energy and hopes into electoral campaigns. Election campaigns in most countries last only a few months, with strict limits on financing and advertising to try

to ensure fair elections. But Americans pour millions of hours and billions of dollars into multi-year election campaigns run by an ever-growing sector of the commercial advertising industry, which even awarded Barack Obama its “Marketer of the Year” award for 2008. (The other finalists were not John McCain or the Republicans but Apple, Nike and Coors beer.)

When U.S. elections are finally over, thousands of exhausted volunteers sweep up the bunting and go home, believing their work is done. While electoral politics should be a vehicle for change, this neoliberal model of corporate “center-right” and “center-left” politics ensures that congresspeople and presidents of both parties are primarily accountable to the ruling 1% who “pay to play.”

Former President Jimmy Carter has bluntly described what Americans euphemistically call “campaign finance” as a system of legalized bribery. Transparency International (TI) ranks the U.S. 22nd on its political corruption index, identifying it as more corrupt than any other wealthy, developed country.

Without a mass movement continually pushing and prodding for real change and holding politicians accountable—for their policies as well as their words—our neoliberal rulers assume that they can safely ignore the concerns and interests of ordinary people as they make the critical decisions that shape the world we live in. As Frederick Douglass observed in 1857, “Power concedes nothing with-



When U.S. elections are finally over, thousands of exhausted volunteers sweep up the bunting and go home, believing their work is done, by rblfmr/Shutterstock.com

out a demand. It never has and it never will.”

Millions of Americans have internalized the myth of the “American dream,” believing they have exceptional chances for social and economic mobility compared with their peers in other countries. If they aren’t successful, it must be their own fault—either they’re not smart enough or they don’t work hard enough.

The American Dream is not just elusive—it’s a complete fantasy. In reality, the U.S. has the greatest income inequality of any wealthy, developed country. Of the 39 developed countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), only South Africa and Costa Rica exceed the U.S.’s 18 percent poverty rate. The United States is an anomaly: a very wealthy country suffering from exceptional poverty. To make matters worse, children born into poor families in the U.S. are more likely to remain poor as adults than poor children in other wealthy countries. But the American dream ideology keeps

people struggling and competing to improve their lives on a strictly individual basis, instead of demanding a fairer society and the healthcare, education and public services we all need and deserve.

The corporate media keeps Americans uninformed and docile. The U.S.’s corporate media system is also unique, both in its consolidated corporate ownership and in its limited news coverage, endlessly downsized newsrooms and narrow range of viewpoints. Its economics reporting reflects the interests of its corporate owners and advertisers; its domestic reporting and debate is strictly framed and limited by the prevailing rhetoric of Democratic and Republican leaders; its anemic foreign policy coverage is editorially dictated by the State Department and Pentagon.

This closed media system wraps the public in a cocoon of myths, euphemisms and propaganda to leave us exceptionally ignorant about our own country and the world we live in. Reporters Without Borders ranks

the U.S. 48th out of 180 countries on its Press Freedom Index, once again making the U.S. an exceptional outlier among wealthy countries.

It's true people can search for their own truth on social media to counter the corporate babble, but social media is itself a distraction. People spend countless hours on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other platforms venting their anger and frustration without getting up off the couch to actually do something—except perhaps sign a petition. “Clicktivism” will not change the world.

Add to this the endless distractions of Hollywood, video games, sports and consumerism, and the exhaustion that comes with working several jobs to make ends meet. The resulting

political passivity of Americans is not some strange accident of American culture but the intended product of a mutually reinforcing web of economic, political and media systems that keep the American public confused, distracted and convinced of our own powerlessness.

The political docility of the American public does not mean that Americans are happy with the way things are, and the unique challenges this induced docility poses for American political activists and organizers surely cannot be more daunting than the life-threatening repression faced by activists in Chile, Haiti or Iraq.

So how can we liberate ourselves from our assigned roles as passive spectators and mindless cheerleaders for a venal rul-

ing class that is laughing all the way to the bank and through the halls of power as it grabs ever more concentrated wealth and power at our expense?

Few expected a year ago that 2019 would be a year of global uprising against the neoliberal economic and political system that has dominated the world for forty years. Few predicted new revolutions in Chile or Iraq or Algeria. But popular uprisings have a way of confounding conventional wisdom.

The catalysts for each of these uprisings have also been surprising. The protests in Chile began over an increase in subway fares. In Lebanon, the spark was a proposed tax on WhatsApp and other social media accounts. Hikes in fuel tax triggered the yellow vest protests in France,



Protests in Lebanon
Photo by P.jowdy/Shutterstock.com

while the ending of fuel subsidies was a catalyst in both Ecuador and Sudan.

The common factor in all these movements is the outrage of ordinary people at systems and laws that reward corruption, oligarchy and plutocracy at the expense of their own quality of life. In each country, these catalysts were the final straws that broke the camel's back, but once people were in the street, protests quickly turned into more general uprisings demanding the resignation of leaders and governments.

They have the guns but we have the numbers. State repression and violence have only fueled greater popular demands for more fundamental change, and millions of protesters in country after country have remained committed to nonviolence and peaceful protest—in stark contrast to the rampant violence of the right-wing coup in Bolivia.

While these uprisings seem spontaneous, in every country where ordinary people have risen up in 2019, activists have been working for years to build the movements that eventually brought large numbers of people onto the streets and into the headlines.

Erica Chenoweth's research on the history of nonviolent protest movements found that whenever at least 3.5 percent of a population have taken to the streets to demand political change, governments have been unable to resist their demands. Here in the U.S., Transparency International found that the number of Americans who see

“direct action,” including street protests, as the antidote to our corrupt political system has risen from 17 percent to 25 percent since Trump took office, far more than Chenoweth's 3.5 percent. Only 28 percent still see simply “voting for a clean candidate” as the answer. So maybe we are just waiting for the right catalyst to strike a chord with the American public.

In fact, the work of progressive activists in the U.S. is already upsetting the neoliberal status quo. Without the movement-building work of thousands of Americans, Bernie Sanders would still be a little-known Senator from Vermont, largely ignored by the corporate media and the Democratic Party. Sanders's wildly successful first presidential campaign in 2016 pushed a new generation of American politicians to commit to real policy solutions to real problems, instead of the vague promises and applause lines that serve as smokescreens for the corrupt agendas of neoliberal politicians like Trump and Biden.

We can't predict exactly what catalyst will trigger a mass movement in the U.S. like the ones we are seeing overseas, but with more and more Americans, especially young people, demanding an alternative to a system that doesn't serve their needs, the tinder for a revolutionary movement is everywhere. We just have to keep kicking up sparks until one catches fire. Z

Medea Benjamin, co-founder of CODEPINK for Peace, is the author of *Inside Iran: The Real*

History and Politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Kingdom of the Unjust: Behind the U.S.-Saudi Connection.

Nicolas J. S. Davies is a freelance writer, a researcher for CODEPINK and the author of *Blood on Our Hands: The American Invasion and Destruction of Iraq.*

On the Road to Gaza: The Freedom Flo-tilla Will Sail Again

By Ramzy Baroud

What is Gaza to us but an Israeli missile, a rudimentary rocket, a demolished home, an injured child being whisked away by his peers under a hail of bullets? On a daily basis, Gaza is conveyed to us as a bloody image or a dramatic video, none of which can truly capture the everyday reality of the Strip—its formidable steadfastness, the everyday acts of resistance, and the type of suffering that can never be really understood through a customary glance at a social media post.

At long last, the chief prosecutor of the International Court of Justice (ICC), Fatou Bensouda, has declared her “satisfaction” that “war crimes have been—or are being—committed in the

West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.” As soon as the ICC statement was made on December 20, pro-Palestinian groups felt a rare moment of relief. Finally, Israel will stand accused, potentially paying for its recurring bloodbath in the isolated and besieged Gaza Strip, its military occupation and apartheid in the West Bank, and much more.

However, it could take years for the ICC to initiate its legal proceedings and render its verdict. Moreover, there are no political guarantees that an ICC decision indicting Israel would ever be respected, let alone implemented.

Meanwhile, the siege on Gaza persists, only to be interrupted by a massive war, like the one of 2014, or a less destructive one, similar to the latest Israeli onslaught in November. And with every war, more dismal statistics are produced, more lives shattered, and more painful stories are told and retold.

For years, civil society groups across the world labored to destabilize this horrific status quo. They organized, held vigils, wrote letters to their political representatives and so on. To no avail. Frustrated by government inaction, a small group of activists sailed to Gaza in a small boat in August 2008, succeeding in doing what the United Nations has failed to do: they broke, however fleetingly, the Israeli siege on the impoverished Strip.

This symbolic action of the Free Gaza movement had a tremendous impact. It sent a clear message to Palestinians in oc-

cupied Palestine that their fate is not only determined by the Israeli government and military machine; that there are other actors who are capable of challenging the dreadful silence of the international community; that not all Westerners are as complicit as their governments in the prolonged suffering of the Palestinian people.

Since then, many more solidarity missions have attempted to follow suit, coming across the sea atop flotillas or in large caravans through the Sinai desert. Some have successfully reached Gaza, delivering medical aid and other supplies. The majority, however, were sent back or had their boats hijacked in international waters by the Israeli navy.

The outcome of all of this has been the writing of a new chapter of solidarity with the Pales-

tinian people that went beyond the occasional demonstration and the typical signing of a petition.

The second Palestinian Intifada, the uprising of 2002, had already redefined the role of the “activist” in Palestine. The formation of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) allowed thousands of international activists from around the world to participate in “direct action” in Palestine—thus fulfilling, however symbolically, a role that is typically played by a United Nations protective force.

ISM activists, however, employed non-violent means of registering civil society’s rejection of the Israeli occupation. Expectedly, Israel did not honor the fact that many of these activists came from countries deemed “friendly” by Tel Aviv’s standards. The killing of U.S. and



Demonstrators in support of the Flotilla for Gaza Solidarity protest to break the blockade of Gaza, sponsored by Code Pink at the Sausalito Southern Marin ferry terminal, by Phil Pasquini/Shutterstock.com

British nationals Rachel Corrie and Tom Hurndall in Gaza in 2003 and 2004 respectively, was just the precursor of Israeli violence that was to follow.

In May 2010, the Israeli navy attacked the Freedom Flotilla consisting of the Turkish-owned ship *MV Mavi Marmara* and others, killing 10 unarmed humanitarian workers and wounding at least 50 more. As was the case with the murder of Rachel and Tom, there was no real accountability for the Israeli attack on the solidarity boats.

It must be understood that Israeli violence is not random nor is it just a reflection of Israel's notoriety and disregard of international and humanitarian law. With every violent episode, Israel hopes to dissuade outside actors from getting involved in "Israeli affairs." Yet, time and again, the solidarity movement returns with a defiant message, insisting that no country, not even Israel, has the right to commit war crimes with impunity.

Following a recent meeting in the Dutch city of Rotterdam, the International Coalition of the Freedom Flotilla, which consists of many international groups, has decided to, once more, sail to Gaza. The solidarity mission is scheduled for the summer of 2020, and, like most of the 35 previous attempts, the Flotilla is likely to be intercepted by the Israeli Navy. Yet, another attempt will likely follow, and many more, until the Gaza siege is completely lifted. It has become clear that the purpose of these humanitarian missions is not to deliver a few medical supplies to



Demonstrators in support of the Flotilla for Gaza Solidarity protest to break the blockade of Gaza sponsored by Code Pink at the Sausalito Southern Marin ferry terminal, by Phil Pasquini/Shutterstock.com

the nearly two million besieged Gazans, but to challenge the Israeli narrative that has turned the occupation and isolation of Palestinians to a status quo ante, to an "Israeli affair."

According to the United Nations Office in Occupied Palestine, the poverty rate in Gaza seems to be increasing at an alarming speed of 2 percent per year. By the end of 2017, 53 percent of Gaza's population lived in poverty, two-thirds of them living in "deep poverty." This terrible number includes over 400,000 children.

An image, a video, a chart or a social media post can never convey the pain of 400,000 children, who experience real hunger every single day of their lives so that the Israeli government may achieve its military and political designs in Gaza. Indeed, Gaza is not just an Israeli missile, a demolished home, and an injured

child. It is an entire nation that is suffering and resisting, in near-complete isolation from the rest of the world.

True solidarity should aim at forcing Israel to end the protracted occupation and siege on the Palestinian people, sailing the high seas, if necessary. Thankfully, the good activists of the Freedom Flotilla are doing just that. Z

Ramzy Baroud is a journalist and the Editor of *The Palestine Chronicle*. He is the author of five books. His latest is *These Chains Will Be Broken: Palestinian Stories of Struggle and Defiance in Israeli Prisons* (Clarity Press). Dr. Baroud is a Non-resident Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Islam and Global Affairs (CIGA), Zaim University. His website is www.ramzybaroud.net.

Why is Animal Research So Seldom in the News?

By Martha Rosenberg

If you are like most people, you know a lot more about how farm animals are treated on factory farms than dogs, primates and other animals are treated in U.S. labs. It is no coincidence.

Exposure of what occurs behind the Plexiglass Curtain would be so damaging to National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded university research contracts that millions are spent to prevent transparency. For example, in 2009 the University of Iowa was cleared to construct an \$11.2 million, 35,000-square-foot “subterranean vivarium that will house experimental animals to be used in biomedical research and offer an extra measure of protection from animal rights extremists,” reported *The Scientist*. The experimental animals include primates, sheep, pigs and rabbits.

Why would exposure be so damaging? Because much government-sponsored research is expensive, cruel, repetitive and without scientific value. Better that it stays out of the news.

Lab animals are the actual currency of government grants

to medical centers and universities—a kind of academic pork. At a medical center where I worked, researchers felt they had not “made it” until they were given primates instead of lowly cats or rodents. And while NIH Director Francis Collins, who describes himself as a “serious Christian,” has tackled a lack of minorities and sexism in science, he is strangely silent on the millions, probably billions, of animals he sends to their death—usually for meaningless experiments.

Animal Research at the Highest Government Levels

Thomas R. Insel directed the Yerkes Regional Primate Research Center at Emory University, one of the world’s largest centers for primate research, before becoming director of the NIH’s National Institute of Mental Health. In one experiment Insel participated in, newborn monkeys were “removed from their mothers within 48 h of birth,” and subjected to “stressors” without being “able to use a social companion to buffer their response to a stressor.” What was learned? “As expected from previous studies, monkeys removed from their mother shortly after birth and raised in standard nursery conditions develop a syndrome characterized by decreased affiliation, increased aggression, and increased self-directed, repetitive behavior.”

In another experiment conducted by Insel on voles, a

mouse-like mammal, “an animal was placed in the start box” with 2-8 days old pups. “Parental behavior was recorded as time spent with pups, either nursing, grooming or crouching during a 5-min period. Females were decapitated the same day.”

Similar banal, cruel and taxpayer-funded research has been conducted by Nora Volkow, director of the NIH’s National Institute on Drug Abuse. One research paper co-written by Volkow shows a bloody “pregnant bonnet macaque in transverse position within HR+ PET scanner . . . positioned so that maternal and fetal organs were within same field of view.” The paper concludes that when female primates are dosed with cocaine, fetuses are affected too. Does anyone not know this?

The NIH’s National Institute on Aging (NIA) is also complicit. A few years ago, when I inquired about degrading and mocking primate images posted on its website from an official NIA workshop created by Wake Forest’s Thomas Clarkson, the images were promptly removed with no written explanations. The photos showed monkeys posed with glasses, posed at typewriters and dressed in clothing. “Funny” cartoon bubbles were added.

Defending Their Dollars

There is probably no industry more afraid of transparency than animal research. Ever since Alex Pacheco exposed treatment of the Silver Spring monkeys in 1981, animal researchers have

been reduced to uttering “it’s not how it looks” or “let us explain” when unwanted images surface.

And, expectedly, animal researchers turn nasty when their deeds are exposed and career security threatened. For example, when a group called Progress for Science dared to question taxpayer-funded primate research conducted at UCLA in 2014, they were met by an angry mob of as many as 40 UCLA researchers and their supporters who yelled obscenities. Some pro-animal research protesters became so livid they had to be restrained by police. It was hard to believe the mob was, by day, men and women of “science” dedicated to advancing human medicine. It was reminiscent of Northwestern University medical students who jeered and screamed at protestors of their “dog labs” outside their medical building in 1988. Are these future healers?

In the 1980s, the animal research industry tried to spin negative public opinion with campaigns like “your daughter or your dog” implying your child would die if the dog or chimp didn’t. Then researchers replaced dog labs with pig labs, a less loved animal. But by the 2000s, the animal research industry, running scared, pushed through the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act which criminalizes interference with “the operations of an animal enterprise” a precursor to “Ag-Gag” laws covering farm operations.

Yes the Public Can Judge

Animal Research

In addition to underground vivariums, electronic surveillance, code cards, high tech security and the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act, the animal research industry has another way of evading scrutiny: the public can’t judge their “high level” science. You do not have the scientific background to judge the work of scientists so “trust them.” Yet revealing that maternal deprivation causes harm in babies or maternal cocaine use affects the fetus is not “high level” science—it is a waste of taxpayer dollars, cruelty to animals and an insult to our intelligence.

Consider the “Draize Test” in which millions of restrained, conscious animals—usually albino rabbits but sometimes dogs—have test substances applied to their eyes to observe for redness, swelling, discharge, ulceration, hemorrhaging, cloudiness, or blindness. This “scientific” test is thrown out when product liability cases come to court because “animal results cannot be extrapolated to humans.” So why are they done?

The animal-research indus-

try is a vast, macabre enterprise richly supporting medical centers and individual researchers with almost no transparency or accountability. The public is denied a right to “know” even though the public pays for it. Z

A Winning Strategy for Power, Already Underway

By Ted Glick

How can we truly turn things around, bring about revolutionary change in our badly wounded, struggling world? For those of us who identify with the up-and-down, historical struggle for a world where its resources and decision-making are shared among all in a just way, and democracy and human rights are for real, it is important that most of us agree in general on the main outlines of a strate-



Making a revolution in the U.S. needs a clear, understandable, thoughtful plan grounded in reality, not up-in-the-air wishes or dreams

By johnjohnson/Shutterstock.com

gy for such a change.

Having a strategy is, in essence, like having a well-thought-out plan. If you're going to get from point A to point B, and it's not an easy path, you need to figure out how you are going to do so, how you will overcome the many obstacles in your way and make it to your point B objective. Making a revolution in the U.S. for sure needs a clear, understandable, thoughtful plan grounded in reality, not up-in-the-air wishes or dreams.

Down through history people on the Left have often been at odds over key strategic questions: What about third party vs. work in the Democratic Party?; Is the working class the key sector and what is the working class today anyway?; the issue of class vs. intersectionality vs. not seeing them as either/or; the kind of organizations(s) needed to give leadership to the struggle for transformational change; and more.

Is it naive to believe, as I do, that right now, today, there is a lot more agreement among a wide swath of activists and organizers on the Left about questions of strategy than there has been in a long time? This doesn't mean that we're all united, we definitely aren't, but as I see and experience the broad Left, I think it is possible that the urgency of our situation (climate catastrophe, massive inequality, rising racism and white nationalism, repressive government moves), together with positive developments within the progressive movement over the last decade, may have produced

much more agreement among a very large percentage of us than we collectively realize.

Below are my ideas on what I personally see as the necessary aspects of a winning strategy. I see many of them very much in motion, happening now, by no means just ideas grabbed out of thin air. That fact is very hopeful.

My ideas fall into nine categories:

- 1) We must build a broadly-based, multi-cultural, multi-issue, multi-gender popular alliance, uniting people of color, women, youth, LGBTQ people, trade unionists, farmers, small business people, people with disabilities, professionals and others.
- 2) This alliance must be deeply rooted within the low income sector of the working class, as well as in all sectors of the working class, which makes up about 75 percent of the U.S. population.
- 3) Women, people of color, LGBTQ people and young people, particularly working-class people from those constituencies, must be significantly represented in leadership bodies of the organizations making up the broad alliance as much as possible.
- 4) The alliance must function as a welcoming, democratic movement of movements: for racial and gender justice and equality; for the right to organize and unionize on the job; against militarism and for justice-based peace; for detoxification and protection of our natural environment and a rapid shift from dirty and dangerous fossil fuels and nukes to clean, renewable energy sources; for immigrant rights, reproductive rights and an end to mass incarceration; for a Green New Deal, Medicare for All, a \$15 minimum wage, tuition-free public higher education and student debt cancellation; and more.
- 5) This alliance movement must be grounded in day-to-day, community-, workplace-, and issue-based organizing by millions of volunteer and paid activists and organizers, utilizing popular education approaches and techniques as much as possible.
- 6) It must engage in independent electoral campaigns from the most local to the highest national level, doing so in a tactically flexible way as far as whether to run on a Democratic, Independent, Working Families, Green, or other line.
- 7) It must continually but strategically organize public marches, demonstrations, strikes and nonviolent direct actions on key issues, as part of ongoing campaigns and in support of the overall alliance program.
- 8) The diverse and extensive mix of organizations which make up the movement/alliance must make conscious efforts to devel-

op group-centered leadership, not individual-centered leadership, to evolve a “not me, us,” democratic internal culture, and to provide a welcoming and personally rewarding experience for all those involved.

- 9) And, finally, throughout all of this work, its members and leadership must consciously strive to treat one another and all with whom we interact with respect, personal integrity and higher love.

I really do believe that in many of these areas we are well along the road, and in all of them that progress, sometimes uneven, is being made.

I believe that we can win. Z

Ted Glick has been a progressive activist, organizer and writer since 1968. Past writings and other information can be found at <http://tedglick.com>, and he can be followed on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/jtglick>.

War with Iran Is at Stake—and Democrats’ High Jumps Over Low Standards Aren’t Helping

By Norman Solomon

The huge crisis with Iran is more dangerous because so many Democrats have been talking out of both sides of their congressional mouths.

An example is the recent rhetoric from Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT). “The attack on our embassy in Baghdad is horrifying but predictable,” he tweeted on the last day of 2019. “Trump has rendered America impotent in the Middle East. No one fears us, no one listens to us. America has been reduced to huddling in safe rooms, hoping the bad guys will go away. What a disgrace.”

Fast forward one week: Murphy was on the Senate floor declaring “we can choose to get off of this path of escalation and make decisions that correct this president’s recklessness and

keep Americans safe.”

On the same day, in Murphy’s home state, the *Connecticut Mirror* reported that he “has emerged as a leading critic of Trump administration hostility to Iran” and called him “the most vocal” Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee “in criticizing President Donald Trump’s decision to kill Iranian General Qasem Soleimani in a drone strike.”

It’s a partisan pattern that’s all too common among Democrats on Capitol Hill—goading Trump as a wimp and then bemoaning his aggressive actions. And so, in a matter of days, Murphy was decrying the “recklessness” of the same president he’d alleged “has rendered America impotent in the Middle East” because “no one fears us.”



In a matter of days, Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) was decrying the “recklessness” of the same president he’d alleged “has rendered America impotent in the Middle East” because “no one fears us,” by viewimage/Shutterstock.com



SEATTLE, WASHINGTON — Anti-war protest following the assassination of Qassem Soleimani at Victor Steinbrueck Park, by JohannMG/Shutterstock.com

Murphy is one of the better senators on foreign policy—and that’s a key point here. He still couldn’t resist baiting Trump in a way that implicitly scorned him for failure to use enough military violence.

At a time like this, the spirit of Wayne Morse is badly needed. During his 24-year career representing Oregon in the Senate, he rose to prominence as a rigorously consistent defender of international law as well as the U.S. Constitution. An unwavering foe of might-makes-right foreign policy, he unequivocally opposed the Vietnam War from the outset.

Morse never backed down. And he refused to play along with questions based on false premises, as network TV footage makes clear. During his appearance on the CBS program “Face the Nation” in May 1964, fireworks began a split second

after moderator Peter Lisagor said: “Senator, the Constitution gives to the president of the United States the sole responsibility for the conduct of foreign policy.”

“Couldn’t be more wrong,” Morse shot back. “You couldn’t make a more unsound legal statement than the one you have just made. This is the promulgation of an old fallacy that foreign policy belongs to the president of the United States. That’s nonsense.”

Lisagor sounded a bit exasperated: “To whom does it belong then, senator?”

Morse didn’t hesitate. “It belongs to the American people,” the senator fired back. And he added: “What I’m saying is—under our Constitution all the president is, is the administrator of the people’s foreign policy, those are his prerogatives, and I’m pleading that the American

people be given the facts about foreign policy—”

“You know, senator, that the American people cannot formulate and execute foreign policy —”

“Why do you say that? Why, you’re a man of little faith in democracy if you make that kind of comment,” Morse retorted. “I have complete faith in the ability of the American people to follow the facts if you’ll give them. And my charge against my government is we’re not giving the American people the facts.”

Three months later, Morse was one of only two senators to vote against the Tonkin Gulf Resolution that opened the floodgates to the mass carnage of the Vietnam War.

When President Lyndon Johnson’s iconic adviser Gen. Max Taylor—a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and ex-ambassador to South

Vietnam—appeared before the Foreign Relations Committee on February 17, 1966, this exchange (preserved on video) ensued:

SEN. MORSE: “We’re engaged in a historic debate in this country, we have honest differences of opinion. I happen to hold to the point of view that it isn’t going to be too long before the American people as a people will repudiate our war in Southeast Asia.”

GEN. TAYLOR: “That of course is good news to Hanoi, senator.”

SEN. MORSE: “Oh I know that that’s the smear artists that your militarists give to those of us that have honest differences of opinion with you, but I don’t intend to get down in the gutter with you and engage in that kind of debate, general. I’m simply saying that in my judgment the president of the United States is already losing the people of this country by the millions in connection with this war in Southeast Asia. And all I’m asking is—if the people decide that this war should be stopped in Southeast Asia, are you going to take the position that’s a weakness on the home front in a democracy?”

GEN. TAYLOR: “I would feel that our people were badly misguided and did not understand the consequences of such a disaster.”

SEN. MORSE: “Well, we agree on one thing, that they can be badly misguided—and you and the president, in my judgment, have been misleading them for a long time in this war.”

Much has changed during the last five decades, but deception remains central to the state of perpetual war that funnels mega-billions in profits to the military-industrial complex. The vast majority of Congress members are part of that complex, including most Democrats. Instead of thanking those members of Congress for not being worse, progressive constituents should organize to insist that they quickly become much better—or face escalating protests as well as political consequences.

Z

Review of The Scourge of Neoliberalism: U.S. Economic Policy From Reagan to Trump

By Jack Rasmus
Clarity Press, Inc.

Review by David
Baker

At 272 pages, Dr. Jack Rasmus’s new book, *The Scourge of Neoliberalism: US Economic Policy From Reagan to Trump*, is a big little book. To understand its importance, a comparison to another big little

book by John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, is helpful.

Economic Consequences grew out of Keynes’s participation in the post-World War I peace negotiation as an English representative. When Keynes discovered the extraordinary punitive nature of the peace being imposed upon Germany he walked out in protest. His book explains why.

Economic Consequences begins with a careful, common sense explanation as to how the economies of Germany France and England had become interlocked and interdependent which we would now describe as a global economy in the making. So to punish one, in this case Germany, was to punish all. Likewise, the punitive economic sanctions imposed upon Germany were so severe that Keynes predicted that a political monster would arise in Germany. That political monster was ultimately embodied in the person of Adolf Hitler.

The Scourge describes how our home-grown political monsters came into being, with Rasmus doing a great job with the economic history that helped to create these monsters. His baseline is that economic structures are not static, but constantly changing to control evolving economic and political challenges.

Rasmus divides the American economy since 1900 into three periods: roughly before World War I, during and after World War II, and the Reagan era, which kicked off neoliberal-

ism. In the two World War eras, America faced a happy challenge: how to manage America's growing economic might so it would become an unsurpassed superpower. The first restructuring made U.S. capitalists an equal partner with British and European capital; the second, during and immediately after WWII, made the U.S. a global economic superpower. The third era, was, and is, an unhappy time for America's policymakers as they were faced with real challenges and decline. Their goal was now to defeat domestic challengers, such as unions, as well as global challengers, such as Japan and Germany, for decades to come.

The stage was set for the third era in the early 1970s. Unions were extremely powerful and had made unprecedented wage gains of up to 25 percent in the early 1970s. Meanwhile, America could not compete with Japan and Europe due to its lagging and aging industrial infrastructure. So the policymakers faced a real dilemma. Their reaction came to be called neoliberalism, which is neither new nor liberal, but a marketing term exploited by an all-too-compliant intellectual class.

Neoliberalism is essentially a set of crude policies that maintains high short-term profits at the expense of long-term profits and prosperity for all. The policymakers did not want to plunge, say, 35 percent of GDP into research and development and infrastructure upgrades because that would cut into their profits. Instead they took the

easy way out: they cut taxes for businesses and the wealthy; they destroyed unions; they offshored U.S. manufacturing to low-wage countries; they repealed decades of important regulations; they destroyed real pension plans for the lower 90 percent; robbed Social Security; they onshored cheap high-tech help from foreign countries; they unleashed rivers of capital across the globe; they let the banks gamble with financial instruments; they destroyed public education and crippled the young with more than \$1.5 trillion in student loans; they poured at least \$5 trillion of virtually free money into the banks and investors from the Fed and on and on.

The Democratic Party's response to all this was appalling: one campaign promise after another was broken and the lower 90 percent were faced with an active enabler of neoliberal policies, Bill Clinton, or a passive enabler of neoliberal policies, Barack Obama.

Rasmus also excels at showing the economic consequences of these policies: stagnating incomes and standard of living for the lower 90 percent; grotesque income inequality; a rotting infrastructure; and lack of access by the lower 90 percent to adequate housing, healthcare, transportation and education. America has become a second rate country with an angry precariat.

Rasmus's discussion of war/defense spending is illuminating. At no time since 1900 was any country a military threat to the United States. That ended in

1812. And yet, beginning with Reagan and continuing through Obama/Trump war/defense spending has gone through the roof. Why?

First, war/defense spending is an easy money conduit for the Fortune 500 since, by definition, there is no foreign competition. Likewise, it is a great way of funding research and development without calling it that. Who would be willing to pour tens of billions of tax dollars into IT to make, say, Bill Gates rich? Finally there was a tacit acknowledgment that since America could not compete economically then it would continue to compete militarily. Rasmus demonstrates how this is a complete policy dead-end.

This war/defense policy created the dilemma of double deficits. That is, how can America cut taxes and increase war/defense spending? Answer: the double deficit. The U.S. agreed to allow its allies to import significantly more to the U.S. than the U.S. was exporting to them but to fund this chronic and growing trade deficit the allies agreed to buy by large quantities of U.S. debt to close the gap in deficit spending. Likewise taxes for businesses and wealthy investors have been cut by \$15 trillion since 2001, which also pushed the domestic deficit through the roof. But this rising debt generated huge interest payments, which the Congressional Budget Office estimates in ten years will be about \$1 trillion in interest payments alone per year. Meanwhile the lack of real research and development

investment by the U.S. led to low productivity growth which in turn led to the further compression of wages/income for the lower 90 percent.

Then, finally, there is what I call the China Challenge, which demonstrates the dead end of this policy choice. Several years ago, China announced its 2025 policy plan, which would put China in the lead of new IT development such as G5, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence. This is a real and significant threat to military leadership by the U.S. because new IT developments have obvious and long-term military applications. This prompted Trump's trade war with China that ultimately collapsed.

As trade war talk intensified, the purchase of American debt by Asian countries slowed; equally important the Chinese stopped buying American agricultural products which was one of the core political constituencies of Trump: Midwest farmers, large and small, many of whom went bankrupt, started screaming at the Trump administration to back off from China. So Trump backed off, despite his public announcements that he had won the trade war. The Chinese will steam ahead to become the world leader in IT while the U.S. falls farther and farther behind.

Another important policy dead end is the Greenspan "put." The Greenspan "put" is to maintain low interest rates through the Federal Reserve. Those low interest rates allows

multinationals to achieve high profits on their foreign manufacture subsidiaries. How? Low rates keep the value of the U.S. dollar low and therefore the exchange rate value of the foreign currency of multinationals in the country of their operation high. This allows the multinationals to "buy" more dollars and thus return more profits in U.S. dollars to their main offices. It also allows U.S. exporters to other countries to sell more, raise profits, and beat out competitors. But the low interest rates allow financial institutions to gamble in financial speculation, which has prompted one asset spike after another and the inevitable collapse of the same, such as the dot.com bust, the savings-and-loan collapse, and the subprime meltdown. Each collapse becomes more severe than the previous one, but the regulated banks and the unregulated banks, shadow banks, continue to speculate in financial assets because of the billions of dollars in immediate profits.

Likewise, the low interest rates benefit major businesses by allowing stock buybacks, dividend payouts, mergers and acquisitions and offshoring of jobs. Little if anything goes into the real economy in the U.S. to improve productivity and create full time jobs for Americans.

This makes financial markets more more unstable and requires the Federal Reserve to pump more and more money into the system—trillions of dollars which should have gone into real jobs in the real economy in

the U.S. Instead, they went into stock buybacks, mergers and acquisitions, dividend payouts, offshoring of manufacturing units, and the hoarding of hundreds of billions of dollars offshore by major multinationals. Apple alone is hoarding over \$250 billion in various countries outside of the U.S.

And then the problem becomes that even a modest spike in interest rates causes a collapse in assets such as 35 percent decline in the stock market in 2018 which prompted a fight between the Fed and Trump. Trump "won" so the Fed lowered rates, which only means the next collapse will be more severe than the last one.

Rasmus also does a good job of describing the natural and structural changes that are coming to the economy. The key driver is energy production which has moved from water to coal to gas and oil, and is now moving toward solar and hydrogen production. At each stage of this transformation of energy production, the economy has to be retooled and refitted to meet the challenges of the transformation in question. This stretches many businesses to the breaking point, i.e. bankruptcy.

The energy component is changing at the same time that IT development is pushing economic structures into a whole new dimension through artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, G5 Communications Systems, and biotechnology. The problem is that neoliberalism has no answer to these significant

problems and has no means of dealing with, for example, what I've called the China Challenge. Bloated with debt, major multinationals cannot, and will not, make the necessary investments required to meet the challenges of these new developments and remain competitive.

Rasmus pushes the future even farther by describing how our political institutions are becoming more and more distorted and less and less democratic. The means of making America oligarchic is through a multitude of devices such as the electoral college, the U.S. Supreme Court, gerrymandering, voter suppression, and the rivers of money that flow from the 1% throughout our political institutions, utterly corrupting them.

Even a great book has flaws. Missing from *The Scourge* is a discussion of how the war on drugs—originally launched by Reagan which continues to this day—is a potent weapon of neoliberalism to permanently disenfranchise tens of millions of

poor people of color from any meaningful participation in U.S. society by labeling them felons. The obvious economic and political use of the drug wars is to criminalize a potentially political disruptive segment of our society and make sure that the U.S. has no obligation to help them with decent jobs, housing, education or healthcare.

As with the drug wars, students loans, now at \$1.5 trillion, disable a large potentially politically disruptive element of society from political activism by forcing them to spend much of their lives managing debt.

Rasmus's relentless drumbeat that the future only holds endless job losses to automation is true, but there is a deeper issue. Automation, artificial intelligence and other IT developments, could free up critical and needed human resources to meet the challenges of the future. Think about climate change. Think about the tens of millions of jobs that could be created that are not only necessary but fun-

damental to avoid the coming environmental collapse.

Rasmus is a powerful advocate for Medicare for all, but should also consider that this also would demand huge human resources—the training of thousands of healthcare workers in the U.S. Healthcare workers, like IT workers, are onshored by the thousands. We must train our own to take on the difficult task of caring for all throughout the country and not just in wealthy areas along the coasts. The lack of access to quality health care by the rural poor is criminal; it is not a “mistake” that many of Trump's most ardent supporters are the rural poor.

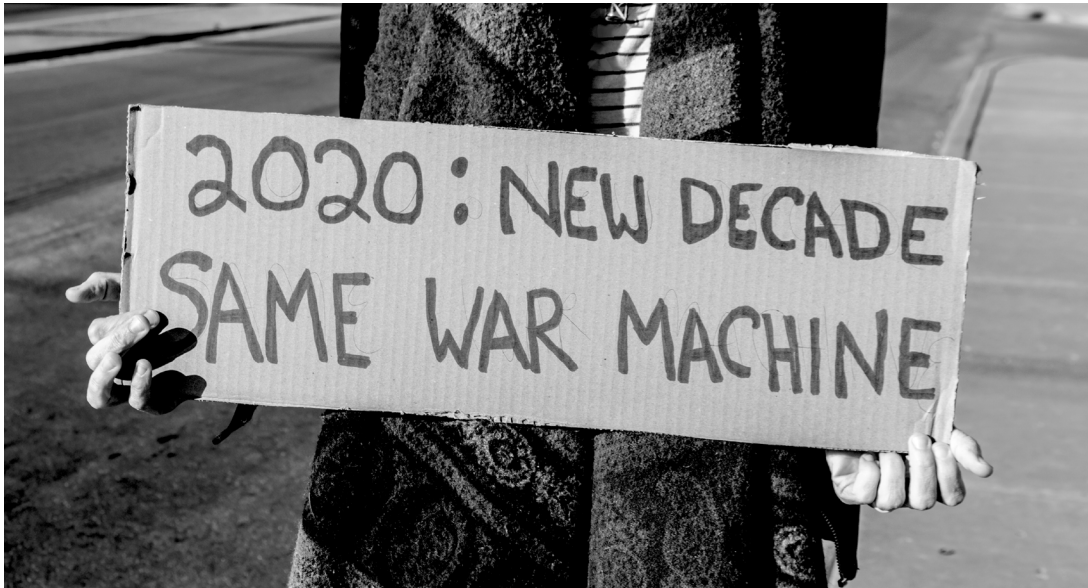
Finally, I wish Rasmus would provide a glossary. Such terms as median versus average income and negative interest rates, continuously escape me despite the fact that I've read about them in context at least 10 times.

But overall, *The Scourge* is a powerful, important book. We ignore it at our peril. Z



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Feature



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The U.S. is a Rogue State and Suleimani's Assassination Confirms It

C.J. Polychroniou interviews Noam Chomsky

C.J. Polychroniou: Noam, the U.S. assassination of Iran's Quds Force commander Qassim Suleimani has reaffirmed Washington's long-held obsession with Tehran and its clerical regime, which goes all the way back to the late 1970s. What is the conflict between U.S. and Iran all about, and

does the assassination of Suleimani constitute an act of war?

Noam Chomsky: Act of war? Perhaps we can settle on reckless international terrorism. It seems that Trump's decision, on a whim, appalled high

Pentagon officials who briefed him on options, on pragmatic grounds. If we wish to look beyond, we might ask how we would react in comparable circumstances.

Suppose that Iran were to murder the second-highest U.S. official, its top general, in the Mexico City international airport, along with the commander of a large part of the U.S.-supported army of an allied nation. Would that be an act of war? Others can decide. It is enough for us to recognize that the analogy is fair enough, and that the pretexts put forth by Washington collapse so quickly on examination that it would be embarrassing to run through them.

Suleimani was greatly respected—not only in Iran, where he was a kind of cult figure. This is recognized by U.S. experts on Iran. One of the most prominent experts, Vali Nasr (no dove, and who detests Suleimani), says that Iraqis, including Iraqi Kurds, “don’t see him as the nefarious figure that the West does, but they see him through the prism of defeating ISIS.” They have not forgotten that when the huge, heavily armed, U.S.-trained Iraqi army quickly collapsed, and the Kurdish capital of Erbil, then Baghdad and all of Iraq were about to fall in the hands of ISIS [also known as Daesh], it was Suleimani and the Iraqi Shia militias he organized that saved the country. Not a small matter.

As for what the conflict is all about, the background reasons are not obscure. It has long been a primary principle of U.S. foreign policy to control the vast energy resources of the Middle East: to control, not necessarily to use. Iran has been central to this objective during the post-World War II period, and its escape from the U.S. orbit in 1979 has accordingly been intolerable.

The “obsession” can be traced to 1953, when Britain—the overlord of Iran since oil was discovered there—was unable to prevent the government from taking over its own resources and called on the global superpower to manage the operation. There is no space to review the course of the obsession since in detail, but some highlights are instructive.

Britain called on Washington with some reluctance. To do so meant surrendering more of its former empire to the U.S. and declining even more to

the role of “junior partner” in global management, as the foreign office recognized with dismay. The Eisenhower administration took over. It organized a military coup that overthrew the parliamentary regime and re-installed the Shah, restoring the oil concession to its rightful hands, with the U.S. taking over 40 percent of the former British concession. Interestingly, Washington had to force U.S. majors to accept this gift; they preferred to keep to cheaper Saudi oil (which the U.S. had taken over from Britain in a mini war during World War II). But under government coercion, they were forced to comply: one of those unusual but instructive incidents revealing how the government sometimes pursues long-term imperial interests over the objections of the powerful corporate sector that largely controls and even staffs it—with considerable resonance in U.S.-Iran relations in recent years.

The Shah proceeded to institute a harsh tyranny. He was regularly cited by Amnesty International as a leading practitioner of torture, always with strong U.S. support as Iran became one of the pillars of U.S. power in the region, along with the Saudi family dictatorship and Israel. Technically, Iran and Israel were at war. In reality, they had extremely close relations, which surfaced publicly after the overthrow of the Shah in 1979. The tacit relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia are surfacing much more clearly now within the framework of the reactionary alliance that the Trump administration is forging as a base for U.S. power in the region: the Gulf dictatorships, the Egyptian military dictatorship and Israel, linked to Modi’s India, Bolsonaro’s Brazil and other similar elements. A rare semblance of a coherent strategy in this chaotic administration.

The Carter administration strongly supported the Shah until the last moment. High U.S. officials—[Henry] Kissinger, [Dick] Cheney, [Donald] Rumsfeld—called on U.S. universities (mainly my own, MIT, over strong student protest but faculty acquiescence) to aid the Shah’s nuclear programs, even after he made clear that he was seeking nuclear weapons. When the popular uprising overthrew the Shah, the Carter administration was apparently split on whether to endorse the advice of de facto Israeli Ambassador Uri Lu-



By Spiz Photography/Shutterstock.com

brani, who counselled that “Tehran can be taken over by a very relatively small force, determined, ruthless, cruel. I mean the men who would lead that force will have to be emotionally geared to the possibility that they’d have to kill ten thousand people.”

It didn’t work, and soon Ayatollah Khomeini took over on an enormous wave of popular enthusiasm, establishing the brutal clerical autocracy that still reigns, crushing popular protests.

Shortly after, Saddam Hussein invaded Iran with strong U.S. backing, unaffected by his resort to chemical weapons that caused huge Iranian casualties; his monstrous chemical warfare attacks against Iraqi Kurds were denied by Reagan, who sought to blame Iran and blocked congressional condemnation.

Finally, the U.S. pretty much took over, sending naval forces to ensure Saddam’s control of the Gulf. After the U.S. guided missile cruiser *Vincennes* shot down an Iranian civilian airliner in a clearly marked commercial corridor, killing 290

passengers and returning to port to great acclaim and awards for exceptional service, Khomeini capitulated, recognizing that Iran cannot fight the U.S. President Bush then invited Iraqi nuclear scientists to Washington for advanced training in nuclear weapons production, a very serious threat against Iran.

Conflicts continued without a break, in more recent years focusing on Iran’s nuclear programs. These conflicts ended (in theory) with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, an agreement between Iran and the five permanent members of the UN, plus Germany, in which Iran agreed to sharply curtail its nuclear programs—none of them weapons programs—in return for Western concessions. The International Atomic Energy Agency, which carries out intensive inspections, reports that Iran fully lived up to the agreement. U.S. intelligence agrees.

The topic elicits much debate, unlike another question: Has the U.S. observed the agreement? Apparently not. The JCPOA states that all partic-

ipants are committed not to impede in any way Iran's reintegration into the global economy, particularly the global financial system, which the U.S. effectively controls. The U.S. is not permitted to interfere "in areas of trade, technology, finance and energy" and others.

While these topics are not investigated, it appears that Washington has been interfering steadily.

President Trump claims that his effective demolition of the JCPOA is an effort to negotiate an improvement. It's a worthy objective, easily realized. Any concerns about Iranian nuclear threats can be overcome by establishing a nuclear weapons-free zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East, with intensive inspections like those successfully implemented under the JCPOA.

As we have discussed before, this is quite straightforward. Regional support is overwhelming. The Arab states initiated the proposal long ago, and continue to agitate for it, with the strong support of Iran and the former nonaligned countries (G-77, now 132 countries). Europe agrees. In fact, there is only one barrier: the U.S., which regularly vetoes the proposal when it comes up at the review meetings of the Non-Proliferation Treaty countries, most recently by Obama in 2015. The U.S. will not permit inspection of Israel's enormous nuclear arsenal, or even concede its existence, though it is not in doubt. The reason is simple: under U.S. law (the Symington Amendment), conceding its existence would require terminating all aid to Israel.

So the simple method of ending the alleged concern about an Iranian threat is ruled out and the world must face grim prospects.

Since these topics are scarcely mentionable in the U.S., it is perhaps worthwhile to reiterate another forbidden matter: The U.S. and UK have a special responsibility to work to establish a NWFZ in the Middle East. They are formally committed to do so under Article 14 of UN Security Council Resolution 687, which they invoked in their effort to concoct some thin legal basis for their invasion of Iraq, claiming that Iraq had violated the Resolution with nuclear weapons programs. Iraq hadn't, as they were soon forced to concede. But the U.S. continues to violate the Resolution to the present

in order to protect its Israeli client and to allow Washington to violate U.S. law.

Interesting facts, which, unfortunately, are apparently too incendiary to see the light of day.

There's no point reviewing the years that followed in the hands of the man "sent by God to save Israel from Iran," in the words of the serious figure of the administration, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Returning to the original question, there's quite a lot to contemplate about what the conflict is about. In a phrase, primarily imperial power, damn the consequences.

The term "rogue state" (used widely by the U.S. State Department) refers to the pursuit of state interests without regard to accepted standards of international behavior and the basic principles of international law. Given that definition, isn't the U.S. a star example of a rogue state?

State Department officials are not the only ones to use the term "rogue state." It has also been used by prominent American political scientists—referring to the State Department. Not Trump's, Clinton's.

During the era between Reagan's murderous terrorist atrocities in Central America and Bush's invasion of Iraq, they recognized that for much of the world, the U.S. was "becoming the rogue superpower," considered "the single greatest external threat to their societies," and that, "In the eyes of much of the world, in fact, the prime rogue state today is the United States" (Harvard professor of the science of government and government adviser Samuel Huntington; President of the American Political Science Association Robert Jervis. Both in the main establishment journal, *Foreign Affairs*, 1999, 2001).

After Bush took over, qualifications were dropped. It was asserted as fact that the U.S. "has assumed many of the very features of the 'rogue nations' against which it has ... done battle." Others outside the U.S. mainstream might think of different words for the worst crime of the millennium, a textbook example of aggression without credible pretext, the "supreme international crime" of Nuremberg.



Alameda, CA - Alameda residents protesting the concept of war with Iran, by Sheila Fitzgerald/Shutterstock.com

We are supposed to revere the U.S. Constitution. We must therefore revere Article VI, which declares that valid treaties shall be “the supreme law of the land.”

And others sometimes express their opinions. Gallup runs regular polls of international opinion. In 2013 (the Obama years), it asked for the first time, which country is the greatest threat to world peace. The U.S. won; no one else even came close. Far behind in second place was Pakistan, presumably inflated by the Indian vote. Iran—the greatest threat to world peace in U.S. discourse—was scarcely mentioned.

That was also the last time the question was asked, though there needn’t have been much concern. It does not seem to have been reported in the U.S.

We might ponder these questions a little further. We are supposed to revere the U.S. Constitution, especially conservatives. We must therefore revere Article VI, which declares that valid treaties shall be “the supreme law of the land” and officials must be bound by them. In the post-war years, by far the most important such treaty is the UN Charter, instituted under U.S. initiative. It

bans “the threat or use of force” in international affairs; specifically, the common refrain that “all options are open” with regard to Iran. And all cases of resort to force unless explicitly authorized by the Security Council or in defense against armed attack (a narrowly construed notion) until the Security Council, which must be immediately notified, is able to act to terminate the attack.

We might consider what the world would look like if the U.S. Constitution were considered applicable to the U.S., but let’s put that interesting question aside—not, however, without mentioning that there is a respected profession, called “international lawyers and law professors,” who can learnedly explain that words don’t mean what they mean.

Iraq has struggled since the U.S. invasion in 2003 to maintain a balanced situation with both Washington and Tehran. However, the Iraqi parliament has voted after Suleimani’s assassination to expel all U.S. troops. Is this likely to happen? And, if it does, what impact would it have on future U.S.-Iraq-Iran relations, including the fight against ISIS?

We don't know whether it will happen. Even if the Iraqi government orders the U.S. to leave, will it do so? It's not obvious, and as always, public opinion in the U.S., if organized and committed, can help provide an answer.

As for ISIS, Trump has just given it another lease on life, just as he gave it a "get out of jail free" card when he betrayed Syrian Kurds, leaving them to the mercy of their bitter enemies Turkey and Assad after they had fulfilled their function of fighting the war against ISIS (with 11,000 casualties, as compared with half-dozen Americans). ISIS organized at first with jail breaks and is now free to do so again.

ISIS has been given a welcome gift in Iraq as well. The eminent Middle East historian Ervand Abrahamian observes: "The killing of Soleimani ... has actually provided a wonderful opportunity for ISIS to recover. There will be a resurgence of ISIS very much in Mosul, northern Iraq. And that, paradoxically, will help Iran, because the Iraqi government will have no choice but to rely more and more on Iran to be able to contain ISIS [which led the defense of Iraq against the ISIS onslaught, under Suleimani's command] ... Trump has pulled out of north Iraq, of the area where ISIS was, pulled the rug out from the Kurds, and now he's declared war on the pro-Iranian militias. And the Iraqi Army has not been in the past capable of dealing with ISIS. So, the obvious thing is now, the Iraqi government, how are they going to deal with the revival of ISIS? ... they will have no choice but to actually rely more and more on Iran. So, Trump has actually undermined his own policy, if he wants to eliminate Iran's influence in Iraq."

Much as W. Bush did when he invaded Iraq.

We shouldn't forget, however, that enormous power can recover from muddle-headedness and failure—if the domestic population permits it to.

Putin appears to have outmaneuvered the U.S. not only on Syria, but almost everywhere else on the Middle East front. What is Moscow after in the Middle East, and what's your explanation for the often infantile diplomacy displayed by the United States in the region and in fact around the world?

One goal, substantially achieved, was to gain control of Syria. Russia entered the conflict in 2015 after advanced weapons provided by the CIA to the mostly jihadi armies had stopped Assad's forces. Russian aircraft turned the tide, and without concern for the incredible civilian toll, the Russian-backed coalition has taken control of most of the country. Russia is now the external arbiter.

Elsewhere, even among Washington's Gulf allies, Putin has presented himself, apparently with some success, as the one trustworthy outside actor. Trump's bull-in-a-China-shop diplomacy (if that is the right word) is winning few friends outside of Israel, on which he is lavishing gifts, and the other members of the reactionary alliance taking shape. Any thought of "soft power" has been pretty much abandoned. But U.S. reserves of hard power are enormous. No other country can impose harsh sanctions at will and compel third parties to honor them, at cost of expulsion from the international financial system. And, of course, no one else has hundreds of military bases around the world or anything like Washington's advanced military power and ability to resort to force at will and with impunity. The idea of imposing sanctions on the U.S., or anything beyond tepid criticism, borders on ludicrous.

And so, it is likely to remain even as "in the eyes of much of the world, in fact, the prime rogue state today is the United States," considerably more so than 20 years ago when these words were uttered, unless and until the population compels state power to pursue a different course.

C.J. Polychroniou is a political economist/political scientist who has taught and worked in universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. He is a regular contributor to *Truthout* as well as a member of *Truthout's* Public Intellectual Project. He is the author of *Optimism Over Despair: Noam Chomsky On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change*, an anthology of interviews with Chomsky originally published at *Truthout* and collected by Haymarket Books.

This interview has been lightly edited for clarity and length. The Publication of Origin for this article is *Truthout*.

Feature



By ELG Photography/Shutterstock.com

What Will it Take to Prevent Climate Collapse?

By Brian Tokar

The two-week marathon of the annual United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change conference (UNFCCC) is underway in Madrid, and the world's expectations have perhaps never been lower. The Amazon is burning and unprecedented storms are raging

worldwide, but the world's climate diplomats are still mostly talking business-as-usual. Never mind that this year's 25th Conference of Parties (COP) to the UN Climate Convention almost didn't happen, after it was disinvited by the fascistic Bolsonaro regime in Brazil and almost derailed again

by the recent upheaval in the streets of Santiago, Chile, where it had been rescheduled to occur. And Trump's effort to withdraw U.S. participation is not the most serious problem.

The main obstacles have much more to do with how emissions of carbon dioxide, methane, and other climate-destabilizing gases are increasing again after appearing to plateau for a couple of years. A rising number of countries appear to be stepping back from the voluntary and entirely inadequate proposals they brought to the table in 2015 in Paris. And the myth of an informal "ratcheting mechanism" to encourage countries to steadily raise the ambition of their climate policy proposals shows few signs of reality, with only a year to go before countries are encouraged (not required) to release an "enhanced" emissions reduction plan. Of course the Paris Agreement has no real means of enforcement, only some language about an "expert-based" committee to address implementation and compliance that is mandated to be "transparent, non-adversarial and non-punitive." And we shouldn't forget that wealthy countries still support fossil fuels to the tune of \$3-500 billion per year in direct subsidies and a whopping \$5 trillion or more, according to the World Bank, if environmental and other indirect costs are included.

One promising sign is that some organizations involved in the climate negotiations are finally starting to raise the question, who is actually most responsible for climate-destabilizing emissions? The Washington-based World Resources Institute has an interactive platform that helps us visualize the vast inequities in emissions across various countries. Their charts reveal that the top 10 emitting countries and regions (the EU is counted as a single entity) are responsible for nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of all global emissions, and that China, the U.S. and EU contribute 14 times the emissions of the hundred lowest-emitting countries (see <https://www.wri.org/blog/2017/04/interactive-chart-explains-worlds-top-10-emitters-and-how-theyve-changed>). Research over the past five years from Thomas Piketty's group in Paris reveals that inequalities within countries matter as much as the differences among different countries, now accounting for half of the global distri-

bution of greenhouse gas sources. Before addressing these issues in more detail, it is necessary to first review the latest emissions trends.

Every year, in the lead-up to the climate COP, various international agencies release their latest findings, and this year's reports are sobering to say the least:

- The UN Environment Program reports that global greenhouse gas emissions are now rising at a rate of 1.5 percent per year, after an apparent 2-year plateau. Emissions are rising in the U.S., China, India and Russia, among the largest emitters, and have leveled off in the EU after a few years of apparent decline. The G20 most influential countries are responsible for 78 percent of current greenhouse gas pollution. To hold the future average temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius would now require emissions reductions of 7.6 percent every year, exceeding those that accompanied the Great Recession of 2007-08 in the U.S. and Japan.
- The Stockholm Environment Institute's projections of fossil fuel production find that, in the coming decade, countries are planning to produce more than double the amount that would be consistent with a 1.5 degree C. temperature rise, including almost three times as much coal as the 1.5 C. pathway would allow. Countries like Australia and China are still exporting coal and coal-dependent technologies throughout south and east Asia, even though solar and wind power are already cheaper than new coal-fired power plants, and will soon cost less than continuing to fuel existing coal plants. It appears that the continuing profitability of fossil fuels still matters far more than economic efficiency, much less environmental sanity.
- An international team of scientists reported in *Nature* that the various climate tipping points scientists have been warning about are far more interconnected than most people realize, and that "cascading effects" appear increasingly likely. The loss of Arctic and Antarctic ice sheets drives the slowing of atmospheric currents that drive the Gulf Stream and other

weather-mediating features, which in turn affects the drying of global rainforests, weakening of the Asian monsoons, ocean heating, and ultimately even faster ice loss. Atmospheric CO₂, they report, is already at levels last seen 4 million years ago, and is approaching levels associated with the Eocene epoch around 50 million years ago, when temperatures averaged 14 C. (25 degrees Fahrenheit) higher than our own preindustrial baseline, and only the smallest of mammals were apparently able to thrive.

People's actual experiences of climate-related disasters, even at the current 1 C. above preindustrial times, portend horrific times to come if emissions cannot be curtailed and the climate eventually stabilized. And every climate-related disaster in the U.S. and Europe is compounded manifoldly in the global South, from devastating floods and typhoons that affect millions of people in South Asia to waves of drought and hunger that have reached

across vast stretches of East and South Africa, the Middle East and Central America. These in turn have contributed to civil wars and rising waves of refugees, as well as increasingly militarized borders here in the U.S. and in parts of Europe. We also know that the actions the world undertakes, or fails to, today will not only determine the magnitude of future climate impacts, but also whether those impacts will persist for a few generations or literally for thousands of years.

So what do we know about who is most responsible for the carbon dioxide and other gases that are destabilizing the earth's climate? Several organizations and research teams have sought to shed light on this question over the past decade or so:

- In 2008 the World Bank published a chart tracking shares of world consumption—a figure that tracks closely to emissions levels—by individual wealth. They determined that the wealthiest 10 percent of individuals worldwide were responsible for 59 percent



People with banners protest as part of a climate change march, by Ink Drop/Shutterstock.com

of resource consumption and the poorest half of the world were then only responsible for about seven percent. This was first reported for non-insiders in a 2013 *Monthly Review* article by Fred Magdoff.

- Researchers at Oxfam have demonstrated that the wealthiest 10 percent of the global population was responsible, as of 2015, for 49 percent of individual greenhouse gas emissions—in turn almost two-thirds of global emissions, with infrastructure development and other public works representing the other third. In contrast, people in the poorest half of the world are only responsible for 10 percent of all emissions, with the richest one percent emitting 175 times more per person than the poorest 10 percent. South Africa and Brazil have the largest “emissions gaps” between the richest ten percent and the poorest half of the population.
- A collaboration of the international investor services network CDP (originally the Carbon Disclosure Project) and the Colorado-based Climate Accountability Institute has probed historical records to document over 150 years of carbon dioxide and methane emissions from 100 individual companies, plus 8 that no longer exist, accounting for 71 percent of current industrial emissions and 62 percent of

all greenhouse gases since the height of the Industrial Revolution. The top 20 emitters—including major oil corporations like Chevron, ExxonMobil, and BP, together with state-owned companies in Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iran and other countries—are responsible for 29.5 percent of all historical emissions, and the 10 largest private companies were responsible for nearly 16 percent. Today, partly due to the breakup of formerly centralized Russian and Chinese companies, 50 entities are responsible for half of all industrial emissions.

- Researchers in China and in Europe have sought to document the discrepancies in emissions accounting due to international trade. A study from China’s macroeconomic planning agency was likely the first to quantify various countries’ “balance of emissions” by weighing the embodied emissions of their imports and exports. European researchers documented a four-fold increase in net emission transfers from developing to developed countries between 1990 and 2008. They found that over a quarter (26 percent) of global emissions by 2008 resulted from the production of traded goods and services. This allows countries like the UK, with high levels of per capita consumption, to report declining domestic emissions to the IPCC and UN agencies, even



Brussels, Belgium - January 31, 2019. High school and university students stage a protest against the climate policies of the Belgian government, by Alexandros Michailidis/Shutterstock.com

though consumption-related emissions continue to rise. Lucy Baker of the University of Sussex has summarized the logical conclusion of these studies: “wealthy countries have to a large extent exported or outsourced their climate and energy crisis to low and middle-income countries, deliberately or otherwise.”

Such findings affirm the resounding message of climate justice advocates around the world that deep, structural changes in the economic system are necessary to meaningfully address the expanding climate crisis. The persistent myth that we are all equally responsible does not stand up to scrutiny, and meaningful climate solutions need to challenge corporate power, economic inequality, racism and other social injustices, addressing the systemic roots of today’s fossil fuel dependence.

The most promising responses to the climate crisis are not being handed down by UN agencies or national governments, but rather emerge from the grassroots, popular efforts to resist continued fossil fuel development and other forms of accelerated resource extraction, and also to build local alternatives that can help inspire and facilitate like-minded efforts around the world. More than 2,500 cities around the world have submitted plans to the UN to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions, frequently in defiance of their national governments’ far more cautious proposals, and well over 9,000 municipalities have joined a Global Covenant of Mayors to reinforce their commitments to climate action. As U.S. cities and towns have defied the Trump administration by declaring themselves as sanctuaries for refugees and immigrants, many are also advancing the most meaningful climate responses.

We know that the landmark environmental laws of the early 1970s also were not simply handed down from on high. Rather they resulted from a wave of popular mobilizations that led to widespread state and local anti-pollution measures and lawsuits throughout the late 1960s; by the end of that decade, corporate interests voiced a clear preference for uniform national regulations over a patchwork of increasingly restrictive local measures. Perhaps that is our best way past the current obstacles to meaningful climate policies in the

U.S. (A wide-ranging international dialogue from last summer on the potential for local responses to global problems is documented at <https://greattransition.org/gti-forum/thinking-globally-acting-locally>.) Perhaps a heightened conflict between local environmental values and centralized power structures is the key to lasting change, as was proposed by Murray Bookchin in his foundational writings on social ecology and confederal municipalism during the 1980s and nineties. Local efforts to halt construction of pipelines and other new fossil fuel infrastructure are central to such a vision, as are new forms of municipal political organization, expanding structures of direct democracy in defiance of local power structures, and a host of experiments, large and small, that help people save energy, curtail wasteful practices and build community-controlled alternatives.

The outcome of the current Madrid talks is hard to predict in any detail, but most likely we will see a series of modest, incremental steps to implement various provisions of the already-inadequate Paris Agreement. With a new generation of activists in the streets demanding more serious climate action and clamoring for climate justice, we may be seeing the beginnings of a movement that can finally turn things around. The odds are uncertain, and every year of global-scale climate inaction diminishes those odds, but it is more necessary than ever to sustain a hope that humanity can unite to reject the false choices imposed by current political and economic institutions and embrace the potential for an enhanced quality of life beyond fossil-fueled capitalism. Perhaps we can even begin to realize the dream of a liberated and truly interdependent global community of communities. The future of life on earth may depend on our ability to do just that.

Brian Tokar is an educator and activist, based in Vermont. He is the author, most recently of *Toward Climate Justice* (New Compass, 2014), and his new book, an international compilation titled *Climate Justice and Community Renewal* (coedited with Tamra Gilbertson), will be issued by Routledge next spring. Portions of this commentary are excerpted from the book’s Introduction.

Feature



By John Gomez/Shutterstock.com

The Scourge of Neoliberalism, Part 2: Trump's Failing Neoliberal 2.0 Restoration

By Jack Rasmus

The following is a continuation of the analysis of contemporary U.S. Neoliberalism in practice that was begun in Part 1 in the preceding issue of *Z Magazine*. In Part 2, the argument is made that U.S. Neoliberal policy experienced a crisis in 2008-09, and the historic weak recovery that occurred thereafter under the Obama regime. The Trump administration should be understood

as an effort to restore the Neoliberal offensive in a more virulent, aggressive, "2.0" form.

Once again the four key areas that define Neoliberalism are considered: Fiscal policy, Monetary policy, Industrial policy, and Trade-External policy. And after three years of Trump it has become clear that Trump has restored momentum to Neoliberalism in the U.S., although only partially and

in only select policy areas. The Trump restoration to date is thus incomplete.

In areas of Trade-External policy he has clearly failed to date, clearly succeeded in Fiscal-Tax policy, while in still others—such as Monetary policy—a restoration effort is still “in progress.” Looking into the future, material forces that have been developing within U.S. and global capitalism make it increasingly unlikely Trump will be able to succeed in fully restoring U.S. Neoliberal policy momentum such as existed in the 1979-2007 period.

What will follow Trump’s failed restoration is uncertain, but, whatever it is, it is unlikely to conform to the definition or character of Neoliberalism as it has been known up to now. What follows will either be something more radical and aggressive on behalf of capitalist America—at the expense of American capitalism’s domestic and global challengers—or else a return to a more progressive policy regime that will reverse the worst legacies of Neoliberalism.

*The following analysis of Trump Neoliberalism is an excerpt from Chapter 8 in **The Scourge of Neoliberalism: US Economic Policy from Reagan to Trump**, by Dr. Jack Rasmus, published by Clarity Press, January 2020.*

Trump’s Reactionary Neoliberalism

Trump’s election and his economic policies that have followed is best understood as a reaction to the Neoliberal policy regime’s failure under Obama to successfully address the economic crisis of 2008-09, both domestically and globally. Furthermore, Trump’s attempt to resurrect Neoliberalism has more in common with the original neoliberal project initiated by Reagan: i.e. in both cases, their economic policies represent an attempt to confront a preceding period of extended stagnation of the U.S. economy. With Reagan, the 1970s economic stagnation and crisis; with Trump, the weakest recovery from recession in the past 50 years that occurred 2008-2016.

It remains to be seen, however, whether Trump can still succeed in resurrecting neoliberal policies by restoring to full effect the following 12

hallmark characteristics of neoliberal economic policy:

- significant expansion of U.S. War-Defense spending;
- subsidization of investors’ and businesses’ profits via business-investor tax cuts;
- shifting of total tax burdens to payroll taxes and other regressive taxes;
- reductions in social program and social benefits spending;
- restructuring of external trade and currency relationships with U.S. global capitalist competitors, allies and adversaries alike;
- expansion of free trade treaties, whether multilateral or bilateral;
- long-term, low-dollar exchange rate to maximize profits of U.S. multinational corporations’ offshore operations and competitiveness of U.S. corporate exporters;
- continuation of the “twin deficits” solution to enable financing of ever larger U.S. budget deficits and national debt;
- continuation of central bank policies ensuring chronic low interest rates via traditional bond buying operations, and/or Quantitative Easing (QE), to subsidize profits of the private banking system and financial markets;
- expansion of industry deregulations and privatizations of public goods, services and programs;
- destruction of unions and collective bargaining to compress nominal wage and negotiated fringe benefits;
- wage compression by means of delay of minimum and protective wage legislation inflation adjustments, by encouragement of growth of contingency labor employment, by offshoring of jobs, by encouraging displacement of labor with capital by automation, and by policies permitting importation of lower paid skilled labor by H1-B and L1-2 visas.

These are the major policy offensives that together have defined the U.S. neoliberal policy regime since 1980. They are policies that in turn have facilitated the induced restructuring of U.S. capitalist economic relations in the Neoliberal

era— with both other capitalist economies as well as with U.S. domestic non-capitalist groups and classes. Not least, they are also the policies that brought about the deleterious conditions faced by large masses of working people, which were responsible for Trump's election victory.

Trump's Neoliberalism: Successes, Failures, Work Still In Progress

After nearly three years of Trump policy initiatives it is evident that several of the key elements of neoliberal economic policy have been successfully resurrected and restored by Trump after the crisis of neoliberal policy experienced post-2008. These are:

- business-investor tax cutting,
- defense-war spending escalation,
- industry deregulation and privatizations,
- labor compensation compression and union destruction.

The restoration of other neoliberal elements is a work still in progress:

- the restoration of chronic low interest rates

(i.e. central bank monetary policy) and

- ensuring a low U.S. dollar valuation (i.e. exchange rate policy).

But still other neoliberal policies thus far have been proving difficult for Trump to restore. These include, in particular:

- deep cuts to entitlement and other social program spending,
- the restructuring of U.S. trade relationships, and
- ensuring the continuation of the “twin deficits” solution required to continue to successfully finance U.S. budget deficits and the U.S. national debt.

Trump's failure to restore neoliberal policy across all these fronts simultaneously is in part due to the fundamental contradictions between the four dimensions that constitute the Neoliberal policy mix and regime—i.e. fundamental contradictions lie at the heart of the neoliberal policy regime itself.

But Trump's failure to date is not due only to these fundamental contradictions between Neolib-



Trump's failure to date is not due only to these fundamental contradictions between Neoliberal policies. It is also due to the resistance, both domestic and foreign, that Trump's attempted restoration has been generating. Photo by vnews.tv/Shutterstock.com

eral policies. It is also due to the resistance, both domestic and foreign, that Trump's attempted restoration has been generating, both home and abroad. Trump has launched a more aggressive, virulent form of neoliberalism in his effort to continue an ultimately untenable neoliberal policy regime for yet another decade. Hence, it's a nastier, 2.0 version, introduced in the increasingly desperate effort to overcome the neoliberal contradictions and the resistance to it.

Trump Neoliberalism: Restructuring Economic & Social Relations

Trump's more aggressive, nastier form of Neoliberalism requires not only launching new neoliberal initiatives—like global trade restructuring—but also fundamental structural change in U.S. political-governmental institutions and U.S. political culture. Political change under Neoliberalism is thus necessary in order to achieve more aggressive economic policy objectives.

In other words, just as Neoliberal policy evolution drives economic restructuring, and economic restructuring requires more aggressive Neoliberal policy, so too does Neoliberal policy in turn drive political restructuring in order to address the resistance to its continuation as it becomes more virulent and aggressive.

Late stage neoliberal evolution thus requires a change in the relations within and between formal U.S. government institutions (Congress, Executive, Judiciary), between the electorate and those institutions, within and between traditional political parties, and between new political rules and norms and traditional civil liberties and democratic practices protected by the Bill of Rights. Change in international political institutions is also driven by the effort to extend and expand Neoliberalism. Institutions like the IMF, World Bank, NATO, G7, G20, and national security arrangements among U.S. and its allies, etc., become targets for restructuring by the U.S. as the American empire reacts to its waning influence and power on the global stage.

Has Trump Restored Neoliberalism?

After nearly three years in office, Trump's restoration of the Neoliberal policy regime is a mixed picture. On the one hand, Business-Investor tax cuts and War-Defense spending fiscal policies have clearly been set back on an accelerating growth course established under George W. Bush. In fact, they are being pursued even more aggressively. The faltering of War-Defense spending under Obama—which was necessary to justify an even greater \$1.-\$1.5 trillion reduction in social program discretionary spending—has been restored. In addition, Trump's tax cuts have exceeded in two years what Obama had achieved in eight.

A similar case may be made for Trump's Industrial Policy as it applies to deregulation and privatization. Other elements of Industrial Policy represent more of a continuation of preceding trends prior to Obama, and an elimination of Obama's softer approach in some areas of wage, de-unionization, and other industrial policy programs. While Obama slowed—and in some cases rolled back—the privatization of public lands and public goods, Trump has succeeded in reversing those rollbacks. On the other hand, Obama was an advocate of privatizing education through Charter schools and his "No Child Left Behind" program. Nor did he lift a finger to defend the attack on teachers unions and collective bargaining in the public sector. Industrial Policy associated with wage compression and jobs under Trump represents a return, after Obama, to blocking federal and other legislated wage minimums, while reigniting the Neoliberal attack on reducing eligibility for overtime pay. But wage levels for most workers consistently fell under Obama, and under Trump have proved the same, even as the high end of wage earners may have improved under Trump.

But there are three areas of Neoliberal Policy where Trump restoration has clearly been failing. He has not been able to achieve even token reductions in social program spending and other non-defense discretionary spending. He has clearly been willing to forego those cutbacks in exchange for agreement by Democrats to allow his escalating War-Defense spending. Nor has he been willing to take on a fight to cut mandatory spending programs like social security retirement



Since Reagan, there has been an inability of U.S. capitalist economy to reconcile rising War-Defense spending with business-investor tax cutting while deepening austerity in social program expenditures.

Photo by Mark Reinstein/Shutterstock.com

and Medicare, as yet. Should he win another term in office, however, that attack is almost guaranteed after 2020.

His two highly successful restorations—i.e. War-Defense spending and Business-Investor tax cutting—combined with failure to cut social program-nondefense discretionary spending—has resulted in a rapid rise of \$1 trillion dollar annual budget deficits and accelerating U.S. national debt. That, too, must be acknowledged as a failure at Neoliberal restoration.

The two areas of Neoliberal Policy where Trump's restoration has failed most dramatically, however, are Monetary Policy and External Policy—the latter in particular with regard to trade relations restructuring and ensuring a low dollar exchange rate. Neoliberal Monetary Policy defined as ensuring chronic, long-term, low Federal Reserve interest rates might be called a fight over policy in process. Thus neither Monetary Policy nor External (especially trade) Policy to date represent a restoration of Neoliberalism by Trump by any definition.

The question is whether the contradictions inherent in these various elements of Neoliberal policy will, or even can be, overcome. Some longstanding contradictions within Neoliberal

Policy that have been there since the beginning under Reagan still remain: such as the difficulty achieving Neoliberal external/trade policy objectives without undermining Neoliberal fiscal and monetary policy elements; or new contradictions emerging and intensifying—such as the growing contradictions within fiscal policy between deficits and debt financing, on the one hand, and Neoliberal tax cutting and defense spending on the other. Or within Neoliberal monetary policy, in the form of the central bank engineering lower interest rates while still selling Treasuries at an attractive rate yield in order to finance budget deficits. Contradictions within Neoliberal external/trade policy are also growing—such as keeping the dollar exchange rate low while simultaneously raising tariffs, even as the latter slows the global economy and raises demand (and therefore value) of the dollar.

Another longstanding contradiction inherent in Neoliberalism since the beginning, under Reagan, has been the inability of U.S. capitalist economy to reconcile rising War-Defense spending with Business-Investor tax cutting while deepening Austerity in social program expenditures. Domestic resistance has prevented the latter, except for a brief period during the last crisis in 2011-13 under Obama. Neoliberalism's "alternative solution" to

this was to establish the “twin deficits” that would in effect provide the revenues (from borrowing) to cover the deficits created by Neoliberal continued War-Defense escalation and ever greater Business-Investor tax cutting. But this fiscal policy contradiction solution, by means of External policy (running trade deficits and introducing free trade agreements), has spawned a further and perhaps even more serious contradiction: namely, rising global capitalists’ opposition to Trump’s trade wars policy which itself threatens the twin deficits solution to the fiscal policy contradiction.

Thus domestic U.S. popular opposition to austerity in social spending (which will certainly intensify should austerity apply to mandatory social programs like Social Security), on the one hand, and capitalist competitor opposition to Trump Neoliberal trade policy, on the other, together represent a political reflection of the contradictions that exist today within the Neoliberal policy regime and the opposition to which it gives rise. Neoliberalism cannot have it three ways: it can’t

have social program austerity amidst escalating War-Defense spending and Business tax cutting. It can’t have its cake and eat it without having a bad bout of deficit-debt indigestion. And its effort to restore U.S. hegemony via External policy (aka trade restructuring) may no longer be possible either. If so, the U.S. twin deficit will be the eventual casualty.

Overlaid on all this is the realization that Neoliberal Monetary Policy has run its course and is exacerbating all of the above. Neoliberal low interest rates—so important to U.S. multinational corporations’ foreign profits realization and to a low dollar exchange rate—appears increasingly unsustainable. Neoliberal Monetary Policy since the mid-1980s has been in the service of providing low cost money for U.S. business, low dollar valuation for U.S. multinational corps, cheap money for U.S. bankers and borrowers, and a source of annual trillion dollar income redistribution for capitalist investors via stock buybacks and dividend payouts. In short, it has subsidized capital



In the 1930s, competitive devaluations by government declaration or fiat played a major role in preventing the global capitalist economy from economic recovery from depression. Today the same is occurring, but through the intermediary of central bank monetary policy.

**Photo of the Great Depression, Hooverville in lower Manhattan. 1932.
By Everett Historical/Shutterstock.com**

to the tune of trillions of dollars—in the process artificially boosting financial asset markets and speculative profits. In so doing, however, the chronic nearly four decades of cheap money and credit (and therefore the massive debt increase) ultimately engineered by the Federal Reserve and other central banks, has in effect “broken the back” of monetary policy as a force for stimulating the real economy during periods of economic slow growth and recession. The chronic, long-term and artificially low interest rates have had several effects. One is provoking intensified inter-capitalist competition in the form of “competitive devaluations via central bank monetary policy.”

In the 1930s, competitive devaluations by government declaration or fiat played a major role in preventing the global capitalist economy from economic recovery from depression. Today the same is occurring, but through the intermediary of central bank monetary policy. As the U.S. attempts to drive interest rates down, other world economies do the same and more so by central bank rate policies as well. The result is currency instability outside the U.S. and capital flight to the U.S. as other currencies fall. That capital flight’s

destination drives up the value of the dollar, and that disrupts U.S. trade restructuring objectives. So the nearly four decades of U.S. central bank massive liquidity injections in the economy, designed to drive down interest rates, actually results in a rising dollar instead of its decline in response to interest rate cuts.

What the foregoing represents is that Neoliberal Monetary Policy increasingly contradicts Neoliberal trade restructuring and low dollar neoliberal policy objectives. Just as contradictions prevent the three objectives of Neoliberal Fiscal Policy, so too is Neoliberal Monetary Policy today serving as a contradiction to Neoliberal trade restructuring. The reflection of this contradiction on a personalities level is Trump’s simultaneous attacks on China president Xi, as the U.S. is thwarted in trade restructuring, and on U.S. Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell, as he is blocked in the area of driving down interest rates.

Contradictions of Neoliberalism

At the highest level, Neoliberal Fiscal, External, Industrial, and Monetary Policies are “out of synch.” Or, more accurately, are increas-



The reflection of Neoliberal contradiction on a personalities level is Trump's simultaneous attacks on China president Xi, as the U.S. is thwarted in trade restructuring, and on U.S. Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell

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ingly in contradiction to one another. Ultimately this combined “grand contradiction” is due to the financial restructuring and globalization of the international capitalist system since the 1980s, as well as the multiple other material forces that have been evolving within global capitalism during its current four-decade Neoliberal phase. In other words, the evolution of the U.S. and global capitalist economy itself is at the heart of the growing contradictions within the Neoliberal policy mix.

This is no different than prior capitalist policy regimes that arose in the early and mid-20th centuries in the U.S. The new policy mix, associated with the prior natural restructuring of capitalism, at first serves to integrate and stabilize that restructuring. But the policy mix eventually comes into contradiction with the real evolution of the capitalist system. Under the new natural restructuring and changes in the system the prior new (now old) policy regime becomes a drag on the continued evolution of the system. It slows its growth. It destabilizes both its real and financial sectors. Capitalist agents—i.e. investors, corporate leaders, politicians and policy makers—come to realize a more structural change must occur in the policy regime as well. Thus the 1907-16 policy regime, new at the time, eventually no longer serves its purpose. It gives way, after a crisis period, to a new and different 1944-53 policy regime. And that too begins to serve its purpose, as it did by the 1970s, to be replaced by the Neoliberal policy regime that followed.

The question today is whether the Neoliberal policy regime has now “run its course.” If not, then perhaps the Trump restoration might be successful. But if Neoliberalism has reached “the end of its rope” (meaning it no longer continues to serve capitalist expansion and interests), then the Trump current attempt to restore Neoliberalism—even in a more aggressive 2.0 version—is doomed to fail.

In the 1970s, a particular evolution of material forces gave rise to, and drove the evolution, the Neoliberal policy regime from roughly 1978 up to the onset of the crisis of 2008-09. Some of the forces that gave rise to Neoliberalism are inherent to the evolution of capitalism itself—i.e. are thus “natural.” Others are due to changes in the char-

acter of U.S. capitalism brought about by Neoliberal Policy—i.e. are “induced.” How then might these “old” material forces have changed over the past four decades of Neoliberal policy regime hegemony? What new material forces have already emerged since 2000? Or are about to emerge next decade? What might these various material forces look like in the decade to come? Will they render Neoliberal Policies increasingly contradictory in the 2020s decade ahead, and therefore make Neoliberal policies even more ineffective? And more contradictory? To put it alternatively, will the new emerging material forces result in the continued, and even more fundamental, failure of Trump policies; and any similarly minded successors to Trump attempting to restore the Neoliberal policy regime?

It is becoming increasingly clear that the material forces—whether old, new, and emerging—likely present a challenge that Neoliberalism cannot resolve. That means the new policy mix of the 2020s will be even more aggressive and violent in its implementation and effect than has Trump’s 2.0 failed restoration thus far. Or, whatever replaces Neoliberalism as we have known it, will be fundamentally different, including perhaps more progressive than imagined. Z

(Note: Part 3 in this series, *The Scourge of Neoliberalism*, will address the material and technological changes that have been developing in recent decades within US and global Capitalism—i.e. forces that constitute a source of contradictions that, next decade, will result in the demise of the Neoliberal policy regime that has dominated U.S. Capitalism since the late 1970s).

Dr. Jack Rasmus is the author of *The Scourge of Neoliberalism*, published by Clarity Press, January 2020, and other recent books on late US and global capitalism, including *Central Bankers at the End of Their Ropes*, *Systemic Fragility in the Global Economy*, *Looting Greece: A New Financial Imperialism Emerges*, *Obama’s Economy: Recovery for the Few*, and *Epic Recession: Prelude to Global Depression*. Dr. Rasmus’ website is kyklosproductions.com, his blog jackrasmus.com, and his twitter handle is @drjackrasmus.

Feature



Mumbai / India 19 December 2019 Indian muslim girl hold poster protests against anti muslim controversial Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB CAA) at August Kranti Maidan in Mumbai Maharashtra India

By Arun Sambhu Mishra/Shutterstock.com

Poems

By Badri Raina

When the Heart is Desecrate

When the heart is desecrate,
Fervour reigns supreme.
No prayerful heart ever requires
A temple for esteem.

Love is a beggarly itinerant
And seeks for love abroad;
Loving beggars show scant pursuit
Of temple, mosque, or god.

Those that hate must first destroy
Another's house of prayer;
Then build their temple brick by brick

On a frenzy of gleeful fear.

Greater the guilt more the gold
That devotees bequeath
To idols who cannot berate
From behind the golden wreath.

O for shrines of nakedness
That encumbrances shun;
No prayer may ever be more telling
Than that of naked men.

Remembering Professor Higgins

We raised eyebrows when Higgins
asked “why can’t a woman be more
like a man?”
Look how whole nations now build
upon
That thought in the Professor’s brain.

In the land of the free and home of the
brave—
The “oldest democracy” we are told—
Why can’t the black be more like the
white
Is the lament of the beautiful and the
bold.

And in the “largest democracy”
A parallel ask is rampant now;
Why can’t a Muslim be more like a
Hindu,

And propitiate his gods and the holy
cow?

In the monarchies of the Middle East
We hear the insistent call
That it is not enough that we Muslims
be
But that we better be Wahabi Sunnis
all.

Men in charge of governments
Desire, in the interests of unity,
That citizens be of one single mind,
And repudiate “God’s own variety.”

Yet the Good Book says with clarity
That those that have shall get;
And all other Good Books say the same
In sacred alphabet.

So now that God made us all unlike,
He must have meant some to make the
rules,
And ordained the White, the Brahmin,
And the Wahabi to whiplash the lowly
fools

Whom God in his wisdom chose not to
make
White, Brahmin, Wahabi, or rich,
But, like women of any clime,
Slaves to the dominant itch.

It is the task of the bramble and thorn
To set off and serve the regal rose;
The feet may well be necessary,
But a foot cannot be a nose.

Let diversity then not be made
An argument for democracy;
No democracy may equalize
The Elect and the Hoi Polloi.

The Equality idea anyway
Died with Robespierre;
It is now only a politic brand
That “successful” democracies cannily
wear.

For long did mere humanity
Enfeeble the earth;
Sapiens seem once again
To recoup a primitive birth.

What pride that this revolution
Should boldly portend
From a hallowed territory
Of no beginning, no end.

Ablutions

A tough old race of ancient men,
Kin to the dynasaur,
Now return to recharge the earth
With ablutions of gore.

Not a tree that does not bend
To the whisper of their tread;
Not a bird of free discourse
Who is not full of dread.

What were cities and high-rises
Are lethal caves and grottos;
I see mammoths stomp the streets
Where used to be autos.

Monkeys with monster tails
Are sentinels to nations;
Creatures with elephant heads
Preside over deliberations.

All is not Lost

All is not lost.
The young still feel the sting
Of oppression.

Setting aside the quiescent
Counsel of terrified time,
They rise, singing a defiant rhyme.

Women, dragged by the hair,
Lead the march of assertion
Against the strategy of fear.
While the batons of state
Sought the men for correction,
Women in hijab shielded the men.
A new dauntless beauty was born,
Promising a conjoint dawn.

From Arunachal to Chennai,
From Punjab to the Hooghly

The roar goes up—"we
Will not be Zion, we will not be Nazi."

The perfidious who seek to sunder
confront an unsought wonder:
those that the new law has included
For nefarious favour march
To embrace the excluded.

Gandhi smiles from the sky
At the tenacity of his legacy.

Young women and men
Lay the foundation
Of a second struggle for freedom
And common love.

Let the failed elders now
Take heed, relinquish petty
Feuds, and come to the table
Of emancipation that the
Young have seamlessly laid
And sanctified with fresh blood.

Let there be no going back now.

Is a shriek and a shout,
A howl and a wounded plea
From traumatic loss of clout.

When little men come to knowledge
Of persistent subterfuge,
The affront liberates their cowering
souls
Into the power of deluge.

What had seemed invincible
Becomes a pack of cards;
They come to look like mannequins
That strutted like gods.

Hang on, dear people, everywhere,
Oppressions have little sway
Unless we choose to be befooled
By the trickster of the day.

Do not give the found-out gods
Excuse of violent wrath.
Walk in peace and shared truth
A democratic path.

Liberation

Suddenly, the gods are missing,
The people are everywhere.
Those that were circumspect
Seem to have shed their fear.

Thunder from the pulpit

“10 percent of the global population was responsible for
49 percent of individual greenhouse gas emissions”

