

"Exposing  
the true costs  
of war"

# The War Crimes Times

WarCrimesTimes.org

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## Myth America

by Kim Carlyle

"One believes things because one has been conditioned to believe them."

—Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

Humans are not rational beings—humans are *rationalizing* beings. Research in cognitive science has shown that people form beliefs first, then they seek evidence consistent with their beliefs. Because the latter process occurs instantaneously most of the time, people think they're being rational, logical thinkers when they are simply responding intuitively, viscerally. These gut feelings, these emotional responses, are the cumulative product of past experiences, social mores, and other types of conditioning.

Indoctrination begins early and continues throughout life. Little Americans pledge allegiance each morning; older ones, before the game, sing praises to a striped, starred, rectangular cloth; and some watch Fox News. Humans also tend to closely identify with cultural subgroups (Democratic Party, NRA, KKK, USMC, etc.) and robotically adopt their biases, prejudices, and positions.

Mythology—the collection of stories that belong to a culture and help define it—is part of our cultural conditioning that provides a helpful cognitive short cut, sparing us the burden of critical thinking. Our stories and myths convey the values, beliefs, and history of the "American Experience." Told and retold, the mythology becomes "Our Truth."

Myths can be based on real truth but embellished for effect, or they can be entirely fabricated. And they can be beneficial. The story of young George Washington and the cherry tree, while a falsehood in itself, teaches that honesty is the best policy.

Myths can be detrimental as well, inciting fear and hatred and even leading to genocide. For example, communism is inherently evil and must

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### In this issue:

"If people really knew, the war would be stopped tomorrow. But of course they don't know, and can't know."  
—David Lloyd George, during WWI

Almost a century later, the people can get the news—certainly not from the corporate-controlled mainstream media, but from other sources, such as the paper in your hands. Yet the wars continue. What gives?

The people have been sold a bill of goods (yes, "goods" as in America, the good-doer). Troublesome realities of U.S. imperialism and subjugation are twisted into fairy tales of benevolence and humanitarianism. We reject the truth; we won't accept that our nation—and by complicity, we ourselves—does harm. The fables bring comfort; we deny any challenge to them.

We explore this topic: the venerated myths about WWII ("the Good War"), the myth that spawned the "Forgotten War" (Korea), the Vietnam War Commemoration history revision, the U.S.-NATO-Russia continuing saga, and the mutually exclusive tradeoff quandary begotten of the myth of nuclear deterrence.

We also feature an exclusive interview with Korean War veteran, Perry Porter—a medic who refused to fight, a boxer who was happy to fight, an outspoken critic of General Douglas MacArthur, and a generally interesting person.

### A belief without evidence is a myth

## Mythological Basis of Foreign Policy

by David Swanson

Public pressure has helped push back against a bill in Congress that would have torn up the negotiated agreement with Iran by imposing yet more sanctions on the people of that country. The people of this country are not eager for another war, and have not accepted that sanctions lead away from war rather than into it.

But supporters and opponents of that bill tend to agree that Iran has a nuclear weapons program, and that this program must be stopped by one means or another. This underlying assumption is not supported by any evidence and never has been. We've heard it propounded for over thirty years, and the repetition has had its intended effect, but any evidence at all has always been lacking. A belief without evidence is a myth.

Iran has a nuclear energy program because the U.S. and European governments wanted Iran to have a

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### Ukraine and other myths

## The United States: Land of Blissful Ignorance and Blatant Hypocrisy

by Solomon Comissiong

American popular geopolitical ignorance sometimes seems infinite. Most of the world is fully aware that the U.S. government financed the Ukrainian coup "that helped bring to power a wave of neo-Nazis." Yet, most Americans think that Russia is playing the Hitler role, and Washington is the good guys.

One day an innovative social scientist will perhaps conduct a case study centered on the state of blissful ignorance many Americans continuously reside within. That same scholar will take things a step further and delve into the root causes that contributed to the mass production of blissfully ignorant American citizens. Far too many U.S. citizens have been socially engineered to

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## Cease Fire

The next issue of *War Crimes Times* will feature the 100th anniversary of the 1914 World War I Christmas Truce – and it will be our last issue.

In its six years of publication, the *War Crimes Times* (which began as a “one-time-only” handout for a specific direct-action demonstration) has matured and grown into a source of information and tool of outreach for thousands of readers and activists across the United States. Copies have been sent to Congress and to more than a dozen foreign countries.

But the ever-increasing workload associated with the growth of circulation has outpaced the capacity of the handful of volunteers who produce and distribute the paper. Financially, we have always broken even, more or less. (Our recent adjustment to the suggested donation amount was in response to a series of postal rate increases and other new costs.) Generous donors have provided the funding that allowed us to distribute papers to readers and distributors of modest means. So it's not for lack of monetary support or reader interest that we terminate the paper.

When our graphics editor, Mark Runge, recently sought permission for the *WCT* to use an image, the author, who apparently hadn't seen the *WCT* before, told him the paper was great. When Mark described our situation to him, he responded that it was better to have had a good run than no run at all.

We are grateful to our contributors of content, our generous donors, and our faithful readers for a good run. Thank you.

*Note: We will still need your financial support to cover costs for this and the next issues. Any prepaid funds for future issues (e.g. subscriptions) beyond the fall issue will be reimbursed at your request. At the end of this year, any unclaimed funds remaining in the WCT account will be donated to VFP's Howard Zinn Fund.*



# Letters

## Exposing the Façade

Congratulations on your Winter 2014 issue in exposing the false façade of U.S. Exceptionalism with its pretense of greatness and virtue and its true links to unilateral power in an interdependent world.

It required courage to be honest in supporting nonviolence on behalf of Veterans For Peace. It is my hope that your paper will promote peaceful cooperation between nations, which is desperately needed in a divided and overpopulated world, because global disputes urgently need cooperation over ideology, and understanding over armaments and the use of force.

My best wishes for your success in nailing the truth about misuse of power and the catastrophe of war. Vengeance and violence can no longer be rationalized by rousing rhetoric from our leaders.

Clarence A. DeLima, M.D. (retired),  
Humanist, socialist, pacifist (active)  
Dayton, OH

P.S. I request that a bundle of the next issue be distributed at my cost in a larger city such as N.Y. or L.A.

*Thank you, doctor. Generous donors like you help us reach folks who need our message. —Ed.*

## New Recruit

I recently went to a Drone protest rally (my first) in Des Moines, Iowa. I had my first interactions with Catholic Workers and was in learning mode. I must profess my ignorance in the peace and justice movement but this was a good introduction.

When I returned home, I did online research. I learned of Dorothy Day, the

Catholic Workers, much more about Veterans For Peace and even learned a lot about you and your protest marches, Mark Runge and his web site, and about the commitment and sacrifices of many in this movement...I could go on but you have lived it. For me it was an eye opener.

It also told me it was where I am supposed to be. I heard Steve Jacobs sing “Cross The Line” at the rally and the one line, “Will you stand in silent agony or will you cross the line?” echoed in my head. I have, for far too long, stood in “silent agony.” I had my proudest moment standing in solidarity with the other protesters. It was time to shed that “silent agony” and cross the line.

I witnessed the bravest people I have ever seen and hope I can make the ranks. I am an ICU nurse at a VA hospital so getting arrested is not an option, but there are many other productive ways to assist the Peace and justice movement of Veterans For Peace and the Catholic Worker Movement effectively (\$\$ donations, volunteering, protesting, writings, political cartoons etc...). I shall pursue those for now.

Bob Quick  
Columbia, MO

*Bob submitted a cartoon which appears on this page. —Ed.*

## Poetry Contest

This latest issue of *WCT* (Spring 2014) is very impressive. Strong, well-written articles. This paper deserves the widest possible circulation. It reminds me a bit of the underground rags of the '60s.

I wondered if this might not be the time for *WCT* to publish a book of anti-war poetry. You could reprint the poems published in *WCT* plus other poems by these poets.

An additional possibility would be to run an anti-war poetry contest through

*WCT* with the best of the resultant poetry plus what you've already published in *WCT* making up the book's content. You would have a topical book and a targeted readership.

Joe Michaud  
Iowa City, IA

*First, thanks for your kind words about the WCT. Second, great ideas! We've printed some very good poetry over the years, including your work, Joe. But we're not going to be around much longer (see "Cease Fire" on the left). Instead of a book, let's just have a contest for the next (and last) issue. See below.*

## Poetry Contest

We're accepting submissions now through September 1, 2014, for the *War Crimes Times* Cease Fire Poetry Contest.

Send your original pro-peace and anti-war poems to  
[editor@WarCrimesTimes.org](mailto:editor@WarCrimesTimes.org).

Preference will be given to submissions with World War I Christmas Cease Fire topics.

Entries will be judged by the *WCT* editors.

First prize is a postpaid bundle (80 copies) of the fall issue in which all the selected poems will appear. Each contestant will receive one free copy as well.

The *War Crimes Times* is published and distributed by volunteer members of Veterans For Peace in North Carolina, Florida, and California and is funded entirely by donations from readers and from organizations that distribute the paper locally.

**Make donations:** online at [WarCrimesTimes.org](http://WarCrimesTimes.org) or by mail: *War Crimes Times, Veterans For Peace, 216 South Meramec Ave, St. Louis MO 63105.*

We welcome submissions (guidelines at [WarCrimesTimes.org](http://WarCrimesTimes.org)) of original articles, poetry, artwork, cartoons, and letters to [editor@WarCrimesTimes.org](mailto:editor@WarCrimesTimes.org) or *War Crimes Times, PO Box 10664, Greensboro, NC 27404.*

Please note that our contributors' viewpoints may not always be entirely consistent with those of the *War Crimes Times*, but their topics address our concerns.

*Editor-in-chief:* Kim Carlyle. *Graphics editor:* Mark Runge. *Editorial team:* Susan Carlyle, Lyle Petersen, and Robert Yoder. *Distribution team from VFP Chapter 099 includes:* Claire Hanrahan, Ronald Harayda, Bruce Roth, Charlie St.Clair, and Gerry Werhan.



[veteransforpeace.org](http://veteransforpeace.org)

Aborting a Nascent Myth

# Jumping on the Vietnam War Commemoration Bandwagon: The Vain Search for Honor

by Mark A. Ashwill

As we settle into year three of the 13-year commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, which extends from May 28, 2012 to November 11, 2025, Americans from sea to shining sea are joining in events that “recognize the Vietnam Veterans and their families’ service, valor, and sacrifice,” according to the official Vietnam War Commemoration website. As with any program dreamed up by bureaucrats, objectives are a must, lest the organizers and participants lack focus and taxpayer dollars be wasted.

### Jamming Their Transmission

What follows is a point-counterpoint response to the five congressionally-mandated objectives for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, a hollow payback for a generation of neglect and mistreatment of so many Vietnam veterans and a lame attempt to salvage honor where none exists.

1. To thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War, including personnel who were held as prisoners of war (POW), or listed as missing in action (MIA), for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States and to thank and honor the families of these veterans.



Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Photo by Mike Hastie, September, 1986.

### The Wall at the Wall

Whenever the truth threatens one’s belief system, there is a powerful instinct to deny its reality. That is why historical facts and evidence are burned at the stake. That is why the message and the messenger are assassinated. And... that is why history always repeats itself.

—Mike Hastie  
Army Medic Vietnam, March 10, 2014

Thank and honor them for doing what, to whom, by what means, and to what ends? I’m reminded of the words of Camillo “Mac” Bica, a professor of philosophy at the School of Visual Arts in New York City and Vietnam veteran, who wrote in a 2012 essay: “I do not want to appear disrespectful or ungrateful, but should we meet on the street one day, do say ‘Hello,’ or ‘Fine day,’ or other such nicety, but please do not thank me for ‘my service’ as a United States Marine. I make this request because my service, as you refer to it, was basically either to train to become a killer or to actually kill people and blow shit up.”

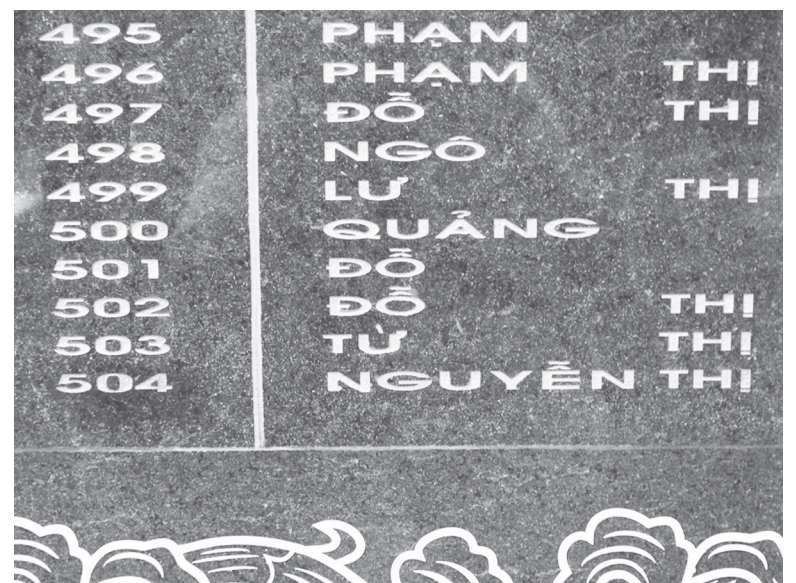
Instead of yet another patronizing round of “thank you for your service,” why not condemn the political leaders of the day who lied to their citizens and the rest of the world, whose actions resulted in the death and injury of millions of Vietnamese and others in Southeast Asia, and who sent tens of thousands of young Americans to die in vain?

Why not call upon present-day U.S. political leaders to issue a heartfelt apology to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the Vietnamese people, families of soldiers who perished, and U.S. veterans and others whose lives (and families’ lives) were altered, diminished, and damaged in oh so many ways?

Why not make good on President Nixon’s broken promise, contained in a February 1, 1973, letter to the Prime Minister of the former Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Pham Van Dong, to provide funds for “postwar reconstruction” in the range of \$3.25 billion, adjusted for inflation? Just a fraction of that amount would provide treatment, care and support for ALL of the victims of war legacies, as well as create a human needs infrastructure (e.g., health care system) whose development has been retarded due in part to a lack of resources caused by the war and one of its insidious by-products, poverty.

As far as POWs are concerned, it baffles me that people like John McCain inhabit America’s pantheon of heroes. They were in the wrong place at the wrong time, where they had no right to be in the first place. Then there are the true heroes, former POWs who opposed the war such as Bob Chenoweth, a former U.S. Army staff sergeant captured in 1968. Chenoweth had this to say five years after his release: “Most of the POWs celebrate the day they were released. But I celebrate the day I was captured. It was a red-letter day for me, the day I began understanding another race.”

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Memorial plaques in the My Lai massacre memorial museum list 504 victims of the massacre. Near Quang Ngai, Vietnam. June 2009. Photo by Adam Jones adamjones.freesevers.com.

May the remaining MIAs, all 253 of them in Vietnam, according to the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, or JPAC, rest in peace and may their families be at peace. (By obscene and tragic contrast, Vietnam has an estimated 300,000 MIAs.) It’s time to retire that tired old black and white flag that flies above thousands of government buildings, silhouette of a man’s bowed head, watchtower, barbed wire and all. JPAC’s annual budget of \$100 million is better spent on the living, including the survivors and victims of war legacies such as Agent Orange and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO).

2. To highlight the service of the Armed Forces during the Vietnam War and the contributions of Federal agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations that served with, or in support of, the Armed Forces.

To invoke the notion of service in the context of the American War in Vietnam makes a complete mockery of the word. Nick Turse’s best-selling book, *Kill Anything That Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam*, which meticulously documents the widespread abuse, torture, and murder of Vietnamese civilians in pursuit of a “kill anything that moves” policy that emphasized body counts as a metric for progress, comes to mind. Service indeed.

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“I’m not particularly interested in figures, but in Washington there is a memorial to the U.S. deaths in the Vietnam War and it is 150 yards long. If the same memorial was built for the Vietnamese that were killed it would be nine miles long.”

—Philip Jones Griffiths, Vietnam War photojournalist

## Myth America

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be stopped from spreading by whatever means are necessary—so let's kill those commie gooks by the millions.

Malignant myths are often supported by subthemes that appear to be benign. For example, the notion that growth is good and necessary for the economy leads to expansionism, exploitation, imperialism, military aggression, and degradation of our life-sustaining ecological systems.

The collection of stories of a particular culture provides its core narrative, its sacred mythology. The American core narrative myth goes something like this:

*After discovering America, Europeans settled the wild new land, brought civilization and religion to the indigenous inhabitants, and began to make use of the abundant natural resources that had been waiting for development. In North America, they invented a new form of government based on equality, freedom, and rule by the people. Following God's plan, they expanded their nation across the continent, carefully resettling the few original inhabitants as needed. As a model of human cultural and political achievement, the United States began to realize, and then actualize, its mission of bringing freedom and democracy to the rest of the world, especially the underdeveloped nations. As holy Crusaders for justice, Americans have saved the free world on several occasions. The U.S. state department, along with associated agencies, has worked to encourage less fortunate nations to evolve toward our advanced level of political and economic achievement; when necessary, it has assisted with the process of total makeover. At times, advancing the mission has required use of overt military force, but only as a last resort when all other options had been exhausted. The proof that the U.S.A. is the pinnacle of human achievement is the high standard of living that its citizens enjoy—the American Way of Life—and to which all nations aspire.*

The portions of the above narrative which are not entirely true are printed in italics. But this story—which today can be summarized as “We are the good-doers saving the world from the evil-doers”—is the basis of our collective self-image and our world view and, therefore, our foreign policy. Of course it is self-delusion. The rest of the world has a much different perspective. Consider this passage from *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't be Wrong* by Jean-Benoit Nadeau and Julie Barlow:

One of the biggest myths is that D-Day was an American landing. In reality, the majority of the troops were British and Canadian. Another is that the Americans defeated the Germans, while, in reality, the Soviets were doing this pretty much on their own by D-Day. [Another myth is propagated in] the film *U-571*, which tells the story of American sailors who captured a German submarine in 1941, a major strategic breakthrough because they got ahold of the very secretive German encryption machines. The film's story is true, with the exception of one major fact: the sailors who captured the submarine were

British, not American. The United States wasn't even in the war in 1941. None of these myths are created on the orders of the White House.

They are perpetuated by a multiplicity of agents, probably in good faith—who all believe them—with the overall effect of spreading the American world view without shooting a bullet. This is what is meant by soft imperialism.

But “hard imperialism” is also a reality. Many parts of the world have suffered horribly from America's military might and economic overreach which have been justified mindlessly and automatically by our distorted world view and self-image.

The real danger of a myth-driven culture (and all cultures are myth-driven)

is that unscrupulous leaders with selfish interests can manipulate the myth and, by this means, arouse the people to commit actions that benefit the leaders at the great expense and suffering of the people. History abounds with examples.

From an interview by U.S. Army Captain Gustave M. Gilbert of Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring in his jail cell during the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials (18 April 1946):

Göring: Why, of course, the people don't want war. Why would some poor slob on a farm want to risk his life in a war when the best that he can get out of it is to come back to his farm in one piece? Naturally, the common people don't want war;



U.S. Marines bring down the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad's Firdos Square. (DoD photo)

neither in Russia nor in England nor in America, nor for that matter in Germany. That is understood. But, after all, it is the

leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy or a fascist dictatorship or a Parliament or a Communist dictatorship.

Gilbert: There is one difference. In a democracy, the people have some say in the matter through their elected representatives, and in the United States only Congress can declare wars.

Göring: Oh, that is all well and good, but, voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the

bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country.

This manipulation is called propaganda. Clearly, the American people have been willing, if unwitting, victims of this weapon of mass deception. It has been an ongoing process throughout our country's history, as new stories, legends, and bold lies are piled on to the Great American Myth. Recall the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue by “jubilant, liberated Iraqis,” the contrived “heroism” of Jessica Lynch, and the fanciful tale of Pat Tillman's death in an enemy ambush.

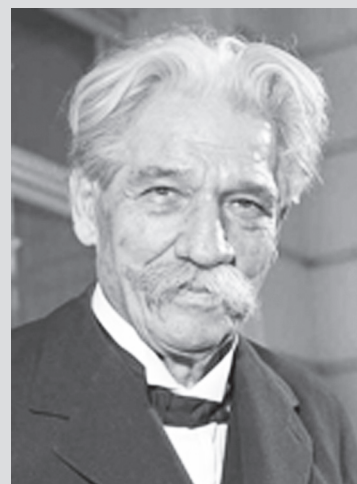
The process is greatly enabled by the ever-consolidating oligopoly of the news and entertainment industry which is wholly subservient and accommodating to the wealthy and powerful who craft and direct the message. The process is simple—tell the lie and repeat it, repeat it, repeat it. And it's easy—whole myths or mythological subthemes can be invoked by a single sentence (e.g. “The Marine Corps builds

***New stories, legends, and bold lies are piled on to the Great American Myth. Recall the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue by “jubilant, liberated Iraqis.”***



***“It is worthy of remark that a belief constantly inculcated during the early years of life, whilst the brain is impressible, appears to acquire almost the nature of an instinct; and the very essence of an instinct is that it is followed independently of reason.”***

—Charles Darwin



***“Civilization can only revive when there shall come into being in a number of individuals a new tone of mind, independent of the prevalent one among the crowds, and in opposition to it—a tone of mind which will gradually win influence over the collective one, and in the end determine its character. Only an ethical movement can rescue us from barbarism, and the ethical comes into existence only in individuals.***

—Albert Schweitzer

men”), a phrase (“Old Glory”), or even just a single word (“terrorist”).

Since human thought process (or lack thereof) allows people to be so easily manipulated, it is extremely important that we become and remain mindful of our world view and its derivation, that we challenge the conventional “wisdom,” and that we make every attempt to be objectively discerning about important matters. And we would do well to reform the American Myth.

Mythologist Joseph Campbell described the archetypal hero who is transformed by a journey/trial/quest and returns to his people with important new insights, an essential message that will then transform his culture. Such heroes include Buddha, Jesus, and Mohammed.

We have such heroes today. Some of them have journeyed to areas victimized by U.S. foreign policy. Some are peace activists; some traveled as soldiers but returned as peace activists. Others have journeyed to inner cities and rural regions—areas victimized by U.S. domestic policies. Still others have witnessed the plunder and devastation of the natural world. Their stories, their work to improve the whole community of life, must be made known and become the major part of our Great American Myth (as well as the Great Universal Myth).

Of course I understand that rationalizing beings, such as you and I, rely reflexively on preconceived notions derived from myths—those of our cultural indoctrination and those we choose to believe. But just imagine a mythology not of a divisive, dualistic, we-versus-them ethos, but one rooted in solidarity—oneness—with other humans and with all life. This is the narrative I choose to nurture; and the one that informs my bias. I do what I can to promote the new stories. I know it’s an uphill battle against potent prevailing sentiment and the powers that drive it. But one important story in my mythology is *The Little Engine That Could*—I think I can, I think I can, I think I can...

The new mythological theme that we can promote—at least I think we can, I think we can—can be simply stated: The essential Truth is *We are One*.

Kim Carlyle is editor-in-chief of the War Crimes Times.

**“Believe nothing just because a so-called wise person said it. Believe nothing just because a belief is generally held. Believe nothing just because it is said in ancient books. Believe nothing just because it is said to be of divine origin. Believe nothing just because someone else believes it. Believe only what you yourself test and judge to be true.”**

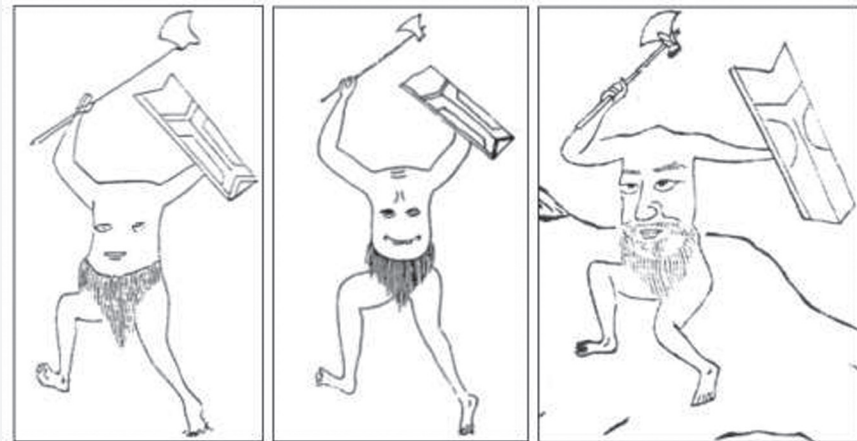
—Siddhartha Gautama

If war were inevitable, there would be little point in trying to end it. If war were inevitable, a moral case might be made for trying to lessen its damage while it continued. And numerous parochial cases could be made for being prepared to win inevitable wars for this side or that side.

Developing ways to avoid generating conflicts is part of the answer, but some occurrence of conflict (or major disagreement) is inevitable, which is why we must use more effective and less destructive tools to resolve conflicts and to achieve security. But there is nothing inevitable about war. It is not made necessary by our genes, by other inevitable forces in our culture, or by crises beyond our control.

### War is NOT in our Genes

War has only been around for the most recent fraction of the existence of our species. We did not evolve with it. During this most recent 10,000 years, war has been sporadic. Some societies have not known war. Some have known it and then abandoned it. Just as some of us find it hard to imagine a world without war or murder, some human societies have found it hard to imagine a world *with* those things. A man in Malaysia, asked why he wouldn’t shoot an arrow at slave raiders, replied “Because it would kill them.” He was unable to comprehend that anyone could *choose* to kill. It’s easy to suspect him of



### War is NOT Natural

According to myth, war is “natural.” Yet a great deal of conditioning is needed to prepare most people to take part in war, and a great deal of mental suffering is common among those who have taken part. In contrast, not a single person is known to have suffered deep moral regret or post-traumatic stress disorder from war deprivation.

In some societies, women have been virtually excluded from war making for centuries and then included. Clearly, this

is a question of culture, not of genetic makeup. War is optional, not inevitable, for women and men alike.

Some nations invest much more heavily in militarism than most and take part in many more wars. Some nations, under coercion, play minor parts in the wars of others. Some nations have completely abandoned war. Some have not attacked another country for centuries. Some have put their military in a museum.

### War is NOT a Permanent Part of our Culture

War long predates capitalism, and surely Switzerland is a type of capitalist nation just as the United

States is. But there is a widespread belief that a culture of capitalism—or of a particular type and degree of greed and destruction and short-sightedness—necessitates war. One answer to this concern is the following: any feature of a society that necessitates war can be changed and is not itself inevitable. The military-industrial complex is not an eternal and invincible force. Environmental destructiveness and economic structures based on greed are not immutable.

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War makers rarely advertise their wars as desirable; it is standard policy to claim that every war is entered into as a last resort. But since it is possible to show that the launching of any particular war was not, in fact, the last resort, that superior alternatives existed, then war is in fact unnecessary.

### War Is Not “Defense”

The U.S. War Department was renamed the Defense Department in 1947. But if the term has any meaning, it cannot be stretched to cover offensive war making or aggressive militarism. If “defense” is to mean something other than “offense,” then attacking another nation “so that they can’t attack us first” or “to send a message” or to “punish” a crime is not defensive and not necessary.

### There Are No “Good Wars”

The most recent widely popular example of a “good war” is World War II. This fact is stunning. People go back three-quarters of a century to find a defensible example of one of our largest endeavors as a species.

## Myth: War Is Necessary

Taking the claim that World War II was “a good war” on its own terms, here are some often overlooked facts, none of which—needless to say—excuse in the

slightest the hideous crimes of any party to that war:

- It is widely accepted that World War I was unnecessary, yet without it, World War II is unimaginable.
- Ending WWI by punishing an entire nation rather than the war makers was understood by wise observers at the time to make WWII very likely.
- The arms race following WWI was widely and correctly understood to be making WWII more likely.
- Western corporations profited by arming Germany and Japan, which also had the support of Western governments between the wars.
- The U.S. had tutored Japan in imperialism and then provoked it through territorial expansion, economic sanctions, and assistance to the Chinese military.

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WWII American anti-Japanese propaganda poster.

***The U.S. government expected the Japanese attack and took numerous actions it knew would likely provoke it.***

## Foreign Policy

(continued from page 1)

nuclear energy program. The U.S. nuclear industry took out full-page ads in U.S. publications bragging about Iran's support for such an enlightened and progressive energy source. The U.S. was pushing for major expansion of Iran's nuclear program just before the Iranian revolution of 1979.

Since the Iranian revolution, the U.S. government has opposed Iran's nuclear energy program and misled the public about the existence of a nuclear weapons program in Iran. This story is well-told in Gareth Porter's new book, *Manufactured Crisis*.

***It should matter to us that there was never any evidence that Mexico attacked the United States, that Spain blew up the Maine, that the Vietnamese fired in the Gulf of Tonkin, or that Iraq had a nuclear weapons program.***

The U.S. assisted Saddam Hussein's Iraq in a war against Iran in the 1980s, in which Iraq attacked Iran with chemical weapons. Iran's religious leaders had declared that chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons must not be used, even in retaliation. And they were not. Iran could have responded to Iraqi chemical attacks with chemical attacks of its own and chose not to.

Iran is committed to not using or possessing weapons of mass destruction. The results of inspections bear that out. Iran's willingness to put restrictions on its legal nuclear energy program—a willingness present both before and after sanctions—bears that out. Inspections should continue. All steps should be taken to move the world toward safe and sustainable energy sources. But can we drop the idea that Iran wants to nuke us?

### Selective Skepticism / Naiveté as National Duty

It's odd how quick we are to spot government deception or ill will when it comes to new health insurance programs, taxes, environmental regulations, or any domestic policy, and how trusting and naive we are when it comes to war. One would think

we'd have learned our lessons. Eisenhower warned us that preparing for war would bring war. When the Soviet enemy disappeared, new ones were quickly found. According to both former NATO commander Wesley Clark and former UK prime minister Tony Blair, the Pentagon has a list of several nations' governments to be overthrown.

The [purported] vast stockpiles of weapons in Iraq weren't there. The claims about chemical weapons attacks in Syria have fallen apart. The evidence that the Libyan government was planning to slaughter civilians has not held up—although plenty of civilians died under NATO's bombing and are dying

now in the chaos left behind. Increased U.S. militarism in Asia is being followed by increased military spending by Asia (although we tend to reverse the chronology and the cause and effect in our minds).

We are supposed to learn from experience. It should matter to us that there was never any evidence that Mexico attacked the United States, that Spain blew up the *Maine*, that the Vietnamese fired in the Gulf of Tonkin, or that Iraq had a nuclear weapons program. When you hear advocates for war and peace alike refer to “the Iranian nuclear weapons program,” ask them for some evidence.

### Myth: the Foundation of War

War gains support and acceptance from widespread belief in false information and the accumulation of false information into generally false concepts or myths about war. This is good news because it means we are not intractably divided by ideology or worldview. Rather, we will find more widespread agreement about war if we can just achieve more widespread awareness of accurate information.

David Swanson blogs at [david-swanson.org](http://david-swanson.org) and [warisacrime.org](http://warisacrime.org), works for [rootsaction.org](http://rootsaction.org), and hosts Talk Nation Radio. His books include *War Is A Lie*. Follow him on Twitter: [@davidenswanson](https://twitter.com/davidenswanson) and Facebook. See also [WorldBeyondWar.org](http://WorldBeyondWar.org).

### Inevitable (from previous page)

We need to understand war as the cultural creation that it is and stop imagining it as something imposed on us by forces beyond our control. In that sense it is important to recognize that no law of physics or sociology requires us to have war because we have some other institution. In fact, war is not required by a particular lifestyle or standard of living because any lifestyle can be changed, because unsustainable practices must end by definition with or without war, and because war actually impoverishes societies that use it.

### War is NOT Created by Crises Beyond our Control

War in human history up to this point has not correlated with population density or resource scarcity. The idea that climate change and the resulting catastrophes will inevitably generate wars could be a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is not a prediction based on facts.

The growing and looming climate crisis is a good reason for us to outgrow our culture of war, so that we are prepared to handle crises by other, less destructive means. And redirecting some or all of the vast sums of money and energy that go into war and war preparation to the urgent work of protecting the climate could make a significant difference, both by ending one of our most environmentally destructive activities and by funding a transition to sustainable practices.

(Myths: Inevitable and Necessary excerpted from longer articles at [WorldBeyondWar.org](http://WorldBeyondWar.org).)

### Necessary (from previous page)

- Winston Churchill called WWII “The Unnecessary War” claiming that “there was never a war more easy to stop.”
- The U.S. government expected the Japanese attack, took numerous actions it knew were likely to provoke it, and prior to the attack instituted a draft, collected the names of Japanese Americans, and ignored activists demonstrating against the build-up to war with Japan.
- Japanese Prime Minister Konoye proposed talks with the U.S. in July 1941, which President Roosevelt rejected.
- To win support for entering the war, Roosevelt lied to Americans about Nazi attacks and plans.
- Roosevelt and the U.S. government blocked efforts to allow Jewish refugees into the U.S. or elsewhere.
- Facts about concentration camps were available but played no part in war propaganda until the war was over.

In contrast, the mistaken belief that wars must follow climate chaos will encourage investment in military preparedness, thus exacerbating the climate crisis and making more likely the compounding of one type of catastrophe with another.

### Ending War Is Possible

Human societies have been known to abolish institutions that were widely considered permanent. These have included human sacrifice, blood feuds, dueling, slavery, the death penalty, and many others. In some societies some of these practices have been largely eradicated, but remain illicitly in the shadows and on the margins. Those exceptions don't prove that complete eradication is impossible, only that it hasn't yet been achieved in that society. The idea of eliminating hunger from the globe was once considered ludicrous. Now it is widely understood that hunger could be abolished—and for a tiny fraction of what is spent on war. While nuclear weapons have not all been dismantled and eliminated, there exists a popular movement working to do just that.

Ending all war is an idea that has found great acceptance in various times and places. It was more popular in the United States, for example, in the 1920s and 1930s. In recent decades, the notion has been propagated that war is permanent. That notion is new, radical, and without basis in fact.

- Nonviolent resistance in Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, and even in Berlin—poorly planned and developed though it was at that time—showed remarkable potential as an alternative to war.

### War Preparation is Not “Defense”

A defensive military would consist of a coast guard, a border patrol, anti-aircraft weapons, and other forces able to defend against an attack. The vast majority of military spending, especially by wealthy nations, is offensive.

### Defense Need Not Involve Violence

The most effective means of defense is, far more often than not, nonviolent resistance. The mythology of warrior cultures suggests that nonviolent action is weak, passive, and ineffective at solving large-scale social problems. The facts show just the opposite.

People under attack can refuse to recognize an attacker's authority. Peace teams from abroad can join the nonviolent resistance. Targeted sanctions and prosecutions can be combined with international diplomatic pressure. There are alternatives to mass violence.

### Ineffective, Counterproductive

War mythology would have us believe that war kills evil people in order to protect us and our freedoms. In reality, recent wars have been one-sided slaughters of children, the elderly, and ordinary residents of the nations attacked. And while “freedom” has served to justify the wars, the wars have served to justify curtailing actual freedoms. Additionally, these wars have spawned a whole new generation of enemies, justifiably, from the traumatized victims.



# Nuclear Weapons or Democracy

**“Out of ratio” weapons are essentially ungovernable.**

by Craig Lambert

The most fateful object yet to appear on this planet could be the “nuclear briefcase,” or “nuclear football,” a 40-pound titanium case containing top-secret information and tools that enable the president of the United States to launch a nuclear strike. The president carries authentication codes to assure recipients that the source of any nuclear orders is actually the Commander in Chief. When the president is away from the White House, a military officer with the nation’s highest security clearance (“Yankee White”) always remains nearby with this doomsday device, at times cabled to his wrist.

Due to the extraordinary secretiveness surrounding nuclear matters, Americans have no idea how many times presidents may have opened the nuclear briefcase or its equivalent. We do know that Eisenhower considered using nuclear weapons twice, during the Taiwan Straits crisis of 1954 and a flare-up over Berlin in 1959; Ike also delegated the power to launch a strike to certain military commanders if he were unavailable. Former secretary of defense Robert McNamara said, late in his life, that John F. Kennedy came “within a hairbreadth of nuclear catastrophe” three times—this in a presidency lasting only 34 months. Lyndon Johnson contemplated deploying nuclear arms to prevent China from building them. Richard Nixon considered using them three times—other than in Vietnam—including one case in which North Korea shot down a U.S. reconnaissance plane in 1969.

“The crucial point is that there’s an interval of 30 or 40 years between those incidents and our learning about them,” says Elaine Scarry, Cabot Professor of Aesthetics and the General Theory of Value at Harvard University. “We wrongly assume that the Cuban missile crisis is the model: ‘when the world is at risk, we know it.’ Well, we don’t know it. In eight of these nine cases, we didn’t have a clue. Do we want to simply *guess* about something like this, where millions of people stand to be killed? We assume there would have to be a huge problem for us to contemplate such a thing. Like, for example, shooting down a reconnaissance plane?”

“It’s widely acknowledged that nuclear weapons are incredibly susceptible to accidental use or to seizure by a non-state actor

or terrorist,” Scarry continues. “But what has been insufficiently recognized is the biggest danger of all: the belief that there is some ‘legitimate’ possession of these weapons, that we are safe as long as there’s government oversight of them. In fact, they are utterly incompatible with governance.”

In her new book, *Thermonuclear Monarchy: Choosing Between Democracy and Doom* (W.W. Norton), Scarry argues that the very existence of nuclear arsenals is irreconcilable with the U.S. Constitution and in fact betrays the basic purpose of the social contract that governs any civil society: forestalling injurious behavior. “Nuclear weapons undo governments, and undo anything that could be meant by democracy,” she says. “They put the population completely outside the realm of overseeing our entry into war—or having a say in their own survival or destruction. We have to choose between nuclear weapons and democracy.”

In her book, Scarry asserts that the United States, “...a country formerly dependent on its population, its legislature, and its executive acting in concert for any act of defense—has now largely eliminated its population and its legislature from the sphere of defense, and relies exclusively on its executive.”

Nuclear weapons are monarchic. Along with other weapons of mass destruction, they are what Scarry calls “out-of-ratio” weapons: ones that give a very small number of people the power to annihilate very large numbers of people. “An out-of-ratio weapon makes the presence of the population at the authorization end [of an attack] a structural impossibility,” she writes. “New weapons inevitably change the nature of warfare,” she says, “but out-of-ratio weapons have changed the nature of government.”

In a practical sense, the speed and scale of an incoming nuclear attack make the notion of congressional authorization of war ridiculous; such arms are fundamentally beyond democratic control. “We had a choice: get rid of nuclear weapons or get rid of Congress and the citizens,” Scarry explains. “We got rid of Congress and the citizens.”

Since the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, American presidents have been well aware that having a finger on the nuclear trigger gives them

monstrous power that dwarfs the petty squabbles of day-to-day political life. During the 1974 impeachment proceedings of Richard Nixon, he told the press, “I can go into my office and pick up the telephone, and in 25 minutes 70 million people will be dead.”

The concentration of such outsized violent force in the hands of the American president (and of the leaders of the other eight nuclear powers) has, Scarry argues, largely undermined the three-part design of government that the framers of the Constitution created to separate legislative, judicial, and executive power. Instead, Washington has become like a three-handed poker game in which one player holds all the high cards and billions of chips.

In Article I, Section 8:11, the Constitution insists on a congressional declaration for war to take place, Scarry says, yet, “since the invention of atomic weapons, there has not been a formal congressional declaration of war.” (The closest case was Congress’s conditional declaration for the Gulf War.) *Thermonuclear Monarchy* describes the five cases of declared war in American history: the War of 1812, the Mexican War of 1846, the Spanish-American War, and the two World Wars. Scarry remarks on “how majestic Congress was in those cases.”

The awesome power that nuclear weapons invest in the executive branch essentially disables the legislative one, she writes. “[O]nce Congress was stripped of its responsibility for overseeing war—as happened the moment atomic weapons were invented—it was, in effect, infantilized....Now, six decades later, book after book has appeared describing Congress as ‘dysfunctional’ or ‘dead.’ Once Congress regains its authority over war, however, there is every reason to believe it will travel back along the reverse path, reacquiring the stature, intelligence, eloquence, and commitment to the population it once had.”

Civic stature and military stature are intimately linked. Scarry points to the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment,




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***Nuclear weapons eliminate individual soldiers; they condense the injuring power that formerly depended on thousands of soldiers into a single weapon, and place it at the disposal of a solitary leader.***

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which enfranchised African-American men. It came on the heels of the Civil War, in which 180,000 black soldiers fought; given this, blacks could hardly be denied the right to vote. Similarly, the Twenty-Sixth Amendment, lowering the voting age from 21 to 18, was ratified after many teenaged soldiers had fought and died in the Vietnam War.

“It is tempting to think that a country with monarchic arrangements in the realm of nuclear war can maintain a more attractive form of government throughout the rest of its civil fabric,” she writes. “That would be a mistake. A country *is* its arrangements for national defense....”

The Constitution and, more generally, the social contract, purposely make it difficult to go to war. Scarry’s book makes clear that the social contract arises from the need to prevent the injuries that people living in groups so often cause one another. The solution involves putting brakes on the concentration of power. “The only way you can civilize force is to distribute it: give everyone a small share,” she says, adding that the Second Amendment’s insistence on the citizens’ right to bear arms underlines this principle. Urging that military powers be held within the social

(continued on page 18)

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***During the 1974 impeachment proceedings of Richard Nixon, he told the press, “I can go into my office and pick up the telephone, and in 25 minutes 70 million people will be dead.”***

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# 'Good' and 'bad' war – and the struggle of memory against forgetting

by John Pilger

Fifty years ago, E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* rescued the study of history from the powerful. Kings and queens, landowners, industrialists, politicians, and imperialists had owned much of the public memory. In 1980, Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* also demonstrated that the freedoms and rights we enjoy precariously—free expression, free association, the jury system, the rights of minorities—were the achievements of ordinary people, not the gift of elites.

Historians, like journalists, play their most honorable role when they myth-bust. Eduardo Galeano's *The Open Veins of Latin America* (1971) achieved this for the people of a continent whose historical memory was colonized and mutated by the dominance of the United States.

The "good" world war of 1939-45 provides a bottomless ethical bath in which the west's "peacetime" conquests are cleansed. De-mystifying historical investigation stands in the way. Richard Overy's *1939: Countdown to War* (2009) is a devastating explanation of why that cataclysm was not inevitable.

We need such smokescreen-clearing now more than ever. The powerful would like us to believe that the likes of Thompson, Zinn, and Galeano are no longer necessary: that we live, as *Time* magazine put it, "in an eternal present," in which reflection is limited to Facebook and historical narrative is the preserve of Hollywood. This is a confidence trick. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell wrote: "Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past."

The people of Korea understand this well. The slaughter on their peninsula following the Second World War is known as the "Forgotten War," whose significance for all humanity has long been suppressed in military histories of Cold War good versus evil.

I have just read *The Korean War: A History* by Bruce Cumings (2010), professor of history at the University of Chicago. I first saw Cumings interviewed in Regis Tremblay's extraordinary film, *The Ghosts of Jeju*, which



Most Feared Weapon—Prisoner interrogation had determined that napalm bombs were the most feared of all weapons used by the U.S. Far East Air Forces in Korea. Shown is the blast from one of these fire bombs as it begins to envelop a building used as a military barracks by the Communists. The jellied gasoline covers the building and is forced through open windows and doors by the blast. In the upper left of the picture can be seen flames from the first of two napalm tanks dropped by B-26 light bombers on a village used by the enemy in Korea to shelter troops and store supplies. (DoD photo ca. January 1951)

documents the uprising of the people of the southern Korean island of Jeju in 1948 and the campaign of the present-day islanders to stop the building of a base with American missiles aimed provocatively at China.

Like most Koreans, the farmers and fishing families protested the senseless division of their nation between north and south in 1945—a line drawn along the 38th Parallel by an American official, Dean Rusk, who had "consulted a map around midnight on the day after we obliterated Nagasaki with an atomic bomb," wrote Cumings. The myth of a "good" Korea (the south) and a "bad" Korea (the north) was invented.

In fact, Korea, north and south, has a remarkable people's history of resistance to feudalism and foreign occupation, notably Japan's in the 20th century. When the Americans defeated Japan in 1945, they occupied Korea and often branded those who had resisted the Japanese as "commies." On Jeju island, as many as 60,000 people were massacred by militias supported, directed, and, in some cases, commanded by American officers.

This and other unreported atrocities were a "forgotten" prelude to the Korean War (1950-53) in which more people were killed than Japanese died during all of World War Two. Cumings gives an astonishing tally of the degree of destruction of the cities of the north: Pyongyang, 75 per cent; Sariwon, 95 per cent; Sinanju, 100 per cent. Great dams in the north were bombed in order to unleash internal tsunamis. "Anti-personnel" weapons, such as napalm, were tested on civilians. Cumings' superb investigation helps us understand why today's North Korea seems so strange: an anachronism sustained by an enduring mentality of siege.

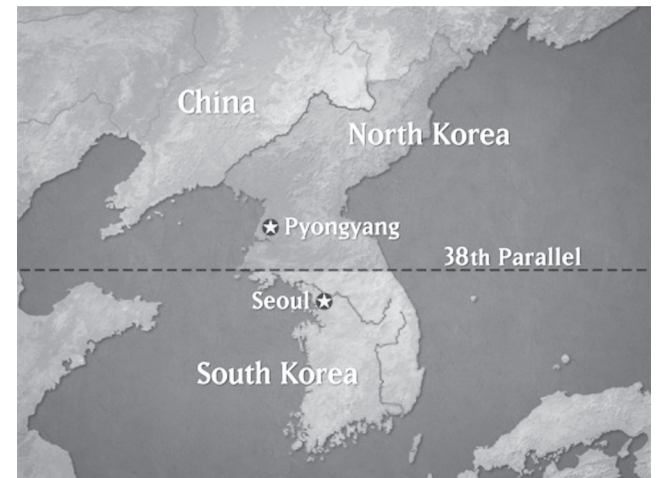
"The unhindered machinery of incendiary bombing was visited on the North for three years," he wrote, "yielding a wasteland and a surviving mole people who had learned to love the shelter of caves, mountains, tunnels, and redoubts, a subterranean world that became the basis for reconstructing a country and a memento for building a fierce hatred through the ranks of the population. Their truth is not cold, antiquarian, ineffectual knowledge." Cumings quotes Virginia Wolf on how the trauma of this kind of war "confers memory."

The guerrilla leader Kim Il Sung had begun fighting the Japanese militarists in 1932. Every characteristic attached to the regime he founded—"communist, rogue state, evil enemy"—derives from a ruthless, brutal, heroic resistance: first to Japan, then the United States, which threatened to nuke the rubble its bombers had left. Cumings exposes as propaganda the notion that Kim Il Sung, leader of the "bad" Korea, was a stooge of Moscow. In contrast, the regime that Washington invented in the south, the "good" Korea, was run largely by those who had collaborated with Japan and America.

The Korean War has an unrecognized distinction. It was in the smoldering ruins of the peninsula that the U.S. turned itself into what Cumings calls "an archipelago of empire." When the Soviet Union collapsed in the 1990s, it was as if the whole planet was declared American—or else.

But there is China now. The base currently being built on Jeju island will face the Chinese metropolis of Shanghai, less than 300 miles away, and the industrial heartland of the only country whose economic power is likely to surpass that of the U.S. "China," says President Obama in a leaked briefing paper, "is our fast-emerging

In 1945, the myth of a "good" Korea (the south) and a "bad" Korea (the north) was invented



*Most Koreans protested the senseless division of their nation between north and south in 1945—a line drawn along the 38th Parallel by an American official, Dean Rusk, who had "consulted a map around midnight on the day after we obliterated Nagasaki with an atomic bomb."*



Jeju Island (marked with an "A")—strategic proximity to China. strategic threat." By 2020, almost two thirds of all U.S. naval forces in the world will be transferred to the Asia-Pacific region. In an arc extending from Australia to Japan and beyond, China will be ringed by U.S. missiles and nuclear-weapons armed aircraft. Will this threat to all of us be "forgotten," too?

*John Pilger has won numerous awards for journalism and for his films. He has covered numerous wars, notably Vietnam. In the late 1960s and 1970s, he reported on the upheavals in the U.S. and marched with America's poor from Alabama to Washington following the assassination of Martin Luther King. His 1994 dispatches from East Timor helped galvanize support for the East Timorese, then occupied by Indonesia. His long list of documentaries includes Vietnam: The Quiet Mutiny (1970), Nicaragua: A Nation's Right to Survive (1983), Paying the Price: Killing the Children of Iraq (2000), and The War You Don't See (2010). In 2003, he was awarded the prestigious Sophie Prize for "30 years of exposing injustice and promoting human rights."*



# The Forgotten War Unforgotten

WCT editor Robert Yoder interviews  
Korean War veteran Perry Porter

More than three million people died in the Korean War; two-and-a-half million were civilians. After three years of carnage, both sides agreed to a cease-fire. The dividing line between North and South Korea was still the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, where it had been when the war started. That cease-fire is still in effect; for political reasons, the U.S. refuses to sign a peace treaty with North Korea officially ending the war. But the Korean War was never declared a war, anyway. President Truman called it a “police action” to circumvent Congress. To those who fought it however, it was a hellish, brutal, savage war fought against the elements as much as the enemy. In North Korea, it’s known as the “Fatherland Liberation War.” In China, it’s the “War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea.” Here in the U.S., it’s “The Forgotten War.”

Perry Porter was drafted into the army in the summer of 1950 and sent to Korea as a medic just in time for the invasion at Inchon. He did not object to training or going into combat but refused to carry a weapon or kill anybody. He was in some of the fiercest fighting of the Korean War. “I never killed anybody but I had to hurt some people real bad,” he told me. Perry agreed to be interviewed and what follows are excerpts from our taped conversations in some of San Francisco’s North Beach cafes.

## Family & Background

*Perry Porter was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. He is Oglala Sioux and German on his mother’s side—her father was German, her mother was a direct descendant of Red Cloud. His father’s side is Cherokee, Carib Indian, African and English.*

**Perry Porter:** My dad was a CO (conscientious objector) in WW I.

*Robert Yoder: What happened to him?*

**PP:** Nothing. They just sent him home.

*How did he come by his CO consciousness?*

**PP:** I don’t really know. My dad died when I was 14, my grandfather died before I was born—and my grandmother. My great-grandfather was an English Jew. He married my great-grandmother who was from Haiti, the wealthiest woman in

Haiti. They came into this country in the 1840s. This guy asked my great-grandfather, “What are you doing with that nigger bitch?” and he shot the motherfucker dead right on the spot. Happened twice again. They couldn’t go anyplace in the U.S., so they went to California before it was a state.

*But your father was a pacifist?*

**PP:** The men in my family were known for being very tough fighters. I remember this one guy got in a fight with my uncle and my uncle never hit him with his fist, he just kept slapping him.

*Did your mother’s side have a history of fisticuffs?*

**PP:** Just my father’s side. My mother’s side had a history of war, though... One of the family friends—Nolly Smith—his father was a scout who told Custer not to go



Perry Porter in front of Cafe Puccini in North Beach, San Francisco, on May 11, 2014.

into Little Big Horn... On my mother’s side, our family was waiting for him.

*Why did Custer ignore him? Stupidity? Arrogance?*

**PP:** No. Custer said the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry could take on the entire Indian nation.

*And that came down to you from your father?*

**PP:** Yeah. And also the church that I attended as a young kid, 17 to 21 [The Church of Fellowship of All Peoples]... It taught out of all the great books of religion. Howard Thurman who was the minister, was reported in *Life* magazine to be [one of] the greatest ministers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Highly knowledgeable.

## Boxing

*The Oakland Boys Club taught boys to box and took them to San Quentin prison to box for the prisoners. Perry’s first boxing match was at San Quentin when he was eight years old.*

*I assume the Boys Club taught you to box. How old were you when you started?*

**PP:** My father taught me how to box when I was very young. When I was fourteen, I started boxing at Harry Fein’s gym in Oakland. Tony Zale taught me how to K.O. a guy “going away.” I worked out almost every day,

*Tell me how you came to be the heavyweight boxing champion of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army.*

**PP:** The fighting got so heavy in the line, I said, “I’ve gotta get down off of this sucker.” We had this 8<sup>th</sup> Army tournament so I went to fight in that tournament and three

guys I fought, they weren’t very much, and then the champion of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army, he weighed 240 pounds and was six foot four. I weighed 190 and was six foot. I broke both of his floating ribs in the first round. That was the 8<sup>th</sup> Army championship.

*That was the first time you fought in the army?*

**PP:** No. I was six minutes late for a formation going overseas – but they were still there – so the sergeant...said, “Where’ve you been?” I said, “I wasn’t gonna stay on the base my last night in the U.S. I may never come back.” He said, “Go report to the Old Man.” The Old Man says, “Put yourself under arrest and go down to the stockade.”... So I’m in the stockade and this guy’s name was Roland LaStarza. He was warming up for heavyweight championship of the world. The guys saw him work out, they wouldn’t fight him, so I fought Roland LaStarza to get out of the stockade. We weren’t working out too hard. I think I could have easily stayed in there with him. Had I known what was waiting for me in Korea, I’d have stayed in prison. [laughs]

*[ed. This exhibition bout was soon after LaStarza lost a split decision against Rocky Marciano in Madison Square Garden.]*

## Army & Becoming a Medic

*He didn’t register as a CO, but as soon as he was drafted made it known that he would not carry a weapon or kill anybody.*

*(continued on page 14)*



Perry Porter (far left) helping load a casualty onto a helicopter during the Korean War. Photo from *The Bayonet: The History of the 7th Infantry Division in Korea* published by the U.S. Military Public Information Office, 1953.

# The War In Afghanistan Is A Racket

by Bill Distler

In August 1968, my company surrounded a Vietnamese village so that the “lerps” (from LRRP—long range reconnaissance patrol) could search it. Five soldiers appeared carrying carbines with silencers. Why would they need silencers?

When it was dark, they went into the village. When morning came, they were gone.

Carlotta Gall’s book about Afghanistan, *The Wrong Enemy*, tells a similar story. An Afghan translator accompanied a U.S. team on a night raid. They carried “American assault weapons with silencers attached.” They broke into a house, shot three adults, and left several children crying. The translator “was never asked to translate anything.”

Our military thinkers still don’t know right from wrong, but they have learned lessons from Vietnam and El Salvador—how to keep wars quiet and, to paraphrase Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, to become more efficient at murder.

*The Wrong Enemy* should cause us to reflect on Afghanistan’s future. For years, our taxes have paid for war. Isn’t it time to shift our spending and our creative thinking to peacemaking?

In Afghanistan, over the last 35 years

of war, there was one constant: the Pakistani military armed the most extreme fundamentalists. During 23 of those years our government paid for these wars.

During the 1980s, our government paid Pakistan to arm Afghan guerrillas (the mujahideen) as they fought the Soviet army. Since 2001, our government has sent our military to fight the Taliban but kept silent while the Pakistani military continued to arm the Taliban. A Pentagon assessment from July 2013 said, “so long as the Taliban can find haven in Pakistan, defeating them on the battlefield will be difficult if not impossible.”

We have spent more than \$1 trillion on the Afghan war. Of that, about \$100 billion went to “reconstruction,” but almost all of that went to prop up the Afghan government, National Army, and Police. Kathy Kelly of Voices for Creative Non-violence wrote that only \$3 billion of that \$1 trillion (one third of 1 percent) has gone to aid the average Afghan.

The anti-corruption group Transparency International ranks Afghanistan as one of the three most corrupt nations on earth, yet our government continues to give contracts to corporations with long records of fraudulent practices. (See “Windfalls of War” at [publicintegrity.org](http://publicintegrity.org))

**Excerpt from a *Mother Jones* interview with Larry McMurtry, author of 32 novels including *Lonesome Dove*.**

*MJ: You’ve described the Old West mythologies as destructive. Which ones particularly grate?*

*LM: The Western notion of masculinity goes back a long way. It doesn’t allow for women, and it’s also racist—it doesn’t allow for other cultures.*

*MJ: To what degree have you succeeded in your demythologizing mission?*

*LM: I haven’t succeeded at all. It’s just as racist and misogynistic as it ever was. The image of the cowboy is one of the dominant images in American culture.*



“[W]e can plan for a limited military presence in Afghanistan beyond 2014, because after all the sacrifices we’ve made, we want to preserve the gains that you have helped to win.”

—Barack Obama,  
speaking to troops at Bagram Air Base  
May 25, 2014

“The trauma and abuse...are the product of 13 consecutive years of war we never should have fought in the first place. The traumas, toxic legacies, and torn social fabric in Iraq and Afghanistan continue to spread harm to these countries and destabilize and militarize the region, and we continue to bring our invisible wounds back home and spread them to our families and loved ones. The real way to end this tragedy is to stop the U.S. policies responsible. This means stop arms shipments to Iraq and immediately withdraw all troops from Afghanistan. Leaving 10,000 troops behind is not a real end to that war.”

—Matt Howard, communication director  
Iraq Veterans Against the War  
May 28, 2014

Nation-building didn’t fail in Afghanistan; it never started. Corrupt contractors took huge payments, sub-contractors took theirs, and on down the line until there was very little left—the trickle-down theory in action.

Before September 11, 2001, Iran opposed the Taliban, while Pakistan armed and supported the Taliban. After September 11, our government illogically designated Iran as our enemy and Pakistan as our ally. This only makes sense if we see that our government follows a logic of its own, based on profit and control of other nations’ resources.

With Iran off-limits, Pakistan became the only route from Afghanistan to the sea. Our foreign policy geniuses gave Pakistan veto power over any U.S. corporate get-rich-quick schemes. The root problem of our continuous war is that U.S. soldiers are caught in a war of attrition over how much control the U.S. and Pakistan will allow each other over Afghanistan.

If we care about the soul of our nation, we must ask why our government enriches a few well-connected Americans and Afghans while pushing the average American and Afghan even deeper into poverty? And why does our government remain silent while Pakistan still provides the weapons that have killed 3,400 U.S. and NATO soldiers, hundreds of civilian contractors and aid workers, and tens of thousands of Afghans?

Does our government value profits over lives? Corporations will profit enormously



from exporting trillions of dollars worth of minerals from Central Asia and Afghanistan to seaports in Pakistan. More profits will come from supplying arms to those who will guard the transportation routes. If we don’t demand that Congress changes course, a coalition of the greedy will continue to shape our policies.

After 33 years in the Marine Corps, General Smedley Butler described himself as “a gangster for capitalism.” General Butler titled his book *War Is a Racket*.

Ann Jones, in her book, *They Were Soldiers*, says “a clever person just needs to find the right racket to profit endlessly from America’s endless wars.” The war in Afghanistan is a racket, and those who promote it for personal gain are gangsters for capitalism.

We can still heal the wounds of war. We should: withdraw all support from the Pakistani military; test a →

The School of the Americas is a U.S. military training school for Latin American security personnel, located at Fort Benning, Georgia. Renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, the school has trained assassins, death squad leaders and human rights abusers for dirty work in Latin America since its founding in 1946. Dubbed the "School of Assassins," the SOA/WHINSEC is synonymous with torture and military repression for millions around the world. Graduates of the school have a long history of participating in and orchestrating killings, rapes, targeted violence and the suppression of popular movements for social change.

# CLOSE THE SOA & RESIST U.S. MILITARIZATION IN THE AMERICAS



**JOIN THE RESISTANCE  
CALL 202-234-3440**

**WWW.SOAW.ORG**

# WANTED

FOR EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

**General Jaime LASPRILLA Villamizar**  
WHINSEC Instructor

Country: Colombia  
SOA Training: Taught Captains  
Career Course

In 2006 General Lasprilla was colonel of the Ninth Brigade in the Department of Huila. Troops under his command reportedly committed at least 58 extrajudicial executions.

He is now the top commander of the Colombian Army.



## The School of the Americas (SOA)



The SOA/WHINSEC is located 2 hours south of Atlanta, Georgia.

is a combat training school for Latin American soldiers, located at Fort Benning, Georgia. In 2001 it was renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC).

Since 1946, the SOA has trained over 70,000 Latin American soldiers in counterinsurgency techniques, sniper training, commando and psychological warfare. Training manuals used at the school for at least a decade, advocated the use of torture, extortion and execution. Graduates of the school continue to use their skills to wage a war against their own people.

To learn more and to take action, contact SOA Watch  
**(202) 234 3440**

**soaw.org**



# greatly MISSED

Natalia Tuberquia Muñoz

Age: 6 years old  
Country: Colombia  
Status: Killed on February 21, 2005

Background: Natalia was murdered in a massacre of three men, two women and two children near the Colombian village of San José de Apartadó in 2005. The massacre was perpetrated by members of the US-trained Colombian military and paramilitaries.

SOA graduates have a long history of collaborating with paramilitaries, orchestrating killings, rapes, and the suppression of social movements.



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**soaw.org**



La Escuela de las Américas (SOA), situada en Fort Benning, Georgia, es un centro de entrenamiento del ejército de los EEUU para personal militar y de seguridad de América Latina. En el año 2001 cambió de nombre y actualmente se le conoce como "El Instituto de Cooperación para la Seguridad Hemisférica" (WHINSEC). Desde 1946, esta escuela ha formado a militares latinoamericanos, muchos de los cuales pasan a ser conocidos asesinos, líderes de escuadrones de la muerte y violadores de los derechos humanos. Apodada la "Escuela de Asesinos", la SOA/WHINSEC es sinónimo con la tortura y la represión militar para millones de personas alrededor del mundo.

# CIERRE LA SOA & RESISTA la militarización en las Américas



**Todxs a Fort Benning  
21-23 de noviembre**

**WWW.SOAW.ORG**

from SOA Watch

# Make the Resistance Visible

Together with street artist César Maxit, SOA Watch has developed a series of downloadable posters (in Spanish and English) to spread the word about the impact of the School of the Americas\* on people all over the hemisphere. The posters show the names, faces, and stories of people who were murdered at the hands of graduates of the School of the Americas, and the names and faces of SOA graduates.

At the left is a small sampling. See more and learn about the poster campaign at soaw.org.

## Vigil at Fort Benning

La Lucha Sigue! Convergence of Hope and Resistance at Fort Benning, November 21-23, 2014.

Join thousands of teachers, farmers, students, unionists, environmentalists—revolutionaries all of us!—as we converge at the gates of the School of the Americas where we continue to reaffirm life and our creativity in the face of Empire. Bring your flags, banners, voices, schools, communities. Engage in creative actions calling attention to continued U.S. militarization in the hemisphere.

Educate. Activate. Mobilize. See you at the gates this November 21-23!

\* The School of the Americas (SOA) is a combat training school for Latin American soldiers, located at Fort Benning, Georgia. In 2001 it was renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC). It was initially established in Panama in 1946; however, it was expelled from Panama in 1984 under the terms of the Panama Canal Treaty. Former Panamanian President, Jorge Illueca, stated that the School of the Americas was the "biggest base for destabilization in Latin America." Since 1946, the SOA has trained over 64,000 Latin American soldiers in counterinsurgency techniques, sniper training, commando and psychological warfare, military intelligence, and interrogation tactics. These graduates have consistently used their skills to wage war against their own people. Among those targeted by SOA graduates are educators, union organizers, religious workers, student leaders, and others who work for the rights of the poor. Hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans have been tortured, raped, assassinated, "disappeared," massacred, and forced into refuge by those trained at the "School of Assassins."

new alliance with Iran to break Pakistan's economic stranglehold; and shift our spending to projects chosen and directed by Afghan civic groups.

We owe a debt to the broken families of Iraq and Afghanistan and to our morally and physically wounded soldiers. We can start repaying that debt by spending whatever is needed to repair the damage.

Bill Distler was a fire team leader and squad leader in the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam from Dec. 1967 to Sept. 1968. He spends his spare time thinking about Vietnam, El Salvador, and Afghanistan. He believes they are all one long war driven by greed, arrogance, and ignorance.

**"When a well-packaged web of lies has been sold gradually to the masses over generations, the truth will seem utterly preposterous and its speaker a raving lunatic."**

—Dresden James

**"The future is too good to waste on lies."**

—Bowe Bergdahl

## Commemoration

(continued from page 3)



3. To pay tribute to the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States during the Vietnam War.

Whose contributions? Those of Nixon's "silent majority"? Those of U.S. intelligence agencies that spied on anti-war protesters (e.g., the FBI through COINTELPRO)?

What about the contributions of the anti-war movement, whose efforts hastened the end of the war? What about the courage of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who chose to break his betrayal of silence and had this to say in his first public antiwar speech, "Beyond Vietnam," in New York City on April 4, 1967, exactly one year before his assassination: "Surely this madness must cease... I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted... I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken."

What about the integrity of those who chose not to "serve"? What about the service of conscientious objectors like Doug Hostetter, who was a Mennonite Central Committee worker in central Vietnam from 1966 to 1969? What about the impact of those returning anti-war veterans, including the current secretary of state, John Kerry's April 1971 testimony before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and others who testified in the January-February 1971 Winter Soldier Investigation, an inquiry into U.S. war crimes?

4. To highlight the advances in technology, science, and medicine related to military research conducted during the Vietnam War.

Which "advances" would those be? Studies of the short- and long-term health effects of Agent Orange exposure? How to save grievously wounded soldiers who would have otherwise perished on the battlefield as preparation for future imperial misadventures also based on lies (e.g., Iraq)? Vietnam as a fantasy lab for the use of bombs, cluster munitions, mines, and grenades? The introduction of new torture techniques and the refinement of existing ones? This objective is reminiscent of "the advances in technology, science, and medicine related to military research" conducted by the Third Reich. It exemplifies that famous American can-do spirit at its most perverse—fumbling for a silver lining in moral pitch blackness.

5. To recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the allies of the United States during the Vietnam War.

"Contributions and sacrifices"—all for naught and at heartbreaking cost, mostly to the Vietnamese, but also to a generation of foreign and U.S. veterans and their families who have paid the price in shattered and, in many cases, prematurely ended lives, including the multigenerational effects of Agent Orange, PTSD, divorce, drug abuse, incarceration, homelessness, and suicide. What about the war crimes committed by some of those allied forces, including Australians and South Koreans?

### Overcoming the Past?

The good news is that while most of America continues to indulge in this national charade and refuses to come to terms with its bloody past and prevent the "past" from becoming "prologue" again and again, the tiny S-shaped country upon which the U.S. military visited so much death and destruction has emerged as one of the great success stories of the developing world, a major



Le Thi Thu, 42, and her daughter, Nguyen Thi Ly, 11, live in a village south of Da Nang, Vietnam. They are second and third generation victims of dioxin exposure, the result of the U.S. military's use of Agent Orange and other herbicides during the Vietnam War more than 40 years ago. Thu's father was sprayed with Agent Orange when he was a soldier in the North Vietnamese Army. She was born in 1970 with facial deformities. "I could see the difference between myself and others right away, she recalls. "When I was a small child, I felt pain inside my body all the time. My parents took me to the hospital, and the doctors determined that I had been affected by Agent Orange." Ly, her first child, was born with the same facial deformities. Her 10-year-old son looks normal, but he also suffers from chronic bone pain, a cruel illustration of how dioxin exposure can randomly affect a family through several generations. The Vietnam Red Cross estimates that 3 million Vietnamese suffer from illnesses related to dioxin exposure, including at least 150,000 people born with severe birth defects since the end of the war. The U.S. government is paying to clean up dioxin-contaminated soil at the Da Nang airport, which served as a major U.S. base during the conflict. But the U.S. government still denies that dioxin is to blame for widespread health problems in Vietnam and has never provided any money specifically to help the country's Agent Orange victims. May 28, 2012. ©2012 Drew Brown. See Drew Brown's Agent Orange photo gallery at drewbrown.photoshelter.com.)

player in Southeast Asia, and a valued partner of the U.S. Against incalculable odds, including a cruel and devastating U.S.-led economic embargo that ended only 20 years ago, Vietnam has prevailed. Best of all, Vietnam belongs to the Vietnamese.

When asked if she feels hatred towards the U.S., a woman who lived through the 1972 "Christmas Bombing" of Hanoi replied "No. You never forget what happened, but you can't move forward if you're always looking back." As the victimizers, Americans and their political leaders need to look back before they can move forward.

Mark A. Ashwill lives in Hanoi, Vietnam. His most recent book, *Vietnam Today: A Guide to a Nation at a Crossroads (with Thai Ngoc Diep)*, was published in 2005 by Intercultural Press.

## Blissful Ignorance

(continued from page 1)

embrace ignorance regarding things like geography, geopolitics, history, and basic social studies. This experiment in social engineering does not stop there; numerous Americans have been mentally configured in ways that prevent them from comprehending their own ignorance. And as if all that were bad enough, Americans have a knack for commenting on topics they know very little about, without actually utilizing due diligence as a means toward educating themselves. Their minds have been brilliantly manipulated to accept untruths as facts. This happens when critical thought is not employed.

Unfortunately, critical thinking is a virtue many Americans have yet to acquire. This, too, is by design.

The corporate media, U.S. government, and school systems have all played significant roles in the blissful ignorance Americans unwittingly cling to. This was by no accident; it is as premeditated as the United States' imperialist wars. Keeping the masses politically dumbed down, while programming them to believe they are actually well versed, insures that the unacceptable status quo will be kept in place—in perpetuity. That status quo has much to do with global domination and the concentration of power within the slimy hands of a small minority.

The powers that be, which also control the corporate media, inundate Americans with shows like "Hannity," "Hardball with Chris Matthews," and "Anderson 360" to program Americans into believing they are now comprehensively educated by virtue of watching these types of programs. As a result, they are not only geopolitically under-educated, they are stuck in a quagmire of consternation, mere pawns to further the U.S.'s destructive global campaigns. Instead of organizing and protesting against U.S. wars and financial machinations, most Americans foolishly cheer on the villains: their own government.

Even when the lies and hypocrisy are blatantly in their faces, most Americans

are too information-starved to recognize them. Take, for instance, the U.S.-backed coup in Ukraine. Most Americans have absolutely no idea that their "own" government financed a coup in that Eastern European nation that helped bring to power a wave of neo-Nazis. This critical geopolitical event has numerous layers including Western European and U.S. powers trying to upend Russian influence in the region and absorb Ukraine into NATO.

Most Americans could not locate Ukraine on a map let alone identify what has really been going on there. President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry find it easy to blatantly lie about the situation. They know most Americans will not be

able to catch them in their lies. After all, you have to know you've been lied to in order to recognize it. Most Americans have no idea where to look for the truth.

Barack Obama and John Kerry have even had the audacity to look into cameras and tell the world "bigger nations cannot simply bully smaller ones." Besides the fact that Russia has not invaded Ukraine, the utter hypocrisy of the lies that spew from their mouths is beyond laughable—it is reprehensible. Who the hell is the United States to lecture anyone about how wrong it is for bigger nations to invade smaller ones?

The United States has a long destructive history in this arena. Barack Obama, himself, led a U.S. and NATO bombing campaign and invasion of Libya, based on a foundation of lies. From 50,000 to 100,000 people have lost their lives in Libya as a result of that U.S. imperialist conquest. And what about the over one million lives lost in Iraq for which the United States' invasion is responsible? What about them, John Kerry and Barack Obama? Did you forget about the Iraqis, Libyans, Somalis, Yemenis, Afghans, and Pakistanis? Do their lives not matter?

***Keeping the masses politically dumbed down, while programming them to believe they are actually well versed, insures that the unacceptable status quo will be kept in place—in perpetuity. That status quo has much to do with global domination and the concentration of power within the slimy hands of a small minority.***

There is blood all over the hands of every U.S. official (and media personality) that championed these crimes against humanity. Was this not a bigger nation bullying a smaller one? Obama also stated that, "Each of us has the right to live as we choose." I guess he meant everybody except for Libyans and all of the communities and people he gave the order to destroy—by way of his drone attacks.

This pack of inexcusable lies may work on the "average American," however they do not work on much of the global community.

They know that the United States government is the preeminent global bully and hypocrite. When one tallies the number of U.S. military engagements and couples them with brutal economic sanctions, the United States government is responsible for the destruction of tens of millions of lives.

Such irrefutable truths are, literally, unthinkable for most Americans. Reality shows, professional sports, and music videos are the main courses in far too many of their mental diets. This must change, if Americans are ever to demand an end to Washington's hypocrisy and ceaseless death campaigns. However, before they can demand anything they must realize how (and why) they have been systematically lied to. And before that happens they must quit—"cold turkey"—their addiction to corporate media "news" and other distractions.

Those of us who are not afflicted with willful ignorance must do our best to re-educate our communities. We must engage them, hold forums, utilize social media, and support and create alternative grassroots media initiatives. If this information is new to you, do your own research to find the truths, and there you will also locate the lies. And please stop supporting fork-tongued, war mongering U.S. politicians.

Activism is the watchword. There is no time for spectating when it comes to building a humane society.

*Solomon Comissiong (solomoncomissiong.com) is an educator, community activist, author, founder of the Your World News Media Collective (www.yourworldnews.org), a founding member of the Pan-African collective for Advocacy & Action, and the author of A Hip Hop Activist Speaks Out on Social Issues. This article appeared on blackagenda.com and is reprinted with permission.*

**Myths, propaganda, lies, and U.S.-Russian relations**

**"The Russians are coming ... again ... and they're still ten feet tall!"**

by William Blum

So, what do we have here? In Libya, in Syria, and elsewhere the United States has been on the same side as the al-Qaeda types. But not in Ukraine. That's the good news. The bad news is that in Ukraine the United States is on the same side as the neo-Nazi types, who—taking time off from parading around with their swastika-like symbols and calling for the death of Jews, Russians, and Communists—on May 2 burned down a trade-union building in Odessa, killing scores of people and sending hundreds to hospital; many of the victims were beaten or shot when they tried to flee the flames and smoke; ambulances were blocked from reaching the wounded. Try and find an American mainstream media entity that has made a serious attempt to capture the horror.

And how did this latest example of American foreign-policy exceptionalism come to be? One starting point that can be considered is what former Secretary of Defense and CIA Director Robert Gates says in his recently published memoir: "When the Soviet Union was collapsing in late 1991, [Defense Secretary Dick Cheney] wanted to see the dismemberment not



Kuban Cossacks, May Day Parade, Red Square 1st May 1937 (Photo courtesy of Alexander Kiyani rkka.ru)

only of the Soviet Union and the Russian empire but of Russia itself, so it could never again be a threat to the rest of the world." That can serve as an early marker for the new cold war while the corpse of the old one was still warm. Soon thereafter, NATO began to surround Russia with military bases, missile sites, and NATO members, while yearning for perhaps the most important part needed to complete the circle—Ukraine.

In February of this year, U.S. State Department officials, undiplomatically, joined anti-government protesters in the capital city of Kiev, handing out encouragement and food, from which emanated the infamous leaked audio tape between the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt, and the State Department's Victoria Nuland... Their conversation dealt with who should be running the new Ukraine government after the government of Viktor Yanukovich was overthrown; their most favored for this position being one Arseniy Yatsenuk.

**Coincidence Theory**

My dear, and recently departed, Washington friend, John Judge, liked to say that if you want to call him a "conspiracy theorist" you have to call others "coincidence theorists." Thus it was by the most remarkable of coincidences that Arseniy Yatsenuk did indeed become the new prime minister. He could very soon be found in private meetings and public press conferences with the president of the United States and the Secretary-General of NATO, as well as meeting with the soon-to-be new owners of Ukraine, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, preparing to impose their standard financial shock therapy. The current protestors in Ukraine don't need Ph.D.s in economics to know what this portends. They know about the impoverishment of Greece, Spain, *et al.* They also despise the new regime for its overthrow of their democratically-elected government, whatever its shortcomings.

(continued on page 17)

**NATO's eastward expansion**



Source: Der Spiegel

## Unforgotten

(continued from page 9)

He trained as an infantryman in heavy weapons, then spent three additional weeks training to be a medic. When he was ready to go overseas, they wanted to assign him to a segregated unit.

**PP:** Although the president had given a directive to integrate the army a long time ago, they called integration taking a battalion of black soldiers and putting them in with a battalion of white soldiers. I said, “I’ll die and go to hell before I’ll serve in a segregated unit.” “You don’t tell your commanding officer where you’re going.” I said, “I’ll die and go to hell before I’ll serve in a segregated unit.” The Executive Officer said, “We spent too much money on him to put him in prison. I know just where we’ll send him.” Well, I never did know where they’d sent me till I’d been court-martialed a fourth time.

What led to your court-martials?

**PP:** As a medic, I was allowed to take Chinese casualties, North Korean casualties, British, American, Australian, Ethiopian casualties, but not South Korean casualties because we gave the South Korean government money to take care of their own casualties. I took them anyway.

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**The generals under MacArthur knew he was making a mistake and they didn’t want to lose an entire regiment so they took half of two regiments and left them up there in case it was all lost, they wouldn’t lose a regular regiment. Chinese came in, a fifteen-day running battle. They cut the unit down from 4,000 to 338, half from battle, half from cold weather... We went through the whole first winter without winter clothes.**

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The first time, a summary court martial, the CO dismissed the charges. The second time, he said, “I asked you not to give me any trouble” and dismissed the charges. The third time, he said, “I asked you not to give me any trouble. Charges dismissed.” The fourth time, I had 40 medics under me and my signature was on all the casualties. He said, “I can’t help you, you’re up for a general court martial.” The colonel conducting the court martial asked the clerk to read the charges. “Taking South Korean casualties against 8<sup>th</sup> Army directives.” “What’s the penalty for murder in the 8<sup>th</sup> Army?” The clerk: “Twenty years in Ft. Leavenworth or we send him to the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.” The colonel pointed to

my shoulder patch: “He’s already in the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Send him back up to his unit. You’re just keeping him alive while he’s down here” and dismissed the charges.

Did they normally make COs medics?

**PP:** Normally they assigned you to a hospital in the States but I never signed a combat waiver so I ended up as a medic with an explosives ordinance disposal team. They killed off enough engineers and medics, they didn’t have enough medics, so whenever they ran a task force, I had to go because I was the only medic. We had 250 men in our company and 286 casualties. Some men were wounded two and three times and I took every one of those casualties off the field. I never got hit... We were losing medics so fast that I went from private to master sergeant in ten months. First, I was a line medic, then a company medic, then a battalion medic, then assistant to the battalion surgeon.

### Combat

Perry was in the Inchon landing on September 15, 1950.

**PP:** The Marines went in at Incheon and we [7<sup>th</sup> Infantry] went in just below Incheon. We closed off the retreat of the North Korean Army. We went into Korea, turned north and went all the way up to

Manchuria. At the border we got lost and wandered on foot into China for about twenty minutes until we realized where we were. The Chinese border guards were watching us but they didn’t bother us. They hadn’t come into the war yet.

I kept asking after I got there, “Where’s the line? Where’s the line?” I thought the line was like in a movie. Finally one day I’m out on a patrol and there are only three of us out there. We all get down and I say,

“Hey, where’s the line?” He says, “See that ridge of mountains about four miles behind us? That’s the line.”

Were you still up on the border when the Chinese entered the war?

**PP:** We radioed MacArthur’s headquarters, “Large number of Chinese,” and that stupid fucking MacArthur, dumb motherfucker MacArthur, unquote [smiles]: “The Chinese do not dare attack American soldiers. There are just 4,000 of them up there, border guards.” And we said, “Nooo. As far as the eye can see, Chinese infantry.” We could see the banners: 4<sup>th</sup> Route Field Army, 2<sup>nd</sup> Route Field Army (RFA). Twenty-seven days later, China



Korea, July 2, 1950. The natural beauty of this quiet scene in North Korea means little to these 1st Marine Division Leathernecks as they rest during a lull in the UN struggle for “Punchbowl Valley.”

entered the war—400,000—400,000!—and we had 4,000 men up there on the Chinese border. The generals under MacArthur knew he was making a mistake and they didn’t want to lose an entire regiment so they took half of two regiments and left them up there in case it was all lost, they wouldn’t lose a regular regiment. Chinese came in, a fifteen-day running battle. They cut the unit down from 4,000 to 338, half from battle, half from cold weather... We went through the whole first winter without winter clothes.

That’s conscious slaughter leaving them up there.

**PP:** The other generals didn’t do it. MacArthur did.

But the other generals were complicit...

**PP:** They were required to do it or face court-martial for disobeying orders under fire which is a capital offense.

And yet, they knew these guys were going to get killed.

**PP:** They knew they didn’t want to lose one whole regiment so they lost half of two regiments.

Where were you all this time?

**PP:** We were up on the border when the Chinese came in. They never came in waves, always came in files. That’s the reason they were able to penetrate so effectively. A large number of columns. And all of their lead soldiers carried hand grenades, bags of hand grenades. The guy behind them had a burp gun.

The 4<sup>th</sup> RFA was Mao’s old army which fought the Japanese in WW II and Chi-

ang Kai-shek after that. The 2<sup>nd</sup> RFA is so highly disciplined you know it when you see it come on the field. They came in [alternating] ranks, each unit about 100 yards wide... You’d see them; one or two units would move up and hold. The units [on either side] would then move up and hold... The units holding are firing or ready to fire as the others move up.

Were they [2<sup>nd</sup> RFA] the only ones that came that way?

**PP:** Yeah. All the others came in files.

So the Chinese were in front of you?

**PP:** Yes. We’re following them. Historically, the Chinese will not fight in a graveyard, so we slept in a graveyard and the next morning...

This was not the first night as you’re following?

**PP:** No.

Had you engaged them at all before this?

**PP:** No. We hid in the graveyard and that morning the 12 of us came in front of the graveyard and dug in to fight them and this Chinese officer came over and said, “Go.” He just let us go. We still had to follow the Chinese to get out of there. The main army didn’t even see us. They were just moving ahead.

And the reason they did this?

**PP:** Because we would not fight in the graveyard. We respected their tradition.

When you saw this Chinese officer coming toward you, what did you think was going to happen?

**PP:** Had no idea.

***They had one guy up there who got beat up because he wasn't a Christian. He was a... some obscure East Indian religion. They were beating him up so I stopped them. He gives me this book, the first copy of the Bhagavad Gita I'd ever seen... We go into the Punchbowl.... and I'm sitting on this pile of high explosives... so I can see over the ridge... So I open the book and start reading and there's Arjuna who's the charioteer and Krishna who's the defender of the faith. Krishna says, "I find myself between two great armies, arrayed for battle." I look down [over the ridge] and as far as I can see, the 2nd RFA. On the other side as far as I can see, American infantry coming up. I closed the book and didn't read it again till a year later.***

*But you didn't shoot at him.*

**PP:** Oh, no. We knew he had something to say.

*And whatever he was going to say was going to affect your lives?*

**PP:** That's right.

*Did he speak English?*

**PP:** Excellent English.

*So the Chinese were not, as we were being told, untrained conscripts coming in human waves?*

**PP:** No, no, no. Professional soldiers and fantastic mortarmen. That's the worst thing for infantrymen, coming on the field and seeing mortars. The mortar observers are close and they can see you and they can drop it right on you. And the artillery is worse...

The Chinese were so good they said they could put a mortar round in your back pocket... A place called the Punchbowl is a big valley that looked like it was made by a meteorite or something and has two ridges on the west and northwest sides, Bloody Ridge and Heartbreak Ridge. The casualties were so heavy in there that we had to put a tramway up to take the casualties out [and] our construction battalion built a tramway from the bottom of the Punchbowl to the forward slope. Once they got it hooked up, they put a load on it and sent it down to see if it worked. Soon as that first load got down there, the Chinese threw a mortar round in and hit the cable—and the cable is no bigger than two fingers! We had to carry that damn cable all the way back up the hill. One round!

Another time, the construction battalion took this Bailey bridge up to a place across this river where there was a big chasm. The tanks were moving the Bailey bridge [a portable, prefabricated truss bridge] into place. The guys on the other

side, they had this Russian artillery adviser and we could see him with our field glasses – he had long red hair [indicates shoulder length]. We got the bridge in and we could see him go like this [a hand signal]. The artillery came, one round, knocked the bridge out.

And in tank battles, we never won a tank battle for the first eight months of the war. And we knew because we were clearing for the tanks. They had a medium tank, T-34, a big wide tread that could go in the mud when nobody else could move, a 90 mm howitzer on it, and it could take out just about anything. We finally had to get the big tanks in to deal with them.

When the Chinese came in, they pushed us [south of] the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.

*How did the Chinese advance finally get stopped?*

**PP:** They took that asshole MacArthur out—they retired his ass—and put a real general in, an Airborne general, Matthew Ridgeway. MacArthur's saying "I need another whole army. I need 20 atomic bombs..." Ridgeway took what he had in the field and pushed the line all the way up to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. If MacArthur had come on the field where we were, we'd have shot his ass.

*[ed.: Ridgeway did not immediately replace MacArthur. Ridgeway replaced Gen. Walton Walker who was killed in a jeep accident on Dec 23, 1950. MacArthur was still in command until April 11, 1951 when Truman removed him and made Gen. Ridgeway overall commander.]*

**PP:** ...they lost a whole division one day. They didn't lose it, it was hit so bad it was put out of commission as a fighting unit—2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry – they killed 4,000 men in two hours. Not casualties but killed. 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry came in; Chinese put them out of business in one day. 25<sup>th</sup> came in the next

day; the Chinese put them out of business as a fighting unit. 26,000 men altogether!

In winter [1950-51] they had all these bodies. They put them in a mass grave. Everything was ice. The tank scraped the ice and dirt and tried to push it over the bodies...it was actually not a tank but a bulldozer. The bulldozer came over the top of it trying to tamp it down and the blood came spurting up. The operator went out of his mind.

\*\*\*

I never carried a weapon in combat except a bayonet...Once I took my bayonet out in a fight... We'd get overrun clearing the tanks every time. They always had an ambush patrol waiting for the guys to clear the mines, so when that happens you have to back underneath the tank and the tank protects you. One time I was the last man under. The last man under has to protect the other guys. So this Chinese soldier came in, an infantryman, and he probed at me with his fixed bayonet and I pushed it aside and pulled it into the dirt. He shot one round and I kicked him off the end of his rifle. He went up and the tank in back of us shot him through the face.

And that was not the only time I had to fight people off. I once got too close to a Shaolin temple and the Shaolin priest came after me. It was in the wintertime and he was coming up the hill and I was going down the hill. He was barefoot and I could see the ice kicking up from his feet. He had on a sleeveless sheepskin vest with one arm in and one arm out. So he's coming up the hill after me and I'm going down the hill and, just before he hit me, I threw my bayonet to the side of his foot to throw his timing off, but he still hit me so hard he knocked me backward up the hill. I grabbed his sheepskin and threw him up over my head. He landed on his

ass and slid down the side of the mountain. I still have a mark where he hit me.

*When you were under fire was there a sense of fear?*

**PP:** You just did what you had to do. That's all you can concentrate on.

*Did you get any medals?*

**PP:** I was one of two people who got put up for a Bronze Star. The 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. and I were mortal enemies. I'm going past his bunker and I can hear him talking in there. [He] says, "Give the medal to the other guy. Porter don't give a damn about these medals." And he was right. *[laughs]*

He sent me up to the outpost about a mile from enemy lines, four miles from our own lines... They had one guy up there who got beat up because he wasn't a Christian. He was a... some obscure East Indian religion. They were beating him up so I stopped them. He gives me this book, the first copy of the *Bhagavad Gita* I'd ever seen... We go into the Punchbowl. Our team is the first in because the way has to be cleared for tanks and infantry. So we're going in and they used their one helicopter to bring a lot of demolitions in and store in the front section of the Punchbowl. We go in there and I'm sitting on this pile of high explosives—it's about 12 by 12 by 12 feet high—so I can see over the ridge.

*Perry, sometimes you don't show good sense!*

**PP:** *[laughs]* Well, it's cold on the ground. So I open the book and start reading and there's Arjuna who's the charioteer and Krishna who's the defender of the faith. Krishna says, "I find myself between two great armies, arrayed for battle." I look down [over the ridge] and as far as I can

*(continued on next page)*



Anti-tank mine crew checks for other mines after a 7th Infantry Division M-4 tank (in background) was disabled by a mine on a road in Korea. 28 Feb 1951. (U.S. Army Center of Military History photo)

**Unforgotten***(continued from page 15)*

see, the 2<sup>nd</sup> RFA. On the other side as far as I can see, American infantry coming up. I closed the book and didn't read it again till a year later.

*You once asked me if I thought any war is without atrocity and I said, No, all wars have them but we never hear about ours, just the other side's.*

**PP:** We had this one Ranger, highly decorated soldier, and there was this woman who was a guerrilla and he captured her...and raped her. We took him out the next day. We had a diamond formation and he was in the center. When the mortar comes, the guy out in front sends a signal to the other guys – mortar overhead – and they hit the ground. We had a special signal that the guys would know without any words. When the mortar came, we all hit the ground. The mortar came and blew a hole in the middle of the guy's chest. He wouldn't rape anybody anymore... I put his ass in a bag and sent him back.

*The North Koreans get lost in the Korean War story. What were they like?*

**PP:** Some of the most brutal bastards since the Japanese and Nazis. One of the guys they captured, they had this hot water pipe up there [indicates the ceiling]. They put him up there, broke his legs and put a wire up there in the marrow of his bone. That's the kind of people they were... The reason you don't hear much about them was that when we went into North Korea, we destroyed their army entirely. There wasn't that much left of them.

*Were the South Koreans just as brutal?*

**PP:** No. They were bad but not that bad.

*What made the North that way?*

**PP:** Korea was under the Japanese for 50 years and then the North was under the Russians and the South was under the U.S....

*But not that long.*

**PP:** It doesn't take long to condition people.

*Did you ever go back to Korea after the war?*

**PP:** No. I was invited by the Korean government but I didn't go. I promised God and three reliable white folks that if I got out of there I'd never go back.

### What is a CO? The Duality of Perry Porter

*Had you felt war is mostly political before you went in?*

**PP:** Yeah. People who make the wars never fight them.

*What would you have done in Vietnam?*

**PP:** I wouldn't have gone to Vietnam.

*Because you knew more then or because Korea was kinda OK...maybe?*

**PP:** Yeah. We knew South Korean leadership was corrupt

so it would amount to nothing even if it was justified. Everything we sent to South Korea in the form of monetary contribution, Syngman Rhee stole it.

*Sounds like Iraq and Afghanistan.*

**PP:** Yeah, like what's his name...

*Hamid Karzai.*

**PP:** Yeah. And other people are dying for that shit.

*Does it surprise you that there's not more resistance to the wars?*

**PP:** It doesn't surprise me because the war is not reported. People don't know what's going on. Two wars going on and people don't know anything about it.

*What do you think is the impact of doing away with the draft?*

**PP:** That's the worst thing that could ever happen... If you've got a draft, you see everyone in the country's involved. Then you see people out in the streets... A republic or democracy should never have a mercenary army. Never. Mercenaries fight for the money. Patriots fight for their country.

*You said you didn't sign a combat waiver. Why not?*

**PP:** I wasn't opposed to going into battle, just about killing.

*That seems like a contradiction...*

**PP:** On one side of my family, my mother's side, my great-uncle was one of the most decorated veterans of the Spanish-American war. My father's side, they had COs.

*So you have this duality. Which one takes precedence?*

**PP:** Not killing.

*You won't kill but you told of the Ranger who raped a Korean woman and you were part of the group, complicit in his death. Isn't that a form of killing?*

**PP:** [pause] I guess. Yeah.

*Do you believe there are justified wars?*

**PP:** In WW II the Japanese were butchers and the Germans were butchers. It was necessary to stop them.

*If you had been in WW II would you have carried a rifle?*

**PP:** No.

*But that obviates the whole notion of having a war.*

**PP:** [long pause] When you go to places in Europe and even in San Francisco, you go to veteran's cemeteries, all of these rows of crosses, row on row on row...and the same people that were shooting the shit out of each other are now the biggest trading partners in the world. It just supports people who make their money from war. They get money from both sides. They sell to both.

*You consciously thought "I'm not going to sign [a combat waiver] because I'm not opposed to going, I'm just not going to kill anybody?"*

**PP:** Yeah. But if everybody else has to go, there's no reason I shouldn't go because I'm a CO.

*If you're not going to participate in the killing, then why are you going to participate in the war?*

**PP:** Because you have an obligation to serve your country but your obligation is not necessarily what everyone else's is.

*Perry Porter is also a poet and writer. He is currently working on a historical novel of Korea. This is one of his Korean poems*

### The Wind in the Bend in the Han

In spring on the ground  
where the Im-jian River comes down  
and goes as it flows to the sea  
and the Han

The old voices sing ah da dang,  
ah da dang  
in the sun in the spring  
in the wind in the bend in the Han

On summer's hot ground  
the river slows down  
and goes as it flows to the sea  
in the Han  
and the river slows as it weaves  
through the rapids and reeds  
hear the wind in the bend in the Han

In the monsoon's wet ground  
the river goes down  
it goes and it flows to the sea  
and the Han  
and the river's a scourge where  
it drops through the gorge  
hear the wind on the bend  
in the Han

On winter's white ground  
the river slows down  
it goes with ice floes  
to the sea in the Han  
though the weapons' sounds sing  
still the snows melt to spring  
hear the wind on the bend  
in the Han.

It is right for us to be in Korea. It was right last June. It is right today. I want to remind you why this is true. The Communists in the Kremlin are engaged in a monstrous conspiracy to stamp out freedom all over the world. If they were to succeed, the United States would be numbered among their principal victims.

—President Harry S. Truman,  
April 11, 1951

We are fighting at such great distances in order to protect our homeland, in order to keep the war as far removed from it as possible...

—Adolph Hitler,  
November 8, 1942

I'm a man of peace. And obviously I would hope that we wouldn't have combat. I also live in a real world of being the president during a war on terror. So I guess I would rather fight them there than here.

—George W. Bush,  
September 22, 2003

The enormous gap between what U.S. leaders do in the world and what Americans think their leaders are doing is one of the great propaganda accomplishments.

—Michael Parenti



## The Russians are Coming...

(continued from page 13)

But the American media obscures these motivations by almost always referring to them simply as “pro-Russian.”

### Duly Elected (in a Coup)

Getting away with supporting al-Qaeda and Nazi types may be giving U.S. officials the idea that they can say or do anything they want in their foreign policy. In a May 2 press conference, President Obama, referring to Ukraine and the NATO Treaty, said: “We’re united in our unwavering Article 5 commitment to the security of our NATO allies.” (Article 5 states: “The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them ... shall be considered an attack against them all.”) Did the president forget that Ukraine is not (yet) a member of NATO? And in the same press conference, the president referred to the “duly elected government in Kiev,” when in fact it had come to power via a coup and then proceeded to establish a new regime in which the vice-premier, minister of defense, minister of agriculture, and minister of environment, all belonged to far-right neo-Nazi parties.

### Wrong Side of History

President Obama recently declared: “The strong condemnation that it’s received from around the world indicates the degree to which Russia is on the wrong side of history on this.” Marvelous!—coming from the man who partners with jihadists and Nazis and has waged war against seven nations. In the past half century is there any country whose foreign policy has received more bitter condemnation than the United States? If the United States is not on the wrong side of history, it may be only in the history books published by the United States.

Barack Obama, like virtually all Americans, likely believes that the Soviet

*The views Americans hold of themselves and other societies are not necessarily more distorted than the views found amongst people elsewhere in the world, but the Americans’ distortion can lead to much more harm. Most Americans and members of Congress have convinced themselves that the U.S./NATO encirclement of Russia is benign—we are, after all, the Good Guys—and they don’t understand why Russia can’t see this.*

Union, with perhaps the sole exception of the Second World War, was consistently on the wrong side of history in its foreign policy as well as at home. Yet, in a survey conducted by an independent Russian polling center this past January, and reported in the *Washington Post* in April, 86 percent of respondents older than 55 expressed regret for the Soviet Union’s collapse; 37 percent of those aged 25 to 39 did so. (Similar poll results have been reported regularly since the demise of the Soviet Union. This is from *USA Today* in 1999: “When the Berlin Wall crumbled, East Germans imagined a life of freedom where consumer goods were abundant and hardships would fade. Ten years later, a remarkable 51% say they were happier with communism.”) Or as the new Russian proverb put it: “Everything the Communists said about Communism was a lie, but everything they said about capitalism turned out to be the truth.”

### Harmful Distortion

The views Americans hold of themselves and other societies are not necessarily more distorted than the views found amongst people elsewhere in the world, but the Americans’ distortion can lead to much more harm. Most Americans and members of Congress have convinced themselves that the U.S./NATO encirclement of

Russia is benign—we are, after all, the Good Guys—and they don’t understand why Russia can’t see this.

The first Cold War, from Washington’s point of view, was often designated as one of “containment,” referring to the U.S. policy of preventing the spread of communism around the world, trying to block *the very idea* of communism or socialism. There’s still some leftover from that—see Venezuela and Cuba, for example—but the new Cold War can be seen more in terms of a military strategy. Washington thinks in terms of who could pose a barrier to the ever-expanding empire adding to its bases and other military necessities.

Whatever the rationale, it’s imperative that the United States suppress any lingering desire to bring Ukraine (and Georgia) into the NATO alliance. Nothing is more likely to bring large numbers of Russian boots onto the Ukrainian ground than the idea that Washington wants to have NATO troops right on the Russian border and in spitting distance of the country’s historic Black Sea naval base in Crimea.

### The Myth of Soviet Expansionism

One still comes across references in the mainstream media to Russian “expansionism” and “the Soviet empire,” in addition to that old favorite “the evil empire.”

These terms stem largely from erstwhile Soviet control of Eastern European states. But was the creation of these satellites following World War II an act of imperialism or expansionism? Or did the decisive impetus lie elsewhere?

Within the space of less than 25 years, Western powers had invaded Russia three times—the two world wars and the “Intervention” of 1918-20—inflicting some 40 million casualties in the two wars alone. To carry out these invasions, the West had used Eastern Europe as a highway. Should it be any cause for wonder that after World War II the Soviets wanted to close this highway down? In almost any other context, Americans would have no problem in seeing this as an act of self defense. But in the context of the Cold War, such thinking could not find a home in mainstream discourse.

### Afghanistan

Then we had Afghanistan. Surely this was an imperialist grab. But the Soviet Union had lived next door to Afghanistan for more than 60 years without gobbling it up. And when the Russians invaded in 1979, the key motivation was the United States involvement in a movement, largely Islamic, to topple the Afghan government, which was friendly to Moscow. The Soviets could not have been expected to tolerate a pro-U.S., anti-communist government on its border any more than the United States could have been expected to tolerate a pro-Soviet, communist government in Mexico.

*William Blum, whose books include America’s Deadliest Export: Democracy, left the State Department in 1967, abandoning his aspiration of becoming a Foreign Service Officer, because of his opposition to what the U.S. was doing in Vietnam. This article is derived from his Anti-Empire Report #128. See the full report and many others at williamblum.org.*

## The Sacred Myth: “They did not die in vain!”

Cling to this myth.  
Still the anguish of  
repressed remorse  
For nurturing needless warriors  
From cradle to taps.

Toy guns, soldier dolls,  
Camo-clad kindergarteners  
Pledging, parading.  
Glory, duty, honor.  
Video violence,  
Computer combat,  
Be prepared.

So proudly we hail  
Our hero recruits.  
Naïve boys morphing  
Not into men, but machines.  
Kill on command, destroy,  
Fall in, salute, obey.  
Not reasoning why.

“Thank you for your subservience.”

Myths,  
A dirty pack of myths,  
Little white myths,  
Bold, brazen, and  
bald-faced myths  
Perpetuate the pain.

Defend Democracy.  
Fight for Freedom.  
Pay the Price —by jingo!—  
For Proud America  
(Our war porn nation).  
Salute a veteran,  
Bury a veteran.

We—robotic, mindless,  
Troop-supporting patriots—  
By complicity  
Kill and destroy  
Our sons, and theirs.  
Not reasoning why.

Culture of war,  
Cycle of pain,  
Cradle to taps,  
Again and again.

Echoing lie  
For our vindication:  
“They did not die in vain!  
But in defense of our nation.”

Stand the lie on its head!  
Rightly honor the dead  
By saying “No more!”  
By honoring war no more  
By nurturing warriors no more  
By being mindless drones no more  
Then—only then—  
Can we rightly maintain,  
“They did not die in vain.”

—Mack Reilly

“TELL THE CHILDREN THE TRUTH RIGHT NOW!  
COME ON AND TELL THE CHILDREN THE TRUTH!”  
—BOB MARLEY



Photo by Mike Hastie 1992. Veterans Day Parade in Albany, Oregon

## Nuclear Weapons

(continued from page 7)

contract, John Locke similarly warned, she notes, that anyone is “in a much worse condition, who is exposed to the arbitrary power of one man, who has the command of 100,000, than he that is exposed to the arbitrary power of 100,000 single men.” Nuclear weapons eliminate individual soldiers; they condense the injuring power that formerly depended on thousands of soldiers into a single weapon, and place it at the disposal of a solitary leader.



Trident II (D-5) missile underwater launch. (US DoD photo)

***The 14 Trident II SSBNs (ballistic-missile launching submarines) have, among them, the firepower to kill all life on 14 continents. “There are only seven continents,” Scarry dryly remarks.***

“Actions that cause major injury, like going to war, require collective decision-making—which gives a great braking power,” she says. “You don’t want to put impediments in the way of the good things in life—things like liberty, lovemaking, party-going, studying, helping others. The social contract puts impediments in the way of *one thing*: injury.”

War surely causes more injury and death than any other action arising from human intentions, and the Constitution (written in the wake of the Revolutionary War) puts a double brake on warfare. War must pass through two gates to become a reality. One is Congress, with its responsibility (now shirked) to declare war. The second brake is the general population. “The mere fact that you required the citizens to fight meant that the citizenry could say yes or no,” she explains. “A war doesn’t get fought if the population doesn’t want it fought.”

“People like to say, ‘Soldiers obey—they do what they’re told,’” she continues. “It’s not true. Soldiers do what they are told, but they do it thoughtfully—and sometimes they *don’t*. The War of 1812 ended when it did because the population, including soldiers and sailors, did not feel strong support for it. There were soldier strikes all over England and Canada at the end of World War I; Winston Churchill wrote to Lloyd George saying he wanted to go into Russia to support the Whites against the Reds, ‘but the soldiers won’t let me.’ A big reason the South lost the Civil War was that 250,000 soldiers deserted; every time Robert E. Lee looked over his shoulder, he saw a smaller army. Soldiers ratify a war.”

“People say, ‘Once something is invented it can’t be un-invented.’ What are we talking about? These things we’ve invented can kill and destroy the whole earth, but *we* can’t get rid of *them*? Of course we can.”

The secrecy that cloaks nuclear policy and the technical aspects of nuclear arms—what happens in the private huddles between a president and his advisers, for example—keeps these policies insulated from any genuine, searching critique, she believes. Even the weapons themselves remain sequestered in deep-sea waters, high in the sky, or at remote land locations in Wyoming, Montana, or North Dakota, for example. It can be difficult even to communicate with the military personnel trusted to oversee them.

The USS *Rhode Island* is one of 18 Ohio class submarines armed with nuclear ballistic

or guided missiles that patrol the world’s waters. Its armaments can destroy all human, animal, and plant life on a continent. When deeply submerged, as in wartime or any moment of high political tension, Scarry writes, “...it can o-n-l-y-r-e-c-e-i-v-e-t-i-n-y-a-m-o-u-n-t-s-o-f-i-n-f-o-r-m-a-t-i-o-n-v-e-r-y-v-e-r-y-s-l-o-w-l-y. In fact, the first three letters of the hyphenated message would have taken fifteen minutes to arrive, and the submarine would have had no way to confirm its receipt of the letters.” The information gets conveyed, she explains, “...in Extremely Low Frequency (or ELF) waves, giant radio waves each 2500 miles in length that can (unlike any other band of the electromagnetic spectrum) penetrate the ocean depths. Until 2004, ELF waves were launched by a giant antenna in Michigan and Wisconsin that is eighteen acres in size.” (The Navy has not disclosed the successor to ELF.)

The nuclear-armed submarine, then, is an obscenely powerful engine of destruction and death that, at the most critical moments, seems all but incommunicado. *Thermonuclear Monarchy* builds on this: “...to say nuclear weapons are ‘ungovernable’ is to say that they are unreachable by the human will, the populations of the earth can have no access to them.... The membrane that separates us from their lethal corridors is one-directional: the weapons may suddenly unzip the barrier, erupt into our world, eliminate us; but we cannot, standing on the other side, unzip the barrier, step into their world, and eliminate them.” She elaborates: “People say, ‘Once something is invented it can’t be un-invented.’ What are we talking about? These things we’ve invented can kill and destroy the whole earth, but *we* can’t get rid of *them*? Of course we can.”

The Ohio class submarines nicely epitomize the furtiveness of the nuclear world. Eight new ones were launched between 1989 and 1997, during the years of the so-called “peace dividend.” *Each* of these subs carries nuclear weapons with eight times the total blast power expended by all Allied and Axis countries in World War II. The 14 Trident II SSBNs (ballistic-missile launching submarines) have, among them, the firepower to kill all life on 14 continents. “There are only seven continents,” Scarry dryly remarks. Even so, news reports did not cover the launching, christening, and commissioning of any of these submarines, even in the states whose names they bore.

The shroud of secrecy keeps the general citizenry ignorant of basic facts about the nation’s nuclear arrangements. Most Americans do not realize that the country has a first-use policy. A 2004 poll found that the majority estimated that the United States has 200 nuclear weapons; the actual current figure is 7,700. Meanwhile, 73 percent of Americans say they want the total elimination of nuclear weapons, as do similar proportions of Russians and Canadians.

The United States and Russia are now reducing their stockpiles of nuclear warheads in accordance with negotiated agreements. This is a positive step, Scarry says, though she cautions that the reductions in forces “may simply be a way to retire obsolete weapons to make way for newer ones.” (Twelve more Ohio class submarines are slated for construction between 2019 and 2035.)

Recent scientific work on the “nuclear winter” (the hypothetical climate change following a nuclear exchange), Scarry reports, indicates that any country launching a nuclear attack would be committing suicide—rendering the weapons, in effect, unusable. An exchange that exploded as little as 0.015 percent of the world’s nuclear arsenal—say, between lesser nuclear powers like

India and Pakistan—could leave 44 million dead immediately—and one billion more people likely to perish in the following month, given the effect on food supplies and the disruption of agriculture.

During the Cuban missile crisis, President John F. Kennedy stated that the United States had no quarrel with the Cuban *people* or the Soviet *people*. But, Scarry says, “These weapons are not designed for a showdown of political leaders. They are going to massacre the *citizens*. No weapon ever invented has remained unused. Does anyone think that in the next 100 years, one of these governments that has them, won’t use them?”

In a 2005 *Foreign Policy* essay, “Apocalypse Soon,” Robert McNamara bluntly declared, “U.S. nuclear weapons policy [is] immoral, illegal, militarily unnecessary, and dreadfully dangerous.” Scarry agrees, and declares, “Nuclear weapons have to be gotten rid of, worldwide. But this cannot be done if the United States is just sitting there with this huge arsenal, which dwarfs what any other nation has. We worry about Iran and North Korea and the huge existential threat if these countries get nuclear weapons. What is mysterious, though, is that we fail to see the huge existential threat that *we* pose to the world with what is by far the most powerful nuclear arsenal anywhere.”

In 1995, 78 countries asked the International Court of Justice to declare nuclear arms illegal. In response, the U.S. Departments of Defense and State jointly argued that using, and even making first use of, nuclear weapons does not violate any treaty regarding human rights or the environment. Nor would the death of millions via a nuclear attack violate the 1948 UN convention on genocide; they asserted that “genocide” applies only to the annihilation of national, ethnic, racial, or religious groups.

Scarry instead suggests that the United States act in concert with other nuclear nations, all using their constitutions, to dismantle and permanently eliminate these weapons. The first step, she says, is “reanimating our awareness that we are responsible—we are in control, or should be in control, of our self-defense.” Restoring the military draft would help return responsibility for decisions about war to the whole population, and make political leaders far more accountable to the citizenry. “Little by little, the importance of the Constitution has been obscured,” she states. “We should require Congress to oversee our entry into war. A president who does not get a congressional declaration should no longer be president. That is absolutely an impeachable offense. The population has to see how important this provision is.” Furthermore, in negotiations for nuclear disarmament, “if those who are negotiating know that the population is *insisting* that these weapons be eliminated—rather than just leaving it up

to a handful of negotiators—that will help them as negotiators.

“There is no transparency if you’re waiting 30 or 40 years to get the information,” she continues. “Presidents ought to report about close calls, for example. Maybe each year in the State of the Union address, the president should have to say how many times a nuclear option was considered in the past year. And we ought to feel that it is our responsibility to *ask* about these things. History has to show that we tried.”

In an earlier book, Scarry analyzed the events of 9/11, showing how the citizens on Flight 93 were able to act effectively to disrupt the terrorists’ planned mission. “They deliberated, they actually *voted*, and they acted to bring down that plane,” she says. “Whereas the Pentagon could not even defend the Pentagon, let alone the rest of the country: their habits and training were all directed toward this idea of war with a foreign country. The fighter jets at first flew off away from the coast, in the wrong direction. But terrorists like the shoe bomber—undone by fellow

passengers. The so-called Christmas bomber in Detroit—undone by passengers. The Times Square car bomb—an ordinary vendor noticed something wrong.”

Perhaps millions of citizens will find something wrong with a far greater bomb threat, and defuse it. Scarry ends the first chapter of *Thermonuclear Monarchy* with a challenge. “The two artifacts, the social contract and the nuclear array, are mutually exclusive,” she writes. “To exist, each requires that the other be destroyed. Which one will it be?”

Craig A. Lambert '69, Ph.D. '78, is deputy editor of Harvard Magazine.

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## The Box

(salute)

With their backs board straight,  
and their hand to their head,  
the draped box passes by.

With their uniforms crisp,  
and their eyes steely fixed,  
the draped box passes by.

Gone are the “hooahs” and the high fives  
and the beers, and the babes and the bitchin’.  
The draped box passes by.  
(take down the salute)

“Kill the bastards —  
they killed ours.  
They’re all bad.”  
“We go there to help them.  
For freedom! Democracy!”  
“We serve our country!”  
“It’s NOT about money or  
markets or oil!  
We’re defending our freedom  
and our soil!”  
“There’s no other way!  
Sometimes we must!  
Send in the few . . . the proud . . .  
the . . .”  
the young ? . . . the pawns?  
The draped box passes by.

“They can’t speak our language.  
They don’t know our customs.  
They’re HYMIES, and JAPS, and CHINKS,  
and GOOKS, and HAJJIS, and RAGHEADS.  
They’re evil. They’re terrorists!”  
They are “THEM.” They are “THOSE.”  
They are “THEY.”  
So it’s OK — to kill them.  
There’s no other way,  
That’s what the box makers say.

We have courts — but not for “THEM.”  
We don’t torture people —  
but “THEY” are not people.  
We are CIVIL — with our approved  
assassination lists,  
We are HUMANE with our  
surgical drone strikes.  
“They” are not.

We have our flag. We sing our songs.  
We love our country. “U-S-A U-S-A  
We’re # 1. We’re # 1!”  
“They” are not.  
Don’t bother your beautiful brain.  
Don’t think . . . avoid the pain.  
As the draped box passes by.



Who makes the box in which soldiers lay?  
This well-crafted box for the remains to stay.  
Is it more than a box to carry the dead?  
Is the box mental and fixed in our head,  
By those who profit from wars and destruction  
Because they know we’ll follow instruction?

Some of the box makers are out in the light,  
They’re proud of the fact they cause us to fight.  
But most of the makers work in the stealth,  
Applying their trade and amassing huge wealth.

From Presidents to talking heads  
and others less known —  
— Create fear, make a box,  
keep the masses alone —  
“We know what we’re doing, we’ll save the day,”  
“Stay in the box and just do as . . . WE say.”

The boxes are made as they always have been,  
By those with the power to develop the spin.  
Their words are repeated —  
Down is up . . . up is down  
Killing is good . . . they are not  
Down is up . . . up is down  
Soon the box closes . . . without a sound.

Violence and power are global pollution.  
Dialogue and education are the solution.  
Talk to those you know . . .  
and to the “they.”  
(very slowly) Read and share . . .  
and show the way . . .

(salute)  
With their backs board straight,  
and their hands to their heads . . .  
With their uniforms crisp,  
and their eyes steely fixed . . . ,  
Gone are the “hooahs” and the high fives,  
What’s left are the whys . . . ,  
As the draped box passes by.

—Army Stieber

Army Stieber is a father, grandfather, and Army infantry Vietnam veteran who was inspired to think about poetry/spoken word after attending several youth poetry competitions in Chicago, where his son teaches high school on the South Side and coaches an after-school poetry club. The club competes in the world’s largest youth poetry competition—*Louder Than A Bomb*—in Chicago. He says that the energy from this competition is immense and he’s learned much from these young people: “The words come from the core and erupt in a flow that clears the complacency of robot ‘news’ and wind-up commentators.”

## Sleep well, Bush & Cheney

A reader sent several newspaper clippings about five Army National Guard soldiers, aged 21 to 35, from Michigan whose Humvee was bombed in Iraq in November of 2005. “There was a tremendous explosion, rupturing the fuel tank. Fire engulfed the Humvee, flames shooting up from the floor.”

The youngest soldier died instantly. The other four were sent to “a burn unit at Brooke Army Medical Center in Ft. Sam Houston, Texas, where they fought to live—

one for weeks, three for months—enduring excruciating pain and countless ups and downs.”

Needless to say, the soldiers’ families endured extreme suffering and grief. One of the victims had burns over 75% of his body. His sister took some solace in his death saying, “He didn’t have the days and months of lying there, thinking, ‘I have no face. I have no nose. I have no ears. How am I going to live my life?’”

The reader who sent the clippings included a note: “See the real horror of war. Visit a burn unit! Sleep well, Bush & Cheney!”

## A giant art installation targets predator drone operators

# Not A Bug Splat

In military slang, Predator drone operators often refer to kills as “bug splats,” since viewing the body through a grainy video image gives the sense of an insect being crushed.

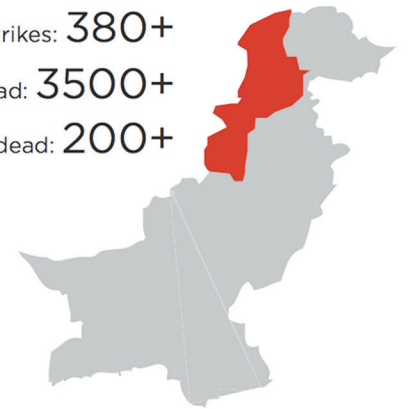


Humans appear as disposable bugs when viewed through a traditional drone camera.

We changed this.

Now, a drone will see an actual face of a child, creating dialogue and, possibly, empathy.

Drone strikes: **380+**  
Dead: **3500+**  
Children dead: **200+**



To challenge this insensitivity as well as raise awareness of civilian casualties, an artist collective installed a massive portrait facing up in the heavily bombed Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa region of Pakistan, where drone attacks regularly occur. Now, when viewed by a drone camera, what an operator sees on his screen is not an anonymous dot on the landscape, but an innocent child victim's face.



The installation is also designed to be captured by satellites in order to make it a permanent part of the landscape on online mapping sites.

The project is a collaboration of artists who made use of the French artist JR's “Inside Out” movement. Reprieve/Foundation for Fundamental Rights (FFR) helped launch the effort which has been released with the hashtag #NotABugSplat

The child featured in the poster is nameless, but according to FFR, lost both her parents and two young siblings in a drone attack.

The group of artists traveled inside Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa province and, with the assistance of highly enthusiastic locals, unrolled the poster amongst mud huts and farms. It is their hope that this will create empathy and introspection amongst drone operators, and will create dialogue amongst policy makers, eventually leading to decisions that will save innocent lives.



Ground view of the gigantic poster of the child victim.



Children gather around the installation.

