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THE WAR WITH NO GOOD GUYS

In this issue: Waihopai Protest; Spies; Syria & Geopolitics; "Base Nation"; Demilitarisation; Mount John Remembered

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Published by
Anti-Bases Campaign (ABC)
PO Box 2258, Christchurch 8140
New Zealand

abc@chch.planet.org.nz
www.converge.org.nz/abc
www.facebook.com/AotearoaABC

WAIHOPAI SPY BASE PROTEST 2018

- Murray Horton

The Anti-Bases Campaign (ABC) held our regular protest at the Waihopai spy base in January 2018. For the previous protest, in January 2017, we had had changes forced upon us by the November 2016 Kaikoura earthquake, namely which route we had to travel to get to and from the spy base, and where we camped. In both cases Mother Earth forced changes to practices that we had followed for years, indeed decades.

January 2018 saw things get back to at least a semblance of normality. After being closed for major repairs for a year, the Christchurch-Picton coastal highway was reopened in time for us to, once again, drive that way to and from Marlborough. This was the first time any of us had been able to make that journey since 2016. It is always a spectacular and beautiful trip under any circumstances but now it has the added wow factor of seeing what Mother Earth has wrought along whole stretches of the coast and hills – seeing large chunks of seabed permanently thrust above the surface is not something I will forget in a hurry. And we decided to prudently keep our camp a safe distance from the Marlborough coast.

Waihopai Works For Trump

Our press release spelled out why we were there: “The protest will make the point that Waihopai works for Donald Trump, which makes this country complicit in his volatile and downright unhinged warmongering behaviour. Trump would be a joke if he didn’t have control of the world’s biggest spying apparatus, biggest military and biggest nuclear arsenal (with the biggest button)”.

“... 2017 saw the Government change but absolutely no change to NZ’s membership of the Five Eyes spy alliance which is the reason for Waihopai’s existence. Andrew Little, the Minister Responsible for the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB, which runs Waihopai), has stated in writing that this Government has no intention of closing Waihopai”.

“Not only does the GCSB systematically spy on New Zealanders – but it also routinely spies on any number of other countries, on behalf of the US National Security Agency (NSA). And the NSA spies on everyone – ultimately it is spying on behalf of Donald Trump. It is essential that more pressure is put on the Government to end the anti-democratic and destructive activities of this NZ spy agency. For 30 years Waihopai has been NZ’s most significant contribution to Washington’s global effort to manipulate world business and diplomacy. And for 30 years the Anti-Bases Campaign has protested at Waihopai, calling for its closure”.

“Waihopai does not operate in the national interest of New Zealand. In all but name it is a foreign spy base on NZ soil, paid for with hundreds of millions of our tax dollars; it spies on Kiwis and foreigners; it is NZ’s key contribution to America’s global spying & war machine. Waihopai must be closed” (ABC press release, 18/1/18, “Waihopai Aids & Abets Donald Trump’s Warmongering”).

Compared to 2017 and other recent years, the 2018 protest was a low-key affair. We confined our activities to the spy base itself, with no march or rally in Blenheim. Numbers were down on 2017 – a factor in that was that, for the first time in years, we had no attendees from our Ploughshares/Catholic Worker/Domebusters friends. They had a major clash that weekend, at the other end of the country. But they were with us in spirit, as they always have been. On the other hand, we had a number of people join us from the group campaigning against the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) and that is an activist link that has only been growing stronger in recent years.



Photo by Dot Lovell-Smith

Waihopai working for Trump was the theme – we propped a banner reading “GCSB Spying To Make America Great” against the base’s outer gate. And the indefatigable Ian Dalziel, who has provided us with many memorable props for past protests (and who regularly does the cover graphic for *Peace Researcher*) made four big posters for us to dramatically illustrate just some of the things that are so objectionable about Trump (there were so many to choose from that it was difficult to decide what to leave out).

Greens’ Unwavering Support

We went for depictions of nuclear war, the “War on Terror”, climate change and racism (Waihopai is directly involved in the “War on Terror”, which we visually represented with a drone strike). We nailed these big posters to the fences adjoining the base’s outer gate. There were several speakers (myself included) at the hour-long rally at that gate. The most noteworthy was newly minted Green MP, Golriz Ghahraman, who was continuing a long tradition of Green MPs and Co-Leaders speaking at Waihopai protests going back to 1996 when the Party first entered Parliament – the likes of Rod Donald, Jeanette Fitzsimons, Russel Norman and Metiria Turei.

Keith Locke has been consistently

attending and speaking at Waihopai protests for decades, including both before he became an MP and after he retired (in 2011). He was with us again in 2018. Steffan Browning, who retired at the 2017 election, was a Waihopai participant, organiser and speaker both before and during his time as an MP. The difference in 2018 was that, for the first time ever, the Greens are part of the Government but that didn’t stop Golriz publicly reaffirming the Party’s policy that Waihopai should be closed.

As in 2017 mainstream media were thin on the ground at the base protest (one explanation is the ongoing demise of the print media. The *Blenheim paper*, the *Marlborough Express*, which has always given our protests good coverage, has reduced from publishing six days a week to only doing so on a couple of days and reporters no longer work on Saturdays, which is the day that ABC holds our Waihopai protests). But the *Express* sent a videographer to the protest and a reporter followed up a few days later with a phone interview with me.

“Protesters outside a Government spy base have called for New Zealand to stop ‘working for Trump’. About 50 protesters gathered at the gates of the Waihopai Station, in Marlborough, with pictures to ‘illustrate different aspects of Trump’, in-

cluding a nuclear mushroom cloud, a drone launching missiles and a burning cross. People have been picketing outside the Government Communications Security Bureau surveillance base for the past 30 years, but this year was all about the US President”.

“The theme this year was basically to draw attention to the fact that the world has now endured a year of Donald Trump as President of the United States’, protest organiser Murray Horton said. ‘The fact that he’s in charge of the world’s biggest military and the world’s biggest spy network, of which Waihopai is part of, isn’t very reassuring ... and that Waihopai is basically working for Trump”.

“Horton said there were no shortages of talking points when it came to Trump. ‘We took up four graphics to illustrate different aspects of Trump, one was a nuclear mushroom cloud, one of a drone launching missiles, one was of the world on fire symbolising climate change and one with a burning cross that symbolises racism’, Horton said. He only realised it was the 30th anniversary of the protest when he was preparing his annual speech. ‘The first protest on the Waihopai spy base was in the beginning of 1988 when it was announced, and before anything was built’, Horton said”.



Green MP Golriz Ghahraman speaks at spy base gate. Photo by Dot Lovell-Smith

“Green MP Golriz Ghahraman also took part in the protest. She reaffirmed her Party’s policy to shut down Waihopai Station. ‘The point is we have to keep up our voices because it does matter, it is hurtful to us as humanity to have things like this happen ... it is important to remember that this base is helping Donald Trump, that’s a really useful prism to look at it on’, she said. Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) protesters also gathered at the site on Saturday, calling to stop the Government’s plan to sign the TPP agreement in March. Police were present at the protest but the event proceeded peacefully with no arrests. Horton said the event was ‘low key’”.

“The surveillance base has been controversial since it first opened in 1989. In April 2008, three activists got past security to get into Waihopai Station where they used a sickle to deflate the dome covering one of the satellite dishes” (“New Zealand ‘Spying To Make America Great’ - Spy Base Protesters”, *Stuff*, 30/1/18, Anan Zaki, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/100970736/New-Zealand-spying-to-make-America-great-spy-base-protesters>. That online report includes a number of photos and a short video).

AIM: Didn’t Happen

That was the end of activities out at the base but it wasn’t the end of activities. The rest of the day was taken up with the Blenheim meeting that was scheduled to launch the Aotearoa Independence Movement (AIM). This was not an ABC project, but that of the Campaign Against

Foreign Control of Aotearoa (CAFCA – my other hat as Organiser). And the outcome of that meeting was a clear-cut vote not to proceed with AIM. I have written about this in detail in my annual *Organiser’s Report* in *Foreign Control Watchdog* 147, April 2018, <http://www.converge.org.nz/watchdog/47/07.html>. The former AIM has its own archived section on the CAFCA Website at <http://canterbury.cyberpl ace.co.nz/community/CAFCA/aotea roa-independence-movement.html>.

It is there that you can find the papers of the three speakers at that January 2018 Blenheim AIM meeting - my one introducing AIM; Keith Locke on what an independent NZ foreign policy would look like; and Bill Rosenberg, Council of Trade Unions’ Economist, on what people-friendly globalisation would look like. ABC concluded the Blenheim meeting (and the day’s events) by screening John Pilger’s “The Coming War On China” (reviewed by Jeremy Agar in *Peace Researcher* 54, November 2017, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr54.pdf>).

30 Year Campaign – And Counting

2018 marks 30 years since our first Waihopai protest. To put that into historical context: David Lange was NZ’s Prime Minister and Ronald Reagan was US President. So, this campaign is definitely a marathon, not a sprint. But we’ll keep going and urge others to join us (as they have always done over the decades). This affects all New Zealanders, because it’s being done in

our name and with our money. With every passing year, the scandals involving Five Eyes, the GCSB and Waihopai, and the threats caused by them, become bigger and worse. Time to say: “Enough is enough! Close Waihopai now!”.

A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Spy Base Protest

Forgive my self-indulgence but this is a funny story. And the joke was on me. When our rental van pulled up opposite the spy base’s outer gate immediately prior to the protest, all of its occupants sprang into action. In my case, that meant opening the back hatch and getting out various items. Except that something unique happened this time – there was suddenly a “whoosh” and the air filled with dry white powder, covering me and everything in the back of the van.

It was the bloody fire extinguisher that I have faithfully brought from home year in and year out in case of emergency. Somehow the pin had been pulled and it duly discharged once pressure was applied on top of the box it was in. So, there I was, looking like an extra from a silent movie’s big flour fight in a bakery. And, within seconds, I was required across the road to MC, to speak, and talk to the media. Not to mention dealing with a cop who had the classic line: “Who’s in charge here”? It was an “interesting” experience and I’m sure it will be on the high-lights reel when my life flashes before my eyes when my number’s up.

■

SPOOKY BITS

- Warren Thomson

Spy Budgets 2018-19

The budget for the local Five Eyes branch, announced in May 2018, was \$153,278,000 for the 2018-19 financial year. This is just slightly less than for the previous year, but \$15 million above the sum reported to be actually spent in 2017. The Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) budget has more than doubled in the last five years. The chances that this Government will do anything to rein in the spies is bleak – especially with Andrew Little in charge. The Security Intelligence Service (SIS) has \$81,835,000 to play with. This is similar to 2017, probably reflecting a reward for catching a Chinese spy (see next item) but a punishment for embarrassing the National Party.

National MP Was (Is?) A Chinese Spy

The SIS has been on the case of – believe it or not – a National Party MP who was (is?) a spy for China. List MP Jian Yang studied at an elite Chinese spy school before moving to New Zealand. He was headhunted by National Party President Peter Goodfellow to become an MP on National's list in 2011, with the support of then Prime Minister John Key. Unsurprisingly he has been a

key fundraiser for National among the Chinese community in Auckland. MP Jian has not apparently included his decade in the People's Liberation Army-Air Force, or the Luoyang Foreign Language Institute, run by China's equivalent of the US National Security Agency (NSA) in any of his CV or public interview content.

According to *Newsroom* (13/9/17) the Luoyang "Foreign Language Institute" is part of the Third Department of the Joint Staff Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army – one of two main military intelligence agencies. The Third Department is responsible for China's signals intelligence operations and for providing intelligence assessments based on information gathered. The SIS would have been in a difficult position here, given that NZ is supposed to have close restrictions on the spies having surveillance on MPs. But it is surprising there has not been more public reaction to the disclosure.

The Russians Are Coming

In mid-April 2018, the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) boss, Andrew Hampton, announced there were signs that New Zealand organisations have been directly threatened by Russian State-sponsored hacking. Hampton

made a point of stressing that accusing particular countries of cyber-attacks is not something that is often done. He made the accusations following a raft of international concerns about Russian-backed hacks on networking equipment (*Press*, 27/4/18).

But, as Gordon Campbell points out in *Scoop* (18/4/18), is there an element of Russophobia in all this? "Why single out Russia, and is the ratio of Russian-sourced attacks more prominent than say, the Chinese-sourced attacks, and to what extent have the attacks emanating from Russia been on the rise, compared to those from other countries...etc, etc.?" PR appreciates that the Russian State is led by a nasty dictator, but what exactly is being targeted by whom and is the GCSB doing a cyber security job that local companies should be doing themselves? Are the attacks political or criminal, or both?

Cabinet's External Relations and Security Committee has released a paper pointing to an increase in cyber security threats (presumably the GCSB's analysis). The National Cyber Security Centre (within the GCSB), recorded 396 incidents during the 2017 financial year, and provided "hands-on intensive incident response" on 31 occasions. "Cyber threat actors are increasingly bold, brazen and disruptive. New Zealand's geographical location does not exempt us from this threat," the Committee said, adding that it was "timely" to step up its cyber security efforts (*Press*, *ibid*).

What Was This All About?

A very rare secret hearing took place in the High Court in Wellington at the beginning of February 2018. The subject of the hearing was so secret it was not listed on the Court's daily schedule. There was unusual security at the court building for the hearing, with screening at the main entrance and security officers stationed outside the lifts on the lower ground floor. According to RadioNZ "lurking in the background (were) men in dark uniforms who (were) neither police nor court security" (28/2/18). RadioNZ's reporter was told to remove herself.

Police apparently had no knowledge of any closed hearings. Electronic gear was collected from those at-



National MP Jian Yang with then PM Bill English

tending the secret hearing and a set of cupboards was installed outside the courtroom to store it. RadioNZ also reported human rights lawyer Michael Bott as commenting he was extremely concerned about the secrecy surrounding the hearing: "One would hope that there are exceptionally good reasons for this (hearing) but as it stands one has to be concerned if the media is excluded, aren't informed of what is going on and aren't even given the right to be heard".

Bott said this process reminded him of the case of the refugee, Ahmed Zaoui*, in which certain matters were hidden from his defence team for a long time because of spurious reasons of national security and he was imprisoned for months before he was released on bail. * See PR 35, December 2007; "At Long Bloody Last: A Happy Ending To Ahmed Zaoui's Ordeal", by Murray Horton, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr35.pdf>. Ed.

In January 2017 a system was developed by Chief Justice Dame Sian Elias and the-then Attorney-General, Chris Finlayson, to allow prosecution-only provision of classified security information to the judge hearing a case (in the UK the Government has set up a special court to sidestep traditional law in security cases, especially those where the Government has an interest in concealing the less salubrious nature of its spook activities).

Closed cases are very rare in NZ and antithetical to the long established legal principle of open trial. A similarly secret hearing at the High Court in Wellington was held in 2017 with the final result that the-then Minister of Internal Affairs, Peter Dunne, cancelled a woman's passport on the grounds that she was a danger to the security of a country other than New Zealand. *Later news reports did shed some light on this secret hearing. It was a further stage in the case, mentioned above, whereby the Government cancelled a woman's passport.* Ed.

Secret Hearing

"So, a trial where no public or media are allowed in at all? That's a big deal. What could it involve? The suspicions of at least some of us were confirmed when Justice Venning, the Chief High Court Judge,

released a statement confirming the subject of the case. It involves an appeal by a Melbourne-based New Zealand woman against a decision to cancel her passport on the grounds that she represents a national security threat to some other, unspecified country. By removing her passport, the New Zealand government says it can neutralise that threat by stopping her from being able to travel there".

"How do we know this? Because her case already has been before the High Court last year (2017), when she sought to challenge the Government's claim that not only did her appeal have to be held in secret, but that neither she nor her lawyer were allowed to know the reasons why her passport had been cancelled".

"Those reasons, said the Government, constituted 'classified security information'. And, under the Passports Act 2002, it's not just the public and press who can't be in the courtroom to hear the content of such information. Neither can the person whose passport is cancelled, nor that person's lawyer. Justice Dobson, who heard that earlier case and is hearing the current one as well, was not entirely happy about this situation. As he noted in a judgment that somewhat reluctantly concluded that the legislation had to be read in this manner".

"The whole of our common law tradition, as bolstered by the rights and protections recognised by New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, render the procedure under (the Passports Act) an anathema to the fundamental concepts of fairness. However, the reality is that Parliament has recognised the justification for the use of that procedure in defined circumstances".

"So, here's what is happening in the High Court in Wellington. A woman is asking to get her passport back after the Government took it off her. She is doing so without knowing the evidence the Government has for deciding she represents a security risk, without being able to be in the court to watch the case being argued, and without being able to have her own lawyer present to argue for her (although some unnamed 'advocates' have been appointed to 'assist with issues that have to be dealt with' in her absence)".

"And none of us can go in and watch the case. Nor can the media go in to watch it on our behalf. It's just a good thing we live in a country where we can be sure the Government gets things right; the security agencies never overreact to perceived threats and the courts always follow proper procedures. Because if we didn't, well ... you'd almost think there was a reason to be worried" (Andrew Geddis, *The Spinoff*, 2/3/18, <https://thespinoff.co.nz/society/02-03-2018/the-bizarre-case-of-the-nz-court-case-hidden-from-public-and-media-scrutiny/>. Geddis is an Otago University Law Professor).

Being A Spook Means Court Gives You Special Treatment

An Air Force spy who had spent three years as an active Defence Force (NZDF) operative in a sensitive specialist intelligence role overseas appeared in court in January 2018. Corporal Richard Graham stole sensitive operational material from the Defence Force with the help of his Government security clearance. Graham's unit and the nature and location of his deployment remains suppressed, but the *NZ Herald* (31/1/18) described his activity as "a hostile operation involving at least 13 people".

Graham stole several items, including electronics containing operationally sensitive equipment. The material was valued at more than \$200,000, according to court documents. Initially, Judge Belinda Piddwell discharged Graham without conviction on charges of burglary, offering to supply drugs, possession of a psychoactive product and possession of a controlled drug. The Police appealed, but another judge expressed sympathy for the ex-spook because of his "traumatic deployment to war". At the appeal hearing in October 2017, the High Court at Auckland heard that Graham was a "secret agent" in the NZDF who had a "highly stressful posting overseas" (ibid).

According to the *Herald*, Justice Anne Hinton said, when making her ruling on the appeal in the December 2017, judgment that the very negative effect on Graham from his hostile deployment overseas did mitigate the offending, as did his cooperation with police. And an affidavit from one of Graham's commanding officers reported that of the

13 troops deployed with Graham, three had difficulties assimilating back into normal Kiwi life, and significant behavioural changes had been noted in five others.

Graham's lawyer, Karl Trotter, said that during his deployment Graham began using drugs because "they were highly effective in his role", which all leads to the alarming conclusion that those targeting for drones or air strikes (likely Graham's role) not only suffer from huge mental stress but that they also believe they operate better when they are high. Trotter also noted that his client was "trained in ways to be deceptive". Police counsel Scott McColgan argued that Judge Pidwell erred in law when originally assessing the gravity of Graham's offending. McColgan said the ruling meant Graham walked away "without even convictions to mark the offending". Obviously, it pays to be a spook in NZ courts.

New Spooks Wanted

The Security Intelligence Service (SIS) launched another recruitment drive for front-line "surveillance officers" in Auckland at the end of April 2018. One of the spooks spoke to TV1 News (part of Director Rebecca Kitteridge's public relations schemes) but we learnt little about the secret agency. Apparently, the job is not nine-to-five (surprise!) and they spend a lot of time driving about in cars which are not Aston Martins.

Why so much time is spent lolling about in cars is left unsaid – but this strongly reinforces the case that much of the SIS work would be better handled by the Police. "It is about paying attention to your surrounds and if you are a keen people watcher - it is just picking up on the small traits and the details and being able to recall that at a later date," according to the spook (TVNZ, 27/4/18).

He says the job can be risky, but those risks are "controlled". But few people know what he really does for a living - including close family. He also gets to work with "expensive" kit (which probably explains where some of their bloated budget goes). The SIS is looking to recruit people from Asian, Maori and Pacific backgrounds because more than two-thirds of its staff are Pakeha who

don't blend in so well in Auckland. Kitteridge says the recruitment is a challenge because staff must be New Zealand citizens. Potential spooks are encouraged to apply via the given Website, but they have to keep their applications top secret.

According to TV3's *Newshub*, (28/4/18), Kitteridge claimed successful applicants could expect to see a range of different kinds of work and could be sent to the "front line". Presumably they won't be sent out by incompetent commanders to be hung up on barbed wire and machine-gunned. It was not immediately clear whether the staff was being increased or whether the new recruits were to replace some that had left. Given that the SIS has had significant increases in its budgets over recent years it is most likely that the number of spooks is on the increase.

Workers Need Top Security Clearance To Clean GCSB Gymnasium

The Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) needs loyal citizens for cleaning duties and the topping up of tea, coffee, and soap supplies. Cleaners who can pass stringent security checks are being sought for employment because the gymnasium floor needs vacuuming and mopping, and the basement car park needs sweeping. Spooky bathrooms need cleaning and disinfecting (*Stuff* Website, 27/2/18).

Applicants must be New Zealand citizens or be citizens of the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, or Australia (i.e. the other four of the Five Eyes electronic spying alliance). Under the Human Rights Act the spy agencies are allowed to discriminate - such as specifying what countries applicants are from - on the basis of national security.

Stuff quotes Victoria University's Professor Robert Ayson, who specialises in international security, as saying the security checks would be the "last line of defence" (!!!!) in protecting confidential New Zealand and Five Eyes security information. "The nightmare would be someone going into a building like that with a thumb drive and downloading stuff they are not allowed to take" (Ed: Or stuffing it in their pantyhose – see story below). The tender documents also show Kiwi spies have an envi-

ronmentally-friendly leaning - one requirement of the winning bidder is being able to supply "Bio Bags" and "Eco Green Rubbish Bags".

Private Dicks Still Used By Government

RadioNZ's *Checkpoint* (19/4/18) revealed that Government departments have continued to employ the notorious Thompson and Clark security agency despite their nasty record of spying on legal protests and promises as far back as the 1999-08 Labour government that it would not happen again. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade used Thompson and Clark to provide security in 2016 for activities related to the signing of the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) in Auckland.

In PR 54 (November 2017) we noted some instances of previous skulduggery and media comment on the extremely biased nature of their reports. In 2015, Thompson and Clark began supplying the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) with weekly intelligence reports it was putting together for the oil and gas industry on protest groups.

This follows on revelations that the State-owned insurance company Southern Response had used the firm to spy on insurance claimants in the wake of the 2010/11 Christchurch earthquakes. According to one commentator Thompson and Clark are still sitting there on the Government's official list of recommended providers of security services in New Zealand (see *Scoop*, 20/4/18).

PRs 34, July 2007, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr34.pdf> and 35, December 2007, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr35.pdf> ran extensive material on Thompson and Clark's private political spying. Specifically, see Mark Eden's "The Privatisation Of Spying, Part 2", in PR 35. Ed.

Brutal Woman Appointed Head Of CIA

As a clandestine officer at the US Central Intelligence Agency in 2002, Gina Haspel oversaw the torture of a terrorism suspect and later took

part in an order to destroy videotapes documenting the brutal interrogations at a secret prison in Udon Thani, in the north of Thailand. The overseas detention site in Thailand was, at one point, run by Ms Haspel, who oversaw the brutal interrogation of Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri. Another detainee, Abu Zubaydah, was tortured at the site before Ms. Haspel took charge. He was waterboarded 83 times in a single month, had his head repeatedly slammed into walls and endured other harsh methods before interrogators decided he had no useful information to provide.

In May 2018, Gina Haspel was confirmed as CIA Director, the first woman to hold the title. Haspel, who had a very limited public profile prior to her nomination by President Donald Trump, is a 33-year veteran of the organisation, and boasted at hearings into her appointment about her abilities. "I had a knack for the nuts and bolts of my profession," Haspel said in her opening remarks. "I excelled in finding and acquiring secret information that I obtained in brush passes, dead drops or in meetings in dusty back alleys of Third World capitals" (CBS News, 9/5/18).

Haspel told the Senate hearing into her appointment: "I can offer you my personal commitment clearly and without reservation that under my leadership on my watch CIA will not restart such a detention and Interrogation programme," she vowed (ibid). But there is nothing here to stop the CIA contracting out the torture – a frequent past practice – however.

The prospects look even worse when we consider the attitudes of Haspel's bosses. President Trump has said repeatedly that he thinks torture works. And the new Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo (Haspel's predecessor as CIA Director), has said that waterboarding and other techniques do not even constitute torture, and praised as "patriots" those who used such methods in the early days of the fight against al Qaeda.

CIA Sunk Again

Every few years a mole is uncovered in one of the US spook agencies who is discovered to have shredded the organisation from the inside. In January 2018 it was re-



vealed that US authorities arrested a former Central Intelligence Agency agent, Hong Kong resident Jerry Chun Shing Lee, after discovering he had an unauthorised notebook that contained the identities of undercover US spies.

Former American officials described the intelligence breach as one of the worst in decades. The number of American "assets" lost in China in the latest disaster is said to rival those lost in the Soviet Union/Russia from the betrayals of Aldrich Ames and Robert Hanssen, who divulged intelligence operations to Moscow for years.

The *New York Times* reported (17/5/17) that Chinese counter-security had systematically dismantled CIA spying operations in the country between 2012 and 2014, killing or imprisoning 18 to 20 of the CIA's sources in China, according to two former senior American officials. This effectively shredded a system that had taken years to establish and crippled intelligence gathering there for years afterward. But apparently US spooks did not know then if the security breach came from a mole or from hacking.

In 2012, FBI agents searched Lee's luggage while he was travelling in the US and found two small books containing handwritten notes that contained classified information, including names and phone numbers of assets and covert CIA employees and operational meeting locations and locations of covert

facilities (*Guardian*, 17/1/18).

Lee has been charged with unlawful retention of national defence information, a charge that can bring up to ten years in prison. He left the Agency in 2007 but officials have not said why it took so long to bring charges against him. The Department of Justice said Lee grew up in the United States and served in the US Army before joining the Central Intelligence Agency as a case officer in 1994.

Drones Breach Human Rights Law

Amnesty International says the UK is in danger of finding itself in breach of international human rights obligations through its support of lethal US drone strikes around the world. Sharing intelligence to help identify targets and the use of Royal Air Force (RAF) bases for drone attacks is likely a breach of international law according to a report by the organisation. Amnesty says: "Four RAF bases in Yorkshire, Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire are heavily implicated in the deadly drone attacks" (AI Website, 19/4/18).

Because of Trump's dramatic expansion in lethal drone operations "... there is a real risk of an increase in unlawful killings and civilian casualties". Amnesty says it is likely that assistance provided by US allies could be aiding potentially unlawful US drone strikes in violation of international law. The United Kingdom,

Germany, the Netherlands and Italy have played a significant role in supporting the US's lethal operations, including its drone programme in countries such as Somalia, Yemen, Iraq and Syria. New Zealanders should note that: "*This assistance takes the form of general intelligence-sharing as part of historical alliances such as the Five Eyes alliance*" (AI Website, *ibid.*, PR emphasis).

The Government Communications Head Quarters (GCHQ), the UK's electronic surveillance agency, is feeding information to the US that is used to launch deadly drone operations in the Middle East and Africa. The report cites Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, along with the UK, as sharing intelligence that allows the US to locate potential targets for drone attacks. The UK, Germany and Italy also provide operational support, including use of their military bases. The UK also has drone pilots embedded with the US military at a base in Nevada (*Guardian*, 19/4/18).

Between 773 and 1,551 civilians are estimated to have been killed (*Guardian*, *ibid.*). Amnesty states that it does not oppose the use of armed drones as long as they are in compliance with international law. Its concerns cover the legality of recent killings, the high number of civilian casualties, and the accuracy and reliability of surveillance and intelligence information used to identify targets.

In particular, AI conducted detailed research into nine of the 45 reported drone strikes carried out by the US in North Waziristan, north western Pakistan, between January 2012 and August 2013. This research revealed that the US had carried out unlawful drone killings in Pakistan, some of which could amount to war crimes or extrajudicial executions.

UK Must Rewrite Spy Law High Court Rules

The UK has six months to rewrite its "snooper's charter", the British High Court has ruled, because judges say the 2016 Investigatory Powers Act is incompatible with European Union (EU) law. The declaration comes after human rights group Liberty argued the Act violates the public's right to privacy by allowing the storage of, and access to, Internet

data.

Judges have given ministers and officials six months to redraft the 2016 Act following a crowdfunded challenge. The Government has accepted the Act is inconsistent with EU law because access to retained data is not limited to the purpose of combating "serious crime" and not subject to prior review by a court or other independent body.

Liberty has launched another fundraising effort for the next stage of its case, which includes challenging rules on bulk interception of digital communications. It argues that the powers to intercept communications in bulk and create files known as personal datasets undermine free speech, privacy and patient confidentiality, legal privilege and journalists' sources (*Guardian*, 27/4/18).

US Case Raises NZ Privacy Fears

In another example of US intimidation to enforce its own laws and interests in other countries, New Zealand's privacy watchdog has had to become involved in a United States court case to try to protect this country from moves by the US government to force companies to hand over data held offshore. The US government has been trying to force Microsoft to grant access to the emails of a suspected drug trafficker held in the company's Irish data centre.

Privacy Commissioner John Edwards has voiced NZ opposition in an appeal against this bullying. The appeal is critical because the US government wants to rely upon US domestic search warrant legislation to access data rather than seeking permission of the Irish government. Accepting this principle means that Washington could issue its own warrants to extract data from organisations in other countries.

Edwards's submission to the court maintains the well-established principle that domestic legislation cannot be extended to another country. The Privacy Commissioner has become involved because his office believes the US presumption goes against not only the interests of Microsoft and Ireland, but the rights of New Zealand as well.

Furthermore, Edwards said it was likely be a breach of New Zealand

laws for a company to hand over data held in New Zealand to the US government without the consent or mutual assistance of local authorities. This gave New Zealand a basis for withholding information which is being collected in an overseas case that might result in a person receiving the death penalty, or arrest and torture (see *NZ Newswire*, 14/12/17, *MSN Website*).

More Aussie Spook Cock-Ups

In January 2018 a classified Australian Defence notebook was found inside a cabinet at a rubbish dump. A man handed into the *Canberra Times* a small pink notebook containing information about Australian counter-terrorism operations. The notes were found, along with three security passes belonging to a senior official, taped to the back of an unlocked drawer in a second-hand cabinet the man bought at a Canberra tip. A security team immediately locked down the *Canberra Times* newsroom and then removed the notebook.

The Australian Defence Department requested that Fairfax withhold the identity of the "senior official" involved in the Canberra breach, as "publication of such information may give rise to a foreign intelligence threat" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 6/2/18). The official, who is surely now seeking new employment, wrote the notes while working with the Australian Signals Directorate in 2016 (the ASD is the Australian equivalent of the NZGCSB).

At almost the same time as the notebook was found at the dump, thousands of sensitive documents, known as "The Cabinet Files", were accidentally sold at a second-hand Government furniture store and obtained by the ABC (i.e. the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, not the Anti-Bases Campaign). The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet admitted it had lost the Cabinet documents, which were taken back from the ABC by agents of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO).

US Kept Australian Government Out Of The Loop

An old US diplomatic cable uncovered by Privacy International (PI) has confirmed the previous exist-

ence of a secret room at America's Pine Gap spy base that Australians were not allowed to enter (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 25/4/18). PI says it provides a "case study" of how intelligence sharing arrangements are "typically confidential and not subject to Parliamentary scrutiny" and could be used to circumvent a country's laws.

Australian National University's defence expert Des Ball, who died in 2016, said at the time (mid-1980s) "... there were at least two areas of the facility where Australian nationals are not permitted entry - the US 'national communication and cypher room' and the 'key room where they (Americans) do the final analysis of all incoming intelligence'" (*SMH*, *ibid.*). The then Defence Minister, Kim Beazley, claimed at the time the Government was "...fully aware of everything that takes place at Pine Gap, near Alice Springs".

NSA Employee In Court For Leaking Secret Document

A woman who told Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents she was disappointed in her job as a Government contractor and hates America, is in court on charges that she printed a classified US report and mailed it to an online news outlet. *USA Today* (28/9/17) believes the report was likely a classified National Security Agency (NSA) report that *The Intercept* obtained which suggested Russian hackers attacked a US voting software supplier before the 2016 Presidential election. The NSA report was dated May 5, the same day as the document Winner is charged with leaking.

The wonderfully named Reality Winner, 25, claimed she stuffed a classified report into her pantyhose and walked out of a National Security Agency office in Georgia. According to prosecutors, Winner wrote to her sister: "I'm no radical. It's mostly just about Americans' obsession with air conditioning.... (America)'s literally the worst thing to happen on the planet. We invented capitalism, the downfall of the environment". Winner told the FBI she was frustrated at her civilian contractor job, which involved translating documents from Farsi to English for the NSA in Augusta. She also complained about the office continually playing *Fox News* (surely grounds for a charge of cruel and unusual punishment?).

US Supreme Court Supports The Spooks

The importance of Trump's Supreme Court nominations can be clearly seen in a recent court decision supporting warrantless surveillance of an American citizen. The Supreme Court has announced it will not review a lower court's ruling in *United States v. Mohamud*, which upheld warrantless surveillance of an American citizen under Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, activity which critics say violates core Fourth Amendment protections.

A representative of the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) says that by using Section 702, the Government warrantlessly collects billions of communications, including those belonging to a large but unknown number of Americans. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld this practice only by creating an unprecedented exception to the Fourth Amendment. This exception allows the Government to collect Americans' communications without a warrant by targeting foreigners outside the United States, known as "incidental collection". This, of course, is a key criticism of all Five Eyes members' operations which can collect 'incidental' data.

Andrew Crocker (EFF *Deeplinks* blog, 8/1/18) goes on to say that some of the most controversial aspects of these programmes have never been reviewed by a public court, let alone the Supreme Court. That includes "backdoor searches," the practice of searching databases for Americans' incidentally collected communications. Even in deciding *Mohamud*, the Ninth Circuit refused

to address the constitutionality of backdoor searches.

Abuse Of Spying Powers

In February 2018 Crocker and Aaron Mackay also reported for the EFF that, even when a court does authorise the Government to spy on specific Americans for national security purposes, that authorisation can be misused to potentially violate other people's civil liberties. Their statements were based on Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC) opinions released to EFF as part of a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit seeking all significant orders and opinions of the secret court.

The documents are said to raise questions about whether the US government can protect people's privacy and free expression rights under Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), which permits officials to engage in warrantless mass surveillance with far less court oversight than is required under the "traditional" FISA warrant process. They also illustrate how important the courts are for protection of civil liberties.

The new opinions show that even when the FISC judges actually approve targeted surveillance on particular individuals, the Government still collects the contents of innocent people's communications in ways that are incompatible with the law. The EFF bloggers raise the question: what is the Government getting away with when it engages in surveillance that has even less FISC oversight? Other court opinions that EFF obtained detail the NSA's unauthorised surveillance of a number of individuals and the Government's



efforts to hold onto the data despite a FISA court's order that the communications be destroyed.

Some of the released opinions show instances of the courts blocking Government efforts to expand its surveillance or ordering the destruction of information obtained improperly as a result of its spying. In 2004 or 2005, FISC Judge Harold Baker rejected the FBI's proposal to log copies of recorded conversations of people who, while not targeted by the agency, were still swept up in its surveillance. This probably occurred when innocent people used the same communications service as the FBI's target, possibly a shared phone line. The opinion demonstrates both the risks of overcollection as part of targeted surveillance as well as the benefits of engaged, detailed court oversight.

And Crocker and Mackay reveal, in at least one instance, the Court took the FBI to task for the "surprising occasion" of seeking to expand its use of incidentally collected communications, rather than getting rid of them. It faulted the FBI for failing to account "for the possibility that overzealous or ill-intentioned personnel might be inclined to misuse information, if given the opportunity". As the Court put it, "the advantage of minimisation at the acquisition stage is clear. Information that is never acquired in the first place cannot be misused".

NSA Problem With Staff Leaving

A former senior researcher at the National Security Agency, who left in 2016 to start her own data-security firm and took at least ten staff with her, has told the *Washington Post* (3/1/18) that loss of NSA employees is best described as "some synonym of the word 'epidemic'". The Agency is not only facing a loss of experienced officers, but also insiders say that morale, which dipped in the aftermath of the Edward Snowden disclosures and public suspicion, has not fully recovered and more recently the workforce is reported to have been rattled by a series of breaches targeting the Agency's highly sensitive hacking tools.

The NSA employs a civilian workforce of about 21,000 at Fort Meade, the headquarters in Maryland. The former NSA researcher

quoted above told the *Post* that: "the Agency is losing an amazing amount of its strongest technical talent, and to lose your best and brightest staff is a huge hit". Since 2015, the NSA has lost several hundred hackers, engineers and data scientists. The attrition rate is close to 8 or 9% among hackers and those who staff the Agency's 24-hour watch centre monitoring for cyberattacks. Some groups within the NSA have lost almost half of their staff, one former official told the *Post*. As a result, projects to make intelligence collection more effective have been cut or slowed.

The potential impact on national security is significant because some people who have left were responsible for collecting and analysing the intelligence that goes into the President's daily briefing. Whether the advent of Trump has impacted the organisation is not clear (but the spooks must be able to spy narcissism, lies and incompetence when they see them).

New restrictions on accessing data, brought in after Snowden's expose and the arrest of former contractor Harold Martin III in 2016, have made work more difficult, and the internal hunt for would-be leakers has contributed to an environment of suspicion, said a number of current and former employees. Also, jobs in places like Silicon Valley can pay US\$200,000 or more, meaning even relatively junior cyber professionals in the industry can make more than top officials at the NSA.

Spies Tracked By Fitness Devices

The identities of individual spooks and their whereabouts have been uncovered because some have been exercising using an app produced by fitness-tracking company Strava which publishes heatmaps that can reveal sensitive military and intelligence sites. The Australian military has said it was considering taking action to prevent further security breaches, according to a report from the Australian Associated Press (*Guardian*, 29/1/18). As well as the location of military bases, the identities of individual service members can also be uncovered, if they are using the service with the default privacy settings.

The app's global heatmap shows public activity uploaded to the app

over its history and in more isolated sites it can highlight areas with an unusually high concentration of connected, exercise-focused young individuals – such as active military personnel serving overseas. The map for one site outside an airbase in Afghanistan revealed the full names of more than 50 service members who were stationed there, and the dates they ran.

The headquarters of GCHQ, in Cheltenham, England, is just one of the sensitive sites to be criss-crossed with GPS activity, suggesting that spies and intelligence analysts are recording and uploading their commutes or lunchtime runs. Similar patterns of activity can be seen around the CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia.

UK Surveillance Technology For Philippines' Murderous President

The UK government has sold more than \$300,000 worth of surveillance equipment to Rodrigo Duterte, the Philippines' President who has been responsible for some of the worst human rights abuses in recent history. The surveillance equipment includes technology for eavesdropping on telephone conversations and for following Internet activity. Duterte recently publicised a list of 600 respected civil rights and community leaders who are listed as "Communist terrorists" (including the UN's Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous People). He is currently being investigated by the International Criminal Court for possible charges (letter to *Guardian*, 13/3/18).

UK Universities' Defence Funding

A significant part of funding for British universities now comes from defence contracts, according to the *Observer* (1/4/18). Britain's universities are taking tens of millions of pounds from some of the world's biggest defence contractors to help develop the next generation of military hardware. Many of the companies distributing the cash are involved in both civilian and military aerospace sectors and their work is justified on the basis that it has led to spin-offs that benefit the wider public.

The *Observer* article reports the following: Leeds University has a col-

laboration with Rolls-Royce “to develop advanced diagnostic and prognostic systems that will contribute to reducing the cost of ownership to the UK government of the next generation of submarines”. Boeing, which makes the Apache attack helicopter, helps fund scholarships and internships for students, including those working on a drone project, at the University of Bristol.

BAE Systems, whose fighter jets have been used in the Saudi-led bombing of Yemen, sponsors the Centre for Ethics and Law at University College London. It also contributed £30,000 to a University of Portsmouth project on “understanding the moral component of conflict”. The University of Manchester also works with BAE, which in 2016 spent almost £11m partnering with UK universities, on a stealth drone project. The University of Surrey helped the US’s Lockheed Martin, the world’s largest defence company, to develop “a new lighter-weight method of improving the protection and survivability of armoured vehicles”.

Arms Suppliers Feast On Middle East Woes

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) states, in its *Annual Report* (12/3/18), that arms imports to the Middle East jumped by 103% between 2013 and 2017. In this five-year period, US arms exports were 25% higher than the five years before. The US, the UK, and France were the main supplier of arms to the region, while Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were the main recipient countries. Much of US and

UK arms exports over the past five years have gone to fuel conflict in the Middle East.

The Saudi government, which is the world’s second-largest arms importer behind India, agreed in March 2018 to buy 48 highly advanced fighter jets from Britain’s BAE Systems despite protests by human rights activists because the Saudi arms procured from Western countries kill civilians in Yemen. The Saudis are providing the muscle for the horrific civil war in Yemen which has destroyed the country and its people. Iran, which backs the Houthi rebels in the conflict, supplies only 1% of arms to the region, according to SIPRI.

The US, which is the world’s biggest arms exporter, supplied arms to as many as 98 states worldwide, accounting for more than a third of global exports. Surprisingly, Russia, the world’s second biggest exporter, saw a decrease of 7.1% in its overall volume of arms exports; US exports were 58% higher than those of Russia. France, Germany and China were also among the top five exporters. The UK is the sixth biggest weapons exporter. India, which accounted for 12 percent of global arms purchases, is the world’s largest importer of arms, mostly from Russia, but India’s arms imports from the US saw a more than six-fold jump.

UK Military Wants To Increase Defence Spending

While the UK arms makers are “increasing their market share” by exporting death technology, the UK Ministry of Defence is pressing the

Government for a significant increase in spending on the Army, Navy and Air Force. In the finest traditions of arms race philosophy, Britain’s Chief of Defence Staff, Sir Nick Carter, asserts that failure to keep up with Russia will leave the UK exposed, particularly to unorthodox, hybrid warfare of the kind practised by Russia and other potentially hostile states. As well as Russia, North Korea, Iran and China have been blamed for cyber-attacks on the US and Europe

The Army, Navy and Air Force have been drastically cut back over the last decade. According to the *Guardian* (22/1/18) much of this is because so much defence money is being channelled to the renewal of the extravagant Trident nuclear programme and two new aircraft carriers, and also because of emphasis on funding the intelligence agencies and counter-terrorism operations.

Leaders In The “Mine Is Bigger Than Yours” Tragedy

The 2018 ratings of military killing potential by *Global Firepower* (see its Website) show that, despite Trumpeting that the US is falling behind, Washington by far continues to dominate military excess. The top three rated powers remain USA, Russia and China (in that order) with the top ten rounded out by India, France, UK, South Korea, Japan, Turkey and Germany respectively. Australia is ranked at 21, exhibiting a tragic military pretension far beyond its needs, and NZ comes in at 90, between Sri Lanka and Kyrgyzstan, which surely have much higher strategic rationales. ■

JACINDA SAYS NZ HAS "INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY"

If Only That Was True

- Murray Horton

The Prime Minister is to be congratulated for explicitly defying President Trump’s bullying in relation to New Zealand’s December 2017 United Nations vote against

the US declaration of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital. She went on to say that “New Zealand has, and always has had, an independent foreign policy”. Fine words. If only they bore some semblance to reality. The fact is that NZ is the most loyal, albeit junior, satellite of the US Empire.

I assume that Jacinda is referring to things like the nuclear free policy. Yes, that is commendable - but never let it be forgotten that if the 1980s’ Labour government that implemented it had had its way, NZ would have been both nuclear free and still in the ANZUS military alliance with the US. NZ did not leave ANZUS, it was kicked out by the US. *ANZUS: The Australia, New Zealand, US military treaty that was the foundation of all New Zealand’s defence and foreign policy from its inception in 1951 until the US, under President Ronald*



Trump, Ardern & Waihopai. Graphic by Ian Dalziel

Reagan, kicked us out in 1986, as punishment for our nuclear free policy. It remains in force today, but only between the US and Australia.

NZ's most important contribution to the US Empire is as a decades-long member of the Five Eyes spy alliance and hosting the Waihopai spy base, which is operated by the NZ Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) on behalf of the US National Security Agency (NSA). Andrew Little, the Minister Responsible for the GCSB, has stated in writing that the Government has no intention of closing Waihopai.

What Would An Independent Foreign Policy Look Like?

It's time for this country to pull the plug, to finish the business started in the 1980s which saw NZ both nuclear free and out of ANZUS; and to break the chains - military, intelligence, economic and cultural - that continue to bind us to the American Empire. The Americans are very proud of having won their independence from the British Empire; it's time for us to do the same from the American Empire. Let's deal with the world on our terms, not on those dictated from whichever empire we happen to be a junior member of at the time.

Gaining true independence from the American Empire is an idea whose time has well and truly come. Indeed, it's a matter of both necessity and national dignity. It is not "anti-

American" (or "racist" or "xenophobic", for that matter). We stand with the American people who are fighting back in their millions against the daily outrages being perpetrated by Trump and his reactionary billionaire cronies. We stand with them as we have stood with them in common causes ranging from the war in Vietnam to the invasion of Iraq and the campaign to impose the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) on our peoples.

It doesn't mean isolationism. It would mean that New Zealand would pick our allies and, if necessary, our wars, on a case by case basis, decided first and foremost by what is in the interests of the New Zealand people, not the interests of foreign governments and/or corporations. It would involve cutting the strings that continue to bind us to the American Empire. Specifically:

- get out of the Five Eyes spy alliance (with the US, UK, Canada and Australia), and pull the plug on the ANZUS-in-all-but-name military and intelligence alliance with Trump's increasingly dangerous and unhinged US. Renounce the recent Wellington and Washington Declarations with the US. Get out of the American wars that we are already in, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan and definitely stay out of any new wars that Trump may try to drag us into, be they in Iran or Korea or wherever.

- the GCSB spy bases at Waihopai and Tangimoana (which are US NSA bases in all but name) must be closed; the GCSB, which is simply a junior subcontractor for the NSA, must be abolished. Cyber-security (the excuse offered for its existence) can be provided by a dedicated non-spy Government agency.
- the US military transport base at Christchurch Airport, which has been there for more than 60 years, must be demilitarised, to end it providing cover for US military and intelligence activities that have nothing to do with providing logistic support for peaceful scientific research in Antarctica.

And I reckon it's glaringly obvious that we need to be not only cutting the ties with the American Empire but also cutting all vestigial ties with our original Empire, namely dear old Mother England. Get shot of Mother England and Uncle Sam. It's called leaving home and living your own life and it's what all of us do in the much vaunted "real world" that we keep getting told about. It's called being independent. But we do not advocate NZ transferring its allegiance to become a loyal servant of the arising Chinese Empire. Why jump from the frying pan into the fire? Let's stay independent of anyone's empire.

Neutrality should be a subject of discussion. Armed neutrality is a well-established practice globally. Does anybody think countries like Switzerland, Sweden or Austria are disadvantaged, poor, or isolated as a result of their long entrenched national policy of armed neutrality? The NZ peace movement put in a lot of work promoting positive neutrality in the 1980s as part of the successful campaign that made NZ nuclear free and out of ANZUS. An independent Aotearoa would be the opposite of "isolationist". It would pursue an activist foreign policy. There is plenty of unfinished business. Let's spread "the Kiwi disease" and actively work for a nuclear free world, one country or region at a time, if necessary.

Let's demand that all the nuclear powers, overt or covert, disarm and dismantle their weapons of mass terror and genocide. Let's speak truth to power and tell countries such as Australia and the US what

we find abhorrent in areas such as their human rights and race relations practices. Because that's what friends do. There have been some encouraging signs of this with the Ardern government politely offering to help Australia solve its self-imposed mess vis a vis the refugees cruelly imprisoned and then abandoned on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island. But the Aussies said "mind your own business, little brother". But this is our own business. Human rights abuses are everyone's business.

Regionally, Aotearoa Needs To Be Much More Activist

As a First World capitalist economy we are part of the climate change problem that threatens the whole world and nowhere more imminently than our tiny Pacific neighbours. There is clamour for NZ to take in more refugees and I fully support that – the inhabitants of these doomed atolls need to be at the top of the list. All of them, if necessary – we're only talking tens of thousands of people at most. This is not a solution to the problem of climate change (that's a whole other, but vitally related, issue, one which Trump is actively making worse) – it is merely a reaction to the problem, a recognition that we have a responsibility to help our neighbours whom we have harmed.

There are other regional issues that Aotearoa should be addressing. Decolonisation of France's Pacific empire is an obvious one. Support the benighted people of West Papua to gain their freedom from Indonesia, in the same way we (very belatedly) supported the East Timorese people. Confront the government of the Philippines over its shocking human rights record (President Duterte makes Trump look like a sensitive new age guy).

Offer the peace-making skills that we demonstrated so successfully in Bougainville to help the Philippines to find an end to the wars that have wracked it for more than half a century. These are some regional examples of where Aotearoa could offer to "lend a hand" (to quote Jacinda Ardern on the Manus Island refugees). There is no shortage of ways in which we can be much more of a good neighbour than we currently are. ■

INDONESIA & NEW ZEALAND: "Friends For Good" - But Whose Good?

- Maire Leadbeater, West Papua Action Auckland

In March 2018 Indonesia's President Joko Widodo was welcomed to New Zealand with considerable pomp and ceremony, including a 100-person guard of honour, an impressive powhiri and a 21-gun salute. New Zealand and Indonesia are celebrating their 60 years of diplomatic ties: "60 years as friends for good". I am all for friendship with the Indonesian people but there has been a lot wrong with our diplomacy over the years.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern told the media that she would raise human rights issues including the limits on access to West Papua and restrictions on freedom of expression. She also undertook to ask questions about proposed new criminal laws relating to the LGBTIQ community in Indonesia. We don't know how President Widodo responded as his public comments were limited to quips about coffee and sheep.

No Mention Of Human Rights

Human rights do not feature in the Joint Statement on Cooperation between New Zealand and the Republic of Indonesia, but the familiar words "support for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity" do appear. Translated, that means New Zealand does not back the West Papuan call for a new exercise in self-determination. So far at least, Jacinda Ardern's administration is on the same West Papua course as its predecessors; mild human rights representations undermined by a refusal to consider the fundamental issue of West Papua's contested political status.

President Widodo's public silence did not go unremarked. *New Zealand Herald* journalist, Audrey Young, said it was "shameful" that he failed to present himself to the public of New Zealand. Young suggested that Indonesia had vetoed a proposed joint Ardern and Widodo press conference and that this was "disrespectful".

This, in turn, drew a sharp response from the Indonesian Ambassador who implied that the no-press-conference protocol was proposed by New Zealand officials. In an attempt to clarify this, I have made an Official Information Act request for the briefing papers prepared in advance of the visit. The most likely explanation is that both countries were happy with a carefully scripted State visit and hoped that the pesky journalists would focus on preferred topics such as trade and economic cooperation.

However, President Widodo was not altogether shielded from the issue of the rights of the Papuan people to determine their own political future. Wellington solidarity activists shadowed him with flags and "Free West Papua" chants as he visited the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior and as he arrived at Parliament. Media coverage of West Papua Action Auckland's lobby for Ardern to advocate for West Papuan rights and of the protests was reasonably prominent.

West Papua's Half Century Under Military Rule

For more than 55 years West Papuan people have been seeking freedom from repressive Indonesian military rule, imposed on them after a 1962 agreement brokered in New York without their consent or participation. To add insult to injury, in 1969 the people were subjected to an "Act of Free Choice", a scandalously unfair process which involved selecting just over 1,000 "representatives" (out of a population of close to one million) who were terrorised into voting to integrate with Indonesia.

The subsequent conflict-related deaths are estimated to be over 100,000 and possibly much higher. In 2017 the International Coalition for Papua documented ten cases of extrajudicial killings, where the victims were either shot dead during security force operations or tortured



to death in custody. Back in 1960 West Papua was under Dutch colonial control, and New Zealand supported the Dutch as they began to prepare the people for self-government.

Prime Minister Walter Nash, once proposed that the two halves of the New Guinea Island (including today's Papua New Guinea) should be placed under joint trusteeship and prepared for eventual independence as one country. Nash put forward his initiative in The Hague in May 1960 and this prompted a trip across the Tasman by Indonesian Ambassador for New Zealand, Dr Helmi. Declassified reports show that Canberra-based Dr Helmi did not change the Prime Minister's mind. Mr Nash said that the people of New Guinea might need more time to get ready, but one day, like people everywhere, they would want to be independent.

Unfortunately, Indonesia's strident claims to the territory were having an impact and the United States and Australia were quietly letting the Dutch know that they would be on their own should Indonesia carry out its threats of force. So, Mr Nash underestimated the forces against his idea, but he was on the right track and over the years Papuan leaders have often upheld the idea of one united New Guinea island: "from Sorong to Samarai". However, New Zealand soon fell into line, burying its qualms about the way West Papua was handed over to Indonesia on a plate.

NZ's Blind Eye To Genocide & East Timor

New Zealand was not a good friend

to the Indonesian people in 1965*. On suspicion of having supported a failed Communist coup over half a million people were killed. These events, part of the global Cold War, left an enduring scar on the Indonesian body politic. The Left-leaning administration of President Sukarno was gradually replaced by the "New Order" regime of General Suharto.

**See Dennis Small's "Ghosts Of A Genocide: The CIA, Suharto And Terrorist Culture" which constituted the entire Special Issue of Peace Researcher 25, March 2002, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr25.pdf>; and his "Case Study: The 1965-70 Indonesia Genocide" in PR 44, November 2012, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr44.pdf>. Ed.*

New Zealand officials were well-informed about the scale and arbitrary nature of killings, but they welcomed Suharto's rise to power and did not protest the killings. One diplomat told a 1967 Parliamentary committee that the transfer of power had been "surprisingly peaceful". At that time New Zealand's diplomatic representation in Jakarta was upgraded from a Legation to a full Embassy.

In 1969 our Ambassador observed part of the so-called "Act of Free Choice" in West Papua. Ambassador Challis described a stage-managed process, but his critical report did not prompt any action by New Zealand. During the UN debate that followed, New Zealand stayed silent, leaving it to newly independent African nations to speak up for the West Papuan people.

New Zealand acquiesced to Indone-

sia's 1975 invasion of East Timor and helped Indonesia to cover up subsequent crimes even as the death toll approached 200,000. This continued throughout the 24-year Indonesian occupation - New Zealand quite quickly decided that the "occupation was irreversible" and did not even use its UN vote to oppose what was happening.

Three New Zealanders died in East Timor at the hands of the Indonesian military or militia: photo-journalist Gary Cunningham in 1975, human rights activist Kamal Bamadhaj in 1991 and peacekeeper Leonard Manning in 2000. Notwithstanding, New Zealand has worked hard to develop and maintain a close bilateral relationship with Indonesia - and because the military is so influential in Indonesian affairs, that has included defence ties.

Military training ties were suspended in 1999 after the cataclysmic violence in East Timor but resumed again in 2007 in the absence of any indication that the military had changed its spots or been held accountable for its crimes in East Timor. The Government permits the export of military goods to Indonesia including "engines, propellers and components" for CASA, P3Orion and C130 Hercules military aircraft.

West Papuans say that they are experiencing "slow genocide" because of the impact on their lives of a relentless inward flow of migrants, environmental exploitation and shockingly low standards of health and education. Indonesia says it is prioritising infrastructure development in West Papua, but in practice this is largely about roads to help ensure that business interests can continue to extract minerals, palm oil, and timber including kwila.

In the remote Asmat area in the last few months there has been a devastating outbreak of measles which, coupled with malnutrition, took the lives of dozens of children. Ironically, the lowland Asmat people live, metaphorically speaking, in the shadow of the mountain where Freeport McMoran operates its giant gold and copper mine, Indonesia's largest taxpayer.

Honest Stock-Take Needed

These days the struggle is now mainly about peaceful protest, petitions and diplomacy but there is no

let-up in security force crack-downs. In the last three years the police have adopted a strategy of arresting demonstrators en masse, and thanks to a Police Chief edict, organisations deemed “separatist” are denied the opportunity to hold any kind of gathering. Yanto Awerkion, a young activist who was promoting a petition calling for the UN Decolonisation Committee to become involved, spent over nine months in

jail on a treason charge. His release in April 2018 was almost certainly thanks to a strong global campaign. It is time for an honest stock-take of our historic relationship with Indonesia. New Zealand has been “friends for good” with the political elite but it has shamefully let down those without power in Indonesia, East Timor and now in West Papua. Territorial integrity should not be allowed to trump responsibility for genocide.

My new book “See No Evil: New Zealand’s Betrayal Of The People Of West Papua” (Otago University Press) will be available in June. Contact West Papua Action Auckland or West Papua Action Canterbury to learn about group/s in your area or about campaigns such as the “Don’t buy kwila” campaign. westpapuaactionauckland@gmail.com or westpapuaactioncanterbury@gmail.com ■

GROWING CHALLENGES FOR PEACE Compounding Geopolitical Confrontation, Insurgency, & Counter-Insurgency

- Dennis Small

“Goddam you all: I told you so” (this was the vindictory warning [or equivalent] to humanity wanted as his epitaph by the prophetic science fiction writer HG Wells. In his “War of the Worlds” (1897), Wells pictured the alien Martians invading Earth, after exhausting the resources of their own planet. Today, Elon Musk, the American billionaire, new technology “entrepreneur”, and SpaceX boss, wants to fly people to Mars as soon as he can, even by “next year” (Press, 14/3/18). He contends that “humans must colonise other planets before ‘World War III’” (ibid.). Ironically, too, Musk warns us about the dangers of artificial intelligence (AI). In the 21st Century, the self-destructive technocratic contradictions of Western “civilisation” are surely running rampant!

“Nothing much has changed – they’re as crazy as they were then!” (Dr Daniel Ellsberg, “The Pentagon Papers” Vietnam War whistle-blower referring here to US nuclear war planners in a recent interview on Nine to Noon with Kathryn Ryan [14/3/18], Radio NZ [RNZ], about his new book, “The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner”, Bloomsbury, 2017; see also: “Daniel Ellsberg: The Doomsday Machine”, YouTube – Commonwealth Club, 14/12/17, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BdyKOfNQeM0>). Ellsberg fervently appeals for urgent, increased international pressure to re-

duce the risks of nuclear war.

“Our goal must be to do everything we can to help countries avert the outbreak of crises that take a high toll on humanity”, (United Nations [UN] Secretary-General Antonio Guterres: “Adapt Peace-making, Security Tools To Overcome Humanitarian Crisis, Emerging Crisis Worldwide, Particularly In Syria, Speakers Urge Security Council – The United Nations”, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13216.doc.htm>).

“I’m really good at killing people” (Barack Obama as the drone war US President: see, e.g.: “Obama ‘Really Good At Killing People’”, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxYPGVs4FD0>, 5/11/13).

“In a way, Russia and America are the only terrorists in the world because they hold the world’s life in the palm of their hand” (Helen Caldicott, interviewed in “The End of Life on Earth”, New Philosopher [NP], February 2018, p75: The Smithsonian named Caldicott one of the most influential women of the 20th Century. She continues to inspire activism for anti-nuclear peace-making. Her latest book is “Sleepwalking To Armageddon: The Threat Of Nuclear Annihilation”).

“The ‘New Dawn’ is confrontation” (BBC reporter Steve Rosenberg on the West’s relations with Russia, 1 News at Middy, 19/4/18).

Such stuff signifies the “death wish” of the “New Age” mainstream media!).

“If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner” (Nelson Mandela).

During April 2018, the world experienced a confrontation between the US and Russia, the likes of which had not been seen since the height of the Cold War and the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. This stand-off over the conduct of the war in Syria was still fraught with danger at the time of writing. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said that relations with the West are now even worse than in the Cold War.

The Trump Administration, along with the UK and France, had carried out an air attack with cruise missiles on what they claimed were sites integral to the Assad regime’s chemical weapons programme. This action was in response to an alleged chemical poison attack on the town of Douma in Eastern Ghouta, on the outskirts of Damascus.

The Football Of International Law

Underlying geopolitical reasons aside, the Western trio not only ignored and flouted international law in their air assault but they very deliberately pre-empted a visit by a UN investigatory team to Douma. Given the bitter domestic circus in which “Mafia Boss” President Donald Trump is continuously embroiled (including a fiery feud with former FBI Director, James Comey), he desperately needed a “Wag The Dog*” distraction scenario. At home, Trump and his cronies are stumbling around in a “legal minefield”.

*“*Wag The Dog*’ is a 1997 black comedy film where a spin doctor and a Hollywood producer fabricate a war to distract voters from a Presidential sex scandal” (Wikipedia). *Sound familiar? Ed.* And what better distraction than, just like Bill Clinton, to conduct a foreign bombing raid?! Trump’s Secretary of Defense, Jim Mattis, is even - so very appropriately - nicknamed “Mad Dog”! Many of Trump’s inner circle, ideologues, and cheerleaders, including the ringmaster himself, are effectively “barking mad” anyway.

Whatever the crimes of the Assad regime - *and they are many and callously vicious, whatever the exact extent of his support base* - Syria can still be considered a sovereign nation, whose national rights the US violates every day. After all, America has been the world’s foremost backer of repressive regimes, the leading subverter of governments, and the biggest butcher of human rights since WWII (“Lawless World: America And The Making And Breaking Of Global Rules”, Philippe Sands, Allen Lane/Penguin Books, 2005; “Rogue Nation: A Guide To The World’s Only Superpower”, 3rd ed., William Blum, Common Courage Press, 2005; & “On Western Terrorism: From Hiroshima To Drone Warfare”, Noam Chomsky & Andre Vltchek, Pluto Press, 2013).

The US carries out blatantly illegal State terrorism, sponsors insurgency, or conducts counter-insurgency - all in accordance with the aims of its foreign policy. And, all the while, the mainstream media act as cheerleaders, covering up the dirty deeds as much as possible. It is certainly no coincidence that the three Western powers involved in the latest cruise missile strike on Syria have together a long and often horrendous imperial record.

“War Is Peace”

Their posturing about humanitarian concern and peace-making as the major reason for this latest military intervention in Syria is so much pure hypocritical humbug! This can be easily illustrated by a comment made by Trump about the 1980s’ Iraq/Iran war, and how Saddam Hussein’s use of “a little gas” had meant that: “Everyone goes crazy” (see, Donald Trump “Saddam Hussein Throws A Little Gas” - YouTube: 24/8/16, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQx7A0-d4jk>).

What a fuss about nothing!

Most damningly, of course, the US had strategically aided Hussein’s use of gas in a number of ways. It even protected Iraq at the UN Security Council against the imposition of international sanctions (see, e.g., “The West’s Chemical Weapons Hypocrisy”, *History News Network*, 2/09/13, <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/153208>).

Once again, we witness the feigned concern about the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) on innocent people. The only real concern that these Western nations have is that they themselves might suffer the impact and effects of such WMD in the ultimate blowback to their depredations. To protect Israel’s armoury of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, the US rejects out of hand any proposals for a WMD-free zone in the Middle East (“Why The United States Can’t Lead On Syria’s Chemical Weapons Atrocities”, *Progressive.org*, 1/04/18, <http://progressive.org/dispatches/why-the-united-states-cant-lead-on-syrias-chemical-weapons-180411/>).

The Politics Of Dehumanisation

The track record of the three Western nations bombing Syria in this latest attack - *let alone in so many other places!* - surely proves that they have no concern for peoples or human rights. This is certainly the case whenever and wherever they see their geopolitical interests at stake - above all their globally defined “national security” (“Syria Intervention Plans Fuelled By Oil Interests, Not Chemical Weapon Concerns”, Nafeez Ahmed, *Guardian*, 30/8/13, [https://www.theguardian.com/environment/earth-insight/2013/aug/30/syria-chemical-attack-war-intervention-oil-gas-energy-pipelines;Western Howls Of Outrage Over The Ghouta Siege Ring Hollow - We Aren’t Likely To Do Anything To Save Civilians](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/earth-insight/2013/aug/30/syria-chemical-attack-war-intervention-oil-gas-energy-pipelines;Western%20Howls%20Of%20Outrage%20Over%20The%20Ghouta%20Siege%20Ring%20Hollow%20-%20We%20Aren't%20Likely%20To%20Do%20Anything%20To%20Save%20Civilians)”, *Independent*, 21/2/18, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/ghouta-siege-syria-death-toll-civilians-armed-attack-rebel-aleppo-latest-a8221086.html>).

For more than seven years now, the Western powers concerned - in close conjunction with their clients and allies like Saudi Arabia - have cynically exploited civilian suffering and misery in Syria for their own gain. They have funded and promoted the ongoing insurgency in a host

of ways - covertly, militarily, politically, propaganda-wise, etc. (ibid.). For this particular article, a conventional dictionary definition of “insurgency” will suffice, i.e.: “an insurgency is a violent attempt to oppose a country’s government carried out by citizens of that country”, with the rider that external forces can also be crucial in fostering and maintaining insurgencies, as in Syria.

Tossing COINs!

Counter-insurgency, or COIN in the military jargon, can be correspondingly defined as: “the violent attempt by a government to suppress an insurgency”. This attempt can be integrated with a range of political, social, and economic measures to try and win ‘hearts and minds’, and so get the populace on side, or at least a significant number of them.

Tragically, the civilian population of Syria has been caught in an eminently brutal geopolitical struggle. Meanwhile, the overall level of humanitarian aid, channelled via the UN, etc., for genuine civilian relief and support for the Syrian people, including refugees, is absolutely pitiful. Civilian casualties and suffering amount just to so much “collateral damage” for both sides, and for the witches’ brew of sectarian fighting, and in-fighting.

For sure, the Western military and covert action expenditure lavished on the Syrian war for regime change, targeting both a close Russian ally and Russia’s Mediterranean naval base at Tartus, has been enormously obscene. **So far, the US alone “has already spent nearly US\$30 billion waging war there”**, as noted even by *Time*, the key American propaganda magazine (“Why The Syrian Civil War Is Becoming Even More Complex”, 6/4/18, <http://time.com/5229691/syria-trump-putin-saudi-arabia/>). *In fact, in one egregiously failed programme, US\$500 million was effectively spent on just five insurgents, about US\$100 million each!*

Far Better Peace-Making Urgently Needed!

We do urgently need far better international mechanisms to protect human rights and help ensure peace. This should include the capacity for intervention in nations for genuinely humanitarian reasons, ideally in non-violent ways. Any armed action

should be under the control of a much improved and neutrally oriented UN. For instance, there should have been speedy and effective military intervention in Rwanda in 1994 to prevent the terrible genocide that happened there.

The shocking failure of the UN in this crisis was principally the responsibility of the same Western trio that bombed Syria this April (see, e.g., "The Role Of The West In The Rwandan Genocide", *Counterpunch*, 2/4/04, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2004/04/02/the-role-of-the-west-in-the-rwandan-genocide/>; "A People Betrayed," by Linda Melvern, review by Adam Jones, <http://adamjones.freesevers.com/melvern.htm>)

A Western heart of darkness is still beating in the fallout from the Rwanda genocide, clawing out into the wider Congo region, with an even deeper genocidal impact. As ever, imperial forces have been at work, driving . . . "the war in Congo, where the country is being plundered by both Rwanda and Uganda on behalf of Western interests – the worst genocide since WWII, an absolute cover-up, gaining hardly any media coverage in the West!" ("On Western Terrorism", op. cit., p139). Of course, the various minerals at issue – from coltan (tantalum) to cassiterite (tin) - are vital to the Silicon Valley-led so-called "fourth industrial revolution" and the giant transnational corporations (TNCs) like Google, Amazon, Facebook, etc., which depend on them.

While "so-called conflict minerals" are now said to be subject to better regulation, "a dark web of large multinational companies, corrupt officials, and unscrupulous states (still) participate in the ancient game of looting the Democratic Republic of Congo [DRC] ("Blood And Minerals: Who Profits From Conflict In DRC?", Al Jazeera, 20/1/16, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/01/blood-minerals-profits-conflict-drc-160118124123342.html>). China plays a major role too as one of these "unscrupulous states".

Geopolitical Gaming For "Regime Change"

To return to the constantly unfolding Syrian situation, Dr Nafeez Ahmed observes how Syrian President Bashar Assad's refusal to play ball with Western fossil fuel geopolitics stimulated yet another bloody round of

the historical Great Game within the Middle East/Central Asian region. American State terrorist and subversive operations against both Iran and Syria were launched during the George W Bush Administration ("Syria Intervention Plans", op. cit.).

The US has incited, directed, facilitated, and supported Islamist jihadists in the field. There has been a whole battery of geopolitical reasons driving this American covert action programme of regime harassment, destabilisation, and change. In his book "Chain Of Command: The Road From 9/11 To Abu Ghraib" (Allen Lane/Penguin Books, 2004), the very fine investigative reporter Seymour M Hersh analyses what he saw at the time as a "lost opportunity" for better US-Syria relations and cooperation (ibid., pp333-341). The Bashar Assad government was then in its early days, with Bashar having taken over the presidency from his father, Hafez Assad, in 2000.

Roiling Reform!

His ascendancy was another step in the perpetuation of the Assad dynasty and the sectarian Alawite Shiite grip on power. Yet Bashar was seen by one expert commentator "as trying to reach out to the people, and (as well) the people like him" (ibid., p339). He showed the desire to be a social reformer. The chance for positive peace for Syria and its people was thus on offer. Bashar Assad had even got training as an eye surgeon in London and, with his British-born wife, was quite a celebrity figure, early on, in the West.

On becoming President, Assad was actually very willing to cooperate on countering the Sunni al Qaeda. Evidently, too, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was especially keen on the continuance of this co-operation. But instead, the George W Bush Administration tried unsuccessfully and counter-productively to pressure Syria into supporting the Orwellian and illegal "Operation Iraqi Freedom" invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Predatory "Neo-con" Hawks

Unfortunately, there were too many "neo-con" hawks in and around the Bush Administration eager to make Syria the next target for "regime change". So, US-Syria cooperation lapsed, and confrontation took over the American agenda. The blunder-

ing, unhinged belligerence of the US blew apart the Middle East; and the turmoil goes on, with country after country pinned on the torture rack.

It is indeed remarkable that the US can even openly broadcast goals of "regime change" for certain countries, e.g., Saddam Hussein's Iraq. So much for the "rules-based" international system which has become a key element of the latest propaganda wave peddled by the Anglo-American axis and its allies. This mantra has even been one of the main justifications in defence of its latest missile strike on Syria, and thus duly echoed by our own Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern.

Most ironically, Ardern says this in specific support of the so-called "Five Eyes" intelligence/covert action network, comprising the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and NZ. These countries stand quite unshamed as the perpetrators, and/or complicit partners in a vast litany of war crimes, illegal interventions, and human rights abuses since WWII (e.g., see "On Western Terrorism", op. cit.).

Drumming Up Support For Doomsday!?

As our *Peace Researcher* Co-Editor, Murray Horton, makes clear, we do not anticipate any meaningful change by the new Labour-led Coalition Government to our participation in the American Doomsday machine and its "Five Eyes" State terrorist network ("Not Very Great Expectations At All", *PR* 54, November 2017, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr54.pdf>). We have to help build up the NZ peace/anti-nuclear movement in order to gain more influence.

But, to give PM Jacinda Ardern her due, of all the "Five Eyes" countries it has been Aotearoa/NZ, which has shown the least enthusiasm for such precipitate and rash action as quickly firing from the hip in reaction to a suspected chemical attack. We shall return to this point further below in connection with some mention of our own media's warmongering and conformity to Trumpism.

If any country needs a "regime change" of its presiding power elite it is America, given this nation's constantly nefarious and multifarious global reach! Trumpist dire rhetoric now threatens all of humankind with

imminent massive violence and ultimate nuclear destruction. The arrogance of power is also inexorably exacting in the meantime its costs and penalties for the transgressor.

Sponsoring Insurgency

By 2009, given the Assad regime's opposition to US/Saudi/Qatar/UK, etc. plans to provide a Western-controlled alternative to Russian domination of gas supplies to Europe, Britain was also planning covert action within Syria ("Syria Intervention Plans", op. cit.). Assad's refusal was coupled in 2010 with his positive endorsement for an Iran-Iraq-Syria gas pipeline. The Anglo-American/Saudi & co. programme of regime subversion then really swung into action (ibid.).

This subversive programme was substantially boosted by the outbreak of the so-called "Arab Spring" at the end of 2010, with street protests spreading across Syria, and other Arab countries in early 2011. Assad's Shiite Alawite dictatorship is also Ba'athist (see later below) in character, similar in this respect to that of the toppled former Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. While Syria is predominantly Sunni Muslim, there is a variety of other ethnic and religious groups besides the Shiites or Shias. For example, there are Kurds, Christians, and Armenians, with various overlapping interconnections of ethnicity and religion. The Western coalition has had lots of scope to stir unrest.

In stark contradistinction, the feudal and totalitarian oil kingdom of Sunni Saudi Arabia has so far proved to be virtually immune to the virus of

democracy, thanks to the military/security protection provided by its greedy Anglo-American minders. Its Shiite minority, located in the south-east where the country's main oil reserves are located, remains tightly shackled ("One Map That Explains The Dangerous Saudi-Iranian Conflict", *Intercept*, 7/1/16, <https://theintercept.com/2016/01/06/one-map-that-explains-the-dangerous-saudi-iranian-conflict/>).

Pincer Movement Goes Awry!

The project to subvert Assad's government was underlain by an anti-Russian agenda. The deeper objective was to lever aside Russia's influence in Syria and put its Mediterranean military base at Tartus at risk. This objective was paralleled by the intention of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) to directly threaten the Russian military base in Crimea in the Ukraine, over on the other side of the Eurasian continent. Thus, Russia would have been caught in a classic pincer movement.

But Putin, to the frustration of the Anglo-American axis, readily saw through what was - after all - a very transparent and potentially very dangerous geopolitical game. Just imagine the trumpeted outrage if Russia tried to intervene in Mexico, say in support of the Zapatistas. *The hallowed Monroe Doctrine of US control of the Americas would have a frenzy fit!*

So, tragically, Syria has proved to be yet another cockpit of geopolitical struggle, initiated to some extent, and then greatly aggravated by US-orchestrated covert intrusion, and

subsequent direct intervention. The Anglo-American axis must therefore take prime responsibility for Syria's seven years of horrible civil war, its current plight; and, indeed, for trying over decades to maliciously and murderously muscle into a host of other independent countries - Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Libya, Somalia, Yemen, etc.

Barbaric Assault Or Poisonous Con Job?

Russia, as the long-time ally of the Assad regime, has denied any responsibility for the apparent poison attack on Douma in April 2018, and accuses Muslim jihadists of staging it, or at least faking it. Yet it is even possible that Russia itself may have been responsible or, at least, a collaborator. Certainly, Russia has long been complicit in this sort of horror as perpetrated by Assad. The big powers and some of their mates, whether the US, Russia, or whoever, can be utterly ruthless when they see fit. Syrian jihadists have also been guilty of some poison gas attacks, according to the findings of the UN, but this has not bothered their Western backers.

When seen in context however, the accusations against Assad in the specific case of the alleged gas attack on Douma in April make little sense. This is a time of acute international sensitivity, and a time, moreover, when Assad & co. are clearly winning the conflict on the ground across most of Syria. Why then get so frustrated with a small hold-out rebel group in Douma?

The veteran and most worthy Middle East journalist Robert Fisk has caustically commented on the egregious hypocrisy flaunted by the "Five Eyes" alliance and their mates ("As Theresa May Gears Up For War In Syria, We Should Remember What Hypocrites We Are About Chemical Warfare In The Middle East", *Independent*, 12/4/18, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/theresa-may-syria-war-uk-chemical-weapons-attack-iran-iraq-thatcher-russia-a8300881.html>); "Chemical Weapons Hypocrisy", *Counterpunch*, 13/4/18, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/04/13/chemical-weapons-hypocrisy/>).

After an investigatory visit to Douma, Fisk found no evidence at all of a chemical attack by the Syrian government. Instead, the available evi-



dence that he found at this stage indicates a very different reality (“The Search For Truth In The Rubble Of Douma – And One Doctor’s Doubts Over The Chemical Attack”, *Independent*, 17/4/18, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/syria-chemical-attack-gas-douma-robert-fisk-ghouta-damascus-a8307726.html>).

The victims portrayed by video “were overcome not by gas, but by oxygen starvation (hypoxia) in the rubbish-filled tunnels and basements in which they lived, on a night of wind and heavy shelling that stirred up a dust storm” (ibid.). As a consequence, the extremist Army of Islam group then controlling Douma took the opportunity to stage a fake gas attack, guaranteed to elicit an outraged US reaction (ibid.). Fisk not only found no evidence of a gas attack, he came across a lot of local residents, “mostly smiling”, and happy “that the siege is finally over” (ibid.). Some were openly disparaging of the jihadists, who had now left for Idlib province in the north-west under safe conduct from the Syrian-Russian forces.

Missing In Action!?

Significantly enough, Fisk’s overall report was confirmed by a very conservative American network, the One American News Network (OAN) and its reporter, Pearson Sharp, on the ground in Douma (“OAN Investigation Finds No Evidence of Chemical Weapons Attack in Syria”, YouTube, 20/4/18, <http://www.oann.com/oan-investigation-find-s-no-evidence-of-chemical-weapons-attack-in-syria>).

At this point, an alert needs to be posted for the reader. Even first-hand reporting on the ground in Douma can be problematic and contentious. For instance, OAN is already the subject of conspiracy charges by certain pro-military media outfits (e.g., Center for American Progress), let alone the ongoing propaganda war between the West and Russia/Syria.

Our best and most reliable touchstone is that represented by those few investigative reporters with a long, proven record in the region for integrity and accuracy. Of them, Robert Fisk is the most outstanding. We await the ultimate findings of the UN inquiry. Meantime, conflicting reportage over the evidence in Douma goes on. The Trump-orchestrated

West stands to be seriously embarrassed if Fisk’s charges are corroborated.

Fracturing Politics And “Fire and Fury”

Whatever the real truth in this particular instance, Putin had earlier threatened to reply to any US/UK/France punishment attack with Trumpian-style “fire and fury”. So far, fortunately for us all, Russia has not made any military response. Yet there is now a yawning gulf of uncertainty and instability. All this amounts to another and particularly acute bout of nuclear brinkmanship, which risks opening up the gates of hell into World War III. Whatever the exact truth of the alleged Douma poisoning incident, the knee-jerk Trump reaction demonstrates most chillingly how an accident, miscalculation, misperception, bravado, etc., could so very easily trigger the ultimate holocaust.

Meanwhile, the zombie mainstream media have reached new depths of suicidal stupidity, crude warmongering, and grossly simplistic, hypocritical propaganda. Much of the NZ media, especially the TV channels, have exhibited this syndrome, with plenty of stereotyped, knee-jerk sort of stuff about our nasty Russian enemy. To be sure, it is desperate days for the sane among the world’s leadership.

The UN Secretary-General has reinforced his recent warning to mankind (“UN Chief On Syria: ‘Cold War Is Back With A Vengeance’”, Al Jazeera, 14/4/18, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Az6YIPa41J4&vI=en>; see also “George Galloway Warns Of A Third World War”, *Express*, 12/4/18, <https://www.express.co.uk/videos/535070/George-Galloway-warns-of-a-third-World-War>).

As the UN signals again to the world, there are multiple points of conflict or potential conflict, capable of sparking wider conflagrations (“UN Chief On Syria”, ibid.). “Hot-spots” and potential “flashpoints” for conflagration range from Syria to the South China Sea, and from the Ukraine to North Korea. Most worryingly, too, the mechanisms for preemptive peace-making, positive negotiation, and vital mediation are being eroded. Russia, which has to date showed commendable restraint over Western violent intervention into another of its border/proximate

countries, has warned that a further such missile strike on Syria could create a real global crisis, even chaos.

Violent Extremism

It is well worth noting here that the full recording of George Galloway’s speech cited above contains a damning indictment of British government support and funding for Islamist “head-choppers”, and similar extremists in Syria, including the Army of Islam, along with their related White Helmets (Syrian Civil Defence) rescue brigades, etc. As well, Western-based organisations like the American Syrian Medical Society, and similar aid groups, have been helping the jihadist rebel movement.

As I shall record later in this article, the British government and its agencies (including the BBC) - as highlighted by Galloway - have had a special relationship with the jihadists who formed the Army of Islam and certain other fundamentalist rebel groups that were long present in Eastern Ghouta, and elsewhere in Syria. Civilian lives, including those of children, have just proved to be pawns in a gruesome geopolitical game. I shall return to this point later on too.

The US currently maintains about 2,000 illegal troops in Syria, supposedly there now to mop up the remnants of Islamic State (ISIS). They are actually operating in support of other armed insurgents according to US goals, which shift and adapt tactically in the light of changing circumstances. As well, the CIA and other Western covert action agencies are running amok as per normal.

“Mad Dog” Terrorists

In 2011, the Anglo-American axis (again with French help) backed Muslim extremists in its orchestration of dictator Muammar Gaddafi’s demise in Libya. This unfortunate country remains a mess. During the Reagan/Thatcher era in 1980s, Gaddafi was painted as the “Mad Dog” of the Middle East. Accused of “terrorism”, Gaddafi’s regime elicited a savage air attack in 1986 by the Reagan Administration.

This action heralded the policy of “counter-terrorism” (“The War on Terror”) as “the catch-all excuse for



bloody US military intervention” around the planet (“Mad Dogs: The US Raids On Libya”, ed. by Mary Kaldor & Paul Anderson, Pluto Press, 1986). Later on, US “Mad Dog” Jim Mattis was in command of the American military in the Middle East/North Africa/Central Asia arc during the Obama Presidency. Mattis had earlier figured in the devastation of Fallujah, in Iraq in 2004, where the chemical weapons of depleted uranium (DU) and phosphorus were used.

DU in particular has left a very ugly legacy of civilian harm (“Toxic Legacy Of US Assault On Fallujah ‘Worse Than Hiroshima’”, *Independent*, Patrick Cockburn, 23/7/10, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/toxic-legacy-of-us-assault-on-fallujah-worse-than-hi-roshima-2034065.html>); “Iraq, 15 Years On: A Toxic US Legacy”, *Middle East Eye*, 18/3/18, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/iraq-15-years-toxic-us-legacy-1536228276>).

Combatting The Dangerous Trends

In recent times, various commentators and international agencies – and most importantly, of course, the UN – have been observing, analysing, and warning about the increasing risks of great power confrontation, and even nuclear war (see e.g., UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, op. cit.; Dr Daniel Ellsberg, op. cit.; “2018 Doomsday Clock Statement”, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 25/1/18, <https://thebulletin.org/2018-doomsday-clock-statement>); “The Next War: The Growing Threat Of Great-Power Conflict – A Special Report”, *Economist*, Jan. 27 -Feb. 2, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2018/01/25/the-grow>

[ing-danger-of-great-power-conflict](#); & “Donald Trump Is Playing A Dangerous Game Of Nuclear Poker”, *Time*, 1/2/18, <http://time.com/5128394/donald-trump-nuclear-poker/>).

As emphasised continually throughout this article, we urgently need a huge boost to peace-making and mediation efforts. Long-time NZ peace activist John Gallagher has been to the fore in fostering ideas for improved peace-making, as in the very important case of the Korean Peninsula (“Korean Nuclear Standoff In Context Of International Rivalries: Can Nuclear-Free NZ Help Out?“, *PR* 52, November 2016, https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwcB6Aysm_HHOW5iQWdHdH_haczQ/view).

(At the time of writing) President Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong-un are due to have a groundbreaking meeting. The world can only hope for the best. This is a meeting between the world's biggest rogue nation and one of a growing number of smaller players, who are disrupting the hegemonic dominance of the US. If nuclear non-proliferation is going to succeed it will take a far greater willingness for compromise on part of the American regime.

The Threat Of Real Denuclearisation

Currently, the US maintains a nuclear umbrella over the Korean peninsula. It would have to withdraw its own nuclear weapons for proper cooperation. But it seems an ominous portent that President Trump has already been playing down expectations, even saying that he could well walk away. It can certainly be contended that the last thing

the US would want to see is a unified, denuclearised Korean peninsula, with the US being told to bugger off. America would lose scores of military bases and its forward fighting platform at China's very front door.

It would certainly represent a big poke in the eye for its plans to fight any future wars - **including above all WWII** - as much as possible on the soils and waters of countries overseas. This ever so obvious American strategy makes a nonsense of the bulk of Western commentary on the Korean situation. Furthermore, a genuine, meaningful move to nuclear disarmament would also surely require the US to start winding back its own massive “overkill” arsenal of nuclear weaponry and touted “modernisation”, along with the implementation of significant curbs on the military-industrial complex itself. *Oh, right. . .!*

“Red Alert!”

The mounting global crisis was clearly signalled at the end of 2017 when the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres posted a dramatic “red alert” about the dire state of the world (YouTube-PresTV, “UN Chief Issues ‘Red Alert’ To World In New Year Message”, 31/12/17, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDo508sx0G4>). As intimated, it is almost needless to say that his urgent warning and desperate call for concerted, pre-emptive international action got only minimal attention from the mostly zombie media. This was certainly the case here in Aotearoa/NZ.

The UN Secretary-General warns humankind about a range of perils, including climate change, deepening conflicts, and the dangers of nuclear weapons (ibid.). In particular, and of relevance to my current article, Guterres said that as crises become more complex, “prevention must be at the centre of everything we do” (“Warning That ‘Peace Remains Elusive’, UN Chief Outlines Areas For Action In 2018”, *UN News*, 16/1/18, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/01/1000512>).

Along with existing documented and closely monitored threats like climate change and mounting inequalities, new dangers have clearly emerged - whether directly, or indirectly, interlinked with the threats already clearly identified (ibid.).

“Nationalism and xenophobia are on the rise”, Guterres said (ibid.). In striving for the unity to achieve a peaceful world, he appealed for fresh and creative thinking. “It is necessary to rethink our approach to how we work, and how we work with others” (ibid.).

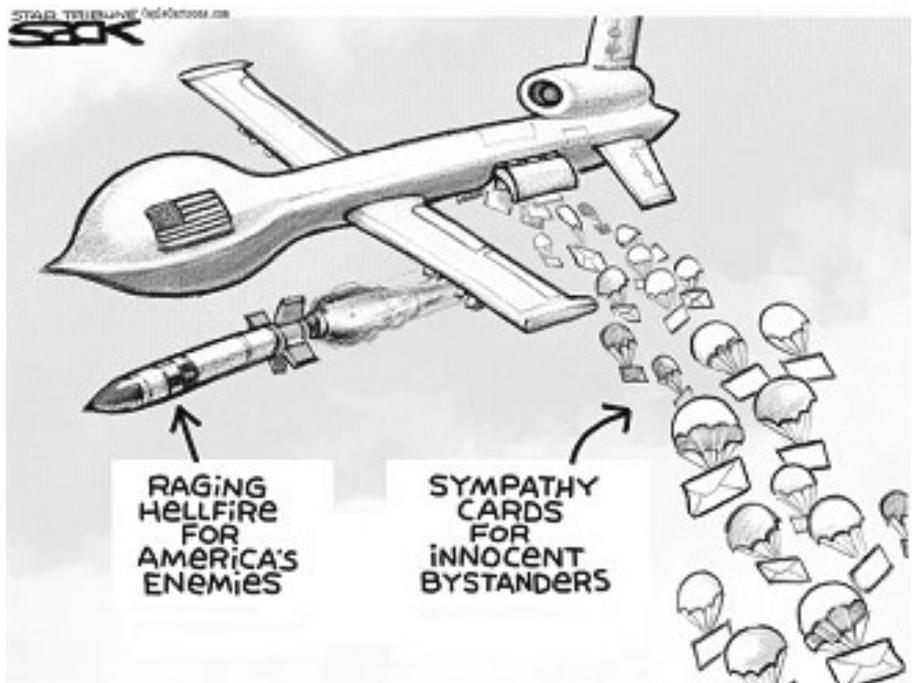
Growing Geopolitical Contortions

Currently, the contortions of geopolitical entanglement and posturing are now coupled with a very dangerously formulated strategy policy trend towards the lowering of engagement thresholds - *spearheaded and signposted again by the US* - in a range of potential theatres, and over a wide spectrum of issues. The further development of territorially invasive automated military technology continues to ramp up the risks.

Most disturbingly, the Trump Administration has even adopted an openly belligerent stance and lower threshold on the possible use of nuclear weapons. For instance, it has signalled that it would use them in reaction to perceived foreign transgressions like cyber-attacks. Of late, it has been whipping its “Five Eyes” intelligence network allies into line over the threat of Russian cyber-attacks. There is no mention, of course, as to what the US & co. are up to themselves but we know that they are fully engaged in similar cyber-warfare.

Correspondingly, Russia has frankly declared that its weapon systems are now primed on a shorter fuse. Earlier in 2018, President Putin dramatically displayed a range of his latest firepower, including a supersonic nuclear missile, about 20 times faster than the speed of sound and intended to elude any “Stars Wars”-type missile defences that the US might put up.

It was a frightening and obscene display of nuclear might. Yet it was obviously in response to the US-induced NATO encirclement of Russia, especially the push to the Ukrainian border (“In Ukraine, The US Is Dragging Us Towards War With Russia”, John Pilger, *Opinion, Guardian*, 13/5/14, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/13/ukraine-us-war-russia-john-pilger>). Between them the US and Russia share some 94% of the 16,000 hydrogen nuclear weapons (“The End Of Life On Earth”, op. cit., p75).



Revolutionising “Killer Ape” Warfare

The field deployment of military hardware, controlled by advanced firing guidance and monitoring systems, reflects these dangerous trends at work. This is part of what Western military analysts and pundits have called the “revolution in military affairs” (RMA). These militarised technological trends are especially evident at present in the proliferation of unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs) or drones, and variously related robotic applications. Cruise missiles have been used in the Syrian theatre by both Russia and the US.

Highly inflammatory incidents can be easily triggered across country borders in an increasingly wide and diverse number of situations (see my previous article: “We Must Strike First: Pre-Emptying Western Strategy And Technology From Spinning Out Of Control”, *PR* 53, June 2017, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr53.pdf>).

Militarised Murder And Mayhem?!

Analyst Doug Craig gives an excellent background and description of militarised drone development, and outlines some future electronic capacities for geopolitical murder operations, given “the rise of increasingly autonomous drone technology” (see his: “Death From The Sky: Drones And Aerial Warfare”, *PR* 45, June 2013, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr45.pdf>). Just further down the track looms the

terrifying threat of completely automated attack and “defence” systems – autonomous weapons systems (AWS) (“Killer Robots”, Andre Dao, *New Philosopher*, op. cit., pp80/1).

If international regulation fails, AWS will take us all into a new and potentially even far more multifariously precarious dimension of instability and uncertainty. But it can be well-argued what is really the difference between being killed by humans operating “drone strikes, remotely controlled from an air-conditioned room thousands of kilometres away”, or “robotised weapon[s]”? (ibid., p80). *When you are killed, you're killed!* Are the former any less terrorising than the latter? (ibid.). As ethicist Andre Dao concludes: “... our concern should start much earlier, when militaries and governments feel the need to insist that humans are ‘still in charge’” [my emphasis] (ibid.).

Global Capitalism Creating Chaos

The advent of Trumpism to the American White House has boosted these new developments and so the reinforcement of the worst of the Pentagon's proclivities. A plethora of dangerous factors are coalescing together (“2018 Doomsday Clock Statement”, op. cit.; “Military Strategy, Trumpism, and State Terrorism”, *PR* 54, November 2017, Dennis Small, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr54.pdf>).

America's self-image, as projected by its power elite and mass media, is that the US is “one of the world's

foremost promoters of human rights and democracy” (“Trumpism: Speak Loudly And Carry A Big Stick”, *Atlantic*, 6/4/18. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/04/trump-doctrine-foreign-policy/556778/>). To be sure, the Orwellian line has usually been that the US is the greatest defender of freedom in the world.

While President Trump can cynically appeal to human decency as in his propaganda on the Syrian situation, and suck in the crony media to conform to his dictates, the big problem is pitching for wider international appeal. Trump has an openly aggressive stance on what he sees as important American interests. In addition, he clearly proclaims his disdain for human rights, whether those of women, Muslims, black Americans, refugees, people of other races, including the “shit-hole” nations of Africa, etc. *The “blow up” could happen soon!* (ibid.).

Blow-Up And Blowback

President Trump, of course, is simply following on, in a number of ways, from the precedents and patterns set by his predecessor, Barack Obama. The Obama Administration embarked on a \$US1 trillion update of America's nuclear arsenal; greatly expanded and extended the global reach of its “low intensity” warfare inflicted on much of the world by both drones and special forces; and engineered the overthrow of democratic governments in the Ukraine, Honduras, and Paraguay.

US intervention in the Ukraine brought us up to the very brink of full-scale great power conflict. For all this, Obama was most warmly and appreciatively feted on a visit to Aotearoa/NZ in March 2018. Meanwhile, the dangerous stand-off with Russia continues, aggravated by a complex of recent incidents and factors.

War criminal, serial killer, and Nobel Peace Prize winner President Obama authorised: “A total of 563 (death squad) strikes, largely by drones, targeted (against) Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen”, during his two terms of office (“Obama's Covert Drone War In Numbers: Ten Times More Strikes Than Bush”, The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 17/1/17, <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2017-01-17/obamas-covert-drone-war-in-numbers->

[ten-times-more-strikes-than-bush](#)).

He also conducted death squad operations, mainly by drones, in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. The results pan out most sadly of course for the peoples of the countries directly targeted. But the payback fallout for the US and its mates go on in a “full spectrum” of damaging outcomes.

A Pandora's Box

One major dimension of such fallout relates to the “revolution in military affairs” (RMA) and military technology. As time goes on, certain radically militant groups - albeit lacking in heavy fire power - have even been devising and using crude drones. For example, ISIS has demonstrated this capacity. In some cases, there has been a marked progression of technological application, especially in liaison with State support. In particular, Lebanon-based Hezbollah has been employing a number of quite smart surveillance machines courtesy of Iran (“We Must Strike First”, op. cit.).

Earlier in 2018 Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu brandished, at an international conference, what he claimed to be a piece of an Iranian drone. It was evidently shot down by the Israeli military. In turn, the Israelis as drone specialists employ their own UCAVs, including such tactics as dropping tear-gas canisters on Palestinian protesters (who have even been trying to hit back by using kites set on fire) as has happened recently along the Gaza border.

Meanwhile: “In Yemen, [Houthi] Shi'ite rebels and their allies fighting against a Saudi-led coalition have used bomb-carrying drones and flown others into the (Saudi) kingdom's Patriot missile batteries” (“Drone Draws Fire”, *Press*, 23/4/18). Iran is accused of supplying such drones and other weaponry to the Houthis but denies these charges (ibid). Meantime, the Anglo-American/Saudi/etc. coalition continues to murder, starve, and hound the children of Yemen, with the almost complete acquiescence of the Western media.

While the Israelis (now in a de facto alliance with the Saudis!) carry out air strikes in Syria against what they claim are Syrian and Iranian weapon supply lines to Hezbollah and to

Hamas in Gaza, they are quite happy to help spread automated murder and mayhem in Central Asia (“We Must Strike First”, op. cit.). Recently, Russian officials have said their Government “might reconsider its pledge not to provide Syria with the S-300 surface-to-air missile defence system” (“Inspectors Return”, *Press*, 27/4/18). In reply, Israel “said that if Syria used Russian-made air defence missiles against Israel, the Israeli military would strike back” (ibid.).

Hype and Hypocrisy On Human Rights

Revealingly enough, whereas we have had a regular flow of American propaganda on our TV channels about Russian vetoes on issues relating to Syria, the usual blackout has prevailed on the endless US vetoes concerning Israeli/Palestinian issues. An Associated Press report, reproduced in the *Sunday Star Times* ([SST] 22/4/18), had the honesty to say that “the mass marches [of Palestinians protesting in Gaza] are not only led by Hamas and similar militants but are also fuelled by growing desperation among Gaza's two million residents” (ibid.). Most of Gaza's residents derive their current condition from being dispossessed of their original lands in the catastrophe of the 1948 Al-Nakba expulsion and the founding of the Zionist state.

Gaza's inhabitants are today trapped by the “border blockade” and are suffering acute deprivation. Trump has posted his contempt for their cause by moving the American Embassy to Jerusalem, as from May 2018 (it opened on the 70th anniversary of the founding of Israel). “The UN Security Council has not commented on the protests because the US, Israel's closest ally, has blocked proposed statements supported by most members critical of the high death toll and Israel's use of force against (unarmed) protesters” (ibid).

Yet the UN has strongly criticised Israel for its cruel and unjustified use of deadly force, as the victims mount in number. The US backs its ruthless ally to the hilt in breaking international law on human rights. This is just par for the course. In so many ways, Israel serves as both a regional and international projection of the American military-industrial complex.

Blowback And Death-Dealing Drones

For the most part, there is usually a very big lag - often a giant one - between cutting edge technology and the crude, imitative hardware like that employed by certain non-State entities, e.g., ISIS. Yet, even so, the RMA is still having all sorts of ramifications beyond the control of the Anglo-American axis and its allies. As noted, Hezbollah has access to quite sophisticated drones. If the Israelis have shot down some of these devices, others have proved elusive ("We Must Strike First", op. cit.).

In the judgement of one Western historian, Stewart Ross: "The creation of Hezbollah ('Party of God'), an Iranian-backed terrorist organisation that would prove even more intractable than the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), can be traced directly to Israeli attacks on previously neutral Shia villages" ("The Middle East Since 1945", Teach Yourself [TY], Hodder Headline Ltd., 2004, p105). Note here, however, that Ross follows the standard, self-serving Western practice of abjuring the term "State terrorism", so very applicable in the case of the Israeli attacks on Shia villages.

Long Roots To The Syrian Crisis

Along with Russia, Shiite Iran and Hezbollah back Assad's regime. They have, of late, largely prevailed against the US/Saudi/Gulf States coalition that has so assiduously funded and armed the mainly Islamist insurgency. The dreadful Syrian civil war is now into its eighth year. During the conflict, as already indicated, the US co-ordinated Coalition countries have given the jihadist fighters lots of military, logistical, and propaganda aid - and all for these countries' own geopolitical and economic objectives.

The Coalition leadership has displayed a chillingly callous disregard for the actual inhabitants of Syria. This is, of course, for the West very much in the imperialist and Social Darwinist tradition. The rot for Syria started soon after the end of World War II. In the context of the Cold War against the former Soviet Union and what it portrayed as advancing Communist hordes, the US decided that the economic and political problems faced by Syria - which still then had a democratic government trying

to find its feet - demanded pre-emptive American action.

"Freedom Is Slavery"

Its concern, naturally, focused on the perceived need to safeguard Syria as "a vital link in the (oil) pipeline route from the Gulf to the Mediterranean" (ibid., p54). So, the US conspired with its collaborators in Syria. "The CIA's chosen man was a 'burly Kurd' named Colonel Husni al Zaim, a man of iron will and mind" (ibid.). He removed the Government and took over in March 1949.

"Thus, with supreme efficiency, the CIA had engineered its first coup, overthrown democracy, and given the independent states of the Middle East their first military dictator. Alas! Zaim proved an unwise choice of puppet. After strutting his stuff like a character out of "Bugsy Malone"* he was shortly removed by another coup" (ibid.). Parliament was later restored but whatever its forms in years to come the capacity for a working democracy had been effectively gutted. In so many ways, it just became a stage for the performance of dictators. *"*Bugsy Malone*" is a 1976 American-British musical gangster comedy film, featuring only child actors (Wikipedia). Ed.

Destabilisation, Disinformation, And Blowback

"Syria now entered upon a prolonged period of instability, marked by a succession of coups by army officers... Throughout this period, a new movement was gathering force in Syrian politics. This was the Arab Socialist Renaissance Party, better known as the Ba'ath Party. It was fiercely anti-Western. Its (early) Pan-Arabist manifesto claimed all boundaries between Arab peoples to be merely inconvenient Western devices. This made the Ba'athists intractably hostile to Israel" (ibid., p55).

The Ba'ath Party emerged as the vehicle for the rise and consolidation of the Assad dynasty and its "Shia minority Alawite community" base (ibid., p85). This dynasty grabbed power in 1970. Since then there has been a bitter and bloody struggle between Sunni Islamists and the Ba'athists ("Under The Black Flag: At The Frontier Of The New Jihad", Sami Moubayed, IB Tauris & Co., Ltd., 2015). Consequently, the An-

glo-American subversives had lots of scope to stir up more trouble for Assad & co.

A branch of the Ba'athist movement also came to the fore in Iraq, which similarly underwent CIA-backed coups and so the rule of very nasty dictators, most prominently Saddam Hussein. The CIA, at least once (in 1963), even kindly provided - as it had done habitually over many years in various places - a long list of named people designated for assassination, in this specific case by the Ba'athist/military coup-makers ("The Middle East Since 1945", op. cit., p130; "On Western Terrorism", op. cit., pp114/5).

Roots Of The Iranian Revolution

CIA-engineered coups in Syria and Iraq were paralleled in 1953 by the Anglo-American overthrow of the democratically elected Mosaddeq government in Iran in yet another CIA-contrived putsch. Most revealingly, in this particular case involving Britain as well, Teach Yourself British historian Stewart Ross gets most outrageously and most malignly biased in his treatment ("The Middle East Since 1945", ibid., p124). Indeed, his treatment constitutes a classic piece of misleading misinformation in such a basic introductory text, with not even a hint of the CIA at work. Ross instead even gives the accompanying Anglo-American obsessed fossil fuel agenda a benign spin, especially the predatory role of British Petroleum [BP] (ibid.).

A democratic Iranian government had so unfairly tried to nationalise the country's oil resource for the benefit of its own people. Unfortunately, however, for the strategy of Anglo-American geopolitical control the Iranian Revolution of 1979 heralded the rise of anti-American Muslim fundamentalism. *Oh dear...* The historical background briefly outlined just above of Anglo-American interventions and subversion set the context for the current Syrian civil war, including the phenomenon of ISIS and its proclaimed Sunni caliphate. We need to note that while the Syrian war can quite accurately in one sense be described as a "civil war", in another sense it can be considered a regional war, and even an international war.

Growing Complexity

There have been some potentially

very perilous incidents involving the big powers of the US and Russia in the Syrian conflict. In February 2018 “US forces killed scores of Russian mercenaries in Syria... in what may be the deadliest clash between citizens of the former foes since the Cold War, according to one US official and three Russians familiar with the matter” (“US Puts Death Toll At 100 [Russian] Mercenaries”, *Press*, 15/2/18). The mercenaries came to grief in an attack on a US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Kurdish-held base “in the oil-rich Deir Ezzor region” (ibid.).

While, in this particular case, Russia actually denied any involvement, the possibility of “a rogue operation [or an officially sanctioned covert operation], under-score the complexity of a conflict that started as a domestic crackdown (by Assad) only to morph into a proxy war involving Islamic extremists, stateless Kurds, and regional powers Iran, Turkey, and now Israel” (ibid.). A former Russian diplomat, lawyer, and now analyst, Vladimir Frolov, stressed how the incident could have turned into “an acute international crisis” (ibid.). Russia did accuse “the US of using its ‘illegal presence’ in Syria as an excuse to ‘seize economic assets’, even as it kept communication with the US open” (ibid.).

Crushing Civilians And Children

Geert Cappelaere of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has made a heart-felt appeal for “the senseless (Syrian) war to stop for the sake of children” (“7 Years Of War Have Taken A High Toll On Syria’s Children”, *Vancouver Courier*, 13/3/18, <http://www.vancourier.com/7-years-of-war-have-taken-a-high-to-ll-on-syria-s-children-1.23199397>).

By March 2018 the humanitarian assessment was that: “Of Syria’s estimated ten million children, 8.6 million are now in dire need of assistance, up about half a million after the first year of war. Nearly six million children are displaced or living as refugees, and about two and a half million are out of school. Over three million children are exposed to the hazards of unexploded ordnance and land mines, even in areas where the conflict has died down. Some 40% of those killed by land mines are children” (ibid.).

The Syrian war has inflicted an “unacceptably brutal impact upon

children” (ibid.). As stressed in this article, it has been driven by the US-led Coalition backing for the insurgency. But then it was US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, who unashamedly said that the human cost of Anglo-American-enforced UN sanctions on Iraq (from August 1990 to May 2003) – including the lives of half a million children – was well worth the fulfilment of her Administration’s geopolitical aims.

Later analysis has disputed the claim there was such a spike in child mortality during the 1990s but Albright was certainly ready to use an openly Hitlerian-type argument at the time (“Madeleine Albright Says 500,000 Dead Iraqi Children Was ‘Worth It’”, Youtube, 12/9/17, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omnskeu-puE>). A recent *Lancet* study (January 2018) has documented how Syrian “children are increasingly bearing the brunt of the fighting, making up 23% of the civilian casualties in 2016, compared to 8.9% in 2011” (“7 Years Of War Have Taken A High Toll On Syria’s Children”, op. cit.). Lamentably, it is estimated that some 20,000 children have been killed since the conflict began in March 2011 (ibid.).

“Noting that during 7 years of war, not a single party to the conflict (my emphasis) has shown any respect for the ‘sacred’ principle of children, Cappelaere said that he fears for the future of Syria” (ibid.). Tragically, the purported ends of all the parties involved continue to justify the means they employ, i.e., according to their own lights! We must step up our humanitarian aid and our positive agitation in support of the Syrian people.

Bombs Away!!

There is a very disturbing concentration nowadays on war in high-density urban areas, set mainly in the regional context of the Middle East but also in a number of other places. To a degree, this reflects the process of urbanisation of the world’s population. It should be viewed as well against both the long historical and more recent background of ruthless Western military power; and, in particular, the calculatedly cowardly and yet so technologically devastating use of airpower (“Bombing Civilians: A Twentieth Century History”, ed. Yuki Tanaka & Marilyn B. Young, The New Press, 2009).

The advent of Trump’s paleo-conservative clique to the White House has ushered in an even more cavalier disregard for civilian casualties (“Why Coalition Airstrikes Killed So Many More Civilians in the Middle East In 2017”, *Vice*, 11/1/18, https://www.vice.com/en_nz/article/wjp4gb/why-coalition-airstrikes-killed-so-many-more-civilians-in-the-middle-east-in-2017).

Bombing civilians in the Middle East has long been a bloody pastime for the West (ibid.). The monstrously racist and imperialist British war criminal Winston Churchill exulted in the initiation and promotion of this practice. “The British pioneered the use of aircraft against villagers. Churchill himself favoured poisoned gas: not the most lethal kind, just enough to strike ‘lively terror’ into the hearts of ‘uncivilised tribesmen’” (“On Western Terrorism”, op. cit., p111).

Churchill’s civilised racism and ruthlessness was hideous. But Churchill is revered, of course, by the British, and by affiliated Anglo-Saxons in general, as their great war leader (as highlighted by the 2017 film “Darkest Hour”). Given the trumpeted reasons for the illegal 2003 Anglo-American “shock and awe” invasion of Iraq, the historical reality of the British crushing a Shiite revolt in Iraq with aircraft and chemical weaponry must surely represent the height of awful irony! (“On Western Terrorism”, ibid.).

Airpower Reigns Supreme

Post-Cold War, airpower “returned largely to the function it often had early in the 20th Century – a weapon of imperial rule” (“Bombing Civilians”, op. cit., p184). And it was largely the possession of one nation, the US. But nowadays the Anglo-American axis confronts rival airpower in Syria and elsewhere. In the first half of February 2018 alone: “Russia, Iran, Israel and Turkey all had aircraft shot down in or near Syria” (“US Puts Death Toll At 100 [Russian] Mercenaries”, op. cit.). The remarkable science fiction writer and social commentator, HG Wells, predicted both the dominance of airpower and the global spread of guerrilla warfare (see his science fiction novel “The War In The Air”, published in 1908; “Bombing Civilians”, op. cit.).

In 2018 we have been fed a con-

stant stream of nauseating celebrity crap on our TV screens about Prince Harry's marriage to an American film actress. Prince Harry, of course, even boasted about his Apache helicopter airborne killing of Taliban in Afghanistan, and how computer gaming had even honed up his skills ("Prince Harry Criticised For Comparing Afghanistan To Video Game", *Spiegel Online*, 22/1/13, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/prince-harry-criticized-for-comparing-afghanistan-to-video-game-a-879055.html>).

The smug depravity of the affluent West could not have been better signalled to the rest of the world. In Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia, etc., the mechanised barbarism of the West forges relentlessly on into the future, whether delivered by fighter bomber, drone, or helicopter-borne special forces raid.

Conducting Chemical Warfare & Other Civilised Horrors

Obviously, President Assad of Syria has had an inspirational model to follow, both in the use of airpower and bombing, including the accompanying implementation of chemical warfare. This is all the more ironic today in the face of Anglo-American charges of chemical warfare, and also in light of the 2018 alleged Russian poison attack on the Skripal father and daughter in Salisbury, UK. Moreover, not only did the Anglo-American axis supply Saddam Hussein with the componentry and logistical support for chemical warfare during the 1980s' Iraq-Iran war, with the obvious resultant capacity to gas his own people, but the same axis still freely uses chemical weapons wherever and whenever it fits their agenda.

In a most rare article for the mainstream media, columnist Chris Trotter posed the question "Why Selective Condemnation Of State-Sponsored Terrorism?" (*Press*, 20/3/18). Trotter pertinently cites the flagship Churchill example and how this sort of chemical warfare against the inhabitants of Iraq has carried on right up to the present. He aptly cited the Fallujah case.

Trotter well remarks in regard to the horrible Skripals' poisoning case and the subsequent British orchestrated outrage: "Curiously, PM (Theresa) May does not appear to re-

gard the 'indiscriminate and reckless' attacks made against 'innocent civilians' living on the soil of other UN member states as being worthy of an equally forthright Parliamentary statement" (ibid.).

He then rightly goes on to observe: "If the West's use of poison gas, DU, white phosphorus and Hellfire (drone) missiles elicits no outrage in the (British) House of Commons; and if the (so-called) 'international community' is not moved" to take appropriate action, then such "outrage" only amounts to "just one more 'lively terror' to be unleashed upon the 'uncivilised tribes' of planet Earth" (ibid.).

The Propaganda Mill Grinds On

Despite the very grim bombing and shelling record of the US-led Coalition, especially the bloody sieges of Mosul (Iraq) and Raqqa (Syria), and lesser towns, the Anglo-American propagandists are blatantly unapologetic (e.g., "US Airstrike Kills Dozens Amid Mounting Western War Propaganda Over Syria", World Socialist Web Site, 28/2/18, <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2018/02/28/syri-f28.html>).

The same egregious hypocrisy displayed in 2017 about the siege of East Aleppo has been regularly peddled again on our screens in regard to the siege of Eastern Ghouta. Our TV channels, courtesy of CBS, the BBC, etc., have emphasised the horror of civilian deaths, especially children, from the Syrian and Russian air attacks. Newspaper reportage has done much the same.

This has all been in contrast to the very same sort of horror that these same media so carefully and cynically camouflaged for the most part during the US-co-ordinated coalition assaults on Mosul, Raqqa, etc. The propaganda war campaign then reached its peak with the alleged poison attack on Douma, the US-driven military reaction, and the ensuing war of words.

Wherever civilians face such bombing and shelling onslaughts, they need all the help and protests that we can muster. The terrible tragedy of Eastern Ghouta, like what has happened in East Aleppo, Mosul, Raqqa, and other Middle Eastern and North African towns, will be repeated again and again, unless we can campaign together internation-

ally on a far greater and concerted scale.

We must unite both in opposition to such outrages, and in providing far greater humanitarian aid and relief all round ("Turmoil In The Middle East Seems Constant And US Military Intervention Only Makes It Worse", *Huffington Post*, 22/6/16, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/ivan-eland/turmoil-in-the-middle-east_b_7637314.html). As emphasised earlier, we have to tackle the whole spectrum of causes - above all the deeply perverse hypocrisy so embedded and institutionalised in the West.

Blatant BBC Bias

Jeremy Bowen, the BBC's Middle East Editor since 2005, has been to the fore in pushing Western propaganda on the siege of Eastern Ghouta. He has featured regularly on our TV channels, with State TV1 presenters Simon Dallow and Wendy Petrie once again displaying the officially prescribed hypocrisy and selective morality about civilian casualties.

So far as Jeremy Bowen himself is concerned, his connections with the Eastern Ghouta area in Syria certainly go a long way back, affording a very revealing insight into Anglo-American backing for Islamist jihadists wherever and whenever is convenient. The real enemies, as ever, are secular nationalists, and Leftwing or socialist activists and/or militants.

In his book on the Arab Spring, Jeremy Bowen observes that the Assad "regime, from the very start, has pushed the message that the rebels want Syria to fall into the hands of bearded Sunni extremists, where women would have to wear the hijab and religious minorities would be expelled. It has been one of Assad's most potent arguments..." ("The Arab Uprisings: The People Want The Fall Of The Regime", Simon & Schuster, 2012/3, p333).

Western Fundamentalism

After referring to the role in the uprising in Syria of the then al Qaeda-affiliated Nusra Front, Bowen tells us how "the dominant Islamist fighting group here in Damascus, Liwa al-Islam, is part of another Islamist alliance..." (ibid., p334). Liwa al-Islam fighters were draped in

“jihadist regalia” too (ibid.). But, according to Bowen, this particular group was critical of the Nusra Front’s expressed loyalty to al Qaeda (ibid.).

Bowen goes on to say that: “I’ve spent time with Liwa al-Islam in the Damascus suburbs” (ibid.). He remarked that both Liwa al-Islam and the Nusra Front “offered cooperation and a certain amount of protection” to Western reporters (ibid.). He felt that “Liwa al-Islam had the trust of the local people”, recruiting many keen young men (ibid.). So, for Bowen and the BBC, all was okay with the Islamist jihad against Assad! Years later, Bowen - as shown on TV - still clearly identifies to some degree with the struggle of this jihadist movement. Some big issues here are what values these Islamist fighters really represent, and what means they are using to try and achieve their ends.

Aiding The Army Of Islam

Until just very recently, Liwa al-Islam remained the leading rebel group in Eastern Ghouta – i.e., until the Syrian/Russian forces took over. It came to be known as Jaysh al-Islam, and then even better known of late as the Army of Islam, as already described above. The relevant *Wikipedia* entry is well worth quoting in some detail: “Jaysh al-Islam (Army of Islam), formerly known as Liwa al-Islam, is a coalition of Islamist and Salafist units involved in the Syrian Civil War. Its

primary base of operations has been the Damascus area, particularly the city of Douma and region of Eastern Ghouta. Jaysh al-Islam is the largest rebel faction in the area... (and) was a part of the Islamic Front”.

“The group, along with Ahrar al-Sham, are among the main rebel groups supported by Saudi Arabia. *The group aims to create an Islamic state under Sharia law* [my emphasis]” (Jaysh al-Islam, *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaysh_al-Islam. Note: Henceforth, I shall only use the term “Army of Islam”, including with reference to the *Wikipedia* entry for Jaysh al-Islam).

Fostering Fundamentalism

The shadow thus looms of fundamentalist Wahhabi Saudi Arabia, the Taliban, etc. And remember that the Taliban (like al Qaeda to a large extent) rose from the US/Saudi/Pakistani campaign to drive the Soviet invaders out of Afghanistan. The joint US/Saudi/Gulf State insurgency programme in Syria illustrates once again the US’s use of Islamists whenever and wherever politically convenient – from militant youth death squads in the Indonesian genocide (1965-70) to the Taliban in Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, many of the US-backed mujahideen fighters against the Soviet occupiers morphed into Taliban militia. For a while, the US negotiated with the Taliban in order

to route a gas pipeline through this central Asian country as part of the global resource war - a very similar situation germane to the generation of the Syrian civil war.

Contortions Of Geopolitics And Propaganda Continue

It is important to note too that the Army of Islam draws much of its fighting force from the Salafis, the sectarian, atavistic branch of Islam which also supplies the hard core of ISIS. Once again, too, we see the hand of fundamentalist Wahhabi Saudi Arabia at work in its geopolitical war against the apostate Shias. “The new group’s creation (from a merger of Liwa al-Islam with other bands) was said to have been negotiated and spearheaded by Saudi Arabia, who believed that al-Nusra Front was gaining too much strength” (ibid.).

And all this too with the blessing of the Anglo-American axis and its allies. Tellingly enough, even the BBC had “claimed in 2015 that the (Army of Islam) is Saudi-backed” (ibid.). In November 2015, a “video showed (Army of Islam) militants had locked people in cages and spread out 100 cages containing about seven captives each through(out) eastern Ghouta, northeast of Damascus, to use them as human shields against Syrian government air raids” (ibid.). Apparently, these captives were captured Alawite Shias, belonging to the same sect as Assad’s family clan.

There have been efforts, including by the *New York Times* (NYT), to suggest that this incident was propaganda contrived by Assad’s regime. But it seems far more likely to have been true, and yet another example of the NYT & co. at work - with their CIA-backed agenda of dissimulation - in support of Islamist jihadists serving American foreign policy objectives.

Double-Games And “Double-Think”

Significantly, the Obama Administration was caught out in June 2016 in its devious double-game and “newspeak” about such forces. It was trying “to convince the Russians and the Syrian governments not to attack (the Army of Islam)” (ibid.). Again, ironically enough, the Army of Islam has used ISIS-style executions in its turf war

SYRIAN SCENE...



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with ISIS. It has both cooperated and fought with the Nusra Front. While the Nusra Front separated from al Qaeda in July 2016, suspicions still swirl in turn about the Front's links. After a merger with some other Islamist bands, it is now known as (Hayat) Tahrir al-Sham (HTS).

The Army of Islam has made local civilians suffer in all sorts of ways. It has been prepared to sacrifice many civilian lives, including those of children, in a hopeless last-ditch stand in Eastern Ghouta instead of negotiating the terms of a peace pact or truce. Western propaganda, prominently including Bowen and the BBC, has been outrageously complicit in all of this.

Camouflaging The Causes Of Conflict

Next to the Army of Islam, the biggest rebel group in Eastern Ghouta has been Faylaq al-Rahman (Legion), founded in 2013. Ironically enough, the BBC itself gave a succinct summary of the complexity of the fighting that centred on Eastern Ghouta ("Explainer: Who's Fighting Whom In Syria's Ghouta?", *BBC Monitoring*, 22/2/18, <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/c1douzrw>).

"The group (i.e. Faylaq al-Rahman) is said to be linked to the ideology of the (fundamentalist) Muslim Brotherhood and has been allied with the jihadist HTS against the (Army of Islam) in the area" (ibid.). So, we have had a torrent of Anglo-American propaganda in support of fanatical sectarian and feuding Islamists! *Such is our commitment to freedom and democracy!!*

Moreover, despite its extremist sectarianism, Faylaq al-Rahman is affiliated with the so-called Free Syrian Army (FSA), which has been the main American-engineered fighting force, and supposedly the cheerleader for democracy in Syria. It was started in 2011 by former Syrian Army officers. What a noxious tangled web has been woven indeed! Obviously, the tragic mess of Afghanistan, of Iraq, and of Libya - and of so many other countries blitzed by the Yanks - have all served as a shining model for the Anglo-American axis and its allies.

Dicing With Democracy

In recent times, the US focus seems

to have shifted to support for the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), given repeated American failures in backing Islamist jihadists against Assad regime and Russian gains on the ground. The SDF is a predominantly Syrian Kurdish body. But, again, the US's real intentions are ultimately poisonous.

"The SDF is mostly composed of, and militarily led by, the People's Protection Units (YPG), a mostly Kurdish militia" ("Syrian Democratic Forces", *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syrian_Democratic_Forces). In March 2018, TV1's *Sunday* programme (11/3/18) featured a couple of young New Zealanders who have been in Syria, helping the YPG and its female partner affiliate, the YPJ, in the fight against ISIS.

Sunday, as expressed in the words of its interviewees, portrayed ISIS as horribly evil (ibid.). One of these interviewees was an English volunteer involved in the siege of Raqqa. In one clip, he was heard wishing for another American air strike. Naturally, there was no reference in this documentary to the awful human cost in dead and injured civilians due to the American and allied bombing raids throughout Syria and Iraq (*extending over almost a century!*). In reaction, ISIS has now further spread into Afghanistan, where it is involved in a savage suicide bombing campaign. *Again, almost needless to say, there was no acknowledgement in Sunday (ibid.) that ISIS was caused by the 2003 Anglo-American illegal invasion of Iraq!*

Compounding Contortions

However, in yet another compounding contradiction, the Erdogan de facto dictatorship in Sunni Muslim Turkey considers the Leftwing YPG/J a serious threat to its interests. The regime sees the YPG/J as closely linked to the strongly socialist PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) in Turkey itself. The PKK is a rebel movement based in the southeast. This Kurdish rebel movement has a long history of conflict pitted against a repressive series of Turkish governmental regimes ("Spoils Of War: The Human Cost Of America's Arms Trade", John Tirman, The Free Press, 1997).

So, the Erdogan regime has invaded northern Syria to deal to the YPG/J there and thus prevent any closer bonding between the PKK

and the YPG. It has been heavily engaged on the front in the Afrin area, at a considerable human cost to the civilians there. While, like Turkey, the US also classifies the PKK as a terrorist organisation, it says the YPG/J are different. Syria's political and ethnic turmoil has got even more intractably complex.

The US, of course, has cynically used Kurdish aspirations in the Middle East/Central Asia region for its own geopolitical ambitions over many decades. Today, there are about 35 million Kurds spread over four countries - Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Turkey (which alone has 15 million). These four countries have traditionally been very concerned about any perceived initiatives towards Kurdish separatism, especially the wider goal for a unitary Kurdish national state carved out of existing entities.

Anglo-American Imperial Imperatives - Crush The Left And Secular Nationalism!

There has certainly been plenty of scope for outside meddling and intervention. In the case of the PKK in Turkey, the US has been a ruthless enemy, principally through the supply of military hardware and logistical support. What is virtually a civil war - as in Syria although not on the same terrible widespread scale - continues right up to the present in Turkey, with the savage, systematic counter-insurgency (COIN) applied by the Erdogan regime.

Since the PKK had Marxist roots, the Anglo-American axis has been enthusiastic in trying to help crush these Kurdish insurgents. In the TV1 *Sunday* documentary cited above, presenter John Hudson remarked that the PKK has waged "a bloody campaign" (op. cit.). He failed to mention, of course, the brutality of the Turkish regime's repression of its Kurdish minority, or the American support for this repression.

Black-Hearted Hawks On The Predatory Prowl

Writing back in 1997, John Tirman, the Executive Director of the Winston Foundation for World Peace in Washington, DC, cited a report by Human Rights Watch, which "documented dozens of cases of abuse by Turkish armed forces using Black Hawks, F-16s, Cobras, and other American supplied technology" ("Spoils Of War", op. cit., p265).

"The uses of the Black Hawks were particularly gruesome" (ibid.). Helicopters were - and have continued to be - "the backbone of the Turkish COIN effort in the southeast" (as so often has been the case in US COIN) (ibid.).

Gross violations of "the rules of war", again as so typically the case in US COIN, are routine and pervasive. The Human Rights Watch report observed that: "They (i.e. the Black Hawks) were employed routinely in village evacuations as intimidators, hovering menacingly or shooting at civilians and livestock" (ibid.). Tirman's book has plenty of searing detail, including other vicious practices involving the Black Hawks.

The Trope And Tripe Of American Victimhood

But the American propaganda machine has perversely put the victimhood image of "Black Hawk Down!" in the public mind, along the lines of Mark Bowden's book (1999) and the later film (2001) of the same name. Two Black Hawk helicopters were shot down in 1993 during a civil war in Somalia, severely disrupting a US special forces operation there to capture a local clan warlord.

The resultant loss of American lives shocked the Clinton Administration into a withdrawal. A key reason pro-claimed for the US raid at the time was that it would help to ensure UN food relief for starving civilians. Despite the "Black Hawk Down!" fiasco only resulting in a relative handful of American lives lost compared with the estimated thousand or so Somali lives, this particular episode has been perversely highlighted and celebrated as an example of heroic US special forces' action against Muslim terrorists.

Even more critical appraisals by the American media can gloat over the disparity of the respective death tolls (e.g., "What Black Hawk Down Leaves Out", *Slate*, 21/1/02, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/kausfiles/special/2002/01/what_black_hawk_down_leaves_out.html). But, thankfully enough, some American commentators are far more incisively fair and humane (e.g., "America's Heroes On Trial", *Counterpunch*, 5/8/06, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2006/08/05/america-s-heroes-on-trial/>).

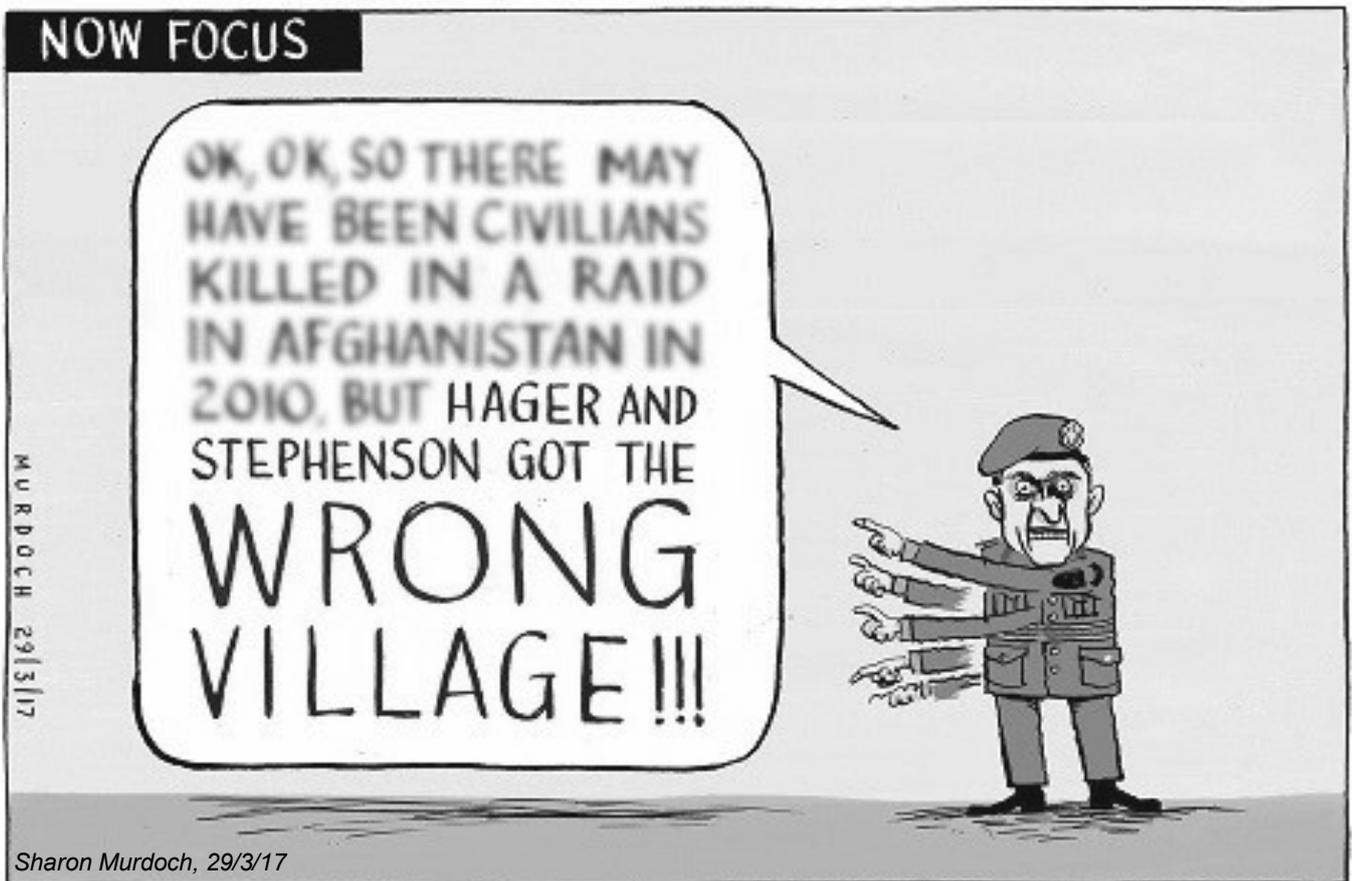
NZ Joins In US COIN - Boots And All!

In August 2010, an NZ Special Air Service (SAS) raid on a couple of

villages in a remote part of Afghanistan had a tragic outcome with a number of dead and injured civilians, none of them the targeted "terrorists" ("Hit & Run: The New Zealand SAS in Afghanistan And The Meaning Of Honour", Nicky Hager & Jon Stephenson, Potton & Burton, 2017. Reviewed by Jeremy Agar in *PR 53*, June 2017, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr53.pdf>). This action was a typical NATO so-called "kill or capture" raid, another in its routine programme of "hearts and minds"-style death squad night attacks.

As well, this particular raid had a special edge. It was very much intended as a revenge raid for a previous engagement. Ever since the release of the book "Hit and Run", the NZ Defence Force (NZDF) has been on the back foot in its public relations. Its rearguard defensive denials of responsibility are repeatedly wearing thin, having recently had to admit that authors Hager and Stephenson got right the locations of the villages concerned.

When coldly and objectively considered, this is a very worrying admission from our NZDF. Afghan villagers, who were victims of the raid, are taking legal action against the NZ government ("Government Fa-



ces Legal Action Over Afghan Civilian Deaths”, *NZ Herald*, 18/8/17, https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11906565).

Black-Hearted Death Squads In Action

Logistical support and cover for the night-time death squad raid were provided by the US military. Most of the NZSAS soldiers were ferried to the designated destination in Chinook helicopters while Apache helicopters indulged in an indiscriminate free fire barrage during the raid (“Hit & Run”, op. cit.). Significantly, and symbolically enough, in light of typical American COIN practice and facilitation, some SAS soldiers, organised into sniper teams, were transported “on a US Black Hawk helicopter, which was scheduled to arrive in the valley before the main group” (ibid., pp33 & 36).

The overall aim of Operation Burnham was thus death squad best practice in the long Anglo-American history of the systematic and brutal repression of peoples in poor countries. While the new Labour Party-led Coalition Government has announced that there will be an inquiry into the conduct of the Operation Burnham raid, there are already fears that it is prejudiced in favour of the NZDF. After all, NZ has either compromised with, or directly collaborated with, American COIN strategy for many years, and in many places around the Earth.

The NZDF has now claimed that real known “terrorists” were killed. There are even photos taken on site of “armed men” (*perhaps locals responding to a vicious night-time home invasion?!*), an observation duly echoed by the Government. Clearly, the Anglo-American Establishment can be blinded by its own racist, imperial arrogance in understanding how people in overseas countries might want to fight back against repressive foreign control. *No wonder “terrorism” can thrive! It’s home-grown!!*

The Complex And Crushing Coils of Conflict

The TV1 *Sunday* documentary, cited above, promoted a message of a democratic goal for Syria on the part of the native Kurds and, by implication, their foreign supporters (op. cit.). But although they have other

ethnic groups affiliated to their cause, these Kurdish forces too have been accused at times of ethnic cleansing. Their aim has been to carve a de facto state out of Syria called “Rojava” (Democratic Federation of Northern Syria), and at one point they controlled around 30% of the country. A disintegrating Syria is certainly of concern for a host of reasons.

Ross Kemp, however, in an episode of his *Extreme World* documentary TV series, pictured an apparently admirable effort at grassroots, multi-ethnic democracy in a local town council in northern Syria (Ross Kemp, *Extreme World*, Prime, 25/4/18). He visited Syria in early 2016. Certainly, the YPG/J Leftist ideology of egalitarian participation is of strong progressive appeal. In such context, the *Sunday* documentary was cunning in its silence on the real, wider Anglo-American agenda.

Like Ross Kemp himself, we can only hope for positive outcomes. But Kemp well warned at the time about likely Turkish intervention in Syria to drive back the Kurds there. And, of course, this has sadly come to pass. Now the US-backed Syrian Kurds and the NATO-aligned Turkish invaders are both locked in conflict against each other. In yet ironic twist, Assad is giving the Syrian Kurds some military support against the Turks.

Civilian Casualties And “Collateral Damage”

By the end of April 2018, Eastern Ghouta had fallen under Assad’s control. There was obvious relief and even rejoicing by many, probably most, refugees and remaining civilians (as demonstrated earlier in East Aleppo) in escaping the futile violence and suffering. But the Western media continued to heap blame solely on the regime. This was the case despite the fact that the Army of Islam & co. had even forced many civilians to live like “troglodytes” in underground tunnels dug by forced labour while the Islamists fired their mortars at random into settled areas (“The Search For Truth In The Rubble Of Douma”, op. cit.).

Western propaganda, on the other hand, had regularly portrayed civilians under siege in Mosul, Raqqa, etc., as the helpless hostages of the

ruthless ISIS, in graphic contrast to the civilian hostages held in East Aleppo and Eastern Ghouta. At the same time, this same propaganda systematically covered up the war crimes of the Anglo-American driven coalition attacking the ISIS-held towns.

A Murderous, Tangled Mess

By mid-March 2018, newspaper headlines were proclaiming that: “Turkish-led forces oust Kurds in Syrian city” [i.e. Afrin] (*Telegraph Group* report reproduced in the *Press*, 20/3/18). Turkey was also now facing the same allegations of war crimes it had levelled for years at the Syrian dictatorship (e.g., “Syria’s Nightmare Deepens As Hospital Hit”, *Press*, 19/3/18).

Most ironically, the Turks are allied with the Free Syrian Army (FSA) in its fight against the mainly Kurdish SDF. The FSA, so long the US’s principal front for the pretence of its commitment to a democratic future for Syria, is now engaged in a sectarian struggle with the similarly US-backed SDF – *in yet another of the civil war’s violent, internecine twists*.

As one Rightwing media report went on to so delicately put it: “Many of the FSA militias fighting alongside Turkish forces had once received backing from the US, further muddying the waters in north-eastern Syria” (*Telegraph Group* report, op. cit.). The Kurds have vowed to fight on in the area as a guerrilla force (ibid.). In the short term, the trajectory of the civil war may seem somewhat uncertain in this region of Syria (e.g., “In The Small City Of Manbij In Syria, We Could See US & Turkish Troops Shooting At Each Other If Tensions Continue”, *Independent*, 2/03/18, Patrick Cockburn, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/syria-us-turkey-troops-fighting-manbij-kurdish-assad-civil-war-a8236201.html>)

Manbij is on the front line of potential conflict (ibid.; “US Offers Mixed Message On Troops In Syria”, *Telegraph Group* report in the *Press*, 6/4/18). But one thing is certain. American backing for the Syrian Kurds is purely opportunistic and pragmatic. Clearly, a first significant step has been the selling out of the Kurds in Afrin (“How The US Betrayed Kurds”, *Le Club de Mediapart*, 23/1/18, <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/matberg-kate/blog/230118/how-us-betrayed-kurds>).

Giant Corporates Systematically Suppressing Right To Free Speech

Meanwhile, in the affluent but increasingly parlous West, democracy and the right to free expression so fundamental to democracy continue to be subtly, quietly, and pervasively undermined. Giant high-tech news and information transnational corporations (TNCs) are at work here too in unprecedented fashion. At this particular point, I shall flag the new reality of online political censorship as spearheaded by Google (“Google’s Eric Schmidt Admits Political Censorship Of Search Results”, World Socialist Website, 22/11/17, <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2017/11/22/pers-n22.html>).

Under the cover of supposedly dealing to “fake news” and alleged Russian manipulation, Google & co. have employed algorithms that also widely and pervasively work to reduce criticism of American foreign policy on the Internet (ibid.; “New Google Algorithm Restricts Access To Leftwing, Progressive Websites”, World Socialist Website, 27/7/17, <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2017/07/27/goog-j27.html>; “Google Escalates Blacklisting Of Leftwing Websites And Journalists”, World Socialist Website, 20/10/17, <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2017/10/20/goog-o20.html>; “Google Sets Up ‘News Initiative’ To Censor Political Opposition And Promote Mainstream Media”, World Socialist Website, 22/3/18 <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2018/03/22/russ-m22.html>). Other Anglo-American Internet search engines are very likely conforming along the same lines.

“Ignorance Is Strength”

Just before ex-President Barack Obama’s visit to Aotearoa/NZ in March 2018, a whole range of *Foreign Control Watchdog* (FCW) articles that had been readily accessible by individual title via common search words disappeared from their accustomed positions on Internet online pages. Even the latest issue of *PR* (54, November 2017) was adversely affected. Many Leftwing organisations round the world have undergone this sort of Orwellian censorship and substantial falls in their online search traffic (ibid.). Some of *Watchdog’s* online material now seems to have bounced back again.

The tech giants like Google, Amazon, Facebook, etc. have indeed gained unprecedented power in a number of crucial spheres of information exchange - exercising political censorship, surveillance, and invasion of privacy (*witness the revelations regarding Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook*). So-called public-private partnerships (PPPs) between government and corporate interests can have all kinds of neo-fascist implications for the future. These very disturbing and sinister phenomena demand some urgent, close attention and counter-action from the international Left. Democratic scrutiny and debate is being further quietly and calculatedly subverted by the American power elite.

Mainstreaming Malevolence

As sectarianism and the compounding complexity of conflicts increase in various regions, the Western mainstream media struggle to try and put a moralistic spin on those conflict situations that serve their controlling capitalist interests. Such propaganda is regularly reinforced and relayed via the host of fictitious American “national security” themed films and TV series. These shows are intended to appropriately condition the public to State terrorism, routine violent intervention in foreign lands, butchering poor people, and ruining their countries - all along with the ratcheting up of the risks of nuclear war.

Besides the regular warmongering feeds from the big American news corporates, BBC, and variously related subsidiary organs, American TV shows glamorise special forces operations in overseas lands. They function to “sex up” the death squads and portray the righteous terror of the Pentagon and CIA, e.g., *The Brave and Seal Team*. There has indeed been a stream of such programmes - from *Strike Back* to *NCIS*. At a more general level, *Madam Secretary* bowdlerises US predatory geopolitics. Such stuff is coupled with documentaries about special forces training, and so on, in the promulgation of a Social Darwinist world view.

Trumpism is the neo-fascist creed of an evil madman, exulting in the “killer ape” syndrome (“The Even More Dangerous Case of Donald Trump”, *Counterpunch*, David Swanson, 19/12/17, <https://www.counterpunch>

[.org/2017/12/19/the-even-more-dangerous-case-of-donald-trump/](https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/12/19/the-even-more-dangerous-case-of-donald-trump/); “The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump”, *Psychology Today*, 12/2/17, www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-ti-me-cure/201709/the-dangerous-case-donald-trump). Bizarrely enough in our increasingly surreal world, some are now promoting the idea that Trump’s horrific warmongering deserves the Nobel Peace Prize! Helen Caldicott considers Trump to be “very frightening” (“The End Of Life On Earth”, op. cit.).

Similarly, Robert Fisk posed the question as to how could British PM Theresa May “follow an American President, who the world knows is crackers, insane, chronically unstable, but whose childish messages – about missiles that are ‘nice, and new, and smart’ – are even taken seriously by many of my colleagues in the US [& NZ!]”? (“As Theresa May Gears Up For War In Syria”, op. cit.). The “walking dead” media and their NZ branch here certainly need an updated review in a future article (for ongoing critical commentary of the media, see the *Standard*, <https://thestandard.org.nz>; this Website is excellent for monitoring and countering Rightwing media bias, on both the domestic and foreign affairs fronts).

Mobilising For Peace

These are surely desperate times. The most precious thing is hope and redoubling our commitments, despite the challenges. We must somehow mobilise on an unprecedented scale to turn the tides of war. How can we consciously yield to the forces of darkness anyway?! A part-Italian friend had an old traditional saying, which essentially said, “don’t let the bastards get you down!” I regularly take it to heart. Ironically enough, the US military used it a lot during WWII.

Let’s use whatever maxims we can to help motivate us in the struggle to prevent the “unthinkable” hellish nightmare of WWII!!! There are plenty of wonderful initiatives that people are taking in all sorts of places. We must build a much greater international movement as in the 1980s that can really hold our leaders to account. We need to create a genuine turning-point for peace, social justice, and sustainability on planet Earth, the only “Goldilocks” planet we shall ever have. ■

ROOT CAUSES OF REFUGEE CRISIS NEED TO BE ADDRESSED

- Murray Horton

Jacinda Ardern is to be congratulated for trying, not long after she became Prime Minister in late 2017, to do the decent thing by, in her words, “offering to lend a hand” with regards to Australia’s appalling treatment of refugees detained, then abandoned, on Manus Island (not to forget the others detained on Nauru). Australian PM Malcolm Turnbull tried to swat her away by saying that he has a deal with the US to take the Manus men – I think pigs will fly before Donald Trump honours what he calls “the worst deal ever”, made by Barack Obama (of course, Trump has since awarded “the worst deal ever” prize to the Iran nuclear deal from which he withdrew the US in 2018. But that’s a whole other story).

Nor do I see why there is anything stopping Jacinda from dealing directly with Papua New Guinea. After all, the Manus Island men are being detained in its country and Australia has abandoned them. NZ and PNG are two independent countries, so what’s to stop the two governments sorting out this mess of Australia’s making? And let’s give credit where credit’s due – the Key National government made the same offer, namely to take some of the Manus men. It got the same response from Australia. That just goes to show that NZ Tories have got more humanity (in this case, at least) than their Aussie counterparts.

And, to his further credit, Key refused to countenance creating a new category of second class New Zealanders, ones with no rights to travel to Australia. Because that’s why pig-headed Turnbull and co won’t take up NZ’s bipartisan offer. The excuse given is that the Manus men could then enter Australia through the New Zealand “back door” i.e. via the free entry allowed to New Zealanders.

That is just so much crap. There is a precedent for New Zealand cleaning up Australia’s refugee mess, namely the Clark government taking in a swag of people from the *Tampa*,

which was famously blocked by John Howard in 2001. Not only that, NZ did the decent thing and let their families join them. Hands up if you’ve heard of any of those people going to Australia via the “New Zealand back door” and becoming terrorists. No, I thought not. Those *Tampa* refugees made their lives in New Zealand and have become an asset to this country.

“Resettled in New Zealand and allowed to bring in their families, *Tampa* refugees have become doctors, civil engineers, lawyers, police officers, nurses, architects and business owners, employing others. About two dozen in the trades worked on the Christchurch rebuild” (Christchurch *Press* editorial, 6/11/17). I’ve met one of the *Tampa* people myself – a young Afghan woman working as a checkout operator, complete with headscarf, in a central Christchurch supermarket. She told me she was a baby on the *Tampa*. So that’s what big tough Australia’s scared of – babies.

Australian State Terrorism

Australia needs to hang its head in shame (this crime against humanity has been perpetrated by both Liberal [conservative] and Labor governments). If you read, heard or saw a news report about civilians imprisoned without charge, trial or hope of release, who were then abandoned without food, water, power or toilets and in imminent fear of attack and/

or death by hostile locals, your first reaction would probably be that this was the latest atrocity by ISIS.

And that’s how we need to judge this – Australia is enacting a policy of State terrorism. Its “Pacific Solution” is starting to resemble the Final Solution that Australia and New Zealand fought to defeat in World War Two. I’ve experienced a little bit of this deprivation myself – no power, water or toilet for several days after the February 2011 Christchurch quake, and it was no fun in a First World society where we had the expectation that somebody would do something about it ASAP. How much worse it must feel then on a Third World island, with no such expectation.

But if our Government is serious about “lending a hand”, then it needs to look much further than the (admittedly spectacular) symptoms like Manus Island, and do something about the causes of the global refugee crisis. Why are these tens of millions of people (of whom only a few hundred are the victims of Australia’s unforgiveable cruelty) fleeing their home countries?

Plenty will be economic refugees, they simply want a better life for their children and themselves. That is a story as old as humanity. That is why several hundred thousand New Zealanders have moved to Australia, after all. It is the same reason why my Australian grandfather moved from Queensland to Wellington at the start of the 20th Century – to get a job.

Cause Is Global Poverty & Inequality

That’s a very big problem, and tiny little New Zealand can only do so



much about that. But we can do our share, and we can start from the recognition articulated by the most unlikely of sources – Winston Peters – that more and more people see capitalism as their foe and not their friend. He was talking about New Zealanders, so multiply that by the billions of people living at the coal-face of global capitalism and you start to get an idea of the scale of the problem.

Capitalism is predicated on a few winners and an awful lot of losers. Not unreasonably, tens of millions of these “losers” want to move to where they think they can join the “winners” (they are bound to be disillusioned by what they discover upon arrival, but that’s another story). Hand in glove with global poverty as a cause of refugees is war. This is a direct and immediate cause of huge numbers of people fleeing for their lives. There is nothing unusual about people running away from a big disaster, whether manmade or natural – tens of thousands of Christchurch people fled the city in the hours after that February 2011 killer quake (and plenty of them have not come back).

This is an area where the Ardern government can deal with the root cause of the global refugee crisis – get out of other people’s wars that we’re already involved in (such as

Afghanistan and Iraq); stay out of the absolute tarpit that is Syria; don’t go haring off after Donald Trump if he goes to war in Iran or Korea or anywhere else. More fundamentally, build on the good work done in the 1980s (which made NZ nuclear free and out of ANZUS) and get out of the Five Eyes spy network and break the remaining military ties that bind NZ to the US Empire. Build a truly non-aligned and independent foreign policy that prioritises peace over war.

War Creates Refugees

There is a direct cause and effect between war and refugees. Our “traditional allies” are very good at creating the mess via war, then expressing indignant surprise when that very same mess comes back to bite them in the bum in the form of a human tide. Libya is a textbook case – NATO military powers, with US assistance, played a vital role in violently overthrowing the Gaddafi regime in 2011 (including being complicit in his being tortured to death. Even Iraq’s Saddam Hussein got a show trial before his enemies killed him). Funnily enough, Libya has been a failed state ever since and Europe has been inundated with refugees arriving by sea – dead or alive - from Libya. Gaddafi is laughing in his grave.

So, there is self-interest for New Zealand in staying out of other people’s wars and in working to end existing wars and preventing new ones. And for those who say “charity begins at home” – I agree. We can help our immediate neighbours on tiny Pacific islands that are threatened by inundation due to climate change. These people did nothing to cause that problem but New Zealand certainly did and continues to do – we have an obligation to open our doors to these climate change refugees.

That is not a solution to the problem (at least this Government recognises there is a problem and has pledged to do something about it) but it is an amelioration of the dire effects of that problem. Even if we took in all of those affected Pacific islanders, plus the prisoners from Manus and Nauru, it would all only add up to a few tens of thousands of people at most.

We bring in more foreigners than that every year to milk them in shonky “education” courses and to supply New Zealand employers with cheap labour. How about we change the emphasis from bringing people in to exploit and rip them off to bringing them to help them and, as the *Tampa* experience shows, helping ourselves in the process? Sounds like a win-win to me. ■



BASE NATION

How US Military Bases Abroad Harm America

And The World

by David Vine
Skyhorse Publishing
New York, 2017

David Vine has long been a reliable and dedicated critic of his country’s military and this account of how America has projected its power around the globe is authoritative. There are an astonishing 800 or so

US bases beyond its borders, scattered in every region. On a world map, only the vast expanse of Russia and China is entirely free of them.

The thickest concentrations numerically – but not always the biggest bases - are in the Caribbean and the top of South America; the middle of Africa; and from Britain and Norway right through to Pakistan. No other country has more than a handful of bases beyond their borders. There’s a popular view these days that Russia and China are big players in such matters, but, compared to the US, they aren’t really, and neither has any sort of military presence to rival America’s beyond its immediate region.

America, as we’re often (and more accurately) reminded, is the one big superpower, and although it’s often said that its relative dominance is diminishing, the effects of that won’t be seen in our time. In the US they

like to talk about the 20th Century as being the “American century”, with the US economy clearing out from the rest in the decades between the two World Wars. Vine traces the present era to 1940 when Britain, struggling to finance its defence forces, accepted 50 World War 1 era destroyers in exchange for military bases in a string of British colonies.

Opportunistic grabs of other people’s land have been the pattern. The first big surge in US influence abroad dated from the end of the 19th Century when its defeat of Spain allowed it to seize Cuba and the Philippines, remnants of a Spanish empire. From then on the Pacific has been dubbed an “American lake” - so the Caribbean is perhaps an American pond? *Of course, the most notorious US base in the world is in Cuba. Guantanamo, the infamous prison and torture centre, is an object lesson in the perils of “hosting” US bases. It is still there,*

U.S. MILITARY BASES ABROAD, 2015



Map created by Kelly Martin for David Vine, "Base Nation: How US Military Bases Abroad Harm America And The World".

like a malignant tumour, decades after Cuba made it plain it wanted the base gone. Ed.

Permanent Expansion

The story of America has been a story of permanent expansion, starting with the drive to the west of the North American continent. The original European settlers thought, first, of the Appalachian Mountains, and then the Mississippi, as being the western boundary of their united states, but of course restless immigrants with guns almost immediately pushed the frontier inland. Vine provides a map which shows 90 US military bases "abroad" in "native lands".

After 1945, with Germany in ruins and Britain and France exhausted, the US was even more dominant than it had been when the war began. It could dictate policy to its allies, who continued to absorb American money and American values. Hitler was gone, but not Stalin, and Uncle Sam was happy to stay on in Europe to keep the Russians

at bay. Then, just four years after the fighting ended, Mao swept into power in China, inducing a contrite Japan and an impoverished South Korea to similarly host US bases.

Vine quotes President Truman's explanation offered to Winston Churchill and Stalin as the war ended: "Though the United States wants no profit or selfish advantage out of this war, we are going to maintain the military bases necessary for the complete protection of our interests and of world peace". While Winnie and Uncle Joe might well have thought that the main clause of this sentence was more truthful than its opening clause, they were in no position to comment. Truman was declaring that the peace was to be an American peace. Churchill was to take some time to adjust to the reality that Pax Britannica was fading fast.

Lest there be an unlikely failure to anticipate the new world order Truman added: "Bases which our military experts deem to be essential for our protection we will acquire".

And, so began the half century of the ugly American. Politicians and generals began to talk of "strategic denial", meaning that it was a good idea to occupy places if only to deny them to other countries. Why give up the "spoils of war" or "occupied real estate"? General MacArthur, who commanded US forces in the 1950-53 Korean War was always upfront, even more so than his President: "Our line of defence", he said, "runs through the chain of islands fringing the coast of Asia", as far as the Aleutians, off Alaska.

Diego Garcia, Okinawa, Bikini

The best bases, it came to be thought, were sited where uppity natives and loony Lefties couldn't get in the way. The perfect place was Diego Garcia, a small coral island in the middle of the Indian Ocean, far from the madding crowds, but within easy air force reach of east Africa, the Middle East and south Asia.

Between 1968 and 1973, with the puppy-dog support of the colonial

master, the UK, the US removed the entire human population; dumped them, with no help in relocating, on the Seychelles and Mauritius, and built a base which is still one of the most important US outposts (Vine has written about Diego Garcia before. See my review of "Island Of Shame" in *Peace Researcher* 38, July 2009, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr38.pdf>).

Other bases selected for the same rationale were Guam and Bikini in the north-west Pacific. In both instances, these small islands were picked because they had relatively small and poor populations, people who could be bribed or ignored as necessity suggested. Both were readily available in the aftermath of the island-hopping assault on Japan. In Guam, Vine notes, the US presence is popular, as it provides relatively well paid and stable jobs.

That's not the case in Okinawa, another island that was devastated by the war. Okinawa is part of Japan, though well to the south of the main islands. There the heavy US presence is resented. The Japanese government, bound like the UK to the US, apparently regards the locals as unimportant, comparable, in the view of one observer whom Vine cites, to how Washington views Puerto Rico. In general, it can be said that the poorer and more isolated the base, the greater the harm inflicted. The extreme example, besides Diego Garcia, must be Bikini, which, as far as the US was concerned, existed as a place to test atomic bombs. Prostitution and booze surrounds more populous areas.

Vine reckons the bases cost taxpayers around \$US70 billion a year, money which is becoming increasingly hard to justify. In Italy and Germany, for instance, even the top brass admits there is no plausible reason to permanently house thousands of American troops. Vine looks at the governmental and bureaucratic stonewalling which keeps them there.

Big State needs are entwined with the gravy train need of big corporate contractors and the Washington lobbyists, Trump's swamp monsters – and every President's best mates. The trend these days is away from the monster bases of the Cold War era and towards "lily pads", smaller installations, lilies in the ocean

ponds, between which troops can hop frog-like to trouble spots.

New Zealand

Accounts of this nature often overlook New Zealand and bookshop browsers who check out the index will find no mention of NZ. But Vine is too thorough to overlook us entirely. In his several maps, NZ is listed as having hosted three bases during World War 2, while his map of bases in 1989, chosen possibly to reflect the result of eight years of Reaganite policy, shows one base: Harewood. That's an inclusion missed frequently by overseas researchers.

Where Vine follows the usual habit of commentators is in ignoring Five Eyes. It would have been helpful had he noted why. Some say that outfits like the Waihopai spy base are (officially) run by the New Zealand government and so do not count as US bases. A second, much less likely reason, is that Vine recognises that Five Eyes, which collects stuff for (American) corporations, has more than a military purpose.

That might be why the Anti-Bases Campaign's protests are not one of the 40 places around the world which are marked as places which saw "anti-base protest and opposition, 1945-2015". Or it might be that the habitual lack of coverage by NZ media has meant that news from Marlborough has not reached Vine.

It's a common omission but an understandable one. By limiting his analysis to the purely military aspects of imperialism, Vine missed the chance to consider US relations both with its main allies and to give more than glancing attention to what, 60 years ago, Eisenhower called the "military-industrial complex". But let's not make too much of a fuss. This study is rich in detail and replete with facts. Check out the acknowledgements at the end. A huge amount of work has gone into this project and there was not the space for looking at Five Eyes mates or, say, Germany. Those topics can wait for another time.

Since Vine conceived his project quite a few years ago, a third "base" has emerged to extend the pun of his title. That's Trump's mob. With their man's abandoning of the nuclear deal with Iran, and the meeting

with Kim Jong-un - the former announced at the time of writing - how are the US of A's relations with the world going? Is it still looking better between the US and North Korea?

At some stage the "base" and the President will almost certainly endanger the peace, if only because of Trump's reckless and petty motivations. The questions are how much worse and where will the trouble break out? Will it bring in a nuclear foe? A foe with terrorist links? With 800 foreign military sites and a would-be tyrant as their Commander in Chief, the modest optimism that Vine had allowed himself – that the base nation might have peaked - he might well now find unwarranted. ■

AMERICA AND ME

A Film by David Bradbury

2016

Near the start of "America And Me" there's a shot of David Bradbury, an Australian film maker, unloading luggage and equipment from a train in Oakland as he sets out to look at the USA. With him are his wife and six-year old son. His ventures are modest in scale but he's been working like that a long time. His relationship with America is sharply critical, but you sense he's ambivalent, that it's a country much like his own, that he wants to persuade Americans to change their ways.

He's talking about Australia too. This is the unspoken impression we are left with as Bradbury interviews David Vine, a domestic critic of the "untrammelled capitalism" that neoliberalism has unleashed on America, motivated by the greed of the rich elites who set the agenda. The result has been increased inequality and insecurity.

The millionaires are becoming billionaires but the unemployed and the homeless lie under bridges, hopeless. A cocaine addict is interviewed. He was jailed at 19, spending his wasted days making bombs for gang wars. Over the last 40 years, we're told, the US jail population has soared by five times to 2.2 million.

Meanwhile the investment in its cit-

ies that is so needed is denied as huge sums are thrown at waging a series of “unwinnable wars”. Bradbury doesn’t elaborate on this; he doesn’t need to. The spectacular example these days is Afghanistan, spectacular in that the war seems endless, and policy makers don’t mind admitting publicly that it’s a stalemate. No-one can win.

We’re offered interspersed shots of the Trump-Clinton debates and quotations, often Biblical. Again, we don’t need to know detail about the President that is and the President that wasn’t to be. She would have been policy-as-usual; Trump will be policy as unusual. We’re offered a few thoughts about how American power has come to be so squandered and misdirected, enough to allow potential audiences to be guided into a deeper discussion.

At the end we return to Vine, who concludes that the present course is not “sustainable”. It’s a term that’s much over-used but here it’s bang on. The present trends of rising wealth gaps, increased environmental degradation and deeper social alienation cannot continue without some nasty shocks. That’s because neo-liberalism is the cause, the means through which the ills have been entwined. They are inter-related and inter-dependent. So, Vine is a wise guide when he says that progressives need to work to bring about change at “multiple levels” (this is the same David Vine, whose “Base Nation” is reviewed above). ■

PHONEY WARS

New Zealand Society In The Second World War

by Stevan & Hugh Eldred-Grigg,
Otago University Press,
Dunedin, 2017

There’s good news and bad news to report about this highly detailed and handsomely produced account. The good news is that it is replete with thoroughly researched insights about daily life in wartime New Zealand. When they talk about domestic attitudes to the Second World War, the authors, a father and son combo, are interesting. Only specialists



Film maker David Bradbury

in the history of the period are likely to be familiar with much of what is on display.

Untrustworthy History

The illustrations and sketches of a variety of normally anonymous people are attractive. The story of how the country raised money for the war and how it organised civilian life is an intriguing one, and the discussion of the steams of opinion is usually objective. That’s the good news. The bad news is the exposition which links the narrative. Get the book by all means for its cartoons and photos and its footnotes. But beware of the text. The history, especially when the story ranges overseas, is untrustworthy.

To get a sense of the trouble, let’s start with Japan. On December 7th, 1941, we are told, “Japan struck suddenly at four colonies: Borneo, Malaya, the Philippines and Hawaii”. To categorise all four as “colonies” could be justified as they were all in fact dependent on imperial powers, but technically only Borneo and Malaya were colonies in the normally understood sense of the term. Both were ruled by Britain, which had no intention of granting them independence, whereas the Philippines and Hawaii were not colonies in the dictionary sense.

The Philippines was allowed official independence in 1946 and would have been granted it earlier had it not been for the Japanese invasion, while Hawaii was officially an “incorporated territory” of the US and achieved US statehood in 1959. That’s before Britain began to allow its empire to break free. The US of course has always grabbed vast

chunks of other people’s lands for its own purposes, especially military purposes (for a closer look at the US military, see my review, above, of “Base Nation”).

So why do the authors want to suggest a similar status when only two of their “colonies” fully qualify as such. It’s done because the authors want to emphasise US imperialism, but in this context, it’s mischievous. Historians owe it to their readers to be unambiguous when it comes to conventional usage of language. Here the usage is deliberate manipulation, as subsequent content amply proves.

They cannot hold themselves in check. At one point we’re introduced to a certain “Edward Windsor, figurehead king of New Zealand”. Ed Windsor? Again, readers who are close in age to the authors will recognise who they are talking about and most will probably share the authors’ implication that they’re not into the British royal family. But do they have to let us know they are republicans? We don’t care. Readers need always to be watchful for unconscious bias in works of history, but here the bias is shouted. The authors want us to like Japan and dislike Britain and America and they are happy to let it be known that they will be selective in their recalling of the past in order to force us to agree.

By bunching Malaya, Borneo, the Philippines and Hawaii, all equal in their status as “colonies”, the authors want to overlook what other historians have always emphasised: the bombing of Pearl Harbor. They do this because they imagine they’re brave rebels. Everyone else

might bang on about Roosevelt's "day of infamy", but polite opinion has been corrupted by the Yankee narrative of a sneak attack.

The authors insist that America had forced Japan's hand by restricting its activities in Asia and the western Pacific. There's a valid discussion to be had as to whether Roosevelt did in fact manipulate events to squeeze Japan – yes – but we don't get any sort of nuance in these pages, where the blame for war lies solely with the USA.

Contradiction And Illogic

New Zealand should never have worried about Japan. That's the authors' most repeated assertion, one that gives the impression of being at least a major motivation for the whole book. Unfortunately, for them, NZ did declare war on Japan, basing its decision "more on emotion than logic". To justify this verdict the Eldred-Griggs offer up an eccentric stew of contradiction and illogic.

The accepted account of Japan's war has it that a feudal, militaristic Japan invaded China to seize resources. Unlike the usual aggressor, Japan could invent no pretext or historic wrong to "explain" why it was justified. It was unprovoked aggression against a weaker neighbour. The Eldred-Griggs' first mention of the invasion is to remark that since 1937 Japan had been "twisting and turning to find a way out of its nightmarish entanglement in China".

Nightmarish for Japan that is – not for China. In reality they didn't need to twist and turn. They needed to go home. That would not have been hard. All they had to do was turn around. Later, the authors offer up a specific and direct refutation of their original assertion by confirming the conventional wisdom by telling us that "Tokyo wished ... to get a springboard" into Southeast Asia. Going home was not on the agenda.

We're told that the New Zealand government "courted" the US but not Japan, which had no interest in attacking NZ. We are offered, without critical comment, a quotation from a Japanese minister that his army wanted only China and could not see why a "treaty of friendship" with the US could not be signed. He did not mention either Australia or NZ. The Eldred-Griggs take this as

proof of his government's benign intent.

NZ, the authors therefore conclude, could have sent people to Japan to "come to an understanding" had it not been for the "closed minds and lack of independent thinking" by the Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, while an Opposition MP made a speech in which he dubbed imperialist Japan a "menace" to NZ, an assessment the authors found "tactless". Despite these opinions, the authors are quite happy to report Japan's own unequivocal statement about its war aims. An expansion to the south was "indispensable to the very national existence" of Japan but "the Labour government did not take up the offer to open a dialogue with Tokyo".

That is not a misprint or a series of typos. The Eldred-Griggs spend a large part of their book – ostensibly about New Zealand society during the Second World War – arguing the case for our becoming a willing satellite of Japan. The rationale offered – the notion that Japan would not invade because it would not have to – is confirmed to the authors' satisfaction by the belief that Japan's plunder extended only to the minerals and oil of South-east Asia. They had no interest in lands south of New Guinea and Fiji.

Because it never happened let's suppose that this would indeed have been the case. But those nasty Yanks might not have been so trusting. They would certainly have thought Australia and New Zealand would be the handy launching pad for their inevitable response to Japan, and that would have brought the war south. This certainty is not considered by our authors, who return to their topic by regretting that back in Godzone people were getting het up about those entirely reasonable Japanese. After Singapore fell there was a "fear that they were fanatics - or so said the propaganda – who would fight tooth and nail".

"Whataboutism"

So said the propaganda, yes, but so too said the facts. The *Evening Post* wrote that the Japanese had been "indoctrinated for centuries that they are a chosen people", a comment that our authors do not try to deny but cannot allow to go unchallenged. So, they insert a coda. The paper did not say that the British too

had been told the same thing forever (an American critic of Donald Trump has called this tactic "whataboutism". When their man is irrefutably in the wrong Trump's supporters talk about something else that has no relevance).

As the Eldred-Griggs look back at their fearful country, they see ignorance. New Zealanders need not have worried, had they been more knowledgeable, but "[o]nly the few citizens who owned a globe understood how very far away the troops of the enemy really were". They then contradict themselves by reminding us that Japanese submarines sailed into Cook Strait, only a few kilometres from that closed-minded Peter Fraser.

"A lot" of those geographically challenged Kiwis believed NZ to be "defenceless", we read, the implication being that they need not have been so ignorant, that New Zealand could have, alone, resisted a Japanese attack – even with its soldiers being in Egypt and Crete (elsewhere, insistently, when the topic is Europe or North Africa, the argument is that tiny NZ's total contribution to Allied victory was zero).

In an extraordinary piece of whataboutism we are reminded that, once incorporated into Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, New Zealand would get a "taste of its own medicine in Samoa... though more generously as it would retain a parliament". Yes, that is saying what it seems to be saying: warlord Japan had a generosity of spirit that shamed democratic New Zealand.

Special Loathing For Britain

Whenever they want to exercise a favourite prejudice, the authors are more than happy to allow themselves to wander off topic. They reserve a special loathing for Britain, which receives unremitting abuse through a crudely selective historiography. How much of this is due to the authors' spite and how much to their historical ignorance is uncertain: people see what we want to see. But given the repeatedly profascist bias on display it's unsurprising that British policy is observed through appeasing eyes. The authors want to endorse the Munich Agreement, whereby Britain and France refused to honour their commitment to defend Czechoslovakia

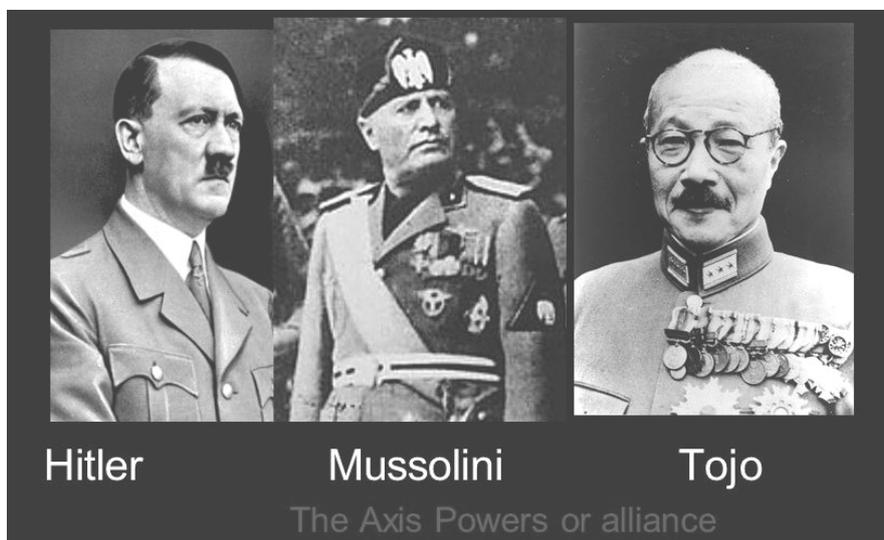
against the Nazis.

A more objective account would place the betrayal of Czechoslovakia as a significant – and arguably the prime – reason for the war in Europe, a conclusion that the Rightwing of UK Tories, and their surrogates elsewhere, still want to deny. That's because attitudes to the events of 1938 in Europe often serve as a proxy for current debates.

As the Eldred-Griggs look back, they see a British Prime Minister who “knew the UK was too weak militarily and economically” to stand up to Hitler. The country “faced bankruptcy”. In this, Neville Chamberlain was backed by Canada and Australia, and in NZ by the National Party (throughout the rest of their book, National is an easy – and usually deserving – target for the authors' venom, but in order to make their essential case – against fighting Germany – they need to sleep with the enemy).

In France pro-fascist appeasers had been saying the same thing. In fact, both the UK and France were strong enough militarily and economically to resist the Nazis and had they done so in 1938 Hitler would have backed down. Thus, all four countries would have saved themselves the trouble of the next seven years – and this book would not have had to be written. An evidence-based opinion would suggest that Chamberlain did not want to get offside with Herr Hitler, with whom he felt he had a lot in common, notably a hostility to the Soviet Union, in whose direction Czechoslovakia was situated. Go east with tacit British support was behind Munich. Just leave us the Empire.

The authors have no time for other whinging Poms. In the early days of the war, around the time of the Battle of Britain when London was being bombed, there was talk “over and over again” about how UK people were behaving “pluckily”. That chatter could not go uncontested, so the authors tag on the inevitable butwhatabout: “No-one told the households of the dominion that German civilians were also coping pluckily”. In the later years of the war, when the RAF was flattening German cities, this criticism (which is, of course, made) would be justified, but we're talking 1940, not 1945.



When Churchill and Roosevelt announced an Atlantic Charter in 1941, setting out principles for a peaceful post-war world it was “widely applauded in NZ and elsewhere”, but “it was only words. None of the eight points was a very compelling motive for New Zealand to fight or keep fighting. Also, many people were cynical about those noble words. Who could really believe that Britain and the United States would not try to get hold of new territory?”.

In 1941? The citizens of Dannevirke and Dunedin were muttering dark thoughts that the British people hurrying into their shelters as the nightly sirens started up were dreaming of seizing ... where? The Britons who were said to lack the resources to defend themselves from Germany? Elsewhere the authors tell us that “New Zealand was not behaving very wisely, however, by tying itself to trade with Britain. The dominion was hitching its wagon to a train wreck”.

While Allied treatment of Samoa, for example, is criticised, only nice things are quoted when it comes to what Pacific people had to say about their Japanese occupiers. And Germany is said here to have treated Allied POWs well. We are not told that this did not apply to Russian prisoners or to the treatment of any of the peoples that the Nazis – and, in the real history, the Japanese – regarded as sub-human.

No Mention Of Holocaust

Had the US or the UK carried out a 20th Century genocide against millions of its citizens, we can be sure it would have merited lengthy and

excoriating analysis in these pages. Butwhatabout Germany? After the curious thought that it was an “irony” that New Zealand “rabbis wholly backed the war” we are presented with the authors' only reference to the events known as the Holocaust, a term that is never used here. When word of the concentration camps reached Fraser, he was shocked and said so.

The authors allow him this reaction, but do not share it. The one sentence they provide on the subject is truly appalling: “Although the Prime Minister undoubtedly felt horror, conservatives who looked down on Jews, and working people who disliked Jewish employers and money-lenders, tended to have more mixed feelings”. When the topic had been daily life in NZ, we are provided with numerous footnotes. All sorts of individuals are quoted. To support the statement that working people in Ponsonby, let's say, or Caversham, were relaxed about the Holocaust, we are given no citations. Neither are we given an example of those superior “conservatives” from Remuera and Karori.

There *were* traces of anti-Semitism in NZ in the period, much of it imported from the UK, where it is still evident. But you don't expect it in 2017 from a father and son who see themselves as progressive champions of the victims of prejudice and violence. When a history is dished up with such severe shortcomings readers will be asking how much they can trust of what they read of events they don't know much about. When the selection of material to cover is so crudely imbalanced, what should we have been told that we are denied?

The book was supposed to be about World War 11, but it has a passage about Vietnam, while omitting, for example, the wars in Korea and Malaya, which were waged between those other two. The reason is of course to further the authors' bitter agenda. The stated reason they emphasise, the message they intended to convey, was that New Zealand was wrong to be upset about Hitler and Tojo because there was nothing in it for us, yet they consider the view that when Japan was fast retreating back north up the Pacific, NZ needed to join the US to have a say in the post-war dispensation as "coldly calculating".

Throughout the preceding text the authors had liked to think their rationale is itself coolly logical and self-interested. Vietnam is included only

to praise the Holyoake government for allegedly doing as little as it could to back the US. Were they at all consistent the authors would have condemned any commitment to fighting, but they'd rather plug their cold war credentials. They further betray their bias by saying how despicable they found the Vietnamese communists, in their view the only enemy of official NZ who deserved to be so stigmatised.

What explains this extraordinary publication? Stevan's previous books have had a consistent sympathy for working class people and he feels he is offering insights into the class system. He deceives himself. His motivations are negative, emotions from a generation reacting to the hegemony of rich men and the very Rightwing Returned Ser-

vices Association, which had captured the voice of returning soldiers. Fifty years ago, it was generally thought that Anzac Day would wither away once the RSA generation, said to glory in war and hate the Huns and the Japs, had died.

Instead, the crowds are bigger every year, attended by new generations who have no animosity towards other countries and no sense that war might be seen as a good idea. For many people now, Anzac Day is about understanding the past and pondering the lives of ancestors they never met. It's not about death and glory and all that. The Eldred-Griggs' obsessions are out of date. Like those Colonel Blimps of the distant past, they're fighting the last war. ■

IN MEMORY OF DEREK BUNN

- Murray Horton

Derek Bunn died in Christchurch, in September 2017, aged 61. I didn't find this out until January 2018 in the course of dinner table conversation with friends. That's not surprising, as I had neither seen nor had any contact with Derek for many decades. But, first things first. Who was Derek Bunn? He was a reminder that, long before there was an Anti-Bases Campaign (ABC), there was a thriving anti-bases campaign (if you get my drift). The anti-bases protests of the late 1960s and early 70s were bigger and more militant than anything that ABC has held in our 30+ years of existence.

The only difference was that those earlier protests were organised on a one-off basis, by ad hoc committees, not by an earlier equivalent of ABC. The most succinct summary of these historic protests is in Maire Leadbeater's



Derek Bunn

article in *Foreign Control Watchdog* 135, April 2014, "Our History As An Anti-Bases Campaign: From CAF-MANZ To CAF CINZ To CAFCA (& Then To ABC)", <http://www.converge.org.nz/watchdog/35/09.html> (CAF-MANZ = Campaign Against Foreign Military Activities in New Zealand. CAF CINZ = Campaign Against Foreign Control In New Zealand. CAFCA = Campaign Against Foreign Control of Aotearoa).

Maire lists the protests: Omega (1968); Woodbourne (1971); Mount John (1972) and Harewood (1973). She also lists the various 1980s' Black Birch protests. Mount John is the relevant one here. "The 1972 national anti-base demonstration was dubbed 'The Battle of Mt John'. Some 250 activists travelled to the Mt John observatory near Tekapo to protest at a US Air Force satellite tracking station built on land leased from the University of Canterbury. Policing was very aggressive and two demonstrators were seriously injured – a schoolboy suffered a fractured jaw after he was kicked in the face by a dog handler and two others were bitten by Police dogs, one of them on the penis".

"At the end of the weekend feelings were running high. 'Somebody vented their frustration by placing a large boulder on the Mount John access road and triggered off a glorious episode of mass vandalism. At least 90% of the 300 or so people present were soon straining and sweating to move every available boulder". The road was rendered completely impassable, littered with hundreds of tons of rocks".

*The quote is from Owen Wilkes' 1973 booklet "Protest: Demonstrations Against The American Military Presence In New Zealand. Omega 1968, Woodbourne 1971, Mount John 1972, Harewood/Weedons 1973". Peace Researcher 31, October 2005, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr31.pdf> is a Special Issue devoted to Owen Wilkes. Ed.

Derek Bunn was the schoolboy whose jaw was fractured by the boot of a Police dog handler. A detailed, contemporary description of the protest can be read online in the Victoria University student paper (*Salient*,

Vol 35, No. 3, 15/3/72, "Unjustifiable Violence At Mount John", George Rosenberg, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Salient35031972-t1-body-d1.html>). The article reported that Bunn lost a couple of teeth as a result of his injury, was taken to a doctor at Fairlie and then into Christchurch Hospital, where he had to spend several weeks. The Police story was that he suffered his injury by falling face first onto a rock or by being hit by a rock thrown by his fellow protestors.

Both Derek Bunn and Richard Suggate, the protestor bitten on the penis by a Police dog, filed damages claims against the Attorney-General on behalf of the Crown. Later in 1972, the National government's Minister of Police had to apologise to Richard on national TV for saying that Richard had been throwing rocks at the cops (there was only one TV network in those days, which everyone watched at the same time. So, that official apology was a big deal). In 1974 the case was settled out of court, with the Crown paying Richard a modest amount of several hundred dollars (to put that into perspective, my weekly rent in those days was \$9 for half a house).

Received Nothing Due To Technicality

Derek Bunn had no such happy

ending. At the time he was injured he was legally a minor, so required parental consent to initiate legal action. This was withheld for a long time. Finally, it was granted and the case was heard in Timaru. The judge held that Derek had indeed been kicked by a cop (as opposed to accidentally injuring himself) and said he would have awarded him a sizeably larger amount of damages than Richard Suggate received.

But – the Crown prevailed because it pointed out to the judge that legal action against the Crown had to be commenced within 12 months of the incident. And, because Derek's family had withheld the necessary consent, he was too late to seek legal redress. He received nothing. And as this was in the days before ACC, he got no financial support as a result of being injured (in those days you had to sue and prove liability. Derek did and his account was found to be true but he received nothing because of a legal technicality).

The University of Canterbury terminated its Mount John lease to the US Air Force and the land reverted to the Crown; the Labour government promptly leased it to a US transnational corporation, which ran the military observatory on behalf of the USAF until the whole thing became obsolete in the mid 1980s when it was closed, dismantled and

flown back to the US. That prompted me to issue the shortest press release I've ever done: "Good riddance to bad rubbish". A point worth noting is that, after Mount John, the cops have never used dogs again at a protest.

Of the US military facilities enumerated by Maire Leadbeater above: Omega was stopped before it ever set up here, Project Longbank (at RNZAF Woodbourne, Blenheim), Mount John and Black Birch (Marlborough) are all gone. Only Harewood (Christchurch Airport) remains, and it's been there since 1955. Both the existence of US military facilities in NZ and protests against them tend to fly under the international radar.

As Jeremy Agar points out in his review of David Vine's "Base Nation" (elsewhere in this issue), New Zealand is "not one of the 40 places around the world which are marked as places which saw 'anti-base protest and opposition, 1945-2015'. Derek Bunn reminds us (brutally, with a literal kick in the face) that NZ definitely does have a long and honourable history of confronting the US military and its local protectors. In the case of Mount John, they literally were the running dogs of US imperialism. ■

NEW PRINTER & WEBMASTER

- Murray Horton

The November 2017 *Peace Researcher* (number 54) turned out to be the last one produced by our printers (who had been doing it since 2003. They had also been printing *Foreign Control Watchdog* since 1997). The major Christchurch institution where the printery was located decided, as of 2018, to contract out its printing to a huge transnational corporation. The head printer, whom I'd known and worked with for all of those 20 years, had no alternative but to inform all their private customers that we'd all have to find new printers.

Apparently, I was the first one to be informed: "My apologies, Murray, and many thanks for all the years of great custom from you, you have been our longest customer and it was always a pleasure to deal with you". This had been talked about for at least a year, so it was not a great surprise. But it was sad to end, quite abruptly, such a long and productive working relationship. Over those years I had become friends with those printers. We'd been through a lot together. For example, they were among the central city premises fenced off and guarded by the Army in the aftermath of the February 2011 killer quake – we still got the next *Watchdog* printed on schedule.

I had already paid tribute to them when the former head printer, Keith Miskimmin, retired in 2016. That tribute is in *PR* 52, November 2016, "*Peace Researcher* Printer Retires", <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bwc>

[B6Aysm_HHOW5iQWdHdHhaczQ/view](#). Keith was succeeded as head printer by Susan Sell, who had actually been there longer than him. In my tribute I wrote: "I look forward to continuing to work with Sue for years to come". In the event, we only continued working together for less than two more years.

Sue was always prepared to go the extra mile for us – on a couple of occasions she personally delivered the printed *Watchdogs* to my home (from where I work), when I couldn't quickly access a vehicle to go and get them. I was delighted that when I paid my last visit to the printer, after being told about its closure to private customers, that Keith happened to pop in while I was saying goodbye to Sue. I hadn't seen him since he'd retired in 2016. They were great printers and we would have happily stayed with them indefinitely.

So, we now had to find a new printer for both *Peace Researcher* and *Watchdog*. The problem was speedily resolved – we simply gave both jobs to the local firm where Anti-Bases Campaign (ABC) has had photocopying and printing done – but never *PR* (apart from the two colours blank covers) - since the 1980s. We're confident that they'll maintain the high standard set by our previous printers. I've worked with these guys even longer than with our previous printers and, likewise, regard them as friends. This issue is the first one printed by them.

Nor was that the only recent change to the vital people who keep ABC & *PR* running. Chris Oakley had been

Webmaster for both ABC & Campaign Against Foreign Control of Aotearoa (CAFCA) since 2014 and resigned from both at the end of 2017. ABC is deeply grateful for the immense amount of work that Chris put into the site.

And, just to prove that it's a small world, his successor as ABC Webmaster is Greg Waite, who was *Watchdog* Webmaster for more than a decade (until he was succeeded by Cass Daley – who was also the previous ABC Webmaster). Greg has come home to NZ after 18 years in Australia, came to the 2018 Waihopai protest (his first time there in 30 years) and is now a key part of the ABC team. Welcome back, Greg! ■

DEMILITARISING THE PACIFIC STARTS AT HOME, JACINDA

- Murray Horton

The Anti-Bases Campaign (ABC) congratulates the Prime Minister for saying (in April 2018): "New Zealand is opposed to the militarisation of the Pacific". She said it in response to reports of China possibly eyeing up the chances of getting itself a military base in Vanuatu. It must be said that these reports have to be taken with a grain of salt. During the Cold War, New Zealand governments and media regularly attempted to frighten the NZ public by regurgitating American propaganda about Soviet fishing boats, passenger ships or submarines allegedly up to no good in the Pacific or inside New Zealand waters.

I'm old enough to remember Prime Minister Muldoon commandeering prime time live TV to solemnly inform the nation about the dangers of a Soviet naval base in Vietnam if the Communists won that war. But let's accept that these current reports are true. If so, ABC declares its opposition to any Chinese military base in Vanuatu. Or anywhere else in the Pacific. But we urge the Prime Minister to go considerably further than simply opposing the militarisation of the Pacific.



ABC's new Webmaster, Greg Waite (left), with Murray Horton, on Owen Wilkes' memorial bench, Christchurch, 2015. Photo by B Horton

PEACE RESEARCHER WELCOMES YOUR FEEDBACK

Peace Researcher is published by the Anti-Bases Campaign. The Co-Editors are Murray Horton and Warren Thomson; the Layout Editor is Becky Horton. It covers a range of peace issues with emphasis on foreign military bases and intelligence topics. Contributed articles will be considered for publication based on subject matter and space requirements. We are particularly interested in reports of original research on peace topics in Aotearoa and the wider region of Australasia and the Pacific. We welcome your feedback and constructive suggestions on how we can improve.

Our address is:

Peace Researcher
PO Box 2258, Christchurch 8140, Aotearoa/New Zealand
e-mail: abc@chch.planet.org.nz

You can read *Peace Researcher* online at <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/peace-researcher-home.html>

She needs to be calling for it to be demilitarised. France still runs a 19th Century time warp empire in the Pacific, complete with military bases. Look no further than our next door neighbour, New Caledonia.

And the glaring fact is that the Pacific is an American lake, with a huge number of military bases in other people's countries and floating bases in the form of nuclear armed aircraft carriers and naval fleets and submarines. These US Pacific bases have two purposes - to project brute American power throughout the world's biggest ocean. And to confront and contain China. The latter is not an excuse for China to start throwing its own military weight around in the South China Sea and the Pacific - but it's certainly an explanation.

For example, Jacinda needs to be telling the Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, to close the Pine Gap war fighting and spy base near Alice Springs and to kick the US Marines out of Darwin. She might object that NZ can't go around interfering in the international relations of sovereign nations. OK, then, there is one Pacific nation where it is quite within her power to make a positive step towards demilitarising the Pacific. That nation is, of course, New Zealand.

Close the Waihopai spy base which, in all but name, is an outpost of the US National Security Agency operating on New Zealand soil, and which is used to spy on our Pacific

neighbours on behalf of the US. Ditto for the Government Communications Security Bureau's other spy base at Tangimoana. Close the GCSB itself. It simply operates as a junior sub-contractor for US intelligence as the 5th of the Five Eyes. The NZ public is told that we need the GCSB to protect us from cyber-criminals. No, we don't. Set up an agency dedicated to that task, without the international and domestic spying that the GCSB does on behalf of its foreign masters.

And demilitarise the openly declared US military base here, the one which has been at Christchurch Airport since 1955. It is a transport

base, not a combat base, but it remains a contingency asset for the US military, part of its global chain of military bases. ABC fully supports peaceful scientific research in Antarctica but we call for the transport and logistic support for that to be demilitarised.

Being nuclear free is not enough. NZ needs to break the chains that continue to bind us into the US military and intelligence empire. No Chinese or other foreign bases in the Pacific. No American bases in the Pacific. And no American spy bases or military bases in New Zealand. That's the way to demilitarise the Pacific. ■



NZ Herald, 4/10/17

JOIN ABC AND GET *PEACE RESEARCHER*

Peace Researcher is the newsletter and journal of the Anti-Bases Campaign. If you would like to join ABC, please fill in the form below. All ABC members receive *Peace Researcher*. Membership is \$20 per year (ABC is not registered for GST). **Cheques payable to ABC, Box 2258, Christchurch 8140, Aotearoa/New Zealand.**

Name	_____	Sub \$	20.00
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