



Science for Peace

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## Standing Up for Science for Peace

By John McMurtry

### Degenerate Global Trends Not Connected or Causally Decoded

No-one can reasonably deny global life system crisis on all planes. But almost nowhere are the degenerate trends connected, or their common cause identified. The air, soil and water cumulatively degrade. The climates and oceans destabilize. Species become extinct at a spasm rate across continents. Pollution cycles and volumes increase to endanger life systems at all levels in cascade effects. Public sectors and services are defunded and privatized as tax evasion by the rich increases. The global food system produces more and more disabling and contaminated junk without nutritional value. Non-contagious diseases multiply to the world's biggest killer with only symptom cures. The vocational future of the next generation collapses across nations. The global financial system ceases to function for productive investment in life capital and goods.

Most relevant to us, *lethal military production increases to more than the cost to prevent these problems while enforcing the very causal mechanism driving the life-system destruction.* Science for Peace certainly has its work cut out for it. Yet conception of peace as a feel-good state of self and members has widely replaced informed recognition of ecocidal and war-criminal aggressions in the real world. A presumptive internalization of blame-the-enemy framing has worked its way into a first premise of public discourse, and the systematic omission of life-and-death facts on the ground has followed suit as a cultivated ignorance. A pattern of omission and silencing has now infiltrated Science for Peace against its founding tradition.

This mind-lock results, for example, in 'pro-Putin' and 'anti-Putin' perspectives as the starting point of serious

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public inquiry organized by the acting president over the last seven months. While the bipartisan US doctrine of "full-spectrum dominance" continues to rule and expand into society-destroying wars, this track record is eliminated from the inquiry before it starts. Then when the memory-hole operation is completed at the conference level, it is made out of bounds for executive review as "already over". Thus the erasure operates at both the ground level and the second-order level in succession. It is reinforced in follower demands to stop pursuing the question by persistent reductions of it to an ad hominem issue. The ultimately regulating pattern of propaganda, war and transnational destruction continues to be ignored and thus abetted. So let us again review the documented pattern of facts. Any disconfirming evidence is welcome, but none has been provided. The memory-hole operations will prevail on macro and micro levels until the circles of erasure and omission are overcome.

The regulating pattern of facts long precedes the Ukraine crisis. Whenever any nation has an independent government with fossil fuel, financial, agricultural or strategic resources not yet subjugated to transnational corporate control, there is a US-led campaign to destroy it. Where is there exception? The master tactic is to direct all attention at the official enemy as pretext for war criminal aggressions. Think of the Middle East – Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Egypt, Libya, Syria. All have been successively warred upon over

decades dating from the overthrow of the social-democratic president Mossadegh of Iran in 1953 to Syria's still mildly independent social state being destroyed to the roots today. Over 20 years in between, Iraq's region-leading social state with universal health-care, free higher education, public water and electricity, local agricultural and food subsidies has been subjected to genocidal destruction and permanent civil war. In paradigmatic US war-criminal aggression which is taboo to name in circles of collaboration, Iraq was attacked on contrived pretexts and the state was destroyed to control its fabulous resource riches "floating on a sea of oil" (Paul Wolfowitz's phrase).

Try to think of any clear stop to this long history of false propaganda leading to crimes against peace that defines US foreign policy prior to the orchestrated destabilization, violent coup d'état, civil war construction, and one-way bombing in Ukraine.

In all cases, vast new profit opportunities, resources, lands, price climbs, markets, agribusiness and – most of all – looting of public resources and finances by private foreign financiers and corporations are opened up once sovereign powers to regulate collective life capital bases are stripped away, not only in the victim societies but at home. The civil war method of long-term destruction of formerly independent societies to more freely exploit their resources has continued to the present day in a strategic arc of devastating civil wars from Pakistan to Iraq to Muslim Africa to Europe itself in Ukraine after the Chechnya civil war in Russia was ended. Civil wars render peoples helpless against foreign money control, and the pattern only deepens. Yet just keep blaming the enemy as the central issue, as in the first premise of organization of the Ukraine crisis by Metta Spencer, and the eco-genocidal pattern continues concealed. For example in recent weeks, Saudi Arabia with US support has recently projected the "terrorist" and sectarian "Shiite" labels on the popular uprising of the poor in Yemen against a corrupt US-Saudi puppet government. In more long-term historical trajectory, civil war has been US-supported and funded in Venezuela ever since its "socialism for the twenty-first century" was launched, briefly succeeding in violent coup d'état until the people rose in the streets against it and loyal guards defeated the putschists who had already been diplomatically recognised by the US (just as in Ukraine over a decade later). Today a main vector of destabilization of both Russia and Venezuela has been orchestrated oil-price halving aimed at it ruining their economies. Yet always "democratic" and "pluralist" pretexts lead the non-stop attacks on independent societies. The Enemy is whatever seriously opposes the ruling propaganda and the war-criminal agenda. One object alone is achieved in fact. Peoples and resources of

the region are more easily preyed by transnational corporations without sovereign social defences or unity of collective life purpose permitted. As long as all evils can still be blamed on an ever-shifting Enemy, there is no overcoming recognition.

### **The Deep Pattern of War Erased in Official Culture and Science for Peace at Once**

Even if the US people themselves keep being bled dry with their common life bases and interests stripped out by military and financial claws in the trillions every year, even as public purses and resources are plundered and destroyed across continents by a recurrent common causal mechanism, the same systematic omission of facts, blaming of the official enemy, and ignoring documented evidence occurs. This is the master denial of never facing the issues. Only surface phenomena are ever engaged, and the rest is blocked out. As transnational private money sequences alone multiply in fact, everything connects in social and environmental life depredation out of control. There are myriad masks of the disorder, but *always the evolved collective life capital bases of societies and their ecological life hosts are cumulatively expropriated and despoiled*. Twenty-five years after the dismantling of Yugoslavia into atavistic nationalisms steeped in the Nazi past, the same happens again north in Ukraine. Yet no level of this deep narrative is even mentioned. Nonetheless its story-line is predictable across borders. Socially organized development is reversed for private transnational feeding on collective financial, agricultural, natural and strategic resources of societies as "freedom".

What can stop it? Only the rule of life-protective law with the force of law works. But Palestine even seeking the protection of international law is openly threatened and its taxes seized by Israel with US support. When Palestine joins UNESCO by invitation, the US defunds UNESCO. This is a lawless rule of normalized terror, life destruction and impunity. But who sees it?

PM Harper, we know, incarnates the divide-and-rule war method. His CEO rule strips Canada of its social life infrastructures and public tax funds in the name of the nation. Yet his underlying program of serving only private market powers to multiply and pillage across borders – the deeper narrative - is suppressed from view even if there is no exception to it. Science for Peace initiative to expose this underlying attack on science was excluded from executive support because of risk to charitable status. How far do we internalize these norms of tyrannical power? Now Canada is aerial bombing in Arab lands from Libya to Syria – also funded by public money – even though the target ISIL beheaders have been trained and financed by the allied states bombing

them. Harper-rule is also now militarily assisting the violent-coup and US-installed regime in Ukraine whose one-way aerial bombing of civilians and infrastructures has killed tens of thousands of its own citizens according to German intelligence, driven two million people from their homes at the latest count, and deployed a policy of mass starvation and ethnic cleansing clearing operations. All this was identified in the October 2014 *Science for Peace Bulletin*, but all was erased by the Ukraine conference in March 2015, in particular the false propaganda campaigns and massive criminal violations of international law.

All disappears from the official story and its propagators by diverting to the official enemy as first step. The topic is diverted to a familiar hate-object of the audience. Corporate mass media and politicians do this as their stock in trade. It gets attention and runs deep into the group psyche. Once diverted to the hate-object of the group - say “Saddam” or “Putin” or “state socialist” or “terrorist” - people block out disproving facts so as to remain acceptable to the surrounding group. This is the underlying thought-switch upon which mass-murderous wars and system oppressions depend as well as most propaganda of daily life. Not even academics may stand up to the accusation of “pro-Russia”, “9-11 conspiracy theorist”, “communist”, or whoever the designated enemy may be.

This is why evidence, public statistics, knowledge of anything outside the official narrative is not now safe in corporate states. Public knowledge is the enemy of the game of propaganda and war. That which sees, documents, shares, certifies, distributes, or organizes to prove and act for the public good is forbidden in a thousand ways even in Canada – the secret behind the Harper agenda of information control - from defunding and de-listing progressive NGOs, to gags on government ministries and scientists, to allowing only his personal photographer’s pictures into the mass media. Yet the method of silencing facts by blocking them from view is not confined to Harper-rule, but expands by normalization into where we may least expect it.

### **The Truth is What Sells**

Thus even the explicit US geostrategic plan and execution of “full spectrum dominance across the world” is *reversed* by the blame-the-enemy premise. An ultimate issue emerges from contemporary world history to our choice space: whether Science for Peace collaborates this ruling order of propaganda and power, *or* stands for scientific standards of evidence and conclusion and against proven falsehood, enemy blame, armed aggression and war. To avoid facing the problem and the proof of it is the way of mission collapse. One merely keeps blocking out the evidence with no reply as if it did

not exist, just as in the wider world of power and propaganda. If ignoring the evidence does not work, then one can simply lie and say it has already been fully answered, or say when caught out, no-one knows what the evidence is. All this has already occurred within our own organisation. Saying it is so makes it so if enough people go along with it. The overall method is dominant in the wider world of starting wars while claiming to work for peace. We are naive if we do not think it can happen here.

Reconnecting to the ruinous trends of global degeneration with which we began, and their enforcement by the world’s ruling military and embargo system, we might ask two direct questions. *Who joins the dots between the degenerate trends, as opposed to ignoring whatever does not fit the US-led public story? Who looks for the common cause, as opposed to multiplying perspectives on the official enemy?*

At the most general level of global corporate press and information systems (including introductory textbooks in economics and sociology, over 90% so controlled in Canada), *not one* of these fatally degenerate trends is connected to any other or to any common cause producing them. This is testable by looking for any exception. Least of all is the depredatory system of vast military expenditures and operations behind the latest enemy they are used against examined as a cause of the hostilities. Never linked to this *perpetual war-preparations system* now costing one billion dollars a day of US public money are the transnational corporate expansions into every area that the weapons, covert operations and nuclear threats advance. In Ukraine next to Russia, for example, private Wall Street and German banks are already in with the IMF as loan enforcer; big agribusiness including Monsanto is already operating to control the greatest farmlands of Europe and a breadbasket of the world; big US oil is already into licenses for the new gas-fracking zones being created now that a pro-Russia government - which prohibits fracking – has been overthrown by the violent US-led coup; and of course the world’s leading manufacturers of war armaments are already receiving orders for them via post-coup Ukraine and US war-party promises with Harper-Canada in tow.

If you are part of the ruling propaganda and power apparatus, every one of these facts will be ignored. If you are an active agency of this system, then only the alleged motives of expansion of the official enemy will be mentioned, indeed assumed as the framework of understanding the civil and international war in motion. One does not have to be a warmonger to be part of the propaganda system set towards war, dispossession and mass murder. One can organise for it by blocking out

every fact showing the underlying pattern. Who is to know or care? Usually just a minority, and they can be insinuated as violent for their opposition. The press does it. Parties and politicians do it. Regime servers do it. It can be merely pre-conscious indoctrination. The winning formula is that of the larger system in which they are embedded. *The truth is what sells*. Endless activities of lectures, member round-ups, connections to like activities, pot-luck dinners, corporate-media chairs for conferences, and so on are all most directly governed by this unexamined value equation. The substance, care and life concern for natural and social, ecological and historical life support systems in cumulative collapse by a global disorder does not compute if it is all blocked out. It dissolves into thin air. The Enemy as hate object steers the process of selection to fit the ruling narrative on which continued funding may depend.

‘Lack of political will’ to do anything follows from the denial of the facts in accord with the ruling framework. Thus no dots can be joined, and so no will is possible. All energies are poured instead into symbolic shows of peace disconnected from the known greatest war machine in the history of the world that invades where it likes. The denial here is not the direct denial found in big-oil funding of deniers of climate destabilization. It is not Harper-rule defunding of all public and non-governmental research exposing system-wide facts. It is more subtle. It operates as in the following paradigm example of our most active member, our acting president in organizing a public conference on one of the great crises of our time.

### **Dear Colleagues: A Paradigm Case of the Propagandist Framework of War**

The very first facts and causal analysis to be eliminated in organizing the conference on Ukraine’s civil war were all those in the lead article of the prior *Science for Peace Bulletin*, “Corporate Globalization and Society Destruction: Joining the Dots of War and Peace in Ukraine”. I thought it strange as well that I knew nothing of the long-organized conference until a few days before it started. So I tracked how the organization had evolved under the direction of the acting president. I soon found that not only had the primary documented source of Science for Peace been erased from the project. Every causal fact and underlying pattern it reported - which had already been through international refereeing process and publication - was also erased from every topic and expertise of the conference plan. The systematic erasures of the official US-led story and of the Science for Peace Conference framework were revealingly the same.

In consequence I wrote a detailed letter demonstrating the propagandist framing of the conference and systematic omission of the most basic and uncontested facts of the causation of the Ukraine civil war. The letter of analysis spelled out step by step how the organizing principles of the acting president’s wholesale expunction of the relevant basic facts were the same as the official US propagandist story with no evidence that any critical understanding was allowed a space in the entire operation.

I submitted the analysis in the expectation that all my time was well spent in communicating with a scientifically literate community, and further expecting relevant counter-evidence or argument to anything stated. I hoped first for some adaptation to the facts before the conference started, or at least some executive re-thinking of what had happened in the light of the meaning of *Science for Peace*. Not one of these expectations – normally taken for granted within a learned community – was remotely fulfilled. Qualified and scientific scholars agreed from the list-serve, but no disagreement or response at all came from the acting president. Only her supporters responded who refused to advance beyond personal matters irrelevant to the Ukraine crisis and to the propagandist structure of the conference. The very same form of executive non-response and diversion compounded by continuous ad hominem fallacies has ruled throughout and since. To place the matter more firmly on the record, my letter as follows was submitted at the same time to the *Bulletin*. This original open letter is edited and reduced, but remains the record in *situ* from which deep-structural generic analysis then follows. .

“While Science for Peace leadership has trended with the commercial world to personal opinions on issues over principled substance, fact and law, our mission by definition is understanding by scientific standards. We therefore commit in first principle to knowing facts versus ignoring facts, reasoning versus diversion to individuals and imputed perspectives, and seeking the underlying causal structures and principles of phenomena rather than interviews with competing perceptions as an end-in-itself.

The non-scientific commercial format has, however, prevailed through the acting president’s organisation of the conference on the Ukraine civil war and in comments of support which do the same thing. There has been no sign of advancing beyond this format, but only more glaring repetitions of its propagandist framework in public in the name of Science for Peace. The starting story line of “*war between Ukraine and Russia*” is still proclaimed in Metta Spencer’s solo press release (March 7), although a profoundly false claim in law and in fact. International law is

ignored from the start and throughout – the most revealing and dangerous omission of all. Unaccountability to scientific or legal understanding of the driving forces of the civil war, their causal pattern, or the war crimes under law against millions of victims on the ground is built in a-priori.

The propagandist framework here has long been endemic in our dominant media and blame-the-enemy political culture. Yet understanding of Science for Peace is only principled if it lives up to standards of science and reason in seeking the civil peace it advocates. This is what the organisation *means* – as distinguished from ‘peace’ as conformity to imperial norms, or a criterionless peace of neutrality standing for no life cause that is defined, or the peace of a genocidal outcome. The founders and strength of Science for Peace over decades has been to see through pervasive armed violence and threats against civilians across the world dressed in myths of the designated Enemy to justify the destruction of one society after another. This is the ultimate issue at stake in the direction of Science for Peace. The Ukraine conference, however, excluded these life-and-death issues from every discussion – an exemplification of the ruling frame of mind that abets war crimes by blinkering them out. No item of the agenda allowed the issue. Armaments and nuclear weapons spending, build-ups, threats and wars already in motion have been what Science for Peace has long sought to empirically track, connect and understand in principle at the leading edge of research. But all these were blocked out of view. Instead reduction to the official foreign enemy and demonization of its leader became the basis of the organization from then to now in the name of ‘Science for Peace’.

In this way, home-side imperial and national slogans without definition, the dominant global market business of war, and heinous crimes under law causing over a million people fleeing in East Ukraine under US-supported neo-Nazi command were over months simply erased. So too were NATO’s non-stop accusations without evidence to justify the heavy-arms NATO build-ups, war exercises, and aerial bombing preparations in every country on Russia’s East European borders in one-way threatening of world war. International law, the only instituted common ground or regulator across the hostile and warring parties, was kept out of any topic, speaker knowledge, or conference discussion. The Canadian government’s unprecedentedly fact-ignorant war

mongering on Ukraine was abolished from view. All was ignored even when explicitly brought to the acting president’s attention with evidence.

As in corporate media and state proclamations, the *taboo zone* was any line of inquiry or analysis that exposed the official story line, its concealments of central facts, and the mass murders and destruction of civilian homes, schools and infrastructures by the known US-installed coup government of Kiev – now being heavily subsidized and armed to renew its war of one-way bombing, starvation and land clearance of Donbass region citizens. Will the truce hold when US-assisted Kiev views it as a period to prepare for war? The life-and-death facts are not allowed within the ruling format. More disquietingly, they were blocked out by every step of the organisation of the Ukraine conference. Seek to find exception. The method is more effective than a gag order because the silencing pattern is itself silent. Omission cannot be seen.

The silencing method has precedent within the acting president’s magazine as reported by lead Science for Peace member, Edwin Daniel but with no evident attention by the executive or the board in allowing this conference to build over months. As Daniel observed beforehand – as usual with no response– her Peace Magazine will “publish claims that are untrue” and refuse to correct them when pointed out. As we know, this is the very opposite of science and reason. Yet “when I have tried to point these out,” he reports, “I have been consistently ignored. I will mention just one recent example, the question of who was responsible for firing sarin containing rockets in Syria. The western media and governments immediately blamed the Assad regime, but later evidence showed that to be false. After Metta published the media claim and I sent her the refuting evidence, nothing happened. So I wrote a letter to the Editor of the Peace Magazine, explaining the nature of the refuting evidence. It never appeared. When I questioned Metta about it, she denied receiving the letter, which I then resent. It has never appeared.” (Edwin Daniel to sfpboard@listserv, March 14).<sup>i</sup>

The propagandist slanting the acting president has imposed on Science for Peace is anti-scientific in principle. It not only assumes the official enemy designated by the US as evil, but ignores the hard evidence proving that the criminal facts alleged are false (here led by the much-documented investigation of Seymour Hersh). In this case, it was the official enemy of Syria’s Assad. In the case of the conference on Ukraine, as we see

below, the issue was immediately mutated to the official enemy, Russia and Vladimir Putin demonized in the West since US-NATO expansion through the Ukraine was stopped after the US-led violent Ukraine coup. Science for Peace has been enlisted into this propagandist framework without notice or Board response.

The acting president has claimed that she had been acting on the instructions of the now resigned president Jim Turk to arrange – in her words - “a conference on Ukraine *and Russia*”. Yet Turk advises in his recent and only letter on the topic that he in fact said that the conference was to be on “Ukraine”. Already we know from this shift to Russia as the target of understanding the external causation of the Ukraine civil war that the acting president had planned the conference around the ruling blame-the-enemy bias, not the president’s direction.

This propagandist structure has been sustained for the months since through the conference, even when ever more evidence becomes public that refutes it. More alarmingly to a long-time researcher into the deep structure of war propaganda, this unilateral false implication of Russia as alone externally responsible constitutes a propagandist framework from the beginning. It was unilaterally presumed throughout as the organising idea of the conference so that Russia led by Putin (whom MS hates, in her words, as “an immoral thug and the most successful thief in the history of the world”) is assumed as the only extra-Ukraine force involved in what is in fact a constructed civil war. Yet all this is planned according to this false frame in the name and agency of Science for Peace with no apology and no stop afterwards. Most significantly, there is no reply or even denial of this war-propaganda framing itself to the present day.

The pattern continues after the conference with even deeper distortion and reversal of facts. Prefacing her March 4 press report on the conference with an even more provocative lead asserting “the *war between Ukraine and Russia*”, she abolishes the historical facts that it is a civil war; that the civil war is known to have been orchestrated by the US Assistant Secretary of State, Victoria Nuland (as reported in the *Bulletin* and widely elsewhere, and nowhere denied by the US State Department); and that the coup government under US direction moved quickly to one-way war-criminal aerial bombing of civilians in Eastern Ukraine and economic strangulation of

the population. Far from ending with the conference, the ruling propagandist framework continues afterwards, and in spite of all written exposure and protest, is more extreme than before. So distorted is the ruling bias at work that the lead for her press release/article does not take into account what it itself reports from the panelists and interviewees themselves which contradict it.

Even though numerous attempts were made to balance the program, to take into account excluded major facts, to achieve some modicum of scientific integrity, all evidence-based patterns of the documented causal sequence of the civil war and its major atrocities, all continued to be ignored and erased. In accordance with the governing propaganda narrative, the ‘Science for Peace conference on Ukraine’ was immediately published by NATO’s publication, *The Atlantic Council* (March 5) with the title lead “*Culpability - -*”. This article described the conference as advising us that “Russia’s actions are best viewed as opportunistic and reactionary, rather than as part of a grand strategy to dismember Ukraine and destabilize the region” – both sides blaming Russia as the villain, and excluding all evidence to the contrary.

How could this happen? Context helps. The acting president was raised and educated in the southern United States, and the International Peace Research Association she identifies with was originally founded as the NATO Science program. Although a main claim to fame is being a member along with 2000 others of the Pugwash group receiving half the Nobel Peace Prize for work done largely over 30 years before she joined, this was work financed by Cyrus Eaton *against official-enemy thinking*. Here Metta Spencer prides herself most of all for having helped to convince Gorbachev towards the USSR’s peaceful collapse, and this helps to explain why she is so enraged at Putin and Russia who have reclaimed independence and now keep pro-US advocates out of the country. A dominant propagandist framework has been internalized and rewarded that rules out all other nations, military powers, and transnational expansionist aims but Putin Russia as the villain in Ukraine - or whoever the official enemy might be elsewhere. This is by no means a one-off derangement. We saw the same closed unbalance at work against Syria’s Assad where even when a central claim against a designated US Enemy is falsified by heavily researched facts, she repeats it, refuses to correct when advised, ignores and evidently lies to the correcting source, and never reports the truth.

Throughout, the ruling operation of fact repression and reversal relies on despising the designated Enemy - the propelling force of big lies and wars across borders against which Science for Peace was founded to confront with knowledge, not propel with one-sided bias and falsehoods.

The acting president, however, has made no response to analysis of this propagandist framework even when directly addressed to her. As all else that crosses the dominant presumptions controlling this form of thought, it is ignored. Push harder, shout at volunteers, obscure conflicts by multiplying perspectives, keep the format free from connective analysis by anyone, display with NATO the results as 'pluralist democracy', and never respond to exposure of the unexamined meta program of falsehood at work. We know the pattern at the wider level. External funding and support comes this way, especially from the parties promoting the civil war scenarios.

We might ask a simple question at this point. Where are known US interventions leading to civil war in sovereign countries – from Ukraine to Venezuela - ever questioned in even decades of her magazine to which Science for Peace is being wedded? Even the decisive documented fact that NATO already had Ukraine divided into two in a 2000 map used by its defense ministers - pressed on the acting president by Adnan Zuberi with sources long before the conference – is silenced. Ultimately we are confronted here by another level of the aggression - eliminating the opposition by blanking out whatever justifies it, and sustaining hate of the official enemy at a reflex level by abolition of the central facts of armed force, oppression and – under law - mass murder of civilians and their life support systems on the ground.

And so the conference proceeded with ignoring, dismissal or insinuating abuse of people not staying in line. In accord with the propagandist frame from step one, nothing is allowed to expose the US, neo-Nazi and NATO supportive roles in the society destabilization, the violent coup d'état or the following string of war criminal atrocities against civilians, nor the pervasively proclaimed evil of the designated Enemy as perpetual pretext for war by reverse blame."

### **The Ad Adversarium Fallacy Behind Wars**

Beneath the political bullying and repression of facts so familiar in these matters, the very bases of

reason and science are silently attacked at the roots. As a professional philosopher and logician as well as social scientist, I have written a lot in refereed journals and texts about the propagandist framing of issues – demonstrating that the underlying *logical form* is deranged. This is not a personal issue, as propagandists always seek to make it to keep attention away from the evidence. Whatever the issue or parties involved, reason is always diverted to the *accepted enemy* of the audience as a diversion from the facts of the dispute or issue. At the general level, this is known in the logic of natural language as an 'ignoratio elenchi' or informally 'red herring'. Yet the specific fallacy involved of diverting to a culturally accepted enemy - away from the causes, facts and inner logic of the issue - is so common across tribes and times that it is still pervasively exploited in ruling propaganda fields into today. This is the *ad adversarium fallacy* which is the track-switch of the rest, and the pro-and-anti-Putin/Russia framing of a conference is a textbook example of its fallacious operations.

It silences all reason and inquiry that does not begin by isolating the official enemy as the issue. Who can I find that is "pro-Putin"? – the main question the acting president posed - is already a complete diversion away from the causation and horrors of the civil war onto the official enemy as the issue. Predictably, no-one took up the invitation. Confined within interview-type format with enemy diversion the basis of presentation, the format ruled out connective meaning, principled understanding and causal analysis of the facts.

I first came to know Science for Peace through its co-founding president and distinguished physicist Eric Fawcett who had read my work, and invited me to give an evening lecture to Science for Peace on "Terrorism" in the midst of the Reagan era. From then on, I was led to believe that Science for Peace was a rigorously logical and factually grounded organisation at the most advanced level of public affairs understanding, and so it has been for many years with some of the world's greatest critical thinkers like Ursula Franklin and Anatol Rapoport as leading figures. Yet out of this long founding tradition, a Science for Peace conference based in a propagandist framework led by official-enemy assumptions and omitting all basic facts refuting this propagandist frame has been instituted and persisted to this day. It has not only controlled every step of a conference, but it has since overridden all evidence of it and efforts to correct it.

I explained why it was propagandist in principle to Metta Spencer and others in open correspondence days before the ‘Ukraine-Russia’ conference. “I can feel Eric Fawcett turn over in his grave”, I implored. Revealingly, the propagandist framework was never even denied. It was not answered by anyone. Only diversions and ad hominem attacks occurred with reverse blaming the familiar method of sidetracking. As on the wider stage of the politics of power and war, issues of fact and truth versus false war propaganda are erased from view. ‘Killing the messenger’ was the response to former president Judy Deutsch which caused her resignation from the executive. Like others presenting central evidence of the propagandist slant and distortion, all is ignored by the acting presidential circle.

Deutsch further observed that the conference went in fact just as the propagandist frame structured it. The central issues of US financing and directing of the destabilization of Ukraine over years into its Nazi-led coup d’etat and overthrow of its governing party elected by the vast majority of people, the NATO push since 2000 into Ukraine against promises made to Gorbachev and continuous NATO war-fever claims of Russia invasions, hundreds of tanks and border build-ups without evidence, the crippling embargoes on the basis of multiple false claims of the violation of international law in Crimea’s vote for re-integration, *whatever did not fit into the propagandist frame of Russia’s Putin as the villain and the US and NATO as invisible was excluded from view.*

Former president Deutsch’s open report that not one of these central issues was discussed at the conference was also not denied by its organiser Metta Spencer. ‘There was’, she continues in her letter of protest to the membership, the board and the executive in fact ‘overt suppression of this discussion such as when speakers Marta Dyczok and Leonid Kossals scoffed at these questions; moreover, the written questions were selected, reworded, and routed by the moderators - - [with the acting president ruling against] any direct interactions with the audience.’ Again there is no denial from anyone present of these eyewitness facts then or since.

In short, every senior member effort to show the degenerate bias and reversal of Science for Peace’s purpose has been silenced just as in the larger macro system of permanent war masquerading as ‘peace’ in continuous digression to ad hominem issues and smears.”

## Silencing the Message in Collapse of Mission

Those standing for Science for Peace against rule by propagandist frame have already appealed to the Board of Directors to set matters straight. The open letter analysis above was a primary document to be reviewed. But again recognition and action was ruled out by imposed framework of omission and exclusion. A chair was appointed for the meeting who declared from the start that he *would read none of the evidence* presented by the formal statements submitted at all. At a stroke, all was effectively banished from the proceedings including the former president’s very detailed and documented demonstration of the propagandist framework moving through a year of misgovernment. Nothing was read by the presiding officer and others following his lead. No deferral to a more prepared occasion was allowed. Directionless interactions and insinuations ruled with few noticing that the propagandist agenda of the conference was now carried over into erasure at the president-led executive and board levels.

Every one of the long-term concerns of Science for Peace painstakingly defined by members and eye-witness were dissolved into verbal opinions with no ground or fact required. Every step of logical demonstration of the propagandist framework and its abolition of the facts and causal sequence of the Ukraine crisis was simultaneously erased from informed discussion within the executive circle. All was erased by the silencing procedure before anything was read, with political constitutionalist Peter Russell applauding. The meeting happened so debased of any bearings that Science for Peace’s most fully qualified faculty scientist with both medical and physics doctorates, Jim Deutsch – our next, scientist president one would hope – took detailed notes. His report indicated that only know-nothing space of discussion ruled.

Thus organized erasure of facts succeeded again by the same method of framework silencing that had been imposed since September 2014 on Science for Peace’s conference on Ukraine’s civil war.

I have not observed any decision-making body before that does not require reading of relevant expert documentation. More deeply, the underlying facts and pattern of collapse of mission were simply dropped down the memory hole without knowledge, facts or counterargument required any step of the way. This is how the silencing happens at the second-order level as well. The appointed chair of the meeting called to resolve the issues instead dismisses the long-prepared statements for it by prescribing as his exact conditions “I will not read messages” and “I do not think that we should be debating a conference that has already taken place”. All



again is relegated to the past as if it had not happened, just as all the basic facts were by the conference itself. Exposure of what is silenced is itself silenced. Science for Peace mission collapses in a continuous format of ignoring, omitting and structurally excluding whatever does not fit the official story at macro and micro levels.

### Science for Peace Defined by What is *Not*

The acting president has carried on in the months since as if successful erasure is complete. Yet in her long Easter/Passover message to members, she asserts two claims on p. 6 of 8 in her only public response to the in-depth demonstrations of her propagandist framework of control. The first is another demand without ground in academic reality: that “we should only cite evidence that we have personally witnessed. Do not quote another person’s criticisms”. This silently entails, we should note, outlawing any direct and proved report of lies, falsehoods and abuses in writing by eyewitnesses and experts so that no denial or counter-evidence from the violator is required. Such an edict would put an end to most scholarly work and reportage that exists. The scholarly remedy is clear. If any written statement of facts is not true, then declare it untrue rather than bluff “court of law” standard with no legal application. Again we may observe the silencing method at work, now on what people may report as true that no-one denies in fact. No denial, I might add, has been made of any facts reported in this article or in my prior open letter.

Again we see the same underlying pattern of repressing or outlawing whatever facts do not fit the official story while asserting moral high-ground at the same time.

The second assertion in the Easter statement of the acting president is more disturbing. It is totally untrue in fact. Metta Spencer says (italics added) she “has been attacked unfairly for the conference that I produced on Ukraine and Russia. *I have answered every accusation fully*”. I hesitate to observe that the big lie, absolute denial and false victimhood are very well worn in the wider world of power and war. Is there any good reason for not concluding these devices at work here as well? I would hope so, but my open inquiries as to where these answers are can find no report of them, and none exists on the record.

We need, nonetheless, to move beyond the acting president’s performance to the deeper principles by which it is governed. They *also* govern the wider world of power and war and the conditioned perceptions of those who do not think beyond them. Experienced higher researchers with advanced empirical and theoretical understanding still provide the backbone and intelligence

of Science for Peace, but they are now in a minority. This is a trend that has grown dominant in recent times with executive compulsion to increase membership and socials, never an objective of the founders.

No thinking through of what Science for Peace *is*, the connected systems understanding it requires, and the high standards of reason and analysis it demands has been evident on global issues of war and peace. As we have seen, organizing and discourse in conformity to a ruling propaganda towards war has been instituted into Science for Peace conference and publicity beneath the majority’s notice. I will be very frank in reporting a trend that others in the faculty minority have observed as well. Pervading the endless long messages, potlucks and activities is a feel-good non-science presented as ‘Science for Peace’ but masking and thus abetting US-led war crimes.

We need to understand the inner logic of this dominant frame of mind. How do we lay bare the cognitive disorder which is normal in the world of power, propaganda and war, but does *not* qualify as true, as science, or as peace? How do we recognise that the opposite is the case despite the surrounding field of state and media propaganda supporting it? How do we counteract unseen rich funding for dissemination of blame-the-enemy narratives that may have infiltrated our mission?

Life-coherent reason is our ultimate obligation. The logical and scientific way of defining this obligation of Science for Peace is by a process of elimination. *We begin by exactly defining what it is not to know what it is*. The analysis above has provided paradigm illustration in depth. But we have to define the underlying principles at work so that we are not confined to particular agents at particular times.

By this time, we know by principled abstraction that Science for Peace is absolutely *not*. It is *not* governed by ultimate assumption of the official enemy as evil, or by erasure of US-led war crimes as an issue to consider, or by organizing against basic evidence that does not fit the official story. It certainly is not eliminating critical feedback and questions, or a process of organizational blocks and insinuations against those who oppose the systematic silencing of basic facts. Science for Peace does *not* turn a blind eye to endless US-led wars, civil wars and preparations for wars, or internalize the dominant propaganda to conceal it. It sets its forehead against the master operation of reverse projecting onto the designated enemy what the aggressor itself is doing as the reason for attacking a weaker society thousands of miles from its borders.

We could substitute *Russia* or *China* for the US to discover what is *not* Science for Peace there too. The differences are very revealing. Russia and China deploy some of these operations against their own citizens, but never thousands of miles away with long-distance killing machinery across the world calling it “peace and “freedom”.

When we go over such organising principles of *not* Science for Peace, we can pose a testing question. Where can we find exception or counter-example to their operation in wars around the world since 1990? Yet what step of organizing of Science for Peace now does not omit them and thereby collaborate them? The exceptions are where Science for Peace still lives. The opposite syntax of propaganda towards war is not conscious any more than a mental illness is. It is instituted into the dominant political field of meaning as ‘normal’, and silencing what exposes it is the basic generic operation of war indoctrination and complicity with aggression. Yet if the issues can be always diverted to personal matters, the evils of the official enemy, plurality of opinions alone, blocking against and denying every step, who is to know it? It all “works as well as bullets” to quote Judy Deutsch again. At the macro level, this propagandist syntax is at work in virtually every causal sequence towards civil war and wars of our era. Scientific reason and logic always seek disconfirming instances to test general claims, and so everyone is invited to find any such counter-evidence here.

Our distinguished colleague Mathematics Professor Franz-Viktor Kuhlman gave examples of these principles at work of what Science for Peace is *not* in March the day of the board meeting before returning to Poland. He wrote:

“I am not pro-Putin, but I am not pro-USA or pro-NATO either. During my time as an active member of the German Natural Scientists' Peace Movement "*Verantwortung fuer den Frieden*" the Heidelberg group put together presentations about SDI and binary weapons. I also know Weizsaecker's study on BMD very well. In all of this it became very clear to me that scientists have to be very critical and investigative towards both (and now more adequately, all) players. If this principle is dropped in a scientists' peace movement, I cannot be part of it. Therefore, I believe that in the name of the scientific principles John McMurtry has talked about, the conference and the messages it has sent to the world have to be discussed without reservations, in particular in the Board meeting, and ways have to be found to correct those messages that cannot be supported by the members of Science for Peace.”

As we know, the board meeting blocked out such issues by its framework of organization, just as the conference did on Ukraine's civil war. As I wrote before the meeting to the Science for Peace list-serve, the executive and the board: “With neither the chair or participants being informed on anything, and no defined issues or examined documents to consider, arbitrary opinion rules unless prepared and documented communications for the Board focus discussion and response. The Board has strangely not met ‘for a very long time’ before and after a major conference that is a centre of concern in this meeting. This avoidance of input to and direction from the Board cannot continue with legitimacy.”

The major issue here is: How do we avoid ever more omission of the life-and-death facts and patterns of armed wars and preparations for war by our executive organization? How, more exactly, do we ensure we overcome the underlying propagandist framework at work? Observe that other ‘peace-activist’ organizations have recently demanded the ‘humanitarian bombing of Syria’ ‘to save lives’? Why not us too by the same propagandist framework of understanding?

We know the regulating principles at work are *not* Science for Peace. They are the opposite. Yet they apply impersonally across time and place. There is nothing personal to them unless one internalizes and enacts them. All of us have a choice of whether we think so or not, and whether we stand for Science for Peace or the opposite. The question now is, what can we pose against the syntax of war propaganda to define what Science for Peace is *for*?

### Science for Peace Principles against the Syntax of War Propaganda

To highlight the opposing principles towards which our choice is made, whether we know it or not, I distinguish each principle of what Science for Peace *is* and *is not* by a bold number (1) through (7). Then in the space after each number I define the principle of what Science for Peace *is not* first, and then the positive principle of what it *is*. They are in logically ordered to provide a unified succession. In each case, there can no doubt of the opposition between them, and together they guide *principled* understanding in integrated form. No names are relevant. They provide an impartial framework of what Science for Peace stands for, and what undermines it at the core.

(1) ultimate assumption of the official enemy as evil  
*Any designation of Enemy is examined for justifications relevant to military war under international law*  
(2) in erasure of US-led war crimes as an issue to consider;

*Historical record of war crimes and crimes against humanity by US (or other state as relevant to crisis) is taken into account, especially as the pattern is repeated.*

(3) ignoring and overriding scientific standards and evidence wherever they conflict with or falsify the official story;

*Recognising that exclusion from account of any relevant basic fact is indicator of distortion/falsehood/ lie in proportion to the flagrancy of omission (especially re. 1 and 2)*

(4) eliminating critical questions by organizational blocks and insinuating smears,

*Recognizing that any failure of I through III is likely to be carried on at second-order level and persevering in communication of the basic violations of Science for Peace standards*

(5) within a wider context of justifying US-led wars and preparations for wars

*Always keeping in mind the documented historical record of crimes against peace and war crimes under law as relevant to the present that repeats them, truthfully opposing rather than omitting or rationalizing them*

(6) by internalized operations of US-led propaganda, *Understanding that we live within pervasive communication fields of intense pressures to internalize global selling of lies for self-maximizing returns, especially in US foreign affairs where the declared objective is ‘full-spectrum dominance’ while pretending ‘peace’*

(7) whose master operation is reverse projection onto the designated Enemy

*Being able to spot the ‘blame-the-enemy’ operation - the ultimate ideological source of armaments build-ups and wars - by rigorous examination of edited-out issues and facts*

(8) of what the dominant force is doing at far higher levels.

*Reverse projection is the most maliciously deceitful but successful form of war propaganda and aggression – blaming the designated Enemy for what the invading armed aggressor is itself doing as the reason for attacking the weaker society to death.*

John McMurtry is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. His work is published and translated from Latin America to Japan, and he is the author and editor of the three-volume *Philosophy and World Problems* published by UNESCO’s Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS). His latest book is *The Cancer Stage of Capitalism/ from Crisis to Cure*.

<sup>1</sup> This is not “hearsay”, but the opposite. It is uncontested eyewitness account by a distinguished scholar in writing produced for the membership and never denied.

## **Munk School of Global Affairs and the Harper Government collaborate on “Direct Diplomacy” in Iran**

**By Judith Deutsch**

In early January 2015 the *Globe and Mail* and the University of Toronto *Varsity* announced that the federal government gave \$9m to the Munk School of Global Affairs for the “direct diplomacy” Digital Public Square project targeting Iran. While Harper severed diplomatic ties with Iran in September, 2012, expelling Iranian diplomats and closing its embassy in Tehran, “the expansion of the direct diplomacy project comes as other countries, including the United States and Britain, seek to re-engage with the Iranian government”. The Munk project bypasses the Iranian government and “offers a platform for dissidents... digital space for free expression and open political dialogue in places where civil society and citizen participation are under threat” (*Globe and Mail* Jan 6, 2015). John Baird, then Foreign Minister, stated that the project will hold governments “to account in defending freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.” Janice Gross Stein, directing the project, said that “fundamental to a university’s core values are the freedom to access information and share ideas.”

### **Why Iran?**

The announcement of the Harper/Munk \$9m “direct diplomacy” project coincides with upcoming elections in Canada and in Israel and with Netanyahu’s clash with Obama over Iran’s nuclear program. Harper, former Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird, and Netanyahu are on the same page, promulgating lies about Iran: that “Iran’s pursuit of a nuclear weapon is the most dangerous threat to global security,” that Iran “refuses to comply with UN resolutions pertaining to its nuclear program...”<sup>1</sup> In his highly publicized speech about Iran’s nuclear weapons on March 3, 2015, Netanyahu told the U.S. Congress “to ditch the current outlines for a [negotiated] deal and toughen sanctions.”

### **Who are the players?**

**The Munk School of Global Affairs.** The deal to establish the Munk School of Global Affairs was secret and not announced until the agreement to establish the school was already finalized. Investigating professors John Valleau and Paul Hamel write that the Academic Board, the body officially charged with ensuring the scholarly direction of academic priorities, “at no point [original italics] saw the Agreement prior to its being signed .... We contend that the imposed lack of academic oversight of academically significant decisions is anyway unacceptable.”<sup>2</sup> Peter Munk’s announced \$35m

donation will receive a \$16m tax deduction, and the Ontario and federal government's donations to the new school amounts to \$66m – so the “private public partnership” is really the taxpayer footing most of the bill with no say about the direction of its programs.

**Peter Munk's** fortune and power come from his position as former CEO of Barrick Gold. Barrick Gold is notorious for its ravaging of ecosystems and indigenous communities, for deaths and injuries at sites in Tanzania and Papua New Guinea. Barrick Gold violates the UN Convention on Indigenous People which requires free, informed, and prior consent. Barrick Gold is no friend of academic freedom, infamously blocking translation and publication of *Noir Canada: Pillage, corruption et criminalite en Afrique*. Barrick Gold has close ties with the federal government: Marketa Evans was Canada's first Corporate Social Responsibility counsellor and was the founding director of the Munk Centre.

<http://protestbarrick.net/> <http://www.miningwatch.ca/>

**Janice Gross Stein** is Director of Digital Public Square and Belzberg Professor of Conflict Management at the Munk School of Global Affairs. She is frequently sought as an expert on human rights and democracy and has close ties with Israel. Janice Gross Stein's book *Diplomacy in the Digital Age* received accolades from Henry Kissinger, Brian Mulroney, and former US Secretaries of State James Baker and George Shultz. Last summer Stein was a featured speaker at the Halifax International Security Forum, co-sponsored by DFAIT, DND, Lockheed Martin, NATO.

**Canada.** The \$9m grant to the Digital Public Square coincides with a number of government actions subverting “free speech and open political dialogue” here in Canada: the fast-tracking of Bill C-51 (anti-terrorism bill); the Memorandum of Understanding signed between Canada and Israel with a section on deeper security cooperation and enhanced information and intelligence sharing; a motion in the House of Commons on anti-Semitism, passed unanimously, which criminalizes “singling Israel out for selective condemnation and opprobrium...”; an Edward Snowden leak showing that the Canadian government has “collected emails to the government at a rate of 400,000 per day, sometimes keeping the data for years.”

### What is the background of Iran, Canada and nuclear weapons?

- Iran is in compliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The NPT allows enriched uranium for use in nuclear reactors and requires regular inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency. India, Pakistan, and Israel are in

violation of the NPT; they have nuclear weapons and never signed the NPT, so there is no oversight and regulation of their nuclear programs. Canada violates the NPT because of its trade in nuclear material with India.

- When Iran was ruled by the brutal Shah of Iran, the United States encouraged and supported Iran's nuclear program. “There was a secret agreement made between MIT and the shah of Iran, which pretty much amounted to turning over the Nuclear Engineering Department to the Shah. For some unspecified but probably large amount of money, MIT agreed to accept nuclear engineers from Iran to train in the United States; it could have become a nuclear weapons program...It was being pressed in Washington by Cheney, Rumsfeld, Kissinger, and Wolfowitz.” In 2009, Obama informed Israel and India that a UN Security Council resolution calling on all states to join the NPT did not apply to them.<sup>3</sup>
- The National Intelligence Estimate on Iran (2007), “reflecting the consensus view of all 16 US intelligence agencies, made clear that Iran did not have a nuclear weapon, did not have a program to build a nuclear weapon, and was less determined to develop nuclear weapons than US intelligence agencies had earlier claimed.” G.W. Bush simply dismissed the facts, telling the Israelis that the NIE's “conclusions don't reflect his own views”<sup>4</sup>.
- *Mossad*: less than a month after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's 2012 warning to the UN General Assembly that Iran was 70 percent of the way to completing its “plans to build a nuclear weapon”, Israel's intelligence service believed that Iran was “not performing the activity necessary to produce weapons. In an interview in March, [former Mossad chief Meir Dagan] warned of overstating the danger of Iran's nuclear activities and of putting Israel on a path to war with Iran.  
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/02/leaks-netanyahu-misled-iran-nuclear-programme-guardian-iran-nuclear-speech-2012-150218165622065.html>
- Seymour Hersh quotes Mohamed ElBaradei, the former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, saying he has not seen, “a shred of evidence” that Iran was — has been weaponizing, in terms of “building nuclear-weapons facilities and using enriched materials.” <http://www.democracynow.org/2011/6/3/seymou>

r\_hersh\_despite\_intelligence\_rejecting\_iran “ I’ve been reporting on Iran and the bomb for *The New Yorker* for the past decade, with a focus on the repeated inability of the best and the brightest of the Joint Special Operations Command to find definitive evidence of a nuclear-weapons production program in Iran.....”

<http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/iran-and-the-i-a-e-a>

- Robert Fisk: “The Israeli President warns us now that Iran is on the cusp of producing a nuclear weapon.... Shimon Peres, as Israeli Prime Minister, said exactly the same thing in 1996.... Benjamin Netanyahu, said in 1992 that Iran would have a nuclear bomb by 1999.... Same old story.”  
<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/fisk/robert-fisk-weve-been-here-before--and-it-suits-israel-that-we-never-forget-nuclear-iran-6294111.html>:
- Richard Falk: “...the frequent allusions by the United States to keeping the military option ‘on the table’ and Israeli-leaked stories about war games involving attack scenarios on Iran’s nuclear facilities and speculation about the location of red lines with respect to the Iranian nuclear program, are clearly articulated in the form of ‘threats’ that would on the face of it violate the prohibition in Article 2(4) [UN Charter: “All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.” Falk notes that “this legally disallows what is sometimes called ‘coercive diplomacy.’”<sup>5</sup>

### “Democracy Promotion”

The Munk project purportedly aims to promote democracy, but “democracy promotion” by western governments has historically served the function of instigating regime change or destabilization and/or furthering host country corporate economic interests. A *Globe and Mail* article about “a landmark report [from Department of Foreign Affairs, 2007] aimed at advancing Canada’s role in democratic development overseas....” quoted Harper’s 2008 Throne Speech in which he announced “a new, non-partisan democracy promotion agency ... to support the peaceful transition to democracy in repressive countries and help emerging democracies build strong institutions.” It was at this time that Harper folded democracy and development agencies into DFAIT. But even prior to that, CIDA, CUSO and other agencies functioned to promote Canadian business interests, particularly mining.<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Amir Hassanpour of the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, University of Toronto, told me that Iran, unlike Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Libya and Yemen, has remained relatively stable because it has not been subjected to a U.S.- led war. However, “US-imposed sanctions on Iran are devastating to the majority of people and add to the corruption of the government and to factional conflicts. The U.S. and EU pursue negotiation and sanctions because war against Iran will disrupt the shaky status quo in Central Asia and the rest of the region and makes it impossible for the US-EU shaky alliance to put it together.” Dr. Hassanpour says that Iranians know their country very well and understand that the Munk project is a non-player in Iran. They recognize that the Munk digital democracy project is presumptuous propaganda.

In Canada programs like “Digital Public Square” subvert the meaning of democracy and diplomacy. They deflect from the real dangers posed by militarism coupled with impunity and ignorance. There are 45 U.S. military bases surrounding Iran and constant threats of a military assault. From Richard Falk: “If ever there was an argument for the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iran, the diplomacy of Israel and the West has fashioned it in a strong form,” and “It is this woeful message of street geopolitics that is being transmitted to the peoples of the world in this crisis-building moment.”<sup>7</sup>

*Judy Deutsch is a past President of Science for Peace.*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.international.gc.ca/media/aff/news-communicues/2012/09/07a.aspx?lang=eng>.

<sup>2</sup> UFTA Newsletter No. 1 (2010-11). P. 45. “University Governance and Acceptance of the Munk Donation.”

<sup>3</sup> Chomsky, Noam and Polk, Laray. (2013). *Nuclear War and Environmental Catastrophe*. P. 21 and p. 42.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>4</sup> P. 2-3. Bennis, Phyllis (2009). *Understanding the US-Iran Crisis: A Primer*. Olive Branch Press.

<sup>5</sup> P. 74. Falk, Richard. (Re)imagining Humane Global Governance (2014). Routledge.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/the-dismantling-of-canadian-democracy-promotion-brick-by-brick/article1321638/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://richardfalk.wordpress.com/2012/03/23/why-not-get-the-law-and-politics-right-in-iran/>

## Ukraine, Russia, the United States and the Threat of Nuclear War

By Judith Deutsch

The Ukraine/Russia conflict is particularly ominous because it could escalate into a nuclear war, and for this reason it is necessary to understand the role of the United

States. The information presented below needs further research to provide a full picture which must necessarily include nuclear weapons, NATO, the economy, and patterns of U.S. domination. The political world is dangerously in flux with entangled military alliances and a robust weapons trade, similar to the prelude to WWI when it took one trigger to unleash cascading inter-state violence. The current destructive potential is unprecedented in the “New American Century” of full-spectrum dominance, with the U.S. holding most responsibility for 50+ million refugees worldwide, for the 1.3+ million people killed since 2003 in the U.S.-led war on terror, for the US \$1.1tn allocation to upgrade nuclear weapons, for destruction of the ecosphere. The global oligarchy cashes in on American power and its institutions, affecting all people of the world. The research of investigative journalists and informed intellectuals is crucial to the work of overturning these policies. These contributions will be summarized and integrated.

#### **Expert Criticism: The Demonization of Russia and Putin Leaves Out the Role of the United States**

Murray Dobbin: “What are the consequences when elected governments make policy based on faith and imperial hubris instead of science and expertise? It’s a question that is forcing itself on the world as we watch the United States, Britain, NATO and the Harper [Canada] government continue to up the ante in the confrontation with Russia over the Ukraine. There are real enough geo-political dangers in the world without actually creating them out of arrogance and ignorance but that is where we are right now and the consequences could be catastrophic.... Canada, Britain, the U.S. and the boys with their toys in NATO headquarters are looking for a fight with Russia.” [The Tyee \(Vancouver, Canada online publication\), March 6, 2015](#)

James Bissett: “The current crisis in Ukraine threatens global security and at worst has the potential for nuclear catastrophe. At best it signals a continuation of the Cold War. Sadly, the crisis is completely unnecessary and the responsibility lies entirely in the hands of the United States – led NATO powers. The almost virulent propaganda onslaught blaming Russia for the instability and violence in Ukraine simply ignores reality and the facts.” James Bissett is a former Canadian diplomat. He was Canada’s ambassador to Yugoslavia, Albania, and Bulgaria. <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/nato-at-the-heart-of-a-new-cold-war-says-former-ambassador>

Robert Parry: “The intensity of the smear campaign against Russia and the portrayal of its president as a pantomime villain is unlike anything I have known as a reporter. According to the Western ‘group think,’ the post-coup Ukrainian government ‘shares our values’ by

favoring democracy and modernity, while the rebellious ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine are ‘Moscow’s minions’ representing dark forces of backwardness and violence, personified by Russia’s ‘irrational’ President Putin. In this view, the conflict is a clash between the forces of good and evil where there is no space for compromise.” “To a degree that I have not seen in my 37 years covering Washington, there is a totalitarian quality to the West’s current ‘group think’ about Ukraine with virtually no one who ‘matters’ deviating from the black-and-white depiction of good guys in Kiev vs bad guys in Donetsk and Moscow.”

<https://consortiumnews.com/2015/02/23/ready-for-nuclear-war-over-ukraine/>

Gary Leupp: “The U.S. has military personnel stationed in about 130 countries in the world—that is, in two-thirds of the countries who are members of the UN. In contrast, Russia has military forces stationed in, by my count, ten foreign countries, eight of them on its borders. And yet the U.S. press and political class depict Russia and specifically its president Vladimir Putin, a threatening juggernaut.” (Professor of History, Tufts University). <http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/04/14/ukraine-the-truth/>

Katrina Vanden-Heuvel: The US media blindly accepts the official US government version of events in Ukraine, and it is complicit in creating the false narrative that may lead the US toward war. “US triumphalism supplants reality in the unprecedented near unanimous complicity of the media elite and US progressives in supporting US policy toward Russia and the demonization of Putin.” Vanden-Heuvel is editor and publisher of *The Nation*. Round Table on "Defining a new security architecture for Europe that brings Russia in from the cold" Brussels, March 2.2015.

Seumas Milne: “Politicians and the media are using Vladimir Putin and Ukraine to justify military expansionism. It’s dangerous folly.” “A quarter of a century after the end of the Cold War, the ‘Russian threat’ is unmistakably back. Vladimir Putin, Britain’s defence secretary Michael Fallon declares, is as great a danger to Europe as ‘Islamic State’.... Putin’s authoritarian conservatism may offer little for Russia’s future, but this anti-Russian incitement is dangerous folly. There certainly has been military expansionism. But it has overwhelmingly come from NATO, not Moscow.” [The Guardian, March 4, 2015](#)

American Friends Service Committee: “Corporate media outlets such as CNN, Fox News and the New York Times have colluded with leaders in Washington to whip up a new Cold War sentiment against Russia, while covering up the U.S. role in the recent violent events in Ukraine. Unmentioned by corporate media are the enormous U.S. financial and military interests at stake – from control of Ukraine's oil and gas pipelines connecting Russia with Western Europe, to the prospect of NATO military bases on Russia's western border.” <https://afsc.org/event/teach-stop-usnatos-new-cold-war-over-ukraine>

Stephen Cohen states that just blaming Putin and Russia means “no negotiation” and that no negotiation leads to war; this is a false historical narrative and a false political analysis. Feeling deeply about this avoidable human tragedy, he decries the predominant narrative: “But they’re using this language, ‘anti-terrorism.’ What are the East Ukrainians—what language are they using to refer to Yatsenyuk? ‘Fascist.’ So you’ve got a government in Kiev sending troops against people in eastern Ukraine on the grounds that they’re terrorists—they are not—and you have the insurgents, let’s call them that, in eastern Ukraine referring to the government as ‘fascist.’ That’s how far apart these people are, and all this on the 69th anniversary of World War II, when Ukraine and Russia lost millions of people to actual fascists. This is how bad it is. The false statement he made, and the premise on which American policy is being made, is that Putin attacked Ukraine and began this whole mess. Whatever you think about what the outcome should be, that is just factually untrue. All of this began when the United States and Europe asked Ukraine back last November to make a decision between Russia and the European Union.”

Stephen Cohen is emeritus professor of Russian studies at Princeton University and New York University. Hear his interviews on Democracy Now <http://www.democracynow.org>.

John J. Mearshimer, “According to the prevailing wisdom in the West, the Ukraine crisis can be blamed almost entirely on Russian aggression. Russian President Vladimir Putin, the argument goes, annexed Crimea out of a long-standing desire to resuscitate the Soviet empire, and he may eventually go after the rest of Ukraine, as well as other countries in eastern Europe. In this view, the ouster of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014 merely provided a pretext for Putin’s decision to order Russian forces to seize part of Ukraine. But this account is wrong: the United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for the crisis.” John Mearshimer is Professor of Political Science, University of Chicago.

<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141769/john-j-mearshimer/why-the-ukraine-crisis-is-the-wests-fault>

Demonization of Putin can be more subtle, such as *Globe and Mail* columnist Doug Saunders’ article about the downing of flight MH17 in which he stated that Putin is to blame regardless of who actually shot the plane because Russia caused chaos in Ukraine. He wrote that all of Europe is under “assault” from Russia (July 18 2014).

## NATO

NATO was formed in 1949, ostensibly as a defensive alliance against communism. In response, European communist states united under the Warsaw pact six years later. When the Berlin wall came down in 1989, Mikhael Gorbachev and George H.W. Bush made a verbal agreement to allow the re-unification of West and East Germany under condition that NATO would not expand “one inch” to the east. The dissolution of the Soviet Union 1991 ushered in major geopolitical shifts. In 1991, all nuclear weapons could have been eliminated and global leaders could have taken steps to eliminate carbon emissions as they had been informed about the critical state of the climate. Instead of dismantling nuclear arsenals, the U.S., with NATO involvement, immediately launched into the first major oil war, “shock and awe” in Iraq. Accompanying NATO wars involving the use of depleted uranium, cluster bombs, massive civilian casualties and infrastructure destruction, and impoverished nations were then forced to borrow from the IMF and sell off public assets. From 1992-1995, NATO fought in Bosnia, and in 1999 Clinton mounted NATO attacks on Serbia in contravention of the UN Charter. The Clinton administration “was sticking to its stand that NATO should be able to act independently of the United Nations.”<sup>1</sup> In 1992, the World Bank was given responsibility for managing the Global Environment Facility (global funds) and accelerated investment in coal and large dams. The World Bank was also involved with the transition of communist Eastern bloc countries to a capitalist economy, resulting in a large-scale privatization of public companies.<sup>2</sup>

By the late 1990s, the U.S. was expanding NATO membership and NATO bases to the east. In 1999, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland joined NATO. Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia joined NATO in 2004. At the April 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, the United States supported inviting Georgia and Ukraine to join the alliance. Georgia’s bid to join NATO in 2008 led directly to the South Ossetia war. Georgia President Saakashvili, trained at George Washington University, launched an

<sup>1</sup> *NYTimes* Feb. 11, 1999, quoted by Chomsky (2000). *Rogue States* p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> P. 183-184. Toussaint, Eric. (2006). *The World Bank: A Critical Primer*.

attack on Russian speaking republics along Russia's border and Russia responded by counter-attacking Georgia. The US sent weapons and US military advisers to Georgia. Ukraine's bid to join NATO predictably provokes Russia.

Strobe Talbott, Deputy Secretary of State under Clinton, strongly criticized NATO expansion. "Russia's resentment toward the United States and the crisis that erupted in March 2014 with Russia's occupation of Crimea were not unrelated to the Clinton administration's insistence in the 1990s that NATO be expanded to Russia's borders." Talbott continued that Russian President Boris Yeltsin "openly expressed bitterness toward the U.S. and toward Clinton personally. 'Why,' he kept asking, 'had 'our friend Bill' unleashed 'this monster'?....It seemed like virtually everyone I knew from the world of academe, journalism, and foreign policy think-tanks was against enlargement"<sup>3</sup> George Kennan later termed enlargement a 'strategic blunder of potentially epic proportions.' [E]xpanding NATO would be the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-cold war era,' he wrote. 'Such a decision may be expected to inflame the nationalistic, anti-Western and militaristic tendencies in Russian opinion; to have an adverse effect on the development of Russian democracy; to restore the atmosphere of the cold war to East-West relations, and to impel Russian foreign policy in directions decidedly not to our liking."<sup>4</sup>

Russians note the double standard, comparing Kosovo and Crimea: Kosovo, backed by NATO, seceded from Serbia in 2008 without any referendum and was recognized immediately by the United Nations. The U.N. strongly condemned Russia for its aggression in absorbing Crimea even though a large proportion of Crimean people voted to secede from Ukraine and for re-absorption into Russia. Subsequent reliable polls show a high rate of approval of absorption into Russia by people in Crimea.<sup>5</sup>

To date, upwards of 6000 people have been killed in Ukraine and over 1.5 million people displaced. Former Russian president Gorbachev now accuses the West of dragging Russia into a new Cold War. NATO was

never investigated or held accountable by the International Criminal Tribunal on Yugoslavia,<sup>6</sup> and recent NATO commanders distort facts with impunity. General Breedlove – "whose name and actions might have been inspired by Stanley Kubrick's Dr. Strangelove – announced that 40,000 Russian troops were 'massing.' In the age of forensic satellite evidence, he offered none. There is in fact no evidence of mass Russian troop movement."<sup>7</sup> "German leaders in Berlin were stunned. They didn't understand what Breedlove was talking about. And it wasn't the first time. Once again, the German government...did not share the view of Nato's Supreme Allied Commander."<sup>8</sup> Former Secretary-General of NATO Anders Fogh Rasmussen recently stated that "NATO is the most successful peace movement the world has ever known." He said that the accusation of encirclement of Russia is not justified, that NATO does not pose a threat to Russia, that there was never a promise not to expand NATO or the EU. Nevertheless, he says, it was the right thing to expand. He maintains that the root cause of the conflict is Russian expansion and that NATO brings prosperity.<sup>9</sup>

There is much documentation about current NATO expansion and war games on Russia's border. The military encirclement and show of force against Russia are carefully documented by Rick Rozoff on Stop NATO website, (<https://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/>), by Bruce Gagnon's Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space (<http://www.space4peace.org/>), Roger Annis' New Cold War <http://newcoldwar.org/>, Counterpunch (<http://www.counterpunch.org/>).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Mandel, Michael (2004). *How America Gets Away with Murder: illegal wars, collateral damage and crimes against humanity.*

<sup>7</sup> John Pilger, *Why the Rise of Fascism is Again the Issue*, <http://johnpilger.com/articles/why-the-rise-of-fascism-is-again-the-issue>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/germany-concerned-about-aggressive-nato-stance-on-ukraine-a-1022193.htm>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/headtohead/2015/04/nato-guardian-peace-bellucose-bully-150401071002520.html>

<sup>10</sup> Selected examples of NATO encirclement since November, 2014.

- November 15, 2014. Rick Rozoff: Participants in negotiations on setting up a coalition at the Ukrainian parliament are considering the annulment of Ukraine's non-aligned status and the country's membership of NATO in a draft coalition agreement."
- February, 2015. Bruce Gagnon reports that the NATO 2<sup>nd</sup> cavalry regiment armoured personnel carriers rolled through Narva, Estonia, 300 yards from the Russian border. (also see UK Telegraph, 25 Feb. 2015, rationale of preemptive action)
- March 7, 2015, Robert Roth, *Counterpunch*. There are the "massive wargames in Eastern Europe and naval exercises in the Black Sea, [where] warships from the US, Turkey, Italy Canada, and Romania started drills."
- March 17, 2015. NATO holds naval exercises in the Black Sea. NATO has held a series of naval exercises in the Black Sea off the

<sup>3</sup> P. 143n. Strobe Talbott, *The Russia Hand: A memoir of Presidential Diplomacy* 224, 2003, quoted in Glennon, Michael J. (2015). *National Security and Double Government*. Oxford.

<sup>4</sup> Glennon, p. 144n., quoting from "A Fateful Error, *N.Y. Times* Feb 5, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> A June 2014 [Gallup poll](#), which was sponsored by the U.S. government's Broadcasting Board of Governors, found that 82.8 percent of Crimeans said the March 16 referendum on secession reflected the views of the Crimean people. In the poll, when asked if joining Russia would improve their lives, 73.9 percent said yes and only 5.5 percent said no. <https://consortiumnews.com/2015/03/22/crimeans-keep-saying-no-to-ukraine/> Also, see the Current: <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-march-17-2015-1.2997944/crimeans-happy-about-union-with-russia-polls-find-1.2997952>



## Nuclear Weapons

What makes Ukraine/Russia so dangerous is that it is a proxy war between nuclear-armed United States and Russia. An advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice ruled that even threatening to use nuclear weapons is a violation of international law, yet the United States ambiguously threatens their use in a “first strike”. In 2002, G.W. Bush unilaterally pulled out of the Anti Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty. The 1972 ABM treaty was the cornerstone of nuclear weapons deterrence and international security. During the Cold War there was a belief that there could be no winners because of “mutually assured destruction”. But the development of missile defense, with technology capable of detecting missiles within one minute of launch, has led to the U.S. believing it can win a nuclear war. The missile defense system has been called an “offense” system. Putin has recently said that missile defense “creates the dangerous illusion of invincibility.” He also said that US unilateral withdrawal from the ABM in 2002 “poses a threat not only to Russia’s security, but also to the entire world.” (Tass, 4 December 2014 ). In October 2014, President Obama provocatively allocated \$1.1tn to upgrade nuclear weapons.

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Romanian coast, ahead of the one year anniversary of Russia’s annexation of Crimea. However, NATO is “sending a serious message by not cancelling the exercises,” Andrei Beketov reports. Warships from the US, Canada, Turkey, Germany, Italy, and Romani took part just 300 km from Crimea. Moscow has accused NATO of “war games”, saying that they could have serious consequences for the settlement of the Ukraine conflict. Russia’s defence ministry said it had begun large scale military exercises. <http://newcoldwar.org/>

- March 30, 2015. CAMPIA TURZII, Romania: Twelve U.S. Air Force A-10 Thunderbolt IIs deployed as a 90-day theater security package in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve. [Europe: Pentagon Spends \\$1 Billion In Anti-Russian Build-Up](#)
- April 6, 2015 [UNIAN](#) (Ukrainian Independent News Agency). Estonia and US start joint military exercises
- April 17 2015 [Stars and Stripes](#) US spending \$1 billion to reassure European allies  
By Steven Beardsley Much of the funding is dedicated to the most visible parts of U.S. operations on the continent. The rotation of an Army heavy armored brigade eats up about a quarter of the total, while ERI also funds fighter jet patrols over the Baltic states and increased Navy deployments to the Black Sea.
- April 19, 2015. [Ukraine War: U.S. Leads Air War Games In Romania](#). Romania, US reaffirm commitment to European security  
By Staff Sgt. Joe W. McFadden, 52nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs: “Although Mr. Putin’s recent actions are of concern, this team is not only in response to him and Russia but also part of a long-range plan,” he said. “The essential point is that rotational constructs that we see here [are] part of a steadfast commitment to the long-term safety and security of our NATO allies.

There is increasingly open talk supporting the nuclear option. “A senior Ukrainian official is urging the West to risk a nuclear conflagration in support of a ‘full-scale war’ with Russia that he says authorities in Kiev are now seeking, another sign of the extremism that pervades the year-old U.S.-backed regime in Kiev. In a recent interview with Canada’s CBC Radio, Ukraine’s Deputy Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko said, ‘Everybody is afraid of fighting with a nuclear state. We are not anymore, in Ukraine – we’ve lost so many people of ours, we’ve lost so much of our territory....’<sup>11</sup> In response, Robert Parry asks “Why should such a pedestrian dispute justify the possibility of vaporizing millions of human beings and conceivably ending life on the planet?... If we begin to notice that the right-wing regime in Kiev is crazy and brutal, we might also start questioning the ‘Russian aggression’ mantra.... Yet, what is perhaps most remarkable about Prystaiko’s ‘Dr. Strangelove’ moment is that it produced almost no reaction in the west.”<sup>12</sup> On April 23, 2015, MEPs (Members of European Parliament) declared that the EU’s readiness for nuclear war “is one of the best steps to deter Russia from further aggression.”<sup>13</sup>

With these concerns uppermost, anti-nuclear leader Dr. Helen Caldicott organized a symposium in New York February 28-March 1, 2015 with experts on nuclear weapons and geopolitics.<sup>14</sup> The conference was recorded and is accessible but was unreported by the media and largely ignored by the anti-war movement. Even the major anti-nuclear weapons websites do not have statements about the urgent nuclear weapons danger due to the Ukraine/Russia US proxy war. The Non-Proliferation Treaty five year Review Conference is fortunately drawing attention to nuclear weapons, and on April 24, 2015, Global Zero issued a press release asking that all nuclear weapons be taken off of hair-trigger alert: “The Commission’s extensive report will call for (1) an urgent agreement between the United States and Russia to begin a phased stand-down of their high-alert strategic forces, and (2) a longer-term global agreement requiring all nuclear weapons countries to refrain from putting nuclear weapons on high alert.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/ukraine-preparing-for-full-scale-war-says-former-envoy-to-canada-1.2964887>

<sup>12</sup> Robert Parry (*Consortium News* February 23, 2015).

<sup>13</sup> MEPs believe EU ‘should be ready for nuclear war’ <https://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/>.

<sup>14</sup> <http://helenaldicottfoundation.org/symposium-the-dynamics-of-possible-nuclear-extinction>. Podcasts will be available at the website.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.globalzero.org/fr/press-media/press-releases/fmr-commander-us-nuclear-forces-and-international-military-experts-ca>

Theodore Postol spoke at the Caldicott symposium. He is professor emeritus of science, technology, and national security at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. “The most dangerous insanity in human history”, the danger of nuclear war is considerably higher than during the Cold War. He said that the United States treats Russia as Germany was treated after World War I and as if Russia’s concerns have no merit. Postol focused on the technical problems that greatly increase the chances of a nuclear war. Russians have a fragile early warning system unlike the United States. They have been unable to build a working space-based early warning system, and this is of greatest danger as Russia can detect incoming missiles only when they are above the earth’s horizon. Therefore, there may be as little as six minutes for Russians to determine whether an enemy missile has been launched, six minutes to decide whether to counterattack with nuclear weapons. In contrast, the United States can know within one minute whether and from where a missile has been launched. “Despite this frightening reality, [US] policy-makers have not attempted to analyze the benefit to US security of pushing the Russians to a higher state of alert. Nor have they asked how an increased US nuclear threat to Russia improves the security of US allies – or for that matter, anyone else around the globe.”

Postol says that the Russians are aware of the vulnerability in their system and are also aware of the United States’ “relentless preoccupation with building nuclear weapons systems.” The United States dangerously treats nuclear weapons as if they are conventional weapons. This is a profoundly false belief that nuclear war objectives can be the same as in a conventional war. In the mythology of nuclear war fighting, the US would need “redundancy” to destroy any possibilities of counterattack. Having a high damage rate is part of nuclear strategic planning. Postol writes that the nuclear weapons overhaul announced by Obama focuses on improving the accuracy of long-range land- and sea- based ballistic missile warheads and on increasing the killing power of other nuclear warheads....But a close analysis reveals a technically sophisticated effort to ready US nuclear forces for a direct confrontation with Russia.” “Sophisticated Russian analysts, especially those who understand the technical aspects of nuclear weapons, see the [US] modernization drive as a disturbing indication that the US military believes a nuclear war against Russia can be fought and won....Do US military and political leaders actually believe that the upgraded systems could serve a useful military purpose? If so, could such ill-informed beliefs lead to a cascade of events that result in a nuclear catastrophe? The troubling answer to both questions is

yes.” Postol concludes that “the modernization effort significantly increases the chances of an accident during an unpredicted, and unpredictable crisis – one that could escalate beyond anyone’s capacity to imagine. The real problem is not irrationality but unpredictability. The reasons things happen are far more complex than obsessive nuclear planning can ever predict. The US modernization program is producing nuclear forces that will severely complicate the chances of backing away from disaster if a crisis were to occur. Anyone who looks at history knows that such crises *will* occur, and that they result from unpredictable and unforeseen events.”<sup>16</sup>

### Economy and Regime Change

John Mearshimer formulates three ways that the United States is drawing Ukraine into the western orbit: NATO membership, European Union membership, and regime change. Precipitating protests against the elected president Viktor Yanukovich was his opposition to joining the EU in favor of a Russian agreement. The U.S. gave \$5b to the political opposition, and U.S. Undersecretary of State Victoria Nuland was involved in selecting the new leadership.<sup>17</sup>

The “US-Saudi manoeuvre to turn up heat on Russia and Iran” aimed to create economic havoc in these countries by flooding the oil market in order to collapse the price of crude. 70% of Russia’s economy is based on oil and gas exports.<sup>18</sup> Lowering the price of oil also serves U.S. aims to bring about regime change in oil-producing Iran and Venezuela.

Also under-reported is an important item from the Oakland Institute: “*Walking on the West Side: the World Bank and the IMF in the Ukraine Conflict*” exposes how the international financial institutions “swooped in on the heels of the political upheaval and are vying to deregulate and throw open Ukraine’s vast agricultural sector to foreign investors. Immediately following the change to a pro-EU government, the country’s pivot to the West was solidified with a \$17 billion loan from the

<sup>16</sup> Theodore Postol, “How the Obama Administration learned to stop worrying and love the bomb” *The Nation*. December 10, 2014). One of the most important books detailing nuclear weapon accidents and unpredictability is Eric Schlosser’s (2013) *Command and Control: Nuclear weapons, the Damascus Accident, and the Illusion of Safety*.

<sup>17</sup> Victoria Nuland’s involvement in Ukraine is reported on Democracy Now; for example, see [http://www.democracynow.org/2014/4/11/headlines/russia\\_warns\\_of\\_ukraine\\_gas\\_cuts\\_nuland\\_touts\\_truth\\_telling\\_campaign](http://www.democracynow.org/2014/4/11/headlines/russia_warns_of_ukraine_gas_cuts_nuland_touts_truth_telling_campaign). Not discussed here is the new regime in Ukraine and the disputed role of fascists. Vladimir Golstein, professor of Slavic Languages at Brown University, criticizes the West for underestimating the extent of fascism in Ukraine. [http://russia-insider.com/en/ukraine\\_opinion/2014/10/18/10-35-50pm/ukraines\\_descent\\_fascism\\_and\\_how\\_west\\_turns\\_blind\\_eye](http://russia-insider.com/en/ukraine_opinion/2014/10/18/10-35-50pm/ukraines_descent_fascism_and_how_west_turns_blind_eye)

<sup>18</sup> (The Guardian Weekly, 14-20 November 2014. P. 1

International Monetary Fund (IMF) and an additional \$3.5 billion aid package from the World Bank, both of which require significant economic reforms and austerity measures that are set to have disastrous effects within the nation.”

The new Ukrainian Finance Minister, Nataliwe Jaresko, is a former senior US State Department official who was hurriedly given Ukrainian citizenship. Vice President Joe Biden’s son is on the board of Ukraine’s biggest oil, gas and fracking company.

### U.S. Hegemony

Well-known are the words of Martin Luther King stating that the United States is the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today, yet there is little attention to the aggressive role of the U.S. in this dangerous Ukraine/Russia crisis.<sup>19</sup> Specific to the escalating nuclear threat, there is a historical pattern of US action and USSR reaction in the escalation of the arms race. For example, the first US nuclear chain reaction was 1942 (US) and 1946 (USSR); the first atom bomb exploded 1945 (US) and 1949 (USSR); accelerated buildup of strategic missiles 1961 (US) and 1966 (USSR); multiple warheads on missiles 1964 (US) and 1973 (USSR), computerized guidance on missiles 1970 (US) and 1975 (USSR).<sup>20</sup>

Relevant to the plausibility of U.S. interference in Ukraine’s government by Victoria Nuland is a history of U.S. involvement in coups against democratically elected governments and the installation of dictators: among them, the Shah of Iran, General Suharto in Indonesia, Batista in Cuba, Somoza in Nicaragua, Pinochet in Chile, Mobutu in Congo-Zaire, Lobo in Honduras. Chalmers Johnson writes that “democracy did develop in some important cases as a result of opposition to our [US] interference, for example, after the collapse of the CIA-installed Greek colonels in 1974; in both Portugal in 1974 and Spain in 1975 after the end of the U.S. - supported fascist dictatorships; after the overthrow of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines in 1986; following the ouster of General Chun Doo Hwan in South Korea in 1987; and following the ending of thirty-eight years of martial law on the island of Taiwan in the same year.” (p 57). Johnson also writes of the United States standing behind the late-twentieth century tortures, disappearances, death squads, military coups, and right-

wing pogroms against workers, peasants, and the educated” in most Latin American countries. (p. 123).<sup>21</sup>

John McMurtry, professor emeritus of philosophy at the University of Guelph, provides a partial list of how the U.S. undermines virtually all international laws to protect human life: “The US has refused to ratify the International Criminal Court to uphold the law against war crimes and crimes against humanity, and it has publicly repudiated the Court’s right to investigate US criminal violations including the ‘supreme crime’ of a war of aggression...[The U.S. has not ratified] treaties and conventions against landmines, against biological weapons, against international ballistic missiles, against small arms, against torture, against racism, against arbitrary seizure and imprisonment, against military weather distortions, against biodiversity loss, against climate destabilization, and even international agreements on the rights of children and of women.”<sup>22</sup>

Eminent investigative journalist and filmmaker John Pilger writes of the United States: “Since 1945, more than a third of the membership of the United Nations – 69 countries – have suffered some or all of the following at the hands of America’s modern fascism. They have been invaded, their governments overthrown, their popular movements suppressed, their elections subverted, their people bombed and their economies stripped of all protection, their societies subjected to a crippling siege known as “sanctions”.”<sup>23</sup>

There is a telling historical precedent in US and Soviet relations described by Chalmers Johnson. Contrary to received opinion, former president Carter authorized payments to Afghan mujahideen months *before*, not *after*, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The intention was to provoke a Soviet incursion, to use the mujahideen like “cannon fodder in order to give the USSR its own Vietnam.” National security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and former CIA Director Robert Gates later confirmed this sequence of events. Afghanistan fared much better under the communists than under the Taliban and under Karzai. The U.S. was not really interested in Afghan welfare and pulled out when the Taliban took over.<sup>24</sup>

Lastly, there are the interpersonal relations. There are the bullying, dismissive interactions with Russians by

<sup>21</sup> Johnson, Chalmers (2010). *Dismantling the Empire: America’s Last Best Hope*.

<sup>22</sup> <http://scienceforpeace.ca/corporate-globalization-and-society-destruction-joining-the-dots-of-war-and-peace-in-ukraine/>”

<sup>23</sup> <http://johnpilger.com/articles/why-the-rise-of-fascism-is-again-the-issue>

<sup>24</sup> Johnson, p. 87-90.

<sup>19</sup> You can hear Dr. King’s speech at [http://www.democracynow.org/2003/4/4/the\\_united\\_states\\_is\\_the\\_greatest](http://www.democracynow.org/2003/4/4/the_united_states_is_the_greatest)

<sup>20</sup> See Regehr and Rosenblum, 1983. *Canada and the Nuclear Arms Race*, p. 9.

North American and European leaders, and thumbnail formulations about Russian paranoia. Stephen Cohen, in many interviews and articles, speaks about the Russian and Ukrainian people – not as thugs but as people with lives, relationships, memories. Former U.S. ambassador to Russia Jack Matlock speaks of the U.S.’ autistic foreign policy. Of grave insensitivity was the decision to exclude the Russians from the June 6<sup>th</sup> 2014 commemoration of the defeat of Nazi Germany. “The Soviet Union suffered at least 24 million casualties in World War II. Well over eight million Soviet soldiers died fighting Hitler, in the process destroying 70% of the German Wehrmacht and 80% of the Luftwaffe. If the Soviets were not at the time shredding so many German divisions on the Eastern Front, the Allies might well have had to swim back to England on D-Day. Yet in but one of many petty insults, the US and its allies patted themselves on the back this last June 6<sup>th</sup> without inviting Mr. Putin to the party. (US losses in WWII, including the Pacific, were 408,000.)” Tens of thousands of Russian soldiers died between 1942 and 1944 defending Crimea from Nazi Germany.<sup>25</sup> On May 9, 2015, the West will again snub Russia’s Victory Day commemoration. Foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said “No one has asked the European veterans of the second world war whether it is right to boycott those who lost hundreds of thousands of people while saving Europe from fascism.”<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusion

Powerful voices in the EU, U.S., and Canada are calling for military intervention, even the use of nuclear weapons. A great deal is known and is accessible, but there are pressures to simplify in the direction of demonizing Putin and occluding dire facts about the United States and its allies. It is a most dangerous time to collude with authority and to be silent.

*Judy Deutsch is a past President of Science for Peace.*

## President's Corner

### "When Saving Others Doesn't Work"

By Metta Spencer

Is Louise Arbour giving up? After an illustrious career as prosecutor of a War Crimes Tribunal (precursor to the

International Criminal Court), High Commissioner of Human Rights, Canadian Supreme Court Justice, advocate of the “right to protect” principle in international law, and head of the International Crisis Group, Arbour has returned to Montreal to a normal role in a law firm. Perhaps she is merely licking wounds incurred by trying to save people around the world from the tragic effects of bad governance.

Nevertheless, her retreat seems even more significant, for she declared to the *Globe and Mail* columnist Doug Saunders that she is “rethinking” her whole approach, which she now concedes is “not working.”

Imagine that! The protection of vulnerable people around the world is “not working” and Ms. Arbour will adopt more limited alternatives, which she describes as involving “empathy.”

I was initially shocked by her reversal of commitments, which seem to repudiate the core of peace work itself—the advocacy of universal standards of human rights and fair governance. Instead, Arbour seems to favor more limited interventions abroad, and would constrain them by “empathy.” Even after the initial shock, I remain troubled by her proposal.

Although her new attitude seems a benign expression of cultural relativism, she has described it only vaguely in public, so I cannot be sure that I understand her correctly. Nevertheless, we should always take seriously the experience of such a wise person, so I am trying to re-think, along with her, the legitimacy of holding all of humankind to the same standards of justice. It is a difficult inner debate for a peace worker, since I believe that “I am my brothers’ keeper,” and must not stand aloof from their struggles and conflicts. Surely, I want to believe, the defence of human rights is a noble project! So what could cause it to fail?

## Five Arguments Against Saving Others From Themselves

Although I can only speculate about Louise Arbour's own reasoning, I have heard at least five other arguments at different times against trying to free people in other countries from oppression. In deference to her opinion, I have been considering them all once again, as I shall do now. Here they are:

**1. “If you take the lid off a society that is unfamiliar with democracy, chaos will result. The group you liberate will just kill their former oppressors.”**

According to this theory, even the worst possible ruler may be the lid on Pandora's jar, preventing warfare among the various clans and ethnic populations in his

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/03/06/how-obamas-aggression-in-ukraine-risks-nuclear-war/>

<sup>26</sup> P. 2. *The Guardian Weekly*, 24-30 April, 2015.

society.

I never fully rejected this grim prediction, but during the last decade the evidence for it has multiplied. Saddam Hussein was a murderous tyrant and Bashar al-Assad ruled over one of the world's worst regimes, but the efforts to oust them have made their societies even more miserable. My Russian friends predicted from the outset that the Arab Spring would fail and, on the same reasoning, continue to support Putin today, even if they despise him. Were he ousted, they predict, the result would be endless bloodshed. The necessary institutions and cultures of democracy are absent and cannot be constructed in the Arab world and Russia within the foreseeable future.

I can no longer dismiss this view, having previously cheered for the brave youths in Cairo's Tahrir Square and the pro-democracy protesters in Moscow. They have been killed or silenced, leaving current regimes more vicious than earlier ones. Why did democratization fail? What might have worked? Does this question haunt Louise Arbour, as it haunts me? Clearly, before starting even a nonviolent revolution for democracy, the activists should anticipate the events that may follow.

**2. “Many people do not want to be free.”** When I was visiting the Soviet Union late in Gorbachev's presidency I used to ask Russians why they were ungrateful to him. “If I were in prison and the warden unlocked the door and let me out, I would thank him,” I said. “But most people here seem to hate him for it.”

It was Lyudmilla Alexeyeva, the old dissident and human rights activist, who explained it to me. “We were like children,” she said. Her people had spent their whole lives under totalitarianism and did not know how to take care of themselves. The state had always told them what to do and had provided for their basic needs. They had to learn how to organize their own affairs. Many people simply died after being liberated and told to manage their own lives.

Of course, it is not only Russians who are unprepared for democracy, and yet certain societies have managed a remarkably smooth transition to freedom. This leaves us with yet another question: Why so? What enables some societies readily to become functioning democracies and remain so, while others still prefer authoritarian regimes?

**3. “Your so-called ‘altruism’ is fraudulent. We know that you are really trying to dominate or exploit us for your own purposes, not trying to protect our ‘human rights.’”** This comment is often heard in post-colonial societies, where there is lingering mistrust of international ‘do-gooder’ humanitarian projects, while

even in Canada, former Marxists retain a trained capacity to detect self-interest behind the motivations of others.

They are not always wrong. Still, such suspicions undermine humanitarian actions. Perhaps Arbour's encounters with this cynicism are the basis for her conclusion that international institutions of justice are “not working.”

**4. “Go clean up your own country. Your ‘democracy’ is no better than ours.”** Hypocrisy is the most ridiculous foible of all, and Canadians and other Western purveyors of democracy abroad are inevitably considered hypocrites nowadays. Indeed, there are double standards. The people indicted for war crimes are not from rich Western countries, but are mainly African generals or prime ministers, even if they use American or French bullets and helicopters.

Besides, it seems that democratic governance itself no longer works, for grievous shortcomings are apparent in North America and Europe—not only in the protection of human rights (consider Ferguson, Missouri) but especially in the efficacy of government policymaking. Even China can solve economic and environmental problems today that Canada cannot.

That's true, but still, the basic argument is wrong. All governments are flawed, but not equally so. International human rights workers invariably do criticize their home countries, but they also recognize certain places abroad that are worse. They properly devote their attention to the places that need it most—and Louise Arbour undoubtedly knows which countries need it more than Canada. Hence this argument can hardly be the basis for her new conviction that such projects are “not working.” So what other arguments may she have in mind?

**5. “You will humiliate them by seeming superior. Even if they admire you and want to emulate you, they will envy and resent you.”** This argument may seem crazy, but Arbour has probably encountered it many times. In fact, I think it is not only correct and historically crucial, but also nearly impossible to counteract. Indeed, this fifth argument may be the most insoluble reason for not trying to save others from themselves and each other.

The German sociologist Max Weber disputed Marx's notion that material interests were an ultimate concern for most people. Instead, he emphasized the significance of prestige or social recognition, which is allocated, not only according to one's individual traits, but also one's social “status group.” In that case, an ethnic group or even a whole society is assigned a particular social rank. Thus one may take pride in the high position of one's nationality or country, or may be humiliated if it loses

prestige. Indeed, there may be no emotion more painful than the shame and rage that accompanies wounded national pride.

But prestige ranking is entirely comparative. On an objective test, everyone may get all the right answers, but (except in Garrison Keillor's Lake Wobegon) not everyone can be above average. In a comparative system of rankings, for every winner there must be a loser. For every person or nation or custom that is respected, there must be a person or nation or custom that is scorned.

To be a judge is to apportion honor. To be a human rights prosecutor is to apportion scorn. What a miserable job!

### Apportioning Scorn

Worse yet, as Louise Arbour has noted, it isn't working. Many people refuse to accept the scorn that is assigned them. Indeed, some resist it with astonishing ferocity. Echoing Weber's previous insight, Thomas Friedman has noted:

“It has always been my view that terrorism is not spawned by the poverty of money; it is spawned by the poverty of dignity. Humiliation is the most underestimated force in international relations and in human relations. It is when people or nations are humiliated that they really lash out and engage in extreme violence.”

Here Friedman contrasts humiliation to dignity. More accurately, however, its true antonym is not dignity but triumphalism—a smug gloating about having defeated the competitor. Dignity is ordinary respectability, an awareness of being “good enough” to incur neither glory nor shame. With dignity one can feel comfortably normal, but the extreme degrees of prestige—humiliation and triumphalism—are problematic.

Describing the humiliation experienced by one status group, Muslims, Friedman has also written:

“One reason Yasir Arafat rejected the Clinton plan for a Palestinian state was that he and many followers didn't want a state handed to them by the U.S. or Israel. That would be “humiliating.” They wanted to win it in blood and fire. Hezbollah TV had bombarded Palestinians with stories of how the Lebanese drove the Israelis out. Palestinian militants wanted the “dignity” of doing the same....

“Ditto Iraq. Why have the U.S. forces never gotten the ovation they expected for liberating Iraq from Saddam's tyranny? In part, it is because many Iraqis feel humiliated that they didn't liberate themselves, and America's presence, even its aid, reminds them of that.”(1<sup>ii</sup>)

Humiliation involves envy—an inherently ambivalent attitude. On the one hand, the low-ranked group admires and wants to resemble (or even be admitted to) the high-ranked group, while at the same time hating them for exclusively possessing the very qualities they desire. Indeed, René Girard maintains that all human desires are borrowed from other people and all conflict originates in these desires, which he calls “mimetic rivalry.”(2<sup>iii</sup>)

And we certainly can see such rivalry everywhere, if we look. Besides the Muslim resentment now being expressed in the violence of Daesh, we see the humiliation of Russia. Vladimir Putin never misses an opportunity to express his resentment in speeches, declaring almost every day that his country has been denied the respect that it deserves as a major world power, and that he will no longer tolerate such humiliation. In this, he articulates feelings that almost all Russians share.

Let me hazard a guess about your own relationships. Please count up all the Russians with whom you had friendly relations a decade ago. Now count those who are still your friends. I would bet that your current list is only half as numerous as the earlier one. That is true for all of us. Almost all Russians today hate Westerners—especially Americans—and consider us arrogant for assuming that we know anything about democracy that they need to learn. The same Russians who loathe Putin and want their country to turn toward Europe nevertheless share his feeling of humiliation. Even Mikhail Gorbachev has called Barack Obama “triumphalist,” though only Russians seem able to imagine Obama gloating over the defeat of a rival.

To be sure, there are abundant *objective* grounds for Russian hostility. For example, among its other bad decisions, NATO repeatedly violated promises never to advance into formerly Soviet space. Moreover, the United States defended the Kosovar Albanians by bombing Serbians, whom the Russians regard as Slavic kinsmen. These are realistic sore points. Still, their objections to such affronts cannot explain Russians' explosions of rage against foreign friends who offer to help them acquire the skills of democracy.

In fact, humiliation is rarely inflicted intentionally, either

interpersonally or between states. Ordinarily, higher-status parties express benign attitudes or (at worst) indifference, and suppose they are treating their lower-status counterparts as either friends or (at worst) normal competitors. They are baffled when Russians reject their well-meant suggestions as arrogant.

But instead of being uniquely Russian, humiliation is one of humankind's most difficult problems, even though we typically avoid mentioning it, lest we exacerbate the ill will it creates.

Richard Ned Lebow is the author of a book, *Why Nations Fight*,<sup>(3 iv)</sup> that does not avoid the term. In it he claims that foreign policy behaviour can be explained by three concerns: fear, interest, and honor. These give rise to four main motives for going to war:

INTERESTS (material interests, such as territory, oil);  
SECURITY (fear of being attacked or exploited);  
STANDING (group status, national prestige);  
REVENGE (“revanchism” — retaliation for past defeat).

Lebow studied 94 wars (1648-2008) that involved one or more great or rising powers and had 1,000 or more battle deaths. He explained them by these motives:

STANDING: (62 wars, 58% of the total)  
SECURITY (19 wars, 18%)  
REVENGE (11 wars, 10%)  
INTERESTS (8 wars, 7%) and OTHER (7 cases, 7%)

The loss of status is evidently one of life's most painful experiences. Envy, resentment, and humiliation may have some basis in objective mistreatment, but more often they are not grounded in any real insult at all. Yet they are no less painful for being of comparative or even imaginary origin.

If, as Lebow is shows, “standing” is by far the most common motive for war, we need to address it to reduce the dangers, but I have no idea how to do so. Even mentioning the differential in status can be perceived as arrogantly rubbing salt in the wounds of defeat.

One who administers justice internationally, as Louise Arbour has done, will often be seen as arrogantly imposing foreign values on a vanquished society, not as defending the universally recognized human rights of people who cannot defend themselves from tyrants. And Arbour is not the only altruistic person who encounters such resistance abroad. Peace workers of all backgrounds receive similar responses. Then how shall we proceed? I think any answer to that question must be tentative, for we are witnessing the breakdown of old forms of social organization before the future forms can yet be envisioned.

## Globalization and Its Discontents

Basically, Arbour remains, with other peace workers, on the right side of history. Human rights matter. And over time, humankind will not be contained within national borders, within the Westphalian principles of national sovereignty or the regional boundaries of normative tradition. Like it or not, we are one world and must live as such. Our interests and our personal relationships are anchored in other countries as much as our own. We may not even know in which countries most of our Facebook friends live.

Yet democracy is not working well at the national level and so far barely exists in transnational organizations. The IMF, the World Bank, the International Criminal Court, the United Nations, the OSCE, and NATO -- such organizations are not accountable to citizens, and the rules they impose may be unfamiliar or even unwelcome. We need new forms of governance and economics to regulate our new relationships and ways of participating. These will be created only when the old forms are decisively rejected as unworkable. As that happens to one institution after the other, our work must continue, but in a context of uncertainty. Even our own projects may be discredited and rejected as failures.

Yet we should celebrate failure! I was a student of Karl Popper, the great philosopher who described the scientific method. He asserted that, though we never reach the truth, we may get closer to it by progressively eliminating falsehoods. We do not prove true theories, but only disprove false ones. The ones that are left standing are not necessarily true (someone may knock them down later) but we can reasonably increase our confidence in them.

Thus science is a battle among theories or models, and it must be hard-fought in order to test them adequately. When a model truly fails, we can rejoice, for the rejection of it brings us closer to the truth. If we have been defending that model, we may not rejoice about its defeat. But we should! Let's shout “hooray!” whenever a new failure can be declared conclusive, for progress toward truth is a process of elimination.

The same goes for social institutions. Communists tried hard to defend their model of a good society, but it didn't work. It was rejected decisively in 1989 and almost nobody believes in it anymore.

Now it seems that democracy and capitalism are not working well. Either they too must be abandoned in favor of something else, or at least they must be changed markedly by replacing the failing parts. But there is no single, comprehensive alternative available now. The

failures must become more conclusive before reforms can begin.

Clear-cut, unmistakable failures are ultimately the most satisfying ones. Ambiguity is frustrating. This fact helps explain why certain societies have been able to accept democracy more readily than others. Here's my theory about it.

Wars have only one good aspect: They may put a conclusive end to a dispute. The outcome of World War II definitely proved that Naziism and the Japanese plans for the future of Asia were finished. No one would try to restore those defeated regimes. Indeed, both Germany and Japan were occupied by victorious armies that enforced democracy and left nothing uncertain.

Likewise, in 1989 the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe was total. Democracy became the new—the only—option. Sensible people all “got with the program” and made it work.

Nothing so decisive happened in Moscow. Gorbachev was still contemplating a hundred options when the Soviet Union collapsed. Although that collapse was decisive, numerous alternative economic and political models are still afloat today, not one of which seems convincing so far.

So the Russians, like the Muslims, have to sort out their own problems. It would be easier if they were not humiliated by comparing themselves to other societies. But can foreigners help them at all?

Maybe a little. At least we should avoid gloating. That may have been what Arbour had in mind when she proposed greater “empathy” for others. Avoid triumphalism, and try to improve our own institutions, which also are “not working” — or not working well enough—while we offer to aid others.

Admittedly, these recommendations will solve very little. Our work must be incremental and even hesitant. We should celebrate every institutional failure as a potential advance, yet show respect and friendship to those who supported that institution and who feel defeated by its failure.

And let's thank Louise Arbour!

*Metta Spencer is the President of Science for Peace.*

<sup>2</sup> Rene Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, Stanford University Press, 1978.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, *Why Nations Fight*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

## Degrowth: A Snail's Eye View of Social Transformation and Ecological Preservation

By Andrea Levy

In 1973 economist E.F. Schumacher observed that “infinite growth in a finite environment is an obvious impossibility.”<sup>1</sup> Degrowth proceeds from that premise of a collision course between relentless economic growth and the biophysical limits of planet Earth. It rests on an acceptance of the basic assumptions of the Limits to Growth thesis advanced in the 1972 report by a group of MIT scientists to the Club of Rome (with some adjustments in the timetable) and of Georgescu-Roegen's arguments about economics and entropy, namely that economic processes of production and consumption result in the irreversible degradation of natural resources. Those storm warnings have been given additional impetus in recent decades by the unfolding climate crisis. Accordingly degrowth calls for a socially equitable downscaling of production and consumption most urgently in the countries of the global North which, in their unsustainable demand on ecological resources and services, are largely responsible for overtaxing the earth's carrying capacity for human beings. Not a philosophical system or a unified school of thought or even a structured social movement, degrowth is a watchword for an evolving set of ideas and practices growing out of a confluence of currents.

### Questioning the fetish of development

The word itself is a graceless translation of the more euphonious French *décroissance*, but the sources of the constellation of ideas that go under the rubric are plural: they include the critique of development advanced in the 1960s and 70s by a number of thinkers such as the Swiss scholar Gilbert Rist and Francois Partant, a French banker who became a scathing critic of development, as well as the French economic anthropologist Serge Latouche, who is currently the best known proponent of degrowth in the francophone world,<sup>27</sup> but also by the

<sup>1</sup> *Small Is Beautiful* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 46.

<sup>27</sup> For a brief introduction see his article “Would the West actually be happier with less? The world downscaled” in the English edition of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, December 200,3 available online at <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/27/081.html>

<sup>1</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, “The Humiliation Factor,” *International New York Times*, November 9, 2003



Austrian philosopher Ivan Illich and the German scholar Wolfgang Sachs. The myth of development made of western capitalist industrialism a model to be followed by the rest of the world, which was accordingly cast as the “underdeveloped” or “developing” countries. But as Sachs remarked in the introduction to *The Development Dictionary*: “...with the fruits of industrialism still scarcely distributed, we now consume in one year what it took the earth a million years to store up. ... If all countries ‘successfully’ followed the industrial example, five or six planets would be needed to serve as mines and waste dumps. It is thus obvious that the ‘advanced’ societies are no model. Rather they are most likely to be seen in the end as an aberration in the course of history.”<sup>28</sup>

### Socialist sources

The socialist contribution to degrowth originates with some of that tradition’s more heterodox representatives, in particular William Morris and André Gorz who eschewed the Prometheism and productivism of much classical socialist thought and promoted ideas of sufficiency and the self-limitation of needs. In *Ecology as Politics*, Gorz analyzed the implacable logic of capitalism that is driven by its quest for profit to stimulate a proliferation of needs and meet them with an ever increasing volume of merchandise and marketable services produced by maximizing the use of energy and resources. The crises of capitalist overproduction, he argued, could not be surmounted “except by a new mode of production which, breaking with economic rationality, is based on the careful stewardship of renewable resources and the decreasing consumption of energy and raw materials.”<sup>29</sup>

### The Anglo-American connection

A relatively marginal strain in the tradition of liberal political economy also proved a major force in the constellation of ideas that goes under the rubric of degrowth. This Anglo-American track dates back to John Stuart Mill, who eschewed pessimistic reading of the Malthusian assumptions of much contemporary political economy to the effect that economic growth would inevitably founder catastrophically on the reef of overpopulation and soil depletion. Rather than anticipating a grim end to growth, Mill looked forward to a green and pleasant “stationary state.” In his *Principles of Political Economy*, Mill contrasted the prospect of a society in which economic growth yielded to improvement in intellectual development and “the Art of Living” with a world rendered barren by the subjugation

of nature to human need and industry: “with every rood of land brought into cultivation, which is capable of growing food for human beings; every flowery waste or natural pasture ploughed up, all quadrupeds or birds which are not domesticated for man's use exterminated as his rivals for food, every hedgerow or superfluous tree rooted out...”<sup>30</sup> Mill here anticipates several ideas central to a degrowth perspective, and not least of which is the recognition of the intrinsic rather than solely instrumental value of ecosystems.

Mill’s stationary state finds echoes in the work of the pioneer of ecological economics in the United States, one time chief economist of the World Bank Herman Daly, whose vision of a steady-state economy has influenced leading degrowth thinkers in the Anglo-American world including environmental lawyer James Gustave Speth in the US, as well as ecological economists Peter Victor in Canada and Tim Jackson in the UK. A student of Georgescu-Roegen, Daly’s conception of the steady-state economy revolves around ensuring the lowest possible “rate of flow of matter and energy through the economy (from the environment as raw material and back to the environment as waste),”<sup>31</sup> which he calls “throughput.”

(As Robin Hahnel has pointed out, throughput is the key to understanding what it is that is slated to be scaled back in a degrowth scenario, although some degrowth advocates do refer somewhat misleadingly to the reduction of GDP, the standard measure of growth in mainstream economics, as a goal.<sup>32</sup> GDP is the value of goods and services exchanged in the market and, as Hahnel observes, it is measured in dollars. Degrowth aims to curb the growth of throughput although in practice within the framework of the existing economic system that would entail a reduction in GDP.)

### From Barcelona to *buen vivir*

Returning to the European continent we find another cradle of degrowth thought in Barcelona in the work of Catalan ecological economist Joan Martinez-Alier who has been especially important in expounding the relationship of degrowth and social justice for the global South, as laid out in his 2012 article “Environmental Justice and Economic Degrowth: An Alliance between Two Movements”.<sup>33</sup> Martinez-Alier works closely with a

<sup>30</sup> *Principles of Political Economy*, Book 4, Chap.6 (London: Longmans Green & Co, 1909), available online at <http://www.econlib.org/library/Mill/mlP61.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Herman Daly, “The Economic Growth Debate,” *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*, no. 14, 1987, p. 323

<sup>32</sup> *Green Economics* (New York: Routledge, 2015), p 76.

<sup>33</sup> *Capitalism Nature Socialism* (Vol. 23, No. 1, March 2012):

<sup>28</sup> *The Development Dictionary* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1992), p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> *Ecology as Politics*, trans. Jonathan Cloud and Patsy Vigderman (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980), p. 40.

number of scholars in the Barcelona Research & Degrowth group including Federico Demaria and Giorgos Kallis.

Identifying all the landmarks in the degrowth constellation is well beyond the scope of this brief introduction; just limiting myself to the contemporary period I should include the German post-growth (*Postwachstum*) current spearheaded by economist **Niko Paech** and, most importantly, the concept of *buen vivir*, an evolving philosophy based, according to scholar Eduardo Gudynas, on the worldviews of a number Indigenous peoples in the global South in dynamic interaction with western critiques of capitalism. Suffice it to say that degrowth has a rich and diverse genealogy. It is an international and ecumenical affair: “an intellectual and experiential rupture from the current limited categories of Left and Right,” as Richard Swift aptly puts it in his recent book *S.O.S. Alternatives to Capitalism*.<sup>34</sup>

### **The smokescreen of sustainable development**

Degrowth positions itself as a challenge to notions like sustainable development and green growth, which stop far short of confronting the gospel of growth and have too often revealed themselves as little more than exercises in greenwashing the ongoing unsustainable exploitation of the natural world. In a February 2015 essay on “The Degrowth Alternative,” Giorgos Kallis writes that degrowth was intended precisely to attack the “oxymoron of sustainable development”<sup>35</sup> which served to depoliticize the environmental movement. He goes on to make the claim (one that that admittedly sits more comfortably with European expressions of degrowth than Anglo-American) that, contrary to sustainable development, degrowth is ultimately an appeal to “exit from the economy” and build alternatives to capitalism. In virtually all its guises, degrowth represents, explicitly or implicitly, a fundamental challenge to the major philosophical premise of mainstream economics: the figure of *homo economicus*. As Federico Demaria, François Schneider, Filka Sekulova and Joan Martinez-Alier affirm in “What is Degrowth? From an Activist Slogan to a Social Movement”: “The conception of human beings as economic agents driven by self-interest and utility maximisation is one representation of the world, or one historic social construct which has been meticulously nested in the minds of many generations of

economics students. Degrowth in that sense calls for more ample visions giving importance to economic relations based on sharing, gifts and reciprocity, where social relations and conviviality are central.”<sup>36</sup>

### **The mirage of technological salvation**

One of the perspectives that unites degrowth advocates is a healthy skepticism regarding the promise of technological salvation. The Promethean spirit finds its apotheosis in today’s technological quest to deploy humankind’s vast but necessarily incomplete scientific understanding to circumvent all biological and physical limits. While transhumanism looks forward enthusiastically to a post human future in which we will be fused with our machines as cyborgs finally transgressing the ultimate frontier of mortality, other techno-fantasies count on colonizing other planets before we render our own uninhabitable. Social, ethical and economic problems are thus reduced to technical challenges.

Geo-engineering is a good example of this type of reductionist thinking. To deal with climate change a group of scientists and entrepreneurs are working on techno-fixes — from “fertilizing the ocean” with iron to spraying millions of tons of sulphur into the atmosphere — designed to avert the need to question a way of life based on the continued reliance on fossil fuels. As Serge Latouche among others has countered, technical solutions are rarely without unintended consequences which in turn call for further technical intervention in an endless game of catch-up. And even if we could find a viable technological solution to climate change, it would not reverse the massive loss of a biodiversity associated with habitat destruction; it would not impede the slow death of the oceans due to overfishing, among other causes; it will not prevent the staggering accumulation of waste inherent to the growth model. At best it will buy a little time. There is no technological solution for a problem that is inexorably bound up with the dominant mode of production and consumption. As degrowth advocate Charles Eisenstein explains: “Today, the impasse in our ability to convert nature into commodities and relationships into services is not temporary. There is little more we can convert. Technological progress and refinements to industrial methods will not help us take more fish from the seas — the fish are mostly gone. It will not help us increase the timber harvest — the forests are already stressed to capacity. It will not allow us to pump more oil — the reserves are drying up. We cannot expand the service sector — there are hardly any things we do for each other that we do not pay for already. There is no more room for economic growth as we have known it; that is, no more room for the conversion of life and the world into

51-73, available online at <http://degrowth.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/jma-degrowth-and-ej.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> *S.O.S. Alternatives to Capitalism* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2014), p.147.

<sup>35</sup> “The Degrowth Alternative,” Great Transition Initiative, February 2015, <http://www.greattransition.org/publication/the-degrowth-alternative>.

<sup>36</sup> “What is Degrowth? From an Activist Slogan to a Social Movement,” *Environmental Values* 22 (2013), p. 197.

money.”<sup>37</sup>

### Too many people?

Degrowth advocates are divided on the demographic question; some dispute the relevance of the issue altogether, dismissing concerns about overpopulation as a neo-Malthusian diversion distracting from the core problem of overconsumption in the global North. To quote Eisenstein again, “If everyone on Earth lived the lifestyle of a traditional Indian villager, it is arguable that even 12 billion would be a sustainable world population. If everyone lives like an upper-middle-class North American ... then even two billion is unsustainable.”<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, unchecked population growth inevitably places pressure on habitat for other animal and plant species, thus threatening biodiversity in ways that ultimately also undermine human flourishing. The demographic factor is taken seriously by Joan Martinez-Alier who distinguishes between reactionary Malthusian responses, such as Garrett Hardin’s odious “lifeboat ethics” that called for rich countries to end immigration and foreign aid, and an alternate tradition that Martinez-Alier has helped bring to light of radical feminist neo-Malthusianism in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe and the US which advocated voluntary limitation of births through contraception in the name of women’s freedom, for environmental reasons, and to counter the downward pressure on wages associated with an increasing supply of labour.<sup>39</sup>

### A civilizational sea change

Degrowth does not have a coherent program, and there are evident contradictions among the wide range of thinkers and activists who identify with the label, but there is an emerging loose consensus around a series of structural reforms supported by many of the key contributors to the conversation around degrowth. These are reforms aimed at laying the groundwork for a human-scale society in which for example, fossil fuel dependency has greatly diminished and people spend far less time working for wages and producing and consuming commodities and far more time producing for their own needs; it is a society in which the market’s role is, at the very least, highly circumscribed, in which circuits of production and distribution are shorter and in which at least some activities once commercialized are

reclaimed. Collective forms of property and “commoning” (shared stewardship of things we use collectively, whether natural endowments or collectively produced resources<sup>40</sup>) are favoured by policy as is collective self-management. GDP has been scrapped as a measure of economic well being in favour of qualitative indices. Industrial agriculture is being superseded by organic farming, urban gardening and permaculture. Social equity is a priority and democracy is participatory. This year the Research & Degrowth association in Barcelona put forward a series of 10 policy proposals and presented them to various left political groups and parties such as Podemos in Spain. The proposals include: a citizen debt audit; work sharing; basic and maximum income; green tax reform; discontinuing support for highly polluting projects by stopping investments and subsidies; increasing support for the non-profit sector; optimal use of buildings; restrictions on advertising; caps on CO2 emissions; and scrapping the GDP as the main indicator of economic health. Giorgos Kallis offers brief descriptions of each reform in his article “Yes, We Can Prosper without Growth.”<sup>41</sup>

Whether degrowth is an anti-capitalist project is also a matter of debate and depends on which currents one considers. Many French (including Quebec) and Spanish degrowth advocates are explicit in their rejection of capitalism as a grow-or-die system that by its very nature is ecologically unsustainable. Because growth is a necessary condition of capitalism you cannot hope to achieve degrowth within the framework of the system. Some of the leading Anglo-American proponents of degrowth have been less categorical but, taken together, the reforms they prescribe, from rigorous environmental regulations, including severe restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions, to measures aimed at reducing consumption and combating inequality, lead ineluctably to a mode of production and consumption bearing little resemblance to contemporary capitalism. Responding to a critique of Naomi Klein’s *This Changes Everything*, Peter Victor points out how capitalism has failed utterly to combat climate change, and concludes that Klein understands correctly that “Questioning the longevity of economic growth entails questioning the structure of capitalism.”<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Silke Helfrich and David Bollier, “Commons” in *Degrowth: a Vocabulary for a New Era*, ed., Giacomo d’Alisa, Federico Demaria and Giorgos Kallis (New York and London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 75-78.

<sup>41</sup> “Yes, We Can Prosper without Growth,” *Common Dreams*, January 28, 2015, available online at <http://www.commondreams.org/views/2015/01/28/yes-we-can-prosper-without-growth-10-policy-proposals-new-left>.

<sup>42</sup> “Four Reasons Why Naomi Klein Is Right,” *This Changes Everything* website, October 20, 2014, <http://thischangeeverything.org/four-reasons-why-naomi>

<sup>37</sup> Sacred Economics, Evolver Books, 2011, available online at <http://sacred-economics.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/sacred-economics-book-text.pdf>.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> See for example his entry “Neo-Malthusians” in *Degrowth: a Vocabulary for a New Era*, ed., Giacomo d’Alisa, Federico Demaria and Giorgos Kallis (New York and London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 125-128.

To bring about fundamental changes in the direction of degrowth requires a massive social movement. Barring that degrowth will occur in a brutal and violent manner as climate change advances, desertification spreads, fresh water grows scarcer, extinction rates accelerate and life for ever greater numbers of humans and most other species becomes nastier and harder to sustain. This is why the qualifier “sustainable” or “convivial” is often added to the term to refer to indicate a degrowth process that is deliberate, equitable and collectively and democratically chosen and controlled. Whether a movement of the magnitude required to “decolonize the imaginary” (Serge Latouche) and implement sustainable degrowth will emerge is very much an open question.

### Activism

There are various forms of political and social experimentation which are sometimes understood as concrete manifestations of a degrowth vision. Perhaps the most well known of these is the Transition Towns movement, launched by Rob Hopkins in 2005, a global grassroots movement of communities aiming to combat climate change by weaning themselves from fossil fuel dependency and promoting resilience, understood as a community’s capacity to withstand and adapt to anticipated ecoshocks. The Transition Town movement does not hoist the banner of degrowth and has been criticized, like many other environmentalist initiatives in the global North, as failing to extend its reach beyond the bounds of a white middle-class movement<sup>43</sup> but it is seen to share a number of precepts and goals with degrowth advocates. Joan Martinez-Alier describes the European degrowth movement as “a small social movement born from experiences of co-housing, squatting, neo-ruralism, reclaiming the streets, alternative energies, waste prevention, and recycling.”<sup>44</sup> His colleagues Giacomo d’Alisa, Federico Demaria and Claudio Cattaneo likewise claim for degrowth myriad forms of activism, from local campaigns to block airports and highways to Spain’s *Indignado* movement that are not necessarily explicitly associated with a degrowth perspective but are in harmony with its basic assumptions and aims.<sup>45</sup> The degrowth movement also organizes international conferences, such as the Fourth International Conference on Degrowth for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity that took place in

Leipzig in September 2014, and has even given rise to a few (ephemeral) political parties

Degrowth has yet to gain a toehold in the labour movement although its fairly unanimous agreement on the objective of significantly reducing working time and introducing some form of citizen’s income offers a fertile ground for alliance. On the other hand at a time when labour and progressive movements generally are fighting the unjust imposition of punishing austerity measures throughout the global North, it will be particularly important to make clear that its vision of an ecologically viable social system shares nothing with hypocritical capitalist state demands for belt-tightening and sacrifice.

Both in theory and practice degrowth is still in the early stages of its evolution and it is difficult to say what direction it will take and what its prospects are for attracting a critical mass of supporters and activists. Nevertheless, the weight of scientific evidence on the ecological crisis humankind has wrought, essentially as a result of a profit-driven, growth-dependent system in which people, animals and ecosystems are just so many “resources” to be exploited, falls squarely on the side of jettisoning the growth paradigm. In one form or another, degrowth is the future.

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<sup>43</sup> See for example Esther Alloun and Samuel Alexander, “The Transition Movement” Questions of Diversity, Power and Affluence, Simplicity Institute Report, 2014, available online at <http://simplicityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/TransitionMovement.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> “Environmental Justice and Economic Degrowth,” p. 62.

<sup>45</sup> “Civil and Uncivil Actors for a Degrowth Society,” *Journal of Civil Society* (Vol. 9, no. 2, 2013): 212-224.

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