



DISARMING Pax Christi TIMES

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THE GEOPOLITICS OF TARGETING RUSSIA

Chandra Muzaffar

The escalation of tensions between the United States, Britain and France, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other, should not surprise anyone. In the last few years, the US leadership and mainstream British media have presented Russia as a major threat to global peace and the international order. Russian president Vladimir Putin in particular has been demonised as a ‘war-monger,’ an ‘aggressor,’ an ‘unscrupulous politician’ hell-bent on restoring Russia’s past glory’ at whatever cost.

This projection of Russia as a threat to world peace has intensified in recent days partly because of Putin’s unveiling of Russia’s cutting edge military technologies on 1st March 2018. They include advanced generation missiles with unlimited range and capability that can evade US or NATO anti-missile defences. Apart from the new Sarmat missile, the Russian defence industry has also developed a low-flying stealth missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead with the ability to bypass interception boundaries that is “invincible against all existing and prospective missile defence and counter-air defence systems.”

Putin also revealed that his country has invented “unmanned submersible vehicles that can move at great depths intercontinentally at a speed multiple times higher than the speed of submarines, ... torpedoes and all kinds of surface vessels ... “ He also spoke of the Kinzhal or dagger system, “ a high-precision hypersonic aircraft missile system... the only one of its kind in the world.” Not only does the missile fly 10 times faster than the speed of sound

but it also delivers nuclear and conventional warheads in a range of over 2,000 kilometres. The Russian president also drew attention to the development of Avangard, a hypersonic missile whose gliding cruise bloc engages in intensive lateral and vertical manoeuvring and is therefore “absolutely invulnerable to any air or missile defence system.”

With these military technologies, Russia has effectively brought to an end the US reign as the world’s sole military superpower. If Putin had made this his goal, it is not because of any obsession with military supremacy. As he explained, the strengthening of Russia’s military prowess was his country’s response to the unilateral US withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 2002 engineered by President George Bush Junior and Vice-President Dick Cheney. As a consequence of the withdrawal, the US and NATO began deploying missile systems to encircle Russia, as observed by veteran analyst, William Engdahl. Countries that were once part of the demised Soviet Union and the dismantled Warsaw Pact in Eastern Europe were drawn into the US-NATO orbit either formally or informally. Anti-ballistic missile bases were built in Romania and Poland. The US global missile defence system now includes destroyers and cruisers deployed “in close proximity to Russia’s borders.”

It is against this backdrop that one should view another major episode that is responsible for the current tension between the West and Russia. It is true that the Russian annexation of Crimea, then part of Ukraine, in early 2014 had

incensed the US and European elites and led to the imposition of crippling sanctions against Russia. While the annexation itself in strict legal terms was a violation of international law, an honest analysis of the episode cannot afford to ignore the larger geopolitical concerns that prompted Moscow to act the way it did. By organising a coup against Ukraine’s democratically elected president in February 2014, the US and its local surrogates demonstrated clearly that they intended to tighten their grip over a land that was not only part of the Soviet Union but also integral to Russian history and culture. Crimea with its strategic port was what the US and NATO coveted. It was all interwoven into the US-NATO agenda of expanding eastwards and emasculating Russia. That the overwhelming majority of the citizens of Crimea endorsed in a referendum conducted on the 16th of March 2014 what they viewed as the restoration of Crimea to its Russian fatherland testifies to the actual feelings of the people — feelings informed by a notion of identity and a sense of justice.

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DISARMING TIMES

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There is yet another recent development that has also contributed towards the exacerbation of tensions between the two sides. It is obvious that the rebels and terrorists in Syria fighting the Assad government backed by the centres of power in

the West and supported by their allies in the region have been defeated. The concerted drive to crush the Hezbollah-Syria-Iran triumvirate opposed to Israeli occupation and US hegemony in West Asia has been thwarted. Since Russia played a significant role in the defeat of the US and Israel and their partners, the antagonism towards Putin among the elites in Washington and Tel Aviv in particular has heightened.

Providing material support to some of the rebels and terrorists holed up in Eastern Ghouta, one of their last few footholds in Syria is a desperate attempt by Washington to ensure that it remains relevant to the emerging post-war political scenario. Highlighting the alleged use of chemical agents by the Syrian Army and the killing of children in government aerial bombardments are tools of propaganda that the Western media have exploited to the hilt in the Syrian war in spite of the effective demolition of some of these lies and half-truths in the past by independent Western journalists themselves reporting and analysing from actual zones of conflict in the country. For Western elites and their media it is not the death of children — after all many children have been killed in Yemen — that is their real concern. It is how Russia has anchored and buttressed its position in Syria and the region as a whole and has challenged American-Israeli hegemony that causes great distress. The latest manifestation of the incessant manipulation of issues pertaining to Russia is of course the alleged use of a nerve agent, “Novichok” to attempt to murder a Russian double agent, Sergei Skripal and his daughter now living in Salisbury Britain. British authorities have offered no concrete proof that the attempted murder was the work of the Russian state. The Russian gov-



ernment has vehemently denied the allegation.

One should ask, what would the Russian government and Putin gain from killing Skripal a week before the Russian presidential election and in the midst of US sanctions?

This is the question that the well-known American columnist, Eric Margolis, poses. A former British diplomat, Craig Murray, also doubts that the Russian government had the motivation to kill a double agent who was part of a spy swap some years ago. He suggests the assassination bid may be linked to an outfit known as ‘Orbis Intelligence’ or to the Israeli Mossad. In Murray’s words, “Israel has a clear motivation for damaging the Russian reputation so grievously. Russian action in Syria has undermined the Israeli position in Syria and Lebanon in a fundamental way, and Israel has every motive for damaging Russia’s international position by an attack aiming to leave the blame on Russia.”

If Israel’s hand is behind the Skripal episode, the truth will never be known. Neither Britain nor any of the other Western powers, not even the UN, would want to conduct an honest, independent investigation. All that Washington and its allies want to do is to increase and expand the economic and financial sanctions against Russia — using Skripal as the excuse.

The aim is clear. It is to compel Moscow to submit to the hegemonic power of the Washington elite. Anyone who has a rudimentary understanding of Russian history knows that this will not happen. Russia will continue to resist. And Russian resistance may well hold the key to a different future for humankind.

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REMEMBERING HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI IN PERILOUS TIMES

Joseph Gerson

August 6, 2018

The consensus among US historians is that the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki — in addition to being moral abominations against civilians — were also opposed by senior military leaders, including General, later President Eisenhower, who did not see them as politically necessary.

While making no excuses for Japanese militarism and imperial aggressions, we should remember that in the months prior to the US's atomic bombings, the Japanese government attempted to surrender on terms the US ultimately accepted *after* the atomic bombings: unconditional surrender with the exception of the emperor remaining on his throne. According to my own research for my book, most senior US military leaders thought that the bombings were unnecessary and wrong.

Craven domestic political calculations, racism and bureaucratic momentum contributed to former President Harry Truman's decision to usher in the nuclear age with the annihilation of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but as General Leslie Groves, who led the Manhattan Project, remarked in 1943, the atomic bomb project was no longer about Germany or Japan. It was about Russia. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were vaporized, incinerated, poisoned and traumatized to ensure that the US would not have to share influence with the Soviet Union in Northern China, Manchuria and Korea. Further, Truman thought that the atomic bomb gave him "a hammer" with which he could dominate the Kremlin with the threat of nuclear annihilation.

Despite the Hibakushas' fundamental truth that human beings and nuclear weapons cannot coexist, the illusion that nuclear weapons have worked and can serve as the ultimate enforcer of empire, compounded by lies and mistaken beliefs about nuclear deterrence, have repeatedly brought us to the brink of nuclear omnicide and have driven nuclear weapons proliferation. In Helsinki, Finland, Russian President Vladimir Putin again illuminated the madness and injustice of nuclear apartheid. "As major nuclear powers," he said "we bear special responsibility for maintaining international security."

He and Trump believe that their nuclear arsenals give them the right to intimidate and dictate how the world's nations and peoples live and possibly die.

A Perilous Time

We live in a perilous time of rising great power tensions, the ascendancy of right-wing autocracies, uncertainties, and renewed nuclear and high-tech arms races. This is compounded by the reality that there are no longer any givens in US foreign and military policy or to the future of liberal democracy in the US.

Following Trump's secretive summit with Putin and the political and media circus that followed, Trump was confronted by his most senior staff who insisted that he deny or reverse a number of statements and commitments he had made in Helsinki — from possible Russian interrogation of the former US ambassador to Moscow to his support for a referendum in Eastern Ukraine. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Adviser John Bolton are at odds on the Korea negotiations. Moreover, the Pentagon is reeling from Trump's unexpected and whimsical orders, musings about reductions of troops in Germany, his order to organize a costly Kremlin-like military parade on Armistice Day and his announcement of the creation of a new space command.

Independent of Trump, though, the gears of empire grind on. The Pentagon budget has been increased by an amount equal to Russia's total military budget. Despite Trump's embrace of Putin, the Pentagon's new National Strategy prioritizes preparations for great power war against China or Russia — the two countries military leaders believe threaten "American Power, influence and interests." This explains the \$1.2 trillion spending plan for the new generation of US offensive nuclear weapons and their delivery systems and Trump's new "Space Command" to dominate Earth from space. As we saw in Trump's theatrical summitry with Kim Jong Un and with his trade war tariffs and denunciation of the European Union, in Trump's "America First" empire, the only good allies are those who know their proper place as vassals.

More than his predecessors, Trump embraces dictators and authoritarian rulers from Putin and the Saudi Kingdom, to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in Hungary and President Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines. While he describes his 391-word vague agreement with Kim Jong Un as a "good deal," he calls the fully implemented P5+1 deal with Iran a "bad deal" and has violated it.

We're now told that there is no reason to rush to complete North Korean denuclearization, while the unspoken commitment to regime change in Iran to restore US regional and global US hegemony is an urgent priority.

Two Minutes to Midnight

All of this is deeply related to continuing US preparations for omnicidal nuclear war. This past winter, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists sent the world a warning by moving the hands of their Doomsday Clock to two minutes to midnight. This is the closest to apocalyptic nuclear war since 1953 and worse than during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

Why the warning? They cited the Trump administration's Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), decrying increased US reliance on nuclear weapons; its staggering investments in new nuclear weapons that are driving "modernization" of the world's other nuclear arsenals; the return to Cold War rhetoric; and the total absence of US-Russian arms control negotiations. They warned about the dangerous lack of coherent US foreign and military policies that undermine global security, North Korea's nuclear weapons program, South Asian rivalries, Trump's threat to the nuclear deal with Iran, and climate change. The NPR follows on the Pentagon's new National Strategy that prioritizes preparations for a great power war and includes a more aggressive US first-strike nuclear war-fighting doctrine. It builds on former President Obama's commitments to deploy new and more usable B-61 nuclear weapons to Europe. The Navy's sea-launched ballistic missiles will be armed with still more devastating first-strike W-76-1 warheads. Further, the mandate to replace the entire nuclear triad remains in place, including replacing older

missiles with new sea-launched cruise missiles and Trident submarine-launched ballistic missiles armed with Hiroshima-like atomic bombs. To compensate for China's increasing area denial capabilities in the western Pacific, there is to be standoff, air-launched, nuclear-armed cruise missiles that can be fired against the Chinese military and civilians from thousands of miles away.

Perhaps the most dangerous element of Trump's \$1.2 trillion NPR is its blurring of the distinction between conventional and nuclear war and the increased role for nuclear weapons in US war-fighting strategies. The initial leaked version of the NPR mandated first-strike attacks in response to devastating cyberattacks, as well as to chemical or biological weapons attacks.

Even before Trump's NPR, renowned whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg pointed to continuities in US nuclear doctrine: Thousands of nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert. The US retains its first-strike policy. So-called "extended deterrence" in Europe and East Asia relies on first use. US doctrine calls for "launch on warning." US policies have "always precluded an effective nonproliferation campaign," according to Ellsberg's *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner*. Further still, the president is not the only person who can launch the country's nuclear weapons.

The US is not the only culprit. All of the other nuclear-armed states are upgrading their arsenals. There is increasing debate in right-wing German circles about the creation of a German or European bomb. Iran will unleash its cyclotrons if the P5+1 deal collapses. Saudi Arabia is putting its nuclear infrastructure in place. Lastly, the Turkish Labor Party reports that President Erdoğan wants a nuclear weapon.

Singapore: After Fire and Fury

We should appreciate South Korean President Moon Jae-in's inspired Olympic diplomacy and that the Singapore summit prevented – at least for the time being – a catastrophic war by walking Trump back from his incendiary fire and fury nuclear threats. The summit also made it possible for Seoul and Pyongyang to

proceed in "determining the destiny of the Korean nation on their own accord."

As we think about North Korea's nuclear arsenal and the threat it poses to Japan, South Korea and other countries, we need to recognize that it reflects fear. Even as we criticize Pyongyang's hideous human rights record, we need to acknowledge that Pyongyang's nuclear weapons grew from the trauma of Japanese conquest and colonialism, the devastating Korean War, US and South Korean regime change commitments, repeated US preparations and threats of first-strike nuclear attacks, and the failures of US diplomacy. Add to this the Clinton and Bush I's failures to implement the 1994 Agreed Framework, Bush II's vetoing Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine policy and rejection of the comprehensive agreement negotiated by former US Secretary of Defense William Perry, and the Obama administration's "benign neglect." As Perry and the renowned historian Bruce Cumings explain the purposes of North Korea's nuclear program are to preserve the Kim dynasty and the country's independence.

Today, current diplomacy is fraught. Bolton insists complete North Korean denuclearization needs to take place within a year while Pompeo says meaningful progress must be made within two years, and Trump says he is in no hurry. Kim Jong Un has denounced Pompeo's "gangster" demands for serious denuclearization steps before the US relaxes sanctions and is now demanding a US commitment to replacing the Armistice with a peace treaty before he makes serious concessions. Furthermore, contrary to US expectations of immediate gratification, Siegfried S. Hecker, former head of Los Alamos and the US physicist with the greatest exposure to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) nuclear infrastructure, has argued that given the size of the country's infrastructure, its complete destruction could take 15 years. While some doubt the seriousness of Kim Jong Un's denuclearization commitments, Joel Wit, who has played a leading role in US negotiations with the DPRK since 1993, reports that, "Everyone underestimates the momentum behind

what North Korea is doing. It's not a charm offensive or a tactical trick." In 2013, when Obama didn't have a potential negotiating partner in South Korea, DPRK diplomats informed the US that they would give up nuclear weapons in exchange for an end to the United States's hostile approach. They said their build up would be of "limited duration" until better relations with US were possible. [They envisioned](#) three stages in response to the US removing the nuclear threat and ending sanctions: a freeze on nuclear weapons development, disabling key facilities and nuclear weapons, and mutual diplomatic recognition.

The US Movement

I wish that I could say we have a massive US movement committed to our government fulfilling Article VI of its Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty commitment, and to signing and ratifying the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. But in response to Trump's "fire and fury" threats, his nuclear weapons upgrade, and the growing dangers of great wars, there is, in fact, greater attention to, and more actions devoted to, reversing the nuclear dangers.

For example, 80 members of Congress have co-sponsored legislation to remove the president's ability to launch a first-strike nuclear war on his own authority, and Congressman Ro Khanna has introduced "No Preemptive War Against Iran" legislation. One of the country's most popular television programs ran a chilling episode about the danger of nuclear war resulting from miscalculation.

Fears about Trump and the bomb are such that a coalition of antiwar groups held a no-first-strike conference at Harvard University with the surreal spectacle of me, a Vietnam-era draft resister, chairing a panel featuring the former high priest of US nuclearism, Perry; the former missileer Bruce Blair; and Zia Mian of Princeton University.

In Massachusetts, the coalition has been briefing congressional primary candidates, and a state legislator running for Congress introduced a no-first-use bill. We also have a campaign of both legal and civil disobedience actions challenging the nuclear weapons upgrade at the

weapons upgrade at the Hanscom Air Force Base near Boston.

In the coming months the coalition will be working to ensure that the nuclear agreement with Iran survives Trump and Bolton, as well as doing our best to prevent a regime-change war. While working to oust Trump and his corrupt coterie, nuclear disarmament advocates will support diplomacy to extend the new START Treaty and the survival of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty ; work for deeper cuts in the great powers' arsenals, and find ways to encourage our partners in the nuclear umbrella states to break ranks

with their masters by signing and ratifying the No Test Ban Treaty.

Finally, with democratic culture and institutions in peril, with people of color and immigrants most vulnerable, and with Trump's economic assaults on the 99 percent, we know that we must shatter our self-isolating movement silos.

Moreover, the reality is that root causes of potential nuclear annihilation and of the assaults on the environment, including racist cultures of domination and injustice, are deeply interrelated. Intersectional movement building is thus a priority for the coalition, including opposing funding for

new nuclear weapons as well as opposing Trump's racist, anti-immigrant ethnic cleansing.

It means insisting that our elected leaders oppose Trumpian austerity and demand that money be redirected to pay for food stamps, for education and for infrastructure investments, and not for empire and its ultimate enforcers – nuclear weapons.

Reproduced with permission from Truthout Joseph Gerson is Director of Programs and Director of the Peace and Economic Security Program for the American Friends' Service Committee.

WHO WAS JOHN MCCAIN?

Dear Readers

*In case you missed it, former US Vice President, Senator John McCain died and was farewelled in style by politicians of all persuasions. I received two articles about McCain: his very moving **Dying Declaration** in which he effectively repents of his involvement in US militarism and imperial domination, and **John McCain, War Criminal; not War Hero** by Brett Wilkins journalist at **Digital Journal**. The two articles give sharply contrasting pictures of the same person, or do they? As Pax Christi rejects all forms of political correctness, I decided offer you both.*

*What do we make of them? Wilkin's article gives us a picture of a warmongering, racist alpha male warrior. In the **Declaration**, McCain on his death bed turns away from all that he has been and expresses his hopes for new world. Which is "true?" Are they both "true?" To quote Pontius Pilate: "What is truth?" We are confronted by the mystery of the human person. Which of us can fathom the mystery of another, never mind ourselves? As Christians, repentance, turning to the light, is part of our core business. Do we accept or reject it? Can a person be "born again?"*

But who are we to judge? Who are we? At what points do we collude with the culture of war and dominance in our lives? IPAN invites us to send old boots to the American forces in Darwin, a heart warming feel good gesture. But how do we deal with the culture of which we are part, a culture which is quite happy to depend on an another imperial racist militarist culture to defend and define it?

McCain RIP. "Do not bring your servant to trial, O Lord, for no person living is innocent before you" (Psalm 143.2)

John McCain's Dying Declaration

My Fellow Americans, I've faced death many times, in Vietnam and elsewhere, but it was only over the course of these past few days that I realized that although I would cease to exist, my legacy would endure. And as this dawned upon me, I shuddered with fright. I felt as Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich must have felt when he was on his deathbed: my god, I thought, I've lived my life all wrong! I spent my life advocating for and enabling war, and heaping hardship upon the poor, completely contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Could I possibly repent? And, if so, how? Is it too late?

For much of my political life I've been known as a maverick, and I was a maverick – for a maverick refers to an unbranded calf, an immature animal. And maybe it's been a long time coming, possibly even too long, but

I've grown up a bit. I don't know if there's an afterlife, or if there's a hell. But I do know that, through the US military, I've made life hellish for too many people here on earth. This must stop. But how?

Well, it shouldn't be too difficult for a Christian nation to follow the words of the prophet Isaiah and to beat our swords and spears into pruning hooks and ploughshares – and our bombers and tanks and aircraft carriers into housing and schools and food and medical clinics.

But while reading the Bible has always inspired me, so does reading the history of these United States. And what I also find inspiring is that our sixth president, John Quincy Adams, had a plan to create a national university system. That's what led me to think about what I would like my legacy to be. In order to abate global

warming, which is growing worse by the hour, and clean up the mess we've made, and in furtherance of world peace, we could use our military budget to close our overseas bases, bring all our troops home, and direct our troops to building this national university system that John Quincy Adams dreamt of. The troops could build campuses in every neighbourhood, from sea to shining sea. Each could have medical schools and nursing schools and medical clinics. And these could provide free medical care to the communities. The campuses could also have all sorts of academic programs, athletic programs, art programs and technical programs (programs that could deliver clean water and clean energy to the cities, towns, and rural regions of the continent). Agriculture and horticulture programs could grow food in each

in each community, ending hunger and poor nutrition – because, as with water, energy, and other necessities, the products of these would be for the community to enjoy for free.

As all members of the community would be students, and all students would receive free housing, homelessness and poverty could be eliminated as well.

In addition to being centres of learning, these campuses could be centres of participatory democracy and self-governance. Communities could grow

their own food, and trade it with other colleges; develop their own movies, music, art, architecture, and technologies, and share these in festivals and competitions held among the schools. And, because free food, housing, and other necessities will free people from the demands of a market system, people can develop their potential outside of market pressures, contributing to a vibrant, free and open culture, liberated from fear and oppression.

As the lights around me fade, I highly encourage the people of the USA to

elect people to office who will divert the US war machine into this venture. I recognize that it sounds fanciful, but if I am lucky my name will be attached to the creation of such a system of locally-run, interconnected colleges, both at home and abroad. And, instead of a legacy of war, poverty, pollution, and misery, I will leave a legacy of peace upon this earth.

It's not too late,

John Sidney McCain III

John McCain, War Criminal; not War Hero by Brett Wilkins

Jhate the gooks” Senator John McCain doubled down when asked on the 2000 presidential campaign trail about his continued use of the racist slur for Vietnamese people. “I will hate them as long as I live.”

In the mind of the settler-colonialist, the white invader is always the victim and the people he invades, occupies, expels or exterminates are always the aggressors, going all the way back to the Native American genocide. McCain was never able to understand that in Vietnam, as in just about everywhere else they went, Americans were the invaders, not the victims. Even as McCain deserves praise and perhaps even admiration for the manner in which he endured the unendurable while imprisoned in Vietnam, we conveniently forget what he was doing when he was shot down over Hanoi. That day, US warplanes were bombing and strafing a light bulb factory in the densely populated capital, where thousands of innocent men, women and children were being killed by relentless American aerial attacks.

One Man's Terrorist...

Bombing civilian targets is a war crime. It was a war crime in Vietnam and it was a war crime in Serbia too, one of the at least 13 countries McCain wanted to “bomb, bomb, bomb” over the course of his congressional career. As Bill Clinton, Tony Blair and other NATO powers waged the 1999 air war against the Serbian people in order to preserve the alliance's “credibility” McCain supported the brutal bombing cam-

paign, which targeted utilities, hospitals, apartment buildings, nursing homes, railways, bridges, marketplaces and media outlets. Here's a little refresher on the Geneva Convention:

It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove, or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies, and irrigation works.

McCain had previously backed bombing Iraq's water purification plants during the first Gulf War, a war crime later proven to be part of a US plan to cripple that country's infrastructure through sanctions that killed hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, many of them children. Many would call this an act of terrorism, but McCain was never one to shy away from supporting terror when he felt it necessary. He personally donated \$400 to Nicaraguan Contra rebels while angrily declaring that “historians will look back and view the vote that cut off... aid to the Contras as a low point in United States history.” Congress banned such aid after widespread reports of horrific Contra atrocities like this one: Rosa had her breasts cut off. Then they cut into her chest and took out her heart. The men had their arms broken, their testicles cut off. They were killed by slitting their throats and pulling the tongue out through the slit.

Of course, one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter, or perhaps both at once. The People's Mujahedin of Iran, better known by its Farsi

acronym MEK, was a State Department-designated terrorist group that had previously assassinated half a dozen US officials back when it was fighting the Shah's regime. After the Shah's ouster, MEK waged a guerrilla terror war against the Islamic Republic, endearing it to US leaders including McCain who supported and arranged secret training for its fighters in Nevada.

In 2009, McCain was part of a delegation of conservative senators who travelled to Libya to meet longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi, who briefly flirted with US rapprochement after agreeing to scrap his weapons of mass destruction program. McCain even promised to help the Gaddafi regime acquire US weapons. But the Libyan love affair was short lived and by 2011 McCain was a leading voice for war against Libya, accusing Gaddafi of having “American blood on his hands.”

Then-secretary of state Hillary Clinton was more than willing to amplify McCain's war call, pressing a reluctant Barack Obama to add Libya to the list of countries he bombed. Iran was a longtime target of McCain's threats. McCain's animus toward Iranians, a nation whose people are among

the most America-loving in the world, bordered on pathological. Upon learning that \$158 million worth of American cigarettes were exported to Iran in violation of US sanctions he quipped, “maybe that's a way of killing them.”

No to MLK Day, Veterans and 9/11 First Responders His relationship with black people was just as

McCain vehemently opposed the national Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, a popular move in a state known for its racism but a shock to millions of Americans who watched McCain vote against the holiday even after President Ronald Reagan finally approved it. What's arguably most confounding about the recent media fawning over McCain is the myth-making surrounding his record on veterans' issues. Lost amid all the gushing over McCain's patriotic service is the fact that he voted dozens of times against funding for veterans' health care and other crucial services, claiming they were "too expensive." Yet McCain had no problem waging and expanding the never-ending "War on Terror" that has cost more than a million lives and more than a trillion taxpayer dollars. McCain's reluctance to spend public funds to care for the men and women who put their lives on the line while fighting to advance the government's agenda is indeed curious given it was the public who financed his own education at the United States Naval Academy.

Also too expensive for McCain's taste was the 9/11 first responders' health care bill, which provided life-saving medical care for the thousands of police officers, firefighters, paramedics and others who selflessly

rushed to the burning Twin Towers that fateful morning and who suffered from deadly cancers and other diseases years later. A watered-down version of the bill was ultimately passed after months of Republican objection.

Grading McCain

McCain surely gets an "A+" grade from the military-industrial complex, for endless war spending was always a top priority for McCain. Taking care of those who fight, and who are physically and mentally maimed by fighting, not so much. That's likely why the nonpartisan Disabled American Veterans graded him a 2 out of ten for his poor record on veterans issues, and why Afghanistan Veterans of America gave him a "D" for, among other travesties, voting against additional body armor and PTSD funding for troops.

War Hero? War Criminal.

John McCain is only a "hero" in the settler-colonialist mind. By the letter of the law, he was a war criminal. We Americans may praise McCain for opposing Bush-era waterboarding, or for standing up to the bigot who called Obama a Muslim at a campaign rally, or for casting the deciding vote that saved millions of Americans' health insurance. Yet one is reminded of Chris Rock reality-checking a black man boasting

about how he pays his child support and stays out of jail. "You're supposed to pay your child support, you're supposed to stay out of jail," the comedian retorts. Well, you're supposed to be against torture and racism and people dying because they can't afford insurance. In a sane world, these things wouldn't even be up for debate.

Alas, this is no sane world and so we see the surreal, Orwellian spectacle of a war criminal hailed as a war hero, of a warmonger praised by purported peace-lovers like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, of someone who staunchly opposed MLK being fondly remembered by the NAACP and by America's first black president. Americans have short, convenient memories. We also love lionizing monsters, from Columbus to Andrew Jackson to Henry Kissinger. In a nation built upon a foundation of genocide and slavery and maintained through global militarism, Olympic feats of mental gymnastics are regularly performed in service of empire. McCain faithfully served the empire and will be rewarded with a lofty place in the official narrative. But in the annals of truth, the John McCain story will read quite differently.

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FROM MYSTICISM TO POLITICS

Richard Rohr O.F.M.

Thanks to Peter Griffin for sending this material from Richard Rohr's Daily Meditations.

The Hebrew prophets and Jesus clearly modelled engagement with both faith and the public forum. Again and again (around 2000 times) Scripture calls for justice for the poor. The call of the Gospel then, calls for a connection between the inner and the outer world.

Characteristically we know this relationship as the dynamic between action and contemplation. Rohr, who heads the Centre for Action and Contemplation in New Mexico, says the most important element of that title lies in the word "and")

Thomas Merton asks the question : *What is the relation (of contemplation) to action ? Simply this : The one who*

attempts to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening their own self understanding, freedom, integrity and capacity to love will not have anything to give others. They will communicate nothing but the contagion of their own obsessions, aggressiveness, ego centred ambitions, delusions about ends and means and doctrinaire prejudices and ideas.....

Richard Rohr comments : Over the years I've met many social activists who were advocating for crucial justice issues, but they were still living largely out of their false self with the need to win and look good – and defeat "the enemy". They might *have* the answer but they are not themselves the answer. In fact they are part of the problem because they still trust in power over love. .

Untransformed mindsets tend to fall in with an identification as either the Left or the Right. Both groups avoid love in different ways. The Left usually has the gift of critical thinking, but that very mind is often too negative and arrogant. It doesn't know how to collaborate in a non partisan way. The Left often becomes ideological, dualistic, individualistic – problem solvers more than long term rebuilders. The Right idolises anything that preserves its own privilege and status quo, but neglects to ask "Is it bearing any fruit for others ?" The conservative gods are normally personal security and well being. In the end both sides are highly individualistic. Rare is the Christian who draws upon the

common good (Tradition) and also serves the common good. (Love in action)

We cannot fight angry power with more angry power.

As humans we can't help but be political whether we recognise it or not. Everything we do either affirms or critiques the status quo. To say nothing is to say something. The status quo – even if it is massively unjust and deceitful – is apparently okay. The challenge then, is to learn how to participate in the public forum as God's image and likeness.

Jesus and other great spiritual teachers first emphasise a primal transformation of consciousness; that our inner attitudes and states are the real sources of our problems. For Jesus, prayer seems to be a matter of waiting in love, returning to love, trusting that love is the unceasing stream of reality. Only the contemplative mind has the ability to hold the reality of what is and the possibility of what could be. Unless our hearts are transformed, our fears will continue to manipulate our politics, reinforcing a polarised and divided society.

If we think we can say our private prayers and still genuflect before the self-perpetuating, unjust systems of this world, our conversion will not go very deep or aid in the unfolding of history. There is no one more radical than a real person of prayer because they are not beholden to any ideology

or economic system. Their identity and motivation is found only in God, not in the pay-offs of "mammon.". Both church and state are threatened by true mystics.

So, for the Christian, politics entails an inevitable spiritual journey. A journey which connects us intrinsically to the presence of God, whose love yearns to save and transform the world.

Social Justice is clearly God's concern, starting with liberation of God's people in Exodus. Yet it has taken Christians a long time to see the Gospel in a fully historic, social and political context. Truly transformed people organically change the world, while fundamentally unchanged people can only conform to the system... Culture will win out every time over the Gospel if it is not critiqued by the Gospel. That essential critique was much of the point of the evangelists' writings.

Most of us need to have the status quo shaken now and then, leaving us off balance and askew, feeling alienated for a while from our usual unquestioned loyalties. In this uncomfortable space, we can finally recognise the much larger kingdom of God. After an authentic conversion, our old "country" no longer holds any ultimate position.

Transformative change in politics depends so much on having a clear view of the desired end. Where does that

vision come from? For the person of faith, that vision finds its roots in God's intended and preferred future for the world. It comes not as a dogmatic blueprint but as an experiential encounter with God's love, flowing like a river from God's throne, nourishing trees with leaves for the healing of the nations (see Revelation 22:1-2). This biblically infused vision, resonant from Genesis to Revelation, pictures a world made whole, with people living in a beloved community, where no one is despised or forgotten, peace reigns, and the goodness of God's creation is treasured and protected as a gift.

Such a vision strikes the political pragmatist as idyllic, unrealistic, and irrelevant. But the person of faith, whose inward journey opens his or her life to the explosive love of God, knows that this vision is the most real of all. It is a glimpse of creation's purpose and a glimmering of the Spirit's movement amid the world's present pain, brokenness, and despair. This vision also recognizes the inevitable journey of inward and outward transformation—the simultaneous, continuing transformation of the inward hearts of people liberated by God's astonishing grace and the outward transformation of social and economic structures liberated by God's standards of justice. See <https://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/2018/07/>

BOOKS FOR NON VIOLENT ACTORS Reviewed by Harry Kerr

Choosing Peace: The Catholic Church Returns to Gospel Nonviolence, Marie Dennis (Ed), Orbis Books, New York 2018

Seven Stories: How to Study and Teach the Non Violent Bible, Anthony W Bartlett, Hopetime Press, Syracuse, NY, 2017

Dax Christi people are good at "Talking the Talk." We have some impressive runs on the board when it comes to "Walking the Walk." When it comes to "Thinking the Thoughts," in-depth reflection on what Christian peacemaking actually means and how it relates to our faith, there are large gaps in our understanding. These two books can help us fill those gaps.

Choosing Peace is a collection of ma-

terial from the conference on *Non Violence and Just Peace, Contributing to the Catholic Understanding of and Commitment to Non Violence*, jointly organised by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and Pax Christi International in April 2016 in the context of the *Jubilee Year of Mercy* with the support of Pope Francis. Representatives of 80 peace groups from around the world attended the conference.

In his message to the conference, the Pope invites participants to *revitalize the tools of nonviolence and of active nonviolence in particular*. The book offers us pictures from around the world of what Active Nonviolence looks like. A study of a number of scenarios from Afghanistan, to Colombia to the Philippines leads us to

see that *the prevention of violence is doable. Normal people, living normal lives, have the option to say No to war*. Jasmin Nario-Galace, leader of Pax Christi Philippines writes of the importance of *Nonviolence in the tedious process towards peace* in the forty year war in Mindanao. She writes of the importance of education for non violence and of the role of the Centre for Peace-Miriam College where she teaches.

In the slums of Medellin, Colombia, a priest formed a number of small communities. He encouraged them to discover their own worth as people loved by God in Christ, to analyse their situation and to plan for action. A group of women by patient demonstrations in the main city square and

initiating dialogue with privileged women managed to start a movement to successfully bring water to their community.

The book explores the history of non-violence on Catholic history and how successive popes have encouraged Christians and humanity in general to turn away from war as a means of solving human conflict but notes that the Just War Theory is still part of the Catholic Catechism. It explores the futility of Just War as violence of any kind inevitably leads to greater violence. It explores Jesus' teaching on peace and nonviolence and explores in depth the biblical concept of Shalom as God's gift of peace as embracing personal relationships and community health as well as relationships between nations and the well being of all humanity. Rose Marie Berger provides a valuable essay on the principles of Active Nonviolence.

The book is well worth reading as it takes us into the theory and practice of Active Nonviolence, opens our eyes to how different communities in different parts of the world are using it and explores the effectiveness of their action. It does not shrink from showing how Active Nonviolence can be risky and dangerous and how some people pay with their lives.

There are gaps. The book and presumably the conference has nothing to say about violence within the church, the abuse of children, and the systemic and actual violence towards women and LGBTI people. It does not deal with the divisions between churches in the Christian community both between churches and the polarisation within and across churches. The ecumenical movement seems to have stalled in recent years. How can

we speak peace to humanity if we are not speaking peace to each other? It has nothing to say about as Peace on Earth meaning Peace *with* Earth though this is closely linked peace between peoples. The book challenges us to go back to our roots and to reconnect with Jesus' vision of peace, to accept that the Constantinian era is finally over and that it is time to stop colluding with "the things of this world."

Seven Stories is a remarkable book. Anthony Bartlett is a former Catholic priest who with his wife Linda founded a Bible Study and Prayer Community in Syracuse USA. His book is an in depth Bible study into the history and practice of nonviolence. The book can be read in two ways. It is designed for group study over an eight months period or it can be read on its own.

However beware. This is not your average parish Bible study. It is demanding. It takes us to the very roots of our faith and understanding. He begins with a quote from Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM: *Many Christians have to go through a time and experience of atheism because the god we have been taught and believe in does not exist.* Many Christians accept what appears to be the violent God, a God of war who encourages conquest and ethnic cleansing and deals unmercifully with enemies. Of course this gave great encouragement to kings and emperors who believe they are doing God's will by waging war. Bartlett invites us to change our reading glasses, to learn to see the biblical stories in context and be led to the nonviolent God we see in Jesus. He draws on the work of French Theologian Rene Girard who

investigates the role of the scapegoat in society and in the Biblical narratives in particular. Bartlett takes into one of the core Christian beliefs, the atonement. Christians believe that *Christ died for our sins.* For many it means that Christ died instead of us, that God punished Jesus for our wrongdoing. This is a violent God who could and did serve as a role model for humanity and validate human war and violence. For Girard, Jesus has been made scapegoat who leads us into the spiral of revenge and violence. He invites us to rediscover in Jesus a God of love who rejects violence and who sets us free from the violent cycle. Bartlett takes us on a wild ride though the Bible writers and invites us to read them through new eyes and to learn to read ourselves with new eyes, to own ourselves to be people who are free to deal with the violence in ourselves and to offer ourselves in love to each other. This is the foundation of peace.

This is a demanding and mind stretching study. It is not for the faint hearted but is infinitely rewarding and potentially life changing. As we read this book we will discover that this book is reading us!

Janet Hubner, a member of Pax Christi Victoria will lead a group through *Seven Stories* at St Peter's Anglican Church Box Hill, beginning in November. All welcome. Janet can be contacted on 0437 489 982 or janet.hubner@hotmail.com.

Choosing Peace is available from www.bookdepository.com for \$31.32 AUD

Seven Stories is available from www.amazon.com.au \$75.05 paperback, 16.35, kindle

MY MYANMAR EXPERIENCE Fr Jacob Kavunkal, S.V.D.

Myanmar, formerly Burma, has been in the public eye since 1961 when the army took over the control of the nation that had become independent of the British rule in 1948. The misconceived policy of the dictatorial regime was won over by the then Chinese xenophobia and style of governing. Myanmar was purged of all the foreign nationals and English was banned from the country including the universities. Wholesale aping of the Chinese system followed

including the driving of the vehicles on the right side of the road.

A major casualty was the development of the nation and its peoples. Just one example of this lack of development is that the excellently maintained school buildings that were taken over from the private agencies, practically Christian, have seen little repair work since 1962! The rich Burmese resources like oil, minerals, timber, and others began to flow freely from Myanmar to China, often in col-

lusion with the local officials and the Chinese party officials. I was told how even the mineral rich dirt was taken to China! As can be presumed there was little room for freedom of expression not to mention the lack of opportunities for development. This has resulted in a rich nation with poor people.

Surely, recent years have seen changes, including the democratic form of government, even if only in the initial changes. Army still holds

powerful ministries as well as 35 % of the representation in the parliament. The elected leader of the nation still has to follow the lines drawn by the army.

With an estimated 52 million people, Myanmar is predominantly a Buddhist nation, with about 88% of the population professing Buddhism. The Burmese were one of the first peoples to embrace the teachings of Lord Buddha. By and large the popular culture is contoured by the Buddhist lifestyle, despite the fact Myanmar is one of the most ethnically pluralistic nations in the world.

Islam has about 4.3% of the population, the vast majority of them hailing from India/Bengal at different points of history, a major portion of them having come during the British administration. The Islamic presence in Burma begins already with the Arab traders coming to the coastal region of the modern Rakhine state in the 9th century.

Christian presence with about 6.2% of the population also has a long history, probably tracing back to the Nestorian Christians. During the 15th and 16th centuries the Dominicans and the Franciscans came to Burma. Later, since the 17th century the Jesuits and the Barnabites worked among the Burmese. The first Protestant missionaries came to Yangon on 19 December 1807 in the persons of Felix Carey and James Chater, sons of William Carey, the very first English Baptist missionary to India.

The Catholic Archbishop of Yangon, Cardinal Charles Bo invited the Divine word Missionaries from Australia to work in his Archdiocese through biblical animation. As I would be retiring from the Yarra Theological Union/University of Divinity by the end of October 2018, I volunteered for the new ministry and as the first of the four-men team, reached Myanmar in the beginning of March 2018. Despite my inability to converse in Burmese, I did engage with people at different levels and in diverse services till the end of June.

I was moved by the warm hospitality, friendliness and acceptance with which the people received me, including Buddhist monks. I was also fascinated by the harmony and peace prevailing among the three major religions in the Yangon region. Right next the Divine Word Residence in Hmwabi, a rural area nearly 50 KMs away from Yangon we have Buddhist Pagodas and a monastery along with a Muslim Mosque.

This was a surprise for me in the context of the international bad-press that Myanmar has. I came to know of the ethnic groups struggling to reclaim “self-determination,” as well as the military operation in the name of national security. Naturally, this calls for greater power sharing and participation for the ethnic groups along with feelings of national solidarity.

The greatest challenge that Myanmar faces today is what is generally known as the Rohingya issue. As has been

already referred, this calls for serious reflection and compromise from both sides, i.e., the Muslims of the Rakhine state as well as the Government. The Arabic term ‘Rohingya’ literally means the people of the Rakhine state which, apparently, is an offense to the Buddhists, the traditional dwellers of the state. The Muslims have come later, even if this goes back to centuries, in some cases. Hence, the Muslims of the Rakhine state could voluntarily refrain from the use of the offensive term.

On the other hand, the government has to acknowledge the long history of the Muslim presence in the state and recognize them as citizens today and extend all rights and privileges that go along with the citizenship. This has been done by the government in the case of the Tamil population of Myanmar. Even if the army forced almost a million Tamils to flee from Myanmar in 1960s today they are accepted and recognized as full citizens of the country. This can be done with regard to the Muslims of the Rakhine state as well.

The task of embedding democracy in a country with many ethnic minorities, long-running internal conflicts, and military rule, is difficult. The elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi wants the religious leaders to animate the people to work for peace and harmony. In this the religions of Myanmar have a major role to play. They should not become source of division or distrust, but catalysts for unity and peace.

Sometimes, in order to learn, you need to slow down and shut up. Which is exactly what my TV crew and I were told to do when we entered the sacred ceremonial grounds at Gulkula in North East Arnhem Land, the home of the Yolgnu clan for more than 50,000 years.

While flying along the red dirt road to the campsite for the Garma festival, I carefully read the 'behaviour protocols' provided by the Yothu Yindi foundation. They state: 'Remember you are on Yolgnu land and entering Yolgnu time. Yolgnu perceptions, priorities and preoccupations are different from those of mainstream Australia. Be patient, and try to leave at home your expectations of how things are learnt, and how events should run. Traditionally Yolgnu learn by observation, by looking and listening. Asking too many questions can be inappropriate. So when you have questions, choose them carefully and thoughtfully.'

Winnowing questions can be a challenge for journalists. But doing just this; sitting back, eyes open, two ears cocked, resulted in one of the most profound experiences of my life, a click, shift and shake of the kaleidoscope. It was an enormous privilege to be briefly immersed in this ancient, calm, respectful tradition, during the country's largest gathering of Indigenous elders, and recognise the lived, enduring shame of the treatment of Indigenous Australians as well as the depth of their spiritual and cultural traditions.

The theme was truth telling.

I am still digesting, there is much more to know and understand *Julia Baird ABC The Drum*

A WORD OF THANKS TO REFUGEES Revd Carolyn Cooke

A Word of thanks... to you in exile
Word of thanks... to you who have risked so much
Word of thanks... to you who have left behind loved ones and now offer love and care to the likes of us, strangers who, God-willing, become friends
A Word of thanks... for the deep wisdom of your heritage and experience
A Word of thanks... for the creativity and vibrancy of your cultures, which we glimpse and savour
A Word of thanks... for your stamina to learn... new languages, new humour, new food, new systems, new rules spoken and unspoken, new views, new manners, new just about everything
A Word of thanks... for not giving up in the face of prejudice and misunderstanding
A Word of thanks... for not giving up on the troubling wait for papers that spell permission to stay, permission to breathe easy, permission to put down roots with equal rights as those around you.
A Word of thanks... for eliciting some good in us, sometimes, and being gracious and humble enough to accept our help
A Word of thanks... for your forgiveness and kindness towards us as we make mistakes and say hurtful things in our attempts to understand
A Word of thanks... for your honesty, for the vulnerable truth of your humanity, your dignity even as you deal with dreams of trauma while still dreaming of lighter days ahead
A Word of thanks... for your sense of humour
A Word of thanks... hunger for life
A Word of thanks... for your resilience
A Word of thanks... for your faith which inspires and challenges our faith
A Word of thanks... to you in exile opening our eyes to so much truth and beauty
So many words of thanks... still so much more to say...
Carolyn Cooke is a priest in the Anglican Diocese of Europe

Maria Visits.

Maria Soares was one of two students from Timor Leste whom Pax Christi Victoria supported and cared for when they came to study Community Development at Victoria University. They returned to Timor Leste where they have married and have families and hold responsible positions in their communities.. Maria manages an important United Nations activity. Maria recently returned to Australia with her two children to renew contacts and to thank Pax Christi. Pax Christi Victoria spent an enjoyable evening in Maria's company being brought up to date with what is happening in Timor Leste



NOTICE BOARD

NEW SOUTH WALES

Pax Christi Meetings

We normally meet on the First Monday of each month at 6.00pm for shared meal that members bring and the meeting follows at 6.30 pm.

Contact: Claude Mostowik
 (02) 9550 3845 or 0411 450 953
 The venue: MSC Justice and Peace Centre, 21 Swanson Street, Erskineville. 2 minutes walk from Erskineville Station

QUEENSLAND

Pax Christi Meetings

Pax Christi Queensland

Pancras Jordan OP

0415 461 620

pancrasjordan@gmail.com

Clare Cooke SSpS

mccl@holyspirit.com.au

Seven Stories:

**How to Study and Teach the Non Violent Bible,
 A New and Challenging Group Study**

**At St Peters' Anglican Church
 Whitehorse Rd., Box Hill
 Beginning early November
 Contact Janet Hubner
 0437 489 982 or
janet.hubner@hotmail.com**

VICTORIA

Agapes and Public Forums

Daf Christi Victoria

*Invites you to
 the October Agape*

**Sunday 21 October
 2018 12.30 for 1 p.m**

ENRICHING OUR
 COMMUNITY

THE SOUTH SUDANESE IN
 THE WESTERN SUBURBS

A conversation with Matthew
 Shawcross, Principal
 Sacred Heart Primary School,
 North Fitzroy.

Matthew is a passionate
 advocate for the South
 Sudanese Community.

He will be accompanied by
 members of the South Suda-
 nese community

**At Fred Pase's
 7 Thyra Street
 Sunshine 3020**

Phone 9311 8515

Shared Meal 1 p.m

Daf Christi Victoria

ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday 18 November

12.30 for 1 pm

Kildara, 39 Stanhope St
 Malvern

REMEMBRANCE DAY FORUM

"A World at Peace With
 Itself Elusive Dream or
 Achievable Goal"
 at

Islamic Council of Victoria
 372 Spencer St.,
 West Melbourne

11 November 2018, 2-5 p.m.
 Speakers, Conversation,
 Poetry Music

To introduce
 the Conference on a
**JUST, ENVIRONMENTAL
 AND
 SUSTAINABLE PEACE**
 23 & 24 April 2019
 at Pilgrim College, Univer-
 sity of Melbourne

**I/We wish to apply for or renew membership of the International Christian Peace Movement -
 Pax Christi Australia.**

(Membership is from January to December)

(Please tick box if you wish to receive your copy of **Disarming Times** by e-mail)

New South Wales Members please return your membership application/membership renewal to PO Box A 681 Sydney South 1235 NSW

All others: please return your membership application/membership renewal to P.O. Box 31 Carlton Sth Vic. 3053

Name..... Address.....

.....P'code.....Phone.....

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ENCLOSED \$..... (Single \$35; Low income \$20; Family \$45)