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Jeremy Kuzmarov

Six Reasons to Oppose Escalation in Af-Pak (and Yemen, Too)

JEREMY KUZMAROV is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Tulsa and author of *The Myth of the Addicted Army: Vietnam and the Modern War on Drugs* (University of Massachusetts Press).

IN HIS 2008 BOOK *BARACK OBAMA AND THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN POLITICS*,¹ leftist author Paul Street deconstructs the notion of Obama as progressive, showing him to be a cunning and conservative power-broker who was promoted by the so-called “power elite” to bolster America’s flagging international reputation and to revive America’s status as the preeminent global power after the disasters of the Bush years. According to Street, throughout his career Obama has shown a lack of backbone on social justice issues and has been a consistent proponent of U.S. hypermilitarism and empire, going so far as to praise Ronald Reagan’s “Star Wars”

program in his much heralded autobiography.

So far, Obama’s actions as president have largely confirmed Street’s analysis, especially in the realm of foreign policy. Obama’s bowing to the pressure of the military and Pentagon in sanctioning massive troop increases in Afghanistan and further extending the war into Pakistan (and now into Yemen as well) is particularly emblematic. In justifying the escalation, Obama has tried to argue that Afghanistan represents a “good” and necessary war for U.S. security interests. In reality, however, it has wrought a cataclysmic impact for the Afghan population, while contributing to the destabilization of the region. Malalai Joya, the youngest member of the Afghan parliament and member of RAWA (Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan) provides an important Afghan perspective — absent in the mainstream media — in her autobiography *A Woman Among Warlords: The Extraordinary Story of an Afghan Who Dared to Raise Her Voice*.² She writes: “..... For Afghans, Obama’s

1. See Paul Street, *Barack Obama and the Future of American Politics*. New York: Paradigm, 2008.

2. New York: Scribner, 2009.

Welcome to the New Shalom

AS MID-WINTER MOVES TOWARD SPRING, WE WELCOME YOU TO the first edition of Shalom, our new Jewish Peace Fellowship online newsletter. First and foremost, I would like to invite each and every one of our readers to participate in this exciting, new project. There is space for every member and every reader to express his or her ideas. Articles, poems, upcoming events, questions, conclusions, letters to the editor, and more — all are welcome.

Over the past several years it has become prohibitively expensive to print and mail a hard copy of Shalom — the Jewish Peace Fellowship’s traditional newsletter — to our members and friends. But now, since computers are so readily available, we have decided to begin this new and exciting format.

NEWS FROM THE JPF

We have reprinted and redesigned *Wrestling with your Conscience: A Guide for Draft Registrants and COs*. If you know any young people who are beginning to think about the concepts of nonviolence, a draft, war and conscientious objection, by all means get them a copy, which is available from the JPF. Gifts to rabbis and temple or synagogue libraries, Jewish study classes and Hillels

are always a good idea as well.

The JPF is still represented on the Fellowship of Reconciliation National Council. This year we have a new representative, Rabbi Karen Sussan. Rabbi Sussan is involved in many issues and brings a Jewish outlook to many projects in which the FOR is involved. Dr. James Lieberman represents the JPF on the board of the Committee on Conscience and War (formerly NISBCO), in Washington, D.C. Irving Ruderman represented the JPF on the CCW Board for many years. Phyllis Taylor, who serves as a Correctional Chaplain in the Philadelphia Prison System, represents the JPF on the Prisoner Visitation Committee, which was long well served by the recently retired Rabbi Robert Tabak.

If you have not read *Peace, Justice and Jews: Reclaiming our Tradition*, edited by Murray Polner and myself, that too can be purchased from the JPF. Publishers Weekly praised it as a “literate, thought-provoking collection.” There are 44 essays on very current issues, our Jewish tradition of non-violence, the Middle East, animal rights, and much, much more.

Happy Spring to you and yours,
STEFAN MERKEN, Chair, JPF

military buildup will only bring more suffering and death to innocent civilians while it may not weaken the Taliban. Afghanistan has long been used as a deadly playground in the 'Great Game' between superpowers, from the British Empire to the Soviet empire, and now the Americans and their allies. They have tried to rule Afghanistan by dividing it. They have given money and

power to thugs and fundamentalists and warlords who have driven our people into terrible misery. We need security and a helping hand from friends around the world, but not this endless U.S.-led 'war on terror,' which is in fact a war against the Afghan people. The Afghan people are not terrorists; we are the victims of terrorism."

Drawing on Joya's insights, here are six general reasons to oppose the recent troop build-up and to support the withdrawal of U.S.-NATO occupying forces:

1. The war has been conducted in violation of U.N. security protocols and international law.

As Marjorie Cohn, a professor at Thomas Jefferson School of Law and immediate past president of the National Lawyers Guild, notes: "The UN Charter provides that all member states must settle their international disputes by peaceful means, and no nation can use military force except in self-defense or when authorized by the Security Council. After the 9/11 attacks, the council passed two resolutions, neither of which authorized the use of military force in Afghanistan. 'Operation Enduring Freedom' was not legitimate self-defense under the charter because the 9/11 attacks were crimes against humanity, not 'armed attacks' by another country. Afghanistan did not attack the United States. In fact, 15 of the 19 hijackers hailed from Saudi Arabia. The necessity for self-defense must be 'instant, overwhelming, leaving no choice of means, and no moment for deliberation.'" This classic principle of self-defense in international law has been affirmed by the Nuremberg Tribunal and the U.N. General Assembly.³ In addition, an underlying motive for the war may be to secure oil pipelines through Central Asia.⁴

2. The U.S.-NATO coalition and its proxies have been respon-

3. Marjorie Cohn, "Why the Af-Pak War is Illegal: Grave Breach of the Geneva Convention," Counterpunch, Dec. 21, 2009.

4. See Paul Fitzgerald and Elizabeth Gould, *Invisible History: Afghanistan's Untold Story*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2009.



"Taliban, do you think that you are safe...?" Front side of a pictorial story leaflet distributed in Afghanistan by the U.S. Department of Defense, 2001-2002. Reverse side on front page. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

sible for committing myriad atrocities.

The record of the U.S.-NATO troops has been an appalling one. Nighttime raids have led to manifold abuses and the killing of civilians. A recent report by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) noted that "the combination of abusive behavior and violent breaking into civilians' homes in the

middle of the night stokes almost as much anger and resentment toward... [pro-government forces] as the more lethal air strikes.... Most of the time these night raids end up killing civilians in their houses." At least two secret U.S. Special Forces teams — one out of Camp Gecko in Kandahar and the other nicknamed Shaheen, based in Nangarhar — have been operating with total impunity, carrying out executions in a manner reminiscent of the Phoenix program in South Vietnam.⁵ (In the middle of the night, for example, in October 2007 in a village in Helmand province suspected of harboring Taliban, a U.S. Special Forces-led squad broke down doors, shot a number of people, including children in their beds, and in one house slit the throats of two brothers, only one of whom survived). Torture meanwhile has been routinely practiced, including incidents in which detainees have been hung to the ceiling by hooks, deprived of sleep and food, and subjected to sensory deprivation, water-boarding and forced drug use, as well as sexual humiliation. The International Red Cross reported massive overcrowding in Afghan prisons, "harsh" conditions, a lack of clarity about the legal basis for detention, and detainees being held "incommunicado" in "a previously undisclosed warren of isolation cells" where they were "sometimes subjected to cruel treatment in violation of the Geneva Conventions."⁶

Contrary to the myth of surgical accuracy promoted by the U.S. military and in the mainstream media, many civilian deaths have been attributed to indiscriminate bombing attacks. In July 2008, in what appears to be a quite typical incident, an early morning U.S. air strike decimated a wedding procession in the mountains of Nangarhar, killing some 50 members of the party. The bridegroom's father remembers: "When I got [to the site of the air strike], I saw pieces of bodies scattered around. I couldn't even make out which part was which. It was just flesh, everywhere."

5. Marc Herold, "Afghanistan: Terror U.S. Style," "Frontline," PBS, March 11, 2009. On the Vietnam-era Phoenix program and its terrible humanitarian effects, see Douglas Valentine, *The Phoenix Program* (New York: William Morrow, 1991).

6. Fitzgerald and Gould, *op.cit.*

Even Hamid Karzai at one point pleaded with the U.S. and NATO to stop bombing civilians, which was creating a groundswell of support for the insurgency.⁷

3. *The Karzai government and state security forces are hopelessly incompetent and corrupt.*

The U.S.-NATO war is being fought on behalf of a government that rates second to last in the global corruption index and recently won a blatantly rigged election. A CIA officer commented in *The New York Times* that during the period of the U.S.-NATO occupation, “Virtually every significant Afghan figure has had brushes with the drug trade. If you are looking for Mother Theresa, she doesn’t live in Afghanistan.” The country now produces 93 percent of the world’s heroin and has been characterized by even Fox News, a major champion of American intervention, as a “narco-state.” Drug money has corrupted all facets of society, crippled the legal economy and made it nearly impossible to carry out the simplest development projects, while most of the population lives in crushing poverty (below the level of even war ravaged countries in sub-Saharan Africa). As in South Vietnam during the American occupation, the main airport has become a major transshipment point for heroin, and positions for police chief in many provinces are auctioned off to the highest bidder due to their enormous

graft value. The cost for a job as chief of police anywhere on the border is rumored to be upwards of \$150,000.⁸

Many of the most powerful individuals in the government are warlords renowned for their brutality. Moreover, U.S.-trained military and police meanwhile have compiled a record of abuse and are central to what Ambassador Ron Neumann has characterized as the pattern of “repression and oppression” gripping the country. They have routinely engaged in shakedowns at impromptu

7. See Tom Englehardt, “The Wedding Crashers: A Short Till Death Do US Part History of Bush’s Wars,” *Tomdispatch.com*, July 14, 2008.

8. Dexter Filkins, Mark Mazetti and James Risen, “Brother of Afghan Leader Said to be Paid by CIA,” *The New York Times*, Oct. 27, 2009; Fitzgerald and Gould, *op. cit.*, 284.

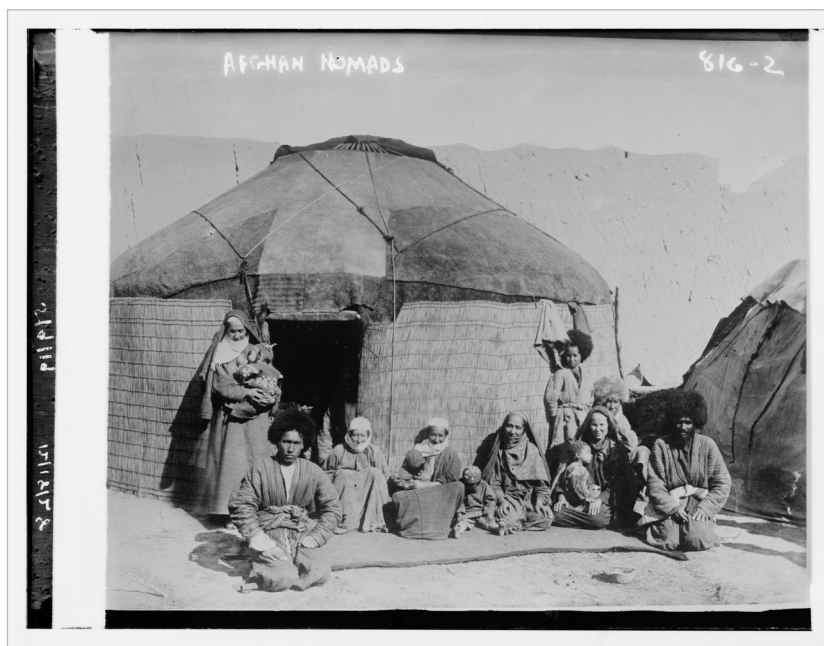
checkpoints, shot at stone-throwing or unarmed demonstrators, stolen farmers land, and terrorized the civilian population while undertaking house-to-house raids in military assisted sweep operations. According to village elders in Babaji north of Laskar Gah, police bent on taking revenge against clan rivals carried out the abduction and rape of pre-teen girls and boys. These are the types of forces the U.S. is empowering as part of Obama’s ill-conceived surge.⁹

4. *The U.S. is igniting ethnic conflict and empowering the Taliban.*

Acting in a classically imperial manner, the U.S. is helping to stoke ethnic hatreds through its tactics of divide and conquer and is playing off one side against the other in a 30-year civil war

between Pashtuns on one side and the Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazara on the other. (Similarly in Iraq, U.S. power has served to intensify ethnic hatred between the Sunni, Shia and Kurds). In an August report calling for the escalation of U.S. troop levels, Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal acknowledged that there are a “set of related insurgencies each of which is a complex system with multiple actors” and consisting almost entirely of “Afghans.” Despite the hysterical claims of Western media, the Iranian influence is said to be “ambiguous” and not clearly documented, while the number of Al Qaeda fighters is estimated by U.S. intelligence to be less than 100.¹⁰ Mullah Zubiallah Akhund, a Taliban leader in Uruzgan, believes that foreign attacks

helped turn their fight against the foreigners into a nationwide popular struggle. He states: “The people who are fighting with the Taliban are the brothers, uncles and relatives of those killed by the Americans. They have joined the Taliban and are fighting



Afghan nomads, seated outside tent, 1919. Bain News Service. Bain Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

9. See D. Gareth Porter, “A Bigger Problem Than the Taliban? Afghanistan’s U.S.-Backed Child Raping Police,” *Counterpunch*, July 30, 2009 [<http://www.counterpunch.org/portero7302009.html>]; Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America’s War in Afghanistan*. New York: Norton, 2009, 172; William Fischer, “Rights: Afghan Prison Looks Like Another Guantanamo,” *IPS News*, Jan. 15, 2008 (also available online at ipsnews.net/).

10. Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, “COMISAF’s Initial Assessment,” International Security Assistance Force, Kabul, Afghanistan, Aug. 30, 2009.

because they want to avenge their brothers, fathers or cousins. There are now Taliban in every village; many of them have rejoined the movement after the savage attacks carried out by Americans.” Frederico Manfredi, adviser to the Belgian government, wrote recently about his trip to southern Afghanistan where he was introduced to a traditional community leader in a mud-brick village about an hour outside of Kandahar. Manfredi writes, “A gracious elder entered the room. He was tall and slender...he introduced his lineage, and said nonchalantly ‘You know, half my family is Taliban.’ ...I listened carefully: ‘Here in the south, whenever people see foreign armies taking over, they want to fight them. I don’t blame those who join the Taliban. At least the ‘Taliban’ are Afghans, they’re Pashtuns, they’re kin.... I’m not a Talib. But I want the occupation to end.’”¹¹

5. The escalation of the war into Pakistan is destabilizing the country and causing much bloodshed.

The escalation of the U.S.-NATO war into Pakistan has had a similar effect in stoking ethnic conflict and empowering insurgent groups in an already volatile country. Upwards of two million people have become refugees. Paradoxically, the U.S. is beefing up the Pakistani military and intelligence services, which are infiltrated by Taliban elements. Most disturbing has been the use of Predator drone strikes. Jane Mayer, in a recent piece in *The New Yorker*, estimates that since Obama took office U.S.-NATO forces have launched more than one per week, with untold numbers of casualties. According to Marc Herold, of the 60 cross-border U.S. drone attacks upon Pakistan between Jan. 14, 2006 and April 8, 2009, only 10 were able to hit their actual targets, killing 14 wanted Al Qaeda leaders and 687 innocent Pakistani civilians. The success percentage of the U.S. Predator strikes thus comes to not more than 6 per cent. After U.S. bombs leveled the village of Bola Baluk in the Taliban controlled Farah province, killing an estimated 123 people, including scores of women and children, the Urdu newspaper *Jang* declared that Obama was “shutting his ears to the screams of thousands of women whom your drones have turned into dust.”

Not surprisingly, according to a poll by CNN correspondent Peter Bergen, only 9 percent of Pakistanis support the strikes, while over two-thirds of the country opposes them. Herold writes: “Obama’s shifting the deadly burden of air strikes onto Pakistani border Pashtun tribe people would seem to be an especially flawed tactic insofar as most Pashtuns adhere to the code of Pashtunwali where a mal-deed against a family member requires revenge. In other words, such attacks causing civilian injury or death are creating an endless supply of new resistance fighters. Widely cited figures suggest that for every dead Pashtun, 3-5 revenge seekers are created.”¹²

11. Marc W. Herold, “What Do Obama’s First 100 Days Mean to Common Afghans,” *RAWA News*, April 30, 2009.

12. See Marc Herold, “America’s Afghan War: The Real World

6. The myth of the “safe haven”: Al Qaeda is an international network which does not principally operate out of Afghanistan.

Ironically, the failed terrorist plot to blow up a plane over Detroit in retaliation for U.S. air strikes which killed an estimated 63 people in Yemen undermines a critical part of Obama’s case for intensifying and expanding the war on Afghanistan and Pakistan. As Harvard Kennedy School of Government Prof. Stephen Walt noted in the journal *Foreign Policy*’s August 2009 essay, Obama’s “safe haven myth” (which was similarly promoted by Dick Cheney) rests on the fundamentally flawed premise that Al Qaeda or its many and various imitators couldn’t just as effectively plot and conduct future terror attacks from any of a large number of other locations, including Western Europe and the U.S. itself. Georgetown University Prof. Paul Pillar, chief of the counterterrorist center at the CIA from 1997 to 1999, seconded Walt’s critique in the editorial pages of *The Washington Post*. “By utilizing networks such as the Internet,” Pillar noted, “terrorists’ organizations have become more network-like, not beholden to any one headquarters.”¹³ In short, the escalation of the Af-Pak war will not have any effect in making the U.S. safer and holds little potential for crippling Al Qaeda. The only way that this latter goal can be achieved is to address the roots of the resentment towards the United States in the Middle-East, including its stationing of troops in Saudi Arabia, propping up the Mubarak dictatorship in Egypt, supporting the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and violently intervening in Iraq and occupying the country indefinitely. Andrew Bacevich, a decorated army officer and international relations specialist at Boston University, comments, sensibly: “Sending U.S. troops to fight interminable wars in distant countries does more to inflame than to extinguish the resentments giving rise to violent anti-Western jihadism.”

Indeed, the peaceful alternatives to endless war and occupation will not only save countless lives, but also in the long run enhance global security and undermine the *raison d’être* for violent groups such as Al Qaeda whose methods unfortunately have much in common with Western practice. ☆

Versus Obama’s Marketed Image,” *RAWA News*, April 12, 2009; Jane Mayer, “The Predator War,” *The New Yorker*, Oct. 26, 2009.

13. Stephen Walt, “The Safe Haven Myth,” *Foreign Policy* (Aug. 18, 2009), read at [http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/08/18/the_safe_haven_myth]; Paul R. Pillar, “Who’s Afraid of a Terrorist Safe Haven?” *Washington Post*, Sept. 16, 2009; Paul Street, “Safe Haven (and Other) Myths in Obama’s Terror War: Reflections in the Wake of Flight 253,” *ZNET* [[www.http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/23504](http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/23504)].

Lawrence S. Wittner

In War, Winners Can Be Losers

LAWRENCE S. WITTNER is Professor of History at the State University of New York/Albany. His latest book is *Confronting the Bomb: A Short History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement* (Stanford University Press).

THUS FAR, MOST OF THE SUPPORTERS AND OPPONENTS OF escalating the U.S. war in Afghanistan have focused on whether or not it is possible to secure a military victory in that conflict. But they neglect considering the fact that, in war, even a winner can be a loser.

The most obvious way in which military success can turn into defeat is by imposing vast human and material costs on the victor. Britain, for example, was victorious in World War I. But the price was high — a generation of young men went to their deaths or came home horribly wounded and psychologically battered. An estimated 450,000 Britons perished during the Second World War and, in the years after the conflict, Britain could survive economically only by maintaining rationing, drawing upon billions of dollars in aid from the United States, and divesting itself of its far-flung empire. The impact of World War II upon another victor, the Soviet Union, was even more devastating. At the war's conclusion, some 24 million Soviet citizens lay dead, many more were wounded or crippled, and a large portion of the nation had been burnt to the ground. Indeed, the death toll among the winners of the Second World War was far higher than among the losers.

And what is one to say about nuclear war? What will be the condition of a nation after it has “won” such a conflict? It seems likely to be a smoldering, radioactive ruin, with millions of rotting corpses everywhere.

Furthermore, as the loser of a war often seeks revenge for its defeat, the military victor frequently finds that its troubles are only beginning. Just ask the French what their World War I victory over Germany accomplished for them. Similarly, Israel has won all its wars since its declaration of independence, and yet it would be hard to think of a more embattled, insecure nation today, ever-fighting wars and ever-threatened by them.

In addition, war — whether victorious or not — frequently undermines democracy and civil liberties. America’s “Founding Fathers” feared Caesarism, and for good reason. Rome won military victories for centuries, but at the price of destroying the

Roman Republic and fostering an imperial tyranny. Since that time and around the world, numerous military leaders, proclaiming themselves to be saviors of their nations, have used their prestige and control of the armed forces to seize political power and snuff out democratic institutions. Even under civilian leadership, governments at war tend to violate civil liberties. In the United States, habeas corpus was suspended during the Civil War, freedom of speech, press, and association were dramatically curtailed during World War I, Americans of Japanese ancestry were placed in internment camps during World War II, McCarthyism played havoc with free expression during the cold war, and torture became part of U.S. government policy during the “war on terror.”

Moreover, military victory can easily lead to arrogance and aggression — a kind of imperialist hubris. For many years, Americans prided themselves on their nation never having lost a war, and this fed into the assumption that it never could lose one. During the Vietnam War, Senator J. William Fulbright, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, warned repeatedly of “the arrogance of power.” But, unfortunately, many Americans — wrapped up in a dream of ongoing U.S. military glory — failed to heed his words before it became clear that in Vietnam victory was a very costly fantasy.

Even worse, people can easily transform a victory secured by larger, better-equipped armies into a victory for moral superiority. In this fashion, citizens of a militarily victorious country all too often lose their sense of reality. How many times, for example, have we heard — among Americans — that the United States is “the greatest nation in the world”? During the 2008 presidential election campaign, in fact, one of the candidates for the Republican nomination, Fred Thompson, declared that the United States was the “greatest country in the history of the world.” More striking yet is the fact that this kind of inflamed nationalist rhetoric is such a commonplace in U.S. political life that no one seemed to find anything strange about it.

Of course, a case can be made that it is better for a nation to win a war than to lose it. But perhaps it is time to learn from the world’s tragic, blood-stained history that there is a third alternative: using our intelligence and creativity to resolve conflicts without war. ☆

This article originally appeared on The History News Network [www.historynewsnetwork.org].



Richard Deats

Peace, the Nobler Way

RICHARD DEATS is editor emeritus of Fellowship Magazine.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S DISCOURSE ON THE JUST WAR IN HIS Nobel acceptance speech was more than a disappointment. It was a wasted opportunity to move the world beyond the age-old justification for war — and the numerous wars being waged now worldwide — and to summon humanity to “choose life, that we and our descendants may live.” (Deut. 30:19).

After eight long years of war in Afghanistan, is this call for more troops all we have to offer? A just war? No. It is simply war. As New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof points out, in 2010, U.S. military spending only in Afghanistan will be more than the total official military budget of every other country in the world. Since 2001, the U.S. has established 19 new military bases in Afghanistan and neighboring countries, adding to about 1,000 military bases and facilities it has in 46 countries and territories. The U.S. Defense Authorization Act for 2010 is an astounding \$680 billion, which includes \$130 billion for the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The 30,000 new troops come at a price tag of \$1 million per soldier per year. Afghanistan is a desperately poor country — one of the poorest in the world. Sending in the troops of the U.S. and other rich nations is like giving a stone to a person asking for bread. An unmanned drone aircraft may be intended to kill only the enemy but tell that to the families of unintended victims, such as the wedding party that was unfortunately slaughtered by mistake. Afghans need safe drinking water and medicine, education and food, not more war. The victims of modern warfare are overwhelmingly civilians, not the soldiers that the proponents of

just war talk about.

People who defend sending in more troops say, “What is the alternative?” If you are in a hole, the first thing to do is to stop digging. In the months of deliberations the White House took to look at the war (in itself a good process), U.S. military, diplomatic and political leaders were listening to themselves, not the Afghans. What wisdom might the tribal elders and community leaders have brought to the table? If they had been asked about ways to bind up their nation's wounds and meet the basic needs of their people, one doubts their answer would have been to continue the war and send in tens of thousands of new troops. Greg Mortenson, author of *Three Cups of Tea* and *From Stones*

to Schools, recently said that although the Taliban have burned down many schools, they have not harmed any of the hundreds of schools his project has built because they are all built only after receiving the opinions of the elders and the input and work of the local villagers.

When Obama was campaigning for president he proposed a \$2 billion global education fund. I kept hoping he would refer

to this in his Nobel address. But the old conundrum — bombs or butter — still holds. If you choose to go down the military path, you just won't have much left over for “butter.” To say this is only a temporary necessity is shortsighted. During the cold war we were always told, “The peace dividend has to wait.” But when the cold war ended, the peace dividend never materialized because the bloated military budgets were continued, in rich and poor nations alike. The world chose to ignore the wisdom of Gandhi and King who said that means and ends are inextricably interrelated. In fact, the end is predetermined by the means you use. Peaceful means produce peaceful ends.

As A. J. Muste said, “There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.” ✧



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Murray Polner

Our Volunteer Army: Two Wars and Counting

MURRAY POLNER is co-editor of *SHALOM: Jewish Peace Letter*. He is also the editor, with Stefan Merken, of *Peace, Justice and Jews: Reclaiming Our Tradition* (Bunim & Bannigan Ltd.).

IT WAS GEN. LEWIS B. HERSHEY, HEAD OF SELECTIVE SERVICE from 1941 until 1973, who said, “I hate to think of the day my grandchildren will be defended by volunteers.”

Well, Lew, they are now.

Looking back, it’s hard to believe that an army of volunteers was ever meant to be anything but a peacetime force, available only for an occasional march on a feeble state in, say, the Caribbean or Central America.

After Korea and before Vietnam, very few men were drafted. Public demonstrations against war were unheard of. Vietnam changed everything. Since the early 70’s, when opposition to the draft mushroomed as its lack of fairness became so evident (yes, college students were exempt, but so too were pro baseball players whose bosses had a tacit agreement with government allowing them to play soldier in occasional reserve duty; the children and grandchildren of fire-eating Congressmen; pro-war editorial writers and pundits, and future hawks hiding behind numerous deferments) a few libertarians such as economist Martin Anderson of Stanford University helped lead the fight to end the draft. Drawing upon the conservative/libertarian stance of the draft as a violation of one’s personal freedom, Richard Nixon — yes, Richard Nixon — said he was concerned about “the question of permanent conscription in a free society.” It was just campaign rhetoric, but a handful around him thought that no draft would mean the end of mass campus and street demonstrations. In 1973, relying on Anderson, Nixon fulfilled his campaign promise and ended the despised draft. The last man inducted, Beth Bailey tells us in *America’s Army: Making the All-Volunteer Army* (Harvard University Press, 2009), was in December 1972.

Despite contemporary conservatives who would like to see

conscription reinstated to maintain American worldwide hegemony, and contrary to liberals like Charles Rangel and Bill Moyers who fantasize that a draft will lead the American people to rise en masse and shut down our current two wars (it never happened in Korea and Vietnam), Nixon preferred a “market-driven all-volunteer force.”

Most significantly, Nixon and his advisors recognized the absence of a draft meant fewer anti-war protests and student protestors. And they were right. Certainly, non-vets George Bush and Dick Cheney understood this, as did Donald Rumsfeld, who

went a step further in believing that the era of World War II’s great land and sea battles were ended and what was needed was a smaller army populated with men and women who want to be in the military, much preferable to relying on reluctant, short-term conscripts. This new army of choice would then attract volunteer specialists trained in the new techniques of contemporary counter-insurgency and counter-terrorist warfare. Of course the assumption proved to be questionable given that well-paid mercenaries now outnumber U.S. troops in Iraq (and will perhaps in Afghanistan as well), plus the onerous reliance on the National Guard, whose members signed up for home-front duty and extra pay with no idea they would end up in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Beth Bailey, who teaches history at Temple University, painstakingly and perceptively details the process

involved in ending the draft after combat troops were withdrawn from Vietnam. She also poses thorny questions — though never quite answers them — such as whether a volunteer army offers young men and women a chance to better their lives and serve their country, or whether military service is merely a duty to be borne by every citizen. Then there is a central question: Why serve in the military at all when the wars to be fought may be unworthy of the pain and sacrifice demanded of our young men and women?

Other than periods of economic distress, recruiting was always a problem. The army sought to cope with the many societal changes occurring in civilian life, and their efforts, at times well-



“At last, a perfect soldier!” Robert Minor, *The Masses*

intentioned, are covered well in the book. Advertising slogans were written and rewritten. Ad agencies were changed. As Iraq demanded more and more troops, and as tours were extended time and again, even recruiters felt the stress, Bailey notes that 37 of them went AWOL in 2005. In 1978 ABC-TV featured a program, "The American Army: A Shocking Case of Incompetence." Critics spread the false and deliberately racist rumor about volunteers being "too dumb, too black." However, Bailey rightly nails the critics, writing that, in 2007, "Even in enlisted ranks," the army is "fairly solidly middle class," (a point also noted in an earlier conservative Heritage Foundation study) and that "people of color have not borne the brunt of the war."

Many volunteers have certainly benefitted from their service and performed well. But we now know that many have also suffered the agony of death and destruction, multiple tours, government falsehoods and the consequences of alcoholism, divorce, domestic violence, post-combat mental illness, rape in the ranks, shockingly high rates of suicide and grievous wartime injuries. Who, other than Hollywood and TV myth-makers and think-tank patriots, ever thought real war was easy and fun?

As problematic as it is to depend on volunteers to fight two wars, resorting to a draft as an alternative is no answer. Simply put, no draft is fair. Four million Americans turn 18 every year. Were the current lottery system utilized, how could a draft of about 50,000 annually be justified when all the rest in the conscription pool would be free to go about their civilian lives? As happened during Vietnam, virtually no Washington V.I.P. in or out of the government today (save Joe Biden) has a child on active military duty in Iraq or Afghanistan. The same elitism and deference to influence and wealth will certainly prevail in any future draft. Anyone with serious political contacts and family connections will always be able to avoid active military duty, or if not, receive plum jobs.

This is not to say that efforts have not been made to reinstitute a draft. Bailey reports that during the Reagan administration the Department of the Army issued a "secret" report urging a draft.

When The Washington Post reported it, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger exploded and the White House instantly announced it had no intention of reinstating conscription. All presidents and presidential candidates have since restated their opposition to a draft to widespread national approval. It is also evident that the existence of a draft has never deterred policymakers from going to war. All it does is provide an endless supply of cannon fodder.

Then again in 1980, Jimmy Carter, seeking to bolster his failing presidency and buffeted by home-front neocons who demanded a more warlike foreign policy, called for every 18-year-old male to register (remarkably, it's still in effect) for a non-existent draft and then spun the deed as a symbolic protest against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which Bailey describes as a "sensible move." Why so is entirely unclear since there is not a shred of evidence that Moscow, mired in its own overwhelming domestic and foreign problems, was swayed in any way by American high school boys signing registration cards in U.S. post offices. Within 10 years the U.S.S.R. collapsed of its own incompetence and corruption, not draft registration.

Historically addicted to war, the U.S. has a vast "national security" apparatus, with some 1,000 bases, and much money to be made by arms producers and global weapons traders. Servicing this immense and complex system requires a constant supply of troops. Meanwhile, far from the battlefield, politicians and pundits debate the "proper" use of military intervention, whether for allegedly humanitarian causes or by invading, bombing and occupying to ensure economic and military domination. Now, faced with nonstop wars in the Middle East and possibly elsewhere, and while the drums of war against Iran and now Yemen are heard in Washington and Jerusalem, the question remains: Who will be required to serve and fight. And a more important question is: Why? ☆

This essay originally appeared at History News Network.org.

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Patrick Henry

Righteous Jews

PATRICK HENRY is Cushing Eells Emeritus Professor of Philosophy and Literature at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington.

YES, VIRGINIA, THERE ARE RIGHTEOUS JEWS! HUNDREDS IF not thousands of them.¹ But only Gentiles are recognized as “righteous” at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Why?

The reasoning seems to be as follows: Whereas Jews who saved their fellow Jews only fulfilled their obligation, non-Jews had no such responsibility toward their Jewish neighbors. Therefore those non-Jews who risked their lives by extending help to Jews merit a special distinction.

Some specific texts in the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Scriptures, however, show that this distinction fails.

Both Christians and Jews have an obligation toward all children of Adam. One of the key passages in deciding this issue is Leviticus 19:18: “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Rabbi Akiba comments, “This is a great principle in the Torah.”

Precisely what it means, however, has been less easily ascertained. Although “neighbor” here is more often read as “fellow Israelite,” this has not always been the case. Ben Azzai’s commentary on this verse, for example, is the following: “This is the book of the descendants of Adam ... him whom God made in his likeness.” In this reading, “neighbor” means every descendant of Adam, all of whom have been made in God’s likeness.

Whatever the meaning of the word “neighbor,” here and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, Leviticus 19:34 shows that the commandment to love transcends the covenant community: “The alien who resides with you shall be unto you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt...”

In the Christian Scriptures, when Jesus is asked to name the great-

est commandments, as he is in Matthew 22:34-40 and Mark 12:28-34, or what one must do to inherit eternal life, in Luke 10:25-28, he cites two specific passages from the Hebrew Bible (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18): “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). Then, in Luke’s account, perhaps to draw Jesus into a debate going on within Judaism at the time, a lawyer asks him: “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:19). Jesus responds to this inquiry by narrating the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 30-37) in which a Jew is beaten by robbers and left half dead by the roadside. Neither a priest nor a Levite who passed

by stopped to help him. But a Samaritan bandaged his wounds, took him to an inn and paid for his keep.

There can be no doubt regarding Jesus’ teaching here where he speaks out explicitly against religious exclusivity, defining our neighbor as anyone in need regardless of ethnic or religious origin. The whole series of formal public apologies by national Christian churches and by the Vatican have taken place, not because Christians have no obligations toward Jews, but because Christians have recognized that they did not fulfill those obligations to Jews during the Holocaust.

The status of Jewish rescuers of Jews appears even more bizarre as of 2004,

when Yad Vashem, for the first time to its knowledge, recognized two men born Jewish, Father Alexandre Glasberg and his brother Vila, as “Righteous Among the Nations.” These men were not posthumously recognized as Jews but as “Righteous Gentiles,” and they could not have been more deserving. Nonetheless, we now have a strange situation in which Christians who rescued Jews and persons born Jewish who converted to Christianity and rescued Jews have been publicly recognized as “Righteous,” but Jewish people who rescued Jews have never been so recognized.

To insist on these differences violates the spirit of the overwhelming majority of rescuers, both Jews and Christians alike, who did not think in terms of religious differences when they performed their courageous deeds. This is true, for example, in the case of Félix Chevrier and Janusz Korczak. In Lisa Gossel’s award-winning documentary, *The Children of Chabannes*, Félix Chevrier, the Gentile leader of a rescue mission that sheltered 400 Jewish children, is described as having been anguished throughout the entire rescue period “because he didn’t want to save the children because they were Jewish. He wanted to save them



Plaque at Avenue of the Righteous, Yad Vashem.
(Photo by Father Maurer/Flickr)

1. In *‘We Only Know Men’: The Rescue of Jews in France during the Holocaust* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), I document the life of one such righteous Jew by the name of Madeleine Dreyfus (pp. 65-103) who, without false papers and with the most readily identifiable Jewish name in the country, managed to place more than 100 Jewish children into non-Jewish homes and institutions before she was arrested and deported.

because they were children.” The great Jewish humanitarian, pediatrician, teacher and radio personality, the most famous of the 3.5 million Jews in Poland in 1940, Janusz Korczak, who ran an orphanage inside the Warsaw Ghetto, when asked what he would do after the war were he to survive, responded: “Take care of German orphans.”

We defile the memory of the rescuers, Jews and Christians alike, when we confine them to categories that their magnanimous souls obviously transcended. For the great majority of rescuers, the “Jewishness” of the person to be rescued was not an issue. By their own admission, this majority was affirming the fundamental similarity of

all human beings. All those who performed these exemplary deeds of rescue have earned the name “righteous,” a term that should be conferred for having “done” something, not for “being” or not being a member of a particular religion. Prudence dictated that both Christians and Jews lie low, out of risk’s path, during the Nazi plague. All those who chose to rise up in the name of others deserve recognition. In Yad Vashem, there should be only one category, “The Righteous,” to which would belong all persons who risked their lives to rescue Jews during the Holocaust.

Adam Simms

Murder By Another Name

ADAM SIMMS is an independent scholar and an Ida May Fuller Research Fellow. He is co-editor of SHALOM.

TO THE EDITOR:

Is it your argument that even Osama bin Laden should be spared the death penalty?

R. D.

NEW YORK, DEC. 14, 2009

R.D.’S OUTRAGE WAS DIRECTED AT AN EDITORIAL IN The New York Times, “There Is No ‘Humane’ Execution,” which commented on an execution in Ohio the week before. Kenneth Biros had been put to death with the state’s newly-instituted one-drug method, which state officials contended was more “humane” than a three-drug cocktail used by many states that still maintain a death penalty.

The Times’s editorial page has become outspokenly critical of capital punishment in recent years, and in this outing the paper stated unequivocally that “for the state to put someone to death is inherently barbaric.” That is the statement that appears to have drawn R.D.’s ire.

The Times has to answer its readers’ questions for itself. For my part, the answer to R.D.’s question — assuming, of course, that Osama bin Laden is apprehended and tried in a criminal court of law — is an emphatic “yes.”

Motive counts in criminal law, and so let us follow that train of thought to clarify some first principles.

Bin Laden, apparently hoping to resurrect a medieval caliphate in which Islam would guide temporal affairs, arrogated to himself the power of that immanent state to set in motion events that led

to the deaths of more than 3,000 human beings in Africa and New York City. To his mind those who died did so deservedly. They were “infidels,” and in Bin Laden’s fevered mind infidels are enemies of his dream-state and his interpretation of its religion, and therefore their lives were forfeit.

If it was barbaric that Bin Laden, in the name of his “state,” assumed the right to take those lives, it is no less barbaric for any state to claim the right, the duty, the power to knowingly and willingly take a human life.

“But we are not barbarians,” you may hear in reply. “We are civilized. We have the rule of law. We have elected bodies that write those laws. We have courts and prosecutors and judges and defense attorneys and juries who deliberate and decide, and we have courts and judges to hear appeals.”

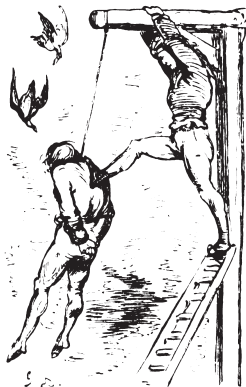
As did Nazi Germany.

A chilling facet of the horror known as the Holocaust is the fact that Germany had all the aforementioned appurtenances of a “civilized” state. An elected parliament passed the Nuremberg Laws. Courts and judges and attorneys legitimated confiscations of property and dismissals from professional posts. These actions were “legal” because the power of the state stood behind them by declaring them to be so. And when cattle cars loaded with human freight headed east, that too was “legal” because the state, having decided that some lives deserved to be forfeited, approved and set those trains in motion.

It was all “legal.” But it was not humane. It was barbaric.

We ought to have learned two lessons about states during the past century.

The first is that even the most ruthless state clothes itself in the trappings of legality. (Consider the elaborate staging of Stalin’s purge trials during the 1930’s.) Doing so steadies the nerve of those who carry out the killing, announces what is in store for those who



might resist, and soothes the consciences of most of the rest.

The second is that state approval of an act no longer insulates those who carry it out from being held responsible for its consequences. The “I was simply following orders” defense ended at Nuremberg.

When an individual takes another human’s life, that is murder. When a state takes a human life through execution, it is called the death penalty. And if the state imposes that death penalty on an innocent person who has been wrongly convicted of taking another human’s life, that is called... what?

There is no difference in the nature of the act, only in the words used to describe it. In one, an individual is the agent of ending a life; in the other it is the state. Only the latter fits the description of “capital punishment,” whereas both fit the description of murder.

That lack of difference seems to be dawning slowly in the public mind, even in regions of the American heartland where support for capital punishment has traditionally been strong.

The Los Angeles Times recently carried a McClatchy News report that prosecutors in Texas requested fewer death sentences during 2009, and that jurors there appear to be less willing to mete them out when sought. (“Fewer Texas inmates sentenced to death,” Los Angeles Times, Dec. 14, 2009; [http://articles.latimes.

com/2009/dec/14/nation/la-na-texas-death-row14-2009dec14].

The report attributes this shift to a variety of factors, including growing numbers of death-row inmates exonerated by DNA evidence, the availability of life without parole as an alternative sentence, and growing unease among Americans generally that innocent individuals may be executed in error.

Unease about wrongful convictions is the most promising development, for it indicates that state support — any state, whether national or local — for capital punishment can be overcome, despite judicial trappings that have for centuries been marshaled to clothe such deaths with legitimacy. Even in Texas, citizens of the last nation in the Atlantic basin to retain capital punishment are coming to understand that the power to take a life cannot be entrusted to the state.

And so, to reiterate my reply to R.D.’s question, the answer is yes.

Even if Osama bin Laden is apprehended, tried and convicted for the murders attributed to him, there is no justification for the state to implicate we, its citizens, in committing that same act. Murder is murder, whether committed by an individual or in the name of the state. No amount of casuistry can hide that bedrock reality. ☆

CAUGHT IN THE WEB OF WORDS

Some recent sightings on the Web, and some of our favorite Web sites

David Gibson @ Politics Daily

Rush Limbaugh Tries to Enlist “Jewish Bankers” Against Obama

<http://www.politicsdaily.com/2010/01/22/rush-limbaugh-tries-to-enlist-jewish-bankers-against-obama/>

Henry Siegman @ London Review of Books

Israel’s Lies

<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v31/no2/henry-siegman/israels-lies>

Gershom Gorenberg @ The American Prospect

To the Victor Go the Street Names

http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=to_the_victor_go_the_street_names

Philip Weiss’s blog @ Mondoweiss

<http://mondoweiss.net/>

Garry Wills @ NYRblog

After Massachusetts: His Hopes Did Him In

<http://blogs.nybooks.com/post/344785707/after-massachusetts-his-hopes-did-him-in>

Tony Judt @ NYRblog

Kibbutz

<http://blogs.nybooks.com/post/341236979/kibbutz>

Ofer Aderet @ Haaretz

Alice Herz-Sommer, Kafka’s Last Living Friend

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArtVty.jhtml?sw=franz+kafka&itemNo=1144293>

Anne Applebaum @ NYRB

Arthur Koestler: Yesterday’s Man?

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/23591>

Scott Horton @ Harper’s

The Guantánamo “Suicides”: A Camp

Delta sergeant blows the whistle

<http://www.harpers.org/archive/2010/01/hbc-90006368>

Tibor Krausz @ Killing the Buddha

Adam’s Family Jewels

<http://killingthebuddha.com/mag/ka-masutra/adam%E2%80%99s-family-jewels/>

Frederic Raphael @ Literary Review

Michel de Montaigne: Man for All Seasons

http://www.literaryreview.co.uk/raphael_12_09.html

Gershom Gorenberg & Haim Watzman @ South Jerusalem

<http://southjerusalem.com/>

News of Israel’s Conscientious Objectors

@ December18th.org

<http://december18th.org/>

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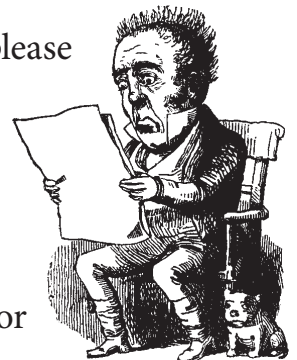
– *THE EDITORS*

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