

C O N T E N T S



Survivors of an attack in Kabul move away from the ensuing blaze.

Photo by Reuters/M Ismail

Doug Bandow
Pg. 3

Forever Wars

America's Disastrous Occupation of Afghanistan Turns 17

Stefan Merken
Pg.2

How to Dispel Dark Shadows

Murray Polner
Pg. 6

Newspaper Junkie



David Swanson
Pg. 4

Escaping the False Dilemma Trap



*From Where I Sit***How to Dispel Dark Shadows**

Stefan Merken

Living in the United States in our times, and dealing with the political upheavals of the last several years, one could get depressed and feel that there is just too much to deal with, too much to keep up with, too depressing to even think about. For example: shootings in schools and places of worship, political lies and half truths to work through, and not sure what or whom to believe.

If you read the news as I do you deal with this daily and it wears me down. Personally, it replaces an otherwise positive outlook with a dark shadow that follows me from morning coffee to the late news and bed. But lately I have come to realize the damage of hearing the news does to me. So I have put on a new face in an attempt to survive.

I believe there is much to be thankful for. First and most important is to get off the couch and get involved again in projects I believe in. A couple of good ones are opposition to the Second Cold War or the possibility of war against Iran. I remain positive, find candidates that support the same peaceful issues that are important and support them in hopes of getting them elected.

In the end, I find these issues are crucial. To all of you, keep learning, keep talking and keep active. ☆

STEFAN MERKEN is Chair of the Jewish Peace Fellowship.

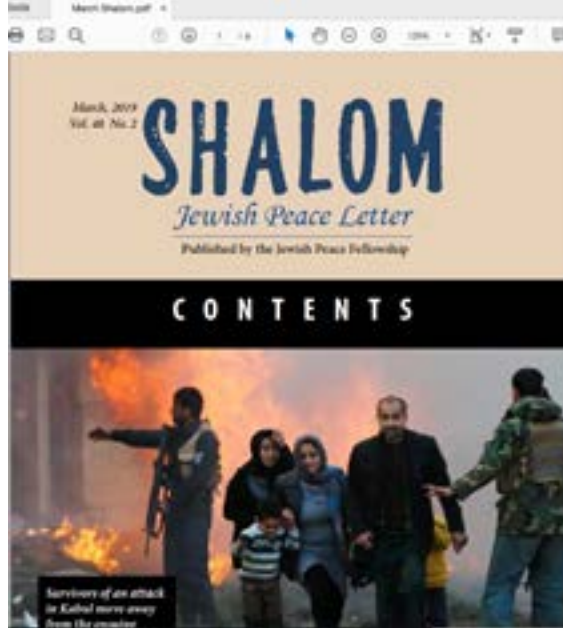
*Viewing this PDF of Shalom***Some viewing and printing tips**

If you are struggling with trying to read a small narrow column on this PDF of Shalom, we have a few tips to help you navigate easier.

When you open this document, you are opening a PDF reader. Most readers will open a full page at a time which means the page will appear tall, but small as in the representation on the left.

Most readers will have an option to enlarge the page to any size. If you do not see an option to enlarge the page here is one possibility for you. You can download a free Adobe Acrobat Reader DC by following this link. <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>. This will only take a few minutes if you follow the directions given.

Adobe Acrobat Reader will look like the representation below with a bar of very simple tools. The most important one is the + or - signs which will enlarge or shrink you page. You can also go from one page to another with the page selection tool.



If you wish to print this document click on the printer icon which opens the print dialog box below. Choose the pages you wish to print, then under sizing, choose poster which will tile, or separate your page into three 8.5 x 11 pages. In this section, you can also choose how much the pages will overlap. ☆

**SHALOM**

Published by the Jewish Peace Fellowship • Box 271 • Nyack, N.Y. 10960 • (845) 358-4601

HONORARY PRESIDENT Rabbi Philip J. Bentley •
CHAIR Stefan Merken • **VICE PRESIDENT** Rabbi Leonard Beerman z"
EDITORS Murray Polner & Richard Middleton-Kaplan
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Patrick Henry, Susannah Heschel,
 E. James Lieberman, Adam Simms, Lawrence S. Wittner

Established in 1941

E-mail: jpf@forusa.org • World Wide Web: <http://www.jewishpeacefellowship.org>
Signed articles are the opinions of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the JPF.



Credit: U.S. Air Force/Flickr

Forever Wars

Doug Bandow

America's Disastrous Occupation of Afghanistan Turns 17

America has now passed the 17-year mark in Afghanistan. U.S. troops have been fighting there for longer than the Revolutionary War, Civil War, World War I, and World War II combined. Yet Washington is further away than ever from anything that might pass for victory.

More than 2,300 American military personnel and 3,500 contractors have died in Afghanistan. The latest death occurred last week*—Specialist James A. Slape from Morehead City, North Carolina. [Editor's note: See * at the bottom of this article] Another 1,100 allied soldiers have been killed, almost half of them from the United Kingdom. More than 20,000 Americans have been wounded. The direct financial cost has amounted to \$2 trillion, with another \$45 billion budgeted for this year.

And for what?

After so many years of senseless combat, Erik Prince's proposal to turn the conflict over to contractors almost sounds reasonable. His lobbying efforts in Kabul have not been notably successful, but some day American personnel will come home. And then Washington's friends in Afghanistan will find themselves on their own.

And the Taliban are in their strongest position in just that many years.

Seventeen years ago the Bush administration was forced to act. After the 9/11 attacks, it was imperative to disrupt if not destroy al-Qaeda and punish the Taliban regime for hosting terrorist training camps. Washington quickly succeeded: al-Qaeda was degraded and dispersed, the Taliban was overthrown and punished. Washington should have left as quickly as it came. But the Bush administration had other hopes: to create a friendly, liberal, democratic state in Central Asia.

But the Bush administration had other hopes: to create a friendly, liberal, democratic state in Central Asia.

If there was ever a chance to establish a stable regime in Kabul, it was right after the Taliban's ouster. However, the Bush administration immediately turned to Iraq, which had nothing to do with 9/11. That shift allowed for a Taliban revival. Even after twice increasing force levels—which peaked at 110,000 U.S. and 30,000 allied troops in 2011—the Obama administration was only able to limit the insurgency's reach. Around that time I twice visited Afghanistan, and found that private, off-the-record opinions of allied military personnel, civilian contractors, and Afghan officials were uniformly pessimistic.

Most saw the operation as a staying action at best. Since then allied troop levels have fallen precipitously, but the large Afghan security forces are an inadequate substitute. Afghan officials figure that as many as a third of soldiers and police are "ghosts," existing only for payroll purposes. Attrition rates and desertions are soaring. Reported Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) "performance will probably worsen due to a combination of Taliban operations, ANSF combat casualties, desertions, poor logistics support, and weak leadership." To make up for that failure, "U.S. Special

Operations troops increasingly [are] being deployed into harm's way to assist their Afghan counterparts."

Over the last four years, U.S. officials figure the number of Taliban fighters has trebled to 60,000; Afghan sources put the number closer to 80,000. Estimates of government control are inflated by counting areas where the district headquarters is in Kabul's hands, even if the rest of the territory is not. A January BBC survey estimated that the Taliban controlled 4 percent of the country and was active in another 66 percent of Afghanistan: the insurgents have "pushed beyond their traditional southern stronghold into eastern western and northern parts of the country." Cordesman reported that the "Taliban now holds more territory than in any year since 2001."

The insurgents are using night vision equipment to mount attacks in the dark. Indeed, observed Cordesman, "Injured Afghan soldiers say they are fighting a more sophisticated and well-armed insurgency than they have seen in years"

Even Kabul is unsafe: Washington now takes personnel to the airport via helicopter, avoiding the roads that I took as NATO's guest in 2011. Of Taliban activity this

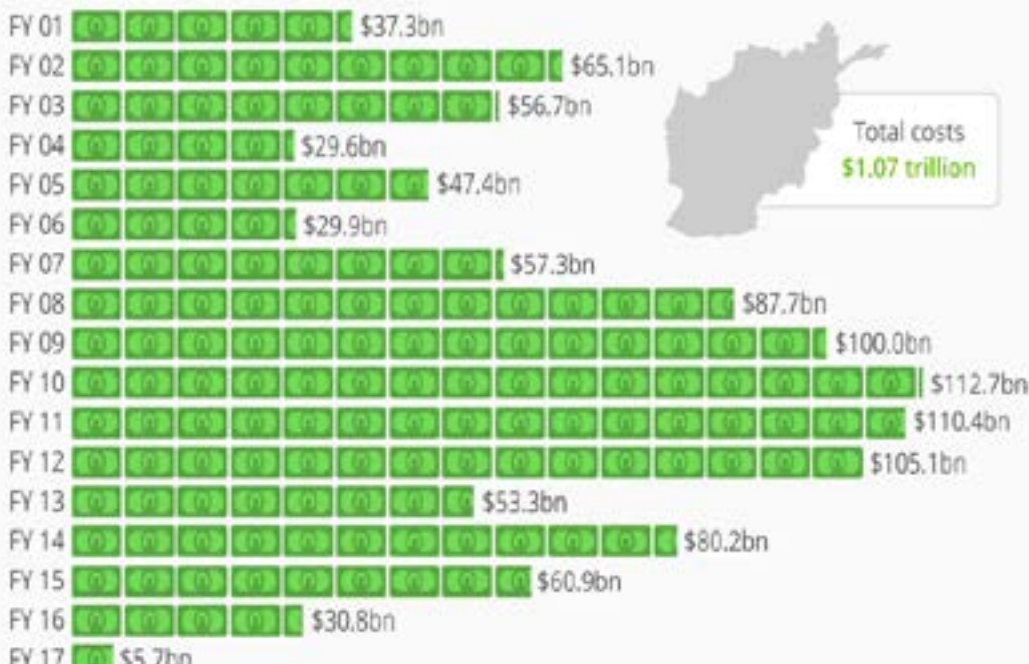
Continued on next page

If there was ever a chance to establish a stable regime in Kabul, it was right after the Taliban's ouster.

The Taliban is now in its strongest position since 2001.

Afghanistan: America's Trillion Dollar War

Cost of the Afghanistan conflict from 2001 to 2017



Continued from page 3

summer, Al Jazeera reports: “The scale and intensity of these attacks have not been seen since 2001. The Taliban never had the capability to launch such massive offenses and never succeeded in taking over any major cities.”

Civilian casualties are on the rise, hitting 2,258 during the first quarter of 2018. Although the Taliban is responsible for most of the deaths, as Kabul relies more on air support the UN reports that casualties from U.S. and Afghan airstrikes are rising.

One need look no further than the Department of Defense for bad news. In May, the Pentagon’s inspector general reported that “available metrics showed few signs of progress.” And results are usually worse than what is admitted. For instance, Cordesman concluded that official U.S. data “provide highly suspect analysis.” Moreover, “official U.S. and Afghan data seem to sharply understate the level of growing threat presence, influence, and control.” Worse, official testimony estimates offered in testimony “seem more spin than objective.” Overall, Cordesman said, “the ‘surge’ in U.S. forces in Afghanistan failed to have a lasting effect and the levels of violence have grown sharply.”

Money offers no answer. The Afghan government is incompetent, divided, and corrupt. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction continues to

issue reports detailing massive waste and ineffectiveness of programs for everything from development to security. A recent analysis of Washington’s stabilization program concluded: “The U.S. government greatly overestimated its ability to build and reform government institutions in Afghanistan.” Whatever success it had won’t outlive the U.S. presence: “successes in stabilizing Afghan districts rarely lasted longer than the physical presence of coalition troops

and civilians.”

In short, the future looks dismal. Cordesman cited the Director of National Intelligence in concluding, “The overall situation in Afghanistan will very likely continue to deteriorate, even if international support is sustained.”

Best would be a swift exit, bolstered by a simple understanding with the Taliban: Create an Islamic state and Washington will stay away, but host terrorists who attack America and Washington will come back bigger and badder than the first time. The Taliban likely would respect that deal.

But reality has little influence on U.S. policy. Both old and new military commanders, as well as administration officials led by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, claim that administration strategy is succeeding. The president bumped up troop levels to some 15,000 U.S. and 7,000 allied personnel. “Our troops will fight to win,” he said. “We will fight to win. From now on, victory will have a clear definition: attacking our enemies, obliterating ISIS, crushing al-Qaeda, preventing the Taliban from taking over Afghanistan, and stopping mass terror attacks against America before they emerge.” Alas, this is errant nonsense. The most the new policy will do is put off failure until the next president takes office.

None of the arguments for permanent war are persuasive. As a matter of geopolitics, Afghanistan is irrelevant to U.S. security. Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and Iran all have a greater interest in regional stability. Washington should encourage a Central Asian conclave, perhaps

Official U.S. estimates of the Taliban’s threat and influence “seem more spin than objective.”



Survivors of an attack in Kabul move away from the ensuing blaze.

Photo by Reuters/M Ismail

under the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Far better for Washington to leave and allow Afghanistan’s neighbors to reach a *modus vivendi* reflecting their relative interests. The result wouldn’t be a liberal, Westminster-style democracy allied with America. But it might be the best possible outcome in a messy, ugly world.

A stable Pakistan is in America’s interest, but the war is highly destabilizing. Rather than push Islamabad to act against its perceived interests, Washington should exit and allow Islamabad to work with neighboring states in forging an acceptable compromise for those most concerned.

Advocates of Afghanistan-forever cite terrorism. They contend that if we don’t fight the terrorists in Kandahar, we will have to fight them in New York. Really. For instance, the ever-hawkish Senator Lindsey Graham argued, “Last time we ignored Afghanistan we got 9/11.” Even the normally sober Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said America was in Afghanistan “to prevent a bomb from going off in Times Square.”

Yet this tragic nation has little to do with terrorism. The Taliban are Islamic fundamentalists, interested in ruling at home, not killing abroad. In 2001, Afghanistan served as a convenient base for Osama bin Laden. After the U.S. intervened, he moved to neighboring Pakistan, where he was later killed. The architect of 9/11, Kalid Sheikh Muhammed, spent time in Bosnia, Kuwait, Pakistan, Qatar, and Pakistan—but never Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda morphed into a group of national franchises. These days the most vibrant branch is al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which has been empowered by the U.S.-backed Saudi and Emirati onslaught against Yemen.

Why else sacrifice U.S. lives and wealth in Afghanistan? There are many Afghans, especially women, who support creation of a liberal society. But that is beyond Washington’s ability to deliver, at least at reasonable cost. Afghanistan always has been ruled at the village and valley level. Someday it might become something different. But that is not Washington’s responsibility today.

For some, to leave suggests failure by those who fought courageously. But it is not American or allied military personnel who are at fault. They have done everything they were asked to do and more. The blame falls primarily on three successive presidents who embraced a quixotic crusade to remake Afghanistan.

In contrast to his predecessors, Donald Trump seemed to understand how hopeless the Afghanistan war is. Before announcing his candidacy, he said simply: “Let’s get out of Afghanistan.” A gaggle of establishment advisors has since pressed him to suppress his instincts, but he still has time to do the right thing. At 17 years and counting, it is far past time to bring America’s bravest home. ☆

*This article appeared online in *The American Conservative* on October 11, 2018. It can be found at <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/americas-disastrous-occupation-of-afghanistan-turns-17/>

DOUG BANDOW is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute.

A former special assistant to President Ronald Reagan, he is author of *Foreign Follies: America’s New Global Empire* (Xulon Press, 2006)

Decades of Challenging Militarism

Newspaper Junkie

“Nowhere in the elite establishment newspapers could you find regular, sustained, and well-informed criticism of an aggressive and overly militarized American foreign policy.”

---- Scott McConnell, in *The American Conservative* magazine.

Murray Polner

Number 1

I’ve always been a newspaper junkie. Encouraged by Irving, my older brother, who read the dignified *Times* every day, I read parts of the paper and lots of local ones too. So when Paul Benov, my high school’s Journalism teacher, told me he had heard the *Times* was looking for a HS student to help out with its HS sports reporting, I was beyond excited. “Gimme a nickel,” I told Irving, “and I’ll call them.” “No, you won’t,” he said, just as excited as I was. “You’ll get on the train and go down and volunteer. Now.”

Which I did, though the job opening was only a rumor. But a sympathetic *Times* reporter, seated nearby, told me that other NY dailies had openings and suggested several leads.

Back on the subway with editors’ names in hand, I was hired that very day by both the *Brooklyn Eagle* and *New York World-Telegram* to cover Saturday’s HS football games. And they paid!! (“So much,” my Mom said, proudly). I was the Tilden Topics HS sports editor

and center on its football team for several years and immediately set out to organize other school sports editors in Brooklyn and Queens. I had them call me once their teams’ games had ended, then paid them a portion of what I received and, with all the high and low lights of the borough’s games, I’d call my two papers with details. “Nice job,” Jimmy Murphy, the *Eagle*’s gracious and encouraging editor told me. Ah, the *Eagle*, my favorite paper, which covered my beloved Brooklyn Dodgers with every possible detail.

Still, they weren’t *The New York Times*. Walter Goodman, a family and personal friend and a veteran *Times* reporter and columnist, set me straight about the paper years later. When I complimented him on a column, he said he’d rewritten

virtually the entire piece. But didn’t the original byline author object? “Listen,” I remember him telling me, “There are writers who’d gladly kill their grandmothers to get a *Times* byline. They never care what changes you make.”

As an adult, I was hooked and began stringing and freelancing for the *Times*: book reviews, travel pieces and Op-eds. I wrote longer articles about bigoted owners and buyers in Levittown who refused to allow Black WWII vets to buy homes, Vietnam and Iraqi-Afghan vets and their post-war suffering, Agent Orange and the devastating impact on some newborns, and insecure Asian immigrants as they tried to acculturate.

When friends asked me who I was writing for I usually answered, anyone who’d have me, left, right and center, the more varied the better: I co-authored one book with Jim O’Grady about the Berrigan brothers, priests who burned 1-A Vietnam War draft files, and another with Tom Woods Jr., a conservative-libertarian, with whom the only common ground we had was that he and I were both deeply anti-war. I also wrote regularly for *Newsday*. When Abba Eban died, the editor asked me for a full and deserving obituary and I complied since in those years *Newsday* was the superior of the *Times* in every way (My youngest son was a reporter for the paper but had nothing to do with my assignments or employment).

And during my military service I published in foreign language newspapers wherever I could make a contact: a Japanese editor about American baseball, a British editor who loved U.S. politics, and a Yiddish-language daily fascinated with Israeli life (the latter thrilled my Russian-born, Yiddish speaking and reading father. Another book I wrote and that meant the most to me was *Our Family*, which was inspired by my friend Layle Silbert’s moving poem, “Round”.

I wrote about the forgotten GIs while smug opinion-makers ignored the shabby treatment received by our sickened and suicidal combat veterans.

Round

*in my head, house of bone
lay my mother and father
when I die
in whose head will I lie?
....and who will remember
...my mother and father?*



Layle Silbert (1913–2003).

Number 2

All the same, my lifelong love affair with *The New York Times* had begun to fade a bit. I joined an external ombudsman, the *New York Times Express*, where I wrote a column “Keeping Score,” about how the Old Man was slipping.

I wrote about its opposition to MLK’s radical approaches to war and poverty; my differences with the paper’s view of Truth-Tellers Snowden and Manning; why Al Campanis, LA Dodger General Manager and onetime minor league shortstop to Montreal second baseman Jackie Robinson, was unjustly punished and driven out of baseball; and how quickly we’ve forgotten the murder and wounding of the Kent State and Jackson State students not to mention the 58,000 GIs who never made it back home from Vietnam or the 38,000 dead in Iraq and elsewhere while smug opinion-makers in the States ignored the shabby treatment received by our sickened, even suicidal, combat veterans.

I wrote about the paper’s lack of interest in the newly released unclassified documents reporting that the U.S. and its NATO allies lied to Russia even after declassified documents released in December 2017 show without a doubt that U.S. Secretary of State James Baker had declared “not one inch eastward” with an oral assurance given to Gorbachev and overheard by NATO ministers on February 9, 1999, specifically that NATO would never expand eastward toward the Russian borders. I have yet to find a serious, searching *Times* article about the documents (still looking), which are housed at the National Security Archive in Washington (<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu>) but am willing to keep looking. And then there’s that unsatisfying connection with corrupt Ukraine, whose anti-Semitic history leaves me cold. Above all, I was in-

Continued on next page



Continued from page 5

I'm bothered because at times The New York Times seems to fall for insider leaks from the huge and very secret "Intelligence Community."

creasingly bothered about the paper's ambivalence toward powerful interests the distant editorial board didn't like.

And then there was its support for the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, which it hurriedly withdrew with an embarrassing public apology. A band of non-veteran neocons, mainly Israel Firsters and their key backer, Dick Cheney and his pals, captured the incompetent Bush Two's White House, whose invasion then set the Greater Middle East afire. The newspaper's uncomfortable but necessary confession, widely reprinted throughout the

world, confessed that it had fallen for lies about Iraq's non-existent WMDs.

I'm also bothered because at times the *Times* seems to fall for insider leaks from the huge and very secret "Intelligence Community" in our post 9/11 national security state, a development embraced by our some of our most aggressive haters. Add that to the growing hostility to Russia, China and Iran, which could bring us perilously close to triggering an accidental conflict.

Who, then, is left to challenge our militarism and imperialism?

So today, while the *Times*, faults and all, remains the best newspaper we have, there's always a real possibility of a second Cold War instigated by our rigid ideologists and their sightlessness.

The late historian's Edward Pessen's *Losing Our Souls: The American Experience in the Cold War* (published by Ivan R. Dee, 1995) or *Why the New Cold War Could Still Be Worse than the Old Cold War* could use some serious discussion in the newspaper of record. Pessen's point is that a second Cold War could kill most of us "in a matter of minutes."

So much for the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave and the former Worker's Paradise.

"in a matter of minutes..." ☆

This article previously appeared online in the January 24, 2019 issue of *History News Network*. It can be found at <https://historynewsnetwork.org/blog/154176>.

MURRAY POLNER is co-editor of SHALOM. His books include the following titles mentioned in this article: *No Victory Parades: The Return of the Vietnam Veteran* (Orbach and Chambers, 1971); *When Can I Come Home? A Debate on Amnesty for Exiles, Antiwar Prisoners, and Others* (Doubleday, 1972); with Jim O'Grady, *Disarmed and Dangerous: The Radical Lives of Daniel and Philip Berrigan* (Basic Books, 1997); and with Thomas Woods, Jr., *We Who Dared to Say No to War: American Antiwar Writing from 1812 to Now* (Basic Books, 2008).



The Challenge of Shalom: The Jewish Tradition of Peace and Justice

Edited by Murray Polner and Naomi Goodman

Highlights the deep and powerful tradition of Jewish non-violence. With reverence for life, passion for justice, and empathy for suffering, Jews historically have practiced a "uniquely powerful system of ethical peacefulness." *The Challenge of Shalom* includes sections on the Tradition, the Holocaust, Israel, Reverence for all life and Personal Testimonies. **\$18.95 per copy, plus \$5 shipping.**



Peace, Justice, and Jews: Reclaiming Our Tradition

Edited by Murray Polner and Stefan Merken

Edited by Murray Polner and Stefan Merken.

A landmark collection of contemporary progressive Jewish thought written by activists from Israel, the US and the UK.

Publishers Weekly called it "literate, thought-provoking" and "by no means homogeneous" and which looked at "from all angles, the idea that editors Polner and Merken believe reflect the most basic attitude in our Jewish heritage."

Publishers Weekly concluded: "There is much to learn here for anyone, Jew or Gentile, interested in global issues of peace and justice."

\$25.00 per copy, plus \$5.00 for shipping

Escaping the False Dilemma Trap

Isolationism or Imperialism: You Really Can't Imagine a Third Possibility?

David Swanson

Of the United Nations' eighteen (18) major human rights treaties, the United States is party to five (5), fewer than any other nation on earth, except Bhutan (four), and tied with Malaya, Myanmar, and South Sudan, a country torn by warfare since its creation in 2011. The United States is the only nation on earth that has not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is the only country to have pulled out of the Paris Climate Agreement. It is by many measures a top destroyer of the natural environment, yet has been a leader in sabotaging climate protection negotiations for decades. Seven countries and the European Union reached an agreement on Iran and nuclear energy, but the United States uniquely withdrew. President Donald Trump is threatening to withdraw, and Congress is threatening to allow it, from critical nuclear disarmament treaties reached by Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev.

The United States not only stands outside the International Criminal Court, but openly threatens sanctions against it and against nations that support it. The United States leads opposition to democratization of the United Nations and easily holds the record for use of the veto in the Security Council during the past 50 years, having vetoed U.N. condemnation of South African apartheid, Israel's wars and occupations, chemical and biological weapons, nuclear weapons proliferation and first use and use against non-nuclear nations, U.S. wars in Nicaragua and Grenada and Panama, the U.S. embargo on Cuba, Rwandan genocide, the deployment of weapons in outer space, etc.

Contrary to popular opinion, the United States is not a leading provider of aid to the suffering of the world, not as a percentage of gross national income or per capita or even as an absolute number of dollars. Unlike other countries, the United States counts as 40 percent of its so-called aid, weapons for foreign militaries. Its aid as a whole is directed around its military goals, and its immigration policies have long been shaped around skin color, and lately around religion, not around human need except perhaps inversely, focusing on locking up and building walls to punish the most desperate.

Keeping the above context, discussed at greater length here, in mind, let's add to it one other set of facts. Unarmed civilian protectors and nonviolent peace workers from groups like [Nonviolent Peaceforce](#) have been proving for many years that people can accomplish more without guns than with them. Thorough studies of violent and nonviolent campaigns over the past century have well established that principally nonviolent efforts are more likely to succeed and those successes virtually guaranteed to be far longer lasting. A consensus has developed even within military establishments that much of what militaries do is counterproductive on its own terms, so much so that "there is no military solution" has practically become a required mantra to be pointlessly but accurately repeated by those attempting military solutions. The tools of diplomacy, cooperation, aid, nonviolent investment, the rule of law, skilled conflict resolution, disarmament, and peaceful conversion have become extremely well-developed and understood, if hardly ever thought of or employed or widely communicated.

Now, keeping all of that in mind, does anything strike you as odd about exclamations that withdrawing U.S. troops from a war is a form of "isolationism"? Is there anything peculiar about the scores of people steadily e-mailing me to condemn a planned protest of NATO as, you guessed it, "isolationism"? Five years ago, there was a debate over whether to bomb Syria flat, and those opposed to doing so were accused of "isolationism." Now the idea

of pulling troops out of Syria or Afghanistan or ceasing to help bomb and starve the people of Yemen is subjected to the same rhetorical assault. That Trump promises to keep the occupation of Iraq going is understood as reassuring "engagement with the world" by people who demanded an end to the occupation of Iraq when George W. Bush was president, and who pretended to celebrate its ending when Barack Obama pretended to end it.

This is simple-minded thinking in the extreme, notwithstanding its claims to be just the opposite. "I'm against war but we can't be simplistic about it and just end one of them willy-nilly, abandoning our allies." This is the type of language used to support imperialism in the great debate between isolationism and imperialism, a debate wholly dependent on the ridiculous pretense that these two choices constitute the full range of possible human behaviors.

A lot of people no longer fall for such sophistry when it comes to domestic politics. "Should we ignore drug users or lock them up?" The obvious answer of "No, we shouldn't do either of those things," actually occurs to a good many people unprompted. "Should we allow shoplifting or imprison shoplifters for the rest of their lives?" This is a question so patently stupid that it will actually elicit from some people asked it the creative response: "Why not end poverty instead? It's not like we don't have plenty of money to do that!" But what about this question: "Should we keep the U.S. military engaged in each of these wars or ignore and abandon and forget about and forsake the people there?" Ah, now we have a patently stupid question that has been repeated so many, many times that it's hard to hear the stupidity of it.

Each year that a war gets worse while continuing somehow fails to constitute outrageous proof that it should not have been continued. The past year of the war on Afghanistan has been one of the deadliest, yet it is the fear that things might go badly after U.S. troops leave that is supposed to concern us. And we are supposed to be powerless to do anything about it other than increase the bombings or avert our eyes to focus on blaming peace-niks. Here's another idea that I think has been proposed so infrequently in part because most people either find it unthinkable or find it too obvious to bother saying: What if we were to try an approach of real anti-isolationism?

What if the United States were to sign and ratify and abide by the major laws of the world, support the world's systems of justice, cooperate in disarmament (including the nuclear weapons ban treaty), collaborate on climate protection, provide humanitarian aid on an unprecedented scale (albeit miniscule in comparison with military spending), jumpstart a reverse arms race, democratize the United Nations, participate in truth and reconciliation

Forty (40) percent of U.S. foreign "aid" consists of military weapons.

What if we were to try an approach of real anti-isolationism?



Continued on next page

Continued from page 7

hearings, invest in unarmed peacekeeping, cease arming and training brutal dictatorships, and actually back democracy abroad and by its own example?

The son of the last dictator the United States imposed on Iran is waiting hopefully in Bethesda, Maryland, for the next U.S. overthrow of the Iranian government, while Iran has not picked out a future King of America. What if the United States ceased worrying about rogue nations and focused on ceasing to be one?

But, you may object, none of that fantasy is going to happen this week, while meanwhile the Kurds are going to be massacred without their U.S. military friends. Back here in the real world, in which the United States and its allies are going to go on flooding the Middle East with weapons and using war as foreign policy, each war must be continued until . . . well, until a fantasy becomes possible, or Jesus comes back from wherever he's been, or

the Democrats take the throne but don't act like, you know, the Democrats have always acted, or something! Of course, we all know what the something is going to be: climate collapse, the Middle East becoming uninhabitable for humans, and extreme weather disasters in much of the rest of the globe. And the response to this shocking if completely predictable and predicted development will be violence or non-

violence, depending on what we have been conditioned to suppose is normal or "natural" or "inevitable."

Given that what is at stake here is human survival, given that the U.S. presidency has been gradually endowed with imperial powers such that the fate of thousands of people can be determined by a tweet, are we really obliged to limit our short-term thinking to (a) "support the troops" by keeping them in a desert exchanging bullets with the locals, or (b) "abandon" people? Why not demand of the U.S. government and/or other nations purporting to care about humanity, immediate announcement of an end to the weapons trade, the opening of diplomatic talks with all relevant parties, the commencement of a major aid program, and support for a major new program of *unarmed* peacekeeping through a coalition of the decent or if possible through a United Nations in which the United States forswears the veto?

Such an alternative to the imperialism-or-isolationism trap is no more difficult to think of or to act on than treating drug addiction or crime or poverty as reason to help people rather than to punish them. The opposite of bombing people is not ignoring them. The opposite of bombing people is embracing them. By the standards of the U.S. communications corporations, Switzerland must be the most isolationist land because it doesn't join in bombing anyone. The fact that it supports the rule of law and global cooperation, and hosts gatherings of nations seeking to work together, is simply not relevant. How about in the new year at least we try a little new thinking? ☆

The opposite of bombing people is not ignoring them, but embracing them.

DOUG SWANSON is a veteran investigative reporter. He teaches in the Writing Program at University of Pittsburgh.



Yes! Here is my tax-deductible contribution to the Jewish Peace Fellowship!

\$25 / \$30 / \$50 / \$100 / \$250

\$500 / \$1000 / Other \$ _____

Enclosed is my check, payable to "Jewish Peace Fellowship"

Phone: _____

E-mail address: _____

(Please provide your name and address below so that we may properly credit your contribution.)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY / STATE / ZIP _____

Mail this slip and your contribution to:
Jewish Peace Fellowship ☆ Box 271 ☆ Nyack, NY 10960-0271

Below, please clearly print the names and addresses, including e-mail, of friends you think might be interested in supporting the aims of the Jewish Peace Fellowship.