

Women Against Military Madness

Newsletter

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Women Against Military Madness

Do we really believe that the U.S. wants democracy for Ukraine, or was this about encircling Russia, increasing Western profits and attempting to expand NATO?

Regime Change aka Coup d'état

by Mary Beaudoin

It's probably safe to say that most Americans wouldn't really be very receptive to the idea of using their tax money to increase profits for the international financial sector and multi-national corporations—especially when they, themselves, are experiencing economic insecurity. And control of Ukrainian pipelines through which Russian gas is transported to Europe seems pretty far removed from our lives, as does NATO expansion.

But because we are accustomed to hearing that any protest anywhere is a way to improve the lives of citizens, it's harder for us to detect underlying profit motives. And so it was last December, when U.S. Undersecretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland brazenly handed out cookies in a gesture of solidarity with regime-change protesters in Maidan, the main square of Ukraine's capital—this while a democratically-elected president sat as the legitimate head of the Ukrainian government (aka “regime” in State Department-speak). Two days later, on December 13, fresh from Kiev, appearing

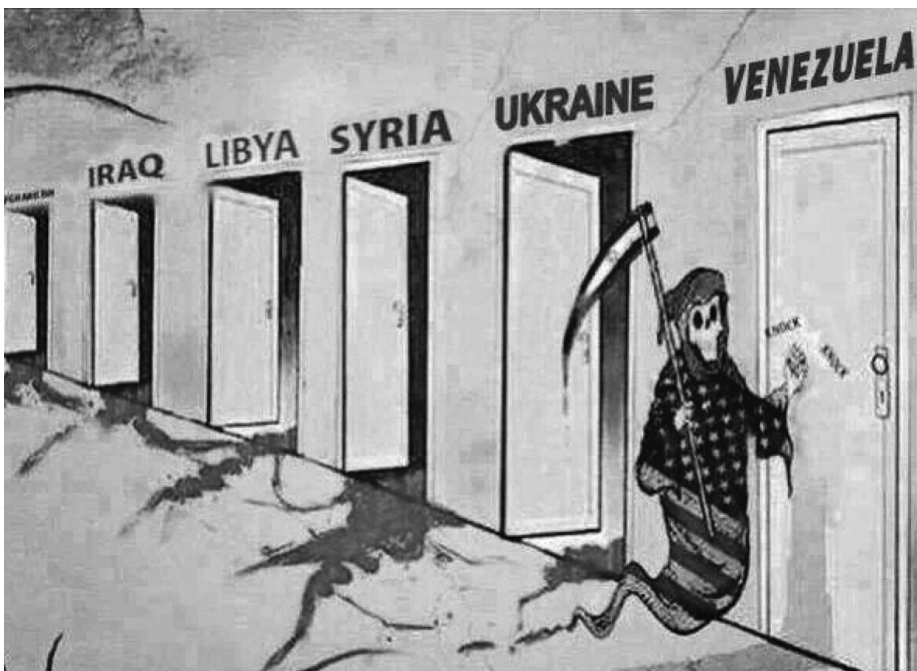
before the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation in Washington against a Chevron logo backdrop, Nuland thanked the people in the room (representatives from mega-corporations like Raytheon, Boeing, Microsoft, Cargill, and also the Heritage Foundation, Freedom House, and the Brookings Institute) for supporting the brave Ukrainian people—support that she said had cost the U.S. \$5 billion in developing “democratic institutions” within Ukraine.

Then, on February 6, the world had an unusual glimpse into just how democratic when Nuland's phone conversation with Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt was leaked—in which she appeared to choose who the president of Ukraine should be (which would mean dismantling the current government). The conversation revealed how deeply involved the U.S. State Department was. Nuland also uttered her now famous expletive, expressing exasperation with the EU, the U.S.'s partner in the process, for moving too slowly on installing a new, more western-friendly head of state. She said that the EU should be bypassed and the issue should go straight to the UN to “glue the whole thing together.” This was *prior* to the February 21 coup d'état in which President Yanukovich, considered by the West to be too close to Russia, was forced to flee the country and proclaim from exile that he was still the legitimate head of state.

Apparently it's not hard to feel confident about changing yet another country's government when the groundwork has already been laid from the outside by operating within a country. In Ukraine, as in other old Soviet countries, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and billionaire-funded nongovernmental organizations, infiltration, and propaganda help set the stage—the “soft power,” or co-opting component of what is now called “smart power” in U.S. foreign policy.

Stirring up the disgruntled through these instruments is easier when a country has first been the recipient of western-imposed policies

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WAMM Newsletter

The statements and opinions reflected in this newsletter are the views of the author and not necessarily official positions of WAMM. We encourage a diversity of opinion to represent the range of perspectives that coexist under the banner of WAMM's mission statement.

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Women Against Military Madness is a nonviolent, feminist organization that works in solidarity with others to create a system of social equality, self-determination and justice through education, action and the empowerment of women. WAMM's purpose is to dismantle systems of militarism, economic exploitation and global oppression.


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PM Melt-Down or Revival of Critical Thinking?

by Polly Mann

For more than 30 years, nuclear power appeared to be on the wane in the U.S. Although some existing plants did increase their capacities through refurbishing, most new construction that occurred after the 1979 partial meltdown at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania had been approved prior to the incident. The last new reactor to be built began service in 1996. The nuclear industry had been constrained after Three Mile Island due to the fact that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) adopted more stringent safety standards causing construction costs to skyrocket, and public objection to nuclear energy succeeded in preventing the construction of many plants that had been planned.

But in February of 2012, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission voted to license Georgia Power, a subsidiary of Atlanta-based Southern Co., to both build and operate two new reactors at its existing power plant near Waynesboro, ushering in what the industry had hoped would be a “Nuclear Revival.” NRC Chair Gregory Jaczko cast an extraordinary dissenting vote among the nuclear commissioners, citing the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan that had spurred the NRC to review whether existing and new U.S. reactors could withstand natural disasters like earthquakes and floods.

And now an alarming new report could serve as an additional deterrent. It reveals that U.S. sailors in the vicinity of the meltdown of the Fukushima atomic power plant in 2011 were tragically exposed to high levels of radiation as the reactors were melting. As part of an effort to aid the Japanese government, some of the sailors were sent to take off on helicopters from the USS Reagan and fly over the wrecked plant and surrounding countryside to observe and report on damage. Even the sailors who serviced the helicopters and others remaining on the ship experienced health problems consistent with major radiation exposure. Kyle Cleveland, founding director of the Institute of Contemporary Studies at Temple University's Japan campus obtained transcribed conversations through the Freedom of Information Act revealing naval officials acknowledging that even while the ship moved 100 miles from Fukushima, radiation readings were “about 30 times what you would detect just on a normal air sample out to sea” (*The Asia Pacific Journal: Japan in Focus*, February 17, 2014). Many of the navy personnel are suing Tokyo Electric Power (TEPCO) for \$1 billion.

Leaks at the Fukushima site continue to worsen. Despite its denials, TEPCO recently admitted it had underestimated certain radiation releases by a factor of 500 percent. A new report indicates

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*Photo: Safe & Green Campaign
Cooling tower collapse, Vermont Yankee nuclear plant*



A Beacon of Hope: the 15-Year Peace Vigil Over the Mississippi

by Marie Braun

It was in the spring of 1999, in response to the U.S. bombing of Yugoslavia, that members of Women Against Military Madness (WAMM), Veterans for Peace, Friends for a Nonviolent World, the Twin Cities Campaign to End Sanctions (on Iraq), and a number of local faith communities started the weekly vigil on the Lake Street/Marshall Avenue Bridge spanning the Mississippi River between Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, which continues to this day. We gathered in solidarity with people in Yugoslavia who were standing on *their* bridges in the belief that the U.S. would not intentionally kill large numbers of civilians.

The WAMM End War Committee has been committed to this vigil for these many years because we believe it is important to have an ongoing public witness against war. Though our numbers may be small at times, we gather on the bridge every Wednesday to remind ourselves and others that the United States is at war and that we must speak out against the atrocities that our country commits in the name of “our national security.” It is also an opportunity to stop, for a short time each week, to remind ourselves of the plight of the people, especially children, who live with the suffering and deprivation that war brings and to join together to say, “War is not the answer.”

For several years, the vigil focused on opposing the sanctions on Iraq and the wars on and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, but vigilers have frequently raised their voices relative to other issues: threats of war against Iran, North Korea, Libya, Mali, and Syria; torture; attacks on civil liberties; and U.S. support for the occupation of Palestine, calling on our government to fund human needs, not war. We have also focused attention on the weapons of war—most recently on drones, our government’s current weapon of choice.

The numbers at the weekly bridge vigil have varied from seven persons on a freezing January day to 1,200 on the day that the *BBC* filmed St. Paul residents Mary and Nick Eoloff, adoptive parents of Israeli nuclear whistleblower Mordechai Vanunu, during one of the vigils. Other actions on the bridge included a three-day fast against sanctions, which drew more than 60 fasters and a bishop from both the Lutheran and Catholic faith communities.

We have been gratified to learn that this vigil has been an inspiration to many others who started vigils in their own communities across



the state of Minnesota and as far away as Sacramento, California.

Thousands of people from the Twin Cities and many outside the Twin Cities area have participated in the vigil on the bridge. We hope the 15th anniversary of the vigil on Wednesday, April 30, 2014, will be an opportunity to come together to share our stories and to support one another in our continuing struggle to end the war and occupation of Afghanistan, stop the drone strikes in Pakistan, put an end to U.S. threats of war in the Middle East and elsewhere, and focus our government’s attention on issues of jobs, education, housing, health care, and other human needs.

The WAMM End War Committee is especially thankful to those who have stood with us through freezing cold weather, snow, rain, excessive heat, and gloom of night since 1999, never missing a Wednesday, even on special holidays. You are truly dedicated peacemakers.

Marie Braun co-founded the Twin Cities Peace Campaign after traveling to Iraq during the Sanctions Period. She is a longtime member of Women Against Military Madness and chair of the End War Committee. Marie and her husband John Braun have been organizers of the Bridge Vigil for the past 15 years.



People have been resisting war every Wednesday for 15 years on a bridge over the Mississippi River between Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Photos this page by Tom Bottolene.

WAMM THANKS

Mary Hastings in honor of Sally Kundert

Marie and John Braun in memory of Bob Giesen

Pepperwolf and Tom Bottolene in memory of Bob Giesen

Lisa and Keith Kupcho in memory of Bob Giesen

Beth and Gary Lehman in memory of Bob Giesen

Lucia Wilkes and Clyde Smith in memory of Bob Giesen

Christine and David Horazdovsky in memory of Bob Giesen

Alice O'Donnell in memory of Gayle Kineannon

David Stack in memory of Genghis Muskox

Normandy Hamilton in honor of Ellie Skelton for 7 years of awesome contribution to Wayside House

Judy Yaeger Jones in memory of Manuel Guerrero

Patty Guerrero in memory of Manuel Guerrero

Patty Guerrero in memory of Bob Giesen

Patty Guerrero in memory of Carol Walker's mother, Betty Freeman

Spare Us

As an Afghan woman, I find the propaganda line used by the Yankees and the Brits that they must stay in Afghanistan to 'protect the wimmings' to be particularly breathtaking in its pathological audacity. We know they're really there for the oil and gas pipelines, the rare-earth minerals and the opium, so please, spare us this BS!

—Bahar Azizi, *rawa.org*,
January 9, 2014

The Real Face of Progress

70% of Afghan children faced an iodine deficiency . . . The price tag of iodized salt to one child per year is 5 cents. The cost to maintain one U.S. soldier has recently risen to 2.1 million dollars per year.

UN figures about hunger in Afghanistan show malnutrition rates rising by 50% or more compared with 2012.

—Kathy Kelly,
"Salt and Terror," *Voices for Creative Nonviolence*,
Feb. 5, 2014

White Saviors? The U.S. Military and Muslim Women

by Sayantani DasGupta

With the U.S. military supposedly "drawing down" from Afghanistan, Washington and the corporate media are, once again, expressing their concern for "saving" Muslim women from oppression.

The U.S. Military is not a feminist institution.

This shouldn't be news to anyone. Despite the over 200,000 women in the active duty military, including 69 generals and admirals (CNN 2013 figures), women remain a relatively low percentage of the overall U.S. military, comprising approximately 14% of the enlisted force and 16% of officers.

Beyond numbers, the U.S. military has a serious gender-based violence problem. From intimate partner abuse to well-publicized cases of sexual harassment, and the insidious military culture of soldier-to-soldier rape and victim-blaming addressed in the award winning 2012 documentary, *The Invisible War*, it is clear the U.S. military has far to go in adopting any sort of feminist ethos into its institutional culture. (While there are assuredly individual feminists in the U.S. military or at least military people committed to gender justice, what I'm talking about here is the overall culture of the institution.)

Yet, why then, has a sort of "global feminist" stance been used so frequently to justify U.S. military presence abroad? Why, in our public imagination, have the U.S. military been the

"liberators" of "oppressed" Muslim women?

A Treacherous Sympathy

Consider a recent *LA Times* article "A precarious time for Afghan women," (February 4, 2014) which suggests that "Since the Taliban's fall, women have seen fitful gains. But those with access to education and work fear the U.S. troop departure will erode their freedoms."

The article quotes several Afghani women, including 26 year-old Ghazalan Koofi, who "came of age after the U.S.-led military invasion toppled the repressive Taliban government in 2001" and now fears that there will be a rollback of women's freedoms. In her words, "We are entering a very dangerous period for women . . . I'm very worried that we will return to those terrible days when the only place for a woman was in the home, doing housework and serving the men."

For both Koofi and the other women interviewed for this article, what is not at all clear is if they see the solution to their concerns about housework, education, free public movement or employment in the form of continued foreign military presence. Yet, regardless of the intention of the women interviewed, that is indeed how the article itself is framed.

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Photo: Department of Defense

George and Laura Bush with Afghan President Hamid Karzai at Camp David.

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And as U.S. troops prepare to (supposedly) leave Afghanistan, it behooves us to be clear about what type of a story articles like this are telling. Because what sentiments like these do is endorse a foreign savior narrative, what Leila Ahmed called, in the context of turn of the century Egypt, a “colonial feminism”—selective concern by foreign military leaders with symbols of the oppression of Muslim women, including the veil. These were leaders who were at the same time often deeply opposed to women’s suffrage or other freedoms for women in their own countries.

This imperialist strategy is not new, but has been used with missionary zeal by British, French and other colonialists for centuries now in their relationships with Muslims, Hindus and other subjects. Consider the practice of French colonialists staging elaborate ceremonies in which Algerian women subjects were “unveiled” and thereby “liberated.”

Indeed, this savior narrative is a deeply patriarchal perspective that locates power in the hands of foreign men and ultimately renders the foreign women they “save” quite powerless in the saving of themselves. In examining the British Raj’s opposition to child marriage and widow immolation (sati) in colonial India, post-colonialist theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak coined the phrase “white men rescuing brown women from brown men,” whereby this trope of “rescuing women” becomes a justification for colonial aggression, but ultimately the voices of the “brown women” are rendered utterly silent. This framing renders invisible any activism by said brown women in securing their own liberation; rather, they are envisioned to be perpetual victims in need of external saving.

Any critiques of colonial aggression, then, become near impossible, as war itself is sugarcoated, understood as a means to “free” foreign women from “oppression.” In a more recent essay called “A Treacherous Sympathy with Muslim Women,” Leila Ahmed has suggested that the burqa has become a sort of “shorthand moral justification” for the war in Afghanistan. As she observes,

... books by Muslim women recounting their personal oppressions under Islam soared in popularity in the very years that our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were in fact costing many mostly Muslim women their very lives. . . . in the period in which the general public was apparently—judging by these best-

selling books—deeply empathizing with Muslim women oppressed by Islam, they were simultaneously apparently not much disturbed, let alone outraged, at the unnumbered lives of Muslim women and children destroyed in these wars.

White Women Saving Brown Women from Brown Men

Interestingly, Spivak’s trope of “white men saving brown women” can just as easily be writ on Western women who seek to “save” brown women, and are unable to critique the racist and colonialist assumptions inherent in this “saving.” As anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod has suggested in her now classic “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?” (see her 2013 book of the same title from Harvard University Press): “I do not think it would be as easy to mobilize so many of these American and European women if it were not a case of Muslim men oppressing Muslim women—women of cover for whom they can feel — sorry and in relation to whom they can feel smugly superior.” (Here, Abu-Lughod is using George W. Bush’s famous phrase “women of cover” to refer to Muslim women)

This is also consistent with a trope I call the “your women are oppressed, but our women are awesome” narrative, seen most obviously in the 2012 *PBS* documentary series based on the 2009 *New York Times* best selling book, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn. This trope appears in many other media storylines as well, and symbolically pits (awesome, liberated, empowered!) women from the Global North against (downtrodden, voiceless, oppressed) women from the Global South.

Abu-Lughod suggests that this impetus to “save” Afghani or Iraqi women is tied to the post-9/11 U.S. and European obsession with “The Muslim Woman” as a figure representing religious and cultural, as opposed to political or historical, explanations of terrorism. This perspective similarly glosses over the role of globalization or poverty in Muslim women’s lives. As Abu-Lughod argues, “Instead of questions that might lead us to the exploration of global interconnections we were offered ones that worked to artificially divide the world into separate spheres—recreating an imaginative geography of West versus East, us versus Muslims, cultures in which First Ladies give speeches versus others where women shuffle around silently in burqas.”

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WORD UP

Who is Uncivilized?

In the case of Afghanistan, American politicians and media blamed the Afghan society in that the oppression of women was simply as a result of their ‘uncivilized’ nature. However, they did not mention the fact the American government was responsible for arming and training the Islamic fundamentalists in the 1980s, who were eventually the cause of the plight of the Afghan women . . . They pay lip service to ‘trying to protect women’ and ‘giving people confidence,’ while they bomb the whole place to the ground, with the predictable result of making living conditions hell for the Afghan people.

—Bahar Azizi, *rawa.org*,
January 9, 2014

Who Was Empowered?

The U.S. and NATO presence is making the struggle for justice and peace much harder because they empower these reactionary terrorists, who are great obstacles for true democratic-minded elements in my country.

—Malalai Joya, *Afghan peace and justice advocate*, former member Afghan parliament, Defense Committee for Malalai Joya

It is an absolute requirement that our troops be given immunity from local arrest and prosecution.

—Hillary Clinton, “Hillary Clinton, John Kerry, Laura Bush Rally for Afghan Women,” ABC News, November 15, 2013

D.C. Talking Points

Acknowledging “a lot of progress,” Clinton added, “But we are well aware this is a serious turning point for all the people of Afghanistan, but in particular the hard-fought gains that women and children have been able to enjoy.”

— “Hilary Clinton, John Kerry, Laura Bush Rally for Afghan Women,” ABC News, November 15, 2013

Truth Talking Pointedly

Hard won rights? Which rights exactly? Ever since the appearance of the ‘Taliban’ and the U.S. invasion and occupation, Afghanistan has been pushed into a downward spiral of destruction, death and misery. . . if violent crime against women in Afghanistan has hit record levels [according to Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission report, 2013], it is a direct result of the 12 years of U.S. and British occupation of my home country.

—Bahar Azizi, rawa.org, January 9, 2014, responding to a Reuters report which used the same talking points as Washington and other media

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Indeed, it was Laura Bush’s now infamous (in global feminist circles at least) November 2001 radio address to the American people where she declared that, “The brutal oppression of women is a central goal of the terrorists.” Conflating the Taliban and terrorism, placing them in opposition to “all civilized people,” and linking the two directly to the oppression of Afghani women and children was a central function of this historic address.

Interestingly, the language of feminism and anti-violence was invoked in Laura Bush’s famous address. Specifically, she employed terms from the Power and Control Wheel, which explains how not just physical abuse but verbal abuse, intimidation, isolation and control are used as methods in partner violence. (This frame-work is known widely in anti-gender-violence movements as the Duluth Model.) Laura Bush’s address was yet another example of feminist principles usurped for colonialist ends. In her words, “The plight of women and children in Afghanistan is a matter of deliberate human cruelty, carried out by those who seek to **intimidate and control.**” (emphasis mine)

Which of course raises the question: why this disproportionate concern over “intimidation and control” by overseas Muslim men over Muslim women where that same concern is not seen regarding gender-based violence among any community in the U.S.? Why indeed if not to vilify an entire religious community and frame gender oppression as something understood in the U.S. to be inherent in “their

culture”? (To be clear, what I am arguing isn’t that gender-based violence doesn’t occur in the Global South; rather, that it occurs everywhere, and ‘brown women’ aren’t somehow more “oppressed” than their sisters in the Global North, and therefore in need of “saving.”)

Women and Children in Need of Foreign “Protection”

Simultaneously, this way of looking at Muslim women’s lives has dovetailed with far more traditional patriarchal rhetoric whereby war and military aggression become justified as ways to protect women, children, and the home. Again, in Laura Bush’s words, “We respect our mothers, our sisters and daughters. Fighting brutality against women and children is not the expression of a specific culture; it is the acceptance of our common humanity—a commitment shared by people of good will on every continent.”

Such invocations of military might being necessary to protect both “home and hearth” and “women and children overseas” are what antiracist and antiviolence feminist scholar Zillah Eisenstein has called “the lie of women and children.” (*Aljazeera.com*, 2 October 2013). Eisenstein recently critiqued how the Obama administration justified its plan to attack Syria due to the danger that chemical weapons pose to “women and children.” She argues, “If the use of chemical warfare is inhumane, it is inhumane for each and every human body, not just for women and children. Age and gender need not be specified.” (Of course, the Obama administration’s assertion that the Syrian

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Photo: Carolyn Kaster /AP
Photo
Laura Bush and Hilary Clinton, with current Secretary of State John Kerry, receiving an award in Washington for their work with women in Afghanistan and around the world.



White Saviors,

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government was in fact involved in the use of chemical weapons against the Syrian people, is in and of itself deeply suspect.)

Invoking protection for foreign women and children suggests that somehow they are (to borrow from the rhetoric of the HIV epidemic) “innocent victims” in opposition to their fathers, brothers, husbands, friends, and sons who are made “guilty” by sheer virtue of their gender. Like celebrity exhortations to “adopt an impoverished child” in a far-away land, the rhetoric of “women and children” (or, as feminist political theorist Cynthia Enloe once phrased it “womenandchildren”) creates a category of agency-less beings taken out of context from their communities and countries, obligated to seek protection from the benign white foreign military patriarchy.

Solidarity, Not Saving

Perhaps the best lesson to understand the conflict in Afghanistan, and therefore future conflicts, is for the U.S. public to step back, and examine the implications of our concern for “The Muslim Woman.” A stance of solidarity, not saving, might be to acknowledge, as Cynthia Enloe did in a September 13, 2013 interview in wagingnonviolence.org,

... any progress that's been achieved for women in Afghanistan has been due to the guts and bravery and intelligence of Afghan women themselves. Afghan women have worked so hard as mothers of daughters, as lawyers, as human rights activists, as people running for the legislature. So many Afghan women have resisted masculinized, violent forces to carve out some space for women's dignity, women's literacy, women's schooling, and women's political and public influence. It's a huge accomplishment that they have carved out as much space as they have.

In addition, maybe we could leave aside our obsession over “veils,” and instead try to stand in solidarity with our Muslim sisters both in the Middle East and in the U.S. Perhaps we could follow the lead of feminist and antiviolence Muslim activists, instead of trying to rush in and “save” them. We might also do some self-examination of how racism and sexism against Muslim women work in our own country, recognizing that hand-in-hand with narratives about Muslim women's oppression overseas comes an easy Islamophobia whereby Muslim women in the U.S. are racially profiled as terrorists,



Identity. Painting by Hend Al Mansour. hendalmanmour.com also on Facebook

subjected to violence, or used as symbols to stereotype and dehumanize their families and communities.

The U.S. military has not been engaged in a feminist undertaking in Afghanistan, Iraq, or any other country. It's time we stopped believing that hackneyed narrative, and started recognizing just how insidious even the rhetorical weapons of violence can be.

Originally trained in pediatrics and public health, Sayantani DasGupta, a physician with a Masters in Public Health, teaches in the Master's Program in Narrative Medicine at Columbia University and the Graduate Program in Health Advocacy at Sarah Lawrence College. She is also the co-chair of Columbia's University Seminar on Narrative, Health and Social Justice and writes widely on issues of race, health, and feminism. Learn more about her work at www.sayantanidasgupta.com



SOLIDARITY SOURCES

Revolutionary Women of Afghanistan

- RAWA is the oldest political/ social organization of Afghan women struggling for peace, freedom, democracy and women's rights in fundamentalism-blighted Afghanistan since 1977. We need the solidarity and support of all people around the world. rawa.org

Voices for Creative Nonviolence

- Voices for Creative Nonviolence has deep, long-standing roots in active nonviolent resistance to U.S. war-making. Founder and coordinator Kathy Kelly has lived in Iraq and Afghanistan. Solidarity projects and reports. vcnv.org

RESOURCE

Your Oppressed, Our Awesome

- For further reading by Sayantani DeGupta, see “Your women are oppressed, but ours are awesome: how Nicholas Kristof and ‘Half the Sky’ use women against each other” racialicious.com

Photo: Press TV

U.S. soldiers kicking in a door during a raid in Afghanistan. Afghan President Karzai refuses to sign an agreement allowing “residual”

U.S. troops to remain in Afghanistan unless they agree to stop the house raids and air strikes that, in addition to crossfire, result in so many civilian casualties.



Gareth Porter

Available online from the publisher, JustWorldBooks, at justworldbooks.com

In Minneapolis: MayDay Books, 301 Cedar Ave., on the West Bank (downstairs, on the side, below the Hub Bike Coop). Store hours: 12:30 to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, 12:30 to 6:00 p.m. Saturday. Closed Sunday. Will order and ship books. Phone: 612-333-4719.

Porter's book is essential reading for all Americans wary of the manufactured path to war. It shows how ideology can distort facts, and can be used as a weapon to sway public opinion in directions that are inimical to world interests.

— *William O. Beeman, PhD., who has conducted research in Iran for more than 40 years and is the author of The Great Satan versus the Mad Mullahs: How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other.*

A Tale of Sound and Fury Signifying Nothing: Iran's Nukes

Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare by Gareth Porter (New York: Just World Books, 2014).

Reviewed by William O. Beeman

Gareth Porter has been the most conscientious follower of the fantasy danger of Iran's purported "nuclear weapons program." In this new, meticulously documented book, he exposes the many lies and half-truths that have been promulgated over more than two decades to try and convince the American public and the world that Iran is the chief danger to international peace.

Before plunging into the details of the book, let me state its conclusions unequivocally: Iran has never been proven to have a nuclear weapons program. Any claim to the contrary is absolutely false. The attempt to claim that such a weapons program exists was the result of a decades-long effort on the part of American neoconservatives allied with right-wing forces in Israel to legitimize hostile actions against Iran designed to effect regime change there.

Porter's account is fascinating and appalling reading. It is fascinating because he has created a compelling narrative showing how the framework for attacking Iran in this way evolved over decades. One of the most telling episodes in the book concerns President George H.W. Bush. In 1989 he was willing to improve relations with Iran eliminating sanctions that had been in place since the revolution of 1978-79. At that time American hostages were being held by Shi'a forces in Lebanon. Then Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati intervened, and all American prisoners were released. Bush was grateful and was supported by his national security advisor, Brent Snowcroft, but suddenly his administration reversed course.

As Porter describes it, though he and Bush wanted improved relations, everyone else on the national security team insisted that Iran was "deeply engaged in other acts of terrorism that made it very, very difficult to improve the relationship" (p. 87). Porter goes on to demonstrate that these "other acts of terrorism" were unsubstantiated. Essentially the decision not to go forward with improved relations was a political one and not based on any proven Iranian actions.

After Robert Gates, who had served on the National Security Council, became CIA

director, the disinformation about Iran continued. Porter documents that in 1992 it was Gates who first declared, with no hard evidence at all, that "Iran is developing a capability to produce weapons of mass destruction," and was "seeking to acquire a nuclear weapons capability."

In this way the juggernaut against Iran was launched. Although the national intelligence estimate for that year declared that Iran would not seriously threaten U.S. interests, Gates' estimate became gospel for the balance of the Bush administration, carrying forward into the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations. Gates' influence was indeed extremely telling.

After the tragedy of September 11, 2001, the George W. Bush administration was dominated by neoconservatives who had been active since the administration of his father and were anxious to see regime change throughout the Middle East. They ignored the fact that the Iranian nuclear energy program had started in earnest during the last years of the regime of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and declared that Iran had been undertaking "secret" nuclear developments. In fact, these were not at all secret, and had been governed by the rules of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to which Iran and the United States (but not Israel, Pakistan, India, or North Korea) were signatories, and which guaranteed Iran the "inalienable right" to the peaceful development of nuclear power.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was charged with carrying out inspections of Iran's nuclear program (and indeed, the nuclear programs of all signatories to the treaty). They never once found the slightest evidence that Iran had a nuclear weapons program or had diverted any nuclear material for military use. Still Gates' 10-year-old assertion that Iran was seeking to acquire a nuclear weapons capability, though completely unproven, was seized upon by the neoconservatives who wanted to bring down the Iranian regime.

As Porter documents, the IAEA quickly became politicized. Its head, Mohamed ElBaradei, was excoriated by the George W. Bush administration, who tried to get him fired because he would not assert that Iran was building nuclear weapons. His eventual successor, Yukio Amano, was more compliant. Though still not able to say that Iran had a

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Critical Thinking,
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that particles of radioactive cesium-134 from Fukushima have been detected in the ocean off the west coast of North America.

According to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Agency, there are now five new nuclear plants under construction in the United States and the NRC is reviewing license applications for 12 new plants—in the South and along the east coast. But plans aren't going as smoothly as anticipated. By mid-February of this year, the Watts Bar unit in Tennessee was behind schedule and costs will "significantly exceed" a previous building cost estimate of \$2.5 billion.

Even without taking into account the Fukushima disaster (though any amount of critical thinking would), new nuclear plants are "more questionable because there are economic factors right now which favor gas-fueled power plants and the fact that the economy is only growing slowly means that nationally the need for new generation is lower than people were expecting in 2007," said Michael Golay, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. (2007 was the year that the nuclear industry began to apply for new construction and operating licenses again) A 1,000-megawatt natural gas plant takes a few years to plan and build and would cost up to \$1 billion for the most efficient, combined-cycle model. A similar-sized nuclear reactor, however, could take five to 10 years to develop and build and cost more than \$5 billion, according to a 2012 *Reuters* report.

However, according to an *MSNBC* report two years later on February 19, the Obama administration declared itself committed to nuclear energy, along with natural gas, solar, and wind, as part of America's mix in "low carbon" energy production. Billions in federal loans are being granted to get the nuclear power industry going again. Without federal funding it would not be possible as banks won't take the risk.

Critical thinking appears to be having a serious meltdown.

But over the years, people have proven that they can resist nuclear power. Just a few examples: In the mid-'90s, the whole state of Minnesota appeared to be engaged in an anti-cask movement directed at the Prairie Island nuclear power plant on the Mississippi River, drawing attention to the fact that there is no permanent solution for dealing with nuclear waste. Grass-roots activism was a key factor in anticipated 2014 shutdown of the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant that had experienced the collapse of its cooling tower and groundwater leaks.

With its serious fracking issues, natural gas



*Photo:
University of
St. Thomas
The answer
blown in the
wind: turbines
at Buffalo
Ridge,
Minnesota*

is obviously not the solution for supplying our energy needs. So, as the nuclear industry attempts to revive and the anti-fracking movement grows strong, this is the time to seize the momentum and demand that the U.S. subsidize renewable energy in a massive way. Public awareness could begin a revival in critical thinking.

Polly Mann is a co-founder of Women Against Military Madness and a regular contributor and columnist for the WAMM newsletter.

Regime Change,
continued from page 1

that wreck havoc on its economy. But without an election, it takes a violent element and show of force to actually depose a seated government and enforce "regime change." And here's where the height of hypocrisy comes in: NATO has picked off so many old Soviet countries that Russia is now surrounded, but Russia is accused of violating Ukrainian sovereignty by moving its military to its own Black Sea base in the (predominately Russian-speaking) Crimean peninsula of Ukraine.

Not long ago Victoria Nuland announced that the U.S. stands with the people of Ukraine as they seek "justice, human dignity, security, and a return to economic health." (Through IMF-imposed structural adjustments that rob them of these things?)

If our government stopped participating in overthrows and wars, isn't it likely that we could experience these conditions, ourselves, as could the people in other countries whose well-being is such a supposed source of concern?

Mary Beaudoin is the editor of the Women Against Military Madness newsletter.

RESOURCES

Nukewatch:

Working for a nuclear-free future. Nuclear weapons, power, waste and nonviolent resistance. News, newsletter, updates, actions, more. nukewatchinfo.org

Beyond Nuclear:

Working for a world beyond nuclear power and nuclear weapons. Fact sheets, pamphlets, reports, videos, more. beyondnuclear.org

Green Power Hour:

User friendly click to hear programs. Fukushima disaster and aftermath, sailors exposure. Solartopia Green Power & Wellness Show on Progressive Radio Network

SOURCES

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japanfocus.org

Klimasinska, Katarzyna. "Atomic 'Agnostic' Named for U.S. NRC Ties Industry Growth to Aid," *Bloomberg News*, June 11, 2012

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Rascoe, Ayesha. "U.S. approves first nuclear plant in a generation," *Reuters*, Feb. 9, 2012

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"Nuclear Power in the USA," *World Nuclear Association Report*, February 20, 2014

Weiner, Bernard. "Cutting through Fukushima Fog: Radiation in U.S.?" crisispaper.org

Brady, Bob. "What Killed the Beast," *Vermont Digger*, Sept. 4, 2013.

March/April WAMM Calendar

Please note that WAMM's provision of information on other group's events is not meant to convey or endorse any action contrary to public policy that would be inconsistent with exempt purposes under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3) i.e., charitable purposes.

Ongoing WAMM Vigils for Peace

Vigil to End War:

Every Wednesday, Note Time Change as of April 1: 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on the Lake Street/Marshall Avenue Bridge spanning the Mississippi River between Minneapolis and St. Paul. FFI: Call 612-522-1861 or WAMM 612-827-5364.

Vigil to End the Occupation

of Palestine: Temporarily suspended till further notice. FFI: Call WAMM office 612-827-5364.

Peace Vigil: Every Tuesday, 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. on the Eastside of the Franklin Avenue Bridge, Minneapolis. Sponsored by: Prospect Hill Neighbors for Peace. FFI: 612-379-7398

Grandmothers for Peace Vigils 50th St. and Halifax (1 block w. of France) 4:45 p.m. to 5:45 p.m. FFI: Marian Wright, 612-927-7607

For information on additional peace vigils in Minnesota and Wisconsin, call the WAMM office at 612-827-5364.

Ongoing WAMM Committee Meetings

Board Meeting: Third Tuesday of each month, 6:00 p.m. at WAMM, 4200 Cedar Avenue South, Minneapolis. FFI: Call WAMM, 612-827-5364.

The WAMM Book Club.

Third Saturday of each month, 10:00 a.m., AFRO Deli: 1939 S. 5th St. Minneapolis (Riverside and 20th Avenue). Meet in the rear left room, behind the Deli. FFI: Call WAMM 612-827-5364

End War Committee: Acting Against War and the Threats of War. First Monday of each month, 5:30 p.m. FFI: Call Marie 612-827-5364

Ground All Drones Committee. First Thursdays of every month, 4:30 to 6:00 p.m., 4200 Cedar Ave. South, Minneapolis. FFI: 612-827-5364

Media Committee: FFI: Email the committee, wammmedia@gmail.com.

Middle East Committee: Second Monday of each month, 10:00 a.m. at WAMM, 4200 Cedar Avenue South, Suite 3, Minneapolis. FFI: Call WAMM 612-827-5364

WAMM Occupy: FFI: Call WAMM, 612-827-5364.

St. Joan of Arc/WAMM

Peacemakers: Fourth Tuesday of each month, 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. at St. Joan of Arc Church, Parish Center, 4537 Third Avenue South, Minneapolis. FFI: Barbara, 612-722-4444

Tackling Torture at the Top (T3): Second Wednesday of each month, 10:00 a.m. at 4200 Cedar Avenue, Minneapolis.

Ongoing Events

Committee to Stop FBI Repression. Stand with the people subpoenaed in a witch hunt, defend civil liberties. Learn what you can do. All who stand up and act for justice and solidarity are welcome. FFI: See stopfbi.net and mnStopFBI.wordpress.com, or call (612) 379-3585.

People of Faith Peacemakers Breakfast: Second and fourth Wednesdays, 8:00 to 9:30 a.m. at African Development Center, Riverside and 20th Avenues South. A resource and support group for those concerned about peace with justice from a faith perspective. FFI: www.justviewpoint.org or call 763-784-5177

Grandmothers for Peace: First Wednesday 12:45 p.m. at Edina Public Library, 5280 Grandview Square, Edina. Program around justice issue that helps us to understand our role in changing unjust systems. FFI: 952-929-1566

Pax Salons: Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. 943 West Seventh St. (St. Paul Gallery. Mad Hatters/Tea Salon is now called "The Burn Unit"), St. Paul. Please come. Topics vary. Call for details. Small donations accepted. FFI: 227-3228 or justcomm.org/pax-salon

Third Thursday Global Issues Forum: 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at Hennepin Ave. United Methodist Church, Groveland at Lyndale Ave., Minneapolis. FFI: globalsolutionsmn.org

Middle East Peace Now: Usually second or third Saturday. Refreshments 9:30 a.m., Program 10:00 a.m. Location may vary. FFI: mepn.org

Dignity, Not Detention Vigil:

Every first Sunday, 2:30 to 3:00 p.m. at 425 Grove Street (Ramsey County Law Enforcement Center). Vigil for civil immigrant detainees in jail. Sponsored by: Interfaith Coalition for Immigration, Advocates for Human Rights. FFI: Email interfaithonimmigration@gmail.com

Special Events

Tom Neilson: Singer with Political Satire, Social Commentary! Friday, April 11 at 7:30 p.m., Community Room at 4200 Cedar Ave South, Minneapolis. A fun-filled evening of good music with this creative award-winning singer/songwriter who performs his songs with marvelous wit and raucous satire. A FUN-raiser for WAMM in celebration of the seventy-fifth year of Larry Olds! \$15 donation. Refreshments.

Celebrate 15 Years of Resistance to War and the Weapons of War. Lake Street/Marshall Avenue Bridge Vigil. Wednesday, April 30. Vigil: 5:00-6:00 p.m. on the Lake Street/Marshall Avenue Bridge (spanning the Mississippi River between Minneapolis and St. Paul). Potluck & program: 6:15 p.m., St. Albert the Great Church, 2836 33rd Ave. South, Minneapolis. 15-minute video highlights, music, sharing, musicians: Fred and Anna Vagle, Bret Hesla, Chickpea and Garbonzo and more. Organized by Twin Cities Peace Campaign, WAMM End War Committee. Co-sponsored by Anti-War Committee, Minnesota Peace Action Coalition and others.

Stop the Wars, Ground the Drones Protest! Saturday, May 17, 1:00 p.m. Gather and rally at Lake Street & Hiawatha Blvd., Minneapolis. March at 1:45 p.m. to closing rally. Part of a national call, during April and May, for "End Drone Killing, Drone Surveillance and Global Militarization" protests against U.S. militarization and drones strikes and interventions. Sponsored by Minnesota Peace Action Coalition. FFI: 612-522-1861 or 612-827-5364. Endorsed by WAMM Ground All Drones Committee.

Additional events listed at WomenAgainstMilitaryMadness.org or call the WAMM office: 612-827-5364. For Minnesota Alliance of Peacemaker events, see: mapm.org

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\$15-39 Low Income/Student membership

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I want to volunteer for WAMM

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- Book Club
- Counter Recruitment
- End War Committee: Acting Against War and the Threats of War
- Immigration
- Media
- Middle East
- St. Joan of Arc/WAMM Peacemakers
- Ground All Drones Committee
- Tackling Torture at the Top
- WAMM Occupy

Administrative and Other Committees:

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- Finance
- Fundraising
- New Member
- Newsletter
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- Sharon Rice Vaughan Co-Chair
- Carol Walker Co-Chair

Sound and Fury,

continued from page 8

demonstrable nuclear weapons program, IAEA reports after he took office used convoluted language to suggest that they “could not eliminate the possibility” that Iran might be building nuclear weapons. Several attempts on Iran’s part during the Bush administration to negotiate over misunderstandings of its program were rebuffed by Washington, partially due to those same neoconservatives in his administration, notably John Bolton, who served as United Nations ambassador on a recess appointment during the crucial period from 2005-2006 and made it his mission to attack Iran with falsehoods at every turn.

Porter presents example after example of the U.S. media, most notably *The New York Times*, distorting the facts about Iran’s nuclear activities. Every action and decision was placed under a microscope, and though Iran had only completed one reactor in development since before the revolution, and was far from completing any facility for additional generation of nuclear power, the hyperbole in the press made it seem that Iran would have a bomb tomorrow. Lobbying groups such as the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) influenced these writings and lobbied the U.S. Congress for more stringent sanctions on Iran with the aim

of completely dismantling Iran’s 40-year-old nuclear program. They also supported military action against Iran either by the United States or by Israel. Porter’s book features the famous picture of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pointing to a picture of a Warner Brothers cartoon bomb and inveighing against Iran.

Porter’s book is essential reading for all Americans wary of the manufactured path to war. It shows how ideology can distort facts, and can be used as a weapon to sway public opinion in directions that are inimical to world interests. As talks with Iran in Vienna over its nuclear program proceed, Porter notes that the Obama administration, only after ridding itself of the extended influence of Robert Gates, has finally made attempts to wind down the two decades of baseless attacks on Iran to try and forge a rapprochement. The question remains whether warmongers in Washington, Israel, and some nations in Europe will come to their senses and let this happen.

William O. Beeman is professor of anthropology at the University of Minnesota. He has conducted research in Iran for over 40 years, and is author of The “Great Satan” vs. the “Mad Mullahs”: How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other.



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