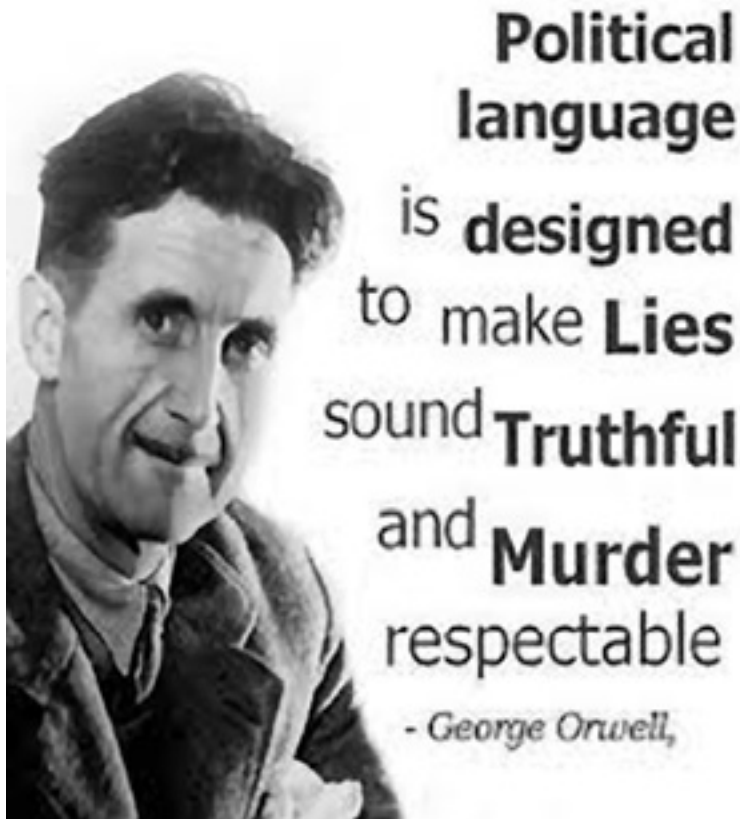


Twelve Memes of 2014 to Say Good-bye to in 2015

By Jeff Nygaard



1. The U.S. is the World's Only Superpower

While the U.S. is still powerful, signs of its decline are everywhere. The heads of state of both Russia and China have recently given speeches calling for a new, multipolar world order. In Latin America there is a “pink tide” of nations electing to break out of the so-called “Washington consensus.” The dollar’s days as the world’s reserve currency are numbered. The reality is that there is no “superpower” at the moment, and the World Order of the future is yet to take shape.

2. Iran Has a Nuclear Weapons Program

Iran expert William Beeman, University of Minnesota, has this to say: “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.” — From a review of Gareth Porter’s 2014 book, *Manufactured Crisis*, an intensive investigative report on the subject.

3. Government Eavesdropping Prevents Terror, Protects the Innocent

The massive, indiscriminate spying on U.S. citizens (and others) by the National Security Agency (and others) that has been revealed by whistleblower Edward Snowden has been defended by officials in a variety of ways, all tapping into our collective fear of terrorism.

But, besides the rampant violation of the privacy rights of all U.S. residents (which raise serious constitutional issues), a major report released last year by the New America Foundation found that such massive spying does little to protect against terrorism. The report, “Do NSA’s Bulk Surveillance Programs Stop Terrorists?,” found that “traditional investigative methods [rather than mass surveillance] initiated the majority of terrorism cases,” and “surveillance of American phone metadata has had no discernible impact on preventing acts of terrorism and only the most marginal of impacts on preventing terrorist-related activity, such as fundraising for a terrorist group.” The full report can be found online [here](#).

4. The Killing of Terrorists with Drones is Keeping Us Safe

The militarization of the U.S. response to terrorism is based on the idea that violence can protect people in the U.S. from this or any other threat. The use of drones by the U.S. is a part of what has been called “the New American Way of War.” The idea is to project U.S. power by means of an international military alliance that can attack rapidly anywhere in the world, dominated by the United States, using U.S. weapons and technology, but with no risk to U.S. life. That’s where drones come in, as such “remote-control” killing avoids direct U.S. casualties—the kind that get on the evening news, that is.

While drone attacks allegedly are aimed at killing “bad guys,” they have all sorts of unintended outcomes. These include the killing of innocent people, the moral corrosion that results from the attempts to justify such killings, and the likelihood that such attacks will actually endanger people in the U.S. by increasing the perception of the U.S. as a rogue state that kills whenever and wherever it wants (making it a legitimate target in the minds of the victims).

5. Suicide Terrorism is the Work of Irrational Individuals

Research by political scientist Robert Pape suggests otherwise: “Suicide terror is not simply the product of irrational individuals or an expression of fanatical hatreds... Nearly all suicide attacks occur in organized, coherent campaigns, not as isolated or randomly timed incidents...” and “Most suicide terrorism is undertaken as a strategic effort directed toward achieving particular political goals... The main purpose of suicide terrorism is to use the threat of punishment to coerce a target government to change policy, especially to cause democratic states to withdraw forces from territory terrorists view as their homeland.” — See “The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism” at danieldrezner.com

6. The United States Has Become a Post-Racial Society

The fact that this idea has even been entertained in recent years—notably since the election of a black man to the presidency—tells us the extent to which the public sphere is and has been dominated by so-called white people. Consider that 37 percent of “white” respondents in a recent poll say that the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, “raises important issues about race.” Eighty percent of black respondents say it does. Anyone who still thinks the U.S. is a post-racial society may benefit from aiming their Internet search engine at Michael Brown, Eric Garner, John Crawford, Tamir Rice, Ezell Ford, or Levar Jones. All were shot by police in the past six months, with the exception of Garner, who was choked; all, with the exception of Jones, were killed. And those are just the high-profile cases! — See “Stark Racial Divisions in Reactions to Ferguson Police Shooting,” people-press.org and this CBS news report of November 24: cbsnews.com

7. We are a Nation of Immigrants

Hardly. Here is a response from a 2006 essay called “Stop Saying This Is a Nation of Immigrants!” by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz: “This is a convenient myth developed as a response to the 1960s movements against colonialism, neocolonialism, and white supremacy. The ruling class and its brain trust offered multiculturalism, diversity, and affirmative action in response to demands for decolonization, justice, reparations, social equality, an end of imperialism, and the rewriting of history... What emerged to replace the liberal melting pot idea and the nationalist triumphal interpretation of the ‘greatest country on earth and in history,’ was the ‘nation of immigrants’ story...” — Read the essay here: mrzine.monthlyreview.org

8. Immigrants Take Jobs Away from Native-born Workers

The Immigration Policy Center tells us that “immigrants are not the cause of unemployment in the United States. Empirical research has demonstrated repeatedly that there is no correlation between immigration and unemployment. In fact, immigrants—including the unauthorized—create jobs through their purchasing power and their entrepreneurship, buying goods and services from U.S. businesses and creating their own businesses, both of which sustain U.S. jobs. The presence of new immigrant workers and consumers in an area also spurs the expansion of businesses, which creates new jobs. In addition, immigrants and native-born workers are usually not competing in the same job markets because they tend to have different levels of education, work in different occupations, specialize in different tasks, and live in different places. Because they complement each other in the labor market rather than compete, immigrants increase the productivity—and the wages—of native-born workers.” — immigrationpolicy.org/

9. The United States is a Great Force for World Peace

In a largely ignored survey by Gallup International, people in 65 countries around the world were asked which country they think is the “greatest threat to peace in

the world today.” The leading vote-getter, at 24 percent, was the United States. China received 6 percent of the votes, North Korea and Iran each received 5 percent, and Russia 2 percent. American foreign policy is aimed at protecting its interests, not at preserving the peace. And the world outside of the U.S. knows it. See wingia.com and commondreams.org

10. Social Security is Going Bankrupt

The Strengthen Social Security Coalition says this: “Social Security can never go bankrupt. Nearly all (97 percent) of its income comes from the contributions of workers and employers, or interest on these contributions. Hence as long as there are workers in America, Social Security will have income. Even if Congress were to take no action, Social Security could pay 100 percent of promised benefits for the next two decades, and more than three-quarters of benefits after that. Around 2033 there will be a modest funding gap requiring modest increases in revenues to guarantee everyone 100 percent of promised benefits.” — strengthensocialsecurity.org

11. Single-Payer Health Care is the Radical Choice

Actually, single-payer is the “middle road” between a largely private health care system like the one currently in place, and a fully socialized system. Socialized medicine is a system in which doctors and hospitals work for and draw salaries from the government, and medical practices and hospitals are publicly owned. Single-payer, in contrast, is a system in which a single public or quasi-public agency organizes health care financing, but the delivery of care remains largely in private hands. In a socialized system, there is no need for insurance, since everyone is guaranteed health care. The current Minnesota healthcare exchange, known as MNsure, says in its marketing campaign that “95 Percent of Minnesotans Now Have Health Insurance. 100 Percent Need It.” Nobody needs insurance; what we need is health care!

12. The Private Sector Can Do Anything Cheaper and Better than Government

In fact, privatization often raises costs for the public and governments. The quality of public goods and services often declines when outsourced to private contractors. A great example is health insurance. Under Obamacare, private insurers can spend no more than 20 percent of their premium income on overhead, and many struggle to comply with the requirement. In contrast, the overhead for the publicly managed Medicare system is below 2 percent. See “Privatization Myths Debunked” by “In the Public Interest” at inthepublicinterest.org

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