



SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY the Beacon

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EDITORIAL

One thing we must be honest about is the reality that our democracy is under attack and has been for a long time. Almost daily, there are efforts, whether by policy or inflammatory rhetoric, to systematically undermine faith in our elections. Shameful examples of voter suppression and the trampling of rights are happening all across the country.

History teaches us that in the United States democracy has never been available to everyone. Its expansion and protection have always come through struggle, organizing and protest. This time is no different.

President (Unitarian Universalist Association) Oct 2020

We need to look at what is happening in the United States, not from the perspective of the privately owned media, but by employing our own common sense and analysis. We need to reject the nonsensical notion that a millionaire salesman (a showman with a dicey reputation) was able to attain the position of US President simply by using his money and his marketing ability.

In fact, this extreme, right wing, narcissistic character, not unlike the German fascist Adolph Hitler, was propelled to power by the worst elements in US society. The unintelligent, unprincipled, but wealthy and ambitious Trump was deemed suitable to control the seat of power as President to allow them to pursue their agenda of unchallenged world control.

By harnessing and releasing the anger and despair of millions of Americans who have been brought to abject poverty by the politics of capitalism, the extreme right wing of capital used Trump to divert this anger and despair towards governments by purporting to be their champion.

The suggestion that the whole situation that has brought the most powerful capitalist nation in the world to its knees was orchestrated by one man is purely nonsense; we need only to look to the history of Nazi Germany to see how Hitler was propelled to power in order to prevent a socialist revolution and placed in power by the same extreme right wing forces that are now operating in the US.

There is an acute crisis in the world capitalist system and an even more acute battle between the fascist forces in each country and the more moderate as to how best to maintain and indeed protect the capitalist system. Trump is the willing tool of those extreme forces in the US.

Questions are slowly emerging about how the attack on the US Senate was able to occur. Where were the security forces, the police, the CIA, the FBI and other national forces? How was it possible, given the knowledge that such an event was in the offing, that this attack was not avoided? Why were police collaborating with the offenders, even to the point of having photos taken with them? What lies have been promoted to create this breakdown of US democratic procedures, and by whom?

The US is now a nation totally divided, totally disunited and totally impotent as the veil of 'principled' world leadership is torn away. How can such a nation 'lead the free world' when it is unable to lead itself? What will be the position of other nations who subordinated their foreign policy and independence to the US, such as our own nation?

There are many lessons to be learned from the appallingly fractured US society. The world has changed dramatically; we need to look beyond a society that allows massive poverty to exist alongside unacceptable wealth and a society that promotes racism as a tool, and we need to examine the way forward for Australia, post economic failure and pandemic.

For do not doubt that our economy was in crisis long before the pandemic and this crisis has been compounded by the pandemic so acutely that it will never be the same again. We will be advised that 'there is light at the end of the tunnel', that we need to 'pull together'. However, before we 'pull together', we need to discuss, how, for whom and to what end?

This is a discussion for every Australian if we are to build a decent society where everyone can share in the wealth they have created and can participate fully in these decisions.

POLITICAL ACTIVIST, ARTIST AND WRITER; AUTHOR: THANK GOD FOR THE REVOLUTION;
COLD TEA FOR BRANDY; OLD CUBA, WORLD HERITAGE; NUGAN HAND; SOME FACTS ABOUT LIBYA;
BACKGROUND TO THE VIETNAM WAR; CO-AUTHORED ROOTED IN SECRECY



Crisis in the Middle East

part II

AND THEN THERE WAS LIBYA

For most of its history the Libyan peoples were subjected to various degrees of foreign control. Its last oppressor,

Italy, occupied the country in 1911 claiming it was a war of liberation against Ottoman rule when it was a ferocious pacification war in an attempt to re-establish a Roman empire in Africa. Mussolini's generals incarcerated the entire population in a huge concentration camp when more than 300,000 perished in the most appalling conditions. Allied forces kicked the Italians out in 1943, and in 1944 Sheikh Idris, a close ally of the British, returned from exile. Idris was anointed king and represented Libya in all subsequent UN negotiations.

In 1959 oil was discovered and Libya, one of the world's poorest, became extremely rich, except under Idris the wealth was concentrated in the hands of the few. Discontent grew with calls for a more unified Arab entity. In 1969, inspired by the example of Nasser in Egypt, Colonel Qaddafi and a small group of army officers staged a coup d'état and kicked out the ailing Idris, abolished the monarchy and nationalised the oil industry.

They closed down foreign bases and built clinics, schools, public housing and implemented reforestation campaigns in the name of the new Libyan Arab Republic, with free education, healthcare, housing, electricity, subsidised food and interest-free loans as set out in law. Women wore Western clothes, went to work and attended university. If they wanted to farm they were given a farmhouse, land, livestock and seeds, all free of charge. Back then, Libya had the highest standard of living and life expectancy in Africa. Fewer Libyans lived below the poverty line than in the Netherlands. And there were no terrorists. More than 60 countries had embassies in Tripoli, along with dozens of multinationals.

I wonder how many know about the close alliance between Nelson Mandela and Qaddafi? Back in the 1970s and 1980s, when the West called Mandela a terrorist and refused to put sanctions in place against apartheid South Africa, it was Qaddafi who supported him and paid for the training and education of ANC fighters, a bond that became even stronger after Mandela was released from gaol. As soon as he was free, Mandela broke the UN embargo and paid a visit to Tripoli where he was shown the ruins of the Qaddafi compound, which in 1986 was bombed by the US under Ronald Reagan in an attempt to murder the entire Qaddafi family, but only succeeded in killing Qaddafi's infant daughter.

Mandela stated: *'...the attitude of the US is a threat to world peace. If there is a country that has committed unspeakable atrocities in the world, it is the US of A. They don't care for human beings.'* While Mandela's life was celebrated around the world, Qaddafi was called a 'mad dog' and killed in a most horrific way, and his country reduced to a swamp of human despair, extremism and primitivism, a once successful society reduced to a failed state. Eccentric? Possibly. Mad? Definitely not.

Of the many crimes committed in the name of humanitarian intervention by the West, the destruction of Libya in 2011 must rate among the most wicked. Libya is now a haven for terrorists, with the north a centre of migrant trafficking against a backdrop of widespread rape, assassinations and torture. Apart from the horrific impact on children, the nation's women have suffered the most.

I visited Libya twice, once in 1979 to take part in an international conference on Palestine. Opened by Qaddafi, it was well-organised and extraordinarily interesting. Palestinian leaders with a price on their heads and using aliases flew in from around the world. Many of their colleagues had been assassinated by Israeli hit squads. I met George Habash, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Vanessa Redgrave, the activist English actress, and at the beginning we all welcomed a delegation from the newly elected Sandinista government in Nicaragua with a standing ovation, their debut onto the world stage.

And again, in 1989, when it looked as if WW3 was about to break out after Washington accused Libya of building a chemical weapons plant at Rabta. In its usual style, it was threatening to bomb the shit out of the country unless Qaddafi closed the plant down and allowed the US to inspect the site. For most of January we were assailed with the usual load of PR bull about Libya 'threatening world peace', which echoed around the world.

People became nervous about the consequences, especially after two US fighter pilots chanting 'good kill, good kill', shot down two Libyan planes over the Mediterranean, claiming self-defence. The Libyan pilots died. Small groups from around the world travelled to Libya to act as human shields and I joined one from Australia. We actually met Qaddafi in a Bedouin tent when we were given a copy of his 'Green Book', Libya's answer to Mao's Little Red Book, a modernised version of Muslim principles to combat Islamic fanaticism, his main domestic enemy. And in the General People's Congress, we met Libya's Deputy Prime Minister, Ibrahim Abukazan, who was also keen to re-establish links with Australia.

But hypocrisy and duplicity continued to rule. In 1988, President Reagan openly admitted at an international conference to sharply increasing spending at the US Army research facility at Fort Detrick, which carries out some of the world's most diabolical experiments. And on 2 March 1990, a story buried on page 17 in the *New York Times* – ignored by our own media – stated that White House officials had admitted that the plant at Rabta was not going to manufacture chemical weapons after all, but was being 'converted' into a pharmaceutical plant, which was precisely what the Libyans had been saying all along.

And Libya was well and truly fitted up over the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, a crime it had nothing to do with. On 16 February 1990, a group of British relatives of the Lockerbie victims went to the US Embassy in London to meet members of the President's Commission on Aviation Security and Terrorism. After the meeting, Martin Cadman from the UK chatted with two of the commission members, later telling the group that one of the officials had told him: 'Your government and our government know exactly what happened at Lockerbie. But they are not going to tell you.'

The destruction of Qaddafi's Libya brought France into war with Mali, pursuing an elusive enemy that Qaddafi had managed to control. France, like the US and Britain, designated Islamic terrorism as its great enemy while doing everything possible to promote its growth and extension. Along with constant support for Israel, even during its murderous bombings of helpless Gaza, and even when Mossad assassinated scientists in Iraq and Iran.

AND SYRIA

In Syria, the CIA and the Saudis united to launch a proxy war against Russia by supplying Islamist groups in Syria with advanced weapons and sophisticated missiles, a strategy with echoes of the secret war the CIA ran with the Saudis against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Long before Assad's crackdown on

BUT HYPOCRISY AND DUPLICITY CONTINUED TO RULE.

protests, strongly supported by George W Bush, the US was pushing for war with Syria as early as 2003 when US Secretary of State Colin Powell and his sidekick John Bolton warned that Syria might be pursuing a program of 'weapons of mass destruction' urging that action must be taken. A case of here we go again, an extension of its long-standing policy to destroy the government in Damascus, which it saw as an impediment to its long-term aims.

As an alternative to direct military intervention, the US chose sanctions, while giving massive military support to Syria's internal opposition. Stripped of weasel words, the US demanded that Damascus must capitulate to Israel and end its support for militant groups seeking Palestinian self-determination like Hezbollah and instead must knuckle under to Wall Street by 'transforming' its mainly publicly owned economy. Israel's military intelligence chief, Major General Herzi Halervy said that Israel 'prefers ISIS over the Syrian government', confirming that this is part of US plans aimed at Iran and beyond, with the hope that Russia's intervention had been stymied.

It is infuriating that almost all the West's 'news' about Syria comes from the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an extremely dodgy one-man outfit which sends out communiques from a suburban house in Coventry in the UK. It was founded in 2006 by a fellow calling himself Rami Abdulrahman, although his real name is Osama Suleiman. Does he work for the CIA? MI6? No one knows, but we do know that he loathes the Syrian government. Hardly impartial, but his biased rubbish is used by all mainstream media outlets, including our own ABC. The media's blind obedience to the US runs deep in Western journalism and ensures that the catastrophe in Syria is blamed exclusively on Bashar al-Assad, who the West and Israel have long conspired to overthrow.

And yet another humanitarian catastrophe – some say even greater than in Syria but one we rarely hear about – this time in Yemen, ostensibly a Saudi war but with Saudis flying US fighter jets and being told by US 'intelligence' about where to bomb, a campaign that saw


al-Qaida enter the Arabian Peninsula, leaving thousands of civilians dead, most of them women and children.

For more than 60 years, the West has systematically opposed secular states in the Middle East starting with Nasser's Egypt. Israel was always afraid of Arab nationalism as it believed it would eventually embrace Palestine, when Arab nationalism was the only political hope for the region. Inevitably, once that hope was trampled on, Islamic extremism rushed in to fill the void.

Today's wars are carried out almost as a matter of course. No troop build-up, just massive air strikes via unmanned drones operated by remote control, sometimes thousands of miles away. US wars in Syria and Iraq are part of a bigger plan aimed at Iran and ultimately Russia. So perhaps we are witnessing the end of the beginning. The most horrifying prospect is that the lunatics that infest America's military establishment believe they can win a nuclear war. And, as if all the stockpiles of bombs aren't enough,

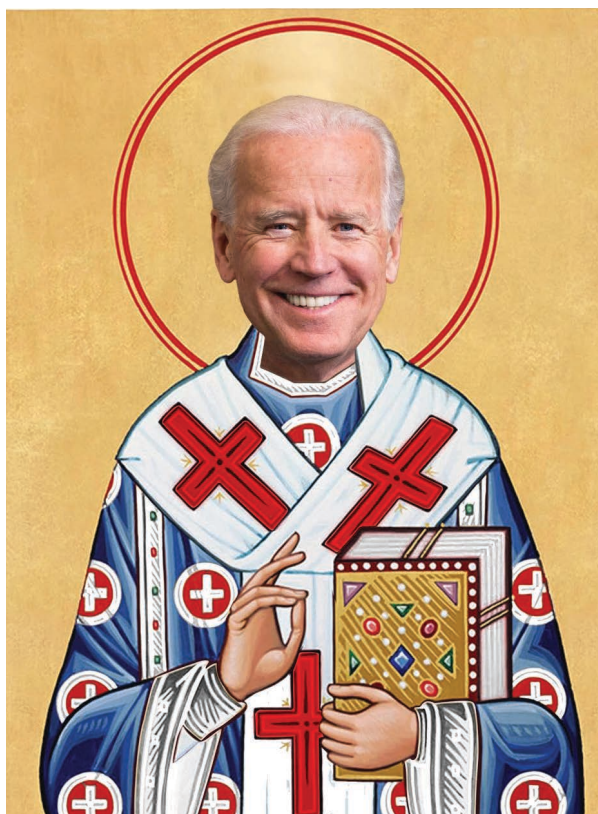
Washington is planning to spend one trillion dollars more on replacing every single bomb, tank and missile. Just think how many hospitals, schools and health centres could be built and how many starving people could be housed and fed.

What rage we should feel about such policies, with our visions of dead Syrian children, the children bombed to bits in Afghanistan and Pakistan from Obama's drones, the chaos of Libya, the wasteland of Iraq, the death and destruction everywhere caused by American military intervention, which we cravenly support. We must join with others to change this destructive capitalist system which brings nothing but wars and misery except to a favoured few and replace it with one for people. It's called socialism.

Only a huge mass movement that pours into every street, that crosses borders and moves across the world can stop these war criminals and this madness. 

BY JOSEPH CAMILLERI

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Why the Biden victory is not the answer to our prayers

Much of America is breathing a sigh of relief that, gracefully or otherwise, Trump will soon vacate the White House. Allies of the United States – not just governments but much of the commentariat – are expecting a less turbulent and more predictable international environment. That may be wishful thinking.

There is no denying that Trumpism has been a recipe for policy incoherence, administrative chaos, and

vulgar, often untruthful discourse. Biden's team will no doubt restore a measure of civility to American diplomacy and craft a set of domestic policies designed to repair some of the damage inflicted on health, environment, and race relations.

Yet, even here, the signs are less than reassuring. Yes, we can expect climate change to be given a higher priority in foreign policy. The appointment of US Secretary of State John Kerry as special presidential envoy on climate change signals a willingness to return to the international negotiating table.

Under the 2015 Paris Agreement, Obama committed the United States to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 26–28% by 2025, from 2005 levels. The Biden administration will renew that commitment and may even set a goal of net zero emissions by 2050.

But let's not forget, what can be done on the international stage depends largely on what happens domestically. Soon after his inauguration, Biden is expected to use executive leverage to reverse some of Trump's most egregious decisions, which erased or loosened nearly 100 environmental rules and regulations.

He may not, however, be able to reinstate all these rules. And, even if he can, this will not be enough to meet the net zero emission target. Eventually, a comprehensive legislative network will be needed. It is not clear how Biden proposes to do this, if, as seems likely, he is faced with a hostile Senate and an obstructionist Supreme Court.

Behind and beyond these institutional roadblocks lies the bigger hurdle – fossil fuel interests. Intense lobbying by coal, gas and oil companies, and the utility and transportation sectors, coupled with large donations to political parties, has been remarkably successful. Nothing said during the election campaign suggests Biden is of a mind to neutralise the fossil fuel lobby's formidable political muscle.

As for Washington's future engagement with the world, we may be in for a torrid time. When formally announcing the members of his national security and foreign policy team last week, Biden chose as his opening words 'America is back'.

Which America is this, we may ask? Is it the America that took us to Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya? Is it the America that has steadfastly invoked external threats to justify in peacetime the deadliest military arsenal in human history?

Much has been made of America's commitment to a rules-based international order. Yet, US administrations have made a habit of overthrowing foreign governments, whether by force or other means. Over the last 67 years, it has attempted regime change in 58 separate instances, that is, the equivalent of one every 14 months.

The defining feature of America's presence in the world since 1945 has been the growth of its 'national security state'. Though presidents come and go, the security apparatus has developed a mind of its own, and tentacles that reach into virtually every area of policy, every institution of government, and a great many foreign governments.

It is entirely possible that Biden has other ideas about future US security policy. He may favour a gentler, wiser, less interventionist America, less intent on reviving its ambition for hegemony. If so, he has yet to spell them out.

All we have at the moment are a few broad-brush sentences. The words he used to introduce his security team are nevertheless cause for concern, and merit, restating:

It's a team that reflects the fact that America is back. Ready to lead the world, not retreat from it. Once again, sit at the head of the table. Ready to confront our adversaries, and not reject our allies, ready to stand up for our values.

We can only assume that the primary adversaries he has in mind are Russia and China. If so, the idea of confronting them raises troubling questions: confront them in response to what, by what means, and with what objectives?

There is, it seems, little appreciation that we are witnessing a shift in the centre of economic and geopolitical gravity from West to East, in part the result of East Asia's renewed economic dynamism.

More importantly, the West-centric world in which first Europe and then the United States held sway, is slowly but steadily giving way to a new world in which other civilisational centres are emerging or re-emerging. This calls for new forms of dialogue and accommodation both across and within major civilisations.

Sadly, there is no indication that the incoming

administration is aware of, not to say favourably disposed to, these possibilities.

In many ways, Biden's choice of cabinet members is itself instructive. Antony Blinken (Secretary of State), Avril Haines (Director of National Intelligence), and Jake Sullivan (National Security Adviser) all went to Ivy League schools and were closely associated with the Obama administration. They are all quintessential products of the security and foreign policy establishment.

They all speak of an America that can resume global leadership as if they know what leadership entails at this historical moment. They assume the world is yearning to be led and to have the United States as its leader. This can hardly be true of Russia or China, and it is difficult to see either Germany or France meekly complying with US preferences and priorities.

Put simply, there is no evidence that the Biden administration is alive to the immense challenges posed by a rapidly transforming world. Significantly, neither the president-elect nor his appointees have referred to the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons. Nor have they indicated much interest in reaching out to other countries with a view to breathing new life into existing international institutions, in particular the United Nations.

Insofar as Biden and his entourage have referred to multilateralism, it has been primarily in the context of international military alliances and regional formations closely aligned to US interests and priorities.

They have been conspicuously silent on the institutions, decision-making processes and resourcing needed to manage, or better still prevent, the financial, environmental and humanitarian crises that have become a regular feature of the international landscape.

They have waxed lyrical about their commitment to US values and human rights, implying that they will respond loudly and forcefully when these standards are violated by adversaries. But they have said little about how they propose to handle gross human rights violations by friends and allies, as is presently the case with the likes of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Thailand and the Philippines.

It is fair to say that the Obama administration assumed office in January 2009 with a much grander vision and loftier rhetoric, but managed to deliver little in the ensuing eight years. It is conceivable that the Biden administration will assume office in January 2021 with a humbler agenda and still end up achieving more. Australia would be unwise to base its future on the strength of that assumption. 🕊

Source: *Pearls & Irritations*

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THE UNSPOKEN PREMISE OF MODERN CAPITALISM IS THAT THE WORLD WILL BE SAVED BY GREEDY TECH OLIGARCHS

Psychopathic neocon Nikki Haley is greasing the wheels for her 2024 presidential campaign by screaming that America has been taken over by socialism.

'2020 was the year socialism went mainstream,' Haley tweeted today. 'The dangerous ideology, which has failed everywhere it has been tried and ruined countless lives, is on its way to becoming the default economic policy of the Democratic Party. This terrifying trend threatens the future of every American.'

Ah yes, America. The country where Republicans spend all day screaming that socialism is happening and Democrats spend all day making sure it never does.

Meanwhile, outside of Nikki Haley's magical fantasy world where Joe Biden is ushering in a Marxist world order and Bernie Sanders is personally guillotining billionaires in Central Park, Americans are being denied financial support and healthcare even as millions are thrown out of work during the pandemic.

In reality, the world is still very much locked into zealous worship of the great god known as capitalism. And it is choking the world to death.

We live on a finite planet of finite resources with a finite ecosystem that has a finite capacity to absorb punishment without becoming uninhabitable. Science tells us we are fast approaching the breaking point at a debatable rate of acceleration. Depending on what scientists you believe, we could get there in several decades, or it could be a whole lot sooner.

Capitalism, the predominant driving force of human behaviour in our world right now, offers exactly two potential solutions to this dilemma. The first is to pretend the dilemma doesn't exist, which is why a Venn diagram of climate denialism and support for

capitalism is always going to be a near-perfect circle. The second is the entirely faith-based hope that some kind of sustainable technological innovation is going to save the day before our behaviour drives us off the cliff of extinction.

Which means the only answer capitalism has for the current plight of our species is the blind-faith belief that the world is about to be saved, any minute now, by a handful of union-busting tech billionaires who choose every single day not to use their vast fortunes to end world hunger. That is the unspoken premise in the argument for the continuation of capitalism.

Since ideological echo chambers tend to develop their own dialects and definitions which can make cross-ideological conversation damn near impossible, I should clarify that what I mean by capitalism is the current system dominating our world today wherein human behaviour is driven as a whole by the pursuit of capital. The current system of profit-seeking and competition as the primary determining factor of what humans are doing on this planet.

Profit-chasing as the driving factor in human behaviour is what got us here. As long as it remains profitable to destroy the environment and human behaviour is driven by profit, then humans *will* continue destroying the environment. Inevitably. This will have to happen.

So, for purposes of this conversation, it's actually irrelevant whether capitalism enthusiasts believe the current system is 'real capitalism' or not, whether you believe the markets are 'free' or not, or whether or not you prefer Austrian over Keynesian models of economic theory. Since we're talking about *any* system where profit-chasing and competition drives human behaviour at mass scale, we are necessarily talking about whatever pet definition of capitalism you happen to prefer.

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So, there's no need to play pedantic word games about this.

So, again, the only argument for our species continuing along its current trajectory is the entirely faith-based belief that some greedy anti-union plutocrat like Elon Musk is going to promote new technologies which make it unprofitable for any humans to destroy the environment, and do so quickly enough to avert ecological disaster. Which is slightly dumber than believing the world has been saved by the election of Joe Biden.

The plutocratic class are not good custodians of our world. They are not good people. They are not wise. They are not even particularly intelligent. They're just a very profitable sort of clever, and have a willingness to crush anyone who gets in their way.

The plutocratic class has been buying up control over our political systems to ensure maximum profit, buying up news media outlets to propagandise the masses into supporting the status quo they've built their kingdoms on, and forming alliances with sociopathic government agencies which murder people around the world to ensure continual US unipolar hegemony. These are the people we've placed in charge of the innovation and distribution of emerging technologies, and we're meant to believe that they will save the world?

They will not. They will keep chasing power and profit until we drive ourselves off the cliff of extinction. It's all they know how to do.

We're never going to compete and consume our way out of the existential crisis we've competed and consumed our way into. Capitalism will never make it more profitable to leave a tree standing than to cut it down, to leave fuel sources in the ground rather than dig them up. Money has no wisdom, no matter how inflation-proof and gold-backed you might want to make it. Markets cannot navigate us through this crisis, no matter how 'free' you might try to make them. Capitalism is the problem. Not the wrong kind of capitalism. Just capitalism.

The only way humanity survives the looming existential threats of ecological collapse and nuclear

war it now faces is if it radically transforms from a competition-based model to a collaboration-based model. One where we collaborate with each other and with our ecosystem to clear the massive hurdles that are rapidly approaching instead of stepping on each other's heads in a mad scramble to stay afloat and destroying our ecosystemic life support system for profit.

Even if you want to make the extremely debatable claim that socialism has failed everywhere it's been tried, an earnest reckoning with our situation will force you to admit that capitalism has failed too. Our system of insatiable profit-seeking to the detriment of our world has led us to the brink of extinction, which is as spectacular a failure as any system could possibly manage. How much of a failure is a system that gets everyone killed? All of it. All the fail.

So, it's kind of a nonsensical position to argue that a movement away from competition and profit-seeking is untenable because it's never been done before, because our current disastrous situation is the direct result of everything we have already tried. Everything we've done led us to this point. If we are to survive as a species, we're necessarily going to have to do something that is entirely unprecedented. We're going to have to transcend our old patterning and do something completely new.

A world where human behaviour is driven by collaboration in the interests of humanity and our ecosystem instead of competition and profit seeking would indeed be wildly unprecedented. Our current crisis is itself also wildly unprecedented. This is evolve-or-die time.

We are living in unprecedented times, and unprecedented times call for unprecedented measures. We need to stop clinging to our old failed ways of doing things and find the courage to step into an entirely new way of being.

The statements, views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of RT.



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Source: RT News

A Twitter Anthem

@drpwh62

Australians let us not rejoice
We're neither one or free
We've poisoned soil, Indue for toil
Our home drowned by rising sea

We've squandered all of nature's gifts
Lost beauty rich and rare
In history's page, let's scream with rage
Australia is not fair
In ironic strains then let us sing
'Advance Australia Fair'

The Life and Corrupt Times of Government

Morrison's motivation lies in his arrogance and his willingness to do anything it takes to remain in power for as long as possible. What we have before us is not a democracy. Morrison is shaping our government into something else – where the few have the power over the many and the wealthy prosper at the expense of the poor. This is where we circle back to neoliberalism with austerity the golden rule and 'surplus' the golden goose.

I doubt very much, however, that we will see that 'back in black' mug featured in any future advertisements for some time, despite Morrison's attempts post-2020 to keep public expenditure down with regard to health, education and welfare. He will continue to pander to business interests while embarking on a campaign to reduce workers' rights, keep wages low, abolish awards and conditions and attack the unions to reduce their power.

Morrison and his government want to punish the poor and reward the rich, but it shouldn't be that way. Democracies are more likely to succeed by rewarding the poor and taxing the rich accordingly to create a more balanced and effective economy. Morrison's 'Liberal' vision is doomed to fail. But he's not in the business of government to be democratic, he's in the business of government for business.

By world standards, Australia is still considered a democracy, but our corruption ranking slipped to 13 in 2013 and has remained there without improvement. Denmark is number 1 in ranking and New Zealand is number 2. This says a lot about our ranking in comparison to one of our closest neighbours. 🇺🇦

<https://shiannonlc.wixsite.com/mysite-1/post/the-life-and-corrupt-times-of-government/>.

BY DESMOND TUTU

NOBEL PEACE LAUREATE, IS A FORMER ARCHBISHOP OF CAPE TOWN AND, FROM 1996 TO 2003, WAS CHAIR OF SOUTH AFRICA'S TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

Joe Biden Should End the US Pretence Over Israel's 'Secret' Nuclear Weapons

3 January 2020 'Information Clearing House' – Every recent US administration has performed a perverse ritual as it has come into office. All have agreed to undermine US law by signing secret letters stipulating they will not acknowledge something everyone knows – that Israel has a nuclear weapons arsenal.

Part of the reason for this is to stop people focusing on Israel's capacity to turn dozens of cities to dust. This failure to face up to the threat posed by Israel's horrific arsenal gives its prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, a sense of power and impunity, allowing Israel to dictate terms to others.

But one other effect of the US administration's ostrich approach is that it avoids invoking the US's own laws, which call for an end to taxpayer largesse for nuclear weapon proliferators.

Israel in fact is a multiple nuclear weapons proliferator. There is overwhelming evidence that it offered to sell the apartheid regime in South Africa nuclear weapons in the 1970s and even conducted a joint nuclear test. The US government tried to cover up these facts. Additionally, it has never signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Yet the US and Israeli governments pushed for the invasion of Iraq based on lies about coming mushroom clouds. As Israeli nuclear whistleblower, Mordechai Vanunu, said: the nuclear weapons were not in Iraq – they are in Israel.

Amendments by former Senators Stuart Symington and John Glenn to the Foreign Assistance Act ban US economic and military assistance to nuclear proliferators and countries that acquire nuclear weapons. While president, Jimmy Carter invoked such provisions against India and Pakistan.

But no president has done so with regard to Israel. Quite the contrary. There has been an oral agreement since President Richard Nixon to accept Israel's 'nuclear ambiguity' – effectively to allow Israel the power that comes with nuclear weapons without the responsibility. And since President Bill Clinton, according to *The New Yorker* magazine, there have been these secret letters.

US presidents and politicians have refused to acknowledge that Israel has nuclear weapons even though the law offers an exemption that would allow the funding to continue if the president certified to Congress that aid to a proliferator would be a vital US interest.

Israel's per capita gross domestic product is comparable with that of Britain. Nevertheless, US taxpayer funds to Israel exceed that to any other country. Adjusted for inflation, the publicly known amount over the years is now approaching \$300bn.

This farce should end. The US government should uphold its laws and cut off funding to Israel because of its acquisition and proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The incoming Biden administration should forthrightly acknowledge Israel as a leading state sponsor of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East and properly implement US law. Other governments – in particular South Africa’s – should insist on the rule of law and for meaningful disarmament, and immediately urge the US government in the strongest possible terms to act.

Apartheid was horrible in South Africa and it’s horrible when Israel practises its own form of apartheid against the Palestinians, with checkpoints and a system of oppressive policies. Indeed, another US statute, the Leahy law, prohibits US military aid to governments that systematically violate human rights.

It’s quite possible that one of the reasons that Israel’s version of apartheid has outlived South Africa’s is that Israel has managed to maintain its oppressive system using not just the guns of soldiers, but also by keeping this nuclear gun pointed at the heads of millions. The solution for this is not for Palestinians and other Arabs to try to attain such weapons. The solution is peace, justice and disarmament.

South Africa learned that it could only have real peace and justice by having truth that would lead to reconciliation. But none of those will come unless truth is faced squarely – and there are few truths more critical to face than a nuclear weapons arsenal in the hands of an apartheid government. ✎

BY MIKE SECCOMBE

THIS IS AN EDITED VERSION OF AN ARTICLE FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE PRINT EDITION OF THE SATURDAY PAPER ON 24 OCT 2020 AS ‘PENAL FAILURE’.



Even by the usual standards of populist campaigning, Queensland Liberal National Party leader Deb Frecklington’s policy announcement was stunningly unsubtle.

If elected, she promised her government would impose curfews on all children in Cairns and Townsville. Anyone under age 14 out past 8 pm, and anyone under 18 out past 10 pm, unaccompanied and ‘without good reason’, could be detained by police. And their parents would be fined \$250.

And while the details – such as where these children would be held and for how long – were unclear, her motivation was crystal.

‘She reached into the bottom drawer and pulled out a good old-fashioned law-and-order campaign,’ says Michael Cope, president of the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties.

And a particularly bankrupt one at that, Cope says, for it would put everyone under 18 effectively ‘under house arrest’.

‘It’s just rampantly open to abuse,’ he says. ‘It will, no doubt, be used by the police predominantly against Indigenous people and other disadvantaged people.’

The threat of fines levied against parents is of particular concern, given unpaid fines are a major reason the most disadvantaged people end up in jail.

Cope does not dispute there are crime issues in Townsville, but says it is not nearly so serious as has been portrayed in the media.

Simplistic punitive policies, such as Frecklington’s, don’t actually solve the complex problem of criminal behaviour, they work to the commercial advantage of populist right-wing media and the electoral advantage of right-wing politicians. They work to justify prejudice. And they work to ensure an ever-growing flow of people into prison.

They work so well that Australia now has one of the highest incarceration rates of all developed nations. Meanwhile, recidivism rates are increasing. Prisons are not rehabilitating people.

'Nationwide, the recidivism rate is about 55 per cent. That means more than half will be back in corrective services control, either inside a jail or in a community corrections program within two years. It's a revolving door.'

Since 2000, the number of Australians in jail has doubled, dramatically outpacing population growth. We now rank third among comparable countries says Nicholas Cowdery AO, QC.

Cowdery, a former Director of Public Prosecutions in New South Wales, is now a board member of the newly formed Justice Reform Initiative – whose patrons include three former High Court justices and two former governors-general, along with scores of other former judges, lawyers, police chiefs, Indigenous leaders and former politicians from all sides.

The statistics they've compiled are damning: more than a third of prisoners are unsentenced – that is untried, on remand, refused bail – and many of them will not be convicted or sentenced. Some 13 per cent remain in custody for a year or more. Most have mental health or cognitive disabilities.

The adult imprisonment rate for First Nations people is almost 12 times that of other Australians, making them probably the most imprisoned people in the world.

So, while people of Indigenous heritage make up just 3.3 per cent of the Australian population, they account for 28 per cent of the total adult prison population. For Indigenous women, the rate is 35 per cent; Indigenous minors comprise nearly 70 per cent of incarcerated juveniles.

More people are going to jail for minor offences and are not there long enough to be engaged in any program of rehabilitation.

'They are simply being warehoused for that period of time,' says Cowdery, 'which deprives them of any opportunity for rehabilitation and reform, which disrupts their family, social, employment, educational lives, and spits them out at the end without adequate support.'

Labor MP Andrew Leigh, formerly an economics professor at the Australian National University, recently published an analysis of historical statistics on incarceration rates in Australia. He found there was a higher proportion of people in Australian prisons now than at any other point since the late 1800s.

Yet this appears to have no correlation to actual crime rates. In fact, Leigh noted, rates have been going down for most categories of offence for 25 years or more – long before the recent startling increase in imprisonments.

Imprisonment rates are not driven by crime rates; they are driven largely by a fear among politicians of appearing 'soft on crime'.

The direct consequence of this fear has been 'reforms' that encourage the justice system to show less leniency for minor offences and less inclination to employ diversionary processes, says Cowdery.



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Various jurisdictions also have made bail and parole conditions more stringent. The tough-on-crime political mindset has also imposed vast costs on Australian taxpayers – some \$3.6 billion each year, and rising. The Australian average was \$231 a day, but the cost per day per prisoner in Victoria was \$329.

It is the most expensive prison system in the country, by some distance, and this is interesting because Victoria also has the highest proportion of inmates in privately run prisons – some 37 per cent.

The privatisation of imprisonment began in that state in the mid-1990s under the premiership of Jeff Kennett.

System-wide there is little evidence to suggest better outcomes when it comes to recidivism rates in Victoria compared with other jurisdictions.

While the current Victorian government appears less keen on privatisation, that state, like the rest of the country, continues to jail ever more people, at ever greater cost. In the 2019 budget, the Andrews government announced it would spend \$1.8 billion to house an additional 1600 prisoners.

Elsewhere in the country, private prisons have proved a failure. Following a damning report from the Queensland Crime and Corruption Commission, that state decided last year to take back control of its two privately owned prisons.

The bottom line, says Robert Tickner, who was the driving force behind the establishment of the new Justice Reform Initiative, is that the current model is failing.

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs minister for the Hawke and Keating governments between 1990 and 1996, Tickner had responsibility for coordinating the national response to the landmark Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

ATSIC, he says, was key to the implementation of those recommendations. But then Labor lost, and the Howard government abolished the commission entirely.

Since then, Tickner says, there have been scores of reports from various inquiries, all recommending the same thing: policy needs to focus on the real drivers of crime. 'On employment, on education, on housing, on health, on early childhood development, family breakdown, poverty,' he says.

'There's been minimal progress in addressing those underlying issues.'

Tickner is optimistic things might be changing. There is evidence of an evidence-based shift. Certainly, the Justice Reform Initiative has assembled a formidable alliance of influential figures.

Its federal co-patrons are former governors-general Sir William Deane and Dame Quentin Bryce.

Bryce told *The Saturday Paper* this week she hopes for 'a justice system which doesn't primarily rely on building more and more jails but rather shifts to evidence-based alternatives for many offenders'.

Such a system, she said, would cut recidivism rates, 'strengthen communities and deliver better outcomes for victims of crime'.

She lamented the current reality of children in youth detention, 'some as young as 10'.

'I hope Australians will get behind this common sense and practical initiative,' she said.

It appears Deb Frecklington has not heard Bryce's message.

Source: *Adelaide Voices* September–November 2020

from our readers



HELLO, DONNA

So nice to have the *Beacon* back in my letterbox.

I have only read the first two articles. My, they are very good.

I will be sending you the money for three subscriptions (my son and daughter) – the latter needs to be enlightened. My son is pretty receptive, so I am sure he will read the articles. I hope you have some left over from this month's offering, because he really needs to get up to date to the devastation in the Middle East.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

Stay well and enjoy time with your families and/or friends.

Ann Jurrjens, Qld

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Editorial: Lessons from an appallingly fractured US society

Crisis in the Middle East (Part II)

Why the Biden victory is not the answer to our prayers

The unspoken premise of modern capitalism is that the world will be saved by greedy tech oligarchs

The life and corrupt times of government

Joe Biden should end the US pretence over Israel's 'secret' nuclear weapons

Push for justice reform

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