

PEACE MAGAZINE

Jan – Mar, 2024

- **Solar Flares, Missiles and Quantum AI**

- Defrosting the Cold War with China
- Israel-Jordan Relations
- Will Tuvalu be Inundated?





NEWSWORTHY

EUROPE TO RESTORE LAND

The European Union has agreed to a Nature Restoration Law that will require member states to begin restoring 20 percent of the bloc's land and sea ecosystems by 2030.

More than 80 percent of European habitats are in "poor shape," according to the European Parliament, but the law will help repair the damage and meet biodiversity and climate goals.

To accomplish this plan, member nations must restore at least 30 percent of the "poor condition" types of habitat to a "good condition" by the end of the decade, with an increase to 60 percent by the end of the following decade and 90 percent by 2050.

Source: Cristen Hemingway Jaynes, Ecowatch, Nov. 13, 2023.

RUSSIA "UNSIGNS" TEST BAN TREATY

On November 2, 2023, Russia's President Vladimir Putin revoked his country's ratification of the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), saying that he did so to bring Russia into line with the United States, which had signed but not ratified the treaty. Besides the US, the treaty has not yet been ratified by China, India, Pakistan, North Korea, Israel, Iran and Egypt.

It is unclear whether the revocation will result in Russia's resuming testing nuclear

weapons. Putin explicitly declined to say, though Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov had stated that Moscow would resume testing only if the U.S. does so.

With the abandonment of the CTBT, the last remaining bilateral nuclear weapons treaty between Washington and Moscow is New START, under which the two nations used to regularly inspect each other's nuclear facilities and limit warheads. Russia suspended the treaty in February, and it will expire in early 2026.

Source: Aljazeera, Nov. 2, 2023

COUNTRIES SUFFERING MOST FROM FOOD CRISIS

According to UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, fifteen countries have been areas of "highest" and "very high" concern as hunger hotspots in 2023. In these countries there are higher than usual levels of acute malnutrition. Some families stave off starvation with such coping strategies as selling off their livestock.

In *Afghanistan*, nearly 20 million people suffer food insecurity because of conflict in the region, high food prices, floods, and droughts. That country has been consistently classified among the world's ten worst food crises since 2016. In 2023, 46 percent of the country's population was experiencing crisis conditions.

In *Nigeria*, 25.3 million people experienced food insecurity or worse. The Boko Haram insurgency in the northeastern states and ban-

ditory and conflict between farmers and pastoralists in the country's northern and central states have been key factors in the crisis. A currency crisis and fuel shortage are making things worse.

In *Somalia*, 6.5 million people were suffering from hunger because of recurring drought, high food and water prices, and conflict. The country has a long history of food crises. A famine in 2011 caused nearly 26,000 deaths. Since then, more than 1.3 million people have been forced from their homes, with outbreaks of cholera and measles because of poor water, sanitation, and nutrition. Ongoing conflict is predicted to continue, hurting livelihood activities, access to markets and trade.

These three countries are comparable to twelve other states that are also undergoing the world's worst food crises. They are *South Sudan*, with 7.8 million people suffering acute food insecurity or worse; *Yemen*, with 17.4 million people so affected; *Haiti*, with 4.9 million; the *Sahel (Burkina Faso and Mali)* with 4.6 million people; *Sudan*, with 19.1 million; *Pakistan*, with 8.6 million; *Central African Republic* with 3 million; *Ethiopia*, with 23.6 million people; *Kenya*, with 5.4 million; *Democratic Republic of the Congo* with 24.5 million people; *Syria* with 12.1 million; and *Myanmar*, with 15.2 million people experiencing acute food insecurity or worse.

Almost always, there are multiple, converging caus-

es of these crises. Wars and other conflicts, combined with climate change to create shortages, high prices, and (inevitably) widespread hunger and disease.

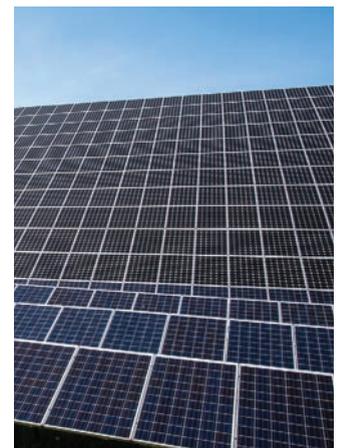
Since the publication of the World Vision article to which we refer here, the War in Gaza has begun. Journalists are reporting that the famine in Gaza is far worse than any of the ones described here.

Source: World Vision. Aug. 17, 2023.

CHINA BUILDS GIANT SOLAR PLANT IN UAE

In the desert outside Abu Dhabi, China has built the largest solar farm on earth, with 4 million panels. It has already produced 3.6 billion kilowatt-hours of clean electricity since it started full operations in April 2023. This was a project of China's Belt and Road Initiative and was successfully completed rapidly to be ready for the opening of the UN's COP 28 climate conference in Dubai.

Source: South China Morning Post, 24 November 2023.



Solar Plant | © Blickpixel, Pixabay

PEACE MAGAZINE

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Does a Magazine Educate You? 6

Two branches of the Canadian government hold opposing views on the subject. One view holds that some of the most important education is informal. Magazines are excellent tools for “mobilizing the knowledge” that researchers have produced by making people aware of it as they sit in the dentist’s waiting room.

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John Feffer imagines being a marital counselor for two countries, China and the United States, who have been having a spat.

Cyber Tug of War at the U.N.. 10

Why does cyber security have such a low profile at the U.N. General Assembly? This frustrates **Paul Meyer**, who recounts the struggle this year between blocs of countries that support two competing proposals.

Peacemaking, Peacekeeping and Peace Building . . . 12

All U.N. member states have agreed to the urgent goal of ending the ‘scourge of war,’ but how can we do so? There are three approaches to maintaining peace and Security, notes **James C. Simeon**.

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No other country has been so profoundly affected by the war in Gaza as Jordan, **Alon Ben Meir** observes. Can a cooperative relationship be restored afterward?

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No peace worker living in Ukraine now can induce the decision-makers to use only nonviolent methods of struggle. So what constructive approaches remain open? **Andre Kamenshikov** is working toward changes that may become feasible after the fighting ends. Come and meet him in Canada.

Solar Flares, Missiles, and Quantum AI 20

Quantum computers, being vastly faster than your laptop, could predict all kinds of events that are known to reoccur with a unknown frequency. **Paul Werbos** and his friends are working to



Tuvalu—a volcanic archipelago (three islands & six atolls) in the South Pacific

develop ways of predicting solar flares to predict future Carrington events — and lots of other apparently irregular phenomena.

To Extract or Not to Extract Plutonium 25

Ole Hendrickson attended a round table discussion about whether to reprocess spent fuel from CANDU reactors. The government has not officially decided yet, but activists are worried about the risk that the plutonium could be captured and used in a bomb.

COP 28’s Report Card 27

Hurray! The final report from Dubai actually referred to “fossil fuels” for the first time. But it seems that the plan is not to phase them out rapidly but rather to “transition away” from them. What do climate change activists think this means?

To Pile Sand on Tuvalu 29

Tapugao Falefou is Tuvalu’s ambassador to the U.N. He is not hoping for any country to take his people in and give them a new homeland after the inundation of their Islands. He wants help in dredging sand from the ocean and piling it up to raise the height of Tuvalu and save its future.

Under the Baobab Tree 30

Mukete Tahle Itoe is a judge and the leader of a humanitarian Organization in Cameroon, where a civil war has been raging since 2017. The 20 percent of Cameroonians who are English-speaking want to retain their education system and use of Common Law.

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BUSINESS OFFICE • P. O. Box 248, Toronto P, Toronto. M5S 2S7, Telephone: 437/887-6978. Email: office@peacemagazine.org

EDITORIAL OFFICE • Phone: 416/789-2294 • E-mail: mspencer@web.net • Web: www.peacemagazine.org.

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From the Editor

We should explain why this issue of Peace does not cover these three big stories: the Russia-Ukraine War; the Gaza-Israel War; and the recent article “Global Warming in the Pipeline” by James Hansen. When we editors discussed the wars, we decided that a quarterly publication cannot cover breaking news; any article we could publish about war would be out-of-date by the time you can read it.

When it comes to global warming, there are known solutions that will not soon become obsolete. Hansen has proposed three several practical and necessary ways of preventing climate catastrophe:

- (a) increasing the global price on greenhouse gas emissions and rapidly developing clean energy;
- (b) supporting the energy needs of the developing world; and
- (c) solar radiation management, such as spraying innocuous salt aerosols into the atmosphere, which will cool the planet temporarily while other, slower measures can be implemented.

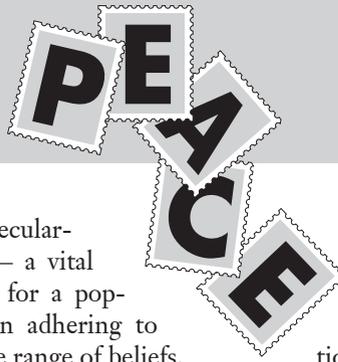
But Hansen's paper points out that even the only globally authorized group of scientists, the IPCC, blocks the spread of accurate information and thereby prevents the adoption of such necessary measures. The IPCC is accountable to national governments.

So, for all three of these problems, our current systems of government are obstructing reasonable solutions. Too often, our political institutions authorize decision-makers who make stupid policies.

Democracy, as Churchill pointed out, is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried. And today we may add: All around the world, democracy is lately generating poor decisions. The solution to these three worst problems, as with many of our other crises, demands more difficult improvements in our political institutions.

Therefore, in 2024 *Peace Magazine*'s editorial board may pay attention to some bolder possible political reforms. That approach seems slow, but it may offer the only realistic solutions to the continuing crises of violence and global warming. Welcome to year 2024!

Our Readers Write



WE WANT PHARMACARE!

I've read claims within conservative news-media that Canada can't afford a fully publicly funded 'pharmacare' plan through which generic-brand prescription medication is universally accessible.

We continue to be the world's sole nation that has universal health care but no similar coverage of prescribed medication, however necessary.

A late-2019 Angus Reid study found that, over the previous year, due to medication unaffordability, almost a quarter of Canadians decided against filling a prescription or having one renewed. Resultantly, many low-income outpatients who cannot afford to fill their prescriptions end up back in the hospital system as a result, therefore costing far more for provincial and federal government health ministries than if the medication had been covered.

Ergo, in order for the industry to continue raking in huge profits, Canadians and their health, as both individual consumers and a taxpaying collective, must lose out big time.

Canadians were promised a 'pharmacare' plan before by the federal government — only to have the pharmaceutical industry successfully threaten to abandon their Canada-based R&D, etcetera, if the government went ahead with the plan.

Why? Because such universal medication coverage would negatively affect the industry's superfluously plenti-

ful profits. The profits would still be great, just not as great.

The Angus Reid study also found that about 90 percent of Canadians — including three quarters of Conservative Party supporters specifically [who definitely are not known for supporting publicly-funded social programs] — support a national 'pharmacare' plan. Another 77 percent believed this should be a high-priority matter for the federal government.

So, while we are envied abroad for our "universal" health care system, full care seemingly still comes second to the industry's big-profit interests.

*Frank Sterle Jr.
White Rock, BC*

WHY KHALISTAN?

The campaign for an independent state for Sikhs in India is driven mainly by the diaspora in Canada, the UK, and Australia. The vast majority of Sikhs, whether living in India or elsewhere, have no interest in carving out a separate state for their community. This is understandable, given the freedom all citizens of India have, to live or work anywhere within the sub-continent.

Moreover, the Government of India, which is committed to freedom of expression and of religious beliefs, could *never* allow the formation of a state expressly for Sikhs or for any other religious group without violating a key element in the Constitution of India, which upholds the principle

of secularism — a vital point for a population adhering to a wide range of beliefs.

Before commenting on the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in B.C., allow me to ask Canadians in particular, how they would feel if Quebec severed ties with Canada — a matter that was far more than a theoretical possibility just a few decades ago.

The creation of Khalistan in India would be equally revolting for Indians in general, as this could potentially lead to other religious groups clamoring for a state of their own. In short, a calamitous state of instability and conflict; possibly a breakup of India, much like the end of Yugoslavia.

This November, the US Department of Justice issued an indictment against Nikhil Gupta, an Indian national who was arrested in the Czech Republic end-June, as he is alleged to be involved in the killing of Nijjar and also in the attempt to kill another prominent Sikh separatist in the US — Gurpatwand Singh Pannun.

Gupta was in close touch with an unnamed agent serving with the intelligence branch and Central Reserve Police Force in Delhi, who ordered the killings. The attempt on the life of the US citizen was thwarted by the efforts of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and the FBI.

In the wake of these two cases and irrefutable evidence that has surfaced, the

government of India has no choice but to take seriously the accusations of Justin Trudeau and the law enforcement agencies of the US. Apparently, President Biden raised the issue with Prime Minister Modi at their Washington meeting last June.

Modi has every right to ask both PM Justin Trudeau and President Biden why Sikh separatists are not reined in or charged for advocating the break-up of a country they regard as a close ally. But extra-territorial killings for political or ideological reasons is a crime that cannot be condoned.

As a member of the Quad, India, along with the US, Australia, and Japan hopes to be a counterweight to China. India is also being courted by several Western countries seeking trade agreements. However, its dealings with Sikh separatists has been a catastrophic blunder and a crime.

*P. Chandrashekhar
Toronto, ON*



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Does a Magazine Educate You?



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The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) recognizes organizations as charities based on three broad categories: relief of poverty, advancement of education, and advancement of religion. It does not consider magazines eligible to be charities because they do not ‘educate.’ CRA apparently assumes that you normally just buy them and casually read a few articles while killing time, whereas real education requires you to follow a planned program of study. Hence even informative magazines, not being used in structured trainings, don’t normally qualify as charities for tax purposes.

On the other hand, two other Canadian institutions, SSHRC and NSERC, which each spend over \$1 billion per year funding research and training, do consider both scholarly journals and magazines as education — at least those that support ‘knowledge mobilization.’

What’s knowledge mobilization? Well, new knowledge is constantly produced by researchers in academia, industry, and government — but the new discoveries may be published in obscure sites where only a few people ever learn about them. To be useful, they must become a lively topic of discourse for experts and stakeholders. Some magazines do spread existing research results widely and show their relevance to

public policy. That’s knowledge mobilization, clearly a vital contribution to public education, whether or not CRA agrees. That’s what *Peace Magazine* has always done well, and now it’s becoming our core objective.

OUR NEW EDITORIAL POLICY

Forty years ago, the Canadian Disarmament Information Service (CANDIS) created *Peace Magazine* as a forum about the nuclear arms race.

Now CANDIS is amalgamating with Project Save the World, a not-for-profit corporation to prevent six life-threatening global risks — war and weapons; global warming; famine; pandemics; radioactive contamination; and cyber risks — plus three policy sectors: the economy; governance and human rights; and civil society.

In merging, CANDIS will cease to exist as a distinct entity, but the combined organization, as Project Save the World, will still publish *Peace Magazine*.

The official purpose of Project Save the World will be:

“The advancement of education by providing an open forum for qualified experts to discuss their research with other experts and to make those results available to the public.”

We run four platforms free of charge to make factual results available to the public: *Peace Magazine*; our website, <https://tosavetheworld.ca>; our YouTube channel, <http://youtube.com/c/tosavetheworld>; and for audio podcasts, Libsyn. We provide spaces for the audience to discuss what they have read, watched, or heard.

Peace Magazine will change a bit by covering more life-threatening risks to humanity. It will publish relevant discussions among qualified experts about research on serious global issues and some other articles that are substantially informed by research.

Not all articles must be written by experts. We also welcome proposals and submissions by writers who may not be researchers themselves but who can tell accurate stories about researchers and their ongoing debates with other experts. We will still offer book reviews, letters, a news page, and a current controversies column, which may even be polemical, but which should be anchored in discussions about evidence, not merely hortatory rhetoric. We hope you’ll enjoy “mobilizing your knowledge.”

DISTRIBUTING THE MAGAZINE

Over its forty-years, *Peace Magazine*’s paid subscribers declined and, when we became digital-only, dropped to a few dozen. However, we now email a free digital edition to thousands of civil society groups. We will continue doing so, not exactly as a magazine, but as PSTW’s free newsletter for NGOS.

Peace now fulfills Project Save the World’s purpose: to make the results of the experts’ discussions available to the public. If you want a free subscription for your NGO or professional association, just tell us and we’ll add it to our email list. If you also want the magazine individually, you can still subscribe through PressReader. We are grateful to our dear handful of loyal paying subscribers. Let’s celebrate together and prepare for our *next* forty years! ■

Defrosting the Cold War with China

BY JOHN FEFFER



President Joe Biden meeting Chinese leader Xi Jinping in 2022 | © Wikimedia

In November, Chinese leader Xi Jinping met with Joe Biden around the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting. Economics was on the top of the agenda.

In addition to the deterioration in security relations — the U.S. shutdown of the Chinese balloon, the increasing tensions in the South China Sea — the two countries have been involved in a low-intensity trade war and a tit-for-tat brawl on advanced technology. The United States has imposed an escalating series of export controls on semiconductors, artificial intelligence technology, and the like. This summer, China

retaliated by restricting exports on the two key rare earth elements of gallium and germanium, which China produces 90 percent and 60 percent respectively — thereby reducing the amount that China made available on the global market to essentially zero.

Pundits and media commentators, following the lead of the Biden administration, worked hard to lower expectations for the Biden-Xi meeting. “We’re not talking about a long list of outcomes or deliverables,” a senior administration official told reporters. “The goals here really are about managing the competition, preventing the downside risk of

conflict and ensuring channels of communication are open.”

Sounds to me like the first meeting at the office of a couples counselor. Since the Trump presidency, everyone has been talking about the “decoupling” of China and the United States. It’s really too bad that Biden and Xi don’t have the services of a third-party facilitator who can help the couple sort through their problems.

I humbly offer my services as a mediator.

GETTING TO MAYBE

My clients have built a strong re-



Chinese Balloon Envelope Recovery: sailors assigned to Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group 2 recover a portion of the balloon from the Atlantic | © U.S. Navy, Wikipedia

lationship that has lasted for nearly 50 years. China and the United States come from very different backgrounds, so it's only to be expected that they will have some conflicts. But even while they were bickering with one another, these particular clients set a new record in trade in goods last year (though it has declined since then). Like any successful couple, they have become dependent on one another while preserving a good deal of independence.

During this first visit to my office, I will encourage Biden and Xi to start out by acknowledging what's working well in the relationship.

My guess is, however, that the two will soon fall to griping.

Beijing is angry about the tariffs that Donald Trump imposed during his presidency and that Biden hasn't lifted, which China pegs at an average of 19 percent compared to the 7.3 percent that China imposes on U.S. products. It's not happy about the export controls on advanced technology that the United States and European Union have imposed. And it really doesn't like the

way that Europe and the United States have put pressure on manufacturers to stop relying on China for critical raw materials.

Washington has accused China of ripping off the intellectual property of U.S. firms. It's beyond annoyed that China has been using advanced technology to upgrade its military, and it's concerned as well about China's human rights record. It puts Chinese tariffs on U.S. goods at somewhere between 15 and 25 percent.

The trade between US and China functions as a kind of offspring of the relationship

Both countries have other complaints. The United States worries about China's military actions in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, its military alliance with Russia, and its efforts to gobble up critical resources in

the Global South. China is furious at how the United States is building alliances — such as the “Quad” with India, Japan, and Australia — designed specifically to contain China's ambitions. Another major irritant is the aggressive military actions that the United States takes near China's borders.

Complaining is not the royal road to reconciliation. Biden and Xi have to listen to each other to make any progress. That's certainly what administration officials mean when they say that both sides have to commit to “ensuring channels of communication are open.”

But let's face it: listening isn't enough either.

IDENTIFYING MUTUAL INTERESTS

If couples have children, they have an obvious mutual interest in raising the family in a healthy environment.

Biden and Xi don't have any children in common. But the trade between the two countries functions as a kind of offspring of the relationship. And let's face it: my clients are really screwing up with that particular kid.

The tariffs in particular have not really benefited either side. On the U.S. side, the tariffs have cost U.S. consumers a huge amount of money, to the tune of \$1.4 billion a month (by the end of 2018). Through 2021, that added up to \$48 billion that consumers shelled out in extra cash.

Biden and Xi have to listen to each other to make any progress

It's harder to know how much China has been affected by the tariffs, though one study concluded on the basis of a reduction in the intensity of night-time lighting in China that local economic activity shrank. However, China has probably not suffered as much as the United States, since its U.S.-bound exports decreased by only 8.5 percent (compared to a decrease of 26.3 percent of China-bound exports from the United States) and its exports to the rest of the world increased by 5.5 percent (compared to an increase of only 2.2 percent for U.S. exports to the rest of the world).

Then there's the matter of the global commons. A couple that spends less time and energy squabbling can turn their attention to improving the neighborhood. But first, they have to marshal the resources to do so.

Both China and the United States devote enormous sums to countering perceived threats from the other side. A very large chunk of the nearly \$1 trillion of U.S. military spending is devoted to that goal. China spends somewhere between \$225 billion (Beijing's figures) and \$300 billion (outside estimates). It's fair to say that at least half of that combined figure — around \$650 billion a year — is being poured down the drain of “preparedness” for some future battle between the two superpowers.

If China and the United States engaged in threat reduction — and then proceeded to arms control — that would free up a lot of money that could go, for instance, toward addressing climate change.

The couple could team up to work on other resource questions. The United States and China are competing furiously to secure critical raw materials throughout the world. What if they cooperated instead on research on recycling and less mining-dependent alternatives? The United States and China are both guilty of over-fishing (with China the more serious culprit). What if they led a global effort to manage ocean resources more responsibly?

Of course, it's not my job to tell clients what to think. But I can steer them toward what I think are more useful ways of working together as a couple.

One tactic is to get them to talk about the various threats that they view in common. My clients are both worried about unpredictable leaders — other than themselves, naturally — who could start a nuclear war or unleash a pandemic. My clients are worried about religious fundamentalism. They are both concerned about the collapse of the Russian government and its replacement by fratricidal chaos (some other countries fall into this category as well).

Someone has to make a first attempt at reconciliation, however modest

The list of common projects is immense. But how can the two sides overcome a trust deficit to re-establish a healthy working relationship?

HOW ABOUT SOME OLIVE BRANCHES?

When a couple doesn't trust each other, someone has to make a first attempt at reconciliation, however modest. It might be an apology or the purchase of some flowers or a promise, finally, to watch a baseball game together.

As a therapist, I don't tell my clients what to do. Instead, I ask questions.

“With the presidential election coming up next year,” I ask Joe Biden, “what are you most worried about?”

“The economy,” he says, curtly. “Can you be more specific?” “Prices shooting back up.” “How can you best prevent that?”

He looks impatient. “Well, there's the Federal Reserve, and the interest rates, and the — “

I'm shooting meaningful glances at Xi, who is glowering in his chair. “And...”

“Yes,” Biden begrudgingly agrees. “The economy is still taking a hit from the tariffs.”

“Which means?” I prompt.

Biden glances at Xi. “I suppose we could consider a partial reduction of some of the tariffs if...”

“If...?” I ask.

“If he does something in return.”

I turn my attention to Xi. “What do you think?”

“We could consider a partial reduction of some of the tariffs if...”

“If...?”

“If he does something in return,” Xi says.

“Those rare earth element export controls have to go,” Biden says.

“And so do the controls on AI chips,” Xi says.

The horse-trading begins in earnest. In short order, the clients have drawn up a preliminary agreement on tariffs and export controls.

It's a start.

Next week, they'll meet again in my office and we'll practice our affirmations. We'll do a short exercise involving gratitudes.

Then we'll move on to saving the planet. ■

John Feffer is the director of Foreign Policy in Focus at the Institute for Policy Studies and a member of Project Save the World's Board of Directors.

We encourage you to comment on this article [here](#). Please give your post a title referring to this article so readers can identify it and reply. If someone does so, we'll tell you.

Cyber Tug of War at the UN

BY PAUL MEYER



Open Ended Working Group (U.N. Photos)

They aren't preventing malicious cyber activities.

For the last 25 years, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) has been discussing the impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on international security. Over these years, fully six Groups of Governmental Experts and two Open-Ended Working Groups have addressed the subject with varying degrees of success, yet neither state nor non-state actors have stopped their malicious cyber activities. The general debate of the UNGA,

which began in October, showed relatively less attention to cyber issues, despite the ongoing work of the cyber Open-Ended Working Group, which continues until 2025. Most nations gave it a brief nod, while some didn't mention it at all. Many just noted the adoption of the group's annual progress report as a positive development.

SOME COUNTRIES WORRY

Is cyber security's lower profile this year due to waning hopes for progress? Or are other urgent issues taking precedence? The Non-Aligned Movement did highlight the ongoing issue of unrestrained cyber hostility and called

for concerted efforts to ensure that cyberspace remains a peaceful domain. A few countries recognized the increasing threats from cyberattacks. Tanzania spoke of the heightened vulnerability of developing nations, South Korea

Responsible state behaviour

insisted that cyberspace was not a lawless realm, and Singapore flagged the rising sophistication of cyber threats. Bangladesh urged multilateral action to prevent cyberspace from turning into a battleground, while Norway suggested

it was imperative to deepen our common understanding of how international law applies.

Fortunately, discussions expanded during the “thematic debate” held in the third week. Several countries praised the currently agreed norms for “responsible state behaviour”, while others, like Venezuela, pushed for the negotiation of a legally binding agreement. Belgium, Croatia, and Türkiye supported an “inclusive and permanent Programme of Action (PoA)”, with Belgium seeing it as the best tool to implement agreed norms.

While most delegations voiced satisfaction with the progress made by the OEWG (Open-Ended Working Group), there was still concern in the air. The Indonesian delegate pointed out the tension caused by two competing proposals: Russia and China’s L.11, supported by 17 other countries, and L.60, backed by 48 countries, with its focus on promoting safe and responsible behavior in cyber space.

TWO COMPETING PROPOSALS

This isn’t the first time the First Committee has seen such a clash between competing resolutions. Back in 2018, there was a similar situation with two groups (OEWG and GGE) established at the same time, but they managed to agree on consensus reports by spring 2021. The second OEWG, running from 2021 to 2025, didn’t have this kind of competition and was able to have member states focus on cyber security in a more united way.

Some countries were upset that the 2021-2025 OEWG was set up in 2020 before the first one finished, feeling that this was a premature action which excluded other options. There was a major debate over the PoA proposal for handling cyber security at the UN. Russia and its allies were cool on this idea, thinking it would overshadow the OEWG. The US in turn accused Rus-

sia of trying to push an “authoritarian agenda” through the OEWG.

The voting showed clear divisions

Throughout this session, the whole issue of having two competing resolutions was a big topic. The Brazilian delegate expressed the frustration many felt, saying that these conflicts could derail their common goal of a safe and open cyberspace. In the end, the voting on November 2nd showed clear divisions: L11 got mixed reactions, while L60Rev1 had a lot of support. Australia, Canada, and New Zealand criticized the way L.11 was handled, while Switzer-

land, Japan, and the Philippines called it redundant. China said it wasn’t against the PoA, just against splitting their efforts, and Malaysia saw both resolutions as helpful.

In conclusion, Brazil urged everyone to hold off on new proposals until the current OEWG term ends. On a brighter note, a decision by Singapore, L.13, was adopted smoothly. But still, the disagreements and split opinions in this session don’t paint a very hopeful picture for the future of international cyber security policy at the UN. ■

Paul Meyer is Adjunct Professor of International Studies, Simon Fraser University and a Senior Advisor to ICT4Peace.

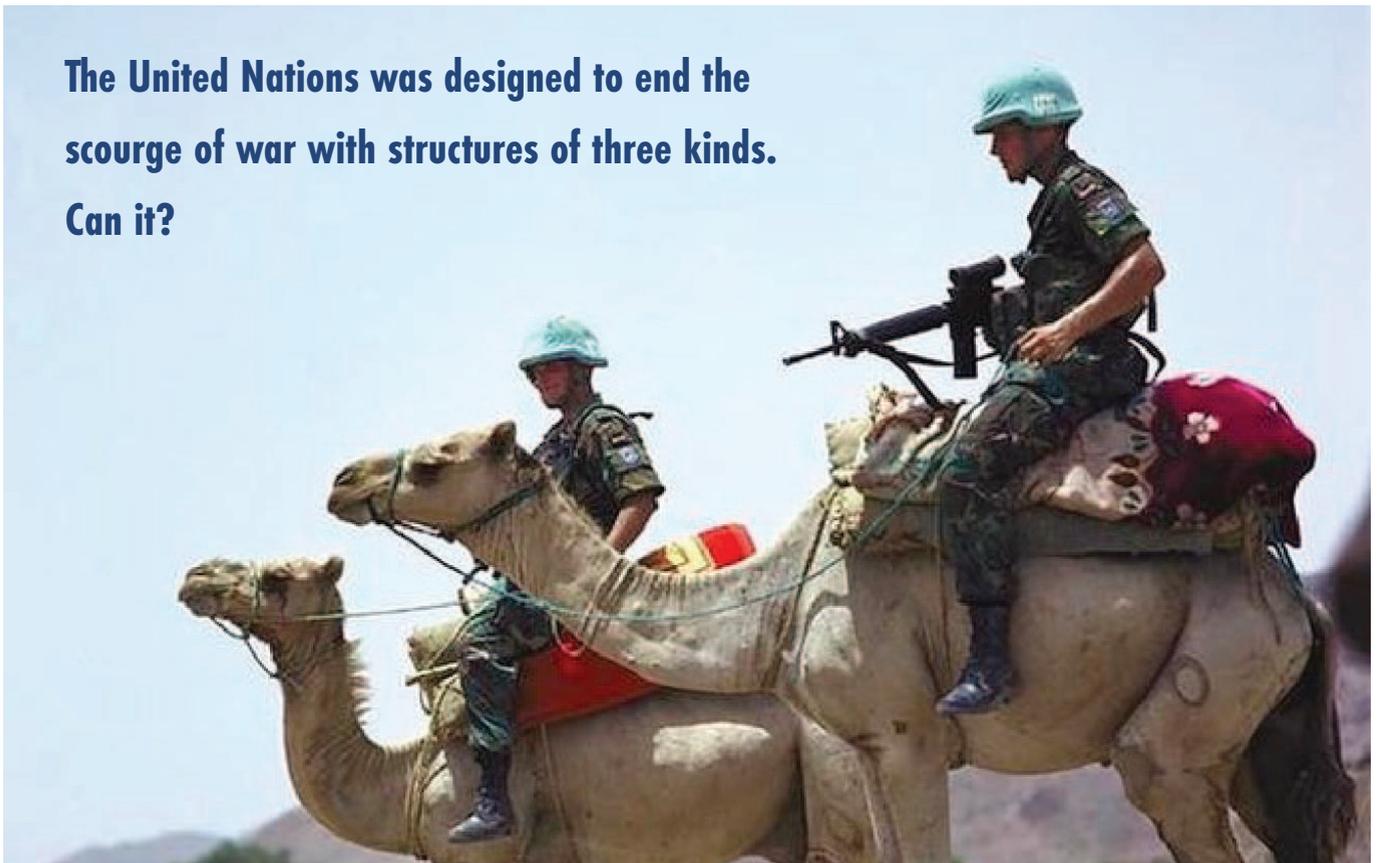


Ambassador Gafoor of Singapore, chair of the OEWG. (U.N. Photos).

Peacemaking, Peacekeeping, and Peacebuilding

BY JAMES C. SIMEON

The United Nations was designed to end the scourge of war with structures of three kinds. Can it?



United Nations soldiers, part of United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), monitoring Eritrea-Ethiopia boundary.

World War II was the largest and deadliest conflict in human history, leaving an estimated 60 to 80 million people dead, the vast majority of them civilian non-combatants. In addition, there were some 65 million people who were forced from their homes in Europe alone and, if we count South Asia too, 175 million. In modern warfare there are always many more civilian non-combatants than military fatalities, plus massive numbers of forcibly displaced persons and refugees. The costs of war are often irreparable, whether in terms of people, property, infrastructure, or environment. The

United Nations was born from the ashes of this global tragedy in 1945, with a vision to “safeguard succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind.” Through its Charter, which is an international treaty, the es principles essential for peaceful international relations. Despite the UN’s noble objectives, the journey towards peace has been challenging. Indeed, there are some 32 wars or armed conflicts raging around the world now. The “scourge of war” has, obviously, yet to be safeguarded from humankind.

While some might consider this proof that ending war is impossible,

others consider the achievement of perpetual peace an endeavour that will require never-ending effort at all levels of society.

WHAT ARE PEACEMAKING, PEACEBUILDING, AND PEACEKEEPING?

The UN is the world’s peacekeeper, but this is only one of its approaches to maintaining peace and security. It also does conflict prevention and mediation, peacemaking, peace enforcement, and peacebuilding — all of them mutually reinforcing ways of addressing the root causes of conflict.

Peacemaking generally includes measures to address conflicts in prog-

ress and usually involves diplomatic action to bring hostile parties to a negotiated agreement.

The UN Secretary-General may exercise his or her “good offices” to facilitate the resolution of the conflict. Peacemakers may also be envoys, governments, groups of states, regional organizations, or the United Nations. Peacemaking efforts may also be undertaken by unofficial and non-governmental groups, or by a prominent personality working independently.

Peacebuilding aims to reduce the risk relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities for conflict management and enhancing the State’s capacity carry out its core functions effectively and legitimately.

PEACEKEEPING IS DEFINED IN THIS WAY:

1. Consent of the parties;
2. Impartiality;
3. Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.

Without the consent of the conflicting parties, there can be no peacekeeping operations. If the peace agreement is breached, the UN Peacekeepers will be caught in the middle of the armed conflict. Peacekeeping Operations are

only possible when the contending parties will agree to either a ceasefire or peace terms. Otherwise, the war or armed conflict will continue. Clearly, these peacekeeping operations can be very dangerous.

OPERATIONALIZING PEACEMAKING, PEACEKEEPING AND PEACEBUILDING

The UN’s Department of Peace Operations leads 12 current peacekeeping operations in Europe, Americas, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. It is supported by the Department of Operational Support. There is also a Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) whose role is to prevent conflict and build sustainable peace globally. The Peacebuilding Support Office assist national peacebuilding efforts and the Peacebuilding Commission. It manages the Peacebuilding Fund on behalf of the UN Secretary-General and works with UN and non-UN organizations to support peacebuilding efforts in relevant countries. There is also an Office of Disarmament Affairs and an Office of Counter-Terrorism.

In addition, the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly have their own has relevant subsidiary

organs. However, functionally, these three Ps (peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding) are concentrated in the UN Security Council and with the UN Secretary-General.

PERPETUAL PEACE THROUGH THE UN?

What are the prospects of a sustainable peace ever being realized under the current arrangements? Given past recent history, it seems unlikely. Another logical next step forward seems necessary, and likely inevitable if we are to end the use of force among States. This will require a global consensus and an international legal system beyond what was possible at the end of the Second World War. Otherwise, we will continue to have wars and protracted armed conflicts, as we have had since the UN was established in 1945. At what point can we truly end this “untold sorrow of humankind”? Only a new paradigm in international relations, supported by a global consensus and legal framework, can pave the way for a future free from war. ■

James C. Simeon is Associate Professor, School of Public Policy and Administration, York University, Toronto, Canada. jcsimeon@yorku.ca.



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Israel-Jordan Relations in the Wake of the Gaza War

BY ALON BEN MEIR



U.S. Secretary John Kerry speaks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and King Abdullah II of Jordan on November 13, 2014, in Amman, Jordan, before the three began a trilateral meeting about ways to restore calm and deescalate tensions in Jerusalem | © U.S. Department of State, Wikimedia

No other country has been so profoundly affected by the war as Jordan. Israel must mitigate Jordan's concerns to save its critical alliance with its neighbor.

Under Prime Minister Netanyahu's leadership, Israel-Jordan relations have hit a new low. Sadly, after 30

years of peace, there is deep sullenness and disappointment between the two countries. The aspiration for strategic partnership has fallen short, except for security collaboration.

Jordan's King Abdallah and Netanyahu do not see eye-to-eye on many issues. The King views Netanyahu as particularly responsible for the deterioration of the relationship between the two countries. Of specific concern to Jordan is the Israeli government's brutal treatment of the Palestinians in the West Bank, its worries about any change in its status as the guardian of the

holy Muslim shrines (Haram al-Sharif), and its concerns over the limits of the bilateral economic relations. What has added significant insult to the already injured relationship is the tragically inadvertent carnage and destruction being inflicted on the Palestinians in Gaza as a result of the Israel-Hamas war.

For Jordan, the future resolution to the Palestinian conflict is the most contentious because whatever happens to the Palestinians, especially in the West Bank, has a direct and indirect impact on Jordan's security, economy, and demographics due to its proximity and



A sign of hope in Gaza | © Hosny Salah, Pixabay

also because half of the population is of Palestinian origin. Netanyahu made hardly any effort to address King Abdullah's justifiable worries about the rapidly deteriorating security conditions in the West Bank. Hundreds of Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank, and there is no sign that the violence will abate any time soon.

TAKING JORDAN FOR GRANTED

Indeed, the absurdity here is that given that Jordan has been at peace with Israel since 1995, its proximity to Israel, and its mutual concerns over the region's stability, the need for full cooperation on intelligence sharing, commercial ties, and national security become ever more critical. But then, Netanyahu has taken Jordan for granted when, in fact, Amman remained faithful to its collaborative efforts with Israel and continues to play a critical role in monitoring and securing the approximately 300-mile-long border with Israel to prevent the smuggling of weapons and infiltration

of terrorists into Israel proper and the West Bank.

The Israel-Hamas war has enormously changed the political dynamic of the Jordanian-Israeli relationship. Although Jordan expressed sympathy toward the Israelis for the unimaginable butchery

Out of sympathy and solidarity, many Jordanian youth have chosen to adopt "Hamas ideology"

that Hamas inflicted on innocent Israeli civilians, Israel's invasion of Gaza and the horrendous destruction and death have enraged the Jordanians to a level unseen between the two countries since they signed a peace treaty in 1994.

More than 50 percent of the Jordanian population are of Palestinian origin and have a strong affinity to their brethren wherever they reside. The death

of 18,000 Palestinians in Gaza, mostly women and children, caused an unparalleled stir in Jordan, damning Israel and demanding an immediate end to the hostilities. In fact, out of sympathy and solidarity, many Jordanian youth have chosen to adopt "Hamas ideology."

The UN Jordanian delegation presented a resolution to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) calling for an "immediate, permanent, and sustainable humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities," which was adopted by 120 countries. On November 1st, Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Al-Safadi recalled Jordan's Ambassador to Israel, saying that his decision was an "expression of Jordan's rejection and condemnation of the raging war in Gaza, which is killing innocent people and causing an unprecedented human catastrophe."

Jordan considers the forced evacuation and displacement of Palestinians in Gaza as equivalent to a war against civilians that will fundamentally shake



Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount in Jerusalem | © Konevi, Pixabay

the bilateral Israeli-Jordanian relations, mainly because Jordan has the largest Palestinian refugee population of any other country, which makes it extraordinarily sympathetic and sensitive to the Palestinian cause.

Of particular concern to the Jordanian government is that the Netanyahu government is determined to deny the Palestinians the right to statehood, which will have a significant impact on Jordan domestically. What worries the Hashemite Kingdom is that some ministers in the current Israeli government are resuscitating the notion that Jordan is Palestine by their actions in the West Bank. Although Netanyahu knows how sensitive the Jordanian government is about this momentous issue, he has done nothing to assuage the Jordanians' growing anxieties that the West Bank Palestinians will be entirely pushed into Jordan.

Amman can play a significant regional diplomatic role in stemming the escalation of the conflict, especially in the

West Bank, before it spins out of control. Jordan, the most stable country with moderate political leadership in a region reddened with violent conflicts, has and continues to serve, along with Israel, as the cornerstone of the US-Middle East security partnership, which both countries must guard with zeal.

The Netanyahu government is determined to deny the Palestinians the right to statehood

There are several necessary measures that the Israeli government must take to alleviate and mend past and present Jordanian grievances and restore and further improve their bilateral relationship, which would best serve their national interests.

First, given Jordan's direct and indirect involvement with the Palestinians,

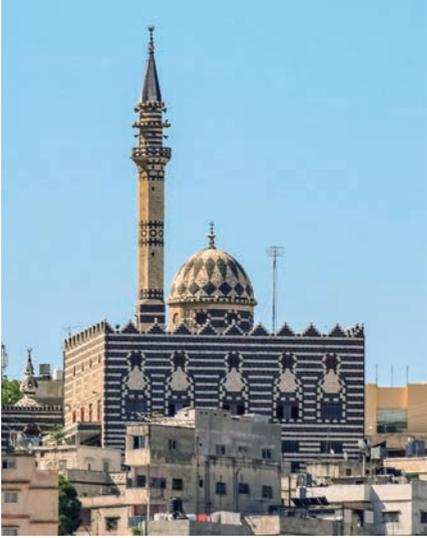
Israel must not ignore Jordan's concerns over the violent clashes between the Israeli settlers and security forces and the Palestinians. Recently, the increasing violence in the West Bank compelled Jordan to strengthen its border security to prevent the escalation of violence from spilling over into its territory. Nevertheless, it could precipitate an influx of Palestinians into Jordan, which Amman wants to avoid. Israel must restate in an unmistakable tone that it respects Jordan's sovereignty, and any resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be separate and apart from and would not infringe in any way on Jordan's independence, which Israel recognizes.

Second, Israel must commit to continuing water and gas supplies to Jordan without interruption. This is critical for restoring Jordan's confidence in any Israeli government, which has been dangerously eroding under Netanyahu. The "Blue and Green Prosperity" project, financed by the UAE and signed in August 2023, enables the exchange of Israeli desalinated water for Jordanian solar energy. This is a significant project for Jordan and must be guarded and fully implemented under any circumstance.

Third, although the collaborative security ties and intelligence sharing between Jordan and Israel remain close, the Israeli government must ensure their security collaboration stays intact and robust. Israel must also carefully address Jordan's unique security needs given the continuing regional tension and the threats of extremist militant groups, as well as its concerns over Iranian threats, which Israel shares. Amman needs to feel assured that Israel has Jordan's back.

CUSTODY OF HARAM AL-SHARIF

Fourth, Israel must assure Jordan that under no circumstances would it seek or facilitate any change in the custodianship and the administrative responsibility of Jordan over the Muslim holy shrines (Haram al-Sharif) in Jerusalem. From the Jordanian perspective, the current arrangement gives it a strategic basis that allows it to have a say in any future agreement with the Palestinians in connection with Jerusa-



Amman, Jordan | © Dimitri Svetsikas, Pixabay

lem. Although Saudi Arabia aspires to assume that role, Israel should honor its agreement with the Hashemite Kingdom from the time Israel annexed East Jerusalem in 1967.

Fifth, Israel ought to strengthen its

economic ties with Jordan by expanding the import-export of goods and services, encouraging Israelis to invest in Jordan, especially in the technological sector, and increasing tourism once the Israel-Hamas war comes to an end and the anti-Israeli Jordanian public sentiment subsides.

The current Netanyahu or any future Israeli government must stop short of nothing to safeguard its ties and constantly improve its relations with Jordan — Israel’s most important Arab ally, partner for peace, and its closest neighbor. Since they have a strong mutual national security interest and strategic alliance, Israel should work hand-in-hand with Jordan in the search for a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because it will directly affect Jordan’s national interest on every front.

To be sure, given the Israel-Hamas war, which makes it neither possible nor desirable to restore the status *quo ante*, it is now more urgent than any time before for Israel and Jordan to mitigate

their differences, strengthen their strategic alliance, and find common ground on how to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. ■

For more information on how a sustainable peace agreement based on a two-state solution can be reached, please refer to my essay in *World Affairs*, “The Case for an Israeli-Palestinian-Jordanian Confederation: Why Now and How?”

*Dr. Alon Ben-Meir is a retired professor of international relations at the Center for Global Affairs at NYU. He teaches courses on international negotiation and Middle Eastern studies.
alon@alonben-meir.com
www.alonben-meir.com*

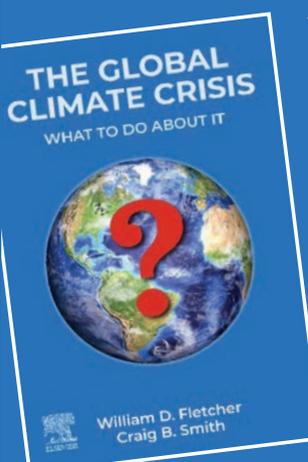
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Meet a Peace Worker During a War: Andre Kamenshikov



Andre Kamenshikov

The Russia-Ukraine war is the largest military conflict on the European continent since 1945. Today Ukraine's battlefields resemble the grim trench warfare in France during WWI, though with drones as the "Gods of war" instead of artillery. And though,

unlike WWI, this is still a war between two states whose political and military leadership make the crucial decisions, both sides significantly depend, crucially in the case of Ukraine, on support from other nations and non-state actors. So, in a sense, this is both a regional and a global conflict, in which different nations and political parties are stakeholders. So, societies in other countries can influence the tragic events unfolding in front of our eyes. However, civil society and the peacebuilding community face these key dilemmas:

1) Peace vs. Justice. No war is entirely black and white, but in few other cases in the modern world is the distinction between the aggressor and the victim so clear. Russia still controls much of Ukraine, where millions of Ukrainians live under occupation. Under such conditions, what are the possibilities of a "peace for territory" a formula?

2) Is there space for nonviolence in the midst of the largest European war since 1945? Since Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine, the world had seen massive pro-Ukrainian demonstrations in occupied areas. Nonviolent resistance shattered Putin's hope to enlist cooperation from the people, whom he claimed to be "saving from a Nazi regime". Today, two years into the war, is any space left for



Eternal Flame Monument in Kyiv | © Beleckiy, Pixabay

effective nonviolent action? And if so, what kind of action?

3) Is Russia doomed to be an adversary of the West? Twenty years ago, Russia, despite certain concerns and misunderstandings, was seen as becoming part of the Western world. It was, in fact, a US ally during the “war on terror”. Russians were at the table at NATO headquarters, and a USAF logistical base functioned in central Russia, led by no one other than Putin himself. Yet today, his regime positions itself as the spearhead for everyone in the world who wants to challenge the current global order and undermine the “Western world”. Is Putin’s regime an aberration or is Russia inherently different and opposed to the key values of the Western world? Should the West build its own iron curtain — or is there still hope for constructive engagement?

4) We live in a world of fake transparency. We see and hear a lot about what is happening on ground; we can watch events unfold on our computer screens, but do we really understand what we see? The Internet gives us access to a sea of information, but in the case of Ukraine, false narratives have been successful. Common misconceptions about the war in Ukraine are shared by well-meaning people who influence decision-making. How can we deal with them?

These topics will be discussed during speaking engagements of Andre Kamenshikov, the Ukraine representative of US-based NGO Nonviolence International and the regional coordinator of an international civil society network, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPAC) in the Eastern Europe region.

Andre is a civil society peacebuilder with over 31 years of experience in conflict areas of the ex-USSR. For 22 years he led a small NGO in Russia that operated in the post-Soviet conflict areas until the worsening political climate forced

it to close. Since 2015 he has been based in Kyiv, working primarily to enhance the capacity of civil society to contribute to peace and democratic development.

Should the West build its own iron curtain?

Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Andre Kamenshikov has remained in Kyiv, assisting nonviolent resistance to Russia’s aggression and occupation of Ukrainian territories, and encouraging steps toward a just peace.

In February 2024 he will be in North America and is ready to speak about his experience in the midst of the Russia-Ukraine war, regarding the dilem-

mas of civil society peacebuilders in the current realities and ways of promoting a nonviolent agenda. To discuss the possibility of holding a meeting with him in your community, join his Zoom conversation with the members of Project Save the World on January 4 from 12:30 to 2:00 pm at this URL: <https://zoom.us/j/9108970203>. If you miss that meeting, you can contact Andre by email here: akamenshikov@gmail.com. ■

DAVID KRIEGER
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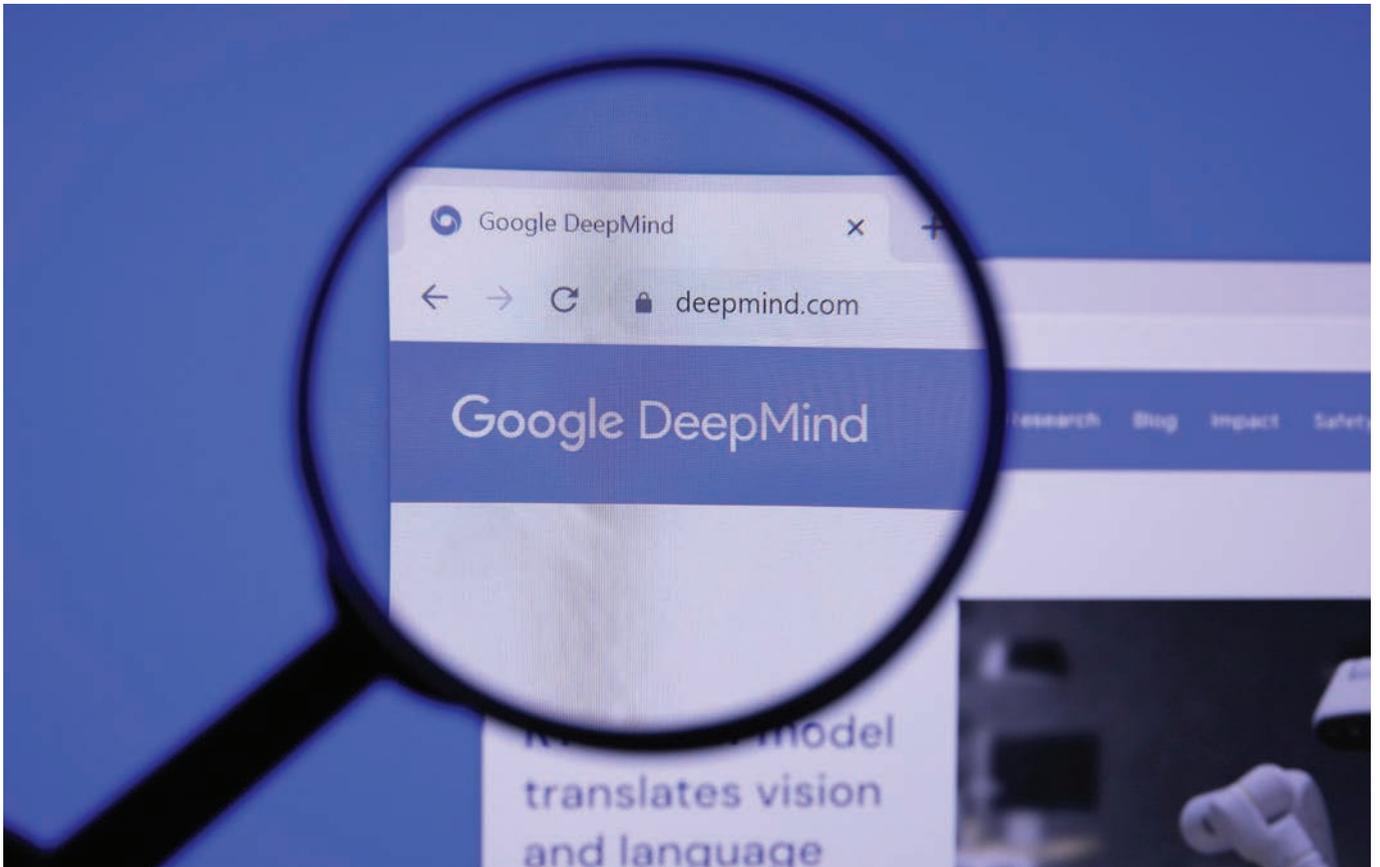
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Solar Flares, Missiles, and Quantum AI

What if we could predict the timing of solar flares, missile attacks and volcano eruptions? Maybe A.I. can help.

In November our editor chatted with Paul Werbos, the mathematician whose work on neural networks is the basis of the new artificial intelligence.



© Jernej Furman, Wikimedia

METTA SPENCER: Tell me about this new initiative of yours

PAUL WERBOS: We have a name — Project Amaterasu. A group of us get together on Friday mornings to discuss how to implement a concept I articulated.

The goal is twofold: to demonstrate a radically new breakthrough in inter-

net and quantum technology, which I'm responsible for. I call it Quantum Artificial General Intelligence — QAGI. Ron Turner, who works with the Air Force, suggested we could use a testbed for a problem that he was interested in — the prediction of solar flares.

Solar flares are important to the security of electric powered arrays and

also to spacecraft and people in space. I said, "Okay, I've got a technology to try out. You've got a testbed to try it on. Let's bring them together."

SPENCER: Why study solar flares?

WERBOS: I used to run Electric Power Research at the National Science Foundation. It was the Number One program in the United States for advanced



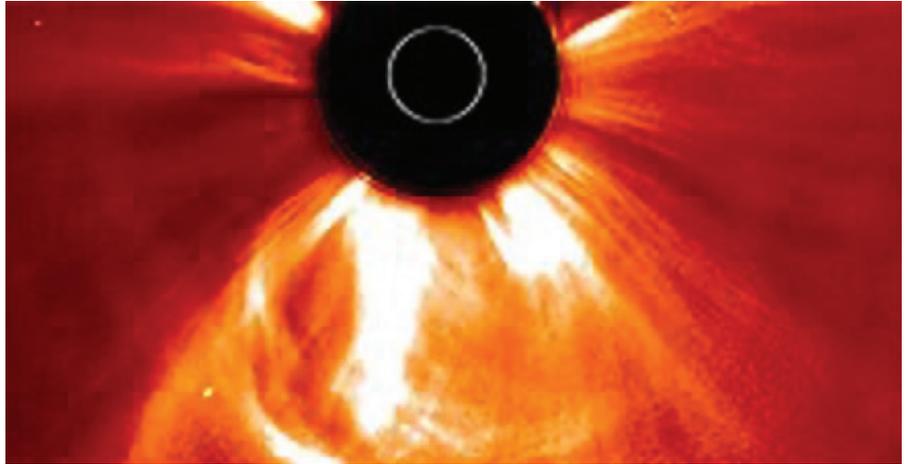
Paul Werbos © Alchetron.com

research on how to manage and protect electric power grids. Under earlier directors, it was responsible for the whole power grid system in the United States. They did major things and I improved it. One of the things we worried about is whether an electric power grid could be taken down by a solar flare.

SPENCER: I've heard that one could knock out the power grid for the hemisphere.

WERBOS: Canada has experienced some very bad solar storm events in the past, knocking out electric power. There was a famous event — the Carrington Event. When I was when I was running this program, I was asked to look into this. A Congressman, Trent Franks from Texas, was put in charge of the Committee in the House that overviews all the worst threats to North America's very survival. He set up a bipartisan meeting for about 30 people from around the country. In it, he said: 'I get all the classified information about anything scary that we're not supposed to know about. In my first six months I could hardly sleep because there was always something new. But it's now my opinion that the Number One threat to the survival of people in the United States is another Carrington event. Let me tell you why I'm worried about it and how we can prevent it. Let me talk about what we can do to make this country secure.'

That meeting was an introduction to me. I got information from many sources in my job. An article in *Science*



July 2012 Solar Storm © NASA/STEREO, Wikipedia

The Carrington Event

On September 1 and 2, 1859, two British amateur astronomers, **Richard Carrington** and **Richard Hodgson** independently recorded their observations of a very bright solar flare — an intense geomagnetic storm spurting from the sun and colliding with the Earth's magnetosphere, affecting the daylight side of the Earth.

Carrington and Hodgson published their observations side by side and exhibited in the meeting of the Royal Astronomical Society. It may have been the largest such storm that has yet been recorded. The aurora woke people up everywhere, from the poles as far south as Mexico, Cuba, Japan, and Colombia. People could read newspapers by the light.

The geomagnetic current caused telegraph systems in Europe and North America to fail. Pylons sparked and gave the operators shocks. Some operators disconnected their power supplies but were able to continue sending and receiving telegrams anyway by the power of the current.

Less severe solar geomagnetic superstorms have occurred several other times — especially in 1921 when one knocked out power in Quebec. A solar flare in 774-75 AD was even larger. A big one in 2013 narrowly missed the Earth. However, an event of Carrington magnitude today would cause trillions of dollars of damage by destroying the electric grid and the satellites on which billions of lives now depend.

— a pretty credible magazine — estimated a Carrington-level event should happen about ten percent of the time when we have a sunspot cycle, which is about every twelve years. It's a random distribution, but expect something like 25% probability that we will have another Carrington event in the next twenty years. As they added, the world economy has changed. We are more dependent on electricity than in 1859, the time of the Carrington. That created a giant mess, but we survived. Now, the most conservative estimate is \$2 trillion

worth of damage overnight.

In these meetings with Trent Franks, people came in to explain to us how another Carrington Event is a threat to life itself in North America.

The guy from the Air Force says, "If we can predict these kinds of flares, we can take advanced action and protect the power grid. But you need to know: Is it coming?"

That was our first goal — to predict when it's coming. And by the way, if you're an astronaut in space when it comes, you're fried. And if you have as-



Aurora Australis observed from the International Space Station during a geomagnetic storm | © Johnson Space Center, ISS Expedition 23 crew, USA, Wikipedia

sets in space, they're dissolved too.

It's only one of the many important things you can do with the new technology. But we think a new type of AI could predict solar flares much better than any of the existing technologies.

SPENCER: What variables do you take into account?

WERBOS: That's actually a very practical question. We had our technical meetings every week. We got into the databases. And this guy from Project Air Force gave us a wonderful talk. What does anybody in the world know about predicting these flares? How good is it? What are the stages? By the end of his talk, I concluded that the best data is from space activities — satellites and telescopes where they are looking at the sun. They can see the sunspots. What's the probability that a sunspot will suddenly grow up to be a flare? When will there be any ejection? They can see the sunspot bubbling. They have mathematical models, but it's hard to predict when we'll get an eject. When I look at

that data, I say: My god, this is our kind of data!

There are two major kinds of data. There is data kind of like a TV picture — an array of pixels. For each square in the image, you can see what the current variables are, and they have a list of standard variables for space. It's like a video record.

Another Carrington Event is a threat to life itself in North America

And Task Number One is: How do you predict a video stream?

There are new ways to sense the nuclear emissions and I'm excited by that technology — but it's not what you can do this week.

Machine learning can learn to recognize time series in general. We have developed universal learning systems that can learn to predict any time se-

ries and there are extensions of those that I published that will extend it to things like grids of arrays dynamically changing with time. Basically, the new quantum technology lets us use the new video prediction technology with more power. You need more power because it's very complex.

When you try to understand the dynamics of a complicated nonlinear video stream like an image of the sun, and you try to predict a model of that stuff, you have to train a network to minimize a measure of error. This is a very difficult mathematical problem. And with a new quantum technology, we can solve those problems a million times faster than you could with any classical computer.

The usual quantum computers can't do it either. You need a new generation of quantum computing. Find the error minimizer and learn how to predict the time series. That's the technology we want to prove.

And, by the way, that technology has many other uses. Pictures of the sun are

not the only things we might want to predict. If you look at the sky and you want to know whether there's a missile coming to hit you, this technology can be used for that. This month, a lot of people are wondering how we get a warning of missiles. We can look in the sky and do pattern recognition and prediction much better than we could with old technology. So, I'm trying to get that video camera learning technology deployed.

SPENCER: That's the electromagnetic pulse — EMP, electromagnetic pulse, right? For 10 years. I've been meaning to get an article about that for the magazine.

WERBOS: Solar flares are only one of the major uses for this. There's a national security aspect. There are nuclear weapons and terrorist weapons.

SPENCER: Could you use it to predict volcano eruptions? There's one in Iceland now that may blow up, and they

would like to know when.

WERBOS: Maybe. I don't know enough about vulcanology to say, but our near goal is to predict time series with a graph of spatial dimensions, based on learning. Anything Deep Mind can predict (which is a lot!), this can predict better — *but how much* better? That depends on the system and the data.

SPENCER: You make it sound like this is just a little thing that you can create in a couple of hours that could be up and running next week. But I don't think so. Tell me about reality.

WERBOS: The reality is that people in Israel are worried about missiles this week. A friend of mine from Israel talked about their fear of being hit by missiles. The goal is to save lives. We're not talking about attacking people.

I'd prefer to go straight to the United Nations, but the United Nations is slow. We have had discussions between Project Amaterasu and Indian investors

and semiconductor people. If we got the right people to work for us are — and some of them are doing it *pro bono* — it would only take a month or two to demonstrate on a quantum simulator that this hardware has the benefits that we claim. And once you have that, you can turn it over to quantum simulators that exist. And my guess is, if we really try and use what we can do, we're like three or four months away from being able to detect these missiles.

SPENCER: What are they expecting to happen in Israel?

WERBOS: Israel and the US have made a big deal. The US will send them the Iron Dome. On TV I could see the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, this guy Netanyahu, and I could see Blinken, the Secretary of State, shaking hands. 'Yeah, we're going to send you the Iron Dome, without money going through Congress. As soon as we get Congress together, we're plan-



U.S. Army Iron Dome anti-missile system © Jim Garamone, DOD, U.S. Department of Defense

ning to move as fast as we can get to get money to pay for Iron Dome, to go to Israel to expand their ability to resist all of the missiles.'

Hamas is flooding Israel with missiles now. Some of my friends tell me that the missiles are coming from Iran. The existing Iron Dome system isn't good enough to meet Israel's needs. It can save some lives. And it's not just Israel. We need a better defense system to protect all the people of the world and, right now, Iron Dome isn't the best. I know what the technology is. I was in touch with a ballistic missile defense people when they were putting it together. They didn't put together the second generation. And what we have now is many generations better than that. So, if we can deploy the new technology quickly it might save millions of lives.

A lot of the solution is in Canada, which has the option to become the world leader in this right now. The Indians are angling for it, but Canada could actually take the lead in this technology, which has commercial applications as well as defense applications.

I know a lot of the people who don't

want to be quoted, but let's just say the world is in a very dangerous position right now. It involves missiles from Hamas, and missiles from everybody who gets them from Iran. I think Iran has an axis with six players and every one of those six has access to Iranian missiles.

The world is in a very dangerous position right now

Right now, the Houthis are also proudly sending missiles now from Yemen to Israel — flying right now, killing people right now. Hezbollah has promised to come in and they're pretty serious. And then there are three others. If they have more missile defense, they'll be able to wait a little longer. And if they don't have missile defense, there will be missiles in all directions. Anything that reduces the damage done by missiles will be better for all of humanity.

I went to the UN first. You were cc'd on some of my emails. The Secretary General said: "Let's build a new UN

agency for AI."

And some of us said, "Why don't we put a missile warning system into the new UN agency? Why don't you make the technology available, open, and transparent to the entire world? If everybody has warning, everybody will be safer. Let's do it that way."

But ironically, Russia and China have UN representatives who are political bureaucrats. They say, "No, the UN can't have this technology. We don't want people to know if we attack them." I don't think they understood that the technology is a monopoly owned by the United States and a few of its allies, so Russia will get less warning than it would as an open global system. If the technology is open and global, Russia and China would be better off but they wouldn't let it happen.

I'm hoping the people in Moscow and Beijing will start realizing, 'Let's look at the world as a whole. Let's talk to the terrorists.'

But first we've got to develop the technology. And the best way to develop the technology is to go fast. US India, Canada, New Zealand. Australia. We all have great capabilities. ■

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To Extract or Not to Extract

BY OLE HENDRICKSON

Reprocessing spent reactor fuel to extract plutonium is highly controversial



© Dirk Rabe Wennigsen, Pixabay

A *Globe and Mail* article raises the issue of why the Canadian government has provided tens of millions of dollars to a New Brunswick company, Moltex, to “reprocess” spent fuel from CANDU reactors, even though the government has yet to decide whether to allow this practice.

Reprocessing spent fuel to extract plutonium and fabricate it into new reactor fuel is a longstanding nuclear industry dream. But plutonium is also the main ingredient in nuclear weapons. U.S. experts have warned Canada that its support for spent-fuel reprocessing and plutonium extraction will undermine the global nuclear weapons non-proliferation regime.

A “modernized” *Radioactive Waste*

and Decommissioning Policy, released in March 2023, says that reprocessing “is not presently employed in Canada, and so is outside the scope of this Policy.” This displeased civil society groups led by *Nuclear Waste Watch*, and more than 7,000 individual Canadians who had commented on the draft policy and had asked the federal government to include a clear ban on reprocessing in the final policy.

DISMISSING CONCERNS

On November 17, 2023, Nuclear Waste Watch organized a round table with government officials, civil society representatives, and U.S. and Canadian experts on nuclear proliferation and nuclear waste. Topics discussed were policy, waste, and security matters related to

reprocessing. Government participants stated that a response had been to the letter from U.S. experts but provided no supporting evidence. They dismissed concerns about a reprocessing policy that has been drafted by the CANDU Owners Group and distributed among government officials, as reported in the *Globe and Mail* article.

Paul McKay’s meticulously researched book, *Atomic Accomplice*, documents Canada’s deep involvement in plutonium and nuclear weapons research. Canada gave India the CIRUS (Canada India Reactor Utility Services) reactor that provided the plutonium used in India’s first nuclear detonation in 1974.

Canada exported plutonium for U.S. weapons production for two decades, and plutonium research at the govern-

ment's Chalk River Laboratories continues to this day. Texas-based Fluor and Jacobs, who manage nuclear weapons facilities in the U.S. and U.K., also operate the Chalk River facility in partnership with SNC-Lavalin (now AtkinsRéalis) under a \$10+ billion federal contract. Their so-called Canadian National Energy Alliance is building a taxpayer-funded, billion-dollar Advanced Nuclear Materials Research Centre to develop "advanced fuel fabrication concepts", including plutonium fuels.

Reprocessing has a troubled history, with a legacy of accidents, worker deaths, unplanned criticality events, excessive worker radiation exposures, fires, chemical explosions, and radioactive contamination of lands and waters. A 1996 International Atomic Energy Agency document, *Significant incidents in nuclear fuel cycle facilities*, reviewed 58 accidents, 37 of which occurred in reprocessing plants.

All commercial and military reprocessing is done at present using the "PUREX" (plutonium uranium extraction) process. Dissolution of spent fuel in nitric acid is followed by a solvent extraction involving tributyl phosphate and kerosene, leaving highly radioactive fission products in a liquid form that is extremely difficult to manage.

CHALK RIVER ACCIDENT

A December 1950 accident at Chalk River killed one worker and injured several others when an evaporator used to concentrate liquid fission product wastes exploded. Another reprocessing facility at Chalk River was shut down in 1954 following several leak events. Equipment was buried on site, spreading groundwater contamination via a plume of fission products that is still discharging into a tributary of the Ottawa River.

At the Hanford site in Washington, which produced the plutonium used in the Trinity test and the Fat Man bomb that destroyed Nagasaki, leaking tanks of reprocessing wastes are contaminating groundwater and the nearby Columbia River.

The worst-ever reprocessing accident occurred in 1957 at Russia's secret

Mayak weapons production facility. A large tank of liquid reprocessing waste exploded, spreading radioactive fallout over hundreds of square kilometers, forcing the evacuation of thousands of people, and leaving a large area uninhabitable. The Russian government was able to cover up this accident until the 1980s. Reprocessing wastes had been dumped in local lakes and rivers before the tanks were built.

Dissolving irradiated fuel in nitric acid releases gaseous waste products. These include radioactive forms of krypton, xenon, hydrogen, carbon, and iodine. Adding reprocessing to the nuclear fuel chain significantly increases total radioactive releases to the atmospheric environment. This represents a new health burden for workers and members of the public.

A commercial reprocessing facility that operated from 1966 to 1972 in West Valley, New York, about 50 kilometers south of Buffalo, produced over two million liters of liquid high-level waste. It continues to be the site of expensive clean-up efforts, with annual expenditures of around \$100 million and no estimated date for closure. Former workers are plagued by cancers and have been paid over \$200 million in compensation.

COUNTRIES QUIT REPROCESSING

U.S. President Jimmy Carter banned reprocessing of spent fuel in 1977, and halted construction of a facility that would have allowed plutonium and uranium to be used in mixed oxide, or

"MOX" fuel. Most countries are abandoning reprocessing. The U.K., Germany, and Switzerland have ceased using MOX fuel in their power reactors. At present, only France and Russia extract power reactor plutonium for military and non-military purposes, including weapons production and fabrication of new power reactor fuels.

While Japan still pursues the plutonium dream, a Japan Times article notes that its Rokkasho reprocessing plant "has been delayed for years amid an endless series of technical glitches resulting in huge cost overruns since construction began in the early 1990s."

The Guardian reported recently that the US is ramping up production of plutonium 'pits' for nuclear weapons. Frank Von Hippel, one of the authors of the letter to Canadian authorities, is quoted as saying "Nuclear war is a probability thing, and it's been 80 years, a lifetime, since we had one to deal with one. So people have assumed the probability was close to zero, which it isn't unfortunately."

Plutonium production is an unavoidable result of nuclear reactor operations. However, extracting that plutonium from spent fuel makes no sense from an economic, environmental, or security perspective. ■

Ole Hendrickson is a retired forest ecologist living in the Ottawa Valley.

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Chalk River Laboratories, 1945 | © National Research Council Canada, Wikipedia

COP 28's Report Card



Conference of Parties (COP 28) in Dubai, UAE

In 2016 almost all countries accepted the so-called ‘Paris Agreement’ which called on them to meet every five years and confront their ‘report card’ — a two-year-long appraisal of their success in solving the climate crisis. The report is supposed to inform the countries’ decisions and bind them to a plan of action. This year some 70,000 people attended the ‘Conference of Parties’ (COP 28) in Dubai, UAE for this ‘Global Stocktake.’ How good were the marks? Was the grading done fairly? Let’s review some of the comments in our email.

Nobody seems to be bragging of success — except maybe the president of this year’s COP meeting, Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, the Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and UAE’s Special Envoy for Climate Change. This COP was held in a petro state whose leading fox hosted the guests in the state’s henhouse. (Al Jaber is also

the head of an oil company.)

TABOO WORDS

What did we expect? The words “fossil fuel” have always been taboo in a COP document. Al Jaber had been caught claiming that there is “no science” behind the idea that fossil fuels must be phased out in order to keep average global temperatures from rising above 1.5 degrees Celsius. At previous meetings, the final document could

Nobody seems to be bragging of success

promote the “reduction of greenhouse gas emissions” but not the ‘rapid phasing out of fossil fuel’ — the source of those emissions.

That phrase, “rapid phasing out,” was the most contentious issue of this year’s meeting. In the sole break-

through, the final statement mentioned the words “fossil fuel” for the first time, though not to be “rapidly phased out” but only “transitioned away from.”

That phraseology might be fine if the countries were actually reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the chief proximate cause of global warming. However, global energy-related CO₂ emissions *grew again in 2022* — by 0.9%, reaching a new high of more than 36.8 billion tonnes.

It is no longer possible to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The earth’s energy imbalance has almost doubled in the past decade. We were close to 1.5 degrees for the entire year 2023 and climatologist Paul Beckwith says, “We are rapidly approaching 2.0. This is an emergency.” He speculates: If you had a life-threatening lung disease, would your doctor advise you to ‘transition away’ from smoking?

Dr. Peter Carter, a physician and

director of the Climate Emergency Institute, said that the first way to reduce global warming is “obviously to stop the \$7 trillion in fossil fuel subsidies a year.... Those subsidies, by the way, have been going up. Imagine if

It was made very clear that coal was not to be phased down or stopped. That’s absolutely terrible.

we took away all those subsidies. The market would immediately swing out of fossil fuels to renewable energy and that would make an immediate impact on CO₂ emissions. Last year for the first time, the IMF modeled what would happen if the subsidies were terminated. And it was a major, major difference — a huge drop in CO₂ emissions and atmospheric CO₂.”

A FUTURE FOR COAL?

Carter worries about a particular clause in the COP 28 consensus statement referring to coal. He noted, “It made it very clear that coal was not to be phased down or stopped. The statement on coal was the strongest support that I can remember. That’s absolutely terrible.”

Some comments about COP 28 seem ambivalent. For example, Mark Watts is the managing director of C40 Cities, a global network of mayors of the world’s leading cities that are acting together to confront the climate crisis.

In a blog, Watts called the reference to transitioning away from fossil fuels ‘progress,’ though he added, “but it is not progress at anywhere near the speed and scale the crisis demands. This is no time for small, incremental steps.”

Watts was pleased by one noticeable development in Dubai: mayors of cities were allowed to participate, as well as national delegates. C40 urges

a “structuring of COP that takes sub-national climate action on board; 75 percent of C40 cities are reducing emissions faster than their respective national governments.”

This is no time for small, incremental steps

Azerbaijan will be host of COP 29 from 11-22 November 2024, and Brazil will be COP 30 host from 10-21 November 2025. The next two years will be critical. At COP 29, governments must establish a new climate finance goal, reflecting the scale and urgency of the climate challenge. ■

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DIALOGUE DIGEST

To Pile Sand on Tuvalu

A visit with Tapugao Falefou by Metta Spencer



Ambassador Tapugao Falefou

Ambassador Tapugao Falefou, who represents his homeland Tuvalu at the United Nations, spoke with Metta Spencer on December 23 about the uncertain future of his small, scenic country.

Fewer than 12,000 people inhabit Tuvalu's ten square miles — three low-lying reef islands and six atolls that lie half-way between Hawaii and Australia. It is the state with the second-smallest population (just a little more populous than the Vatican) and receives the smallest number of visitors. Only a few thousand arrive each year, always on a small Fijian plane. But lately the country's only landing strip has been closed for repairs,

for salt water, somehow seeping up from the soil, is making the tarmac unsafe.

This is a minor aspect of Tuvalu's biggest threat: climate change. As Ambassador Falefou noted, his country's highest point is only three or five meters above the sea level, which makes it extremely vulnerable to the impacts of sea level rise. Beginning in about 1992 at the Rio Convention, Tuvaluans began to realize the scope of their future predicament.

Falefou has first-hand familiarity with the changing climate. Even when he was a child, there were strong winds or even cyclones between October to March, but now these are more frequent and are matched by droughts, which are new. In February or March they used to experience what they called "king tides." Now they happen every year, at the same time as a cyclone, so the waves overlap into the island.

FOOD INSECURITY

The land is saturating with sea water, which affects Tuvaluan crops. Falefou said that their staple foods are pulaka (also called "swamp taro") and breadfruit. These crops can no longer be grown abundantly.

"We only have the ocean and the fish," said Falefou, "and only enough food for our own consumption. So, we are not exporting any agricultural products. We import all our foods from overseas."

But Falefou refuses to be pessimistic. "We hope for the best and are preparing for the worst. The worst scenario is inundation, which would make the island uninhabitable. But we are hopeful that major emitters will stop emitting greenhouse gas and work on mitigation.

"We've already had two projects. We have a big deposit of sand in the lagoon. So, we just need to dredge the sand. There are two reclamation projects that we have completed. We just got the sand from the lagoon."

The first reclamation project, which New Zealand financed, was completed in 2018. The second, funded by the Green Climate Fund, was finished only in October.

A lot more projects are needed, Falefou realizes.

"Within the century," he said. "most of the low-lying atolls may still be in existence but may not be inhabitable."

THE FIRST DIGITAL NATION

We discussed two recent proposals — one to create the world's first "digital nation," and the other an offer from Australia to accept Tuvaluan immigrants.

Indeed, Tuvalu is preparing for its worst scenario, where its people will be scattered around the world. So, there are plans to migrate the country's government to the metaverse and keep it functioning as a state, no matter where its people are physically located. If worse comes to worst and they have to scatter, Tuvaluans also intend to digitize, catalog, and preserve their cultural heritage.

Recently Australia has offered special treatment to Tuvaluans who want to live and work in their country. There is now a treaty providing a "climate mobility pathway" for people from Tuvalu and four or five other Pacific countries who want to immigrate. Also, Australia will provide support to Tuvalu in terms of security.

I speculated that perhaps Canada would give some of its abundant territory to Tuvalu so they could immigrate together and re-establish their country on an Arctic island. The ambassador did not show much interest. He mentioned wistfully the possibility of a floating island. But he'd be even more grateful for some money for dredging and elevating. Shall we help pile up sand on Tuvalu?

To watch the whole video: <https://tosavetheworld.ca/episode-579-the-future-of-tuvalu>. ■

DIALOGUE DIGEST

Under the Baobab Tree

A visit with Justice Mukete Tahle Itoe by Metta Spencer



Justice Mukete Tahle Itoe

Justice Mukete Tahle Itoe is a Judge in Cameroon. He holds a PhD in International law from Selinus University in Italy and specializes in refugee and migration law. Justice Mukete coordinates the activities of the Refugee Welfare Association of Cameroon (REWAC), website: www.rewac.org, a humanitarian organization that defends vulnerable migrants. On December 22, 2023, he and Metta Spencer discussed the civil war in Cameroon.

Cameroon's civil war has caused the internal displacement of over 700,000 persons and 6,000 deaths since it began in 2017. Three conflicts are going on, the largest of which is a separatist demand by many of the English-speakers. Halfway through 2023, only 19.2 per cent of the required funds for the humanitarian response in Cameroon had been received. Dr. Itoe described the suffering that results.

"Cameroon is made up of ten regions," he explained. "Eight of the regions are French-speaking and two are English speaking." Of the 30 million Cameroonians, he belongs to the 20 percent who speak English. Some of those are demanding secession and the creation of a new state called Ambazonia. Dr. Itoe himself does not favor independence but is seeking support abroad.

"It should be a decision taken by the majority of the population," he said. "As I say, we have to sit under the baobab tree. In Africa, when there is a dispute within a family, we will hold a meeting under a baobab tree. We express grudges. We look for a way forward. We come out with compromises, and we embrace ourselves."

But this current conflict is harder. Cameroon had been a German colony, but after World War II the UN divided it as trust territories for France and Britain to administer. In 1960 the French-speaking part became independent and in 1961 the two sections formed a federation, managed from the capital, Yaounde.

However, in 1972 the federation was abandoned in favor of a unitary government. Though that was done constitutionally, the English-speakers had not foreseen the consequences.

Instead, as Dr. Itoe explained, "The argument was that the federal structure was very heavy, that there were not enough resources to run three govern-

ment — the French, the English, and the Federal. So, they put it into a unitary form."

"Then lawyers and teachers became concerned that their heritage from the British — the English system of education and the common law legal system — would be swallowed up by the civil law system. That's how the conflict started.

In Africa, when there is a dispute within a family, we will hold a meeting under a baobab tree

"They cared about the rule of law — the protection of the rights of an individual; the principles of habeas corpus and the presumption of innocence. These are the things which incarnate the protection of the rights of man."

Since 2017 this dispute has been involved what Dr. Itoe calls atrocities. The displaced persons and refugees live a precarious existence, frequently experiencing arbitrary arrest or gender-based violence. "We're talking about rape. We're talking about sexual violence, about forced marriages. More than 90 percent of the victims are women."

Dr. Itoe heads a humanitarian organization for refugees. He clearly hoped I'd know how to help him. I mentioned that Canada had offered to mediate, but that was declined. I could not encourage his hopes that our audience will help much.

But he wants to raise awareness in Canada about Cameroon. I will try but I think that ultimately Cameroonians must find their own path. "How about doing a Truth and Reconciliation process?" I suggested.

"That is for politicians to do during



Baobab tree avenue | © Pasleim, Wikimedia

the final decision-making process to resolve the crisis,” he replied softly. “I am here as a humanitarian actor to expose the atrocities, expose the breach of international law and humanitarian law and attract support from international development agencies, the EU, and civil society. That is why I am here — not about holding a series of talks under the baobab tree.”

“You are right, of course,” I said. “And wish I could think of a solution that would meet your requests. I can’t. But I think that ultimately you’ll find the solution there — under your baobab tree.” ■

Friends, if you have a promising suggestion, please post it in the comments column after watching the episode here: <https://tosavetheworld.ca/episode-578-the-trouble-in-cameroon/>.

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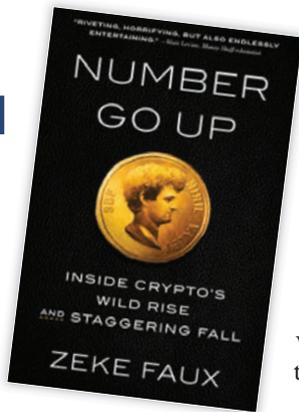
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Number Go Up: Inside Crypto's Wild and Staggering Fall

By Zeke Faux; Currency, New York, 2023, 280 pages



Zeke Faux, an award-winning journalist for Bloomberg News, through two years of research has written a compelling tome on a \$3 trillion financial delusion, the complex web of cryptocurrency. Since its inception It has facilitated illicit drug dealing, sanctions busting, blackmail, enslavement, ransomware attacks, dictatorships and human trafficking. And the panic to buy into this get-rich-quick scam has resulted in massive losses to people all over the world.

What is so compelling about *Number Go Up*, is the worldwide sweep of Faux's investigations, which climaxed in a visit to a vast compound of derelict office towers in Cambodia. Faux undertook brave and unusual investigative efforts such as acquiring his own Non-Fungible Token. (Faux's NFT was a glum Mutant Ape image.)

Faux endured a "convoluted and horrifying ordeal", to purchase it "for more than \$20,000 in cryptocurrency" to obtain an NFT. He named it Dr. Scum and "imagined he was a private detective who gained superintelligence from smoking weed."

The critical point in Faux's investigations came through a criminal case against seven American and Russian money launderers. U.S. prosecutors accused a crypto exchange of "orchestrating a vast scheme that included, among other things, stealing US military technology."

Faux learned from Transparency International (a respected organization dedicated to fighting global corruption) of how crypto exchanges in Moscow

would accept coins from "users with flimsy ID checks, and in exchange, have a courier in London hand off stacks of cash." The money was allegedly used for bribery to obtain U.S. military hardware in defiance of sanctions and export controls.

Faux was initially skeptical of how the "vast sums", needed to infiltrate the U.S. military could be acquired. Then his phone "buzzed with a message" from a beautiful woman he had never met, who ended up giving him "the clue I didn't know I needed."

The mysterious woman was Vicky Ho, a scammer who pretended to develop a romantic relationship with the author. While Faux did not fall for Ho's charms, her allure alerted him to new stories — which revealed that many "people were using huge sums of money" through fake romance schemes (called "pig butchering.") This caused Faux to discover the Global Anti-Scam Organization which aided victims of such crypto crimes. His guide was a former victim, Jason Black, who operates from an Ontario basement.

PIG-BUTCHERING GANGSTERS

Black guided Faux to a world where pig-butchering scams were "orchestrated by gangsters based in Cambodia or Myanmar." The gangsters lured "young men and women from across South-east Asia to move with the promise of well-paying jobs in customer service or online gambling. Then, when workers arrived, they'd be "held captive and forced to work on online scams."

Faux met with people who were able to escape from scamming slavery by foreign police interventions or ransom payments by relatives. They described forced injection of methamphetamine

to increase productivity, murder, assaults, starvation and being "sold from one compound to another."

After speaking with victims Faux journeyed to a vast compound of derelict office towers in Sihanoukville, Cambodia, known as Chinatown. In Cambodia he met with Richard Jan, a veteran Taiwan police officer who rescued enslaved scammers. However, he told Faux that despite the rescues the corrupt Cambodian police would never arrest any of the gangsters who enslaved the scammers.

Jan said that "crypto was making his work more difficult" since, unlike banks, crypto exchanges would not collect information of their customers. His success came from complicated sting operations where he posed as a businessman. In 2022 alone such police investigations were able to free 400 victims of human enslavement in Cambodia.

In his travels through Cambodia, Faux was guided by human rights activists associated with the dissenting newspaper, *Voice of Democracy*. It was subsequently closed down by the country's brutal dictator, Prime Minister Hun Sen.

What is most troubling in *Number Go Up* is its conclusion that the appalling slavery, crime, and money laundering are simply the tip of the iceberg.

The book convinced me that the real reason the communist dictatorship, the People's Republic of China, is so upset with the Republic of China — known as Taiwan — is its democratic nature. The island's freedom makes it a threat to gangsters and human traffickers allied to mainland China's ruling elite, and their allies in other dictatorships such as Myanmar, Cambodia, and Russia. ■

Reviewed by John Bacher, an activist in St. Catharines, Ontario.

We welcome your comments about this review [here](#). Please give your comment a title referring to this review.

Russia Against Modernity

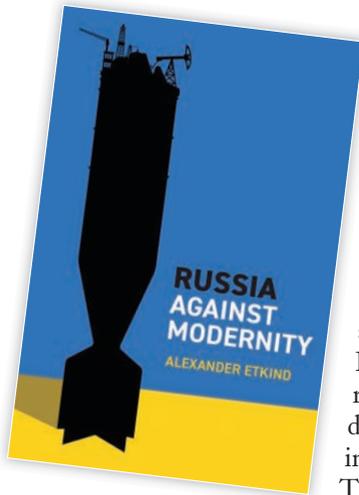
By Alexander Etkind;
Polity Press, 2023.
166 pages

Alexander Etkind's magnificent polemic *Russia Against Modernity* is part of a sadly thin body of literature which exposes the toxic combination of national oil wealth, war, and dictatorship. These books include Leif Wenar's *Blood Oil*, published by Oxford University Press, in 2015, and my own *Petrotyranny* (Dundurn Press and Science for Peace, 2000).

In his account of what he properly calls the Russo-Ukrainian War (2014-), Etkind, a professor with the Central European University in Vienna, exposes the consequences of ignoring prophetic warnings of others of the curse of fossil fuel dependency and the dictatorships they spawn. What Etkind calls "modernity" is quite specific to the central issue of our times. Termed "Gaia-modernity", it is moving towards a world marked by "sorted garbage, clean water and a peaceful community of nations."

Etkind views the Russo-Ukrainian War as a last-ditch desperate effort by what he terms "oilbarons" to stop what they view as an "existential threat" — Gaia-modernity. If achieved, modernity would "damage the oil and gas trade, depriving Russia of its main source of income."

Etkind sees the oilbarons' fascination with gigantic yachts as an effort to escape their homeland's terrible pollution for "foreign seas, which are safer and cleaner." Such rich oil barons also invest "in the same institutions abroad" that they neglect and even destroy at home, "the legal system, universities, parks, and hospitals."



The Kremlin, Etkind contends, is "demonstrating an unexpected force and creativity" in its war on Gaia-modernity (a term taken from the concept of life as a self-regulating force). It is using techniques ranging from "climate denialism to electoral interference to war." Through "spreading corruption, boosting inequality and homophobia" and "subsidizing far-right movements", Putin's clique connives to forge a world safe for the world's petro-dictators.

Etkind situates the timing of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine (as opposed to earlier attempts to annex Crimea and stimulate separatism in Donbas), as created by a decision by the European Union (EU) (the purchaser of most of Russia's oil and gas), to get serious in combatting climate change. In the past, Russian 'oilbarons' found comfort in their "hopes of cheating the planet" through the EU Emissions Trading Scheme in 2009. They found no such loopholes in the more serious EU Transborder Carbon Tax, legislated in 2021.

RUSSIA KEEPS DENYING CLIMATE CHANGE

Planned for full implementation in 2026, the Carbon Tax was an ominous writing on the wall for the Russian oilbarons. Etkind believes that "The effect on Russian exports would be equivalent to an additional customs charge of 16 percent." The move announced in April 2021 was part of a decision by the EU to reduce its emissions by half in 2030 and to zero by 2050. It was denounced by Putin as "hysteria" at a time when "Russian war preparations were in full swing."

Etkind, himself a Russian exile, who taught at an institution funded by George Soros there until it was forced to move, first to Hungary, and later to Austria, deplores especially how many of the powerful in Russia believe that climate change would benefit their nation. Such delusional assumptions based on junk science distort how climate change is hammering Russia. In 2021, Etkind shows, "almost twenty million hectares of Siberian forest were destroyed in wildfires."

Climate change is hammering Russia

Permafrost, which has been steadily melting since 1991, makes Russia peculiarly vulnerable to anthropogenic climate change. Only in Russia, Etkind says, do "major cities such as Yakutsk and Norilsk sit on melting permafrost" which release enormous amounts of methane and accelerate global warming.

One of the most odious consequences of Putin's export of climate change-denying populism sees is in his export to the United States of his former economic advisor, Andrei Illarionov. A hero to American libertarians, Illarionov penned some of the most vicious attacks against international action to counter human-induced climate change. He termed the Kyoto Protocol "a treaty of death", akin to "the Gulag and Auschwitz." Such rhetoric won Illarionov a post with the Republican Party think tank, the CATO Institute, where he portrayed the attack on the US Capital by Trump supporters as a "trap" set by police.

NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE

I found the most precious parts of "Russia Against Modernity" to be passages where he describes heroic nonviolent resistance to Putin's petrophilia within Russia. One such sadly obscure



Russian Oligarch's yacht | © Wikimedia

hero is Sergei Kechimov, a Khanty Reindeer herder and shaman. He attempted to defend Lake Numto from Petro-degradation. In 2017 Kechimov was beaten by Russian oil workers. Another heroic shaman, a Yakut, Alexander Gabyshev, began a protest march to Moscow but was arrested and subjected to forcible psychiatric treatment.

Another ignored protest movement in Russia chronicled in *Russia Against Modernity* is directed in the Arkhangelsk region for waste reduction in 2018 to 2020. What would have been Europe's largest garbage dump was planned to be constructed in a forest prized for berry-picking and hunting. Massive protests blocked rail lines with tents. Etkind sees it as "the biggest victory of the Green movement in contemporary Russia."

Etkind's attention to democratizing eco-justice protests is part of his hopeful view that, despite Putin's tyranny, democratic change within Russia is possible. Explaining Putinism in terms of the distant past, he says "obscures the specific origins of the regime and absolves it of

*Putinism's opposition will
come from female
champions of democracy*

its crimes. Individuals and institutions, rather than national tradition, were to blame for suppressing rallies, stealing trillions, and launching the war."

For all the criminals boosting Putin's tyranny, Etkind brings attention to

unknown nurturers of Gaia-modernity, which is growing in Russia, albeit at a slower pace than the free world. One of these was Galina Starovoitova, an ethnographer who Etkind believes "was the most successful female politician in post-Soviet Russia". Tragically she was murdered by "a political assassin." He sees the most determined opposition to Putinism as coming from female champions of democracy. They reject the ideology of "petromacho", plagued by "domestic violence, male chauvinism and homophobia." ■

Reviewed by John Bacher.

We welcome your comments about this review [here](#). Please give your comment a title referring to this review.

Keep Hope Alive Essays for a War-Free World

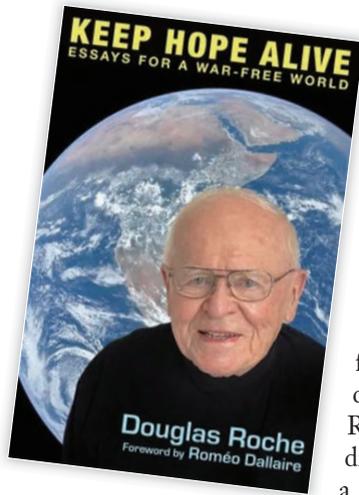
By Douglas Roche; Khalid Yaqub.
2023, 182 pp. \$16.99

“Keep Hope Alive: Essays for a War-Free World” is a thought-provoking collection of essays by Douglas Roche, a distinguished Canadian diplomat, parliamentarian, and former Ambassador for Disarmament. Roche’s profound insights, combined with his accessible writing style, make this book a compelling read for both seasoned experts and everyday readers. Roche skillfully dissects critical global issues while offering concrete solutions that inspire hope for a more peaceful world.

*Reallocate resources
toward goals that benefit
humanity as a whole*

The essays shed light on the challenges facing the United Nations, especially in the context of financial constraints that have hindered the organization’s progress toward achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals. Roche meticulously examines the impact of regional military alliances, such as NATO, on diverting funds from sustainable initiatives like climate action and poverty eradication. The book underscores the urgent need to reallocate resources toward goals that benefit humanity as a whole.

A significant highlight is Roche’s exploration of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), a landmark agreement signed by the majority of nations. The TPNW aims



to eliminate the development, testing, production, acquisition, possession, stockpiling, use, or threat of use of nuclear weapons, marking a crucial step toward a world free from these destructive arms. Roche’s advocacy for disarmament reflects a commitment to global security and a future without the looming threat of nuclear warfare.

The author critically examines Canada’s foreign policy, emphasizing its historical reliance on two pillars: relations with the United States and global participation through the UN. While the Trudeau government initially received praise for its commitment to strengthening Canada’s global role, Roche’s essays reveal areas where the nation has fallen short, particularly in terms of climate responsibilities and strict adherence to NATO agreements. He contends that Canada’s continued allegiance to NATO and other outdated military alliances poses a threat to global security and undermines disarmament efforts.

Despite Canada’s substantial investment in NATO, allocating 1.29 percent of its GDP (approximately \$29 million in 2023) with plans to spend \$553 billion over the next two decades, the country falls short of the alliance’s 2 percent GDP commitment. This financial commitment coincides with cuts to development programs, echoing a concerning trend observed in other nations and compromising the success of UN Development Goals.

Roche also addresses the issue of gender representation on the global stage, expressing concern about Cana-

da’s adherence to traditional patriarchal norms despite advocating for increased female participation in international affairs. This perspective adds a crucial dimension to the discussion, highlighting the need for a more inclusive and diverse approach to global decision-making.

In the face of these challenges, Roche remains optimistic, outlining tangible measures that are currently being implemented and suggesting ways to enhance global security. The book emphasizes a renewed focus on UN millennium goals addressing hunger and climate initiatives as key components of a comprehensive strategy for a better world.

In conclusion, *“Keep Hope Alive”* not only identifies the obstacles hindering global progress but also provides a clear roadmap for a brighter future. Roche’s essays serve as a beacon of optimism in a world grappling with complex and urgent issues, offering readers a thoughtful and actionable perspective on building a war-free world. ■

Reviewed by Susan McClelland, a Canadian writer and film producer living in UK.

We welcome your comments about this review [here](#). Please give your comment a title referring to this review.



NATO headquarters in Brussels | © Wikimedia

Fighting Better: Constructive Con- flicts in America

By Louis Kriesberg; New York:
Oxford University Press, 2023

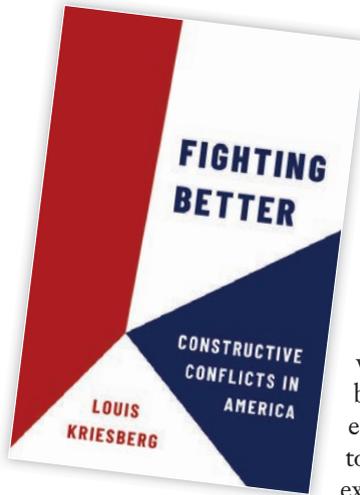
Louis Kriesberg's latest contribution, *Fighting Better: Constructive Conflicts in America*, summarizes much of his wisdom at the age of 97. His classic volume, *The Sociology of Social Conflicts*, was published fifty years ago, and in 2022, he published the sixth edition of *Constructive Conflicts: From Emergence to Transformation, Sixth Edition* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2022).

This revered elder has published or co-edited 24 books (counting new editions) and more than 160 book chapters and articles. He was the founding director of the Program of the Analysis and Resolution of Conflicts (1986–1994) and has served in many other leadership positions and taught and mentored countless peace and conflict analysis scholars.

After a must-read summary of his core ideas about conflict, Kriesberg organizes his core theme of making conflicts constructive by exploring how they are precipitated primarily by inequality and can be made more constructive by advancing equality. He manages the discussion analytically and chronologically by analyzing conflicts emerging from disparities in the primary dimensions of all human societies: class, status, and power.

Thus, the secret of how to fight better is if “the conflicts did or did not advance equity between contenders in different rankings in class, status, and power” (p. 1).

This book examines primary conflicts in American life as examples of how conflicts become constructive or



destructive. American conflicts in 1945 – 1969 were primarily class-related, which increased with a new wave of conflicts from 1970 to 1992 and a final wave precipitated by hyperclass inequality, from 1993 to 2022. Kriesberg explores efforts to reduce African American inequalities (1945-1969), followed by advances and backlashes from 1970 to 1992. Conflicts around gender and other collective identities emerged from 1945 to 2022; he observes shifts in political power equality from 1765 to the present, then highlights recent conflicts as they relate to changes in power inequality.

The seven interrelated core ideas in the constructive conflict approach Kriesberg has championed for decades are of particular significance.

1. Conflicts are carried out in contexts that are generally institutionalized and considered legitimate;
2. Noncoercive inducements are an essential aspect of conflicts, not just negative sanctions or coercion, even if nonviolent;
3. Conflict parties are heterogeneous, with multiple perspectives within each side;
4. Views of the conflict are socially constructed; when adversaries consider solid evidence about everyone's concerns and strengths, constructive changes are more likely;
5. Constructive conflict approaches require understanding the adversary's underlying interests, which increases mutual gains;
6. Conflicts are “interconnected over time and social space,” which in-

creases the intensity of fights and their linkages with identities (p. 8);

7. Conflicts are constantly in flux as contexts and internal relations are usually in flux.

Conflicts move through stages from latent to emerging, escalating, de-escalating, and finally, settling. All that conflict theory does not just emerge *ex nihilo* from a professor's brain but from a careful analysis of actual struggles. His focus is on American disputes over 75 years, although I am sure that decades of researching conflicts worldwide inform it. They are all primarily disputes about inequalities, but they do not necessitate zero-sum outcomes and could result in mutual gains.

Chapter two provides a rich analysis of disputes between people with unequal income or wealth fighting about taxes or poverty reduction, on the one hand, and employee-employer relations and union rights, on the other. The post-war forties saw an escalation of strikes, and then the War on Poverty emerged out of the economic boom. Increasing attention to the gap between an increasingly affluent mainstream and what Michael Harrington called *The Other America*, captured the attention of President John F. Kennedy and, following his assassination, Lyndon Johnson.

In the 1960s, conflicts about unions and poverty reduction became intertwined with opposition to the Vietnam War (which drained resources from the anti-poverty war) and the civil rights, women's, and countercultural movements. Those conflicts were often constructive and led to mutual benefits but also to backlashes, such as Ronald Reagan's presidency and intensified debates over government efforts to reduce inequality.

The late 1970s saw a substantial increase in income and wealth inequality, precipitating health, social, and political problems. Technological changes and globalization tended to increase the

incomes of the top 1 percent and decrease them at the bottom. The Reagan administration made deep reductions in government and welfare programs; they cut “taxes on high-income individuals and corporations, cut welfare benefits, and weakened trade unions” (p. 38). The rise of conservative radio talk shows and Internet-based social media changed the political environment and the country’s polarization led to the “extreme societal divisions and splintering that erupted in 2021 (p. 46).

Inequality breeds inequality, with the extremely wealthy getting more money and the very poor living precariously. Chapter Four takes up this problem and its accompanying conflicts, as well as the lack of mobility between classes and the role of nongovernmental actors. During Donald J. Trump’s presidency, inequality reached new heights, as did political antagonisms and destructive conflicts.

The paucity of chances for upward mobility in the US is explained in part by education and race. Higher-income parents provide better educational opportunities, increasing opportunities for the next generation. The Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations were essential arenas for institutionalized conflict, but less institutionalized spaces were also arenas for significant clashes, with the rise of nongovernmental struggles between 1993 and 2017. Most notable were the 1999 protests in Seattle, Occupy Wall Street in 2011, and a constructive transformation of labor-management conflicts in the automobile industry in the face of the 1979-1982 economic recession and the collapse in US auto sales in 2006-2009, facilitating a resurgence of the industry.

Finally, Donald Trump’s rhetoric and actions regarding class inequality often contradicted each other; he campaigned on working-class grievances and used left-wing populist rhetoric but pursued policies that blended right-wing nationalism, conservatism, and ethnic prejudices. Met with widespread opposition among movements and local governments, he doubled down on his rhetoric, blaming immigrants and others to deflect criticism and finally refusing to accept the outcome of the

elections that defeated him.

By this point, only halfway through the book, we have identified the primary thrust of the professor’s arguments, outlined theoretically, and you can see how he represents them empirically with considerable detail. As the reader who is still with me can see, the text is so rich it is difficult to summarize briefly. If you want the details, read the book.

AFRICAN AMERICANS

Perhaps the most blatant inequality and conflict-generator in American society is racism and the waxing and waning of efforts to advance African Americans appropriately take up two chapters in this volume. Having examined mostly class differences in the earlier chapters, Kriesberg now takes up status discrepancies, beginning with race as an important status dimension, although it is problematic because it is socially assigned and disputed, has some fluidity, and its salience changes over time. The ascribed status of ethnicity is more helpful than race, he claims, but popular conceptions have been shaped, by colonialism and enslavement. The concept of race was constructed to explain and justify the inferior treatment and commodification of others. Kriesberg traces their impact and efforts to address it by administrations and social movements in some detail in chapters six and seven. He notes that constructive conflicts did improve the status of African Americans to a limited degree, and destructive conflicts created by segregation supporters often ironically backfired, inadvertently increasing their status.

Chapter nine shifts to a focus on political power, as the third dimension of inequality-driven conflicts, taking the broad historical view stretching all the way from 1765 to 2022. He analyzes unequal distributions of power in governance institutions, despite the ideal of power serving the people, noting that when a few people at the top make decisions without regard to lower-ranking people, it creates great collective power inequality. Framed as win-lose contentions, some badly conducted fights escalate to violence.

The concluding chapter discusses

how to fight better so that equality can be advanced despite the deterioration of democracy. To do so, he returns to the seven core ideas above, especially considering four major challenges: global warming, recovery from the pandemic, changing global contexts, and threats to the democratic system. How these challenges and the conflicts they engender are conducted will play a major role in shaping changes in America’s class, status, and power inequities.

Professor Kriesberg’s bottom line is that conflicts should reduce inequality in all three primary dimensions: class, status, and power. That is the gold standard for fighting better. If everyone now fighting from Ukraine to Palestine-Israel to Sudan to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to other latent, emerging, and escalating conflicts, were to internalize and act on Louis Kriesberg’s wisdom, we might see peace on Earth. ■

Reviewed by Lester R. Kurtz, a sociology professor at George Mason University and editor of Oxford’s three-volume Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict.

We welcome your comments about this review [here](#). Please give your comment a title referring to this review.



“Yes. You know that one-lagged nigger dat b’longs to old Misto Bradish? ...” illustration from The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Tom Sawyer’s Comrade), by Mark Twain | © Edward W. Kemble, Wikimedia

CURRENT CONTROVERSIES



Kamloops Indian Residential School, 1930 | © Wikipedia

Residential Schools: Assimilation or Genocide?

By Robin Collins

The deliberate destroying of a culture for the benefit of the colonial enterprise is the destruction of a people, whether or not their physical bodies were intended to be destroyed. Does that fit within the legal definition of genocide? Does it matter?

There is plenty of evidence to show that the architects of the Indian Residential School (IRS) system thought their mission was to educate and to elevate their young charges so that they could better accommodate the intruding modern world. This followed the disappearance of First Nations livelihoods which, for example, were based on furs, fishing, trapping and the collapsed buffalo hunt.

Christian denominational schools were thought to be better (and cheaper) than a secular option run directly by the state. Churches would substitute what they saw as civilizing indoctrination and training geared towards agriculture or industry, for the First Nations' own "simple Indian mythology" and traditional means of subsistence.

The Anglican, Roman Catholic, United/Methodist and (to a lesser extent) Presbyterian churches, had teach-

ers with the training and missionary enthusiasm. And First Nations were not initially opposed to the new schooling regime, historian J.R. Miller writes, "only to aspects of it that threatened their identity."

First Nations were not initially opposed to the new schooling regime

Some schools were no doubt brutal places, but not all, as is the experience of people like Cree playwright Tomson Highway, former Dene Chief Cece Hodgson-McCauley, Senator Len Marchand and Chief Clarence Jules (who was chief of the Kamloops band and attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School.) Marchand has written:

"The reader might be expecting me to tell a few horror stories about phys-

INDIAN SCHOOLS DEAL OUT DEATH

**Startling Rate of Mortality is
Shown in Report to the
Department**

TWENTY-FIVE PER CENT

**Dr. Bryce Shows That Conditions
Are Such as to Encourage
Disease**

Winnipeg, Nov. 15.—Not too favorable a report on the health conditions prevailing in the Indian industrial and boarding schools of the Dominion is that just issued by Dr. P. H. Bryce in his capacity as chief medical officer of the department of Indian affairs. Taken in conjunction with the fact that the religious denominations in charge of Indian education have asked the government within the past month

the spring months, he visited all the schools with a few exceptions. He obtained a statistical statement of the past and present conditions of the health of children. A list of questions was left with each teacher, and from fifteen replies received some rather appalling deductions have been drawn. The report says that of the total of 1,527 pupils reported upon nearly 35 per cent. are dead, and in one school with absolute accuracy the statement shows that 69 per cent. of the ex-pupils are dead, and that everywhere the almost invariable cause of death is given as tuberculosis.

"It is apparent," the report says, "that general ill health from continuous respiration of the air of increasing foulness is inevitable, but when sometimes consumptive pupils, and very frequently others will discharging scrofulous glands, are present to add an infective quality to the atmosphere, we have created a situation so dangerous to health that I am often surprised that results were not more serious than they have been shown statistically to be."

Dr. Bryce remarks that conditions in a majority of schools are much as to demand an immediate remedy. In two or three schools there is a very noticeable absence of drill or manual exercise among boys or callisthenics or breathing exercises among young girls.

The report strange to say, does not contain any recommendations or suggestions as to what should be done to reduce this abnormal death rate among Indian pupils, although the statistics given and general conditions described, make it quite evident that vigorous action cannot be long

Daily Colonist, November 16, 1907

ical and sexual abuse at the residential school. But I know of no incidences at KIRS."

But former Assembly of First Nations leader Phil Fontaine broke the silence when he stated in a CBC interview in 1990, that "In my grade three class... if there were 20 boys, every single one of them... would have experienced what I experienced. They would have experienced some aspect of sexual abuse."

The churches (at least publicly) shared the view of the Department of Indian Affairs that the primary purpose of the IRS was either integrative (combining of cultures) or assimilative (supplanting one culture with another).

This was not the view of Indigenous groups who emphasized that the schools should only "promote economic development, not cultural assimilation." Generally, the conditions within the residential schools were poor, with sub-standard accommodation, food and healthcare, and often also delivering un-

impressive scholastic results.

The schools were, however, sometimes better than reserve conditions, and parents were known to line up to have their children registered. As Brian Giesbrecht writes, "From early in the colonial period, there was a general agreement that European-style education was the best way to help Indigenous people whose lands and way of life had been taken from them [and that] both education and integration into the non-Indigenous culture and society were necessary for Indigenous people to survive."

By 1948, a Special Joint Committee of Parliament concluded that the schools should be less oppressive, less negligent, and the assimilationist project should evolve into "education for citizenship," so to enable students to eventually join the mainstream. From the early 1940s onwards, the schools began to shut down (see the chart, below). By the 1970s, school administration

started to be transferred to band councils and Indian educational committees.

GENOCIDE?

Historical events officially termed genocides are quite limited in number: Among them are the Holocaust, Armenians killed by the Ottomans during WWI, the 1930s famine in Ukraine, the Rwanda catastrophe of 1994, Srebrenica in 1995. Yet the Uyghurs in China, the Darfur civil war, and even the activities of the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia, do not yet have sufficient international consensus to qualify.

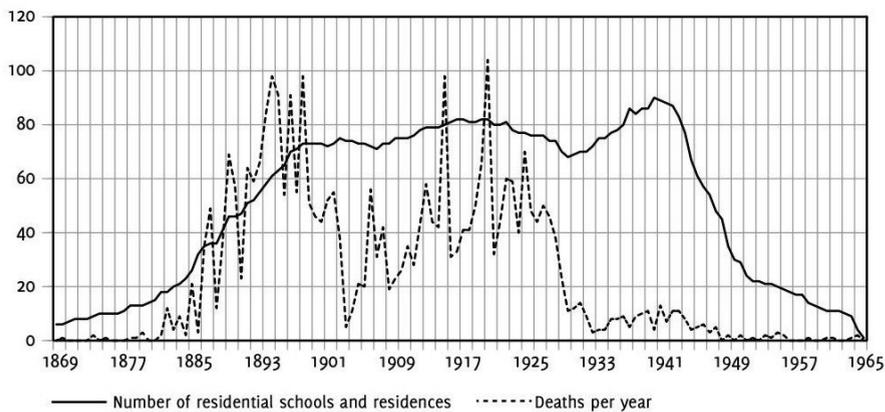
In the Genocide Convention and at the United Nations, the concept is very specific. It involves efforts towards extermination, not only mass murder. The UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect states unequivocally, "[T]here must be a proven intent on the part of perpetrators to physically destroy" a group. "Cultural destruction does not suffice."

Few dispute that Indian Residential Schools (IRS) in Canada were often harsh, drafty and disease-ridden, nor that Christian religious indoctrination was part of the curriculum. There were instances of criminal sexual abuse, and corporal punishment against children culturally unfamiliar with severe disciplinary measures was a particularly cruel practice.

Many assessments of the treatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada exist, including: the 1906 report of Chief Health Inspector Dr. Peter Bryce; the Special Joint Committee report to Parliament in 1948; within the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (2006); Prime Minister Stephen Harper's apology on behalf of Canada in 2008; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report (TRCR) released in 2015; followed by the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG 2019).

Another critic of the claim of IRS being genocidal is Douglas Farrow, Professor of Theology and Ethics at McGill University. He points to John Milloy, author of *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School*

Graph 12
Annual figures for number of residential schools in operation
and number of residential school deaths (Named and Unnamed
registers combined), 1869–1965



Source: Rosenthal, “Statistical Analysis of Deaths”; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, *Indian Residential Schools of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement* 2011.

System, 1879 to 1986, who believed the high mortality rates “were primarily due to the policy of paying churches on a per-capita basis.” This, Farrow underlines, “incentivized over-crowding and the dangerous admission or retention of sick students. It was inexcusable, but it was not genocide.”

TUBERCULOSIS

One thing that is clear is that death rates from disease (particularly tuberculosis) were far higher in IRS (and higher still on reserves) than in the general population, but they dropped dramatically — across all populations — once vaccines were discovered and deployed, beginning in 1921. (Even today, however, long after the closure of the schools, First Nations people living on reserves have a rate of TB that is 40 times higher than the general population.) Tuberculosis is a highly infectious, bacterial disease, and often an indicator of poverty, overcrowding and poor sanitary conditions.

FROM CULTURAL GENOCIDE TO GENOCIDE

While the TRC Report obliquely refers to physical (or traditional) genocide in its summary volume, (“Canada did all these things”), it used the term ‘cultural genocide’ throughout, *and did so in order*

to distinguish what happened from physical genocide: “The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this [assimilation] policy, which can best be described as ‘cultural genocide’.”

The phrase was used earlier by former Prime Minister Paul Martin in 2013, and (controversially) also by Beverley McLachlin, while still Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, in May of 2015. It is now frequently used. The act of genocide, though, does not extend to ‘cultural genocide.’

Then the MMIWG Report proclaimed that the higher-than-national murder rates for Indigenous women and girls were “caused by state actions and inactions rooted in colonialism and colonial ideologies” and constituted “race, identity and gender-based genocide.”

This change in terminology was not universally supported, certainly not by the late Erna Paris, an expert researcher in the genocide and Holocaust subject area, and a respected advocate for the International Criminal Court. While Paris accepted the ‘cultural genocide’ term, she angrily denounced what she called the “gratuitous charge that Canada has committed, and continues to commit, genocide against its Indigenous populations.” The Inquiry conclusion

“that Canada is a genocidal state,” she wrote in the *Globe and Mail*, “lines up with the distortion of language characterizing much of contemporary political discourse.” And, she cautioned, whether we get to reconciliation will “depend on the tenor” of the words we use.

Following purported discoveries of possible unmarked graves (signals detected by ground penetrating radar), initially at Kamloops, British Columbia in May 2021, the national tone changed dramatically.

The Canadian Historical Association (CHA) governing council issued its 2021 Canada Day statement, *The History of Violence Against Indigenous Peoples Fully Warrants the Use of the Word ‘Genocide’*, claiming: “Settler governments ... have worked, and arguably still work, towards the elimination of indigenous peoples as both a distinct culture and physical group.”

DISAGREEMENTS

There was a backlash from a group of more than 60 Canadian historians, including the highly regarded Margaret MacMillan, Jack Granatstein, David Bercuson, Patrice Dutil, Éric Bédard, Christopher Dummitt and Robert Bothwell. The group, in their *Open Letter*, rejected CHA’s “broad scholarly consensus” that what happened in Canada was genocide. An activist CHA, they decried, was “insulting and dismissing the scholars who have arrived at a different assessment.”

One of the most significant of those who signed the letter, J.R. Miller, is a preeminent scholar of Indian Residential Schools, and not one to shy away from criticism of them. But he rejected any claim that there is evidence of “an intent to destroy [Indigenous peoples], in whole or in part” in Canadian policy. Supportive of the TRC Report overall, he also stated that the TRC’s blaming social problems that Indigenous people face today on the schools “looks tenuous at best.”

“From Truth Comes Reconciliation” is a collection of essays assessing the 3,766-page TRC Report. Editors Rodney Clifton and Mark DeWolf included authors who felt the TRC rules

of evidence fell far short of balanced treatment, let alone stringent legal standards. Oral statements were welcome, but substantiating evidence was not mandatory, and cross-examination was not permitted. Former Manitoba Judge Brian Giesbrecht (who wants to abolish the Indian Act and all vestiges of a race-based system in Canada) refers to the problematic inclusion of testimony from appointed ‘honorary witnesses’ who “never witnessed anything, positive or negative about the residential schools.” He argues that “unverified and difficult-to-believe claims [...] undermine the credibility of the Commission and its Report.”

Most testimony was negative and, unsurprisingly, critical of the school experience. Still, the TRC Report does acknowledge that “much of the discussion of the history of residential schools has overlooked both the positive intent with which many staff members approached their work, and the positive accomplishments of the school system. Although they certainly believed the system was underfunded, [staff] devoted much of their lives to educating and caring for Aboriginal children.” [Summary TRCR, page 128.]

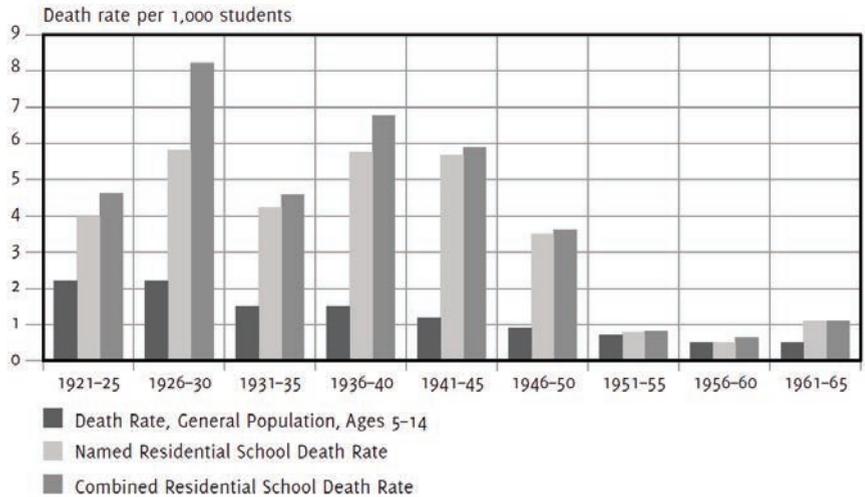
A belief that genocide — not just assimilation — is the inevitable consequence of imposing a ‘settler-colonial society’ on an Indigenous population will conflict with more complex analysis that many credible historians over decades have deduced. The late archaeologist and ethno-historian Bruce Trigger for instance (who, for his meticulous research, was adopted by a clan of the Wendat [Huron] Confederacy) offered this 1985 evaluation of early Indigenous-European settler relations:

“Settlement in Canada, unlike that in the United States, had not been dominated by violent clashes with native groups over rights to land. The St Lawrence lowlands had been largely stripped of their native inhabitants by epidemics and wars among the Indians themselves prior to European settlement.”

Despite clashes, Trigger wrote, “the French treated the Indians who lived within the present borders of Canada as producers of a valued [fur trade] asset...”

Graph 4

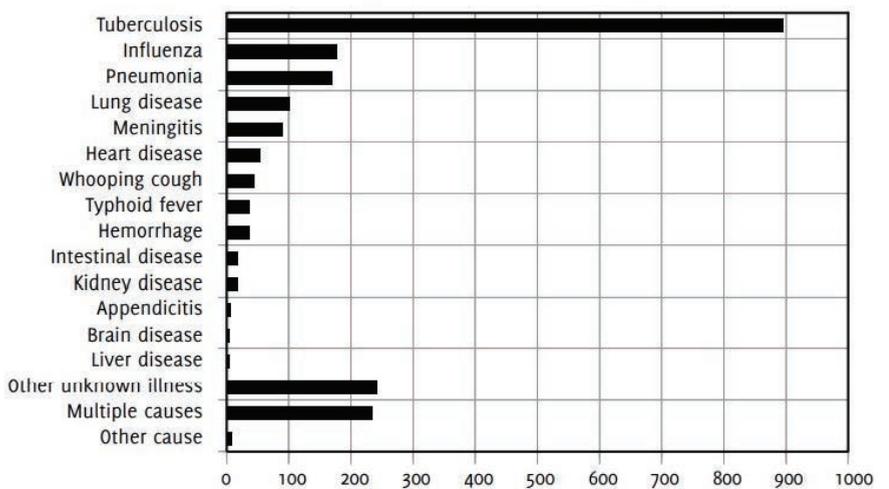
Comparative death rates per 1,000 population, residential schools (Named and Unnamed registers combined) and the general Canadian population of school-aged children, using five-year averages from 1921 to 1965.



Source: Fraser, Vital Statistics and Health, Table B35-50, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-516-x/section-b/4147437-eng.htm>; Rosenthal, “Statistical Analysis of Deaths,” 13.

Graph 6

Causes of residential school deaths by illness (contributing and sole causes combined; Named and Unnamed registers combined), 1867-2000



Source: Rosenthal, “Statistical Analysis of Deaths.”

and, furthermore, “the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which prevented the uncontrolled expansion of settlement, made overt conflict between Indians and Whites minimal.”

EVIDENCE?

To date, no remains of children have been found at a half dozen residential

schools where excavations have taken place, including most recently in the dug-out basement of a Manitoba church at the former Pine Creek Residential School.

There have been problems accessing some residential school records, many of which were purged between 1936 and 1954, although persistent research-



Students at Fort Albany Residential School, c. 1945 | © Wikimedia

ers such as [Nina Green](#) have successfully located many “missing” residential school children in documents located in overlooked government and church archives. More disruptive of the narrative, critics [Giesbrecht and Flanagan](#) insist:

“There is no record of a single student being murdered at a residential school – never mind thousands — in the 113-year history of residential schools. Nor — and this is key — are there any records of Indigenous parents claiming that their children went to residential schools ‘never to be seen again.’”

The national ‘mass hysteria’ that resulted from the Kamloops announcement more than two years ago may be subsiding. Some media are more careful about their headlines (not “mass graves” nor “remains of 215 children” as the Kamloops Band press release stated; but “possible burials”, “ground disturbances” and “targets of interest.”)

And as Douglas Farrow quotes Chief Sophie Pierre (who attended the St. Eugene’s school): “There’s no discovery, we knew it was there, it’s a graveyard. The fact there are graves inside a graveyard shouldn’t be a surprise to anyone.”

HAZARDS OF TRUTH-TELLING

Many now know of the cancelling (and firing) of Dr. Frances Widdowson, a scholar of Indigenous policy for more

than two decades; the dismissal of Abbotsford, British Columbia teacher Jim McMurtry for insisting that tuberculosis was the primary killer of Indigenous children; the tragic suicide of Toronto District School Board principal [Richard Bilkszto](#) who questioned whether Canada was a “bastion of white supremacy.”

Despite a growing number of claims being challenged, [NDP Member of Parliament Leah Gazan](#) in October 2022 organized a *unanimous* resolution in the House of Commons declaring residential schools an act of genocide. She has now gone further to equate legitimate challenges to that narrative with “denialism,” and therefore a “hate crime” that should be prosecuted. This strategy may not succeed but it would make a column such as this one riskier to publish and therefore harder to find.

Gazan has been joined in her quest by Kimberley Murray, *Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools*, whose [report](#) has called for “the implementation of both civil and criminal sanctions” against “prolific violence” that is said to take place “via e-mail, telephone, social media, op-eds and, at times, through in-person confrontations.”

But when the RCMP’s Kamloops detachment opened a file to investigate the

“discovery of 215 children’s remains,” Truth and Reconciliation Commission Chair Murray Sinclair accused the police of “typical heavy-handed[ness]” and of intimidation. The RCMP subsequently withdrew and handed over the investigation to the Kamloops Band (and Chief Rosanne Casimir.)

A National Post [article](#) tried to absolve the Indigenous leadership of exaggeration or obfuscation and to blame instead “foreign news outlets” and “activists”, but in truth it was Chief Casimir several weeks after the initial Kamloops announcement who put forward a motion still claiming “**the mass grave** discovered at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School reveals Crown conduct reflecting a **pattern of genocide** against Indigenous Peoples...” The Assembly of First Nations Chiefs voted in favour of her resolution at the AFN’s Annual General Assembly in July 2021 and reissued it that December.

And now, in her new book [Doppelgänger](#), Naomi Klein laments anti-vaxxers’ appropriation of orange T-shirts, a symbol of justice for “Indigenous survivors of the **genocidal** Indian residential-school system.”

DO NOT SPECULATE: EXCAVATE!

There remain many unanswered questions. A wide berth has been given to conjecture and stories. So far, very few excavations of rumoured burial sites have been undertaken. Some have been blocked or delayed by band leaders who believe investigation would involve “trespassing on sacred ground” and constitute “**continued genocide**.”

Yet, independent forensic excavations should clear up much of the mystery surrounding (in particular) the Kamloops residential school accusations. It is expected that remains will still be found in abandoned community cemeteries.

We will all benefit from honest and full disclosure. The silencing of critics, on the other hand, only increases skepticism and suspicion, and delays reconciliation. ■

Robin Collins writes about peace from Ottawa.

Project Save the World's Fall 2023 Online Forums

All the video talks on this list can be seen on your computer, tablet, or smartphone at Project Save the World's website: <https://tosavetheworld.ca>. At the top of our home page, just type into the search bar the title of a show, the episode number, or the name of a speaker. These conversations are also accessible on the website page as audio podcasts and (often) as transcripts. There is also a comment column where you are invited to discuss the show after watching it, hearing it, or reading the transcript. If someone replies, we will let you know.



Episode 572: Global Town Hall, October 2023

Paul Werbos jokes about Schrödinger's cat, Marilyn Krieger tells us about California's cats, Andre Kamenshikov describes the present state of the Russia/Ukraine war as like the Western front of WW1 and Gordon Edwards reminds us that Canada was first to practice vitrification of nuclear waste. What a Global Town Hall! For the video, audio podcast, transcript and discussion: <https://tosavetheworld.ca/episode-572-global-town-hall-oct-2023>.



Episode 573: Food Security and Climate

Cynthia Rosenzweig is a professor at Columbia University who studies the connections between food security and climate change. She reports that the number of hungry people has markedly increased since the Sustainable Development Goals were promulgated, promising to reduce it. For the



video, audio podcast, transcript and comments: <https://tosavetheworld.ca/episode-573-food-security-and-climate>.

Episode 574: Water Security

Leila Harris is a professor in British Columbia who studies the political and social aspects of water. She began with a dissertation on the methods of irrigation in Turkey and more recently has spent time in African townships, seeing how access to abundant clean water affects the social relationships among neighbors. For the video, audio podcast, transcript, and comments: <https://tosavetheworld.ca/episode-574-water-security>.



Episode 575: Rivers and Peace

Aaron Wolf is a geography professor at Oregon State University. He heads a program teaching graduate students



to work out treaties and other agreements among countries with transboundary disputes over water — mainly rivers that run through their lands. For the video, audio podcast, transcript, and comments: <https://tosavetheworld.ca/episode-575-rivers-and-peace>.

Episode 576: Empower Russian Escapees

Both Konstantin Samoilov and Andre Kamenshikov have left Russia because of their opposition to the war. Jill Carr-Harris is a Gandhian leader in India. We discuss the possibilities and risks of producing educational forums about nonviolence for millions of expatriate Russians. For the video, audio podcast, transcript and comments: <https://tosavetheworld.ca/episode-576-empower-russian-escapees>.



Episode 577: Global Town Hall, November 2023

The war in Gaza has been going on all month, so we talked most about it. Shane Steinman, Alan Haber, and Paul Werbos all want a solution that does not involve exclusive sovereignty. Andre Sheldon and Alastair Farrugia both promote changes in process. Sandy Greer opposes small modular nuclear reactors and Alexey Prokhorenko has applied to stay in Poland as a refugee. For the video, audio podcast, transcript and comments: <https://tosavetheworld.ca/episode-577-global-town-hall-nov-2023>.



Episode 578: The Trouble in Cameroon

Dr. Mukete Tahle Itoe is a judge in Cameroon and the leader of a humanitarian organization that seeks to provide security for the refugees and migrants in his country. There are over 700,000 internally displaced persons there, victims of the violence that has been going on since 2017 as a result of the “Ambazonian” separatist movement of English-speaking citizens. Some 80 percent of Cameroonians speak French and have created a unitary system of government that is opposed by the English-speaking 20 percent. Itoe himself is seeking harmony, not secession, and wants the situation in his country to be better-known to the rest of the world. For the video and audio podcast: <https://tosavetheworld.ca/episode-578-the-trouble-in-cameroon>.

Episode 579: The Future of Tuvalu

Global warming will submerge most of Tuvalu, but Ambassador Falefou is at the UN, mobilizing support for his country’s survival. For a billion dollars or two, it is possible to raise the elevation and enable the society to continue as a sovereign country in Oceania. That is less expensive than removing the whole population to other countries, which may otherwise be necessary. The Tuvaluans plan to become the first “digital nation.” For the video and audio podcast: <https://tosavetheworld.ca/episode-579-the-future-of-tuvalu>.

Episode 580: Likhotal on Year 2023

Alexander Likhotal, now a professor of international relations in Geneva, was formerly executive director of Green Cross International, appointed by Mikhail Gorbachev, whom he served as press secretary both during and after Gorbachev’s presidency. His pessimism about the future is based on the universally shared conclusion that 2023 has been tragic in many countries and for many failures. We discuss Zelinsky’s policies in Ukraine, the prospects for an end to the war in Ukraine, and the tragic war in Israel and Gaza. For the video and audio podcast: <https://tosavetheworld.ca/episode-580-likhotal-on-year-2023>.

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