

Their Precious Young Minds and Our Precious Young Minds

By [William Blum](#)

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Region: [USA](#)

“She was a redheaded rebel, the singer in the family, a trash-talking, tattooed 21-year-old wrapped up in a hip-hop dream of becoming Holland’s Eminem. Then Betsy found Allah. After her sudden conversion to Islam last summer, Betsy began dressing in full Muslim robes. By January, the once-agnostic Dutch woman, raised in a home where the only sign of religion was a dusty Bible on a shelf, began defending homegrown terrorists. ... Denis Cuspert, a German hip-hop artist known as Deso Dogg who converted in 2010 and later joined The Islamic State [ISIS], delivers a rap-like chant portraying the path to jihad as a chance for empowerment, spiritual fulfillment, vengeance and adventure. ... ‘The door to jihad is standing there waiting for you,’ says a Swedish convert to Islam in a video. ‘It is the fastest way to paradise.’ ”

Tales told many times in recent years, all over Europe, at times in the United States. Parents and authorities are deeply distressed and perplexed. How can young people raised in the West – the freedom-obsessed, democratic, peace-loving, humanitarian, fun-filled West – join the Islamic State and support the public cutting off of the heads of breathing, living human beings? Each of us in our own way are lost souls searching for answers to the awful mysteries of life. But THIS? What life-quest does The Islamic State satisfy that our beloved West can’t satisfy? ISIS is unique in the world in making US foreign policy look good. The Defense Department and the State Department have special task forces studying the new enemy; the latter regularly puts out videos to counteract the many Islamic State videos.

I hope those researching the question look inwardly as well as at ISIS. How do young people raised in the West – the same West we know and love – coldly machine-gun to death more than a dozen Iraqis, men, women, children, reporters, absolutely in cold blood, in the video made famous by Chelsea Manning; but this of course is nothing compared to Fallujah with its two-headed babies, even three-headed, an eye in the middle of the forehead. The Islamic State has done nothing compared to what the United States did to the people of Fallujah. Can anyone name a horror in all of history more gruesome? Yes, there are some, but not many; and much of Fallujah was personally executed by nice, clean-cut, freedom-obsessed, democratic, peace-loving, humanitarian, fun-filled made-in America young men.

Here’s US Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, in his memoir, April 6, 2004, the time of Fallujah, in video teleconference with President Bush, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. “We’ve got to smash somebody’s ass quickly,” said Powell. “There has to be a total victory somewhere. We must have a brute demonstration of power.” Then Bush spoke: “At the end of this campaign al-Sadr must be gone. At a minimum, he will be arrested. It is essential he be wiped out. Kick ass! If somebody tries to stop the march to democracy, we will seek them out and kill them! We must be tougher

than hell! This Vietnam stuff, this is not even close. It is a mind-set. We can't send that message. It's an excuse to prepare us for withdrawal. ... There is a series of moments and this is one of them. Our will is being tested, but we are resolute. We have a better way. Stay strong! Stay the course! Kill them! Be confident! Prevail! We are going to wipe them out! We are not blinking!"

"Years from now when America looks out on a democratic Middle East, growing in freedom and prosperity, Americans will speak of the battles like Fallujah with the same awe and reverence that we now give to Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima" in World War II. - George W. Bush, 2006

Well, George, it's either that or Fallujah was one of the key reasons for the rise of ISIS.

My point here is not that United States foreign policy is as barbaric and depraved as The Islamic State. It's not. Most of the time. I simply hope to make it a bit easier to understand the enemy by seeing ourselves without the stars in our eyes. And I haven't even mentioned what the United States has led the world in for over a century - torture.

The ever-fascinating and ever-revealing subject of ideology

Jeb Bush has gotten himself into trouble because, like all politicians running for office, he is unable to give simple honest answers to simple straightforward questions, for fear of offending one or another segment of the population. How refreshing it would be to have a politician say only what s/he actually believes, even if it's as stupid as usual.

The brother of the previous president has been asked repeatedly: "Knowing what we know now, would you have authorized the invasion of Iraq?" At first his answer was "yes", then at times "I don't know", even "no" at least once, or he's refused to answer at all. Clearly he's been guessing about which reply would win him points with the most people, or which would lose him the least.

This caused a minor uproar, even among conservatives. Right-wing radio host Laura Ingraham was moved to make a rare rational remark: "You can't still think that going into Iraq, now, as a sane human being, was the right thing to. If you do, there has to be something wrong with you."

Such discussions always leave out a critical point. Why did millions of Americans, and even more millions abroad, march against the war in the fall of 2002 and early 2003, before it began? What did they know that the Bush brothers and countless other politicians didn't know? It was clear to the protesters that George W. Bush and Dick Cheney were habitual liars, that they couldn't care less about the people of Iraq, that the defenseless people of that ancient civilization were going to be bombed to hell; most of the protesters knew something about the bombings of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Panama, Yugoslavia, or Afghanistan; and they knew about napalm, cluster bombs, depleted uranium, etc. Those who marched knew that the impending war was something a moral person could not support; and that it was totally illegal, a textbook case of a "war of aggression"; one didn't have to be an expert in international law to know this.

Didn't the Brothers Bush, Hillary Clinton (who voted for the war in the Senate), *et al* know about any of these things? Of course they did. They just didn't care enough; supporting the

empire's domination and expansion was a given, and remains so; no US politician gets very far - certainly not to the White House - questioning the right of American Exceptionalism to impose itself upon humanity (for humanity's sake of course).

Consider the darlings *du jour* of the American Left, Senators Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders. They very seldom speak out critically about US foreign policy or even the military budget. The anti-war/anti-imperialist segment of the American left need to put proper pressure on the two senators.

Mr. Sanders should also be asked why he routinely refers to himself as a "democratic socialist". Why not just "socialist"? It's likely a legacy of the Cold War. I think that he and other political figures who use the term are, consciously or unconsciously, trying to disassociate themselves from communism, the Soviet Union, Marxism, etc., all those things that are not good for you. (The word "socialist" once connoted furtive men with European accents, sinister facial hair, and bombs.)

It would be delightful to hear Sanders openly declare that he is simply a "socialist". Socialism can be democratic; indeed, a lot more so than capitalism, particularly concerning the distribution of wealth and all the ramifications of that. Presented here are some relevant thoughts on these issues, from myself and others:

It's only the socialists who maintain as a bedrock principle: People before Profit, which can serve as a very concise definition of socialism, an ideology anathema to the Right and libertarians, who fervently believe, against all evidence, in the rationality of a free market. I personally favor the idea of a centralized, planned economy. (Oh my God, a damn Commie!) Modern society is much too complex and technical to leave its operation in the hands of libertarians, communitarians, or anarchists seeking to return to a "community" or "village" level.

"Washington has always regarded democratic socialism as a greater challenge than totalitarian Communism, which was easy to vilify and made for a handy enemy. In the 1960s and '70s, the favored tactic for dealing with the inconvenient popularity of economic nationalism and democratic socialism was to try to equate them with Stalinism, deliberately blurring the clear differences between the world views." - Naomi Klein

"If it is true, as often said, that most socialist regimes turn out to be dictatorships, that is largely because a dictatorship is much harder to overthrow or subvert than a democracy." - Jean Bricmont, Belgian author of "Humanitarian Imperialism" (2006)

Without a proclaimed socialist vision, radical change becomes too many different things for too many different individuals and groups.

"Call it democracy, or call it democratic socialism, but there must be a better distribution of wealth within this country for all of God's children." - Martin Luther King

The United States is so fearful of the word "socialism" that it changed the "social sciences" to the "behavioral sciences".

If for no other reason than to save the environment, the world needs to abandon the capitalist system. Every day, in every spot on earth, in a multitude of ways, corporations are faced with a choice: to optimize profits or to do what's best for the planet.

The great majority of people in any society work for a salary. They don't need to be motivated by the profit motive. It's not in anyone's genes. Virtually everybody, if given the choice, would prefer to work at jobs where the main motivations are to help others, improve the quality of life of society, and provide themselves with meaningful and satisfying work. It's not natural to be primarily motivated by trying to win or steal "customers" from other people, no holds barred, survival of the fittest or the least honest.

And what about this thing called "democracy", or "majority rule"? Many millions marched against the invasion of Iraq before it began. I don't know of a single soul who marched in favor of it, although I'm sure there must have been someone somewhere. That lucky soul was the one they listened to.

Finally, the question being asked of Jeb Bush and others is not the best one. They're asked: "Knowing what we know now, would you have authorized the invasion of Iraq?" A more important question would be: "Knowing what we knew then, would you have authorized the invasion of Iraq?" And the answer should be "no", because we knew that Saddam Hussein had destroyed his weapons of mass destruction. This is very well documented, from diverse sources, international and Iraqi, including Saddam himself and his chief lieutenants.

The American Mainstream Media - A Classic Tale Of Propaganda

"When an American warplane accidentally struck the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in 1999 during the Kosovo campaign ..."

These words appeared in the *Washington Post* on April 24, 2015 as part of a story about US drone warfare and how an American drone attack in Pakistan in January had accidentally killed two Western aid workers. The *Post* felt no need to document the Belgrade incident, or explain it any further. Almost anyone who follows international news halfway seriously knows about this famous "accident" of May 7, 1999. The only problem is that the story is pure propaganda.

Three people inside the Chinese embassy were killed and Washington apologized profusely to Beijing, blaming outdated maps among other problems. However, two well-documented and very convincing reports in *The Observer* of London in October and November of that year, based on NATO and US military and intelligence sources, revealed that the embassy had been purposely targeted after NATO discovered that it was being used to transmit Yugoslav army communications. The Chinese were doing this after NATO planes had successfully silenced the Yugoslav government's own transmitters. The story of how the US mainstream media covered up the real story behind the embassy bombing is absolutely embarrassing.

Over and above the military need, there may have been a political purpose served. China, then as now, was clearly the principal barrier to US hegemony in Asia, if not elsewhere. The bombing of the embassy was perhaps Washington's charming way of telling Beijing that this is only a small sample of what can happen to you if you have any ideas of resisting or competing with the American juggernaut. Since an American bombing campaign over

Belgrade was already being carried out, Washington was able to have a much better than usual “plausible denial” for the embassy bombing. The opportunity may have been irresistible to American leaders. The chance might never come again.

All of US/NATO’s other bombing “mistakes” in Yugoslavia were typically followed by their spokesman telling the world: “We regret the loss of life.” These same words were used by the IRA in Northern Ireland on a number of occasions over the years following one of their bombings which appeared to have struck the wrong target. But their actions were invariably called “terrorist”.

Undoubtedly, the US media will be writing of the “accidental” American bombing of the Chinese embassy as long as the empire exists and China does not become a member of NATO.

P.S On May 20 the Office of the Director of National Intelligence released a [list of 39 English-language books](#) recovered during the raid that reportedly killed Osama bin Laden. Noam Chomsky and I are the only two authors on the list with two books.

As some of you may remember, in January, 2006 bin Laden, in an audiotape, recommended that Americans read my book *Rogue State*. This resulted in the US media discovering my existence for a week. You can read the full story in my book *America’s Deadliest Export: Democracy* (pp. 281-84).

Notes:

1. *Washington Post*, May 7, 2015
2. Ricardo Sanchez, *Wiser in Battle: A Soldier’s Story* (2008), pages 349-350
3. *Associated Press*, November 11, 2006
4. William Blum, *America’s Deadliest Export: Democracy*, pp. 61-2
5. *The Observer* (London), October 17, 1999 (“Nato bombed Chinese deliberately”), and November 28, 1999 (“Truth behind America’s raid on Belgrade”)
6. *Extra! Update* (magazine of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting [FAIR], New York), December 1999; appeared first as solitary article October 22, 1999 (“U.S. Media Overlook Expose on Chinese Embassy Bombing”)

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