

Whose Blood, Whose Hands?

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“Qasem Soleimani had the blood of Americans on his hands”, so said US Representative Eliot Engel, Chair of the House Committee on Foreign Relations. A similar accusation was made by many other politicians and commentators. But these blood-drenched politicians and commentators only know what the extremely biased anti-Russian and anti-Iranian US intelligence reports say which are predictably unreliable. They have no idea of Soleimani’s history who many observers credit with being the chief strategist in defeating ISIS. And the most important question of all is ignored – why are unwanted US military present in other countries? They are there illegally, a blatantly imperial menace. Why is Congress funding this policy that in fact threatens the people of the US, rather than protecting them?

Of course, these mostly White men hypocritically ignore gruesome history, including militarily supporting Iraq’s Saddam Hussein with chemical weapons in his 8-year war against Iran that took one million of their lives. Or, the totally concocted, grotesquely illegal and criminal US war against Iraq, 1990-1991, and 2003-present, killing over a million lives. Since the blood is not streaming out of their bodies, they callously ignore the blood of Iranians, Iraqis, Afghans, Syrians, Yemenis, Libyans, Somalis, Venezuelans, Nicaraguans, Salvadorans, Hondurans, Bolivians, Sudanese, Pakistanis, Nigerians, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, and citizens of many other countries, that is in fact on *their* hands, and on the hands of countless US Generals, Colonels, Majors, Captains, Lieutenants, and their Navy and Marine counterparts, and common soldiers and sailors under the direction of these officers, the President Commander-in-Chief, and all their funders in the bipartisan US Congress comprised of 535 (s)elected representatives, such as Mr. Engel, and the hands of millions of taxpayers.

How many US citizens know of the crimes our country systematically has committed, and continues to commit, throughout the world, crimes that are constant, remorseless, and fully documented? British playwright and Nobel Prize recipient Harold Pinter sadly commented: “Nobody talks about them. . . . It never happened. Nothing ever happened. Even while it was happening it wasn’t happening. It didn’t matter. It was of no interest”.^[1] Without historical context, there is little capacity to critique the veracity of contemporary policies and rhetoric. So, it is believed, the US just couldn’t be involved in patterns of criminal interventions; our origins just couldn’t be built on dispossession and genocide. “That is not the American way.” But the fact is that it *is* the American way. We simply don’t know about it and don’t want to know about it. Impunity has erased memory.

We would all be enlightened to re-read Barbara Tuchman’s classic, *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam*, where she clearly articulates the horrific patterns of war folly that have played out around the globe for millennia.^[2] Only now it would be from Troy to Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan.

Impunity

Cultural historians, philosophers, psychologists, essayists, and scientists caution us to seriously understand the past and its patterns. Sigmund Freud declared that in psychic life, nothing of what has been formed in the past ever disappears. Everything that has occurred is preserved in one way or another and, in fact, reappears under either favorable or unfavorable circumstances.

When impunity dominates, memory disappears and justice as a permanent value in human history ceases to exist. Sickness in the soul – of the individual, as well as of a nation – results where nothing is real. Everything becomes pretend, lies told over and over in many different forms throughout time.[3]

Impunity in fact produces severe disturbances within the individual and collective psyche, manifesting in behavioral psychopathologies of huge magnitude, such as wars. Think of a spoiled child who has never been taught boundaries or been held to account for harmful behavior. Collective as well as individual narcissism can lead to extreme antisocial conduct. Security is experienced through individuality, attracted to authoritarianism, but not social justice. An acquisitive habit settles into the inner life, preempting an authentic *inquisitive* and socially empathic mind. A social compact is destroyed in deference to privatization, creating *anomie*. Life is commodified. Disparity between the Haves and Have-Nots becomes extreme; today this is called neoliberal economics. History is negated, concealing past traumas such as unspeakable genocides and deceitfully based wars.[4]

The Shame of Forceful Dispossession Hidden by Exceptionalism

The United States of America was founded on two horrific genocides – the forceful dispossession of Indigenous Americans, stealing their land, murdering millions with impunity, and the forceful dispossession of Africans, stealing their labor, murdering millions with impunity. Their blood is still on our hands.

So, we created a kind of “religious” mythology about our country to conceal our painful *shame*. It is called exceptionalism, enabled by impunity. The psychological and cultural conditioning growing up in US America, especially for a Eurocentric White male like myself, is emotionally and intellectually comfortable. But the noble history we have been taught about ourselves is fantastic fakery which continues to serve as a comfortable escape from experiencing and feeling the horrible truth of the collective shame of our unspeakable criminal genocidal origins. Capitalism itself would not have existed without centuries of egregious colonial plunder of millions of Indigenous Americans, or millions of enslaved Africans. Karma exists in some fashion, or as the saying goes, what goes around comes around.

Exceptional Stupidity

So, not only does the lie of being superior over others enable us to avoid extremely unpleasant thoughts and feelings, but it also discourages asking enlightening, delving questions, about who we really are as a people. Why mess with the apparent successful myth of being exceptional?

US policy operates in paranoia with delusions of grandeur. By the early 1980s, with more than a decade of reflection since being in Viet Nam, I sensed that this culture of my birth and upbringing possesses an illness of psychotic denial. This feeling of superiority – of being uniquely exceptional – is very dangerous because it leads to a kind of stupor, or dangerous

stupidity, uninterested in engaging in truly honest dialogue or discussion. It acts like a mindless, conceited fool. And against stupidity we are defenseless since reason and diplomacy are confidently ignored. It is much more dangerous than malice. Exceptionalism is deeply conditioned in us.

But thoughtlessness – a suspension of critical thinking – today leads to a Planet-threatening nuclear, arrogant war-making society. Not unintelligent, but stupid. And the power brokers, and many in the population, have a vested interest in *remaining* stupid to protect the comfortable original lie, that requires countless subsequent lies, in turn, to preserve that original lie. We have told ourselves a fairy tale, and it feels good, serving as a successful technique of denial.

Our dangerousness was again evidenced by our latest act of war – targeted drone assassinations at the Baghdad International Airport of Iran’s popular General Qasem Soleimani, and Iraqi military leader Abu Mehdi Muhandis. And until we the people are able to literally take the money out of the Military-Congressional-Intelligence-Banking-Wall Street-Drug Complex, and the ability of that wealthy complex to absolutely control with bribery our political process, we are doomed to war, climate catastrophe, and extinction, or near so.

Immediately after the assassination of Soleimani, the stock of major US weapon’s manufacturers surged as investors look forward to additional obscene profits from more war. Trump had it right in his campaign promise to get the US out of the Middle East, but he has forsaken that goal in deference to the Neocons and elements of the Deep State, in cahoots with Congress. Ironically, all this military bully posturing, murdering, lying, and disrespect for diplomacy, severely endangers everybody. The Department of Defense (DOD) really should be described as the Department of Offensive War (DOOW).

What is required is a massive, widespread popular rebellion rooted in a global consciousness that tenaciously empowers us to replace our deceitful oligarchy. Why do we continue to allow this insane national misbehavior? Will we escape our stupor, and instead feel, taste, and experience the countless liters of blood on our hands? If so, we might be awakened to the most important of all social emotions – empathy – that enables all humanity to live as one interconnected species, even with different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. It really is our choice, and the stakes could not be higher – survival with dignity.

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Notes

[1] Harold Pinter, *Various Voices: Prose, Poetry, Politics, 1948-1998*(New York: Grove Press, 1998, 237.

[2] New York: Knopf, 1984.

[3] S. Brian Willson, "The Pretend Society," <http://www.brianwillson.com/the-pretend-society/>.

[4] B. Paz Rojas, "Impunity and the Inner History of Life," *Social Justice: A Journal of Crime, Conflict and World Order*, 26(4), 1999.

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