

# Holocaust- Gedenktag im Gymnasium in Kusel



Ein Foto von dem Vortrag zum Holocaust-Gedenktag am 27. Januar 2020 im Gymnasium in Kusel.

In jedem Jahr organisiert Herr Ulrich Reh, Pfarrer und Religionslehrer, Vorträge und einen Besuch der Stolpersteine in Kusel für die 9. Klassen (ca. 100 Jugendliche von 15 Jahren).

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## Redesigning Cities Could Solve Our Biggest Problems. But We're Hardly Talking About Them.

Cities are the biggest thing we create. But when we talk about sustainability, there is still surprisingly little discussion about how our cities are designed as a whole.

This is a clip from 2012: Time For Change (2010). Watch the full film for free online [here](#) or via [Hulu](#). You can buy the [DVD here](#).

For more info on eco-cities, we highly recommend checking out Richard Register's website: <http://www.ecocitybuilders.org/>

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# Vaderlandsche letteroefeningen. Jaargang 1824. Een bezoek op Aruba en Bonaire, twee tot Curaçao behorende eilanden, in 1823

*Bonaire* is, wegens deszelfs ligging bovenswinds, gunstiger voor *Curaçao*, dan *Aruba*, en meer bekend bij de zeelieden, die hetzelfde doorgaans opzoeken, als zij naar *Curaçao* willen. Er is geene andere vaart op dit eiland, dan van eene of twee lands-goeletten, (want alle koophandel is er verboden) die gestadig af en aan varen, om van daar zout, kalk en brandhout te halen. Om van *Curaçao* naar *Bonaire* te komen, heeft men meestal 24 uren noodig; want het gaat tegen wind en stroom op: in het afkomen besteedt men er nog geene 8 uren over. Zoodra men de oostpunt van *Curaçao* verlaat, ziet men terstond het westelijk gedeelte van *Bonaire* voor zich, hetwelk het éénige bergachtige land dier plaats is.

De zuidelijke kust, die men langs vaart, om naar de baai te komen, is zeer schoon; *schoon*, in de beteekenis, waarin de zeeluî het gebruiken: want men zeilt veilig zoo na aan den wal, dat men er, in den wezenlijken zin des woords, met een' steen op werpen kan. Reeds was lk het grootste gedeelte van het land, en wel zeer nabij den wal, langs gevaren, zonder dat zich eenig kenteeken vertoonde, dat deze plaats bewoond wordt, en zonder dat ik eenig levend bewerktuigd wezen gezien had. Het met kreupelhout beplante lage land wordt door niets afgewisseld, dan door kleine kale bergen. Eindelijk kwamen wij voor de baai. Hier verbeeldde ik mij *Curaçao* te zien, toen het, vóór bijna twee eeuwen, door onze voorvaders was in bezit genomen. Langs een dor, eenzaam en akelig strand, waar men niets hoort dan het eentoonig gekabbel van het water, ziet men eenige ver van elkander liggende strooijen huizen, in welker midden een klein Fort staat, met vier stukken geschut voorzien, waar de Kommandeur zijn verblijf houdt, en dat tot eene bewaarplaats dient van de landsgoederen.

Lees

verder: <http://ikkiseiland.com/een-bezoek-op-aruba-en-bonaire-twee-tot-curacao-b>

# To Members Of Congress



January 7, 2020.

The unlawful and provocative assassination of Iran's top general, Qasem Soleimani, has already given rise to an escalating spiral of lethal events. The greatest risks are to stumble escalating into a devastating war in the Middle East with grave consequences for the peoples of Iran and Iraq and likely across the region. Such a war would have disastrous effects for this country, for the region and the world. It is certain to do further harm to the reputation of the United States, which already is perceived in much of the world as an irresponsible and criminal political actor in the region, using military force in ways that have made already difficult situations catastrophic by taking various dangerous military, economic and quasi-diplomatic initiatives misleadingly presented as "maximum pressure"

It is imperative for the well-being of our country, and indeed the world, that the Congress of the United States fulfill its most solemn constitutional responsibility, and impose effective restraints on the war-making actions of this impeached president. This is a moment when partisan politics should be put aside, not only for the sake of national interests but for the benefit of humanity - -we should realize that these unilateral actions by the United States have put the entire world at risk. It is also a moment when Republicans as well as Democrats must stand up for a sane foreign policy, and for diplomacy and peace instead of aggression and war, and fulfill their duties as Members of Congress.

The Iranian people have endured decades of economic warfare waged by the US and its allies. Since the revolution of 1979 in Iran and the end of a mutually beneficial relationship between the US and Iran's autocratic leader, the Shah, the US has imposed numerous sanctions on Iran under various guises, threatened it with war and inflicted pain and suffering on its people.

What is desperately needed with respect to Iran is not any further recourse to coercive diplomacy based on escalating threats, crippling sanctions, and tit-for-tat military actions. What is urgently needed is an immediate shift to restorative diplomacy based on mutual respect for international and domestic law, with the objective of peace, stability, and cooperation.

From all that we now know, General Soleimani had come to Iraq without stealth on a commercial plane. He came to Iraq on a diplomatic peacemaking mission at the invitation of the Baghdad Government, and with a meeting scheduled on the following day with the Prime Minister that was part of an ongoing effort to seek a lessening of tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In reaction to major violations of its sovereignty, the Iraqi Parliament has voted to expel U.S. troops from their country. In place of what seemed a promising regional initiative the assassination of General Soleimani has resulted in an intensification of conflict, further massive suffering, and the likelihood of dangerous escalation.

We call on Congress to act with urgency to stem this slide toward war and regional chaos.

We urge you to consider imposing ironclad restraints on the authority of the President to make any further use of international force without a clear and definite authorization by the U.S. Congress, which itself should respect the relevant prohibitions of international law and the provisions and procedures of the UN Charter.

Respectfully yours,

Noam Chomsky

Richard Falk

Daniel Ellsberg

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## **Noam Chomsky: US Is A Rogue**

# State And Suleimani's Assassination Confirms It



Noam Chomsky

Trump's decision to assassinate one of Iran's most prominent and highly respected military leaders, Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, has added yet another name to the list of people killed by the U.S. — which many rightly see as the world's biggest rogue state.

The assassination has escalated hostilities between Tehran and Washington and created an even more explosive situation in the politically volatile Middle East. As was to be expected, Iran has vowed to retaliate on its own terms for the killing of its general, while also announcing that it will withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal. Iraq's parliament, in turn, has voted to expel all U.S. troops, but Trump has responded with threats of sanctions if the U.S. is forced to remove its troops from the country.

As world-renowned public intellectual Noam Chomsky points out in this exclusive interview for *Truthout*, the primary aim of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East has been to control the region's energy resources. Here Chomsky — a university professor emeritus at MIT and laureate professor of linguistics at the University of Arizona who has published more than 120 books on linguistics, global affairs, U.S. foreign policy, media studies, politics and philosophy — offers his analysis of Trump's reckless act and its possible effects.

*C.J. Polychroniou: Noam, the U.S. assassination of Iran's Quds Force commander Qassim Suleimani has reaffirmed Washington's long-held obsession with Tehran and its clerical regime, which goes all the way back to the late 1970s. What is the*

*conflict between U.S. and Iran all about, and does the assassination of Suleimani constitute an act of war?*

*Noam Chomsky:* Act of war? Perhaps we can settle on reckless international terrorism. It seems that Trump's decision, on a whim, appalled high Pentagon officials who briefed him on options, on pragmatic grounds. If we wish to look beyond, we might ask how we would react in comparable circumstances.

Suppose that Iran were to murder the second-highest U.S. official, its top general, in the Mexico City international airport, along with the commander of a large part of the U.S.-supported army of an allied nation. Would that be an act of war? Others can decide. It is enough for us to recognize that the analogy is fair enough, and that the pretexts put forth by Washington collapse so quickly on examination that it would be embarrassing to run through them.

Suleimani was greatly respected — not only in Iran, where he was a kind of cult figure. This is recognized by U.S. experts on Iran. One of the most prominent experts, Vali Nasr (no dove, and who detests Suleimani), [says](#) that Iraqis, including Iraqi Kurds, “don't see him as the nefarious figure that the West does, but they see him through the prism of defeating ISIS.” They have not forgotten that when the huge, heavily armed U.S.-trained Iraqi army quickly collapsed, and the Kurdish capital of Erbil, then Baghdad and all of Iraq were about to fall in the hands of ISIS [also known as Daesh], it was Suleimani and the Iraqi Shia militias he organized that saved the country. Not a small matter.

As for what the conflict is all about, the background reasons are not obscure. It has long been a primary principle of U.S. foreign policy to control the vast energy resources of the Middle East: to *control*, not necessarily to use. Iran has been central to this objective during the post-World War II period, and its escape from the U.S. orbit in 1979 has accordingly been intolerable.

The “obsession” can be traced to 1953, when Britain — the overlord of Iran since oil was discovered there — was unable to prevent the government from taking over its own resources and called on the global superpower to manage the operation. There is no space to review the course of the obsession since in detail, but some highlights are instructive.

Britain called on Washington with some reluctance. To do so meant surrendering more of its former empire to the U.S. and declining even more to the role of

“junior partner” in global management, as the foreign office recognized with dismay. The Eisenhower administration took over. It organized a military coup that overthrew the parliamentary regime and re-installed the Shah, restoring the oil concession to its rightful hands, with the U.S. taking over 40 percent of the former British concession. Interestingly, Washington had to force U.S. majors to accept this gift; they preferred to keep to cheaper Saudi oil (which the U.S. had taken over from Britain in a mini war during World War II). But under government coercion, they were forced to comply: one of those unusual but instructive incidents revealing how the government sometimes pursues long-term imperial interests over the objections of the powerful corporate sector that largely controls and even staffs it — with considerable resonance in U.S.-Iran relations in recent years.

The Shah proceeded to institute a harsh tyranny. He was regularly cited by Amnesty International as a leading practitioner of torture, always with strong U.S. support as Iran became one of the pillars of U.S. power in the region, along with the Saudi family dictatorship and Israel. Technically, Iran and Israel were at war. In reality, they had extremely close relations, which surfaced publicly after the overthrow of the Shah in 1979. The tacit relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia are surfacing much more clearly now within the framework of the reactionary alliance that the Trump administration is forging as a base for U.S. power in the region: the Gulf dictatorships, the Egyptian military dictatorship and Israel, linked to Modi’s India, Bolsonaro’s Brazil and other similar elements. A rare semblance of a coherent strategy in this chaotic administration.

The Carter administration strongly supported the Shah until the last moment. High U.S. officials — [Henry] Kissinger, [Dick] Cheney, [Donald] Rumsfeld — called on U.S. universities (mainly my own, MIT, over strong student protest but faculty acquiescence) to aid the Shah’s nuclear programs, even after he made clear that he was seeking nuclear weapons. When the popular uprising overthrew the Shah, the Carter administration was apparently split on whether to endorse the advice of de facto Israeli Ambassador Uri Lubrani, who counselled that “Tehran can be taken over by a very relatively small force, determined, ruthless, cruel. I mean the men who would lead that force will have to be emotionally geared to the possibility that they’d have to kill ten thousand people.”

It didn’t work, and soon Ayatollah Khomeini took over on an enormous wave of popular enthusiasm, establishing the brutal clerical autocracy that still reigns,

crushing popular protests.

Shortly after, Saddam Hussein invaded Iran with strong U.S. backing, unaffected by his resort to chemical weapons that caused huge Iranian casualties; his monstrous chemical warfare attacks against Iraqi Kurds were denied by Reagan, who sought to blame Iran and blocked congressional condemnation.

Finally, the U.S. pretty much took over, sending naval forces to ensure Saddam's control of the Gulf. After the U.S. guided missile cruiser Vincennes shot down an Iranian civilian airliner in a clearly marked commercial corridor, killing 290 passengers and returning to port to great acclaim and awards for exceptional service, Khomeini capitulated, recognizing that Iran cannot fight the U.S. President Bush then invited Iraqi nuclear scientists to Washington for advanced training in nuclear weapons production, a very serious threat against Iran.

Conflicts continued without a break, in more recent years focusing on Iran's nuclear programs. These conflicts ended (in theory) with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, an agreement between Iran and the five permanent members of the UN, plus Germany, in which Iran agreed to sharply curtail its nuclear programs — none of them weapons programs — in return for Western concessions. The International Atomic Energy Agency, which carries out intensive inspections, reports that Iran fully lived up to the agreement. U.S. intelligence agrees.

The topic elicits much debate, unlike another question: Has the U.S. observed the agreement? Apparently not. The JCPOA states that all participants are committed not to impede in any way Iran's reintegration into the global economy, particularly the global financial system, which the U.S. effectively controls. The U.S. is not permitted to interfere "in areas of trade, technology, finance and energy" and others.

While these topics are not investigated, it appears that Washington has been interfering steadily.

President Trump claims that his effective demolition of the JCPOA is an effort to negotiate an improvement. It's a worthy objective, easily realized. Any concerns about Iranian nuclear threats can be overcome by establishing a nuclear weapons-free zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East, with intensive inspections like those successfully implemented under the JCPOA.

[As we have discussed before](#), this is quite straightforward. Regional support is overwhelming. The Arab states initiated the proposal long ago, and continue to



agitate for it, with the strong support of Iran and the former nonaligned countries (G-77, now 132 countries). Europe agrees. In fact, there is only one barrier: the U.S., which regularly vetoes the proposal when it comes up at the review meetings of the Non-Proliferation Treaty countries, most recently by Obama in 2015. The U.S. will not permit inspection of Israel's enormous nuclear arsenal, or even concede its existence, though it is not in doubt. The reason is simple: under U.S. law (the Symington Amendment), conceding its existence would require terminating all aid to Israel.

So the simple method of ending the alleged concern about an Iranian threat is ruled out and the world must face grim prospects.

Since these topics are scarcely mentionable in the U.S., it is perhaps worthwhile to reiterate another forbidden matter: The U.S. and U.K. have a special responsibility to work to establish a NWFZ in the Middle East. They are formally committed to do so under Article 14 of UN Security Council Resolution 687, which they invoked in their effort to concoct some thin legal basis for their invasion of Iraq, claiming that Iraq had violated the Resolution with nuclear weapons programs. Iraq hadn't, as they were soon forced to concede. But the U.S. continues to violate the Resolution to the present in order to protect its Israeli client and to allow Washington to violate U.S. law.

Interesting facts, which, unfortunately, are apparently too incendiary to see the light of day.

There's no point reviewing the years that followed in the hands of the man "sent by God to save Israel from Iran," in the words of the serious figure of the administration, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Returning to the original question, there's quite a lot to contemplate about what the conflict is about. In a phrase, primarily imperial power, damn the consequences.

*The term "rogue state" (used widely by the U.S. State Department) refers to the pursuit of state interests without regard to accepted standards of international behavior and the basic principles of international law. Given that definition, isn't the U.S. a star example of a rogue state?*

State Department officials are not the only ones to use the term "rogue state." It has also been used by prominent American political scientists — referring to the State Department. Not Trump's, Clinton's.

During the era between Reagan's murderous terrorist atrocities in Central America and Bush's invasion of Iraq, they recognized that for much of the world, the U.S. was "becoming the rogue superpower," considered "the single greatest external threat to their societies," and that, "In the eyes of much of the world, in fact, the prime rogue state today is the United States" (Harvard professor of the science of government and government adviser Samuel Huntington; President of the American Political Science Association Robert Jervis. Both in the main establishment journal, *Foreign Affairs*, 1999, 2001).

After Bush took over, qualifications were dropped. It was [asserted](#) as fact that the U.S. "has assumed many of the very features of the 'rogue nations' against which it has ... done battle." Others outside the U.S. mainstream might think of different words for the worst crime of the millennium, a textbook example of aggression without credible pretext, the "supreme international crime" of Nuremberg.

And others sometimes express their opinions. Gallup runs regular polls of international opinion. In 2013 (the Obama years), it asked for the first time, which country is the greatest threat to world peace. The U.S. won; no one else even came close. Far behind in second place was Pakistan, presumably inflated by the Indian vote. Iran — the greatest threat to world peace in U.S. discourse — was scarcely mentioned.

That was also the last time the question was asked, though there needn't have been much concern. It does not seem to have been reported in the U.S.

We might ponder these questions a little further. We are supposed to revere the U.S. Constitution, especially conservatives. We must therefore revere Article VI, which declares that valid treaties shall be "the supreme law of the land" and officials must be bound by them. In the post-war years, by far the most important such treaty is the UN Charter, instituted under U.S. initiative. It bans "the threat or use of force" in international affairs; specifically, the common refrain that "all options are open" with regard to Iran. And all cases of resort to force unless explicitly authorized by the Security Council or in defense against armed attack (a narrowly construed notion) until the Security Council, which must be immediately notified, is able to act to terminate the attack.

We might consider what the world would look like if the U.S. Constitution were considered applicable to the U.S., but let's put that interesting question aside — not, however, without mentioning that there is a respected profession, called "international lawyers and law professors," who can learnedly explain that words

don't mean what they mean.

*Iraq has struggled since the U.S. invasion in 2003 to maintain a balanced situation with both Washington and Tehran. However, the Iraqi parliament has voted after Suleimani's assassination to expel all U.S. troops. Is this likely to happen? And, if it does, what impact would it have on future U.S.- Iraq-Iran relations, including the fight against ISIS?*

We don't know whether it will happen. Even if the Iraqi government orders the U.S. to leave, will it do so? It's not obvious, and as always, public opinion in the U.S., if organized and committed, can help provide an answer.

As for ISIS, Trump has just given it another lease on life, just as he gave it a "get out of jail free" card when he betrayed Syrian Kurds, leaving them to the mercy of their bitter enemies Turkey and Assad after they had fulfilled their function of fighting the war against ISIS (with 11,000 casualties, as compared with half-dozen Americans). ISIS organized at first with jail breaks and is now free to do so again.

ISIS has been given a welcome gift in Iraq as well. The eminent Middle East historian Ervand Abrahamian [observes](#):

*The killing of Soleimani ... has actually provided a wonderful opportunity for ISIS to recover. There will be a resurgence of ISIS very much in Mosul, northern Iraq. And that, paradoxically, will help Iran, because the Iraqi government will have no choice but to rely more and more on Iran to be able to contain ISIS[which led the defense of Iraq against the ISIS onslaught, under Suleimani's command] ... Trump has pulled out of north Iraq, of the area where ISIS was, pulled the rug out from the Kurds, and now he's declared war on the pro-Iranian militias. And the Iraqi Army has not been in the past capable of dealing with ISIS. So, the obvious thing is now, the Iraqi government, how are they going to deal with the revival of ISIS? ... they will have no choice but to actually rely more and more on Iran. So, Trump has actually undermined his own policy, if he wants to eliminate Iran's influence in Iraq.*

Much as W. Bush did when he invaded Iraq.

We shouldn't forget, however, that enormous power can recover from muddle-

headedness and failure — if the domestic population permits it to.

*Putin appears to have outmaneuvered the U.S. not only on Syria, but almost everywhere else on the Middle East front. What is Moscow after in the Middle East, and what's your explanation for the often infantile diplomacy displayed by the United States in the region and in fact around the world?*

One goal, substantially achieved, was to gain control of Syria. Russia entered the conflict in 2015 after advanced weapons provided by the CIA to the mostly jihadi armies had stopped Assad's forces. Russian aircraft turned the tide, and without concern for the incredible civilian toll, the Russian-backed coalition has taken control of most of the country. Russia is now the external arbiter.

Elsewhere, even among Washington's Gulf allies, Putin has presented himself, apparently with some success, as the one trustworthy outside actor. Trump's bull-in-a-China-shop diplomacy (if that is the right word) is winning few friends outside of Israel, on which he is lavishing gifts, and the other members of the reactionary alliance taking shape. Any thought of "soft power" has been pretty much abandoned. But U.S. reserves of hard power are enormous. No other country can impose harsh sanctions at will and compel third parties to honor them, at cost of expulsion from the international financial system. And, of course, no one else has hundreds of military bases around the world or anything like Washington's advanced military power and ability to resort to force at will and with impunity. The idea of imposing sanctions on the U.S., or anything beyond tepid criticism, borders on ludicrous.

And so, it is likely to remain even as "in the eyes of much of the world, in fact, the prime rogue state today is the United States," considerably more so than 20 years ago when these words were uttered, unless and until the population compels state power to pursue a different course.

*This interview has been lightly edited for clarity and length.*

C.J. Polychroniou is a political economist/political scientist who has taught and worked in universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. His main research interests are in European economic integration, globalization, the political economy of the United States and the deconstruction of neoliberalism's politico-economic project. He is a regular contributor to *Truthout* as well as a member of *Truthout's* Public Intellectual Project. He has published several books

and his articles have appeared in a variety of journals, magazines, newspapers and popular news websites. Many of his publications have been translated into several foreign languages, including Croatian, French, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish. He is the author of [\*Optimism Over Despair: Noam Chomsky On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change\*](#), an anthology of interviews with Chomsky originally published at *Truthout* and collected by Haymarket Books.

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## From A Dysfunctional World Order To A Sustainable Future



*Em. Prof. dr. Richard Falk*

In the interview that follows, *Richard Falk*, an internationally-renowned scholar of Global Politics and International Law, offers his insights on the contemporary state of world politics and shares his radical vision of the future world order. Richard Falk is Alfred G. Milbank Professor Emeritus of International Law and Practice at Princeton University, where he taught for more than forty years, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Occupied Palestine and Advisor of the POMEAS Project, Istanbul Policy Center, Sabanci University. He has served on scores of Commissions on International Law and Justice and is author and editor of more than fifty books, including (Re)Imagining Humane Global Governance, Palestine: The Legitimacy of Hope and Chaos and Counterrevolution: After the Arab Spring.

C. J. Polychroniou is scholar, author and journalist. He has taught at numerous

Universities in Europe and the United States, was founder and director of the now defunct Centre for the Study of Globalization in Athens, Greece, and author and editor of scores of books, academic articles and popular essays. His latest books *Optimism Over Despair: On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change* (conversations with Noam Chomsky) and *The Political Economy of Climate Change and the Global New Deal* (conversations with Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin; forthcoming).

*C. J. Polychroniou:* Richard, I want to start this interview on the state of global affairs near the end of the second decade of the 21st century by moving from the abstract to the concrete. To begin with, it's regarded as axiomatic that the postwar international liberal order is fracturing and that we are at the same time in the midst of a geopolitical transition where the most prominent characteristic seems to be the decline of the United States as a global superpower. With that in mind, can you offer us a panoramic perspective on the contemporary state of global affairs? In that context, what do you consider to be the primary changes under way, and the emerging challenges and threats to global peace and stability?

*Richard Falk:* There are many crosscutting tendencies now evident at the global level. At the very time when globalizing challenges are intensifying, the mechanisms available for regional and global cooperation are becoming dangerously less effective. The failure to address climate change, so clearly in the global public interest, is emblematic of a dysfunctional world order system. This failure can be further delineated by reference to two distinct, yet interrelated developments. The first characterized by a vacuum in global leadership, which reflects both the overall decline of the United States as well as its explicit renunciation of such a role by the Trump presidency. Trump proudly proclaims that his only political agenda is shaped by American national interests, declaring he was elected president of the United States, and not the world. The second broader development is the rise of autocrats in almost every important sovereign state, whether by popular will or through imposed rule, resulting in the affirmation of an ultra-nationalist approach to foreign policy, given ideological intensity by chauvinistic and ethnic hostility toward migrants and internal minorities. This kind of exclusionary statism contributes to the emergence of what might be called 'global Trumpism' further obstructing global problem-solving, shared solutions to common problems. A discernable effect of these two

dimensions of world order is to diminish the relevance and authority of the United Nations and international law, as well as a declining respect for standards of international human rights and a disturbing indifference to global warming and other global scale challenges, including to biodiversity and the stability of major global rainforests.

Overall, what has been emerging globally is a reinvigoration of the seventeenth century Westphalian regional system of sovereign states that arose in Europe after more than a century of devastating religious wars, but under vastly different conditions that now pose dire threats to stability of international relations and the wellbeing of peoples throughout the world. Among these differences are the dependence upon responsible internal behavior by states in an era of growing ecological interdependence. The tolerance of fires in the Amazon rainforest by the Brazilian government for the sake of economic growth, via agrobusiness and logging, endangers a vital global source of biodiversity as well as depletes essential carbon capturing capabilities of the vast forest area, yet there is no way under existing international norms to challenge Brazil's sovereign prerogative to set its own policy agenda, however irresponsible with respect to the ecological future.

At the same time, there has emerged doctrine and technology that defies territorial constraints, and gives rise to contradictory pressures that subvert the traditional capabilities of states to uphold national security. On the one side, transnational extremism exposes the symbolic and material vulnerability of the most militarily powerful states as the United States discovered on 9/11 when the World Trade Center and Pentagon were allegedly attacked by a small group of unarmed individuals. Responses by way of retaliatory strikes directed at the supposed source of these attacks, according to a global mandate associated with counterterrorist warfare, and technological innovations associated with precision guided missiles and unmanned drones have produced this new conception of a boundaryless war zone. The world has become a battlefield for both sides in an unresolved struggle. Additionally, there are opening new uncertain frontiers for 21st century warfare involving cyber assaults of various kinds, evidently used by the U.S. and Israel in their efforts to destabilize Iran, as well as new initiatives by a few states to militarize space in ways that capable of threatening any society on the face of the planet with instant and total devastation.

Under these pressures the world economy is also fragmenting, not only

behaviorally but doctrinally. Trump's transactional mode of operations challenges the rule governed system established after World War II, which relied on the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization. The economic dimensions of resurgent nationalism also give rise to trade tensions, with real prospects of major trade wars, reminding expert observers of the atmosphere in the early 1930s that gave rise to the Great Depression. Underneath this new approach to political economy seems to be what amounts to a mostly silent revolt against neoliberal globalization, and its encouragement of transnational investments based on economic opportunity, as measured by the efficiency of capital rather than the wellbeing of people, including environmental protection. A major source of dissatisfaction with traditional politics in democratic societies seems associated with increasing economic inequality, which has unleashed a populist assault on establishment institutions, being thought responsible for enriching upper elites while holding stagnant or worse the living standards of almost the whole rest of society, an astonishing 99% being left behind.

In this downward global spiral, additional negative factors are associated with poor management of ending the Cold War, and the accompanying collapse of the Soviet Union. I would point to three principal negative impacts: (1) the failure of the United States as triumphant global leader to seize the opportunity to move the world toward greater peace, justice, and prosperity by strengthening the UN, by reallocating resources from defense to civilian infrastructure, and by initiating denuclearization and demilitarizing policies regionally and worldwide; (2) the degree to which the Soviet collapse led to a world economic order without ideological choices for political actors ('there is no alternative' mentality), it pushed capitalism toward inhumane extremes; as long as socialism as associated with Soviet leadership was part of the global setting, there were strong political incentives in the West to exhibit ethical concerns for human wellbeing, and social protection frameworks moderating the cruelty of minimally regulated market forces; in effect, capitalism needed the rivalry with socialism to maintain an acceptable ideological composure; (3) the sudden withdrawal of Soviet balancing influence in several regions of the world, especially the Middle East, led to order-maintaining cycles of oppressive patterns of governance, U.S. regime changing interventions, and political turmoil causing massive suffering, famine, and devastation.

This combination of domestic authoritarianism and state-centric foreign policy is



inclining the world toward ecological catastrophe and geopolitical uncertainty, even chaos. This pattern is accentuated by world economic orientations that are oblivious to human and global interests, while slanting national interest toward the ultra-rich. In effect, the political future for formerly leading democratic states is now more accurately described as a mixture of autocracy and plutocracy.

One symptom of these implosive developments calls attention to the altered role of the United States in this overall conjuncture of historical forces. On the one side, is the reality of U.S. decline, accentuated by the behavior of Trump since 2016, which reflects the impact of this impulsive and anti-globalist leader and national mood, but also exhibits some longer deeper trends that transcend his demagogic impact. The most important of these is the failure to learn from the reduced effectiveness of military force with respect to the pursuit of foreign policy given changes in the nature of political power and international status, especially in relations between the West and non-West. Costly interventions in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq have all ended in political failure, despite U.S. military dominance and a strong political commitment to the mission. The U.S. reaction has been to reframe tactics rather than to appreciate the enhanced capabilities in the post-colonial world of militarily vulnerable countries to mobilize prolonged resistance to interventions from the West, and thus repeat the experience of failed interventions in a new context. In this narrow regard, Trump's seeming repudiation of regime-changing wars was more realistic than the Pentagon's tendency to return to the drawing counterinsurgency and counterterrorist drawing boards to figure out how to do better next time. Yet Trump's militarism is evident in other forms, including seeking to extend military frontiers to outer space, and by his boasts about investing in producing the most powerful military machine in human history. In this respect, the U.S. not only is increasing risks of global catastrophe, but also inadvertently helping its international rivals to gain relative economic and diplomatic advantages. A crucial explanation of America's likely continuing decline results from two refusals: first, of the neutralization of military power among major states by the mutually destructive character of warfare and secondly, of asymmetric conflicts due to the rising capabilities of national resistance frustrating what had once been relatively simple colonial and imperial operations.

Another source of decline is that the kind of confrontation that existed during the Cold War no longer seems to exert nearly as much control over the security

dimensions of world order as previously. Most European states feel less need for the American nuclear umbrella and the safety afforded by close alliance relations, which translates into reduced U.S. influence. This shift can be observed by the degree to which most states currently entrust their defensive security needs to national capabilities, somewhat marginalizing alliances that had been formally identified with U.S. leadership. In this regard, the bipolar and unipolar conceptions of world order have been superseded by multipolarity and statism in the dynamic restructuring of world order since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The profile of American decline, with respect to the international policy agenda could be rather abruptly altered, if not reversed, by an internationalist post-Trump foreign policy. This would be particularly evident, in all likelihood, with respect to reaffirming cooperative efforts regarding climate change, reviving the 2015 Paris Agreement, and calling for a more obligatory approach to international regulatory arrangements. Of course, a revived American bid for global leadership would be further exhibited by certain foreign policy moves such as seeking balance in addressing Israel/Palestine relations, lifting economic sanctions from such countries as Cuba, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe, and renewing adherence to the JCPOA (Nuclear Agreement) with Iran.

In a sense, the assessment and contours of American decline, reflective of so many factors, will become clearer after the 2020 elections. If Trump prevails, the decline thesis will be confirmed. If a centrist Democrat, say Biden, prevails, it will likely create a sense of relief internationally, along with a temporary suspension of doubt about the reality of decline, but will not override the longer run decline hypothesis as such a Democratic Party president will not challenge the Pentagon budget or the militarism that underpins American policy for the past 75 years. If, as now seems highly unlikely, the Democrats nominate a progressive candidate, say Sanders or Warren, and he is able to gain enough support in Congress, the trends pointing to further decline might not only be suspended, but possibly reversed. Addressing inequality arising from the plutocratic allocation of benefits resulting from neoliberal globalization and undoing the excessive reliance on military approaches to foreign policy are the only two paths leading to a sustainable renewal of American global leadership and prospects for a benevolent future.

*C. J. Polychroniou:* Do you detect any similarities between the current global geopolitical condition and that of the era of imperial rivalries prior to the

outbreak of World War I?

*Richard Falk:* The imperial rivalries, at the root of the stumble into major warfare, were much more overt in the period preceding World War I than is the case today. Now imperial strategies are more disguised by soft power expansionism as is the case with China or geopolitical security arrangements and normative claims as is the American approach, but the possibility of an unwanted escalation in areas of strategic interaction are present, especially in areas surrounding China. Confrontations and crises can be anticipated in coming years, and without skillful diplomacy a war could result that could be more destructive and transformative of world order than was World War I.

There is also the possibility of hegemonic rivalry producing a major war in the Middle East, as between Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the United States on one side and Iran and Russia on the other side. The Syrian War prefigured on a national scale such hegemonic rivalry that could now recur on a regional scale. A more optimistic interpretation of developments in the Middle East is to suggest that the stability of the Cold War era might reemerge in light of Russian reengagement, which could restore the balance imposed earlier, and seem preferable to the turmoil and confrontations of the last 25 years. It would be prudent to take note of the World War I context to remind political leaders that they risk unwanted sequences of events if promoting aggressive challenges to the established order in regional or global settings.

Of course, triggering conditions prior to World War I were concentrated in Europe, whereas now it could be argued that the most dangerous situations are either geographically concentrated in the Middle East or in a variety of regional circumstances where coercive diplomacy could result in an unintended war that was as possibly on the Korean Peninsula or in relation to China where interest collide in the Western Pacific and South China Sea.

Graham Allison has written a widely discussed book, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape the Thucydides Trap?* (2017), which argues that throughout history when the dominance of a state is challenged by a rising power a major war has frequently resulted to establish geopolitical ranking. Of course, circumstances have changed drastically since the time of Thucydides, due to the possession of nuclear weapons on both sides, a fact that is likely to encourage geopolitical caution as risks of mutual catastrophe are quite evident. At the same

time complacency is not warranted as governments have not changed their reliance on threats and bluffs to achieve their goals, and the possibility of miscalculation is present as antagonisms climb escalation ladders.

More broadly, the existence of nuclear weapons, their deployment, and doctrines leading to their use in certain situations create conditions that are very different than what existed in Europe more than a century ago. Yet there is one rather frightening similarity. Threat diplomacy tends to produce conflict spirals that can produce wars based on misperception and miscalculation, as well as accident, rogue behavior, and pathological leadership. In other words, the world as it is now constituted, can as occurred in 1914, stumble into an unwanted war, and this time with casualties, devastation, and unanticipated side effects occurring on a far greater scale.

Finally, there were no ecological issues confronting the world in 1914 as there are at present. Any war fought with nuclear weapons can alter the weather for up to ten years in disastrous ways. There is the fear validated by careful scholarly study that 'a nuclear famine' could be produced by stagnant clouds of smoke that would deprive the earth of the sunlight needed for agriculture. In other words, the consequences of a major war are so much more serious that its avoidance should be a top priority of any responsible leader. Yet, with so many irresponsible leaders, typified by Donald Trump, the rationality that would seem to prevent large scale war may not be sufficient to avoid its occurrence. Also, the mobilization of resources and the focus of attention on the war would almost certainly preclude urgent efforts to address global warming and other ecological challenges.

*C. J. Polychroniou:* Given that the historical conditions and specific political factors that gave rise to Cold War policies and institutions have vanished, what purpose does NATO serve today?

*Richard Falk:* Although the conditions that explained the formation and persistence of NATO were overcome by the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and of the Soviet Union a few years later, NATO remained useful to some of its members for several reasons. For the United States, it kept the U.S. engaged in Europe, and sustained its role as alliance leader. For the major European powers, it represented a security guaranty in the event of a revived Russian threat, and lessened internal pressures to develop effective European military capabilities

that did not depend on American participation. The Kosovo War in 1999 displayed a European consensus to transform NATO into an intra-European peace force, while the Libyan War of 2011 displayed a misleading willingness to manipulate the UN into authorizing NATO to engage in a regime-changing out of area military intervention that not only weakened the legitimacy of the post-Cold War UN and harmed Libya, but also understandably eroded trust in UN procedures on the part of Russia and China that had been persuaded to support a decision for a strictly limited humanitarian intervention but not for NATO sponsored regime change.

The NATO alliance should be disbanded in the interest of world peace and stability. Its only real function since 1989 has been to further the geopolitical goals of the United States, and to a lesser extent, France and the UK. The persistence of NATO after its Cold War rationalization was undercut exemplifies a refusal of the West to make the structural adjustments that could have expressed an intention to make a transition from a pre-war environment of strategic confrontation that characterized the Cold War to a post-war atmosphere of dealignment and demilitarization. Had such a transition occurred, or even been attempted, we would now most likely be living in more positive historical circumstances with attention to the real economic, political, and ecological challenges to human wellbeing now and in the future being addressed. We would not need the awakening alarms being set off by a 16 year old Swedish girl!

*C. J. Polychroniou:* Trump's foreign policy towards the Middle East is unabashedly pro-Israel, while also supportive of Erdogan's grand vision for Turkey and the Arab world. Can you explain for us this apparent anomaly?

*Richard Falk:* It may be intellectually satisfying to give a coherent spin to Trump's seemingly antagonistic policies in the Middle East, but I feel it conveys a false sense of plan and strategy beyond the play of personality and ad hoc circumstance. The most that can be claimed is that there is a kind of hierarchy in arranging American foreign policies priorities, yet overall, lacking any sense of regional grand strategy. At the top of the Trump policy pyramid seem to be upholding the two 'special relationships' with Israel, first, and Saudi Arabia, second. Turkey is somewhat supported because of the seeming personal rapport between Erdogan and Trump, and partly also for reasons of continuity of alignment and economic trade relations. Iran is the perfect regional enemy for the United States to demonize. Iran is antagonistic to Saudi ambitions to assert a kind

of regional hegemony and to Israel because of its pro-Palestinian, anti-Zionist stance, and not a trading partner or strategic ally with the United States ever since the revolutionary overthrow of the Shah in 1979. Besides, Iran as the leading Shi'a state in the region is a sectarian foil for the Gulf/Egyptian Sunni affinities. Besides, Trump's insistence on repudiating Obama's initiatives encouraged the repudiation of the Nuclear Program Agreement negotiated in 2015 (JCPOA, that is, Joint Comprehensive Program of Action), are all part of this anti-Iran agenda carried forward at considerable risk and expense.

Although Trump campaigned on a pledge of disengagement from senseless regime-changing interventions of the past in the Middle East, especially the attack on and occupation of Iraq since 2003, it has been a difficult policy to implement, especially in relation to Syria. This seems to reflect American deep state resistance to all demilitarizing moves in the Middle East, as well as Trump's quixotic and ambivalent style of diplomacy.

As far as Turkey is concerned, there seems to be some continuity in Erdogan's foreign policy, which is to support the Palestinian national struggle and to favor democratizing movements from below, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, but to avoid entanglements of the sort that led to a major foreign policy failure in Syria. Also, to support global reform by questioning the hold of the permanent members of the Security Council on UN decision-making, relying on the slogan 'the world is greater than five.').

*C. J. Polychroniou:* Do you see China emerging any time in the near future as a global superpower?

*Richard Falk:* I think China is already a global superpower in some fundamental respects, although not a global leader in the manner of the United States in the period between 1945-2016. Whether it has the political will to play a geopolitical role beyond its East Asia region is difficult to predict. Its top officials seems to sense a dangerous vacuum and inviting opportunity created by the withdrawal of the United States from its leadership position. At the same time, the Chinese themselves seem aware of their lack of experience beyond the Asian region, are preoccupied with domestic challenges, and realize that Chinese is not a global language nor the renminbi a global currency. For these reasons, I expect China to stay largely passive, or at most defensive, when it comes to the global geopolitical agenda, and use its considerable leverage to promote multipolarity in most

international venues.

At the same time, China's superpower status can be affirmed in two different fundamental respects: as the only credible adversary of the United States in a major war and as a soft power giant when it comes to spreading its influence beyond its territorial limits by a variety of non-military means, most spectacularly by its Road and Belt Initiative, the largest investment undertaking in the world. If soft power status is the best measure of influence in a post-political world order, then China may have already achieved global leadership if history is at the dawn of a new period in which the role of military power and conquest as the principal agent of change is morphing toward obsolescence. Arguably the most telling symptom of American decline is its gross over-investment in military capabilities despite enduring a series of political setbacks in situations where it dominated the battlefield and at the expense of domestic infrastructure and social protection. Perhaps, the Vietnam War is the clearest instance of total military superiority resulting in the loss of the war, but there are other notable instances (Afghanistan, Iraq).

*C. J. Polychroniou:* If you were asked to provide a radical vision of the world order in the 21st century, what would it look like?

*Richard Falk:* This is a difficult assignment. I would offer two sets of response, but with a realization of the radical uncertainty associated with any conjectures about the future of world order. My responses depend on some separation between considerations of policy and of structure. I respond on the basis of my tentative diagnosis of the present reality as posing the first bio-ethical-ecological crisis in world history.

With respect to policy, I would emphasize the systemic nature of the challenges, global in scale and scope. The most severe of these challenges relate to the advent of nuclear weapons, and the geopolitical policy consensus that has opted for a nonproliferation regime rather than a denuclearizing disarmament option. Such a regime contradicts the fundamental principle of world order based on the equality of states, large or small, when it comes to rights and duties under international law. It does, however, reflect adherence to the fundamental norm of geopolitics that is embedded in the UN Charter, which acknowledges inequality with respect to rights and duties, evident in other spheres of international life, including accountability for international crimes, as recognized by the demeaning

phrase, 'victors' justice.' To address the challenges to world order that threaten the peoples of the world does not require overcoming political inequality, but it does require achieving two radical goals: 1) adherence to international law and the UN Charter by all states, which would at least entail national self-discipline and the elimination of the right of veto, but not necessarily permanent membership in the Security Council; 2) the strengthening of the autonomy of the United Nations in relation to the peace and security agenda by creating an independent funding arrangement based on imposing a tax on transnational travel, military expenditures, and luxury items. The objectives would be to move toward a global organization that was dedicated to the global and human interest as well as to the promotion of national interests as is now the case, which would depend on vesting implementing authority in the UN Secretary General as well as the acceptance of a degree of demilitarization by current geopolitical actors, with proclamation of shared goals of making national security unambiguously defensive, and regulated.

In effect, the policy priorities to be served by such a radical reordering of global relations, shifting authority and power from its present geopolitical nexus to one that sought global justice and ecological sustainability, and was more institutionally situated in global networks and arrangements. In the scheme depicted above it would mean a rather dramatic shift from geopolitical autonomy to a more law-governed world order with effective mechanisms to serve the whole of humanity rather than being focused on the wellbeing of its distinct territorial parts. In the process, accompanying social democratic arrangements for trade, investment, and development would need to be adjusted to serve the attainment of basic economic and social rights as implemented by monitoring and regulatory procedures that were also sensitive to ecological sustainability.

It hard to imagine such policy and structural modifications taking place without a renewed confidence in democratic and generally progressive styles of governance at the national level, accountable to future generations, as well as to short-term electoral cycles. In other words, the behavioral tendencies and values that are now dominating most political arenas by dangerously myopic approaches to policy and structures of accountability would have to be transformed on the basis of ecological consciousness, respect for human rights and international law, and an international institutional structure oriented around the protection of human and global interests. There is no path visible to such a future at present, although



there is a growing sense of alarm, as epitomized by the charismatic impact and impressive insight of Greta Thunberg. What is altogether missing are credible sources of revolutionary energy guided by such a vision of a necessary and desirable future, which would imply a rejection of autocratic governance of sovereign states and apartheid geopolitical regimes (as with nuclear weapons, accountability to international criminal law, and double standards). In effect, a drastic shift from a zero-sum world of destructive rivalry and political egoism to a win/world based on the emergence of a sense of global community accompanied by the mechanisms and structures to convert policy directives into behavioral conformity.

*Previously published in Global Policy Journal, January 2020*