

SUBMISSION TO IPAN PEOPLE'S INQUIRY BY SHEILA NEWMAN

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Introduction

My submission departs from the presumption that war in complex societies is really about theft and other crimes on a huge scale. It has little to do with rational defence.

Another presumption is that the United States is the biggest warmonger and the biggest criminal. Since 1953 China has not engaged in any wars outside its own territory. Post-Soviet Russia, with the debatable exception of Crimea and Georgia, and its support for people in the east of Ukraine, and Syria, has not invaded other countries or conducted proxy terrorist wars.

I recommend that Australia distance itself from the US in all ways in order to avoid being dragged further down, in foreign affairs, defence, and domestic values.

A further presumption is that war depends on its proponents' ability to manipulate the mass media in order to keep people uninformed and to manufacture consent. I point to the example of *Wikileaks*, and the leadership of Julian Assange, as the way to counter this mass-media manipulation, and I recommend IPAN encourage support for this innovative media and its creator.

I recommend that Australians make changes to education and use Linux open source infotech systems so that they may avoid corporate proprietary impediments to communication and privacy, in order to take back the public messaging talking-stick and communicate and inform themselves independently of the managed and managing brand mainstream media, internet platforms, and technological hardware.

The Business of War

Although my expertise is not in war, I have researched and theorised on animal and human land-tenure and inheritance systems (territory and dispersal) and their role in population dynamics and politics; on energy resources, population dynamics, and the development of capitalism in Britain

and of democracy in France.¹ My observations thereto are that wars in complex societies are generally conducted by elites for trade relationships, territory, loot, status, money laundering, human trafficking, succession, and to preserve established power, including the use of armies for the self-protection of regimes from their own populations.

Much arms-movement may be explained in terms of status conferring deals from powerful states to the leaders of vassal states, like Australia.² These deals also comport obligations. The secrecy surrounding the modern defence industry creates an ideal cover for corruption, trafficking, and violent crime.³

The business of war requires control over the public messaging system (via the mass media, both public and private.) This can be in the form of messages via pulpit, bima, minbar, etc., the traditional press, television and radio, or massive internet platforms. Australia's very low media-ownership diversity makes our population especially vulnerable to propaganda.

Mass-media owners can be incredibly wealthy and well-connected, with access to all kinds of privileged information. They can designate authority and manipulate public perception. They can be hugely influential on governments, corporations, and investments because of their capacity to present these positively, negatively, or not at all, to the public.

After WW2, nation-states seem increasingly subsumed to stateless corporate entities, dynasties (not necessarily royal), and incredibly wealthy persons, invested in arms manufacture and sales, who also use wars for currency and global market manipulation,⁴ and to provoke mass movements of people.

¹ Some works by Sheila Newman:

The Growth Lobby in Australia and its Absence in France, M.A. by Research in Environmental Sociology, Swinburne University, 2002, <https://researchbank.swinburne.edu.au/file/a3115a39-c50a-4504-8d1f-4aca21be26fd/1/Sheila%20Newman%20Thesis.pdf>.

Andrew McKillop with Sheila Newman, (Eds.) *The Final Energy Crisis*, Pluto Books, UK, 2005.

Sheila Newman (Ed.) *The Final Energy Crisis*, 2nd Edition (Mostly new chapters), Pluto Books, UK, 2008.

The Urge to Disperse, Candobetter Press, 2011.

Demography, Territory, Law: The Rules of Animal and Human Populations, Countershock Press, 2013.

Demography, Territory, Law 2: Land-tenure and the Origins of Capitalism in Britain, Countershock Press, 2014. (In process of publication now: *Demography, Territory, Law 3: Land-tenure and the Rise of Democracy and Birth Control in France*, Countershock Press, ?2021.)

"Contradictions in the go-to kangaroo population science," (2018) https://www.academia.edu/36309047/CONTRADICTIONS_IN_THE_GO_TO_KANGAROO_POPULATION_SCIENCE.

Since 2006, I have been one of the main editors and writers for <https://candobetter.net>, which is a multi-author Australian website for reform in democracy, environment, population, land use planning and energy policy.

² Holden, Paul, *Indefensible*, Zed Books. Kindle Edition, location 812-817.

³ Holden, Paul, Op. Cit., location 261-265.)

⁴ See Jodi Liss, "Making Monetary Mischief: Using Currency as a Weapon," *World Policy Journal*, Vol.24, No.4 (Winter, 2007/2008), pp.29-38. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40210205>. See also, Mina Aldroubi, "Yemen's central bank launches initiative to protect currency," *N World*, 5 Aug 2019, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/mena/yemen-s-central-bank-launches-initiative-to-protect-currency-1.894727>; Suleiman Al-Khalidi, "Syria to crack down on profiteers in bid to ease currency crisis," 17 September 2019, Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-syria-economy-pound-idUSKBN1W200D>; "War currencies, not currency wars," 20 April 2011, <https://www.worldfinance.com/special-reports/war-currencies-not-currency-wars>; Jalel Harchaoui, "Libya's looming contest for the central bank," 1 April 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/04/libyas-looming-contest-for-the-central-bank/>

The mainstream media is a very powerful part of this layer, on which all the others depend for public communication.

Pushing populations across borders creates predictable demand-growth in the receiving countries, which would not happen in stable populations, no matter how big, where demand tends to remain a constant.

Population displacement pushes up prices for big 'items', notably land and land-based 'resources': water, food, materials, housing, rare earths, energy. For ordinary people, rising cost of land (mortgages, rentals, business premises) and other resources pushes up the cost of living and doing business, (salary-demand to cope with rising costs).

For corporations like banks, insurers, property developers, and very wealthy individuals who own, invest in, and control these resources, these costs represent profits. These corporate, dynastic, and individual wealth and power-elites, which dominate governments and media, have the motivation and ability to influence people movement by manipulating industrial laws, immigration laws, and land-ownership laws, among others. They can also manipulate or profit from currency movement by warmongering and via the stock market.

To counter currency manipulation, Jodi Liss recommends more tracking and oversight of large sales of currency, bonds, and derivatives, with regulations covering both offshore and domestic activity. To prepare strategic responses to potential malicious currency attacks, "a sound economy and strong financial oversight, including a healthy banking sector and adequate foreign reserves, may be the best defenses."⁵

Money laundering and theft: a few among endless recent examples

The huge amounts of materials and people moved around during military interventions provide many opportunities for theft, embezzlement, treasure hunting, and hoarding.⁶ The Swiss National Bank and the Vatican, among others, have been plausibly accused of storing vast quantities of looted Nazi gold.

But such huge-scale money laundering crimes are not confined to the past, or the Nazis. US-NATO countries currently have their banks, military, and justice systems working to officialise and launder theft on a breath-taking scale.

Where does the money end up? The "Panama Papers," exposed by Wikileaks, illustrate the potential scale of elite black economies and the involvement of heads of states.

In its latest of serial attempts to bring down Venezuelan governments and get control of Venezuelan oil, the US followed up the ongoing siege (sanctions) on Venezuelans, by absurdly designating Juan Guaido, a minor Venezuelan opposition figure, to replace the elected president, Nicolas Maduro. US-NATO allies all joined preposterously in celebrating Guaido as President.

The UK then stole \$1 bn worth of Venezuelan public assets, in the form of gold stored in the bank of England, purportedly to give it to Juan Guaido, with the loot laundered by the British judiciary at the highest level: "The UK High Court has ruled against Venezuela's government in a legal battle over

⁵ Jodi Liss, Op. Cit., p.36.

⁶ James Wright, "Dirty Money: Development, money laundering, & Real Estate," November 16, 2018 <https://warroom.armywarcollege.edu/articles/money-laundering-in-real-estate/>

access to \$1bn (£820m) of gold stored in the Bank of England. [...] the UK had "unequivocally recognised opposition leader Juan Guaidó as president," rather than President Nicolás Maduro.⁷

The US also confiscated to its Justice Department and fancifully named 'US Treasury Department of Forfeiture Fund', hundreds of millions of dollars in US bank accounts, luxury homes, cars and yachts, from Venezuelan officials and their associates whom it deemed corrupt.⁸

Legendary quantities of gold, diamonds, and other valuables, disappeared with the assassination of Gaddafi.⁹ Interstate interactions with Libya's banking system are perhaps even more intriguing.¹⁰ And regime-change made Libya a thriving international slave market.

Syria has accused the United States of stealing more than 40 tons of gold,¹¹ and the US has boasted about stealing its oil. Currency speculation adds to war in crippling Syria's economy.¹²

The United States military itself is like a black-economy financial hole:

"[The United States] Defense Department's Inspector General, in a June report, said the Army made \$2.8 trillion in wrongful adjustments to accounting entries in one quarter alone in 2015, and \$6.5 trillion for the year. Yet the Army lacked receipts and invoices to support those numbers or simply made them up."¹³

"A Ukrainian parliamentary investigation found that Ukraine had 'lost' \$32bn in military assets between 1992 and 1998, mostly due to theft, a lack of oversight and quick-fire deals."¹⁴

Despite an EU arms embargo on Sudan and South Sudan, France, Germany, Italy, and Ethiopia (among others) sold them small arms and light weapons. Ukraine shipped 110 T72 tanks plus ammunition, multiple-launch rocket launchers, anti-aircraft guns, rocket-propelled grenades, and automatic rifles. The SPLA bought Russian Mi-17 transport helicopters and Chinese ammunition, carried by a German ship, and Kenya assisted cross-country transport. American warships monitored ransom negotiations involved when Somali pirates highjacked the 10,000-ton cargo ship MV Faina, that was transporting some of the Ukraine-supplied heavy arms. An official document of transfer named the certified end-user of the cargo as MOD/GOSS, which purported to be a Kenyan government department, but probably was not. South Sudan, which did not have a professional army, although its forces were being trained and advised by Western governments, spent half of its oil revenues on these weapons. The weapons were used in South Sudan's civil war, producing a

⁷ "Venezuela gold: UK High Court rules against Nicolás Maduro," BBC, 2 July 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-53262767>.

⁸ Andres Oppenheimer, "Were Venezuela's corruption funds used for Trump's border wall? He should tell us," Opinion, Miami Herald, 17 June 2020. <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/andres-oppenheimer/article243608322.html>

⁹ Lynsey Chutel, "Muammar Gaddafi's lost treasure may be stashed in boxes hidden around Africa," *Quartz*, 20 June 2017, <https://qz.com/africa/1009354/united-nations-report-shows-lost-gaddafi-millions-may-be-hidden-all-over-africa/>

¹⁰ Jalel Harchaoui, "Libya's looming contest for the central bank," 1 April 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/04/libyas-looming-contest-for-the-central-bank/> and "War currencies, not currency wars," 20 April 2011, <https://www.worldfinance.com/special-reports/war-currencies-not-currency-wars/>

¹¹ Eric Zuesse, "Syria Accuses U.S. Stole 40+ Tons of its gold," 11 arch 2019, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2019/03/11/syria-accuses-u-s-stole-40-tons-of-its-gold/>

¹² Suleiman Al-Khalidi, "Syria to crack down on profiteers in bid to ease currency crisis," 17 September 2019. <https://www.worldfinance.com/special-reports/war-currencies-not-currency-wars>

¹³ Paltrow, Scot J., "U.S. Army fudged its accounts by trillions of dollars, auditor finds," August 20, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-audit-army-idUSKCN10U1IG>.

¹⁴ Holden, Paul, Op. Cit., Location 1169-1174.

massive humanitarian crisis, with many refugees growing up in UN camps. In Melbourne I later drug-counselled some of the refugees that grew up in those camps.¹⁵

Saudi Arabia is one of the most prolific purchasers from US and UK weapons manufacturers. The US and the UK train and maintain the Saudi army, and have informal agreements to protect Saudi Arabia. Paul Holden writes that Saudi Arabia's huge defence budget is "one of the primary ways in which key members of the Saudi royal family divert enormous state resources into their own pockets."¹⁶

Bribery permeates the awarding of contracts, according to a survey conducted by Control Risks in 2006.¹⁷ This characteristic of the industry is yet another reason for Australia to avoid involvement with arms manufacturing or purchase. Furthermore, whilst some individuals profit from their manufacture and transaction, arms often turn out to be more or less useless for their stated strategic purpose.¹⁸

Public justification

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Defence Minister Peter Dutton recently promoted plans to partner with arms manufacturing corporations and 'work closely with the US' to produce guided missiles. They talked about ten- and twenty-year projects and two thousand jobs.¹⁹ National leaders increasingly publicly justify the weapons industry as a way of providing jobs and economic opportunity, rather than emphasising its purported defence purposes. The World Trade Organisation provides loopholes for the use of 'offsets' to encourage this. Once the industry digs itself into a national economy, it is difficult to get rid of.²⁰

Sanctions and sieges

There is a school of thought that because there have been no overt conflicts between major powers since WW2, that the world is more peaceful overall (Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, 2011). However, landmines persist in many countries and the tactic of laying siege, by cutting off supply, is alive and well vis a vis Syria, Iran, North Korea, Venezuela, etc. These sieges provoke mass migration, which provides cheap labour and undermines organised labour. The population that remains is vulnerable to enslavement, including sex trafficking,²¹ as are migrants.

Environment and Refugees

As the biggest military investor and warmonger in the world, the United States manufactures, uses, and exports, more weapons than any other state in the world, thus consuming more fuel and materials and outputting more pollution, notably carbon-gases, but including radioactive pollution, than any other state in the world.

¹⁵ This paragraph on weapons in Sudan is summarised from Holden, Paul, Op. Cit., location 886-922.

¹⁶ Holden, Paul, Op. Cit., location 847-851.

¹⁷ Holden, Paul, Op. Cit., location 789.

¹⁸ Holden, Paul, Op. Cit., location 926-930

¹⁹ "Australia to produce its own guided missiles as part of billion-dollar defence manufacturing plan," ABC Australia, 31 March 2021, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-31/government-weapons-facility-guided-missiles-made-in-australia/100039990>

²⁰ Holden, Paul, Op. Cit., location 762.

²¹ See Larysa Kondracki (Director), *The Whistleblower*, Samuel Goldwyn Films, 2011, about US contractors to the UN in Bosnia.

Wars, 'peace-keeping' interventions, and sieges, are the vital parts of a money-machine that destroys our biosphere and our economies with it, creating refugees and other diasporas. Whole countries are now disturbed through indefinite occupation by heavily armed foreign 'peacekeepers', in charred, polluted landscapes, with bad water and broken cities, their economies and societies distorted, their people deskilled, their schooling interrupted, their herds and cultivations destroyed, their politicians removed, their national oil reserves corporatized and outsourced (Afghanistan, Iraq), or overtaken by slavery and violent chaos after criminal total regime-changes. (Libya).²² And then the disaster capitalists and infrastructure merchants arrive, bringing debt.

These involvements provide cover for moving militia, gold, diamonds, jewellery, artworks, and archaeological artefacts, rare species, drugs, materials and fuels, and the depraved and merciless traffic in sex-slaves and other slaves.

Impact of US Alliance on First Nations People and other Australians

Military installations in Northern Australia intensify economic activity, draw on energy and materials, intensify land-clearing, and pollution, in regions whose populations lived in harmony with their environment until recently.

The 1788 colonisation of Australia is endlessly perpetuated by new waves of migrants, continually displacing the First Nations People and the last wave of migrants, as the most fertile parts of this land, from which traditional First Nations People were first driven, are covered with suburbs, farms and mines, suffocating native vegetation and wildlife, heating the atmosphere.

The installation of populations of US military personnel on this land is yet another example of this perpetual invasion, vis a vis all who live here, First Nation or not. Most Australians, as well as First Nation People, have never been adequately consulted about these military installations. I recommend they be debated in parliament.

Foreign Policy

The United States' detention, prosecution and persecution of Julian Assange as punishment for revealing war-crimes overseen by world leaders like Bush and Blair (Iraq war) is an iconic representation of injustice in the service of war-criminals. Most of Australia's political class has abjectly failed to defend Assange's human and civil rights as an Australian citizen, or his actions on behalf of all humanity, free speech, and journalism. Instead, they have chosen obedience to a criminal US elite. Furthermore, our mainstream press, public and corporate, and the US-based internet platforms, have chosen to shelter that elite.

How can this political and media collusion be challenged, except by a technically able and politically informed alternative citizen media?

The United States is not a signatory to the International Criminal Court and abuses its position of a charter member of the United Nations and one of five permanent members of the UN Security Council. We should not allow ourselves to be hostage to this unfettered, criminal, malignantly capitalistic, environmentally nihilistic, political power.

²² See Francis A. Boyle, *Destroying Libya, the Three Decade US Campaign to destroy the Qaddafi Revolution*, Clarity Press, 2013. Boyle was Gadaffi's international lawyer and advisor on dealings with a hostile United States. This is his detailed record of what happened.

I recommend we join other nations and blocs insisting on US subscription to limits, legal and environmental. This action could also be to endorse such principles as overarching trade and military agreements.

Military and Defence

Our alliance with the United States makes us targets for enemies of the United States, and draws us into hostile relations with many of our neighbours, such as China, and polities further afield, such as Russia and Iran. The IPAN background paper referred to Kim Beasley in 2006 suggesting that in the event of a clash with China, Australia would have to actively support the United States because it could not survive without that military alliance. Such a looming prospect, however, could be taken as an opportunity to form new and different alliances, perhaps more complementary and trade-based. This should be the subject of parliamentary and community debate. For the latter to be informed, good geography and history courses are needed in schools. It is my understanding that trade links have always been considered as an antidote to war, however they may also become trade-war alliances, defended through sanctions (sieges), theft of national assets, currency terrorism, war propaganda, and military violence.

There are many other things wrong with our US military alliance, including the cost of maintaining submarines very far from our own region, the need to buy them from the United States, and the requirement that our supportive activity has to be integrated into US military systems.

I recommend government, private, and crowd-funding of Peace Study institutes and movements, in the style of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) <https://www.sipri.org/>

Political (Including Democratic Rights), Social & Community, Unions

Naomi Klein's book, *The Shock Doctrine*,²³ hypothesizes that powerful elite practitioners of theories arising in the Chicago School of Economics (with economist, Milton Friedman) have, since 1973, purposefully destroyed democracy by causing social shocks to countries and, in the ensuing panic and disorientation, the political system is dismantled and the economy pillaged through privatisation and government contracted debt. The International Monetary Fund is severely implicated in this as are a number of international corporations.

The theory Klein develops is that the main reason for the rise of democracy and social-welfare with its old age pensions, public hospitals, public housing, and universal education after the Great Depression of the 1930s was that the beneficiaries of the robber-baron culture which had dominated until then were aware that if people were kept sufficiently miserable, they would turn to communism and socialism.

But the robber-barons, land-sharks, and bankers, were only waiting for an opportunity to break down any political system which would stop them from having anything they wanted. Their method was tried and true: a religion embracing trickle-down economics, endless growth and total deregulation.

She describes how this school of economic propaganda set about training people in its atrocious doctrine all over the world. Its practitioners sought to break down all examples of egalitarian, community oriented democratic states, speciously linking 'democracy' to the imposition of 'free-market' economics.

Although Klein does not make this connection, the beginning of their program in 1973 was also the time of the first oil-shock, when the US sought to overturn trends to nationalisation of oil production

²³ <http://candobetter.net/node/263>

in various oil-producing states. These included Australia, where Prime Minister Whitlam was attempting to institute national self-sufficiency. She describes a course of corporatised looting, torture, slavery and repression which begins with Pinochet's rise in Chile, with Milton Friedman as his advisor, and passes through similar horrors in Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, Poland, South Africa, Russia, and Iraq. She finishes this incredible expose by describing the nauseating excesses of developers masquerading as foreign AID in Sri Lanka and Thailand after the 2004 tsunamis which so many Australians and others contributed their money to help.

Examples of things which socially shock a country, most of which are dealt with by Klein using examples in many countries, are:

- The Breaking down of labour laws and trade regulations
- Mass immigration and the Contracting of business to foreign imported labour in preference to local labour
- Falling wages
- bank privatisation, deregulation of the economy
- Breaking down of the public service, public welfare
- Loss of public subsidy of therapeutic drugs
- Privatisation of public hospitals, schools...
- Privatisation of public technology, power and utilities – telephones, electricity, water and energy resources like oil and gas
- Unaffordable privatised housing and land development
- Land speculation leading to homelessness
- Unaffordable justice systems
- Privatisation of the military – use of mercenaries and contractors
- Torture, disappearance, and war
- Natural disasters

Signs of the dismantling of a political system and its reinvention as a corporatocracy include:

- education of young people, educators and politicians, in economic rationalist doctrines as the only true way
- growth economics
- the normalisation of theft of the public wealth through its transfer to the private sector
- loss of restrictions on investment by political regulators
- acceptance of ostentatious lifestyles in politicians and their public frequentation of corporate figures
- Phoney enquiries (as opposed to real peoples' inquiries like this one).
- Commercial-in-confidence agreements which make it impossible for the public to obtain information
- the privatisation of areas normally administered by government, for instance mercenaries for soldiers, corporations for military support and logistics like accommodation, clothing and food, immigration (immigration agents)
- The institutionalisation with public funded support for corporations. (The Victorian Government's gift to Australand of public land at Royal Park and \$80 m in exchange for what many would call very little, comes to my mind).²⁴

²⁴ See Jill Quirk, "Royal Park then and now," (video) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6rco6ltC4Y>

Unions and Workers' Rights

America tries to persuade its allies and supporters (the UK, EU, Australia etc) to enter international agreements that reduce the ability of citizens in those states to assert union and worker rights. The US attempts to model other countries on its own example, which is a shameful one, degrading of human rights, perpetuating slavery via its huge prison system, where people are employed by corporations for next to nothing, and may submit to medical experiments for money out of desperation. Legal representation for the poor is spectacularly inadequate and plea-bargaining, rather than trial by jury, is the norm. Large parts of the huge American prison population are held for minor infringements due to poverty, such as the inability to pay parking fines, or for drug-dependent activities in a country where there is little support for detox or rehabilitation.

Australia's industrial law protections were greatly reduced under Prime Minister Howard, following Premier Kennett's then other state premiers' abolition of state awards.²⁵ These changes made profit more possible from cheap foreign labour, and were followed by significant increases in migration to Australia. Two further processes helped to expand the trends that Jeff Kennett's actions set in motion. These were deregulation of the Australian housing market to permit overseas purchase and investment; and the rise of the internet, which was exploited by state governments, private migration agents in conjunction with employers; corporatised universities seeking students; and property financiers, conveyancers, developers and real-estate agencies, to globalise Australian employment, public institutions, universities, and property.²⁶

These changes have made Australia's industrial relations and property markets increasingly similar to those of the United States. A brake exists, however, in that it is not possible to acquire Australian nationality simply by being born in Australia. We have a hugely influential growth lobby²⁷ involving the property finance-insurance-and-development²⁸ sector with its associated industries upstream and downstream, including the corporate media property dot coms, public media, and political parties,²⁹ that pushes for open borders and high population growth. With this aim, using its massive media access and influence, it continuously promotes all forms of migration with an aura of refugee heroism, and tars objectors as racists.

Thus, we come full circle, for property developers in Australia benefit at one end of the disaster capitalism economic cycle. In some countries their involvement in war is more obvious, such as in the Gaza strip, where developer bulldozers seem to stand in for tanks in displacing Palestinians, who then become refugees and economic migrants. Property development gets financed in the wake of disasters, to rebuild roads and cities, so wars are good for this industry, which is increasingly organised on a massive scale, with turnover in multi-billions. In fact, most property development corporations operate more or less internationally, and those based in Australia court international investment on the basis that reliable rapid population growth promotes demand-growth.

²⁵ See "Sheila Newman: Kennett population policy, numbers and flow-ons: Regional migration and industrial law under Kennett," (videoed speech and article) 27 September 2015 <https://candobetter.net/node/4612>

²⁶ See "Sheila Newman: Kennett population policy, numbers and flow-ons: Regional migration and industrial law under Kennett," (videoed speech and article) 27 September 2015 <https://candobetter.net/node/4612>

²⁷ James Sinnamon, "How the growth lobby threatens Australia's future," 24 January 2009, <https://candobetter.net/node/1002>

²⁸ Sheila Newman, "Property Council of Australia 2010 campaign to contrast with 2012 spin," 27 March 2012, <https://candobetter.net/node/2830>; "About APop - The Australian Population Institute," 17 July 2015, <https://candobetter.net/node/4513>

²⁹ Sheila Newman, "Australian Labor Governments or Commercial Corporations?" 18 January 2010, <https://candobetter.net/node/1781>

The Mass Media and the Alternative Media

The US-NATO invasion of Iraq (2003) proposal, based on the bogus 'weapons of mass destruction' claims, elicited the largest and most widespread protests ever, globally, yet US and the UK leaders, Bush and Blair, criminally conspired to go ahead. The trial for breaching the Official Secrets Act (1989) of British spy-turned-whistle-blower, Katharine Gun, threatened to expose the Bush-Blair conspiracy to the world, so the British Government dropped all charges, avoiding official compromise.³⁰

The Iraq war protests were, however, the last anti-war protests on any similar scale. That is almost certainly because the mainstream media simply stopped covering anti-war protest and discussion,³¹ and because the alternative media could not compensate for this (possibly due to being covertly 'managed'.)

Despite the fact that the United States and her NATO allies, with Australia an ever-supportive yes-man, have gone on from there to ever bigger and worse invasions based on similar lies, there is little public discussion of this, and really not much knowledge.³² Australia's ABC and other mass media have manufactured, not consent, but an absence of awareness, by ceasing to cover protest against Australian involvement in war.

The US-dominated international internet-based, corporate and public press, which now permeates Australian, British, western European, some eastern European, Scandinavian, and Middle Eastern corporate and public broadcasters, is used to justify all pretexts for US invasions, occupations, financing, and other involvement in wars.

Julian Assange challenged this ignorance on a global basis with an avalanche of evidence, but the US-NATO crackdown has been nearly commensurate, with all mass media in retreat from reporting truth or reflecting democratic opinion. Currently, in Australia, an Afghanistan-war-crimes whistle-blower, David McBride, faces prosecution,³³ despite the obvious public benefit of his revelations, and the fact that they induced a public apology from the army and the Australian government³⁴ (a positive contrast to the way the US handled the collateral murder revelations).

Truly, only something like Wikileaks is up to the challenge of informing the world, in an unbiased and factual manner, of crucial information about wars and the psychopathic power-and-treasure hunts that lead to them, in the face of the corporate and state media propaganda. Wikileaks, when headed

³⁰ See Marcia Mitchell and Thomas Mitchell, *The Spy Who Tried to Stop a War: Katharine Gun and the Secret Plot to Sanction the Iraq Invasion*, Sausalito, CA, 2008. Also brilliantly dramatized in Gavin Hood (Director), *Official Secrets*, Clear Pictures Entertainment and others, 2019.)

³¹ Harpootlian, Allegra, US Wars and military action: The New Anti-War Movement, <https://www.thenation.com/article/tom-dispatch-new-anti-war-movement-iraq-iran/> ; Hayes, Danny and Guardino, Matt, Whose Views Made the News? Media Coverage and the March to War in Iraq, *Political Communication*, Vol. 27, No. 1, Dec 2009, p59. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/10584600903502615> ; Murphy, Cullen, The Press at War, From Vietnam to Iraq, *Atlantic Monthly*, March 20, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/03/iraq-war-anniversary/555989/>

³² For a discussion of how the mass media manages war information, see, Kenneth Eade, "The Dirty Business of War," <https://candobetter.net/node/4914>

³³ Peter Theodosiou, Abdullah Alikhil, "Petition to 'free' Afghan war crimes whistleblower David McBride reaches 36,000 signatures," 2 December 2020, <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/petition-to-free-afghan-war-crimes-whistleblower-david-mcbride-reaches-36-000-signatures>

³⁴ Ibid.

by Julian Assange, was able to unmask the crimes of powerful elites. By rights, those elites should be brought to justice. Instead, Assange has been imprisoned, isolated, and disempowered, by the very institutions supposed to represent justice.

So, my main recommendation here is for IPAN to take up the cause of resurrecting Julian Assange and Wikileaks. And of creating parallel people's courts to try the elites who keep taking us to war on manufactured excuses and who profit from sales of the weapons they manufacture on these pretexts.

Education

Our education system, primary, secondary and tertiary, needs liberation from Microsoft and Apple's opaque proprietary software. Linux systems and Linux-based programs ('apps') exist parallel to Microsoft et al, but are free to download and develop. They enable ordinary people to build or adapt corporate-independent phones, computers, internet networks and pages. With such an opensource base, Australians could put together a new interpersonal communications system, a Wikileaks open public information system, and a public-messaging system, reducing our dependence on corporate spyware like google, Facebook, Gmail etc. These things are now fundamental to human rights, interpersonal communication and expression, mass media, and democratic power.