The Left and 9/11

by Adam Shatz

Since the September 11 attacks, it’s become a cliché to say that the left is divided over American foreign policy. But “divided” doesn’t begin to capture the diversity of opinion about the war in Afghanistan and the war on terror—or, for that matter, the inner conflicts that have racked many people on the left. Standing outside my apartment on Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn on September 11, I saw the towers on fire. As shaken and horrified as I was, I knew two things: (1) the American government—my government, for better or for worse—would respond; and (2) that despite my fear that the response would be disproportionate, I wasn’t going to be attending any peace rallies, at least not yet.

Since then, the fog of war has grown thicker and thicker. On some days, I’m sympathetic to Noam Chomsky’s critique of the war on terrorism as an arrogant war of empire. On other days, I remember the view from Flatbush Avenue on September 11, and I’m gripped by the sense that anti-imperialism is a woefully in-complete guide to today’s situation. I never saw the Soviets, the Cubans, the Sandinistas, the ANC or the PLO as enemies. Al Qaeda is another matter altogether.

Curious whether others shared my own ambivalence, I undertook an informal investigation of left-wing opinion on American foreign policy since 9/11. I spoke to a range of left intellectuals, from social democrats who were convinced that Afghanistan was a necessary and just war, to anti-imperialists who believed that it was a nasty war of retribution. More important, I spoke with people, arguably the left majority, who fell somewhere in between.

Expenditure of resources on people who are guilty only by reason of their skin color or political ideology.

Second, the government should not be able to imprison people without a public accounting, reviewable in court, establishing that it has a sound legal basis for doing so. The mutually reinforcing checks of judicial review and public scrutiny, reflected in the ancient writ of habeas corpus and the constitutional right to a public trial, are essential to insuring that the innocent are not caught up as John Ashcroft’s “suspected terrorists” or President Bush’s “bad guys.”

Third, we must insist on public accountability and oversight of law enforcement powers. Past abuses have often been shrouded in secrecy, only to be discovered and condemned years later, as when the Church Committee in 1975 revealed the excesses of the CIA and the FBI in the 1950s and ’60s. The Bush Administration has sought to pursue this war under unprecedented secrecy, even refusing to divulge basic facts about its employment of new legislative measures to Congress.

Fourth, we should adopt only those measures that we are willing to have imposed on ourselves. Where everyone has an interest at stake, the political process is much more likely to strike an appropriate balance between liberty and security. Where we sacrifice the rights of some for the purported security of the majority, we violate our most basic constitutional commitments.

Finally, we must avoid repeating past mistakes. After a terrorist bomb exploded at the home of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer in 1919, the Justice Department responded by launching the Palmer Raids, in which thousands of immigrants across the country were rounded up and hundreds deported, not for their involvement in the bombing but for their political associations. Eighty years later, the Ashcroft Raids similarly arrested 1,500-2,000 people and deported hundreds—again, without netting anyone charged with the crime under investigation.

None of these principles are new. But the fact that they are old and that they have been forged over the course of many prior crises that also appeared to call for “new paradigms” should count in their favor, not against them. The attacks of September 11 were indeed unthinkable, and the anthrax scare that followed vividly underscored our postmodern vulnerability. But the Administration has yet to make the case that these threats justify compromising our fundamental principles of liberty and justice. In the area of human rights and civil liberties, what is needed is not a “new paradigm” but true conservatism. Only then will freedom endure this operation.

The War on Terror Has Ignited a Fiery Debate That Shows No Signs of Abating.

Adam Shatz is a writer in New York City. Research support was provided by the Investigative Fund of the Nation Institute.
call it a debate. It’s more like a shouting match, with accusations of treason of one kind or another being flung by both sides.

New Left Review editor Tariq Ali sneers at supporters of the war, including his ex-friend Christopher Hitchens, as “the new empire loyalists,” while Hitchens excoriates opponents of the war on terror as “Ramadanistas.” In “Can There Be a Decent Left?,” an essay in the spring Dissent, Michael Walzer—who lent his signature to “What We’re Fighting For,” a prowar manifesto sponsored by the center-right Institute for American Values—accused the antiwar left of expressing “barely concealed glee that the imperial state had finally gotten what it deserved.” (When I asked him to say whom he had in mind, he said: “I’m not going to do that. Virtually everyone who read it knew exactly what I was talking about.”)

The debate reflects sharp disagreements not only about the war on terror but about America’s enormously expanded role in the world. Radical anti-imperialists ground their claims in the sordid history of US involvement in Iran, Guatemala, Vietnam, Chile, East Timor and Nicaragua. As the left-wing war historian Gabriel Kolko puts it: “Everyone—Americans and those people who are the objects of their efforts—would be far better off if the United States did nothing, closed its bases overseas, withdrew its fleets everywhere and allowed the rest of the world to find its own way without American weapons and troops.” Left interventionists, by contrast, invoke the recent history of the Balkans, where they argue American military intervention helped create the conditions for Slobodan Milosevic’s downfall and for the democratization of Serbia; they also point out that in post–cold war geopolitics, there are worse things than the expansion of NATO—ethnic cleansing and genocide, for instance. “I think it should have occurred to a lot of people that there are many places in the world where American intervention would be considered desirable,” says Hitchens. One camp inclines toward automatic hostility to any American military intervention; the other veers toward an embrace of American expansionism.

The prowar left and the antiwar left have both tended to view the conflict through ideologically tinted prisms. Reflexive anti-Americanism is one such prism. As Don Guttenplan, a London-based correspondent for The Nation, observes, for a small but vocal section of American radicals, “there is only one imperialism, and if it isn’t American it’s not imperialism.” In the past decade this theology of American evil has assumed increasingly twisted forms, including, in some cases, a creeping sympathy for Serbian nationalism. It has also produced a highly selective solicitude for the oppressed: “Muslim grievances” are to be heeded when they emanate from Palestine, but ignored or even repudiated when they arise in Bosnia or Kosovo. This has damaged the left’s moral standing and widened the chasm with human rights activists, who should be our natural allies.

The MIT linguist and prolific essayist Noam Chomsky has emerged as a favorite target of those keen on exposing the left’s anti-Americanism. Although Chomsky denounced the attacks, emphasizing that “nothing can justify such crimes,” he seemed irritable in the interviews he gave just after September 11, as if he couldn’t quite connect to the emotional reality of American suffering. He wasted little time on the attacks themselves before launching into a wooden recitation of atrocities carried out by the
American government and its allies. In a clumsy analogy, Chomsky likened the attacks to Clinton’s bombing of the Al Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Sudan (wrongly suspected of manufacturing biological weapons), which resulted in one direct casualty. According to Chomsky, because the destruction of the plant placed tens of thousands of Sudanese at risk of malaria and other lethal diseases, it was “morally worse” than 9/11.

Much of what Chomsky said—his argument that the United States should treat the attacks as a crime, rather than an act of war, and that it should apprehend the terrorists and bring them before an international court rather than declare war on Afghanistan—was echoed by more centrist thinkers, including the British military historian Michael Howard in Foreign Affairs and Stanley Hoffmann in The New York Review of Books. The problem was not so much Chomsky’s opposition to US retaliation as the weirdly dispassionate tone of his reaction to the carnage at Ground Zero, but, as Todd Gitlin points out, “in an interview undertaken just after September 11, the tone was the position.”

“There’s a humbling insight into the US pretension of occupying the moral high ground in Chomsky’s work,” international legal scholar and Nation editorial board member Richard Falk reflects. “Part of what he’s saying is true. Objectively viewed, the United States isn’t the victim but in many contexts, including its response to terrorism, the perpetrator.” But, adds Falk, he’s “so preoccupied with the evils of US imperialism that it completely occupies all the political and moral space, and therefore it’s not possible for him to acknowledge that even without intending to do so, some US military interventions may actually have a beneficial effect.”

Instead of taking “an either/or view” of American military intervention, Falk argues, “we should look with as much care as possible at the case where the interventionary claim is being made, and consider the effects of intervening and not intervening.” As his own writings on Afghanistan illustrate, however, it’s not always easy to make these calls. Falk changed his position on Afghanistan several times before arriving at the conclusion that the war was “just and necessary,” despite the use of tactics like cluster bombs that he believes were “in clear violation of the laws of war.”

Falk has been widely chastised for his vacillations. “Will the old Falk please stand up? We need you, Richard!” the antiterrorist lawyer Peter Weiss wrote in a letter to The Nation. “He wanted to be vindicated, he didn’t want to be right,” says Hitchens, from the other end of the spectrum. And yet one could argue that it was the opposite—that Falk was trying to stake out a principled position, one attentive both to the delicate balance between human rights and domestic security, and to the rapid changes on the ground in Afghanistan. In doing so, he spoke for many people on the left, though unlike some of us he expressed his uncertainty and ambivalence, and was not afraid to admit that he had been mistaken.

While Falk did not evaluate the war through the distorting prism of anti-Americanism, he also avoided the misleading view of many prowar liberals, for whom America’s struggle against Al Qaeda and Israel’s war with Palestinian suicide bombers are one and the same. “America’s crime, its real crime, is to be America herself,” Paul Berman wrote in The American Prospect shortly after the attacks. “The crime is to exude the dynamism of an ever-changing liberal culture. America is like Israel in that respect, only fifty times larger and infinitely richer and more powerful.” The implication of Berman’s argument is that no change in Middle East policy could stem the tide of Arab anger, directed as it is not against specific American or Israeli policies but against “our” way of life. Though rarely cited explicitly, Israel shapes and even defines the foreign policy views of a small but influential group of American liberals. It’s one reason Berman and like-minded social democrats at the journal Dissent may support a war against Iraq. Saddam Hussein has not attacked us, but, as Ann Snitow, a member of the Dissent editorial board, reminded me, “Who is ‘us’? Is it New York or Tel Aviv? The ‘us’ slides around.”

Unlike most Americans, leftists didn’t have to ask the question “Why do they hate us?”—and not because of any glee that the chickens had come home to roost. The left press had spent the better part of the past two decades critiquing American policies that have fanned anger and resentment in the Arab and Muslim world.

Yet the attacks also placed the left on the defensive. Although bin Laden represents a gristy perversion of anti-imperialism, the atrocities posed a challenge to the sentimental Third Worldism that has been a cornerstone of the radical left since the Vietnam era. “A lot of us came up in the period when the most imperialist actions were coming from the West,” says Robin D.G. Kelley, a professor of Africana Studies at New York University. “I think anyone who supports some blind Third World unity has to think again now.”

The atrocities also exposed an intelligence failure on the left. For years, progressive writers had referred to terrorism in scare quotes, largely because security hawks and Israeli lobbyists cynically applied the term to acts of indiscriminate violence by national liberation movements, and never to those by states. And while many feminists were decrying the Taliban long before President Bush discovered what a burqa was, some left-wing scholars had presented a sanitized image of Islamic fundamentalists as authentic populists, even as a potentially democratizing force in the Arab world. The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality? was the title...
of one highly praised study. Guess what the answer was.

"This war is a real crisis for the left," says Katha Pollitt, "in that finally there is an enemy who has attacked us, as opposed to any enemy that's in our heads, and one that's completely unsympathetic to the goals of the left."

There was also confusion and disagreement about how to combat this new enemy, stateless and elusive as it is. "There are numerous ways of dealing with terrorism, and the military option is not the only one or necessarily even the best one," says Eric Foner, an American historian at Columbia University. "It wasn't Western intervention, it wasn't Western bomber jets...which went and got rid of Khomeini," Tariq Ali observes. "It was biology: He died. And after he died, it opened up conflicts in that society. And it was the Iranians, without the help of bomber jets, who voted out the hard-line clerics."

But Iran is a nation-state whose ambitions do not extend beyond the region; Al Qaeda is a shadowy network of cells dispersed, in clandestine fashion, throughout the world and inspired by an implacable vision of a war to the death with "Crusaders and Zionists." As Ali notes, nonmilitary policies like police work and spying may prove ideally suited to tracking down Al Qaeda terrorists and preventing future attacks: Ramzi Yousef, the mastermind of the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center, was apprehended by traditional police methods. And yet there are some settings in which police methods can hardly be expected to work, like Afghanistan. "Which was the court where these guys could be summoned?" asks Todd Gitlin. "Were subpoenas to be dropped at the mouths of the caves of Tora Bora?" What's more, the call for "police work" rather than war sounded somewhat disingenuous, coming as it did from some of the same people who used to call for the abolition of the CIA, an organization to which much of the policing would presumably be entrusted. A noisy debate over the reform of the CIA rocked mainstream and conservative circles after 9/11, but, as the investigative journalist Ken Silverstein notes, the left didn't participate. "Whatever the solutions are, it's a reasonable debate," says Silverstein. "But it wasn't a debate that was vibrant on the left. When people on the left hear the words Pentagon or CIA, they immediately go into the mode of, 'Oh, they're big, bad organizations and that's all I need to know.'"

When it comes to military action, moreover, the left has been similarly hard pressed to develop an informed critique that transcends pacifist platitudes. "What should we be learning from the last couple of decades," Barbara Ehrenreich reflects, "is that there's a variety of forms of [military] intervention." Once the war in Afghanistan began and it became clear that America would rely once again on high-altitude bombing—and the assistance of ruthless local proxies—a number of left-liberal writers who supported the intervention called for ground troops. The cultural critic Ellen Willis was among them. "There's no such thing as a war without consequences for yourself," she says. "The idea that some people in the military have that America should never have any casualties is ridiculous."

But ridiculous to whom? Given the mercurial realities of American electoral politics, and given the "lessons" of Vietnam, keeping American casualties to a minimum makes perfect sense to
both the American government and the American military, not to mention the American people.

When I mentioned this problem to Willis, she said: “I think it’s incumbent on people to say what they think… If you’re going to be a critic, be a critic of those things that you’re really critical of, and support the things that you can support.” It’s a reasonable argument, but it may also be a touch naïve. As Pollitt reflects, “A fundamental problem with intellectuals is that they think they’re much more powerful than they are, and they find these middle paths.”

The war on terror, though far more controversial than the war in Afghanistan, has found some impassioned liberal supporters, particularly the circle around Dissent, the magazine Walzer edits. The New Republic published in the Balkans and in Haiti. Even so, it’s hard not to be taken aback when it seemed rudderless. The journal has thus devoted much of its critical energy since 9/11 to castigating the sins of the left. At Dissent’s first editorial board meeting after the attacks, the liveliest topic of conversation was reportedly Chomsky, whom Walzer appears to regard as an even greater menace to society than Obama himself.

The bellicosity of Christopher Hitchens is more surprising. It’s true that Hitchens also supported American military interventions in the Balkans and in Haiti. Even so, it’s hard not to be taken aback by his zealous embrace of the war on terrorism, his conditional support for a pre-emptive strike against Iraq and by the fero-cious invective he has poured on antiwar critics. Hitchens, a self-described “root-and-branch anti-Zionist,” once disdained the very notion of a foreign policy premised on antiterrorism. In an essay published in The Nation on December 5, 1981, he wrote about The New Republic: “The cult of ‘anti-terrorism’”—notice the quotes—“has taken a sturdy hold on that once-proud magazine, and has spilled over from gung-ho attitudes on Israel to a pastiche of Reaganism in general—at least in the area of foreign policy.”

It’s true that the world, and not just Hitchens, has changed since 1981. When Reaganites referred to “terrorism” in those days, they meant violent resistance of any kind by radical nationalists, whether the PLO, the ANC or Central American insurgents. And while this violence was sometimes directed at innocent civilians, it often wasn’t—it merited the quotes around it in a way that Al Qaeda’s religiously inspired and vastly more lethal attacks do not. Even so, the war against terror seems to have taken a sturdy hold on the left’s most gifted polemicalist, and has spilled over from gung-ho attitudes on American power into a pastiche of Bushism—at least in the area of foreign policy.

In the first couple of weeks after 9/11, as radicals flashed peace buttons and denounced America’s war before a shot was fired, Hitchens’s voice was a tonic. You didn’t have to agree with his overheated (and now overused) analogy between radical Islam and fascism to appreciate his candor about the evil that occurred on September 11, and about the need to prevent similar attacks in the future. In the bombers of Manhattan, he declared, “we have met an enemy, and…he is not us, but someone else.” While radicals noted that the United States had armed and trained Islamic militants in Afghanistan throughout the 1980s, as if “blowback” were reason enough not to do anything about them now, Hitchens asked the obvious question: “Does this not double or triple our responsibility to remove them from power?”

“All that made sense to me,” Guttenplan says of Hitchens’s early responses to 9/11. “What didn’t make sense to me was saying we’re getting on the bus with George Bush.” Which, in effect, is what Hitchens has been saying for the past several months. “There may be some stupid and…self-righteous ways of being in favor of this war or of the Bush foreign policy, but there is no intelligent and no principled way of being against it,” Hitchens thundered in a recent debate with Tariq Ali. At that debate, Hitchens traced the war back to February 14, 1989, when Khomeini declared a fatwa against his friend the novelist Salman Rushdie. Never mind that the radical Shiites of Iran are sworn enemies of the Sunni fundamentalists of Al Qaeda. For Hitchens, the war on terror is a religious war, or rather an anticlerical war—even though it is led by a born-again Christian. In a fairly laudatory assessment of Bush’s first year in office, published last January in the British Observer, Hitchens praised the President for knowing his place (“He has not sought to outgrow his limited stature…. In general, he has eschewed the temptations of posturing or grandstanding”) and for his tolerant stance vis-à-vis the Muslim world (“he was, if anything, too immaculate in his deference to Muslim sensitivities at home and abroad”). The contrast with his verbal assaults on the Chomsky left, whom Hitchens calls “soft on crime and soft on fascism,” is stark and telling.

Hitchens’s enthusiasm for the war on terror has led him to adopt some strange positions. You would think that, as a longstanding champion of Palestinian rights, he would be disturbed by Rumsfeld’s cavalier talk of the “so-called occupied territories” and Bush’s crude ultimatum to the Palestinians to either vote out Arafat or continue living under occupation. But Hitchens told me that while he objects to “that whole tone of voice,” he prefers Bush’s “tough love” to the “patronization” of Clinton’s peace negotiators. Nor is he troubled by the mounting civilian toll exacted by America’s crusade in Afghanistan. “I don’t think the war in Afghanistan was ruthlessly enough waged,” he says. What about the use of cluster bombs?

If you’re actually certain that you’re hitting only a concentration of enemy troops…then it’s pretty good because those steel pellets will go straight through somebody and out the other side and through somebody else. And if they’re bearing a Koran over their heart, it’ll go straight through that, too. So they won’t be able to say, ‘Ah, I was bearing a Koran over my heart and guess what, the missile stopped halfway through.’ No way, ‘cause it’ll go straight through that as well. They’ll be dead, in other words.
“It pains me to hear that,” says Edward Said, a friend of many years. “He’s gone back to nineteenth-century gunboat diplomacy—go hit the wogs.”

Wars tend to spread beyond their original objectives, and the war in Afghanistan is no exception. Hardly had the Taliban collapsed when a new war was declared, a war on terror with a long list of enemies (almost none of them related to Al Qaeda) and no obvious endgame. Not without reason, our European allies increasingly see this war as a naked effort to remap the world in US interests. The war’s collateral effects now include widespread violations of civil liberties at home, an aggressive foreign policy and an emboldened unilateralism.

As it turns out, the more persuasive analysis on the left of these collateral effects belongs not to Hitchens but to Chomsky. While Hitchens was outlining his support for a war on “Islamo-fascism,” Chomsky was predicting that the terrorist threat would be invoked to justify further adventures, just as it was during the Reagan Administration. And the second war against terrorism is staffed by some of the same people who led the first one. John Negroponte, Reagan’s ambassador to Honduras and the point man of our Central American wars, is our ambassador to the United Nations. Reagan’s special envoy to the Middle East, Donald Rumsfeld, is Defense Secretary. One can differ with Chomsky on Afghanistan and still see much of value in his critique of the war on terrorism. “I don’t believe that we’re ideologically committed to do evil,” says playwright Tony Kushner. “On the other hand, what Chomsky says about the globalization of the war is absolutely true. It’s the beginning of an unapologetic imperium, and that’s quite frightening.”

Chomsky’s framework for understanding US foreign policy is appealing because it appears to see through the fog, while allowing those who accept it to feel like they’re on the side of history’s angels. His world is an orderly, logical one in which everything is foretold. The shape events assume may be unexpected, but the events themselves are the predictable outcome of this or that American policy. Applied to Vietnam, East Timor and Palestine, Chomsky’s analysis of American imperialism has demonstrated uncommon prophetic powers. Applied to Cambodia and the Balkans, it has prevented him from comprehending evil that has not been plotted from Washington.

Unlike Chomsky, Hitchens has an acute sense of the contingency, and the ironies, of history. But he now talks about global politics as though it were a great chessboard, which the United States could master provided it learned the rules of the game.

Despite their strengths, since September 11 both these paradigms have proved to be unreliable compasses. Chomsky’s jaundiced perspective on American power makes it virtually impossible to contemplate the possibility of just American military interventions, either for self-defense or to prevent genocide. Hitchens’s intoxicated embrace of American power has left him less and less capable of drawing the line between humanitarian intervention and
rogue-state adventurism. What the left needs to cultivate is an intelligent synthesis, one that recognizes that the United States has a role to play in the world while also warning of the dangers of an imperial foreign policy.

Even where a growing consensus is apparent, as in the case of Iraq, such a synthesis remains elusive. Why does the left oppose war on Iraq? Do we oppose it because the US government’s reasons for going to war are always deceitful, or because the United States has no right to unseat foreign governments that haven’t attacked us first, or because this war is ill-timed and is likely to backfire? Do we oppose it because it’s unilateral and illegal under international law, or because the American government has failed to put forward a coherent vision of Iraq after Saddam? As with Afghanistan, there are more than two ways to be for or against an intervention in Iraq. Like the war on terror, the debate on the left over the uses of American force has no end in sight.

Letter to America

by Breyten Breytenbach

Concerned that a much-needed international perspective is missing from the debate in this country over the course of American foreign policy and US relations with the world, The Nation asked a number of distinguished foreign writers and thinkers to share their reflections with us. It is our hope that, as in the early 1980s, when a “letter” in these pages from the late E.P. Thompson expressing rising European concern about the Reagan Administration’s nuclear weapons buildup was instrumental in building common bonds between antinuclear movements across the Atlantic, this series will forge bonds between Americans concerned about how Washington is exercising power today and the rest of the world. We begin with a letter to an American friend written by the South African writer Breyten Breytenbach, whose opposition to apartheid resulted in his spending seven years in prison.

—The Editors

Dear Jack,

This is an extraordinarily difficult letter to write, and it may even be a perilous exercise. Dangerous because your present Administration and its specialized agencies by all accounts know no restraint in hitting out at any perceived enemy of America, and nobody or nothing can protect one from their vindictiveness. Not even American courts are any longer a bulwark against arbitrary exactions. Take the people being kept in that concentration camp in Guantánamo: They are literally extraterritorial, by force made anonymous and stateless so that no law, domestic or international, is habilitated to protect them. It may be an extreme example brought about by abnormal circumstances—but the criteria of human rights kick in, surely, precisely when the conditions are extreme and the situation is abnormal. The predominant yardstick of your government is not human rights but national interests. (Your President keeps repeating the mantra.) In what way is this order of priorities any different from those of the defunct Soviet Union or other totalitarian regimes?

The war against terror is an all-purpose fig leaf for violating or ignoring local laws and international agreements and treaties.

Breyten Breytenbach, who teaches in the creative writing program at New York University, is executive director of the Gorée Institute in Senegal. His most recent book is a volume of poems, Lady One (Harcourt).

So, talking to America is like dealing with a very aggressive beast: One must do so softly, not make any brusque moves or run off at the mouth if you wish to survive. In dancing with the enemy one follows his steps even if counting under one’s breath. But do be careful not to dance too close to containers intended for transporting war prisoners in Afghanistan: One risks finding one’s face blackened by a premature death.

Why is it difficult? Because the United States is a complex entity despite the gung-ho slogans and simplistic posturing in moments of national hysteria. Your political system is resilient and well tested; it has always harbored counterforces; it allows quite effectively for alternation: for a swing-back of the pendulum whenever policies have strayed too far from middle-class interests—with the result that you have a large middle ground of acceptable political practices. Why, through the role of elected representatives, the people who vote even have a rudimentary democratic control over public affairs! Except maybe in Florida. Better still—your history has shown how powerful a moral catharsis expressed through popular resistance to injustice can sometimes be; I have in mind the grassroots opposition to the Vietnam War. And all along there was no dearth of strong voices speaking firm convictions and enunciating sure ethical standards.

Where are they now? What happened to the influential intellectuals and the trustworthy journalists explaining the ineluctable consequences of your present policies? Where are the clergy calling for humility and some compassion for the rest of the world? Are there no ordinary folk pointing out that the President and his cronies are naked, cynical, morally reprehensible and very, very dangerous not only for the world but also for American interests—and by now probably out of control? Are these voices stifled? Has the public arena of freely debated expressions of concern been sapped of all influence? Are people indifferent to the havoc wreaked all over the world by America’s diktat policies, destroying the underpinnings of decent international coexistence? Or are they perhaps secretly and shamefully gleeful, as closet supporters of this Showdown at OK Corral approach? They (and you and I) are most likely hunkered down, waiting for the storm of imbecility to pass. How deadened we have become!

In reality the workings of your governing system are opaque and covert, while hiding in the chattering spotlight of an ostensible
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