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| The USC4P&J Occasional Papers are a series of ad hoc publications on the themes of peace and justice, comprising informal  essays, declarations, papers in progress, and talks or contributions to meetings and assemblies. |

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| Keynote speech by **Lucas Alden**, principal organizer of the public sit-in held in front of the  US Embassy, Rome, Italy, on the Global Day of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS),  April 14th, 2018.  The host organizing group was US Citizens for Peace and Justice, Rome, with the participation  of Rete NoWar Roma, Diem25 Italia, BDS Roma, AEPC Roma and others. The sit-in was in conjunction with the worldwide GDAMS called by the International Peace Bureau, Berlin  (IPB), the Institute for Policy Studies. Washington, DC (IPS), and the Center of Peace  Studies J.M. Delas, Barcelona. Both national and international media were present. |

**The Consequences of US Military Expenditure in 2018 – Hopes and Prospects**

1.We say YES to Diplomacy, we say YES to cutting military spending and “defense budgets,” we say YES to phasing wars and the threat of wars out of existence. We say YES to real diplomacy and solidarity among all peoples of the world.

We’ve all seen the headlines this week ..these issues haven’t gone away…on the contray they’ve intensified. Perfect time to see how instructive it is to see how the liberal intellectuals treat war-mongering – some may be critical of Trump but that the US and its junior partners are NOT subject to international law and that the sovereignty of others is not in our interest is paramount, and the media is there to back up any administration on these points. Have a look. We’ve got the Trump administration with MACRON AND MAY NOW BOMBING – not only threatening to increase bombing in Syria, a move which will do nothing more than increase human suffering and worsen the catastrophe there, in the region and around the world by spreading jihadism.

We’ve got unarmed Palestinian protestors being gunned down in broad daylight by a vicious Israeli army which receives a green light to dismiss international law and evade its consequences thanks to the crucial and decisive diplomatic, economic and above all military support it has been receiving from the USA to carry its illegal occupation of Palestinian lands under international law since 1967. None of the crimes Israel regularly carries out would be possible, in fact Israel would be alone in the world without US funding and protection, so some of us here as US citizens have a unique responsibility to express dissent at policies such as these that the US regularly carries out.

We’ve got the Trump administration threatening the lives of huge swaths of the world population in their provocations with North Korea. ***Should*** we ask first why one administration, extremely few individuals or even one man, should have the power to end life on earth as we know it for huge percentages of the population? ***Why*** do we permit this situation to go on, as it has since 1945? Now it’s come to this, a reality show clown with his hands on the trigger. ***Should*** we ask why North Korea has nukes in the first place? ***Why*** does it have a dictatorship? ***Why*** does it feel threatened by the US? ***Could*** it have something to do with the carpet bombing we subjected the civilian population of that country to in the early 1950s, killing millions all in the name of fighting the spread of so-called communism? A country and a region, later in Vietnam, which posed no threat to the rest of the world whatsoever. Do we need to be reminded that the US is indeed the only country to have ever used nuclear weapons, indeed on a defenseless civilian population of a country, Japan, which was on the cusp of surrendering, as US military commanders fully well knew.

2. ***The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists***, a board and journal of Nobel laureate scientists internationally reknowed since 1947 has, this January, moved it’s famous Doomsday Clock to 2 minutes to midnight, midnight being lights out, the closest it’s been to midnight since – 1953 - at the peak of US provoked nuclear arms races between the US and the Soviet Union. These scientists consider it to be a miracle that catastrophic events involving nuclear arms have not occurred since 1947, for nothing other than the law of percentages - the longer they exist the more likely an event will occur. They decision to move the clock to 2 minutes to midnight was not only due to the nuclear threat, but to above to climate change – the increasing rates of climate and environmental devastation and more importantly the unwillingness to do much about it, with the US in the lead at blocking any mild initiatives which have been proposed, such as the Paris Climate Agreement.

[According to Nature Geoscience (Friedlingstein, et al.), “Current emission growth rates are twice as large as in the 1990s despite 20 years of international climate negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).”]

It was said even before Trump’s election that even if all the signers to the ***Paris Agreement*** lived up to their pledges that we would still hit a 2 degree tipping point increase by 2050 or even a decade sooner. (2 degrees F meaning the release of CO2 of way over 400parts per million, which means irreversible effects on the atmosphere and the oceans) With the current climate denying administration, accelerating rates of climate change, the biggest issue of our or any time, will only increase, with the accords in Paris profoundly and inherently flawed to begin with, barely putting a tap on the crisis. (Corporate news didn’t mention the biggest issue in human history during the last presidential election…in part because it was barely mentioned by Hilary Clinton and outright denied by a Republican Congress who have since been labeled “the most dangerous organization in human history”…an outrageous claim but is it true? As Noam Chomsky asks.)

We in the west believe we have a **refugee and migrant crisis** at the moment. But what happens when hundreds of millions from the Indian sub-continent are forced to move north over the coming decades over rising sea levels brought on mainly by the fossil fuel consumption and forced growth rates in the political economic system we live under? We in the north are causing this.

Which organization in the world is by far annually the largest consumer of fossil fuels? The US Military.

The long term dire devastation that this fossil fuel consumption is causing has as its immediate present counterpart in the environmental devastation that wars provoked on the part of the US have caused in the middle east and Africa over recent decades, most notably in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, Palestine Yemen and elsewhere.

Speaking about refugees, if they’re not fleeing climate disaster in Africa or the middle east, ***what*** are they fleeing? ***Why*** are they arriving in Europe in droves? ***What*** do the refugees think? ***Could*** we have some responsibility in the west in this, particularly those of us who are US citizens, whose governments have increased so called defense budgets, arms selling at home and abroad and continually provoked wars?

Unreported in the US and western media on the whole is that the US is consistently seen as the greatest threat to world peace, with no other nations even close. These are polls, conducted by WIN/Gallup and Pew, the last being in 2014 in the midst of the Obama presidency. Obama increased the number of wars from 2 when he came into office to 7 when he left office. Also introduced the drone program, called by some commentators the “biggest terrorist campaign in history” in the devastation it has brought to middle eastern populations particularly in Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia and elsewhere.

The Iraq war alone was the most pernicious crime against humanity carried out since Vietnam, with upwards of over a million killed and several million displaced. Do access to their natural resources and selling arms have anything to do with this? Libya was ripped apart by the US led NATO assault on it in 2011 under Obama and H. Clinton, and as with Iraq, this aggression on the part of the west, the supreme war crime under international law, had been predicted by all intelligence agencies, US included to fantastically increase low grade terrorism worldwide, as has occurred at an increasing rate since the advent of the Iraq war in 2003 and accelerated since the destruction of Libya in 2011. ***Shall*** we ask where all these horrific instances of terrorism in Europe over particularly the last 5 years have come from? ***Why*** are they nearly all being carried out by young men of arab descent or the muslim faith? If we ask these questions seriously, the directions they lead us are not mysterious.

***Could*** the culture of war that the US has created with its empire through its titanic military expenditures, be related to the violence with military assault rifles seen regularly in US society and and in US schools? ***Could*** these arms manufacturers exist in any way that they actually do and have any kind of the power they actually have, make and sell these arms through the government for wars abroad without their eventually having a market at home? ***Shall*** we be asking and looking into these questions? Nearly all of the slaughters carried out have been with military grade assault weapons.

Are governments, particulary the US government, really interested in our security? ***Are*** airport and embassy police really security? Or ***is*** security not going to war when your own intelligence agencies are reporting to you that war making and even threats of war will fantastically increase terrorism worldwide?

This so-called “defense” budget, the historical record shows, has been an ***offensive*** budget with dire consequences the world over, as well as at home.

We say cut the budgets.

***Should*** we question why these budgets are so heavily weighted towards arms and wars and not towards human needs at home and abroad?

**Should** we question why so-called leaders continue to push and approve mammoth military budgets, at the expense of our ability to have the highest quality free at the point of service national healthcare and higher education? The DP not only approved Trump’s increased pentagon spending, they gave him more than he wanted last fall. **Why** do these so called leaders stay in power? ***Why*** are they taken seriously on the most crucial issues? ***Why*** does this continue no matter which party is in power? ***Why*** does the public accept this?

***3. Should*** we, in the knowledge of increasing military budgets and wars, with the unfathomable attention given to elections, should we ask ourselves whether political parties and electoral cycles singularly define politics? ***Is*** that what politics is? We’ve had an enormous increase of the franchise over the last century and wars and violence have only increased. The vote is of immeasurable value, but is that where politics ends?

***Is*** a political-economic system which has produced such awesome concentration of wealth in so few hands be related to the slashing of social spending on real human needs and privatization of public services, healthcare and education and increasing debt?

How is this related to a political system so profoundly influenced by arms dealers and weapon makers – to which Pres. Eisenhower warned us as the military industrial complex– which doesn’t allow for congresses to heed the call of the people for peace?

***Could*** the ever increasing rate of inequality – unseen now since the 1920s – be related to the ever increasing concentration of wealth and of military spending?

***Does*** the media report accurately on the most important issues? ***Do*** these issues even come up in the media?

We’re going to have to start thinking about these questions.

In my estimation the bad news is that state and private power has been consolidating more and more since the democratizing tendencies of the popular activism of the 60s changed society forever, as it had in the 30s, actually because it realizes its power is always on shaky ground. The good news is that in my view this period since the 60s has seen another trend analogous to the first in that public consciousness has risen to levels perhaps previously unseen. Issues of international solidarity, the women’s movement, gay rights, the environmental movements, and most of all opposition to international aggression simply didn’t exist anywhere near this level before 50 years ago. There’s been an enormous change. It was seen in the opposition to the Iraq War in the largest popular protests seen in history in February of 2003 before the war was even launched. I and many of you were there. The protests to our savagery in Vietnam in the 1960s had nothing remotely similar to this – it had taken 5 years after that war had already been launched by Kennedy in 1961 and after the country had already been destroyed to find comparable popular resistance. Consciousness has changed so much for the better but I’d say it needs to change a whole lot more. I think we ought to consider the questions posed here and organize ourselves for the future we want, one with concrete steps taken to reverse the paralyzing trends mentioned here and improve upon those which are democratizing.