

Selected articles (February 7, 2020)

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1a)

«A murderous system is being created before our very eyes»

An interview by Daniel Ryser, Yves Bachmann (Photos) and Charles Hawley (Translation)

January 31, 2020

„A made-up rape allegation and fabricated evidence in Sweden, pressure from the UK not to drop the case, a biased judge, detention in a maximum security prison, psychological torture – and soon extradition to the U.S., where he could face up to 175 years in prison for exposing war crimes. For the first time, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Nils Melzer, speaks in detail about the explosive findings of his investigation into the case of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange. [...]“

<https://www.republik.ch/2020/01/31/nils-melzer-about-wikileaks-founder-julian-assange>

1b)

Council of Europe sides with Julian Assange

By Sara Chessa

February 5, 2020

<https://independentaustralia.net/politics/politics-display/council-of-europe-declares-support-for-julian-assange,13565>

„[...] The moment that press freedom advocates have been waiting for so long has finally arrived. The European institutions are starting to officially state that they don't want Julian Assange to be extradited to the U.S.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has become the first one to step in and call for Assange's immediate release, joining the call of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, Nils Melzer, who some months ago clearly stated that Assange should walk free. [...]“

1c)

In Interview with Randy Credico, Investigative Journalist Stefania Maurizi Talks Assange, Source Protection and the Rise of Fascism

By Jimmysllama

February 4, 2020

<https://www.mintpressnews.com/interview-randy-credico-stefania-maurizi-julian-assange/264591/>

„In the fourth installment of “Live on the Fly – Julian Assange: Countdown to Freedom” in collaboration with CovertAction Magazine, political satirist and civil rights activist, Randy Credico, spoke with internationally acclaimed investigative journalist Stefania Maurizi, in an exclusive, in-depth interview about

source protection, Julian Assange, fascism, and the fight against power. Maurizi currently works for La Repubblica after spending ten years with the Italian news outlet l'Espresso. She's also worked with WikiLeaks extensively for over a decade after receiving an unexpected phone call during the summer of 2009, well before most people had even heard of WikiLeaks. [...]"

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2a)

Interview: Trump's nuclear insecurities and other secrets from the author of "The Bomb"

By Dawn Stover

February 4, 2020

<https://thebulletin.org/2020/02/interview-trumps-nuclear-insecurities-and-other-secrets-from-the-author-of-the-bomb/#>

*„In this interview, Bulletin contributing editor Dawn Stover speaks with Fred Kaplan about his just-published book, *The Bomb: Presidents, Generals, and the Secret History of Nuclear War* (Simon & Schuster). Kaplan is a national-security columnist for Slate and the author of five other books, including *The Wizards of Armageddon*, a 1983 book on the origins of American nuclear strategy. He has a PhD in political science from MIT. [...]"*

„[...] The [US] nuclear war plan up until the '60s was, if the Soviets or the communist Chinese invaded some area that was in our vital interests, say West Germany or West Berlin, not using nuclear weapons but crossing the line, the policy was to unleash our entire nuclear arsenal against every target in the Soviet Union, the satellite nations of Eastern Europe, and China, even if China had nothing to do with the war. And it was asked how many people this would kill, and the estimate was 285 million people. [...]"

2b)

NYC moving towards nuclear weapon divestment

January 2020

<https://www.dontbankonthebomb.com/city-councillors-call-for-nyc-to-divest-from-nuclear-weapons/>

„There is now a super majority of support for the package of legislation in the New York City Council introduced on nuclear weapons (Res. No. 976 and Int. No. 1621). Introduced by City Council Member Daniel Dromm and overwhelmingly supported by New York City residents, the vote is yet to be scheduled. [...]"

2c)

Don't bank on the bomb

A city guide to divestment

<https://www.dontbankonthebomb.com/city-guide/>

„Divesting from producers of controversial weapons: a guide for local authorities

More and more people are moving to cities. The growing trend towards urbanization means that the traditional role of Mayors and City Councils is expanding. To protect their citizens, municipal leaders must embrace a wide range of approaches towards securing their cities. This new reality is reflected in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. [...]"

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3a)

In Humiliating Rebuke, Arab League and Palestine Slap Down Kushner Plan, as Palestine severs all Relations with US and Israel

By Juan Cole

February 2, 2020

<https://www.juancole.com/2020/02/humiliating-palestine-relations.html>

„[...] The Beirut-based pan-Arab news site al-Mayadeen quoted a report on Israeli television channel 12 admitting that the Arab League vote was a surprise and a huge blow to American and Israeli diplomacy. The paper said that the Israeli commentators reported that there had been indications that some Arab countries would rejected Mahmoud Abbas's complete refusal of the American Plan. Moreover, it alleged, they said that Trump had been in informal contact with a number of the Arab states urging them to back his Plan. Instead, they all voted to reject it out of hand. Al-Mayadeen says that the Israeli commentators speculated on the reasons for this abrupt about-face, suggesting that these Arab governments were worried about pressure from Iran and Turkey, and about a massive backlash from their own populations.“

3b)

Trump's Bantustan-Lite Palestine Plan Shows the 'Two State' Solution Was Always a Lie

By Craig Murray

February 2, 2020

<https://consortiumnews.com/2020/02/02/trumps-bantustan-lite-palestine-plan-shows-the-two-state-solution-was-always-a-lie/>

„I have read through the entire 181 pages of President Donald Trump's "peace deal" for Israel, and it is breathtaking. It is not just that the "solution" it proposes is ludicrously one-sided, it is the entire analysis of the problem to be solved which reads as pure, unadulterated Zionist propaganda. [...]"

3c)

How Release of the Kushner Plan Overturned Israeli Strategy

By Paul R. Pillar

February 3, 2020

<https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2020/02/03/how-release-of-the-kushner-plan-overturned-israeli-strategy/>

„[...] Whatever the remaining power of the mythology, by making the apparent death of the two-state solution more visible, the Kushner plan will encourage people, both inside and outside Palestine, to think and act less in terms of two states and more in terms of advocating for the rights of Palestinian Arabs within a binational state. That shift will make it harder than ever to avoid comparisons between the Israeli version of apartheid and the earlier South African one, and to the sorts of international pressures that helped to end the latter injustice.“

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4a)

Syrian Army Progress Leads To New Scuffle Between Turkey And Russia

The continuing Syrian army operation to liberate Idlib governorate is leading to a new clash between Turkey and Russia.

Moon of Alabama

February 3, 2020

<https://www.moonofalabama.org/2020/02/syrian-army-progress-leads-to-new-scuffle-between-turkey-and-russia.html#more>

4b)

What brought Iranian forces to Idlib front?

By Hamidreza Azizi

February 5, 2020

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/02/iran-battlefield-idlib-syria-soleimani.html>

„The Syrian army’s ongoing military operation in the northwestern province of Idlib has resulted in a number of strategic gains for President Bashar al-Assad’s government. On Jan. 28, the Syrian army recaptured Maaret al-Numan, a strategic town south of the city of Idlib, from rebel and terrorist groups. The achievement was seen as an important step to regain full control over the M5 highway that connects Damascus with Aleppo. As has been the case with the previous rounds of the Syrian army’s operations in Idlib, the recent advances were made possible by Russian air support for the Syrian forces. However, what has been new this time is the active presence of Iranian and Iranian-backed forces on the battlefield that has been reported. [...]“

4c)

The Syrian Russian Turkish Idlib Stand-Of – Erdogan’s Last Stand?

By Ghassan Kadi

February 6, 2020

<https://thesaker.is/the-syrian-russian-turksih-idlib-stand-Off-erdogans-last-stand/>

„Even though the Syrian Army, with the aid of its international friends and allies, especially Russia, has been able to score many victories and liberate most of Syria’s major cities from the control of terrorist groups, the fight is far from over.

Before the situation in the American-controlled North-East is addressed, the Western regions, including Idlib and its surrounds must be put back fully under the legitimate government control. [...]“

4d)

Israel uses civilian flight as shield to raid Damascus after Syrian troops liberate Saraqib

PressTV

February 7, 2020

<https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2020/02/07/618076/Israeli-airstrike-civilian-flight-in-Syria>

„An Israeli airstrike, carried out as Syria troops were liberating the terrorist-held town of Saraqib in northwestern Idlib province, has endangered a civilian flight carrying 172 passengers, according to the Russian Defense Ministry. [...]“

„[...] "The Israeli general staff's use of passenger jets as a cover for its military operations or as a shield from Syrian missile system fire is becoming a typical trait of Israeli air force," he said.

Russia had previously warned that Israeli airstrikes against Damascus were endangering civilian jets.

Lebanese officials have also stated that Israeli jets illegally conducting operations against Syria from the country's airspace pose a danger to civilian aircraft in Lebanon.

In 2018, Syrian air defenses mistakenly shot down a Russian Ilyushin Il-20 reconnaissance plane after it was similarly used as a cover by Israeli warplanes, killing 15 people on board. [...]“

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5)

Bolivia: The Struggle For Democracy Is Not Over

U.S. Peace Council Statement

January 31, 2020

<https://uspeacecouncil.org/bolivia-the-struggle-for-democracy-is-not-over/>

„In early January 2020, the Trump Administration’s assassination of a top Iranian general in Baghdad, Iraq brought the US and Iran to the brink of a major war. Understandably, that crisis shoved many other crises to the sidelines. [...]“

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6a)

Uncomfortable Lessons: Reassessing Iran's Missile Attack

By Ian Williams

Center for International & Strategic Studies

February 6, 2020

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/uncomfortable-lessons-reassessing-irans-missile-attack>

„Nearly one month has passed since Iran attacked U.S. troops in Iraq with a barrage of ballistic missiles. As considerably more information has now come to light, a reassessment now seems in order. Initially characterized as a symbolic act to be shrugged off, newer information shows the attacks were of greater consequence. The available evidence, for example, no longer supports earlier assessments that Iran made a special effort to avoid killing Americans. The attacks also show that Iranian ballistic missile forces, both in technology and operational competency, have the potential to cause major disruption to the United States and partner military operations in the Middle East. Finally, the attack reveals that Iran is tolerant of strategic risk and less deterred by the threat of U.S. military action. This new situation may require the United States to adjust its posture of forward-deployed forces in the region. [...]“

6b)

Opposing War with Iran is an Environmental Imperative

By Laila Ujayli

January 31, 2020

<https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2020/01/31/opposing-war-with-iran-is-an-environmental-imperative/>

„[...] Working together, the environmental and peace communities can champion a progressive vision of U.S. global engagement that holds both human and environmental justice at its center, because one cannot be fulfilled without the other. As people concerned with the future of our planet, we must make every effort to show decision makers that militarism and climate change must be addressed as partners. Failing to do so would be like ending the rebellion after destroying the Death Star — despite one victory, the Empire still wins.“

6c)

Why House Democrats Passed Bills Reining in Trump's War Machine

By Erica Fein

February 3, 2020

<https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2020/02/03/why-house-democrats-passed-bills-reining-in-trumps-war-machine/>

„[...] Just last week, the U.S. House of Representatives, remarkably, passed two measures that would constrain Trump's ability to wage war with Iran. It's remarkable because these were votes that the House didn't "need" to take; it had already passed a war powers resolution blocking a Trump-precipitated war

with Iran two weeks earlier. Yet, as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi explained in her floor speech, she viewed passing these two bills as “additional steps” aimed at “protecting American lives and values.” Citing a poll showing that 60 percent of Americans oppose a new war with Iran, she added, “There is no appetite for war in our country.”[...]

6d)

Trump’s Presidency Is in Hands of Iraqis Rather than Senate; Analyst

Interview with Seyed Mohammad Marandi conducted by Parsi Policy

February 3, 2020

<https://siasateparsiri.ir/en/news/2724>

„[...] What the EU does suggests that their words are not credible as their decisions are made in Washington. This is a message to all the countries that want to negotiate with the EU. Countries of the world will bear it in their mind that Europe is not capable and powerful, remembering that their decision is not credible as they do not have the last word, and that they would breach their deal if the US orders them to do so. [...]

„[...] America will not leave Iraq voluntarily. The US arrogance and colonial attitude and hegemony do not let it act wisely. The Iraqi people say that they want the US out of their country but the US say it will not leave and threatens the country with sanctions. This is the worst response to what the Iraqis demand.“

6e)

How Iran Decided To Bomb US Bases And How Trump Avoided An All-Out War

By Elijah J. Magnier

February 1, 2020

<https://ejmagnier.com/2020/02/01/how-iran-decided-to-bomb-us-bases-and-how-trump-avoided-an-all-out-war/>

„[...] The magic turned against the magician and Trump gave Iran a massive gift by allowing it to bomb his army and challenge him face to face. Trump was afraid to announce the number of casualties in the first week. The Pentagon is now releasing a part of the reality every week. The US, not Iran, has shown fear.

“All US military bases have become a threat to the hosting countries in the Middle East. These bases no longer serve to protect these countries but have become perfect targets for Iran in case of war. They provide an overwhelming list of targets for Iran. No place will be safe for US forces in the Middle East if red-lines are crossed, as happened with the assassination of Sardar Soleimani,” said the source.“

6f)

‘Swiss mechanism not to tackle medicine sanctions problem’

Tehran Times

February 4, 2020

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/444825/Swiss-mechanism-not-to-tackle-medicine-sanctions-problem>

„[...] The ministry of health welcomes every mechanism that eases supply of medicine and medical equipment using all the available capacities to patients, especially those with cancer and rare diseases, Karim Hemmati said, IRNA reported on Monday.

However, the financial mechanism launched recently by Switzerland cannot solve the problem of supplying necessary medicines and transferring money to purchase them, he lamented. [...]“

6g)

Iran ranks 8th for top papers in artificial intelligence (AI)

Tehran Times

September 2, 2019

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/439876/Iran-ranks-8th-for-top-papers-in-AI>

„[...] Iran is the 8th country in the world based on high impact and high citation articles and the only country from the Middle East in the top ten countries in this field. [...]“

6h)

Iranian Kurdish rebels hire law firm to lobby Trump administration

By Aaron Schaffer

February 5, 2020

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/02/komala-iranian-kurds-hire-lobbyist-executive-branch-meet-trump.html>

„[...] The Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan hired Washington law firm the Cogent Law Group in December to “promote and develop cooperative relations with the US government,” according to newly disclosed lobbying filings. The firm was paid \$40,000 up front to organize a “single high-level meeting with a senior official of the executive branch of the United States Government” and a “single media interview in the United States.” [...]“

6i)

Israel has played a key role in US aggression towards Iran

By Aaron Maté

February 1, 2020

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=24&v=Kg5D6sqvfpA&feature=emb_title

„As the Trump administration's stated rationale for killing Qasem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis collapses, journalist Gareth Porter has pieced together the overlooked background. Porter reports that

the assassination was in fact the culmination of a lengthy provocation campaign involving Mike Pompeo, John Bolton, and the Israeli government, which carried out a number of under-reported bombings inside Iraq and Syria in the months prior. Guest: Gareth Porter. Journalist and historian. His latest book, with John Kiriakou, is "The CIA Insider's Guide to the Iran Crisis." "

6j)

US understanding of Chabahar Port Operations

By Current Affairs Correspondent East Asia

Belt & Rod News

February 6, 2020

<https://www.beltandroad.news/2020/02/06/us-understanding-of-chabahar-port-operations/>

„The US has shown understanding of the importance of the Chabahar Port Operations for continued humanitarian supplies to Afghanistan, the Government said on Wednesday, amid concerns that increased American sanctions against Iran may impact projects. [...]“

6k)

Europe knows there's no deal better than JCPOA: presidential chief of staff

Tehran Times

February 5, 2020

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/444879/Europe-knows-there-s-no-deal-better-than-JCPOA-presidential>

„Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi said on Wednesday that European Union knows that there is no deal better than the 2015 nuclear agreement, officially known as the JCPOA Vaezi also predicted that the EU will not refer Iran's case to the United Nations Security Council. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting, he also called EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell's visit to Iran on Monday "very good". [...]“

6l)

Issues in Iran's Parliamentary Election

By Garrett Nada

United States Institute of Peace

February 5, 2020

<https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2020/feb/05/issues-iran%E2%80%99s-parliamentary-election>

„Iran's 2020 parliamentary election, following months of internal protests and showdowns with the outside world, will be a stark contrast to the last poll in 2016, when Iranians believed they were emerging from

years of economic sanctions and political isolation. Voters go to the polls on February 21 in an atmosphere fraught with frustration and anger. Iran is far worse off — squeezed economically, divided politically, and exposed militarily — than it was four years ago. [...]

6m)

Europe worries as Trump seems to lose interest in new Iran deal

By Laura Rozen

February 6, 2020

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/02/europe-worries-iran-deal-trump-jcpoa.html>

„European diplomats working to try to leverage the Donald Trump administration’s Iran “maximum pressure” campaign into a negotiation for a new deal are increasingly worried as they say US officials seem in recent months to have convinced themselves that the Iranian regime is nearing the brink of collapse and show little interest in getting back to the negotiating table, even as Tehran’s nuclear program expands. [...]

6n)

Trump’s Iran Strategy Isn’t Working as Well as He Thinks

The killing of Qassem Soleimani upended expectations in useful ways, but the U.S. isn’t in a position to capitalize on the turmoil.

By Kori Schake

February 2, 2020

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/02/trumps-iran-strategy-doesnt-work-as-well-as-he-thinks/605947/>

„[...] The administration’s Iran strategy has six elements: First, Trump withdrew from the nuclear agreement because it did not constrain Iran’s ballistic-missile programs and had a termination date. Second, the United States imposed “maximum pressure” sanctions, strangling Iran’s economy to drive the government into negotiating a deal with greater restrictions on Iranian nuclear-weapons programs and other malign behavior. Third, the administration wants to prevent Europe from acquiescing in Iranian resumption of activities that had been constrained by the nuclear agreement. Fourth, the United States killed Soleimani, the powerful commander who had been responsible for attacks on Americans, and the architect of Iran’s policies to destabilize Middle Eastern governments. Fifth, Trump and his team now seek to manage any potential escalation in the aftermath of the Soleimani attack. Finally, they hope to amplify protests within Iran to further delegitimize the Iranian regime. [...]

6o)

Iran can disable U.S. RQ-4 drone from remote distance: commander

Tehran Times

February 7, 2020

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/444910/Iran-can-disable-U-S-RQ-4-drone-from-remote-distance-commander>

„The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Aerospace Force announced on Thursday that his country enjoys the technology to turn the U.S. modern large-size U.S. RQ-4 drone inefficient even while the aircraft is flying thousands of kilometers away from Iran's borders. [...]"

„[...] In his Thursday remarks, Hajizadeh added that new parts of the downed U.S. drone have been recently discovered in depth of Iran's southern waters.

"We have accessed to the RQ-4 drone's secret codes... We can make the drone inefficient from several thousands of kilometers distance," the commander explained. [...]"