

# The Comey Indictment and Free Speech

In 200-plus years of interpreting the free speech clause of the First Amendment, the courts have narrowed and expanded its scope. The Supreme Court employed a particularly narrow approach during much of the last century, through two world wars and then the Red Scare in the 1950s.

Thankfully, in the 1960s, the Warren Court began a remarkable and thus far unimpeded march toward compelling the government to tolerate open, wide, caustic and even threatening speech.

When crafting the First Amendment with its iconic speech clause — “Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech” — James Madison insisted that the word “the” precede the word “freedom” so as to make clear the understanding of the drafters and ratifiers that the freedom of speech existed before the government did. This presumption — that speech is pre-political — has a theoretical and a practical application.

Madison’s theoretical application, shared by Thomas Jefferson and articulated by him in the Declaration

By **Andrew P. Napolitano**

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of Independence — that our rights are endowed within us by our Creator — is that free speech is inherent in our human nature. Hence, it is a natural right that all persons have irrespective of the place or time of their births — or the government’s wishes.

The practical application is that free speech is vital to popular government. If people fear expressing opinions that might antagonize the government, they will hesitate to speak freely; and then debate over matters of public importance will be minimized rather than be a part of robust deliberative processes out of which many ideas are sifted and challenged.

When the government threatens to punish speech, the threat harms not only the person charged, but it also chills the expressive rights of others. It gives others pause before articulating an opinion that might offend those in power. In recent years, the federal courts have criticized chilling by the government, deferring instead to the open marketplace of ideas.

Speech should rise or fall — be influential or ignored — based on its ability to be accepted in the marketplace of ideas, not on whether it pleases the government.

Until now.

Now, the Trump Department of Justice has persuaded a grand jury in North Carolina to indict James Comey, the former federal prosecutor, DoJ official and FBI director, for posting on Instagram a photo of a configuration of sea shells on a beach that someone else had crafted displaying the numbers 8647.

The government’s theory of its case is that the 47 refers to the 47th president of the United States, Donald Trump, and the 86 offers to kill him. Having worked in restaurants in my youth, I recall the use of 86 in restaurant jargon. There, it means that whatever item is articulated with the 86 is no longer available for offering to patrons. “Espresso is 86ed!”

JAMES MADISON

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LewRockwell.com

The DoJ apparently persuaded the grand jurors that on a beach and coming from Comey, 86 expressed both a wish and an intent to kill Trump.

But the Comey posting was last year. That indicates that the DoJ itself did not take it as a serious threat.

Secret Service agents — not the DoJ or FBI — interviewed Comey via a phone call, and he satisfied them that he had no intent to harm anyone, least of all the president.

Then came the true threat to the president at the Washington, D.C., Hilton Hotel last month at which a dangerous and deranged man sought to kill him and others. Two days after that event, the DoJ presented its case against Comey to the grand jury.

Is the benign posting of 8647 on Instagram protected speech? In a word: YES.

The Supreme Court has ruled consistently, as recently as 2023 in *Counterman v. Colorado*, that, if there are two or more interpretations of the behavior or speech which forms the basis of a criminal charge and at least one of them is not criminal, the non-criminal interpretation prevails over the criminal interpretation.

This derives from the presumption of innocence and is known as the rule of lenity. It commands courts to interpret ambiguous statutes, behavior and speech in a light favorable to a defendant. This is especially so in a case involving pure speech — that is, speech unaccompanied by any action taken to further the accomplishment of the words used by the defendant.

In a 1969 case, *Watts v. United States*, the court held that when a young man who was condemning the draft in the Vietnam era told a gathering that, if forced to carry a rifle for the government, the first person to be in his sights would be President Lyndon B. Johnson, he was not threatening the president as he had no immediate means to carry out his stated wish, nor was anyone in the crowd he addressed incited to make an attempt on LBJ's life.

The Comey case is on all fours with the *Counterman* and *Watts* cases, as the government has not charged that Comey's posting incited any of the attempts on Trump's life of which we are all painfully aware.

This furthers the doctrine of constitutional avoidance by which courts are encouraged to terminate criminal cases based on reason, rather than equivocal constitutional jurisprudence. Check Amazon for Pricing.

But there is nothing equivocal in applying basic First Amendment principles here, and that can easily be done under the seminal and unanimous 1969 Supreme Court decision, *Brandenburg v. Ohio*. There, a KKK leader in Ohio encouraged violence against Blacks and Jewish people in Washington, D.C., but no one in his audience reacted violently. In overturning his conviction in an Ohio state court, the Supreme Court ruled that all innocuous speech is absolutely protected and all speech is innocuous when there is time for more speech to rebut, neutralize or challenge it.

If the government can't leave free speech alone, then its oath to the Constitution and the Constitution's stated guarantees are meaningless.



In the wake of Orbán's electoral defeat, Hungary's long-standing role as a defiant stronghold of national sovereignty, Christian family values, and cultural preservation hangs in the balance.

*O, my God, the Magyar bless  
With Thy plenty and good cheer!  
With Thine aid his just cause press,  
Where his foes to fight appear.  
Fate, who for so long did'st frown,  
Bring him happy times and ways;  
Atoning sorrow hath weighed down  
Sins of past and future days.  
—Ferenc Kölcsey, "Himnusz."*

**T**he recent election in Hungary which unseated longtime Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has rung alarms throughout European and American conservative circles. As Prime Minister since 2010, Orbán had made his country a seeming refuge of decency in a continent whose national (in most countries) and EU leadership appear bound and determined to replace their native populations, impose perversion, infanticide, euthanasia, and a host of other ills into every nook and cranny of national life, and to wipe out any sort of dissent from this toxic program. Orbán's Hungary, by contrast, worked to strengthen the birthrate and family life, reinforce national culture, limit immigration, and reinstall national pride.

Moreover, his government invited a host of conservative thinkers of varying styles and schools to take up residence there through such mixed government and private efforts as the Danube Institute and the Mathias Corvinus Collegium. The chain of Scruton coffee shops has become legendary throughout the country. Orbán has refused to accept Brussels' directions in his foreign and immigration policy—and the EU has held up funding and punished Hungary in other ways as a result.

The European People's Party—the umbrella group of formerly "Christian" Democratic parties in the EU Parliament—expelled Orbán's Fidesz Party a few years ago for the high crime and misdemeanor of retaining the beliefs of such Christian Democratic Founding Fathers as Schuman, Adenauer, and de Gasperi. The EU administration in Brussels have attacked and insulted Orbán's government in terms of finance, criticism, and much else.

**Part of what angered them most** was Orbán's steady reassertion of Hungarian national identity. The original name, coat of arms, and national anthem of the country were all revived, as was the State's veneration of the Holy Crown of St. Stephen. Various traditional titles for county officials were revived, and behind it all lay a great fear, that was probably spotted by the media and the political establishment throughout Europe and seen as a great danger.

This danger was exposed in the Austrian periodical *Der Standard*, whose August 10, 2025, issue carried an article with the shrill title "How the Habsburgs and Viktor Orbán form a political symbiosis." The intro line shrieked, "Several members of the Habsburg family are actively involved with the Hungarian Prime Minister, some holding official positions. This also aligns ideologically."

The article carried on in the same tone:

*Catholic, revisionist, illiberal—and suddenly politically relevant: In Viktor Orbán's Hungary, the Habsburgs are celebrating an ideological comeback. Two family members are official ambassadors; one writes books about the "Habsburg way of life," the other gives lectures at far-right political organizations. And the Hungarian Prime Minister is enthusiastic: "We think alike."*

Among other horrific things the article accused the Habsburgs of doing, its authors zeroed in on the current Head of the House, Karl von Habsburg. “Today, he is involved in foreign policy for Ukraine, is a close friend of investigative journalist Christo Grozev—with whom he also founded several companies—and was a supporter of Russian dissident Alexei Navalny.” But he ultimately cannot be trusted: “However, in terms of social policy, he is remembered for comparing the abortion drug Mifegyne to the death penalty in 2002.”

This last outweighed, in *Der Standard's* eyes, his efforts on the part of Ukraine. They condemned him further, citing his dealings with this writer:

*Karl Habsburg officially rules out a return of the monarchy. And yet he wrote the foreword to a book by the US historian Charles Coulombe, which deals with the “Blessed Emperor Karl,” his grandfather. Coulombe openly advocates a Habsburg restoration, laments the liberalization of Western societies since 1968—and asks whether Europe can regain its “soul.”*

**While I am certainly guilty as charged**, the Archduke Karl most certainly is not. Nor was Orbán interested in a Habsburg restoration—but more of that momentarily.

Of more immediate interest, in all likelihood, to his opponents in Brussels on the one hand and George Soros on the other, was Orbán’s “intransigence” on LGBTQ+ issues, immigration (for which the EU withheld development funds due Hungary), support for “Far Right Parties” throughout Europe, and refusal to fully support the Ukraine War. The country faced unrelenting pressure from Brussels and elsewhere as a result, and one symptom of such was the rise of Péter Magyar.

Originally a member of Orbán’s government, Magyar resigned in February 2024 in response to the Katalin Novák presidential pardon scandal. On March 15, 2024, he assumed leadership of the hitherto unknown Respect and Freedom (Hungarian: *Tisztelet és Szabadság*, Tisza) party, emerging as the most prominent opposition leader.

The name—Tisza—was telling. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Tizas were a noble family and leaders of the dominant Hungarian Liberal Party. Committed, on the one hand, to Magyarizing the numerically dominant Slovak, Croatian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovenian, and Serbian minorities within the Hungarian half of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, on the other they constantly attempted to chisel as much power as possible away from the Habsburgs and into their own hands. This inevitably led them into conflict with Archduke Franz Ferdinand who, despite his love of the Magyars and his close connection with the Catholic Party in Hungary, wanted to federalize the Empire.

When Franz Ferdinand was murdered in 1914, his views were taken up by his nephew, Bl. Karl, who would continue having to deal with the Tisza’s obstructionism after ascending to the Imperial and Royal thrones in 1916. After the war and until 1945, the Habsburgs continued to press for a Danubian Federation. Successive Hungarian governments up to and including Orbán’s preserved what they considered to be seriously important in the legacy of Kossuth’s 1848 Rebellion, in which a major chunk of the Magyars rebelled against the Habsburgs. In name, at any rate, Peter Magyar’s party name hearkened back to the same family whom Orbán’s government derived a good deal of legitimacy from.

While in the political wilderness, Péter Magyar became close to many in the Brussels Eurocracy, even while building his alliances with the disaffected in Hungary and such as George Soros abroad. Foreign funding was key to his party’s rapid rise. But Orbán’s perceived tolerance of widespread corruption among his pals led to a great sense of outrage over time. All of these realities forced Magyar to appear in three different guises.

**To a great many Hungarians**, he must be made to look like a great reformer. To many others, he must seem to be like Orbán, only incorruptible—combining what was most popular in his rival’s program with personal financial rectitude. But for a minority within Hungary and his foreign supporters, Magyar must

appear as the one who reopens Hungary to all the moral corruption, repopulation, and secularization so popular in the rest of Europe. In a word, to satisfy all of his constituents, he must be all things to all people.

As a result of this, he sends extremely mixed signals in the wake of his election. At the Hungarian National Day, he wore the kind of native costume that is associated with the Right Wing in Hungary. At the same time, he appointed Judit Lannert as Minister of Education and Child Care Affairs of Hungary. Having promoted LGBTQ+ activism on her Facebook profile in the summer of 2021, when the national Assembly of Hungary passed the Child Protection Act, she is the darling of some and the focus of hatred of others.

In addition to these interesting points, Magyar has declared: "We used to share a country, and Austria is a key economic partner of Hungary. I would like to strengthen the relationship between Hungary and Austria for historical but also for cultural and economic reasons." He has gone on to call for closer bonds between Hungary, Austria, Czechia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Croatia.

This is actually a rather key statement. Together with Poland, these countries (with the partial exception of Austria) are, for the most part, conservative in terms of family and other social issues. Apart, they are merely small units of the EU and not in a position to resist Brussels' social and "moral" demands in the long run. Together, however, in a sort of "federation-within-a-federation" in the EU, they would be a force to be reckoned with. Possessed of a population of some 40.6 million people, "Danubia," or whatever it might be called, would be quite capable of holding its own within the European Union. Moreover, it could be a center of gravity for all sorts of decent-minded folk across Europe.

This outcome, however, depends on several things. First, Magyar would need to be playing a canny if dishonest card. He must be truly committed to Hungarian survival and as much a devotee as ever a Hungarian was of the Crown of St. Stephen; but he must conceal this devotion from his would-be masters in Brussels. More than this, however, he must also be willing to give up those attitudes of ethnic superiority, which have governed a large percentage of Hungarian patriotism since 1848.

But even being willing to do so, if Magyar wishes to accomplish more in the outside world, he will have to overcome the mutual hatred which has kept the peoples of Central Europe divided. Traditionally, only two things have done so. One of these is the Catholic Faith. It remains stronger in Central Europe as a cultural force than in the West, but it certainly could use a great deal more lay and clerical zeal if it is to regain its role as mediator of the Nations. This is perhaps best symbolized by Our Lady of Mariazell, who is at once *Magna Mater Austriae*, *Mater Gentium Slavorum*, and *Magna Domina Hungarorum*. Another religious expression of regional religious unity is the growing cultus of Bl. Karl and his wife, Servant of God Zita.

This latter reminds us of the second factor, which Orbán—despite *Der Standard*—had little intention of restoring: the illustrious House of Habsburg. A number of its members are still quite active in the region, especially the head, Archduke Karl, and his brother Archduke Georg. If Magyar can force himself to behave like a statesman, he will bring about not only a wonderful situation for Central Europe but ultimately the whole continent. A united, free, Christian, and Monarchical Central Europe shall be a catalyst for all of Europe.

Of course, it may well be that Magyar will not be a secret paladin of truth. He might well work to obliterate all that Orbán accomplished and have the EU construct of gender confusion and population replacement imposed upon the country. In this scenario, his regime mirrors the worst fears of the Hungarian majority. All this will mean, however, is postponing the inevitable regime change which appears to be a phenomenon toward which all of the Mother Continent is heading.

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# The Unz Review • An Alternative Media Selection

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## Government Kills the Spirit

RON PAUL • MAY 4, 2026 • 600 WORDS • 1 COMMENT

One of the industries hardest hit by the spike in fuel prices caused by the Iran War is airlines. Jet fuel prices have doubled since the start of the war. Airlines have reacted to the fuel price increase by raising fares and baggage fees, as well as by cutting routes.

Raising prices is not a good option for “budget” airlines since their main appeal to consumers is their low prices. Increasing prices could cause these carriers to lose business.

The financial strain from the increased fuel costs led discount airline Spirit to ask the Trump administration for a bailout. President Trump said a bailout would be conditioned on Spirit giving the government an ownership stake in the company. Spirit was unable to reach a deal with the government, so Spirit went out of business on Saturday. However, several other budget airlines are seeking a government bailout.

Spirit has been struggling for years. In 2022, the airline sought to get on better financial footing by merging with fellow discount airline JetBlue. The merger may have allowed for more effective competition with the dominant carriers. However, the Justice Department successfully opposed the merger in court on the grounds it would lead to more concentration in the discount airlines market. This is one of many examples of how an aggressive approach to antitrust enforcement can harm businesses and consumers.

Spirit is not the first business President Trump has considered having the government “invest” in. For example, in exchange for government approval of Nippon Steel’s acquisition of US Steel, the government was given a “golden share” allowing the government to overrule decisions made by the company that the government determines are against US “national security.” Among the other companies the government has obtained an ownership interest in are several minerals mining companies and computer chip manufacturer Intel. If discount airlines receive bailouts in exchange for granting government ownership stakes in their businesses, other companies impacted by the spike in fuel prices may line up for the same deal.

Having government own part of what is a nominally private company interferes with the efficient allocation of capital. It also means business decisions will be made to please government officials and bureaucrats instead of to meet the needs and wants of consumers. Government officials will also act based on what will boost returns in the government’s investments.

Government ownership of all or part of private businesses is the epitome of economic fascism. Yet, there have not been protests from the so-called “anti-fascist” progressives over President Trump arranging US government ownership stakes in private companies. This is probably because they are looking forward to a Democrat president expanding government’s investment in, and control of, private businesses.

There has been little criticism of President Trump’s acquisition of ownership interests in private companies from Republican politicians or conservative writers and activists. Many of them, though, would have opposed President Obama or President Biden tooth and nail if either had the US government take an ownership interest in private companies.

Contrary to what many seem to think, full or partial government ownership of private companies does not magically become less of a threat to liberty and prosperity when done by a Republican. Congress should pass a law forbidding any part of the federal government — including the Federal Reserve — from taking an ownership interest in any private business.

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# And in This Corner, No One

By Anthony Esolen

If you hate or despise American ways, if when you think of American history you think first and second and third of its evils, you cannot have any strong interest in the assimilation of immigrants to those ways.

The current fury over immigration in the United States reminds me of my experience, over 25 years, teaching in the Development of Western Civilization program at Providence College.

When I arrived in 1990 as a young professor in the English department, I was politically liberal, with certain Catholic modifications. I believed that abortion was homicide. I believed that suicide was criminal. I believed that marriage was for keeps. I believed that the social, cultural, and intellectual benefits conferred upon the world by the Christian Faith were incalculable, while the Faith itself transcended all such matters.

I took for granted that Western arts and letters constituted a precious heritage, belonging first to anyone raised up in the West and then to all the world. It is no small thing to consider how deeply the works of Bach are admired in Japan.

Yet I had also accepted the liberal position on gay marriage and the adoption of children by gay couples. I said so openly in class, in the fall of 1991. I had accepted liberal positions on war, social welfare, the environment, and race relations. Not on education, because I knew how badly educated American teachers tended to be—and because I loathed consolidation and standardization. Then a change struck me like a thunderbolt.

I was scheduled in the spring of 1992 to begin teaching in that Western Civilization program. But a sociology professor (who had only arrived on campus when I did) had organized a student revolt against the program, through a group they called Students Organized Against Racism. I attended their first panel debate, in a room packed with 150 people, most of them students who wanted the program eliminated. I expected arguments from the literary-critical Left, and I was ready to counter them with arguments from history and from a different corner of that literary-critical Left.

So, when it came time for the audience to ask questions, I asked a young female student whether she knew that John Adams had described the new American system in terms he derived from Polybius' description of the Roman Republic. She did not. I expected her to complain that the Romans were "patriarchal," so I gave her an account of a foundational episode in Livy, from the legendary days before the Republic, when Rome was little more than a cow town with a king.

The Romans were striving for supremacy with their near kin, the Sabines. Three young brothers on the Roman side engaged in a battle with three on the Sabine side, winners to take all. Things looked bad for the Romans when two of their Horatii were slain by the Sabine Curiatii. Then the last Horatius did something apparently unheroic. He ran.

The Curiatii pursued, but at different speeds, as two of them were wounded, one worse than the other. Suddenly, he turned about and slew his freshest opponent, then he dispatched the next two, one by one. The people rejoiced. But when he came home, he found his sister weeping because one of the three he slew was to be her husband. He killed her on the spot. It was a capital crime—yet the father pleaded with the king to spare his son for the great benefit he conferred upon the city.

I pointed out to the young lady that if you can't make something subversive out of *that* story, you aren't trying.

Her reply took my breath away. "I have no idea what you're talking about," she said. The audience erupted in laughter and applause. And the scales fell from my eyes.

These people did not care about Livy or Virgil—and I later came to see that they did not care about Lao-Tzu or Confucius, either. They were not there to argue for improvements to the Western Civilization program. They were not arguing for the greater merits of Japanese watercolors over those of the French impressionists. They wanted the program eliminated. So I began to question everything else about the political Left.

The program survived the attack and grew stronger, casting a broader net, including more art and music generally, and works from the periphery of the West. So it went until around 2008, when the program was mangled, in part to satisfy the demands of professors who did not teach in it, who did not like it, and who were not conversant with the material we taught. The central question should have been, "Given that the college has this program, what can we do to make it the best it can be?" It was not so. It was instead, among the long-standing opponents from the social sciences, "How much hobbling and gutting can we get away with?"

Thus do we see the structure of the *false fight*, when one of the sides engages the fight under false pretenses, with another aim entirely in mind. At Providence, my colleagues and I wanted to have the *best* program, though we disagreed sometimes over what that would entail. The others wanted no such program at all, yet they were permitted to engage in and eventually dominate discussions about what form the program should take, deflecting attention from their own dubious territories.

Suppose the people of Mexico say, "We cherish our cultural heritage, which is a mingling of the Spanish and the native American, and we wish to craft an immigration policy that will preserve or enhance that heritage." Who would gainsay them? Genuine discussions would turn toward the details, with all sides committed to the same general ideal, though differing on how to achieve it, or on how to combine it with an openness to other cultures, especially those to which the Mexican is allied. But should someone detest Mexican history, seeing in it little more than a saga of brutality and ignorance and characterizing the mother country, Spain, by the worst evils of the Inquisition, surely a sane person would say, "Friend, you are not a part of this discussion."

Fighting is often productive; the *false fight*, never. If you hate or despise American ways, if when you think of American history you think first and second and third of its evils, you cannot have any strong interest in the assimilation of immigrants to those ways. Perhaps you can think in monetary terms, about how the tax intake compares with the welfare outflow and how the work of migrants affects the price of oranges. But if people say, "We think that one million legal immigrants a year is enough, and we worry that most of them in our time have little interest in becoming Americans," before you accuse them of bigotry, you should admit that what they fear is what you hope for. You are *glad* that the muezzin on the loudspeaker calls people to pray in Dearborn, not because you love Islam but because you despise what you hope it will displace.

From 1992 to 2017, I taught in that program at Providence College, covering literature, history, theology, philosophy, and the fine arts from 1500 B.C. to the end of the Renaissance, presenting material originating from more than a dozen cultures, with literature written in Babylonian, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Anglo-Saxon, French, Italian, Spanish, and English, and occasionally Arabic, Old High German, Icelandic, and Portuguese. I read most of those languages, so I could present the students with what the texts really said, aside from the translations.

None of this mattered to the self-styled multiculturalists; it was not "diverse." For "diversity" in academe implies political uniformity of a peculiarly unforgiving sort. Yet in all those years, I never once used my position of authority to push one side of some political controversy. My job was to teach Plato, not to cheat students by foisting my political opinions on them. If you want that sort of thing, you can get it for free on the internet.

My greatest academic desire was to have them fall in love with what I loved—say, the paintings of Caravaggio, or the poetry of George Herbert. My greatest desire of all was to bring them closer to Christ, not by preaching, which was *not* my job, but by letting the Christian works speak for themselves.

This, too, I see, was to let the *false fight* go on. The professor who sought to shut down the Western Civilization program hated me and wanted me gone, while I neither hated him nor wanted him gone nor had the least thing to do with him. Everything for him was political.

In his mind, George W. Bush was a filthy racist who delighted in withholding aid from New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina; that was the centerpiece of a course he taught with a friend of mine on city life. My friend talked about Dr. Johnson's London, which both he and Dr. Johnson loved; the sociology professor talked about a supposedly malevolent Bush, whom he hated. I'm not a city boy, but I wonder about what makes city life attractive to people and how it differs from life in a small town. But that would not have sufficed for the professor energized by hate.

Does our Church know the *false fight*? We assume that every bishop and priest and religious sister actually wants the faithful to be more devout, firmer in their beliefs about God and Jesus, more alive in their commitment to all the Church teaches about the moral life, and more energetic in bringing the Good News to a world that so badly needs it. But what if it is not so? What if, in particular, conflicts over the liturgy constitute a *false fight*?

Suppose some layman sees that the Church has been the only prominent institution not to lose its mind in the sexual revolution. Suppose he draws connections between the collapse of marriage and family life and the collapse of working-class neighborhoods, parishes, and communities. Suppose he sees that solemnity of worship actually draws people in, precisely because it is so different from what a louche and dispirited world has to offer. We assume that bishops would *encourage* him. Why?

What if the bishop or priest or Catholic teacher would find such a layman "deplorable," to use Mrs. Clinton's word of contempt? How can we argue with them? We might say, "This parish produces young people committed to the Church, eager to get married and raise families, and sometimes eager to join the priesthood or the religious orders." What if that is not good news? What do these hierarchs really want?

Author

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# The White Rose: A Lesson in Dissent

by Jacob G. Hornberger

The date was February 22, 1943. Hans Scholl and his sister Sophie, along with their best friend, Christoph Probst, were scheduled to be executed by Nazi officials that afternoon. The prison guards were so impressed with the calm and bravery of the prisoners in the face of impending death that they violated regulations by permitting them to meet together one last time. Hans, a medical student at the University of Munich, was 24. Sophie, a student, was 21. Christoph, a medical student, was 22.

This is the story of The White Rose. It is a lesson in dissent. It is a tale of courage, of principle, of honor. It is detailed in three books, *The White Rose* (1970) by Inge Scholl, *A Noble Treason* (1979) by Richard Hanser, and *An Honourable Defeat* (1994) by Anton Gill.

Hans and Sophie Scholl were German teenagers in the 1930s. Like other young Germans, they enthusiastically joined the Hitler Youth. They believed that Adolf Hitler was leading Germany and the German people back to greatness.

Their parents were not so enthusiastic. Their father, Robert Scholl, told his children that Hitler and the Nazis were leading Germany down a road of destruction. Later, in 1942, he would serve time in a Nazi prison for telling his secretary: "The war! It is already lost. This Hitler is God's scourge on mankind, and if the war doesn't end soon the Russians will be sitting in Berlin." Gradually, Hans and Sophie began realizing that their father was right. They concluded that, in the name of freedom and the greater good of the German nation, Hitler and the Nazis were enslaving and destroying the German people.

They also knew that open dissent was impossible in Nazi Germany, especially after the start of World War II. Most Germans took the traditional position, that once war breaks out, it is the duty of the citizen to support the troops by supporting the government. But Hans and Sophie Scholl believed differently. They believed that it was the duty of a citizen, even in times of war, to stand up against an evil regime, especially when it is sending hundreds of thousands of its citizens to their deaths.

The Scholl siblings began sharing their feelings with a few of their friends, Christoph Probst, Alexander Schmorell, Willi Graf, as well as with Kurt Huber, their psychology and philosophy professor.

One day in 1942, copies of a leaflet entitled "The White Rose" suddenly appeared at the University of Munich. The leaflet contained an anonymous essay that said that the Nazi system had slowly imprisoned the German people and was now destroying them. The Nazi regime had turned evil. It was time, the essay said, for Germans to rise up and resist the tyranny of their own government. At the bottom of the essay, the following request appeared: "Please make as many copies of this leaflet as you can and distribute them."

The leaflet caused a tremendous stir among the student body. It was the first time that internal dissent against the Nazi regime had surfaced in Germany. The essay had been secretly written and distributed by Hans Scholl and his friends.

Another leaflet appeared soon afterward. And then another. And another. Ultimately, there were six leaflets published and distributed by Hans and Sophie Scholl and their friends, four under the title "The White Rose" and two under the title "Leaflets of the Resistance." Their publication took place periodically between 1942 and 1943, interrupted for a few months when Hans and his friends were temporarily sent to the Eastern Front to fight against the Russians.

The members of The White Rose, of course, had to act cautiously. The Nazi regime maintained an iron grip over German society. Internal dissent was quickly and efficiently smashed by the Gestapo. Hans and Sophie Scholl and their friends knew what would happen to them if they were caught.

People began receiving copies of the leaflets in the mail. Students at the University of Hamburg began copying and distributing them. Copies began turning up in different parts of Germany and Austria. Moreover, as Hanser points out, the members of The White Rose did not limit themselves to leaflets. Graffiti began appearing in large letters on streets and buildings all over Munich: "Down with Hitler! . . . Hitler the Mass Murderer!" and "Freiheit! . . . Freiheit! . . . Freedom! . . . Freedom!"

The Gestapo was driven into a frenzy. It knew that the authors were having to procure large quantities of paper, envelopes, and postage. It knew that they were using a duplicating machine. But despite the Gestapo's best efforts, it was unable to catch the perpetrators.

One day, February 18, 1943, Hans' and Sophie's luck ran out. They were caught leaving pamphlets at the University of Munich and were arrested. A search disclosed evidence of Christoph Probst's participation, and he too was soon arrested. The three of them were indicted for treason.

On February 22, four days after their arrest, their trial began. The presiding judge, Roland Freisler, chief justice of the People's Court of the Greater German Reich, had been sent from Berlin. Hanser writes:

He conducted the trial as if the future of the Reich were indeed at stake. He roared denunciations of the accused as if he were not the judge but the prosecutor. He behaved alternately like an actor ranting through an overwritten role in an implausible melodrama and a Grand Inquisitor calling down eternal damnation on the heads of the three irredeemable heretics before him. . . . No

witnesses were called, since the defendants had admitted everything. The proceedings consisted almost entirely of Roland Freisler's denunciation and abuse, punctuated from time to time by half-hearted offerings from the court-appointed defense attorneys, one of whom summed up his case with the observation, "I can only say fiat justitia. Let justice be done." By which he meant: Let the accused get what they deserve.

Freisler and the other accusers could not understand what had happened to these German youths. After all, they all came from nice German families. They all had attended German schools. They had been members of the Hitler Youth. How could they have turned out to be traitors? What had so twisted and warped their minds?

Sophie Scholl shocked everyone in the courtroom when she remarked to Freisler: "Somebody, after all, had to make a start. What we wrote and said is also believed by many others. They just don't dare to express themselves as we did." Later in the proceedings, she said to him: "You know the war is lost. Why don't you have the courage to face it?"

In the middle of the trial, Robert and Magdalene Scholl tried to enter the courtroom. Magdalene said to the guard: "But I'm the mother of two of the accused." The guard responded: "You should have brought them up better." Robert Scholl forced his way into the courtroom and told the court that he was there to defend his children. He was seized and forcibly escorted outside. The entire courtroom heard him shout: "One day there will be another kind of justice! One day they will go down in history!"

Robert Freisler pronounced his judgment on the three defendants: Guilty of treason. Their sentence: Death.

They were escorted back to Stadelheim prison, where the guards permitted Hans and Sophie to have one last visit with their parents. Hans met with them first, and then Sophie. Hansen writes:

His eyes were clear and steady and he showed no sign of dejection or despair. He thanked his parents again for the love and warmth they had given him and he asked them to convey his affection and regard to a number of friends, whom he named. Here, for a moment, tears threatened, and he turned away to spare his parents the pain of seeing them. Facing them again, his shoulders were back and he smiled. . . .

Then a woman prison guard brought in Sophie. . . . Her mother tentatively offered her some candy, which Hans had declined. "Gladly," said Sophie, taking it. "After all, I haven't had any lunch!" She, too, looked somehow smaller, as if drawn together, but her face was clear and her smile was fresh and unforced, with something in it that her parents read as triumph. "Sophie, Sophie," her mother murmured, as if to herself. "To think you'll never be coming through the door again!"

Sophie's smile was gentle. "Ah, Mother," she said. "Those few little years. . . ." Sophie Scholl looked at her parents and was strong in her pride and certainty. "We took everything upon ourselves," she said. "What we did will cause waves."

Her mother spoke again: "Sophie," she said softly, "Remember Jesus."

"Yes," replied Sophie earnestly, almost commandingly, "but you, too." She left them, her parents, Robert and Magdalene Scholl, with her face still lit by the smile they loved so well and would never see again. She was perfectly composed as she was led away. Robert Mohr [a Gestapo official], who had come out to the prison on business of his own, saw her in her cell immediately afterwards, and she was crying. It was the first time Robert Mohr had seen her in tears, and she apologized. "I have just said good-bye to my parents," she said. "You understand. . ." She had not cried before her parents. For them she had smiled.

No relatives visited Christoph Probst. His wife, who had just had their third child, was in the hospital. Neither she nor any members of his family even knew that he was on trial or that he had been sentenced to death. While his faith in God had always been deep and unwavering, he had never committed to a certain faith. On the eve of his death, a Catholic priest admitted him into the church in articulo mortis, at the point of death. "Now," he said, "my death will be easy and joyful."

That afternoon, the prison guards permitted Hans, Sophie, and Christoph to have one last visit together. Sophie was then led to the guillotine. One observer described her as she walked to her death: "Without turning a hair, without flinching." Christoph Probst was next. Hans Scholl was last; just before he was beheaded, Hans cried out: "Long live freedom!"

Unfortunately, they were not the last to die. The Gestapo's investigation was relentless. Later tried and executed were Alex Schmorell (age 25), Willi Graf (age 25), and Kurt Huber (age 49). Students at the University of Hamburg were either executed or sent to concentration camps.

Today, every German knows the story of The White Rose. A square at the University of Munich is named after Hans and Sophie Scholl. And there are streets, squares, and schools all over Germany named for the members of The White Rose. The German movie *The White Rose* is now found in video stores in Germany and the United States. Richard Hansen sums up the story of The White Rose:

In the vogue words of the time, the Scholls and their friends represented the "other" Germany, the land of poets and thinkers, in contrast to the Germany that was reverting to barbarism and trying to take the world with it. What they were and what they did would have been "other" in any society at any time. What they did transcended the easy division of good-German/bad-German and lifted them above the nationalism of time-bound events. Their actions made them enduring symbols of the struggle, universal and timeless, for the freedom of the human spirit wherever and whenever it is threatened.

# Remembering the Catholic Bishop Behind Lebanon's Resistance to Israel

by J.D. Hester | Apr 19, 2026 | News | 0 Comments

Following President Donald Trump's vicious attacks on Pope Leo XIV for refusing to back his "atrocious" war in Iran, the United States and Israel have finally achieved a 10-day ceasefire after holding talks with Lebanon. The negotiations came after Israel blatantly violated the Pakistani-brokered ceasefire between the United States and Iran, killing innocent women and children. However, while negotiators and mainstream media alike will focus on Hezbollah, it is important to recognize that other groups have resisted Israeli imperialism. One of these groups is the Amal Movement, influenced, in part, by the Catholic Bishop Grégoire Haddad.

The Amal Movement is a secular political party and militia that has existed since 1974. Its precursor organization, the Movement of the Deprived, was established by Haddad and Amal's eventual first leader, Musa al-Sadr. Composed mainly of Shia Muslims, Amal has had a long and complicated relationship with different powers in the Middle East. Its current leader is Nabih Berri, speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, who has led the movement since 1980. Following Berri's election as leader, some members defected and formed Islamic Amal, which eventually became Hezbollah. While Amal has historically clashed with Hezbollah, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and other groups opposed to Israel, it has often opposed Israeli imperialism.

In the 21st century, Amal has coordinated with Hezbollah to defend Lebanese land from Israeli incursions. During the 2006 Lebanon War, Amal fighters were involved in "every major battle." In more recent years, Amal launched strikes on Israeli barracks during the 2023 border clashes and fought against Israeli imperialists during the 2024 invasion. Since the outbreak of the 2026 Lebanon War, Amal has not just engaged in military operations, but has also played a humanitarian role in the conflict. According to reporting from Drop Site News, Israel has slaughtered members of the Amal-affiliated Islamic Risala Scout Association, a medical and rescue organization in a triple tap strike. With the Pope expressing spiritual solidarity with the Christians affected by the Israeli war in Lebanon, it is now important to remember the life and teachings of Bishop Grégoire Haddad.

In 1924, Haddad was born to a Protestant father and a Melkite Greek Catholic mother in Lebanon. Ordained in 1949, he rose through the hierarchy of the Church and was appointed Bishop of Beirut and Jbeil in 1968. Known as "the Red Bishop" and "the Bishop of the Poor," Haddad was controversial for supporting secular government and inter-faith dialogue. During various bouts of violence between Catholics, Muslims, and Druze, Haddad negotiated for the release of civilians. He even provided humanitarian support for Palestinian refugees and worked with Shia communities, both very controversial acts in a deeply sectarian country.

Haddad believed that Lebanon needed to remain united in order to foster peace and strengthen national sovereignty. To achieve this, he advocated for secularism at the government level and denounced religious sectarianism and extremism. A proponent of liberation theology, he called on the Church to take care of the poor and vulnerable. In order to resist foreign interference and take care of the poor, Haddad believed in Muslim-Christian cooperation. Indeed, Haddad's state secularism was not a rejection of religion. Instead, Haddad viewed secular governance as a way to unite all Lebanese

citizens in support of the state and against forces that endangered the unique cultures and faith traditions of Lebanon.

Haddad's philosophical and political thinking parallels the Amal Movement. Most obvious is Amal's commitment to the state secularism outlined by Haddad, which has allowed the movement to gain institutional power in the Lebanese state while maintaining its commitment to national sovereignty. Additionally, Haddad's emphasis on protecting the vulnerable can be seen in Amal's aforementioned Islamic Risala Scout Association. Volunteers with the association are currently risking their lives to provide much-needed medical and rescue services in the midst of Israel's ongoing war against the people of Lebanon. In these ways, Haddad's thinking continues to make an impact on the world even a decade after his death.

As the pro-Israel crowd continues to attack Pope Leo XIV, Catholics in the West, especially those in positions of power, would be wise to emulate Bishop Haddad instead of the Israeli government responsible for Operation Eternal Darkness, the codename of Israel's coordinated April 8th strikes on Lebanon. His Holiness has been clear: "Woe to those who manipulate religion and the very name of God for their own military, economic and political gain, dragging that which is sacred into darkness and filth... It is a world turned upside down, an exploitation of God's creation that must be denounced and rejected by every honest conscience."

*J.D. Hester is an independent writer born and raised in Arizona. He has previously written for Antiwar.com, Asia Times, AF Post, and other outlets. You can send him an email at josephdhester@gmail.com. Follow him on X (@JDH3ster).*

**NewAmerican**

Written by R. Cort Kirkwood on April 13, 2026



## Netanyahu Says Trump Admin Reports to Him "Every Day." Kent: No-enrichment Position Killed Peace Talks.

During an Israeli Cabinet meeting today, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confessed that the Trump administration has Netanyahu on speed dial so it can report to him "every day" about the Iran war U.S. President Donald Trump started on Israel's behalf.

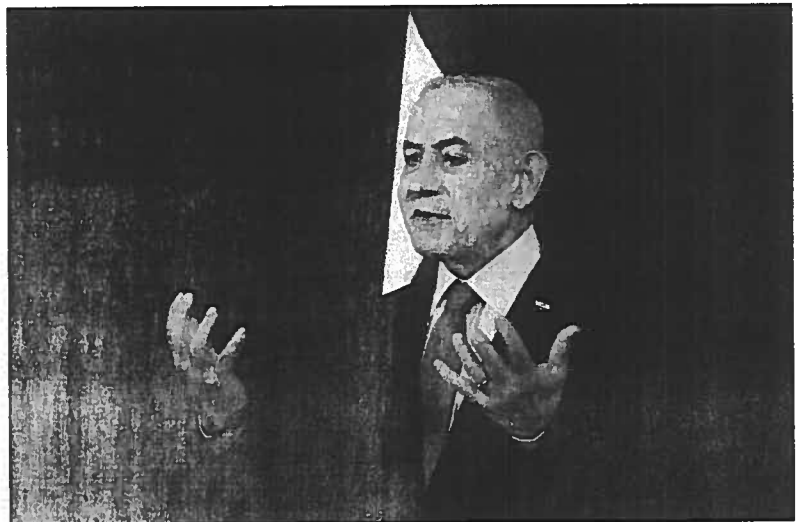
The latest on the tail-wags-dog relationship comes from Axios writer Barak Ravid, a former Israeli military intelligence operative in constant contact with Israeli officials.

That news follows a report in *The New York Times* that Netanyahu lied to Trump during a briefing in February in the White House Situation Room to push him into attacking Iran.

Amusingly, Trump told Fox News that the U.S.-Israel relationship is one of big brother-little brother, with the United States being the big brother. The latest from Netanyahu suggests that Trump had it backwards.

But in any event, former U.S. counterterrorism chief Joe Kent noted that the administration's position during failed peace talks over the weekend — that Iran cannot have *any* enriched uranium — reversed long-standing U.S. policy and "killed" the talks.

And in yet another off-the-cuff remark to reporters, Trump said today that the U.S. might attack Cuba after it is done with Iran.



AP Images  
Benjamin Netanyahu

May 6, 2026

# Remembering the Costs of War

April marks the time when the guns of war began to fall silent across the South in 1865, after four years of war. On April 9, General Robert E. Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia. General Nathan Bedford Forrest stood down his cavalry on May 9. By June 23, General Stand Watie had surrendered the last of the Confederate soldiers still fighting, the First Indian Brigade which included his own Cherokee Braves.

When the guns fall silent, it does not suffice simply to forget about the war and move on. It is necessary to pause and reflect on what we can do to promote lasting peace.

As John V. Denson argues in *The Costs of War: America's Pyrrhic Victories*, war is ever the greatest enemy of liberty. Denson reminds us that, "We need to understand the 'total' costs of war in order to appreciate the true dangers that war in general, and the New World Order in particular, pose to individual liberty." The New World Order—whose dangers he highlights—is one in which "the United States is to become a permanent garrison state and also the world policeman..."

There are growing signs that the lessons of history are not being heeded. The USA is introducing automatic military draft registration. Under Germany's new Military Service Modernisation Act, military service is being reintroduced:

The [German] law that came into force in January brings back conscription in principle, though it will be implemented only if not enough people sign up for the army voluntarily.

Germany's Chancellor Friedrich Merz has said he wants to create Europe's strongest conventional army.

As of January this year, all 18-year-olds in Germany are being sent a questionnaire asking if they are interested and willing to join the armed forces.

The questionnaire is mandatory for men and voluntary for women.

Denson does not argue in favor of pacifism or isolationism. He recognizes that war may be just when fought in defense of home and hearth. The point he emphasizes is that no matter how just a war may be, we must remember that it is inevitably deleterious to liberty. For example, Murray Rothbard regarded the Southern cause as just, but even so, we must recognize that when the South lay in ashes much more had been lost than the Southern bid for independence.

Lord Acton, in his letter to Robert E. Lee, wrote that, "I deemed that you were fighting the battles of our liberty, our progress, and our civilization; and I mourn for the stake which was lost at Richmond more deeply than I rejoice over that which was saved at Waterloo." As Jefferson Davis, the Confederate President, put it, the cause that was lost



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was "not that of the South only, but the cause of constitutional government, of the supremacy of law, of the natural rights of man."

One of the residual threats to liberty highlighted by Denson is the "abuse of the presidential powers regarding wars." The convention seems to have arisen that the president has power to do whatever he deems necessary to police the world's criminals and tyrants. Denson explains:

We have now reached a point in our history where it is strongly asserted that the president of the United States claims the power to declare a crisis and then send troops wherever he pleases without Congressional authority or approval.

Shakespeare dramatized this same point with Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar* where he states: "Cry 'Havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war."

By **Wanjiru Njoya**  
**Mises.org**

Denson also highlights the danger posed by war propaganda, reminding us—in the words of US Senator Hiram Johnson—that, "When war is declared, truth is the first casualty."

First comes the spin. For example, the Trump administration insists that their attack on Iran is not a war requiring congressional approval, but merely a "military operation." Then follows the slander against any who dissent. In recent weeks the neo-conservative radio host, Mark Levin, has been calling anyone who disagrees with President Trump's latest war a "traitor" to America. He believes any opinions that differ from his own are "anti-American." Do people who warn against the dangers of war thereby become traitors to their country?



War Crimes Against  
Sou...

Cisco, Walter Brian

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What is meant by love of country? In his book *Capitalism and Freedom*, the economist Milton Friedman offered some remarks that may shed some light on this issue. Readers will be aware that Murray Rothbard was no admirer of Friedman.

He described Friedman as "a favorite of the Establishment," a "Court Libertarian," and a "statist." But statist though he was, Friedman deserves some credit for reminding his statist followers that love of country and loyalty to a common heritage do not entail worship of government. Friedman rejected the notion that "free men in a free society" should view their government as synonymous with their country. He observed:

To the free man, the country is the collection of individuals who compose it, not something over and above them. He is proud of a common heritage and loyal to common traditions. But he regards government as a means, an instrumentality, neither a grantor of favors and gifts, nor a master or god to be blindly worshipped and served.

Although Friedman did not agree with the libertarian view of the state as inherently criminal and tyrannical, he argued that "the scope of government must be limited" and that "government power must be dispersed." He favored decentralizing political power. He drew Rothbard's ire for viewing the government as essentially well-intentioned, but he did at least recognize that good intentions do not mitigate harm. He wrote:

The power to do good is also the power to do harm; those who control the power today may not tomorrow; and, more important, what one man regards as good, another may regard as harm. The great tragedy of the drive to centralization, as of the drive to extend the scope of government in general, is that it is mostly led by men of good will who will be the first to rue its consequences.

That being the case, disagreeing with government policy certainly does not make one a traitor to his country. The historian Clyde Wilson argued, in *Defending Dixie: Essays in Southern History and Culture*, that even the Pledge of Allegiance, which is popularly seen as a way to express love of country, may be viewed as superfluous because "the virtuous do not need a Pledge and the rest will not honor it anyway." Wilson argues that in that light, the pledge ironically amounts in reality to "a pledge of allegiance not to the country or people but to the federal government." He remarked that:

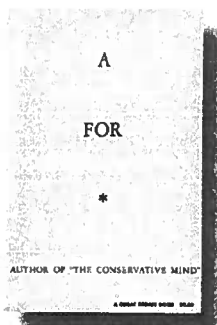
Such pledges did not mark the early years of the United States. They were unknown until they were employed as coercive devices in the South during the War Between the States and Reconstruction.... The present Pledge was written in 1892 by Francis Bellamy, a defrocked Boston minister and Marxist... It was taken up and promoted by the National Education Association as a way to enforce conformity to "Americanism" among its captive students, especially the first and second generation immigrants.

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Wilson, like Denson, is no pacifist. He remarked in his *Defending Dixie* essays that his direct forefathers on both sides of his family fought in every major war since America was founded, including the American Revolutionary War, the War for Southern Independence, and both World Wars. With that ancestry, Wilson is as good an authority as any on what counts as loyalty to America. His comment on the recent attack on Iran, in his essay "Marching to Persepolis," is that it "fails every rule of Christian 'just war' theory. It trashes what little is left of the Constitution. And possibly worst of all, it is stupid."



JUST A YEAR after writing *The Conservative Mind*, the indefatigable Russell Kirk published *A Program for Conservatives*. Here, Kirk was not so concerned with broad intellectual history and focused instead on a series of themes or problems in human social life on which conservatism gives us indispensable food for thought.

The list of themes treated, each of which gets its own chapter, is instructive: The mind, the heart, social boredom, community, social justice, wants, order, power, loyalty, and tradition. The reader will find himself in every chapter wanting to copy down large chunks of Kirk's luscious prose to ensure that they remain forever in memory.

What to say in a brief comment on a book overstuffed with brilliant insight? There is, for example, Kirk's extended polemic against the "degradation of the democratic dogma." This is the kind of relativist leveling we see all around us in American culture today. I think of Kirk's rhetoric every time I hear someone who claims to be on the right lauding "democracy" to the skies, without any qualification. The distorted ideology of "One man is as good as another, or maybe a little better" has done immeasurable harm. The truth is that inequality is unavoidable. Indeed, it is a good thing.

Every reader who is concerned about the decline of our educational institutions will be especially drawn to Kirk's chapter on the problem of the mind. What he wrote about the decay of the colleges and universities three quarters of a century ago remains true.

Kirk wrote that the scholar requires two other figures for his full splendor: the priest and the gentleman. As we have nearly exterminated both, the scholar, too, is nearing extinction. While the university Kirk adored charged itself with familiarizing young people with great literature and a view of "elevated human character," its mutated present form preaches hatred for greatness and elevation as mechanisms of oppression. The real human person has become an object of derision for today's professors. Kirk told a sad tale, not to make us cry over what we've lost, but to arm us for the struggle to come.

*Chronicles* readers know Kirk is an American intellectual treasure. This invaluable book is long out of print, but used and digital copies can still be found online.

—Alexander Riley

# Imperial Lies and the War in Iran

Under the guise of principled conservatism, the United States has been led down a path of global empire and endless wars.

by Nolan Denaro | May 5, 2026 | 0 Comments

Mass deception is a cornerstone of the state's ability to maintain total control. One of the main methods used by government to convince the population of their legitimacy is the tool of propaganda. This is nothing new, and states throughout the world have engaged in this practice for all of human history. What is new, however, is the mass awakening that is occurring in this moment of imperial decay.

I believe this decay is the direct result of an expansionist foreign policy, which is focused on expanding the global empire rather than furthering the values of liberty at home. The systems established by our founders are no longer the guidelines by which our government operates, and they haven't been for a very long time. Consider the fact that the President of the United States, Donald Trump, is yet to receive Congressional approval for his reckless war of choice against Iran, launched on February 28th, 2026.

Under Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution, it is stated that the Congress is the body with the authority "To declare War." However, the United States hasn't officially declared war since World War 2. The U.S. President swears an oath to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States." This oath, which these Presidents take with their hand on the Bible, is routinely broken.

As a result of this lack of respect for the founding documents, we have seen the United States engage in countless wars over the past century. Arguably the most disastrous of these wars was the second Iraq War, launched in March of 2003 by the George W. Bush administration.

This war was sold through a series of lies, which states that Iraq's head of state, Saddam Hussein, had acquired weapons of mass destruction, and was collaborating with the jihadist terrorist group Al-Qaeda to use these weapons against America. This was a particularly engaging narrative because just a little over a year and a half prior, on September 11th, 2001, Al-Qaeda had hit the United States with a series of terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C.

This narrative would go on to be proven false over the subsequent years. Saddam did not have WMDs and he was not aligned with Al-Qaeda. This war was the result of a group of people known as the neoconservatives hijacking the foreign policy wing of the Bush administration and using it to accomplish goals which they had already been pushing for before 9/11. The terrorist attacks simply served as their pretext for war.

Through a mixture of fake intelligence, foreign influence, and outright lies, the U.S. was led into a war that was against our interests.

This conflict started a chain of events that has resulted in catastrophe for our nation. The U.S. has never left Iraq, and between 2003 and 2023 the war resulted in anywhere from 200,000-600,000 Iraqi civilian deaths, roughly 4,598 American troops killed, and countless more American veterans having taken their own lives in the aftermath due to mental struggles. We spent, borrowed, and printed trillions of dollars over the course of this conflict, which has resulted in inflation here at home.

Every war is sold through a narrative, usually one which paints a picture of good vs. evil, light vs. dark, or hero vs. villain. The U.S. government is usually described as a "liberator," whose goal is to free the people of foreign nations from their oppressive regimes. This line was used not only in Iraq, but is even being used today to justify the war in Iran. Donald Trump repeatedly expressed a goal to "help" the Iranian people free themselves from their regime, as if the bombing of Iranian major cities was rooted in humanitarian impulses. How kind.

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In reality, this is merely fiction. The truth has much more to do with global power, foreign influence, and the ideological drive towards big government, masked as principled conservatism.

This fraudulent lie about the motives of the U.S. government has been the basis for the expansion of the American empire. This story, organized in the style of a superhero movie, is one of the core pillars serving as a justification for so much of what the state is able to get away with. By casting themselves as the “good guy,” whose only goal is the expansion of global liberalism, they are able to get the American people on board with endless war, also known as state-sanctioned mass murder.

Take this current war in Iran as an example. This war was not a war of necessity, and that is patently obvious. Nobody is buying the narrative that Iran was plotting to develop a deliverable nuclear weapon for the purpose of bombing the United States. This not only wouldn't be possible for close to a decade, according to the Defense Department's own 2025 report, titled, “Golden Dome for America: Current and Future Missile Threats to the U.S. Homeland,” but it is also a statement devoid of any context that could help us come to a negotiated solution.

When you assess these types of situations in a vacuum, you are more likely to conclude that military action is all that can be done. However, when you look at the history of these tensions, you can better judge the grievances of both sides, and it becomes more possible for diplomacy to work.

John Mearsheimer and his “Realist” school of foreign policy thought tells us that understanding the motives of the enemy, and the grievances they hold, is essential to having a holistic grasp on the conflict. This doesn't mean we agree with them or justify actions they take as a result. As a libertarian, I am against essentially all states, especially oppressive theocracies. But this doesn't mean there isn't a history to these feuds that is worth assessing and understanding.

As it pertains to this current war, there is a history that I urge everyone reading this to look into. The CIA and MI6 orchestrated a coup in 1953, known as Operation Ajax, against Iran's then-president Mohammed Mosaddegh. This led to the installation of the U.S.-backed Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, a brutal monarch. The tension against his rule culminated in the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Since then, the U.S. has overthrown all of Iran's neighbors. Iraq, Syria and Libya have all been casualties of the United States' “War on Terror,” which sought to overthrow regimes across the Middle East that were hostile to Israel. This was the direct result of neoconservatives, who explicitly prioritize the goals of the State of Israel over those of America, taking control over our foreign policy.

Now, after decades of advocating for this war, both the U.S. and Israel have launched a regime change operation against the IRGC. This is now a war of survival for Iran.

It does not take a foreign policy genius to understand how these dynamics could create the situation we see today. Clearly, there is much more to this story. This is not as simple as a childish “good vs. evil” narrative.

It is the failure to even consider the broader history that results in our leaders either being ignorant or intentionally dishonest in their assessment. However, more people than ever before are awake to the fact that they aren't telling us the whole story. According to a new Washington Post-ABC News-Ipsos poll, 61% say that it was a “mistake” for the U.S. to take military action against Iran.

While they may not know the whole history, and they may not necessarily be against this conflict based on a principled anti-war stance, the majority of this country senses deep down that something is off. It becomes apparent that the entire story is not being told, especially when the holes in said story are so gaping.

What is to be done about this? Tell the truth. As the heroic Congressman Ron Paul said so wisely, “Truth is treason in the empire of lies.” That is the necessary first step to breaking down this facade. This has already begun, and if we are to guide our republic back to sanity, we must continue fearlessly.