G20 Summit

Abbott govt – climate pariah

Bob Briton

Abbott’s attempt to steer the agenda of the G20 Summit around the issue of climate change was undone in spectacular fashion by US President Barack Obama’s address to an enthusiastic audience at the University of Queensland. Commitments about post-2020 domestic climate targets and energy efficiency appear in the communique coming from the two-day meeting of leaders of the world’s biggest economies.

Pressure is mounting on the Abbott government to stop being a “lender” and to join the “lifters” in the still stumbling international effort to head off a climate catastrophe.

Australia’s negligible effort in the area of emissions reduction was underscored before the Brisbane mega-meeting even began. An agreement between the US and the People’s Republic of China on the eve of the G-20 commits the US to an emissions reduction of between 26 and 28 percent of 2005 levels by 2025. China has pledged to stop emissions growth by 2030, if not sooner, to get an ambitious 20 percent of its energy from renewable sources and to use higher grade, cleaner fuels in general – that is equivalent to the closure of all its coal-fired power plants.

Together, the US and China account for just over 40 percent of global carbon emissions, so any cut in their output has got to be good news. It is not, however, a cue for a world-wide sigh of relief that the battle for a livable climate in future has been won. China will continue to use more fossil fuels for the next decade and a half. This is in line with the principles of the Kyoto Protocol ratified at the Rio World Climate Change Summit in 1992. It was always recognised that developing countries needing to increase emissions for some time.

The US government’s decision to use yet another base year for measuring emissions reductions is deliberately confusing. The original Kyoto commitment by the governments of 37 wealthier, industrialised countries was for a reduction of 5.2 percent from 1990 levels by 2012. The base year for calculating reductions was subsequently shifted to 2000 – a move that significantly lowered the agreement’s ambitions.

Whatever the base year, a commitment from Australia equivalent to that just made by the US would be for a 30 percent reduction in emissions from 2000 levels by 2025. Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt won’t comment on any targets beyond 2020 until the Paris conference on climate change to be held next year is upon us. The shameful reality is that the Abbott government’s so-called “direct action plan” is unlikely to achieve even its stated, unambitious target of a 5 percent reduction by 2020. The resource sector’s ownership of the Australian government was on show for all the world to see at the G-20.

Abbott’s clangers about coal being “good for humanity” and his government’s insistence that “clean coal” is just around the corner have raised eyebrows. Plans to dump dredge soil in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area to create deeper port facilities for coal exports just keep on coming. And while the world grapples with the consequences of record high temperatures and rising sea levels, the Abbott government is cutting funding to the Australian Climate Change Science Program.

Labor has pulled out of discussions with the government about Australia’s renewable energy target (RET). The Coalition wants to slash the RET from 41,000 gigawatt hours of baseline power by 2020 to about 26,000 gigawatt hours. Investment in the green energy sector has collapsed as a consequence of this sharply downgraded commitment. Labor’s attempts at compromise gigawatt hour target in the mid-to-high 30s have all been rebuffed. Frustration at Abbott & Co’s eco-vandalism is building.

The failure of successive Australian governments to pull their weight on climate change is now internationally recognised. It is not how the people of Australia want change is now internationally recognised. It is not how the people of Australia want to be viewed. The election of the Coalition government last year wasn’t a ringing endorsement of its lifeless “direct action plan” but an expression of a lack of faith in Labor, its opportunism and deal-making on the question.

As can be seen from the rapturous reception for Obama, Australians desperately want leadership on this and several other burning issues. Obama made direct reference to the Great Barrier Reef, “I want to come back, and I want my daughters to be able to come back, and I want them to be able to bring their daughers or sons to visit.” And I want that there 50 years from now.”

Unfortunately, faith in Obama and similar international figures is misplaced. Despite commitments by the US, Britain, Canada, the EU and others, the planet is still not on track for a happy climate ending. The UN’s International Panel on Climate Change recently renewed its warning about the multiple threats facing humanity from anthropogenic global warming. Its earlier reports insisted there must be a 40 percent reduction on year 2000 carbon emission levels by 2020 if we are to avoid a global average temperature increase above 2°C. That’s not going to happen.

Huge transnational corporations, most of them in charge of hugely polluting industries, dictate policy to the Abbotts, Camerons, Merkels and Obamas of this world. Their job is to sell big business’ agenda to the people of their respective countries. Obama does a very slick job, Abbott does a bumbling one.

The workers and other exploited people know there is a crisis and are resisting the reckless policies of the monopolies. They have managed to push back more successfully in the UK, the EU and elsewhere than in Australia but it’s not enough. A greater understanding of the destructive essence of capitalism is required. Action on climate change has to be a central demand for all progressive people. It must become a core trade union concern.
Terra nullius never went away

“As we look around this glorious city, as we see the extraordinary development, it’s hard to think that back in 1788 it was nothing but bush ... Everything would have seemed so extraordinarily basic and raw ...” Prime Minister Tony Abbott told an international gathering in Sydney on November 14. He repeated those words again at a post-APEC International Business breakfast on November 17. Terra nullius is back on the agenda, not that it ever really went away. Assuredly, the mining business and this government is proudly clear the way, in particular, for mining companies.

Consistent with Abbott’s terra nullius outlook, the government is currently at the forefront of efforts to strip inalienable rights of Indigenous people. That is why funding is being cut, that is why in Sydney on November 14. He repeated the same words again at a bush … Everything would have seemed so extraordinarily basic and reasonable. We are supposed to reward, we are supposed to support, we are supposed to accommodate. Yet, because we are Aboriginal people who perhaps most WA, we would be supported, accommodated and rewarded for our efforts. Yet, because we are Aboriginal people who perhaps most WA, we would be supported, accommodated and rewarded for our efforts. Yet, because we are Aboriginal people who perhaps most WA, we would be supported, accommodated and rewarded for our efforts. Yet, because we are Aboriginal people who perhaps most WA, we would be supported, accommodated and rewarded for our efforts. 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APEC pursuing integrated Asia-Pacific

Anna Pha

While the Australian media were focused on the Prime Minister making a fool of himself, an important meeting was taking place in Beijing. It was the 22nd Leaders Summit of APEC (See box below). The original intent of APEC when proposed by Australia (on the US’s behalf) was an Asian Pacific regional group under US domination. The Summit was significant in a number of ways.

China and the US announced a secretly negotiated agreement between the two countries on climate change and emission reductions. (See page 1).

PM Tony Abbott was caught by surprise, after all his mate had not forewarned him despite Australia being the US’s most loyal and subservient ally. Not exactly a public expression of trust or respect.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Obama have also agreed on a military accord designed to avert clashes between Chinese and American planes and warships in the waters off the Chinese coast. They are also cooperating on trade in hi tech goods and direct foreign investment.

There were interesting bilateral meetings between China and the US, China and Japan, the US and Russia, and Australia and Russia resulting in speculation about an easing of tensions. However, it seems clear that the dispute over islands between China and Japan has not been resolved.

The Australian media focused on the face-to-face public encounter between Abbott and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Not surprisingly, Abbott failed to carry out his threat to “shirt-front” Putin. We are told by Abbott’s team that he did tell Putin to pull out of Ukraine, and pay compensation to the families of the dead. The Malaysia aircraft and pay compensation to the families of the dead. The Malaysian aircraft and pay compensation to the families of the dead.

The Beijing Declaration, “Beijing Agenda for an Integrated, Innovative and Interconnected Asia-Pacific”, states, “Through its unique approach featuring voluntary action, concrete and flexible principles and pragmatism, APEC has successfully established a sound regional economic cooperation framework among member economies with remarkable diversity and at different stages of development.

“Adhering to the spirit of unity, mutual respect and trust, mutual assistance and win-win cooperation, we have been working to narrow the development gap among ourselves and have consistently promoted the robust, sustainable, balanced, inclusive and secure growth in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

“After years of rapid development, the Asia-Pacific has become the most dynamic region of the world, and has never been as important as it is today in the global landscape …”

Regional integration

China used its position as host to advance the process towards concrete action on a Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP).

The FTAAP includes China, unlike the US-driven Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP). It involves the 21 APEC economies as compared with the TPP’s 12. “Establishment of this Roadmap for APEC’s Contribution to the Realisation of the FTAAP represents an important concrete step towards greater regional economic integration.” (The Beijing Roadmap for APEC’s Contribution to the Realisation of the FTAAP, Annex A to Leaders’ Declaration)

While the US has a strong preference for its TPP, China made it clear that the FTAAP should not be pitted against the TPP. The Leaders Declaration describes it as “a major instrument to further APEC’s regional economic integration agenda which should be pursued as a comprehensive, free trade agreement by developing and building on ongoing regional undertakings such as ASEAN+3, ASEAN+6, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership.”

“The FTAAP will be realised outside of APEC, parallel with the APEC process. APEC should maintain its non-binding, voluntary cooperation principles in its contributions to the realisation of the FTAAP. APEC will encourage more unilaterally trade and investment liberalisation and reform, continue to play a role as incubator of the FTAAP and provide leadership and intellectual input to its realisation.”

The FTAAP has a unique approach, with significant differences in the principles of cooperation when compared with the approach of the WTO or TPP where the framework results in greater power of the stronger economies to exploit the weaker ones.

The APEC Leaders’ Declaration is underpinned by five pillars of cooperation*: Economic Reform; New Economy; Innovative Growth; Inclusive Support; and Urbanisation. Each of these pillars is spelt out in detail.

For example, the New Economy has three components: Internet Economy, Blue Economy and the Green Economy. The Blue Economy relates to coastal and marine ecosystems, disaster resilience; ocean-related food security and associated trade; and marine science, technology and innovation.

A statement on the 25th anniversary of APEC recapping its achievements states, “APEC has carried out practical cooperation in a wide range of areas, including structural reform; standards and conformance; women and the economy; health, education and labour; climate change; food security and food safety; energy security and sustainable energy development; green economy; blue economy; small and medium enterprises; information and communications technology; transport; infrastructure development and investment; forestry; mining; counter-terrorism; emergency preparedness; and, anti-corruption.”

Big business plays a role through APEC’s Business Advisory Council. While much of the agenda of APEC is based on free trade, tariff removals, opening up to foreign investment, unlike free trade agreements, adherence is on a voluntary basis. Not everything in the statement is to be applauded. For example, in Annex C it states: “We support the safe and efficient development of nuclear power, which functions as a base load power source, in interested economies.”

Looking ahead, the statement said, “We are committed to jointly building an open economy in the Asia-Pacific that is based on innovative development, interconnected growth, and shared interests.

* See full declaration, Annex C www.globaltimes.cn/content/891377.shtml Full coverage of G20 next issue.
Principals survey finds lack of resourcing their biggest concern

New research shows over 80 percent of Australia’s principals say a lack of resources is hurting education at their school, the Australian Education (AEU) says. The result, found in the Australian Council for Educational Research’s latest report, “Australian Teachers and the Learning Environment,” showed principals believe the biggest issue in their schools is inadequate schools’ budgets and resources.

AEU deputy federal president Correna Haythorpe said the result should remind the Abbott government of the importance of committing to the full six years of Gonski funding, to ensure all schools meet minimum resource standards.

“Principals on the frontline know that the one thing which could make an immediate difference to their school is their resource allocation,” Haythorpe said. “The report also reveals concerns about teacher training, with almost 38 percent of teachers saying their training did not address content of all the subjects they are now teaching.

Principals also raised concerns that a lack of properly qualified teachers was hindering school performance, including 37 percent saying they had shortages of teachers trained in teaching subjects with special needs, and 33 percent reporting shortages of teachers in vocational education.

“Ensuring as many children as possible are taught by a properly qualified teacher is important for the quality of their education,” Haythorpe said.

“We need better workforce planning, and to ensure all teaching degrees are a post-graduate two-year degree to give teachers the knowledge they need for the classroom.”

The report also raised concerns about the ageing teaching workforce in Australia, with 37.1 percent of teachers aged 50 or over ahead of the OECD average of 31.8 percent. “Our ageing workforce makes it even more important that we focus on giving the next generation of teachers the best training possible,” Haythorpe said.

The Queensland government’s agreement to sink tax-payers’ money into the controversial Carmichael coal project railway line to the Galilee Basin is an expensive waste of money that threatens irreparable damage to water resources in Queensland.

Lock the Gate Alliance says the Queensland government keeps throwing at the Galilee Basin keeps growing.

“Neither Premier Newman nor Cabinet has acknowledged that the government’s perverse support for the mining industry comes at the expense of Queensland’s water resource,” the Lock the Gate Alliance said.

The Queensland government is preparing to waste taxpayers’ money, ruin the environment, trash family farms and communities for mines the world knows has no future.

In another “free kick” a report is expected from a parliamentary committee inquiry into the latest Bill to provide concessions to coal mines. The Water Reform and Other Legislation Bill is slated to allow the Galilee mine proponents, and all other coal miners in Queensland, to take billions of litres of groundwater without having to obtain licences under water resource plans.

Lock the Gate is backing the “Queensland People’s Bill” to bring back fairness and democracy to this development, the introduction of the defunct Upper House. We will hold aQA about the Queensland People’s Bill at the Old Museum on November 29 with politicians and leading experts on the panel.

Detailed reports on Q&K and Adani mines by the Energy Resource Studies Australasia at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) here: www.ieefa.org/industry/reports

Qld government footing the bill for Galilee rail line

Protesters gather at WA Parliament in response to the death of Dhu while in police custody.
to put climate change as a formal item on the agenda did appear prominently in the formal sessions of the G20 Summit. He blew big his chance to prove to world leaders and the rest of the world his international leadership skills. Instead of giving leadership, he babbled on about co-payments, deregulation of universities, how he stopped the boats and abolished carbon pricing. Because he was thanked and politely praised Abbott for his chairing and organising of the Summit, it seems Abbott has no idea that they would not do otherwise. Protocol and diplomacy dictate it. Nor does he understand the role of a host for an organisation like the G20. Putin was singled out for differential treatment, being met at the airport by an assistant minister for defence, whereas other leaders were welcomed by the Governor General or Attorney General.

Climate change denial
As the G20 kicked off, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told reporters at the International Media Centre in Brisbane, “Climate change is the defining issue of our times, therefore it is only natural that the G20 leaders should focus on this.” Abbott and his climate denier mates still didn’t get it, they hadn’t heard how the Pacific was already being affected or that coal is not the future. He dug his head even deeper into the sand, steadfastly refusing to put climate change as a formal agenda item despite demands from other participants. Obama was not used to being told what he could or could not do, especially from a little, arrogant upstart touting Tea Party economics.

When addressing a predominately student audience at Queens- land University, Obama included issues that the homophobic, sexist and climate change denying PM has failed to address. Obama spoke forcefully on the need for action on climate change, resounding applause. “We will stand up for our gay and lesbian fellow citizens because they need to be treated equally under the law,” Obama said to more applause. His support for women’s equality was greeted with an even louder response. Adding insult to injury, Obama called on some of the dirty industries that powered our development to “go straight to a clean-energy economy that allows them to grow, create jobs and at the same time reduce their carbon pollution.” He then called Australia’s youth to “keep raising your voices” and challenge “entrenched interests”.

None of it was music to the government’s ears, a government that seeks to place Australia’s economic future on coal. But then, what else can be expected from a government beholden to the powerful mining companies and needing to do deals with a mining magnate’s political party in the Senate.

Obama struck the final blow “It’s been a good week for American leadership and for American workers,” he told a press conference. Clearly the message was directed at his audience back home, but perhaps, just perhaps there was a message for Abbott as climate change did appear prominently in the final communique.

It is not a great secret that defence loves their military equipment, always lusts for more and usually gets what it says it needs. Millions of dollars have been wasted in military purchases and at present Australia is quietly selling off dozens of missiles to other countries in order to recoup some of the $200 million spent on them. The Australian Defence Force has sold 30 anti-ship Penguin missiles to Brazil (through Norway), several to New Zealand and two Popeye air-to-surface missile to South Korea since the begin- ning of last year. The sales have been conducted without any publicity – not surprising really if you consider the amount of money that is being spent now. A missile purchase spree of $200 million is peanuts compared to one of Australia’s biggest defence fiascos when the Howard government offered 11 Sea-sprite helicopters in 1997 but serious flaws in the helicopters delayed the project by seven years and then it was scrapped. That particular exercise in wasting money cost more than $1.4 billion dollars to taxpayers.

Life expectancy has always been a good indicator for managing the provision of health and social services for its citizens. Australia is considered to be among the top countries when it comes to longevity. But there is a problem. While wealthy Anglo-Saxon-dominated suburbs in large cities top life expectancy lists, the average person in remote western NSW can expect to live a shorter life than somebody in Iraq, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Life expectancy in rural NSW is among the worst in the country with only Western Australia and the Northern Territory falling under remote NSW’s life expectancy of 67.8 years. Primary health care with an emphasis on prevention is hard to access. Severe lack of permanent GPs, under-resourcing, closure of health facilities are the factors which contribute to this state of affairs.

Forbes’ list of the world’s most powerful leaders should be “shirt-fronted” – it has failed even to mention in passing our very own Tony Abbott. Mister Putin is there as number one, Mr Obama at number two and the Chinese leader Xi Jinping at number three. Two of Mr Abbott’s cheer leaders and sup- porters are there – Rupert Murdoch and Gina Rinehart.

Across the United Kingdom, government departments and local councils are taking back contracts from companies like Serco and G4S which were supposed to provide services for the elderly and disabled people. The outsourcing of servic- es there proved a disaster, with rorting and expensive blowouts proving the norm rather than the exception. Now the NSW gov- ernment is planning to do the same. Do they ever learn from experience? Do they ever listen to the people who work in this area? Older people and people with disabilities are not going to be the winners when an essential public service is being transferred to private companies. If it is such a good idea, why not ask NSW voters in March what they think about it?
The War for the Islamic State

Stephen J. Sniegoski

The silence of the Israelis on ISIS

In the war on the Islamic State, the alleged scourge of humanity, little is heard about the position of America’s much-hated greatest ally in the Middle East, if not the world, Israel. Now the Islamic State has been conquering territory in very close proximity to the border of Israel. But Israel does not seem to be fearful and it is not taking any action.

And the Obama administration and American policy-makers do not seem to be the least bit disturbed. This is quite in contrast to the complaints about other Middle East countries such as Turkey that are being harshly criticized for their failure to become actively involved in fighting the Islamic State.

For example, a New York Times editorial, “Mr Erdogan’s Dangerous Game,” begins, “Turkey’s president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, once aspired to lead the Muslim world. At this time of regional crisis, he has been standing passively behind a chicken-wire border fence while a mile away in Syria, Islamic extremists are besieging the town of Kobani and its Kurdish population.”

An article in the Boston Globe read, “Turkey has failed Kobani, Kurds.” An editorial in the USA Today was titled “Turkey waits as ISIL crushes Kobani.”

Necdet Karan with Turkey in “Endog-

an Double Game”:

“For almost a month, Kobani Kurds have been trying to hold off Islamic State fighters who have been trying to take the border town from the Turks. Outgunned, outnumbered and outmanned, the defending Kurds have begged Turkey to allow weapons and reinforcements through the border. Erdogan has refused to even allow an observer mission to that, let alone intervening directly.”

Even the normally anti-war Noam Chomsky expressed support for protecting the Kurds. “When America or even Turkey is in the shocking situation,” Chomsky opined, “This morning’s newspaper described Turkish military operation against Kurds in Turkey, not against ISIS, a couple of kilometres across the border where they are in danger of being slaughtered. I think someone needs to ask what the UN is in terms of a strong resolution to call for a ceasefire.

“It is hard to impose the use of force. It is even harder to impose it in the US.” Chomsky continued, “but to the extent that it can be done try and protect Kobani from destruction at the hands of ISIS, which could be a major massacre with enormous conse-
quences.” Chomsky added that “the strategic significance of the town in the Kurdish region is pretty obvious, and the Turkish role is critical in this.”

Israel’s reticence

Returning to the issue of Israel, the fact of the matter is that Israel acts to protect its own national interests. At the current time, the primary goal of the Islamic State is to purify Islam, to remove all non-Muslims. Considering the Islamic State is targeting Muslims, the Israeli government does not see it as a significant enemy at this time. And it is rewarding for Israeli leaders to believe that the Islamic State would never move on to attack their country because it will never be able to conquer its major Islamic foes, such as the American military position against the Islamic State.

Moreover, the fact of the matter is that the Islamic State actually benefits from problems for those very states that do actively oppose Israel and support the Palestinians, such as Syria. What the Islamic State is doing in the Middle East is perfectly attuned with the view of the Israeli Right – as best articulated by Odor Yinon in 1982 – which sought to have Israel’s Middle East enemies fragmented and fighting among themselves in order to weaken the external threat to Israel.

Currently, these divisions are not only plaguing Syria and Iraq, but also Turkey, where Erdogan, by falsely claiming that Hamas and Iran are not a threat to the region, is trying to exploit his enemies’ unwillingness to help their brethren in Syria, and Lebanon, where the Shia government, Haiti, is being assailed by the Jewish-

ist Nusra Front, which has the support of many Lebanese Sunnis. [See Jonathan Spyer, “The Shia-Sunn War Reaches Lebanon”, Jerusalem Post, Middle East Forum, October 17, 2014.]

More than this, the Netanyahu government is trying to take advantage of the Islamic State’s aggression by falsely claiming that Hamas, which is its equivalent, is in control of the Islamic State. In an address to the UN General Assembly on September 29, Netanyahu asserted that “Hamas is the immediate threat to us in this region. Hamas is the threat to Israel.”

Thus, Netanyahu claimed that it is wrong for countries to criticize Israel’s brutal treatment of the Palestinians in its conflict with Hamas, pointing out that “the same countries that now support confronting ISIS, opposed Israel for confronting Hamas. They evident-
ly don’t understand that ISIS and Hamas are part of the same poisonous tree. ISIS and Hamas share a fanatical creed, which they both seek to impose well beyond the territory under their control.”

In short, Netanyahu maintained that the Islamic State and Hamas were essentially identi-
ical, “when it comes to their ultimate goals, Hamas is ISIS and ISIS is Hamas.”

National interest

Now there is nothing strange about Israel’s position here. It is simply acting in its own national interest. There is no reason to fight a group that doesn’t threaten it. Furthermore, it is in Israel’s interest to try to see such a group appear that it is acting for the good of all humanity when attacking Hamas, and though these arguments are unlikely to sway any UN members, the prime minister did provide ammunition to the Israel lobby and its supporters that could be used to persuade some gullible Americans. It can be argued that if Israel openly entered the fray as a member of the anti-Islamic State coalition, it would be counterproductive. Since many Arabs see Israel as their major enemy, Israel’s involvement in the war would turn them against the Islamic State and maybe even cause some of them to support that mili-
tant jihadist group as an enemy of Israel.

So it might be understandable that the United States would not demand that Israel participate in the war against the Islamic State, just as it did not expect Israel to fight against Saddam Hussein. Although this might be understandable, if it were to mean that Israel could not really be an ally of the United States in the Middle East because it could not participate in America’s wars in the region, which is the very raison d’ etat of an ally.

Conceivably, Israel could covertly support the enemies of Islamic State. Israel has been doing just that in regard to Syria. During the past two years it has launched airstrikes against Assad’s forces which has helped the opposition. Israel takes the position that any attacks on its territory from Syria are the responsibility of the Assad government even if they are made by the opposition.

Moreover, just like the United States, Israel has provided training for Syrian opposition. For example, Abdul-Hal al-Bashir al-Noomi, currently the Chief of Staff of the Supreme Mili-
tary Council (SNC) of the Free Syrian Army, secretly trained in Israel in 2013 after being admitted into the country for medical treatment. [See “Report: Commander of Syrian Rebels Trained in Israel, Jewish Press News Briefs”, February 24, 2014. In regard to Israeli par-
ticipation in training Syrian opposition, see-

lyst confirms link between Israel, ‘moderate’ Syrian rebels,” Alakbar English, October 17, 2014.]

Staying out of the fray

Israel’s pro-rebel activities in the Syrian conflict have not been counterproductive in that they have not caused any of Assad’s many Arab enemies to abandon their effort to remove his regime. But it is not apparent that Israel is taking any steps like this regarding the Islamic State, and the United States does not seem to be pressuring it to do so.

What this means is that Israel is not really any type of ally of the United States. It does not bend its foreign policy to aid the United States but only acts in its own interest. It takes actions against the Assad regime because the latter is an ally of Iran and provides a conduit for weapons being sent to Israel’s enemy Hezbollah.

Israel’s inactivity is ironic. The Islamic State inactivity has not been counterproductive in that they have not caused any of Assad’s many Arab enemies to abandon their effort to remove his regime. But it is not apparent that Israel is taking any steps like this regarding the Islamic State, and the United States does not seem to be pressuring it to do so.

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Israel’s inactivity is ironic. It is ironic that in the United States it is the supporters of Israel, such as the neoconservatives, who have taken the lead in pushing for a hard-line American military position against the Islamic State.
So much for consulting with the First Nations

Leaders angered as South Australia’s Premier refuses to include leaders in meeting with Andrew Forrest, Professor Marcia Langton to discuss concerns on “Creating Parity”

Gerry Georgatos

So much for consulting with First Nations People over Andrew Forrest’s controversial “Creating Parity” report, says the First Nations People of South Australia. When Forrest and his assistant author of the report, Professor Marcia Langton arrived in Adelaide last week in secret, to discuss the proposal with South Australia’s Labor Premier, Jay Weatherill requests for First Nations leaders to attend also were rejected.

The Forrest report has been heavily criticised by First Nations People in South Australia, none of whom were adequately consulted before the Creating Parity report was being developed nor since its release but that Forrest has not stopped Premier Weatherill delivering glowing support for the reports recommendations.

Weatherill received a formal request that leaders of South Australia’s First Nations clans be included in the meeting with Forrest and Professor Langton but the request was rejected. Instead, it was only Weatherill and government advisers included.

Weatherill has come out in glowing support of the report’s recommendations which has surprised and angered many First Nations communities in the State.

South Australian First Nations leaders have labelled the report’s recommendations as “reductionist, paternalistic and assimilationist”. That was why the Premier received a request to allow First Nations leaders be included so they could discuss their concerns.

Local rights advocate, Roxley Foley, son of Dr Gary Foley, was scathing of the report labelling it the “worst, most dangerous proposal” he had ever seen on Indigenous rights.

Chair of the Narrungga People, Tauto Sambsury was among those leaders nominated to attend the discussions and he was furious the Premier had denied him and other leaders the opportunity to be included. “Creating Parity” Weatherill may be Premier but he must respect that he cannot speak for our people, or understand as we understand ourselves, Samsbury said.

“The impacts from this report, if implemented, will stretch beyond the imagination, they will hit us hard.”

Premier Weatherill has already announced he would offer the broadest possible support to the 27 recommendations in the “Creating Parity” report including support for the controversial expansion of income management to all working age Centrelink recipients, which is potentially up to 2.5 million people.

Weatherill’s bland endorsement of the report puts him at odds with federal Labor, which has refused to back the “Creating Parity” report in its entirety. Not even Prime Minister, Tony Abbott has completely backed the recommendations.

On the same day as Premier Weatherill held his meeting with Forrest and Professor Langton, nearby South Australia’s Parliament House, at the vast Tandanya Cultural Centre, the large Tandanya auditorium was filled with First Peoples from communities from across the state to hear the other side of the story on Forrest’s and Langton’s report. In the audience were Liberal Opposition leader, Steven Marshall and Greens parliamentarian, Tammy Franks.

“IT not only as a slap in the face but as a slap in the face to all Aboriginal people. Premier Weatherill refused our inclusion in the meeting. So much for consultation,” Sansbury said. “Income management is a failed policy that disempowers and humilates vulnerable members of the community.”

But Forrest’s report is not limited to income management. Many believe the report’s recommendations actually seek to support the erosion of Aboriginal land rights.

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But Forrest’s report is not limited to income management. Many believe the report’s recommendations actually seek to support the erosion of Aboriginal land rights. Sansbury said it was clear in the report that it supports the “disability” approach. “It’s too late,” Sansbury said.

“We need to mobilise, we need to critically think, we need to stand in the way,” Schoen said.

Roxley Foley was also scathing in his assessment of the Forrest report, declaring delegations of First Peoples needed to go to all the communities to explain to them what is happening, what is at risk.

“In all my years, I have never seen anything worse or more dangerous than the Forrest report, it will take us backwards,” Foley said. “There has never been a more powerful opportunity to mobilise, to bring our people together, to unite in the struggle against the agendas of this government and of the Forrest report.”

The Greens Tammy Franks said she was stunned the Labor Premier, Jay Weatherill would support the Forrest report. “I am at a loss to understand why he has given so much support to this report,” Franks said.

South Australian parliamentarian, Kelly Vincent from Dignity for Disability, also condemned Premier Weatherill’s blanket endorsement of the report.

“The recommendations in the Forrest Review further restrict access to the Disability Support Pension, make it easier for payments to job seekers to be cut or suspended without warning or justification, which will increase poverty without dealing with the fundamental under-supply of jobs, especially in regional and remote communities and the many societal barriers Aboriginal people and people with disabilities in particular can face when looking for work,” Vincent said.

“The Forrest recommendations regarding land ownership have the potential to further erode Aboriginal control of their lands and communities, which will destabilise these communities and further deny them the right to self-determination.”

National Indigenous Times

4, 2009 up to 142 Afghan civilians in Kunduz, many of them children, were killed in an attack called in by German Colonel Georg Klein, again without even the usual warning fly-over. His courage – from a safe distance – was rewarded with a promotion to Brigadier General. But, as Gauck insists, he ‘shouldn’t reject from the start the use of military methods as a last resort.’

In September, at Gdańsk in Poland, he equated Nazi Germany’s attack there 75 years ago with current Russian policy in the Ukraine. In his usual slightly veiled yet menacing language he threatened Putin. “His policy teaches us that territorial concessions often only whet the appetite of aggressors. Europe will hold to its libertarian values. We will adjust our political path, our economy and our defence preparations to this new situation.”

He did not overly stress that his father, like his mother an early Nazi Party member – had been a loyal captain in Danzig, as Gdańsk was then called by the Germans, during World War II before advancing to teach Navigation and Military Law to future officers. Doubtless to his joy, Poland, backed by NATO, is moving more towards the Ukrainian border, making de-escalation in the Ukraine even tougher.

German uniforms have been deployed in 13 foreign regions since unification: over Serbia, in Kosovo, Afghanistan, in naval blockades at Lebanon and the Horn of Africa, in Turkey with Patriot missiles at the Syrian border, and in many African countries. But still too few for Joachim Gauck!

This relates to another worry of his. Although a polled majority wants no more military adventures, only one party in the Bundestag opposes past, present and future foreign deployments; that is the Left party. And now these heretics may become, for the first time, the leading party in a German state, Thuringia!

State politics are not directly tied to military matters but a Left minister-president, Bodo Ramelow, would automatically become a member and occasional chair of Germany’s Upper House (Bundestag); his position could help legitimise his party in western Germany where age-old anti-Communist prejudices have thus far kept it to a role as despised ragan-muffins, with low polling results. But Ramelow cannot easily be red-baited as a “left-over back from the old GDR, with bright eyes” until moving east in 1990 he was a proper, pious, church-going West German.

The Left won this unprecedented opportunity by coming in a close second to the Christian Democrats (CDU) 25 years ago, Friedrich Schorlemmer, called Gauck’s condemnation of the Left party in reality?”

Not everyone was happy about Gauck’s interference. SPD Vice-Chairman Ralph Stegner said: “In controversial questions of ongoing party politics it is wise and correct to maintain reserve, for the official authority of the president depends on his maintaining distinct non-party position.”

The noted Lutheran theologian and a leading dissident in the GDR 25 years ago, Friedrich Schorlemmer, called Gauck’s condemnation of the Left party in reality?”

As for Gauck, whose smiles will often shine down on the celebrations, it was constantly inflamed anew by Gauck, and his uncasing witch-hunt against many, many thousands, some undoubtedly nasty, others by no means, destroyed countless livelihoods and led to not a few suicides.

For some Social Democrats and Greens he becomes a Franken-stein monster. But not for others, like Katrin Göring-Eckardt, chair-person of the Green caucus in the Bundestag, who also supported military measures against Libya, in Syria and Iraq and went all-out in backing the Maidan coup and demanding pressures against Russia. She said: “Gauck has done just the things we elected him to do.”

As for Gauck, whose smiles will often shine down on the celebrations, it is now seems that he himself once worked secretly – and on a friendly basis – with the Stasi. Yet I have a feeling that such incredible hypocrisy – and many such problems of victory or defeat – are by no means restricted to Germany.
How does the military lose half a billion dollars worth of equipment in one year? Last year the question Pentagon auditors asked after it was revealed that US military equipment was being lost or stolen in Afghanistan.

Robert Bridge

The reason for the last-minute change of tactic was not due to prudence for the trampled Constitution, but rather the understanding that taking up arms and going off to war in a civil war was a bad public relations move since Al-Qaeda was also allied with the Syrian opposition against the Assad government.

Meanwhile, the aerial campaign against the barbaric Islamic State seems to have taken a backseat. The US military announced it carried out air strikes against the Al-Qaeda-linked Khorasan group, an organisation few people had heard of before the aerial campaign began in Syria. According to military officials, US forces targeted several vehicles and buildings near the border with Turkey.

In fact, Washington has openly stated its reason for assisting the opposition to usurp the elected leader of Syria. But without the chemical weapons as the poor man's equivalent of nuclear weapons – but that does not mean Washington is content with Assad – an ally of the Iranian regime (which in all likelihood is the Endgame here) – still hanging around.

Increasingly, and oddly, the allegedly ruthless Islamic State seems to be falling out of the equation in Syria as a host of other lesser known groups are becoming the target of the US-led aerial campaign. This is having the effect of confusing the situation in Syria to the point that few people understand what is happening. When and if the US attacks Syria's government forces this dust being thrown into the public's face will have served its purpose.

On November 12, a Japanese protestor committed suicide by setting fire to himself at a park in Tokyo, opposing Japan's "collective self-defence right" that Parliament approved in July. The bill allowed the Japanese military to fight overseas on the excuse of defending its allies from threats. The man left a note condemning Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzio's militarism. Two days ago, over 1,000 people including Japanese opposition party leaders gathered in front of the parliament building protesting against the approval of the bill.

On November 19, 2014

The curious thing about Islamic State is that its very presence is an embodiment of the best and worst of the US military: from America's top-shelf military hardware from Afghanistan? If all that equipment was sold or stolen, it would eventually appear on the radar. And perhaps it already has.

America’s Commander-in-Chief, who has never waited in the past for congressional consent to initiate a military offensive (seven offensives to date for the Nobel Prize winner with still two years left to go), this time left the decision to Congress.

Meanwhile, the aerial campaign against the barbaric Islamic State seems to have taken a backseat.
The dangers of asbestos

During Asbestos Awareness Month my fellow ambassadors Cherrie Barber, Don Burke, Scott Cam, Barry Du Bois, Scott McGregor and I speak with one voice to all Australians about the dangers of asbestos to homeowners, renovators, tradies and handymen hoping they’ll hear our potentially life-saving message.

For those who think asbestos-related diseases are a thing of the past, think again. There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos fibres and if breathed in, it can have the potential to cause mesothelioma, a deadly cancer that can take 20 to 50 years to develop. There is no cure and people have a very short life expectancy – just 10 to 12 months after diagnosis.

I lost a good mate Harold Hopkins to mesothelioma because he breathed in asbestos fibres when he was a young bloke on building sites so I know first-hand how dangerous asbestos can be. Asbestos can be found in at least 1 in 3 Austral- ian homes and it doesn’t matter what kind of home you live in, brick, weatherboard, clad or fibro, so if it was built or renovated before 1987, it will most likely contain asbestos.

Australian’s need to think smart, think safe and get to know asbestos this November by visiting asbestosaustralia.org as it’s not worth the risk.

Contact campaign managers Clare Collins or Alice Collins on 02 9518 4744.

John Jarrett
Ambassador: Asbestos Awareness Month Campaign

Fascism, accurately called “the last resort of capitalism in decline”, is being actively fostered in various countries around the world. The current political climate is in place laws that deny basic democratic rights while maintaining a façade of bourgeois democracy. This is usually done these days under the cloak of “combating a ter- rorist threat” (that the “threat” is invented is ignored by the capitalist media which are eager participants in the whole exercise).

Nowhere has resorting to fascism (and to fascist thugs) been more blatant than in Ukraine (although the post-Soviet leadership in the Baltic states has been praising the war- time Nazis and building monuments to them – at the same time as they destroyed Soviet war memorials – for several years now).

Last month’s elections in Ukraine, which predictably returned the pro-NATO and pro-EU government that had been installed by the Maidan coup earlier in the year, were conducted in an atmosphere of intimidation and terror. Nearly half of the electorate stayed home. Kiev then invaded the self-proclaimed Novorossiya establishing their own self-defence social services. Ukraine’s future will be as grim to Russia they have condemned Ukraine to a European future” for the country, despite the election result as ensuring a “realistic expectation to this “unforgivable incident” and to recall and deliver to various cafes and shops.

The poll itself was conducted in what Ukrainian Communist leader Peter Simonenkov described as a climate of “total intimidation” with the Right-wing not only controlling a complete monopoly over the media but also using pro-fascist gangs to physically prevent the Left from taking part in the campaign.

Ivan Melnikov, deputy leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPРF) said the election had merely replaced the “orange” coalition with a “brown” one of “Nazi and Russophobic policy makers”. Russian senator Andrey Klishas said: “Ukrainians themselves cannot fail to notice the mass violations of human rights during the latest parliamentary campaign. These were the ban on free speech, attacks on opposition candidates, mass violence in the form of so-called ‘popular gatherings’, even lynching mobs on the side of the pro-fascist political forces.”

That did not stop the clique running the show in Kiev from declaring, apparently with no sense of irony, that the election would “usher in a new era of democracy”. They also hailed the election result as ensuring a “realistic European future” for the country, despite the fact that by severing their economic ties to Russia they have condemned Ukraine to a future of austerity and savage cuts to jobs and social services. Ukraine’s future will be as grim as that of other EU “junior partners” such as Greece, Spain and Portugal.

Murderous attacks on (and “disappearances” of) progressives in the Russian-speaking east of the country to the areas now identified as Novorossiya establishing their own self-defence militias and kicking the Kiev regime’s troops out. Kiev then invaded the self-proclaimed people’s republics in the east, killing thousands in aerial and artillery bombardment of housing in towns and villages. Once again, the anti-fascist militia had to defend the region and drive Kiev’s army out again.

They were helped by the enormous number of defectors from the Ukrainian army (thousands of deserters have sought refuge in Russia).

Ironically, the time when Kiev’s neo-Nazis were celebrating their election “victory” coincided with the 70th anniversary of Ukraine’s liberation from Hitlerite occupation. Last April, Russia’s parliament, the State Duma, approved a bill that provides up to five years in prison for denying the facts set out in the Nuremberg Trials of Nazi war criminals, trying to rehabilitate Nazism, or distributing false information about the actions of the Soviet Union and its allies during the Second World War.

Victor Shapinov, a former member of the left-sectarian Russian Communist Workers’ Party (KRP) and a founder of the Ukrainian Marxist organisation Union Borotba (Struggle), commented “the forces awakened by Maidan are very destructive and dangerous for all society. We are face-to-face with the Fascism of the 21st century. It is not because they have portraits of [wartime Ukrainian Nazi collaborator] Stepan Bandera or because they say ‘Ukraine über alles’ like clones of Nazi Germany.

“The nature of Fascism is that this is direct state power of big capital that uses some mass support from the middle class and other groups to destroy any political opposition with violence. This is the essence of Fascism.”

Shapinov is critical of the leadership of the Communist Party of Ukraine (KPU) which he says “was always seeking alliances in parliament with whichever capitalist party was strongest. Not many people in the West know this, but before aligning with the Party of Regions of [deposed President Victor Yanukovych they were partners with the party of Yulia Timoshenko [reactionary politician associated with the 2004 ‘Orange Revolution’ and today part of the Kiev junta].

“It was an unprincipled position by the KPU leadership and for us it meant that we couldn’t just be the left wing of the Communist Party.”

At the other extreme from the struggle against Fascism in Ukraine is the case of the Swiss retail giant which, for reasons it has not revealed, thought it was timely to supply coffee shops and restaurants in that country with a range of coffee cream pots adorned with the faces of Adolf Hitler and his Italian colleague Benito Mussolini!

Fascism’s former leaders still provoke revulsion. But images of them, even monuments to them, are still being erected and “honoured” in Ukraine, Latvia, and elsewhere.
Film review by Joseph Zimmermann

Fury

The first half of the new war film Fury is grim, gritty, and intrigu- ing, but soon it all goes terribly awry. The premise of the film is not particularly unique in the war movie genre, an experienced squad, or in this case the crew of a Sherman tank, have an inexperti- enced new recruit thrust into their ranks.

The setting for the picture is Nazi Germany in what will prove to be the final weeks of the war. The evil of the fascist state is aptly illustrated, and the landscape remains dangerous. Upon surveying the destruction all around them one GI appropriately comments, “It’s hard to believe we’re winning the war!”

Brad Pitt portrays Staff Ser- geant Collier, a combat veteran who stays alive thanks to experience and instinct, and always staying one step ahead of the situation with a sharp eye, and a steady temperament.

The film seems authentic as it shows the camaraderie, rivalry, and locker room humour of the tank crew. In the best scene of the film the crew sits down to an improvised meal with two civilian occupants of a German home in a town that was only moments ago cleared of hostile combatants.

It is this scene in which we real- ize that the whole crew is on the verge of a total psychological break- down and is likely only able to hold themselves together thanks to their training and a will to survive.

One of the strange things the viewer notices early on is the um- usual amount of religious imagery and quoting of Christian Biblical verses. At first the viewer might suppose that this is going to be a device used to question the faith of man in a situ- ation of endless horrors, which are graphically illustrated in the combat scenes.

At one point a character so prone to quoting the scripture that his nick- name is “Bible” is asked if Jesus loves Hitler, and for those keeping score at home, the answer is “yes,” if Hitler were to accept Christ.

By the second half of the film things go wildly wrong. First, the combat scenes go from the tense and shocking to so over the top and unlikely, that they seem straight out of a horror flick or adolescent video game. Secondly, the dialogue goes from being sprinkled with Bible verses to positively clogged. I began to wonder if it was the American Army or the Salvation Army that was fighting the Third Reich.

The film does boast some excel- lent performances, including Chica- go native Michael Pena, known best for portraying farm worker activist Cesar Chavez in the film of the same name. English actor Jason Isaacs adopts a convincing New York accent in a small role as a weary and realis- tic Captain, and actor Jon Bernthal, who studied at the Moscow Art Theatre School, is memorable as a lout- ish north Georgia Redneck. Sadly, these performances are all wasted by the second half of the film when the script turns utterly preposterous.

For films set during the waning days of WW2 one would do well to check out I Was Nineteen, a 1968 pro- duction of the German Democratic Republic, that not only deals with the fanaticism of last ditch Nazi resis- tance led by the SS, but unmasks the aristocratic Wehrmacht officer corps as well. For a look inside the lives of a tank crew of the same period it is hard to beat the 1969 Soviet produc- tion In War as in War.

As for Fury, after they cut out all the dirty words, it might have a future being screened at Baptist Bible summer camps or at Promise Keeper rally after-parties, but for a working class audience it will remain little more than a curious oddity in the war movie catalogue.

Worth Watching will return next week.

People’s World.

The combat scenes go from the tense and shocking to so over the top and unlikely, that they seem straight out of a horror flick or adolescent video game.
Sydney District Committee:

the unspeakable horrors the Israeli military was
spending time in Shifa for the first four months.

They care, triage, try to understand the
incomprehensible chaos of bodies, here –
lungs, walking, not breathing, breathing, not
bleeding human beings.

Ben Norton

Israel has banned Norwegian doctor and
human rights activist Mads Gilbert from entry to Gaza for life. Gilbert, a professor at the
University Hospital of North Norway, where he has worked since 1976, earned international
renewed for his humanitarian work in late 2008, during Israel’s Opera-

A common myth suggests that Israel ended its
occupation of Gaza with its 2005 disengage-
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