

The End Of The Republic And The Delusion Of Empire

Review Of James Petras's Book

By [Edward Curtin](#)

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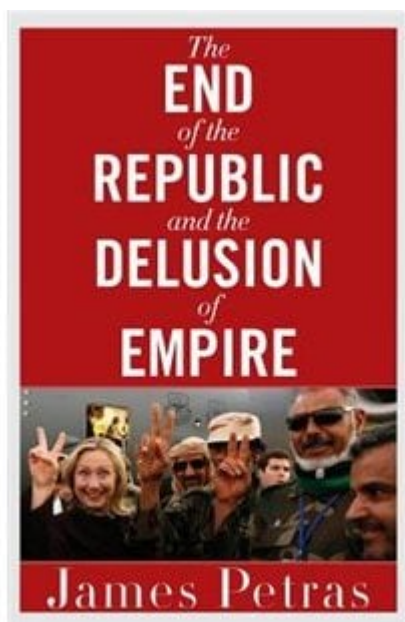
Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Global Economy](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Very few public intellectuals pull no punches in their analyses of world affairs. James Petras is one of them. Possessed of a brilliant and capacious mind that grasps global events in a comprehensive and interconnected way, he also writes with a moral urgency befitting our dangerous historical moment. He reminds me of C. Wright Mills, another brilliant sociologist whose warnings went unheeded more than fifty years ago.

The End of the Republic and the Delusion of Empire is his 68th book, and one of his most important. It should be read by anyone concerned with the looming disaster that will eventuate from the upcoming U.S. presidential election, no matter who wins. While not explicitly stating it, it is clear that Petras expects Hillary Clinton to win, and he finds her far more dangerous than Donald Trump.

[To order James Petras' book from Clarity Press, click image right](#)



If Trump were to be elected by some fluke, he thinks he would “face a massive investment and lending revolt from capitalists and bankers who would be very willing to drive the fragile economy into a major recession, threatening a kind of domestic economic sabotage.” If Clinton wins, as she surely will, he foresees a much worse outcome: “there is a strong chance the election of Hillary Clinton will drive the world into catastrophic nuclear war.”

Petras, therefore, declares a pox on both their houses.

The book is divided into four parts. The first deals with the U.S. presidential primaries and election. It was written before Trump and Clinton secured their parties' nominations, but Petras assumes they will be the nominees. Part two, the longest is devoted to what he calls "The Delusions of Empire," and is a multi-faceted dissection of the American empire and its push toward war with Russia. Part three is an analysis of the rise and fall of popular insurgencies throughout the world, as they confront bankers, warlords, and their political proxies in the U.S. The final section concerns the issue of "who rules America and who sets the military agenda in the most contentious regions of the Middle East."

While all are well done, I think one, two, and four are the strongest and most immediately pertinent. None are written in a pedantically academic style, though all are informed by an impressive breadth of knowledge. The book in its entirety is written in a passionate and committed style, while being rooted in facts.

As for the 2016 presidential elections, Petras rightly says that more than half the U.S. electorate views Clinton and Trump "with horror and disdain." He argues that Trump, while painted as a fascist by the main stream media (MSM), "lacks the program, organization, and practice that define a fascist politician." Nevertheless, he is the "lobotomized" candidate serving as "backdoor backing of political psychopath Hillary Clinton."



He chronicles Clinton's record of savage war-making - she "has launched or promoted more simultaneous wars than any Secretary of State in US history." He shows how the Democratic Party, while posing as the party of regular people, is actually pro-Wall Street and pro-imperialist. He skewers the Democratic Party's "house radicals" - Jesse Jackson, Dennis Kucinich, Barack Obama, and Bernie Sanders - as phony actors, who have betrayed the American people through deceit and hypocrisy in the name of progressivism.

Prof. James Petras (left)

"The key to understanding why millions of Americans, fed up by 30 years of declining living standards, deepening inequalities and perpetual wars, do not form an alternative party is that they have been repeatedly conned and corralled in the Democratic Party by the house radicals," all of whom he considers to be charlatans.

While I think it is true that Americans have been conned, I think he is ignoring the American people's desire to be deceived - their bad-faith. It takes two to tango.

Hillary Clinton is the great object of Petras's scorn. He labels her "pro-Israel, pro-war, pro-Wall Street, the candidate of Plutocratic Zionism the marriage of plutocracy and right-

wing Zionism,” who is supported by “a vast army of Israel-First ideologues.” For this, and for naming these ideologues, Petras has been falsely accused of being anti-Semitic. But his critics do not engage him on the factual and logical accusations of his argument; rather, he is dismissed with a broad brush that equates his ant-Zionist critique with anti-Jewish bias.

When writing about the delusions of empire, Petras examines the issue from multiple angles, deftly flipping from one to another like a prestidigitatorial teenager swiveling a Rubik’s Cubes’ various colors to solve the puzzle.

Look here: this is the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) rogues’ gallery from Michael Camdessus to Christine Lagarde. See how the IMF fits – “they were selected because they reflect the values, interests, and behavior of the global financial elite.”

Flip to the Anglo-American long-term, large-scale, structural regression. “For the past three decades, the US and Great Britain have led the global drive to undermine labor’s advances. First, the economic structure sustaining labor organizations were dismantled and fragmented. Then organized labor was decimated, co-opted and corporatized.”

Look at this blue cube: It is Barack Obama’s shameful race to establish his imperial legacy, pursuing “wars of unrelenting destruction partnerships with terrorists and death squads as it seeks short-term imperial victories, which end in dismal failure. The imperial legacy of this ‘historic’ president is a mirage of pillage, squalor and destruction.”

Ah the red cubes! Look closely, Petras says, at the bloody “war cycle started in late 2001 with the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan.” Let us count the victims: Iraq, Lebanon, Somalia, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Ukraine. See how they fit together with the push for war with Russia.

Here are the white cubes, posing as the good guys. The Harvard boys, “mandarins for the Warlords,” led by Harvard professor Joseph Nye, advising the empire builders. There the Council on Foreign Relations, with their ignorant advice on how to defeat China, as if the Chinese are stupid Orientals incapable of strategic intelligence.

And see what happens when you align the yellow cubes: Voila, you clearly see the yellow press lined up: The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, and the Financial Times (he mistakenly omits The Washington Post), lying and having “systematically engaged in political warfare, acting as virtual propaganda arms of the US and EU imperialist governments in their attempts to maintain and/or impose vassal state status on countries and economies, which are to be regulated according to the needs of Western financial institutions.”

In these nine brief chapters, Petras solves the puzzle, aligns the perpetrators, and deftly reveals a depressing picture of the mad logic of empire. Squared-off, color-coded, and symmetrical, it reveals the handiwork of lunatics, as Chesterton once described: “A madman is not someone who has lost his reason but someone who has lost everything but his reason.”

His third part, wherein he analyzes Latin American revolts and betrayals, and the Islamist State (IS), while complementary and accurate, is far too brief and superficial.

But his concluding section, “Zionism in America,” while also brief, is a hard-hitting final round. Petras ends by arguing that the “US Zionist Power Configuration which leads

President Obama and 430 US members of Congress (to quote Ariel Sharon) ...'by the nose!'" is unduly instrumental in controlling U.S. foreign and domestic policies. He maintains that while this is so, "few progressive websites or even the micro-Marxist journals confront these issues, more out of moral cowardice (self-censorship) than ignorance. Instead they bleat general clichés and radical rhetoric about US imperialism and the rise of the right without identifying the precise social and political identity of the forces that move national policy. In a word, the Zionist Power Configuration gets more than a free ride."

What Petras terms a Zionist elite, many others call "neoconservatives." These neoconservatives are widely accepted by leftist – and even liberal – analysts to be a powerful force driving U.S. policies. Petras claims that the neoconservatives are composed of a large number of Israel-first Zionists. He names names – e.g. Wolfowitz, Abrams, Pritzker, Nuland-Kagan, Chertoff et al. – and shows their linkages. It is time his claims were openly discussed in left-wing publications. Name calling will resolve nothing; nor will avoidance of his argument. That is intellectual and moral dishonesty.

Petras is a very brilliant and prolific thinker who deserves intellectual debate. With *The End of the Republic and the Delusion of Empire* he again throws down the gauntlet and challenges conventional thinking. He ends by asking, "Don't the deaths and maiming of millions of Iraqis, Palestinians, Syrians and Libyans, and the tens of millions of desperate refugees, resulting from their foreign policies, warrant a pause in their continued hold on power and prestige, if not outright condemnation for crimes against humanity?"

As we slide cataleptically toward global war, a book like this can help snap us out of this hypnotic trance that dooms us to disaster. It should be widely read and engaged

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