

The War Hawks Come Home to Roost

Ross Welcome to Renegade Inc. Belmarsh prison's most famous resident Julian Assange said: "Nearly every war that has started in the past 50 years has been a result of media lies." In 1960, the writer Albert Camus said: "The welfare of the people in particular has always been the alibi of tyrants." Both statements are correct and interwoven. So when will we finally see through the spin to ensure there's no more war?

Ross Dan Kovalik, lovely to have you on Renegade Inc.

Daniel Kovalik Thank you. It's my pleasure. Truly is.

Ross I want you to unpick a couple of words for us, a phrase, if you like - humanitarian intervention. We hear this a lot. The corporate media use it a lot. But seems to me that when we hear that it's the prelude for an awful lot of chaos, death, destruction and human misery. Unpack humanitarian intervention for us.

Daniel Kovalik Yes. So you're very correct. I mean, in truth, humanitarian intervention is a contradiction in terms. It's really an oxymoron. You know, pretty much every horrible war has started with a claim of humanitarian intervention, right? Even Hitler claimed to be, you know, invading Czechoslovakia to protect minority Germans there in the Sudetenland. Everyone claims that they are going to war for humanitarian reasons. And yet it's rarely, if ever, the case. That's not what countries go to war for. Usually they go to war for treasure and for political power. I trace in my book, I go back to King Leopold's intervention in Congo because I think it's one of the earlier examples of what so-called humanitarian intervention is really about. King Leopold, as probably a lot of folks there know, went into the Congo claiming he was there to protect the human rights of the Congolese. He said that he was there to protect them, for example, from Arab slave traders. And he sent his emissaries around the world. They'd have these fancy cocktail parties very much like, you know, people do today. And they raised money, again, on the grounds that he was going to go into the Congo for humanitarian concerns. In fact, he was there to plunder Congo of its rubber and ivory. And in the process, he enslaved and murdered millions of Congolese. By the time his horrible reign there ended, there were about ten million Congolese dead, about half the population of Congo. And again, I think this is a good example, because we see this time and again. The most recent 'humanitarian intervention' that I think we can point to, and a very enigmatic one is the NATO intervention in Libya, if I can go to that? I mean, also, obviously an African country. And this is a very interesting one, because you had some of the main intellectual authors of humanitarian intervention lead the charge on this. And those were Susan Rice, Samantha Power and Hillary Clinton. They were some of the big promoters of this intervention. And again, they said we're there to protect the Libyans from Gaddafi. We're there to stop genocide. In fact, as we know what happened, ultimately, was that the intervention was horrific for the Libyan people, did not stop a genocide. In fact, very early on, the internal emails of the folks I mentioned showed that they knew there were no true humanitarian concerns by the time the NATO bombing started. But what did happen was NATO first of all committed their own war crimes by destroying cities like Sirte, a major city in Libya. But also they paved the way for these jihadist groups, which NATO partnered with to take over Libya and to carry out, ultimately, a genocide against sub-Saharan Africans

living in Libya. The people that I mentioned who are alleged humanitarians, Susan Rice, Samantha Power, Hillary Clinton, claimed that these guest workers - some of them guest workers, some who had lived there for many, many years, again, from sub-Saharan Africa, darker skinned people - that they were black mercenaries that Gadhafi was bringing in to carry out a reign of terror in Libya. This was a lie. This is completely untrue. But ultimately, this helped pave the way for the jihadists who took over to punish black Libyans, and they did. They depopulated whole towns of black Libyans, arrested black Libyans, murdered black Libyans. And ultimately now, black Libyans and other Africans are being sold in slave markets in Libya as a consequence of this humanitarian intervention, which was anything but.

Ross So they would say that also they are spreading democracy - people like Rice, Power, Clinton, Obama. But when you look at Libya now, there is absolutely no way a sane human being can see what's going on there and equate any of the NATO action to anything but a total disaster.

Daniel Kovalik Yes. And in fact, you know, Barack Obama ended up later saying his great regret was Libya, that, you know, he failed in stabilising Libya. And, you know, creating any sort of state there. Of course, he didn't try to. That's the irony. It reminds me of this line from The Simpsons cartoon. Flanders is sitting there with his parents. It's a flashback and there with a psychologist. And the parents are like, you know, we've tried nothing and we're all out of ideas. So, you know, they they didn't try. There was no goal of building a state. They didn't care they went. They destroyed the country, just like the US destroyed Iraq, it continues to destroy Afghanistan, has tried to destroy Syria. And frankly, they're just content to leave in a mess and they'll leave it in chaos. And that's what these humanitarian interventions are doing.

Ross We have to ask Cui Bono on this, because I was talking to Colonel Larry Wilkerson and I asked him, I said to him, Colonel, is it the case that we never, ever learn? And his immediate response was absolutely no. Is Libya a full stop moment or will this. NATO sponsored carnage continue when a political process in the US or in the U.K. decides so?

Daniel Kovalik I think probably this carnage will continue. And it's because I believe, frankly, while the populace of places like the U.S. and U.K. tend not to learn the lessons. I think that, frankly, the truth is that, you know, the intervention in places like Libya went according to plan. So let's talk about Cui Bono, who benefits here and who did benefit from this? A lot of people did. As I mentioned in my book, for example, Italy had just signed a deal with Gaddafi to pay reparations to Libya for the crimes committed by Italy during its colonial rule of Libya, OK. So Italy's interest was to get out of that deal because they didn't really want to pay the reparations. And in fact, once Gaddafi was overthrown, according to plan, that agreement was torn up. So Italy, everything worked out for Italy. France had its own interests. Nicolas Sarkozy it turned out, had received 50 million dollars from Gaddafi for his presidential campaign, which is illegal under French law and also quite an embarrassing fact. This was starting to come out. He wanted Gaddafi dead because he was a witness to this illegal and embarrassing payment. France was also interested in Gaddafi's very substantial gold reserves in Libya. Belgium was similarly interested in the gold reserves and the United States was interested in both oil and in infrastructure investment. The U.S. was upset because while Gaddafi was dancing with the West that this time, was making infrastructure deals with the West, they were also still giving deals to China and Russia. And this is the real sick part of all this. They also know that if you destroy the infrastructure of a country like Libya, you

can get them to pay you to rebuild what you destroyed, right? Pretty sick, right? And we see this in other countries. And then again, that worked according to plan and so many companies then went in and started, you know, again, rebuilding what NATO had destroyed. And there is now an oil rush in Libya with Western countries now fighting each other for Libya's substantial oil reserve. So, again, this went according to plan. And there's no real lesson, you know, for those who did this to learn from. They got what they wanted. It's we who have to learn from it. We cannot go along with the next humanitarian intervention.

Ross Your analysis is absolutely clear. But people because they are both reasonable and good, a lot of people just think, oh, well, the military just got that a bit wrong. But what you're actually saying is no absolute death and destruction. The smashing up of infrastructure, that is the plan. That isn't something going wrong. This is something going absolutely right?

Daniel Kovalik Yes. Yes. And if we look at kind of how the historical colonialism has devolved. You know, in the day, if you look at the British Empire, for example, the colonial powers at least felt some stewardship over their colonies, right? They would repress people in the colonies, but they felt some obligation to build some infrastructure, you know, to do something for people. And they prided themselves on this, right? I think they overtly prided themselves on it. But, you know, they felt some obligation. And then, of course, you know, certainly after World War Two, the British colonies break up, the British Empire falls apart. And, you know, the U.S. starts to really become the dominant colonial power. And what it decides is, look, we don't have to be a steward over these places. That costs money and it's you know, it takes effort. So what we're going to do is just support strong men to rule over these countries in our interest. So we'll get all the benefit. But we don't really have to do much for these folks, right? But then as time went on, they decided, well, the strong men are unreliable, right? Like, you look at the Congo with Mobutu who the U.S. and Belgium helped install in the 60s, and he reigned until the mid 90s. The U.S. finally got tired of him because ultimately Mobutu even understood God. I got to do something for these people or I won't be able to stay in power. And so I started to do crazy things like tax foreign companies and do some social programmes. And the U.S. said, no, that's not what we're interested in, right? So they helped overthrow him. And what they decided in general is we're not going to be a steward. We're not going to support strong men like Mobutu or Saddam Hussein, who was a US asset for a long time. What we're going to do is we're just going to create chaos. We're going to destroy the state. We're going to create stateless countries in which we could then go in and plunder at will, right? We don't have to negotiate. We don't have to pay taxes. We don't have to pay royalties. We can just go in and take what we want because there's no state, even a compliant state to deal with. And that is the new model. That's what people have to understand. Chaos is the end game. And I fear when you look at what's happening in the West right now within countries like the United States, you're starting to see the state here fall apart as well. And again, not by accident. The state has been attacked by the government itself for many years. You look at the post office, for example, we have a big dispute over the post office. They are trying to utterly wreck the post office. They've allowed much of the US infrastructure to fall apart. They've, you know, destroyed much of the social programmes that have been built up over the years and are threatening to destroy what is left. And so you see the same end game here, which is to essentially say, hey, we don't even have to do anything for our own people, much less people in Libya. We'll let them fend for themselves, yet again, the people in the US, and we'll just take from them. And that's what's happened during the

pandemic, right? So they gave very little to people in this country. They gave twelve hundred dollars stimulus over the last six months. A one time payment. Twelve hundred bucks to the average people. But the billionaires have made many more billions. They have profited from this calamity, right? And again, this is disaster capitalism that people like Naomi Klein talk about. This is the type of capitalism we've tried to impose on these other countries. Now we're imposing it - and when I say we, I mean, you know, the powers that be - are imposing it on our own countries. And that is a scary thing. Now we are starting to feel the pain that these other countries have felt. And that's a very scary moment.

Ross Dan, just picking up a couple of points that you made in the first half. Really what you're saying is that the imperialists, the colonialists, the rent seekers, the people who back in the day used to go to far flung places, loot the place and bring it home. What they've done is turned on their own people. They've begun to demolish the state, begun to demolish some of the social institutions within the US, arguably, the UK, too. And actually, they've turned on their people because they don't feel from a governance point of view or a leadership point of view that they have any duty of care for their own citizens?

Daniel Kovalik Well, that's right. And one of the reasons is - and it's taken me a while to think through all these things because, you know, they're not necessarily intuitive - but the one thing, you know, you kind of think about is in the earlier days, you know, even in the gilded age of capitalism, the capitalists still had to live with us, right? They walked amongst us. You know, if they wanted to drive a car, they had to build roads for the cars that we all had to use. They shared the same infrastructure and state benefits that we all did and, therefore, they had to do something to maintain those things, right? That doesn't exist anymore.

Ross So that social contract is broken because the one percent, to use David Graeber's phrase, are above the norms of society, whilst the bottom 33 percent can't enter into the norms of society because they don't have the economic ability?

Daniel Kovalik Right. And so now the one percent, they don't live amongst us. So, for example, there's been stories in mainstream press that during the pandemic you have these super rich that are circling Manhattan and their yachts waiting out the pandemic, right? This is a new thing. This wasn't happening in the day. You have people like Richard Branson, for example, who is trying to get to Mars, right? And Elon Musk as well. They've decided they don't even have to live here on Earth, right?

Ross There's a lot of people would like them to go and stay.

Daniel Kovalik Yeah. Which is good. But they're going to take all of our wealth with them, right? It doesn't cost nothing to do these things. There's also stories of people moving to New Zealand because they think that that is the most weather proof and climate change proof place to be. The point is that the wealthy now have the ability to live above us and away from us. So they don't need to stay. They don't care. In the US there are 16,000 bridges in critical need of repair. And once in a while one just collapses. Several people die. Again, they don't care. They're going to build flying cars. I guess they have some prototypes even right now. They're just going to fly around. They have helicopters. They commute by helicopters to downtown Manhattan. And again, now you don't even have to commute, right? They're in the pandemic.

We now realise none of us have to, right? You don't even have to come through an office. So, you know, what this does is allow them to not care and do nothing for us. There is no incentive for them to build any infrastructure, to have any social programmes for us. They don't need us. And this is a change in history and it's a change that technology has helped allow. So that's why the capitalists now decided, you know, they don't have to do anything for us, just like they haven't had to do anything for their neo columns.

Ross If you continue to follow the logic of what you're saying, and if we both agree that the social contract is broken and inequality is off the charts when the evidence is that a backup that, if you follow the logic of what you're saying, ultimately we end up with private armies.

Daniel Kovalik That's already happening. We have that. You know, in the US, for example, even the military abroad is becoming more and more privatised. You have the former Blackwater now. I forget what it's called now. But you know, you have this private military service led by Erik Prince whose sister, by the way, is Betsy Devos, the head of the Education Department in the United States. And she's destroying, by the way, you know, one brick at a time, the public school system. Yes, you have these private militaries more and more. And I think that is the wave of the future. And, of course, as we know, they don't even need human beings for the most part to be soldiers, right? They've got drones. They have all sorts of technology. I don't want to sound like a crazy man, but they will have robots, too. I mean, again, we have all sorts of technology in which they won't even need private armies. They're just gonna use electronics to do all this for them. So again, people - humans - are becoming more and more obsolete to the one percent. I mean, really, the only thing they need us for is to buy their crap.

Ross The hollowing out of all these institutions, it seems to me that when it comes to the US, nothing is sacrosanct. Anything is on the list. Everything has a target on its head. Even if you think about the International Criminal Court, now we've got a scenario where the U.S. either won't recognise it, or worse, it sanctions it.

Daniel Kovalik Yeah.

Ross So how do you begin? How does a civil society, civil in inverted commas, society, begin to find the sort of regeneration and renaissance necessary to be able to start holding these private interests to account because let's face it, they're totally out of control?

Daniel Kovalik Yeah. I mean, first of all, it's a huge undertaking because, again, there is such an actual physical separation between us and them, the one percent. But I mean, where it has to begin is here at home, in the U.K., in the United States. We are the ones who are going to have to do this, right? We have to take control of our governments. And, you know, we need a popular rebellion is what is what needs to happen. And we need to rebuild our democratic institutions, seize those institutions for the 99 percent and make sure that our governments work not only for us, but people abroad. We need to also pressure our governments to stop these endless wars abroad. I mean, I'm not pollyannaish. This is not an easy undertaking, but it's the only way to deal with this.

Ross What does a popular rebellion from where you're sitting, what does that look like?

Daniel Kovalik I mean, I think you're going to look at general strikes, you know, because, you know, they still do need some workers to build the stuff that they're selling. I think consumer strikes as well. Again, they need people to buy what they're selling. And you need people on the streets, massive numbers of people on the streets. I mean, you really need a revolution that will in the US, for example, take over Washington, D.C. and demand a serious change in government. Now you see some you know, you see some seeds of hope in the racial justice protests that are happening. Also in the election here in the US of more progressive leaders like AOC, for example, Bernie Sanders, who, you know, came very close to being nominated. Of course, there in UK, if I could be so bold as to mention Jeremy Corbyn. I mean, leaders like that are the types of folks we need to elect and we need to keep pressuring them to, again, restore democracy, to restore our infrastructure and social programmes before it's too late. I mean, look at the US. Again, I can only speak for the U.S. We are the wealthiest country in the world. And we've had this pandemic that has killed more people here than in any other country on Earth by far. How did this happen? And again, it's happened because over time, really since the 1970s and really in earnest since 1980 when Ronald Reagan was elected, it has happened because all public goods have been under attack since that time. And then when this happens, we see it's been raw, you know. And people just can't accept it anymore. They need to resist and not consent to this new state of affairs.

Ross Reagan famously said that the most terrifying nine words in the English language is, "Hi, I'm from the government and I'm here to help." If we extend that to this conversation, turning up in a foreign land on a mission of military adventurism when someone hears high, I'm from America and I'm here to help, that should, given the context that you've just given us, send a shudder down anyone's spine, because when we look at the track record, we go back to Vietnam through to today, there isn't one of those missions that ended well?

Daniel Kovalik No, absolutely not. No, I would say, you know, to borrow an old phrase, I would say beware of the Westerner bearing human rights. Nothing good is going to come out of that. And again, even we now living in the countries we live in have to be aware of that. You know, of course, I would also quote Margaret Thatcher, who said, you know, I believe she said something like, there's no such thing as society or whatever. And, you know, she tried to make sure that was true by destroying society. You know, these are anti-social people. These are psychopaths.

Ross Yes. And, you know, the interesting thing on Twitter recently during the pandemic here in the U.K., which was very badly handled by the British government - Boris Johnson's government - someone was very droll and said, oh, now the British know what it's like to be ruled by the British.

Daniel Kovalik That's beautiful. It's great. I mean, truer words were never spoken.

Ross Are you optimistic? Because, are we at this point now, and people say, you know, enough is enough, or do you think that the war machine is so colossal that actually it just marches on?

Daniel Kovalik I mean, that's a great question. Honestly, it depends on what time of day you talk to me. It's hard to be optimistic. In truth, you know, let's face it. I mean, every day the news is bad and there's some other crisis that's happening. But I do think - and again, I think I

hope it's OK if I quote Winston Churchill - who said, I don't see any point in being anything other than optimistic, right? I mean, it's all we have. We have to have some hope. And we need to find hope in each other in our relationships and our friendships and our comradeships. And we just need to do what we have to to save this world. And I think success is not guaranteed but along the way, we'll find some fulfilment and some meaning. And that's all that anyone can promise, I think. But you need to retain that core of hope to continue that struggle.

Ross Dan Kovalik, thank you so much for your time.

Daniel Kovalik Thank you very much.