

Joe Hanania, a member of TPF, is the author of two provocative books on foreign policy and politics.* Hanania was born in America in 1929, of Syrian-American background, worked for years in England and lives in France. Like his hero, Thomas Paine, he is a dedicated foe of aggressive war.

In the first volume, *Where the USA went wrong— A study of the United States Empire*, Paine and Jefferson are associated with the founding of the United States of America (USA) in 1776 with the Declaration of Independence and the later Articles of Confederation, where the rights of the individual and the powers of the states are paramount with a weak central government. This is contrasted to 1787 and the Constitution, under the leadership of George Washington, where USA is replaced by US and the rule of law, thereby strong central government and Empire become dominant. This abrupt switch from 1776 to the imperial mode of 1787 is made clear in remarks of George Washington, being "Washington's polite way of declaring the first Empire war for the new nation" *i.e.*, doing whatever it takes to remove the Indians from "our" continent:

Indians have nothing human except the shape. The extension of our settlements will certainly cause the savage, as the wolf, to retire, both being beasts of prey, though they differ in shape.

The Indian wars lasted a century, ending in 1890 with the massacre at Wounded Knee.

There is a brief summary of *Common Sense*, a discussion of Paine's many contributions to the war effort, and a short review of the complicated Silas Deane Affair as Paine emerges as the first American whistle-blower, amid growing party partisanship in Congress.

The bulk of the book catalogs America's wars as well as its overt and covert interventions in each Presidential administration from Washington to George W. Bush. In only a few cases can these wars and interventions be seen as non-aggressive and justified. But recall, for instance, the Spanish-American war, the annexation of Hawaii, "gun-boat" diplomacy in Latin America in the 1920's, and CIA "covert actions" to overthrow democratically elected governments and replace with friendly dictators, the School of the Americas, and the overthrow of Allende of Chile, with the aid of International Telephone & Telegraph Corporation and Henry Kissinger. It is a long and shameful list which every American should read, understand and take action to prevent further outrages. It is all too painfully apparent that far from spreading democracy, America has mostly opposed and impeded it across the globe, too often for the benefit of multinational corporations and the wealthy.

In Hanania's second book, *Democracy? Not yet, perhaps*

Never, we are presented with definition of terms, a brief history of democracy in the US, UK and France and a pessimistic four-part conclusion: 1) Democracy doesn't exist, but people want it; 2) Our governments want war, the people want peace; 3) The US Empire is a danger to peace and democracy; 4) The UN gives little hope for peace and human rights.

The main theme is that "true" democracy is best expressed in Lincoln's formulation: "a government of the people, by the people and for the people," leading to the conclusion that direct democracy is the only acceptable form of democracy. To illustrate his preference, a constitution for a mythical municipality of "Hopeville," is presented, where every law must be approved by the voters.

Unfortunately, Paine on representative government has not been consulted. Paine in several places, including his "Dissertation on Government; the Affairs of the Bank; and Paper Money" (1786), makes it clear that when any jurisdiction exceeds the size and population of ancient Athens, direct democracy is impossible and representatives must be elected to make the laws. Paine calls for frequent elections and thorough public discussions to insure that the public will prevail.

Hanania is part of the growing chorus of critics warning that democracy, particularly in America, is in serious trouble. Americans face a political crisis compounded by the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, sorely testing our ability to organize a winning movement for real reform of our domestic and foreign policies. We must overcome politicians dedicated to the special interests, a corporate-dominated media unwilling to inform the public fully, and most formidable of all, the unlimited funds available from corporations and the super-rich dumped into elections as a result of the 2010 Citizens United Supreme Court decision.

The book ends with a call, resembling a "Hail Mary" play in football, for 30 million people around the world to form a "vigilante committee" to investigate the 9/11 attack, supporting existing NGO's working in this area. A court would be convened, a kind of grand jury to hear evidence and bring down indictments. The aim of this world-wide mobilization, I take it, goes well beyond 9/11 and would be a means of dealing with our mounting global problems to be solved by peaceful means.

* Both books were privately published, in 2011, in English editions, Nouic, France. Contact the author at: 27, Beausejour, 87330 Nouic, France.