

Update

Spring 2018

Ron Zucker, Editor

Local

April 8 Meeting

Sharat Lin on “The Prospects for Peace With North Korea”

The story of the U.S. and the Korean Peninsula continues to change at a rapid pace. We saw (and for now still seem to have) an “Olympic Truce”, and the hope of a possible meeting between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un. Lurking in the weeds is a series of personnel shifts in the White House diplomacy regime – the latest being noted warmonger John Bolton about to become the National Security Advisor – that may bring everyone back to a hawkish footing. We dare not take our eyes off of the proceedings, thus the next PASMCM meeting will once again focus on that part of the world.

With the help of south bay activist, writer and lecturer Dr. Sharat G. Lin, we will try to get caught up with what has happened, what it means for the region and what could come. On Sunday, April 8, Sharat will give a talk and visual presentation entitled “Prospects for Peace With North Korea.” The evening will begin at 7 PM at the Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo, 300 E. Santa Inez Avenue in San Mateo.

North Korea is perhaps the single most demonized and least understood country on Earth. After 70 years of diplomatic isolation, relentless sanctions, a devastating war and threats of nuclear confrontation, what makes peace and reconciliation possible after a round of Olympic diplomacy? This is a question that Sharat Lin has asked and on which he will share his thoughts on April 8. He has traveled to North Korea to see firsthand what the country is really like, and he presents an eye-opening picture of a place few Americans have ever seen. Sharat will also explore a viable road to peace.

Dr. Sharat Lin is a research fellow and past president of the San Jose Peace and Justice Center. He is also on the Board of Advisors of the Initiative for Equality. Sharat received his Ph.D. in medical physics and nuclear medicine from U.C. Berkeley. He writes and lectures on global political economy, labor migration, social movements, and public health. Sharat is also an educator, community organizer, photojournalist and artist. We invite you to join us on Sunday, April 8, for an evening of unique perspectives and ideas on the “Prospects for Peace with North Korea.” Admission is free, contributions welcome. The UUSM is wheelchair accessible.

Summary of March 18 Meeting

Straight Talk on Yemen and Syria

With the mainstream media sometimes providing surface or slanted takes on U.S. foreign policy adventures, we are lucky to have plain-spoken freelance correspondent Reese Erlich available to address our members. Such was the case for the March meeting of PASMCM, to which Reese came to fill in gaps in folks’ knowledge about the conflicts in both Yemen and Syria. His expertise is on the Middle East, and these two countries each harbor a humanitarian disaster about which the world needs to know. Evidently so do more U.S. Senators, since that chamber recently voted to table a resolution that would have cut off U.S. funding for the war in Yemen. In any case, these are two big pictures for which Reese provided vital details.

He began with Yemen, which had been a British colony – valued not because of oil reserves but for its strategic location at the end of a sea route for British military ships sailing from the Suez Canal. Previously comprised of North and South Yemen, both areas achieved independence in the 1960s, and then united into a single country in 1990, when, he said, “things unraveled.” Yemen was presided over by Ali Saleh, a brutal dictator and “kleptocrat”, whose pro-west allegiance nonetheless made him acceptable to the U.S. and Great Britain. Yemen was (and still is) the poorest country in the Middle East.

Saleh’s 21-year rule ended when the “Arab Spring” arrived. The U.S. and Yemen’s neighbor (and U.S. client) Saudi Arabia, in an effort to “short-circuit” the movement in Yemen, engineered the replacement of Saleh by Abd Rabbuh Al-Hadi. While Al-Hadi was also pro-west, incompetent rule brought on a rebellion in 2015 by the Houthis, a Shia Muslim group that took over the northern city of Sanaa and the surrounding region, then advanced toward Aden in the south. The U.S. and Saudi Arabia, said Reese, “got completely freaked” because of the Houthis’ apparent alignment with Saudi enemy Iran – as well as Houthi opposition to U.S. influence in the region. Thus the Saudis, joined by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and assisted by the U.S., began bombing to stop the Houthis, and continue in the present to attack their stronghold in the north.

Reese described the catastrophic effect on Yemen, with indiscriminate bombing carried out by U.S.-made planes (which actual U.S. planes refuel in midair); the bombing targets include schools and hospitals as well as more

typical military and government buildings. He also mentioned the Saudi economic blockade that keeps out humanitarian aid amid widespread starvation and a cholera outbreak. The Saudis, he said, “want to demoralize the population” so they turn against their leaders – a “classic tactic” that always backfires as people rally around their leader in a time of war.

This was all further complicated, said Reese, by the entrance of the terrorist organization Al Qaeda and later Islamic State (IS) elements who had broken off from Al Qaeda. These were Sunnis who aligned with the Saudis, thus also the U.S., against the Shia Houthis, a “common enemy”. Later the UAE split from the Saudis and took partial control of Aden in the south, leading, he said, to a military stalemate to go with the humanitarian disaster. Both the U.S. and the Saudis, he said, thought it would all be a quick operation and end soon. Three years later, it continues.

He concluded the “Yemen portion” of his talk with the bipartisan Senate bill designed to cut off funds for our country’s war effort by invoking the War Powers Act. While the bill later failed by a 55-44 margin, it was a significant vote in favor of ending the U.S. role, the largest such vote in recent memory. But it showed we still have a long way to go to persuade Congress.

Turning to Syria, Reese offered an overview of another tragic story, beginning with President Hafez Assad’s brutal crackdown on demonstrations in 2011, leading to various groups taking up arms, including extremist groups such as Al Qaeda and Islamic State. Now, he said, there are five outside countries either bombing or occupying Syria, all claiming to fight terrorists. Reese gave his take on all five:

The U.S. began its direct involvement in 2014 when members of the Yazidi religious sect were chased across Syria into Iraq by IS. Reese recalled openly disputing then-President Obama’s claim that there would be no U.S. troops on the ground; since then, 500 “trainers” have grown to a presence of 2000 or more. Reese added that we have “carved out a region of northern Syria” that includes a Kurdish enclave – where Syrian oil reserves lie. The U.S. now provides an air war and military support to the mostly-Sunni Syrian Democratic Force (“any force that hopes to rule Syria” he said, “has to have a base among Sunni Arabs”) and the Kurdish People’s Protection Forces (YPG), who were instrumental in fighting IS.

Reese described Turkey as a U.S. ally that is nonetheless “terrified” of having a Kurdish faction involved in any outcome in Syria, with the Kurdish push for autonomy in its Turkish region (among other places) being a military as well as political effort. Turkish troops occupied Syria’s northern border to counter a Kurdish occupation

there, which angered the U.S. and other players because of the Kurds’ role vis a vis the IS. (At the time of Reese’s talk there was news of Turkey capturing the Kurdish-held city of Afrin; “I don’t trust the western news reports”, he said.)

Reese then discussed Israel, which he said claimed neutrality in the conflict but is arming and supporting rebel factions deemed sympathetic to it. Its further claim of humanitarian assistance, he said, was actually rescuing refugees only to coerce them into going back into Syria to be spies. Israel has also bombed parts of Syria occupied by its enemy Hezbollah and Iran, which supports Hezbollah. That aspect of the conflict, he said, has led to retaliation as well as a heavily-armed Iran, and Russia.

As for Russia, Reese noted its stated aim of a brief engagement but has evolved into what looks like a permanent presence, with two military bases in Syria. He recalled that both Russia and Iran insisted they were invited in to defend a legitimate government, but he called that a “phony argument”, feeling their 2015 involvement began when Syria was losing ground to the rebel advance. Reese stated a big concern about Russia’s presence: “The danger is that somebody’s going to bomb somebody; that’s going to spark a much wider conflict.” He cited an incident in which a U.S. bomb attack killed some Russians as one possible example leading to escalation.

As for solutions to the war and the humanitarian crisis it has sparked, Reese said “all foreign powers have to get out of Syria.” On the notion of any country’s departure resulting in a “power vacuum” for another to fill, he suggested the U.S. pull out and then threaten Israel and Turkey with a cutoff of arms support if they don’t do likewise. And then we could impress upon Russia and Iran that others “fighting terrorists” have ceased their hostilities, thus they should do likewise. “There is political and diplomatic pressure that can be waged...”, he said, “but now the people of Syria and the entire region are suffering...and we have a particular obligation to see that our troops, and the name of our country, is not used to justify the continued occupation of the region”

Ron Zucker

Membership Report

Peace Action of San Mateo County welcomes two new members: Laura Hinze and Sharon Mitchell

And we welcome back these renewing members:

Thomas Banks, Minnette Berger, Nancy and David Crabbe, Malcolm and Cosette Dudley, Linda Durkee, Richard Howse, Caryl and Gordon Hughan, Craig Wiesner and Derrick Kikuchi (of Reach and Teach), Louis Maraviglia, Alan Mattlage, Joanne McMahon, Linda Whitley, Bob and May-Blossom Wilkinson

Summary of February 11 Meeting**Sara Matlin's Local Immigrant Advocacy**

Attorney Sara Matlin's professional emphasis is not on immigration, but her role as chair of the North Peninsula Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU-NP) informs her concern for the immense challenges facing not just immigrants in our area but everyday people without the means to navigate the courts themselves. "We basically use our frustration to fight injustice", she said of the organization's efforts. ACLU-NP, she added, does not take on individual cases but rather engages in local advocacy to push elected representatives to support policies respecting the rights of community members. In the past that has included the preservation of peoples' "Miranda rights" (to remain silent); a more recent example is the fight against Donald Trump's Muslim ban.

In describing her work on behalf of immigrants, Sara began with the simple notion that "deportations are bad", and "a harm against one of us being a harm against all of us." She decried that law enforcement has scapegoated and dehumanized immigrants by making the immigration system intertwined with criminal law policies. Her ideal goal is to get local law enforcement "out of the deportation business" by following existing laws that don't involve the practice but rather treat people fairly.

Sara reminded the audience that passing and deciding how to carry out immigration laws are the job of the Federal government – specifically, in these times, Congress and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The job of enforcement, she said, falls to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). She also established that while immigration offenses such as entering another country without a visa or overstaying a visa are civil offenses, people who are caught go through the criminal justice system without the same protections as others – such as the right to a free attorney.

State and local law enforcement (including San Mateo County) will sometimes use issues such as health, safety or education to enforce immigration laws, even invoking the idea of immigrants being a "danger to society" or a drain on government resources. Sara used California's Proposition 187 – passed in 1994 but later struck down in court – as an example of trying to bar social services to immigrants.

In 2010 ICE and DHS began using digital fingerprints to identify possible undocumented immigrants. This led to what Sara termed "ICE holds" in which state or county law enforcement detained undocumented immigrants for two business days – at the local entity's expense. Sara offered Santa Clara County as an example of a locality that refused to spend money to hold detainees without a judge's order. However San Mateo County did not fol-

low suit despite the advocacy efforts of the San Mateo County Coalition for Immigrant Rights (SMCCfIR), of which ACLU-NP is a member. The County Sheriff at the time, Greg Munks, "was very happy to help ICE out", she said, by holding detainees longer than ICE had requested.

ACLU-NP tried to step up pressure to at least limit the hold to 48 (business day) hours – as well as to stop the County Probation Department from reporting immigrant youth to ICE. Sara noted the organization has had success with the probation department, and has also persuaded San Mateo Police Chief Susan Manheimer to decrease the frequency of reporting the undocumented to ICE. But Sheriff Munks, Sara said, continued to "punish detainees twice" – for the alleged crime, and for ICE to come to deport them.

Sara cited the passage in California of the TRUST Act, which made it harder for ICE to arrest detainees as well as for local jails to hold them for ICE. Thus in 2015 ICE began a request for a "notification of release", asking jails to inform them when they would be releasing detainees, so agents could pick them up at that point.

Noting this change happened during Obama's presidency, ("...it wasn't a picnic for undocumented immigrants"), Sara called out the Trump administration for its approach to immigration policy, including his hope "to deport every undocumented immigrant in the U.S.", his attempt to end Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and his move to withhold federal funds from any jurisdiction that doesn't cooperate with ICE. The latter two actions have for now been held up in court, but it is clear where Trump's sentiments lie.

Sara brought us to more recent developments, notably the 2017 passage of SB 54, the California Values Act, further mandating that local jails could not hold the undocumented without a judge's order, and forbidding police to consider detainees' immigration status except in the case of a serious crime.

But she expressed concern whether current San Mateo County Sheriff Carlos Bolanos understands the law, since he continued to notify ICE when detainees were to be released – whether for a serious crime or not. (As a result, ICE picked up 159 people from the county jail.) Besides seeming confused at a community forum about SB 54 and cooperation with ICE, he tried to change the County's web site to state its readiness to inform ICE of release dates, to make it easier to pick up and deport the undocumented. Sara noted that ACLU-NP will most likely join SMCCfIR in an effort to get Bolanos to make his immigration policy clear and ensure his compliance with SB 54.

She then invited the audience to collaborate with SMCCfIR or ACLU-NP (www.aclunp.org) in a few dif-

ferent ways: People can either provide sanctuary housing or donate to support the effort financially; there is also the Rapid Response Network (203-666-4472) where people can call for information in order to respond to ICE raids. “We want to show the community, not just the Sheriff...that it’s not just a few immigrant rights activists who think he needs to stop collaborating with ICE – it’s a broad swath of the community, she said. “We have the leverage when we work together, and when we’re smart about it.”

Ron Zucker

Weekly Peace Vigils

Join PASMCM members and friends every Saturday from 3-4 PM, as we call for peace, justice and survival in this world! We gather at 3rd Avenue and El Camino Real, in front of the Bank of America building.

And on Thursdays from 4-6 PM, you’ll find Declaration of Peace-San Mateo at and El Camino, as they “Stand for Peace” at 5th Avenue and El Camino. Join with them as well!

Summary of January 7 Meeting Catalonia’s Struggle for Independence

Joan Morales is a native of the Catalonia region of Spain but also a citizen of the U.S., where he has lived since 2010 and now has a wife and young child. At the January PASMCM meeting Joan (pronounced “Jo-AN”) shared a subject about which he feels strongly, that of Catalonia’s recent and ongoing attempts to gain independence from Spain. With words and slides, he recounted the history of the relationship between the country and its populous, vibrant and economically strong northeastern region. And he explained the reasons for pursuing independence that are, as he put it, cultural, economic and political.

Joan began with recent events surrounding Catalonia’s drive for independence, most notably a referendum last October 1 asking if the people in the region wanted to form an independent republic. While the vote was overwhelmingly in favor, Joan, who was in Barcelona at the time, recalled thousands of Spanish police showing up in boats in order to stop the vote with violent actions (injuring 893 people) and attempts to confiscate ballots – which were subsequently hidden by Catalan officials. He noted that the police left when CNN and the BBC showed up with their cameras to cover the story. While the police raids prevented an estimated 770,000 from voting, the “yes” votes for independence were nonetheless at about 90 %.

Joan credited a longtime grassroots effort for promoting the movement for independence...and he compared it somewhat to the American revolution. Offering some

history, he cited Catalonia’s conquest at various times dating back to the 12th century, which itself is predated by the establishment of the Catalan language and culture around the year 1028. Spain was an Islamic state during that time period, and was supported by French kingdoms. That regime was kicked out, said Joan, by a united Catalan population that extended beyond the immediate region.

He jumped to 1714, when Catalonia was again conquered (officially on September 11) and brought into Spain’s sphere – with immediate action to suppress Catalan language and culture. The persecution continued, Joan said, until the end of the fascist regime of Generalissimo Francisco Franco in 1975. Through the centuries, Catalans preserved their culture. “The more you persecute somebody” Joan said, “the more that culture solidifies to defend its identity.” His slides of the annual April Saint Jordi celebration, the spirited “human towers” that Catalans like to erect, the art and architecture, all demonstrated the uniqueness of Catalan culture, which combine to help drive its movement for independence.

Joan then turned to the economic reasons for independence. He cited a “fiscal deficit” for Catalonia, dating back to the Franco dictatorship, in which its gross domestic product (GDP), exports and foreign investment all outdistance its percentage of the Spanish population – which itself far outnumbered the percentage of Spain’s budget for government services (hospitals, schools, etc) there. Taxes paid by Catalonia, he said, go heavily toward the country’s poorer regions. After Franco there was hope that this would change and government funding distribution would be more equal, but the inequality “became permanent”, Joan said, “because we have a different identity.”

Segueing to political considerations, he cited two main political parties in Spain that “never win in Catalonia”, he said; thus the extra taxes they pay are somewhat used “for votes” in the other Spanish regions. The end of the Franco regime also brought hope that Spain’s government would look and act more like a democracy, but “change is not that easy”, he said, and it is still fairly conservative. Citing descendants of the regime still in the government (...they are dressed as Democrats but they are the same people”), he called out its ongoing contribution to the Franco Foundation, which glorifies the time of the dictatorship.

Many in Spain, Joan said, espouse the idea of Spain as “indivisible”, but he interprets that as having no room for differences. Thus people are jailed for singing songs or holding signs protesting the king, as well as schoolteachers for discussing the idea of Catalan independence. Joan also noted the deteriorating quality of Spanish democracy in its lack of separation of powers: the same

officials populate both the executive and legislative branches, and these people also appoint the judges, whose rulings also suggest a corrupt judiciary.

In 2006 the Catalan government won approval to make better decisions about the amount of taxes it pays to Spain, but in 2010 the right-wing Spanish Party went to the Supreme Court and had the ruling invalidated. Joan's slides of a march by 1.5 million people in 2010 showed an indication of what was to come, culminating in last October's referendum. Spain responded, he said, not just with police violence but also by putting Catalan officials in jail, prompting their leader, Carles Puigdemont, to flee to Belgium where he is protected and still claims authority in Catalonia.

With the region's leaders either jailed, fired or made fugitives, Spain took over the Catalan government and held a "flash election" on December 21 for a new Parliament. Despite the repression and more police action (Joan noted the arrest of peaceful demonstrators for "inciting violence"), parties in favor of independence still prevailed. Nevertheless, a Catalan republic is still just a dream.

"This will be a struggle that we want to win in democracy", said Joan, adding the leaders, knowing it is a long process, have invoked such historic figures as Martin Luther King and Ghandi. He concluded that independence could be 10, 20 or even 50 years away, but feels it is "now closer than I have ever seen."

Ron Zucker

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National

Peace Action: John Bolton's Appointment is a National Security Nightmare

In response to President Trump's announcement that John Bolton will take over as national security advisor effective April 9, 2018, Jon Rainwater, Executive Director of Peace Action, released the following statement from the National office on March 22.

"You would be hard pressed to find anyone who's ever held public office in the U.S. who would be a more dangerous choice for the role of national security advisor than John Bolton. The national security advisor works just a few steps away from the President. Putting such a knee-jerk, perennial hawk in that office does not bode well for the peace and security of the United States.

"John Bolton's record of pushing for military solutions to diplomatic problems is unsurpassed. Bolton was one of the chief advocates for the disastrous Iraq war and unlike many Iraq hawks he still thinks the invasion was a good idea. Bolton called for bombing Iran during the height of nuclear negotiations that led to the successful implementation of the Iran agreement. And during the Bush administration his fingerprints are all over the failure of nuclear diplomacy with North Korea that led ultimately to North Korea testing its first nuclear device. Paired with the nomination of Mike Pompeo as Secretary of State, this signals that the Trump administration has little interest in pursuing real diplomacy with North Korea, in fact, Bolton's recent advocacy for preventive strikes on North Korea suggests just the opposite.

"This isn't just another terrible appointment, this tips Trump's hand about the likelihood of military action on the Korean Peninsula. Americans who recognize the recklessness of starting a war with North Korea need to stand up and make themselves heard. Whether or not Trump follows through with his plan to meet with Kim Jong-un, Bolton's appointment to this central role at the national security council strongly suggests Trump intends to sabotage the budding diplomatic opening, declare that diplomacy failed, and pivot back to war."

www.peaceaction.org

Throwaway Lines

It looks like all ahead full, back to the 19th century. That's right, skip the 20th much less the 21st, it's back to the 19th. That's when "great powers" ran over folks with bogus slogans like "manifest destiny" and "It's God's will" (he wrote it down right here somewhere). Those were the days when throwaway ideologies covered for stealing the lands of others and putting them on reservations or creating much worse outcomes.

“America first”, “Lebensraum”, “For the glory of England”, were all cheap code phrases for stealing lands and resources from others. In our case the stealing will be from middle class Americans to make life even better for our one percent. The throwaway lines here are “border walls”, “deregulation” and “extreme vetting”. They are supposed to placate the middle class while their hands are in your pockets.

Do folks really think their children will have a future if we have to live through that period all over again? Humanity’s numbers have swollen to over 6 billion and counting. The planet is heating with more stress on our ecosystems. If we don’t put more life into the United Nations, do you think we’ll really survive as humans?

Yet we live under a cardboard cutout of a leader. I’d say that’s motivation enough for activism.

Mike Caggiano

IAEA Report Points to Implementation of the JCPOA

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) issued its first quarterly report of 2018 on Iran’s implementation of its nuclear commitments under the JCPOA. In presenting the report to the IAEA Board of Governors, Director General Yukiya Amano said March 5 that Iran is implementing its nuclear-related commitments and noted that the agency has had “access to all the locations that we needed to visit.” He said that failure of the JCPOA would be a “great loss for nuclear verification and multilateralism.”

Amano highlighted the additional monitoring and verification made possible by the JCPOA. He said the agency “installed some 2,000 tamper-proof seals on nuclear material and equipment.” He also noted that the IAEA collects and analyses “hundreds of thousands of images captured daily by our sophisticated surveillance cameras in Iran – about half of the total number of such images that we collect throughout the world.”

The Feb. 22 report noted:

the stockpile of low-enriched uranium was 109.5 kg, below the 300-kilogram limit set by the deal; the stockpile of heavy water was 117.9 metric tons, below the 130-ton limit set by the JCPOA; no more than 5,060 IR-1 centrifuges have been used for enriching uranium at Natanz; there has been no enrichment of uranium above 3.67 percent uranium-235; and no more than 1,044 IR-1 centrifuges are installed at Fordow and no uranium enrichment or related research has been conducted.

The report also stated that the IAEA has the necessary extra-budgetary funds to cover the cost of implementing the JCPOA for 2018.

Arms Control Association

www.armscontrol.org

Action Alert

Stop War on North Korea, and Bolton

Donald Trump has upended the structure of the Executive Branch with his dismissal of H.R. McMaster as National Security Advisor, followed by Trump’s replacement choice of John Bolton, a longtime proponent of war over diplomacy. Peace advocates everywhere are troubled by what could happen when he gets Trump’s ear regarding what to do about North Korea and Iran – and who knows where else.

Of obvious concern is the Korean Peninsula. Just as the “Olympic Truce” has created momentum for diplomatic overtures between the U.S. and North Korea, Trump is bringing in Bolton and his vitriolic hawkishness to take positions that could lead us to war. Not the least of such factors is Bolton’s push for ending the nuclear deal with Iran, which would certainly cause North Korea to wonder about the credibility of the U.S. in diplomatic efforts.

Congress can do nothing about Bolton’s appointment, which requires no Senate confirmation. Some say anyone with his extreme views would have no chance of being confirmed to anything. That leaves it up to Congress to minimize Bolton’s potential to prompt a war with North Korea, and both chambers had already stepped up with the “No Unconstitutional Strike against North Korea Act”. Massachusetts Senator Ed Markey introduced S. 2016 back in October, and South Bay Rep. Ro Khanna followed in January with H.R. 4837. The respective bills forbid any initial military action by the U.S. on North Korea, without the constitutionally-mandated approval of Congress.

At least there would be debate about the dubious wisdom of such a war, even what has been termed a smaller “bloody nose” attack, with the possibility of a retaliatory attack on South Korea, a wider war with the help of other countries like Russia, and escalation – perhaps even nuclear – beyond any of the actors’ control.

Action: Contact Senators Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris and tell them to cosponsor S. 2016 (which now has just three co-sponsors), to keep the possibility of war on North Korea in the hands of Congress. Rep. Jackie Speier’s constituents should urge her support for H.R. 4837; Rep. Anna Eshoo’s people can thank her for being among the 68 co-sponsors of the bill. Everyone in both chambers should hear that the stakes are high, especially with John Bolton about to join the mix.

Wrong Choice for Secretary of State

Ahead of Donald Trump taking office, activists rallied and protested the nomination of former Exxon/Mobile CEO Rex Tillerson. Now Trump’s pick to replace the fired Tillerson, current CIA director Mike Pompeo,

might fill us with a bit of nostalgia for Tillerson. (That is what it has come to with this White House.)

Tillerson was one of the cabinet members trying to keep some rationality in U.S. foreign policy, engaging in back-channel talks with North Korea and discouraging Trump from pulling out of the P5 + 1 nuclear deal with Iran. Pompeo, whose role in the CIA was preceded by his election in 2010 as a Congressional Tea Party Republican, like Bolton has expressed nothing but opposition to the Iran deal – for that matter to Iran itself, which he compared to ISIS in a speech last October. If Trump, Pompeo and Bolton have their way, Trump could unilaterally tear up the agreement by May, and the U.S. could also be on a path to war with Iran.

In addition to the seeming lack of any semblance of the diplomatic acumen required of a Secretary of State, Pompeo is in favor of torture as a tactic, as well as expanding both domestic spying and the National Security Agency's capacity to collect data from U.S. citizens. He is also a denier of climate change and backed Trump's pullout of the Paris climate agreement. Some may expect such a position from someone like Pompeo who is also the former head of an oilfield production business affiliated by Koch Industries. However the Senate, whose confirmation would allow him to take office, has some say-so over its appropriateness.

Action: Contact Senators Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris, and tell them to either ask or suggest questions that would expose Mike Pompeo's radical turn away from proper diplomacy and toward war and U.S. missteps on the world stage, should he become Secretary of State. Tell them to vote against his confirmation, and to encourage their colleagues to do the same.

...And for CIA Director

Trump is looking to promote CIA Deputy Director Gina Haspel to replace Pompeo – but there are issues with this nomination as well, relating to her history of facilitating torture overseas. Here is another case where the Senate can consider a dubious record rather than “rubber-stamping” a confirmation.

During her career, Haspel ran a secret "black site" prison in Thailand, one of many places where detainees in the “war on terror” were taken. Waterboarding, sleep deprivation, confinement in boxes and other torture techniques were all in the toolbox of CIA interrogators under her supervision. And in 2005, Haspel engaged in suppression of information about it, signing off on an order to destroy videotapes of the cruel activities.

Promoters of torture such as Haspel often cite the “imminent threat” intelligence that can be gleaned from the practice, but a Senate report in 2009 left ample doubt about the efficacy of such techniques. It concluded that tortured detainees often said anything, including incor-

rect information, in order to stop torture – and were in fact more likely to give useful information without being tortured. A 2015 law made it all illegal, though did not address “extraordinary rendition”, in which detainees are taken to other countries contracted to carry out torture.

Trump seems oblivious to all of this, having expressed the desire to bring back waterboarding, “and a hell of a lot worse”. He wants to bring on a person with experience like Gina Haspel to carry it out, and it's up to the Senate to try to see that someone more vigilant of human rights and the U.S. standing in the world gets a try at running the CIA.

Action: Contact Sens. Feinstein and Harris and tell them to also vote against the confirmation of Gina Haspel as CIA Director. Feinstein, who is on the Intelligence Committee, should ask pointed questions of Haspel about torture practices to which she is tied. Feinstein has made positive statements about confirmation, but perhaps needs to think again about this.

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The **Update** is published quarterly by Peace Action of San Mateo County. We welcome all submissions and letters, and reserve the right to exclude or edit for content and other considerations. The views expressed within are not necessarily those of the members of Peace Action of San Mateo County or Peace Action.



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Peace vigil every Saturday

We will be at 3rd Ave. and El Camino Real in San Mateo at 3 PM for our weekly antiwar vigil, while our military presence in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan continues. Visit us on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/pasmc

Peace Action of San Mateo County
presents

A talk and visual presentation by

Dr. Sharat G. Lin

Past President of the

San Jose Peace and Justice Center

Activist, writer, lecturer

***"The Prospects for Peace With
North Korea"***

Sunday, April 8, 7 PM

Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo

300 E. Santa Inez Ave., San Mateo

Admission free, contributions welcome