

American military planners declare: “War is peace”

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In a roundtable discussion Wednesday, former Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mark Milley and Palantir CEO Alex Karp defended Israel’s massacre of Palestinian civilians by advocating military brutality as a general principle.

This discussion took place at the Ash Carter Exchange, a conference sponsored by the Special Competitive Studies Project, a US think tank founded by former Google CEO Eric Schmidt. David Cohen, the Deputy Director of the CIA, and Schmidt himself also participated in the discussion. Both Google and Palantir are major contractors for both the United States and Israeli militaries and intelligence agencies.

The transcript of the discussion was not made public, and no official video recording is available. However, clips began to immediately circulate on social media revealing excerpts from what was discussed behind closed doors.

A major focus of the discussion was the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza, which all participants vociferously defended. Strikingly, Milley and Karp argued in defense of Israel’s actions not on the basis of particular expediencies or exceptions, but by asserting the claim that war crimes are a positive good and a means to achieve “peace.”

“Before we all get self-righteous about what Israel is doing, we shouldn’t forget that the United States killed a lot of innocent people in Mosul and Raqqa,” Milley said, referring to the US attacks on the Iraqi cities in 2016 and 2017, notorious for indiscriminate bombing that led to thousands, or tens of thousands, of civilian casualties.

Milley then turned to the US war in the Pacific during World War II, declaring, “We destroyed 69 Japanese cities, not including Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we slaughtered people in massive numbers, innocent

people who had nothing to do with their government, men, women, and children.

“War is a terrible thing. But if it’s going to have meaning, if it’s going to have any sense of morality, there has to be a political purpose, and it must be achieved rapidly with the least cost, and that is done by speed.”

At this point, Karp jumped in, declaring, “The peace activists are actually the pro-war activists, and we’re the peace activists. So if you don’t want war, you better be strong. You have to scare your adversary.”

He added,

And you have to be willing to understand the peace activists or war activists, because if you’re the useful idiot of Iran, and China.... If you think that creates peace, you are literally the reason why would Hamas ever give up. They have you marching for them. They’re never going to give up. You are an infection inside of our society. And they are the reason they’re not going to give up. If you want to stop these people, you have to be willing to be fierce.

Milley, in agreement, added, “They’re out there supporting a terrorist organization.”

It is worth carefully considering these statements. What does it mean to say that the means to achieve “peace” is for an army to be “fierce,” and to “scare your enemy”? The logical conclusion is that those armies that are the most violent, who do not fight in accordance with the laws of war, are most effective, and therefore, the most moral and peace-loving.

By this logic, the most peaceful army in history was

the German Wehrmacht under Adolf Hitler, which dispensed with the law of war entirely, illegally killing tens of millions of people—civilians and captured soldiers alike.

The remarks by Milley and Karp are unique only in that they express with particular bluntness, in a semi-public sphere, the general conceptions that have come to dominate US war planning. Dominant sections of the US political establishment are adopting as their mantra the first slogan of the party in George Orwell's *1984*: "War is peace."

Milley, in particular, has repeated this argument on numerous occasions. "Preparation for war and deterrence is extraordinarily expensive, but it's not as expensive as fighting a war," Milley said in congressional testimony last year. "This budget prevents war and prepares us to fight it if necessary."

The espousers of this argument claim that they do not actually want to wage war, but that they hope, through the threat of military aggression, to intimidate the United States' rivals without having to fight.

Critically, this argument was taken up in the Nuremberg trials of the Nazi war criminals, which noted that the Nazi defendants claimed they did not believe "that Hitler actually meant war" because they hoped he "would obtain a 'political solution' of Germany's problems."

This argument was summarily dismissed in the ruling, which declared, "But all that this means, when examined, is the belief that Germany's position would be so good, and Germany's armed might so overwhelming, that the territory desired could be obtained without fighting for it."

Indeed, the arguments of Milley and Karp bear a strong resemblance to a notorious speech given by Hitler to his general staff in 1939. Hitler declared, "Our strength consists in our speed and in our brutality. Genghis Khan led millions of women and children to slaughter—with premeditation and a happy heart... Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"

Even in the expressions used—the repeated references to "speed"—the parallels to Hitler's statements are chilling.

Milley's invocation of "the least cost" is another parallel to a notorious statement by Hitler, who told Germany's commanders-in-chief in 1937, "The

question for Germany is where the greatest possible conquest could be made at the lowest cost."

In response to a 1941 letter of protest by an admiral questioning the illegal mistreatment of Soviet prisoners of war, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel wrote, "The objections arise from the military concept of chivalrous warfare. This is the destruction of an ideology."

But perhaps most ominous is the conference participants' reference to anti-war views as an "infection."

The Nuremberg judgment noted that "Hitler had likened the Jews to 'tuberculosis bacilli.'" In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler declared that "The bourgeois world was infected from within with the deadly virus of Marxist ideas." The belief in social equality and national equality was likewise an "infection," which made "the amazing political progress of the Marxist teaching ... possible."

In recent years, it has become widely known that former US president Donald Trump is an admirer of the Nazi leader, and indeed his rhetoric about immigrants "poisoning the blood" of the country is recognized as a paraphrase of Hitler's antisemitic rhetoric. "Hitler did some good things," Trump reportedly told retired Marine Gen. John Kelly.

But what is made clear by the comments of Milley and Karp, however, is the parallels of Nazi ideology are not limited to Trump, but rather pervade the highest levels of the American state and military apparatus.



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