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*“The apology for
war is made in the
name of peace.”*

-Boaventura de Sousa Santos



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How Worker Ownership Builds Community Wealth And A More Just Society

Pamela Haines

A recent help-wanted ad for a laundry worker in Cleveland contained some unusual language, asking prospective candidates: “Have you ever wanted to work for a company that is 90 percent employee-owned? What about a company that offers a program to help you become a homeowner?” The ad went on to identify Evergreen Cooperative Laundry as the only employee-owned commercial laundry firm in the country, citing a commitment to building the wealth and careers of its employees.

Founded in Cleveland in 2009, Evergreen laundry lies at the heart of a movement that has now spread around the world. This attention to community wealth building is providing a 21st century model for Gandhi’s “constructive program,” which — along with nonviolent direct action — powered his overall campaign to overcome the political and economic oppression of colonialism.

The cooperative movement in the Rust Belt city of Cleveland has deep roots in community struggle for shared wealth. Its earliest origins are in the Mondragon co-op movement of the Basque Country in northern Spain, where tens of thousands of workers are organized into a vast co-op network that has flourished since the 1950s. Here in the U.S., when steel companies were closing down throughout the Ohio Valley in the 1970s — and moving to non-union, lower-wage regions in the south, and then overseas — a small band of activists promoted the idea of worker ownership.

Gar Alperovitz, a key player in that campaign, traces its origins to the 1977 shuttering of the

Youngstown Sheet and Tube steel mill, which threw 5,000 steelworkers onto the streets, with little retraining help and no other jobs available. A plan by an ecumenical religious coalition for community-worker ownership of the giant mill captured widespread media attention, significant bipartisan support and an initial \$200 million in loan guarantees from the Carter administration.

According to Alperovitz, “Corporate and other political maneuvering in the end undercut the Youngstown initiative. Nonetheless, the effort had ongoing impact, especially in Ohio, where the idea of worker-ownership became widespread ... because of all the publicity and the depth of policy failures in response to deindustrialization throughout the state.”

Now, nearly half a century later, the Evergreen laundry and its sister solar and greenhouse coops are at the heart of the model around which the theory and practice of community wealth building have grown. Developed by the new economy research center Democracy Collaborative, the model is a simple one: First, identify anchor institutions — hospitals, universities, seats of government — that are not going to relocate in search of higher profits and incentivize them to do their procurement of supplies and services locally, so that those dollars stay at home. Then, make regulatory, financing and policy changes that support the growth of cooperatives to supply their needs, so that the business profits stay with the workers. This model has been quietly gaining attention and putting down roots in other places — starting with a jump across the Atlantic Ocean.

Community wealth building in the UK

In 2012, it seemed like the run-down industrial city of Preston, in northern England, had come to the end of the road. Its economic base had been bleeding away for years, and the last gasp attempt — a deal to lure in a mall developer — had fallen through. Fortunately, a deep-thinking member of the Preston City Council, Matthew Brown, had heard of an innovative model of community wealth building based in Cleveland, Ohio.

“Crucially, we need to have more democracy in Preston’s economy — we can’t be at the whims of outside investors who’ll want to extract as much wealth from our community as possible,” Brown told the Lancashire Post. He reached out to Ted Howard from the Democracy Collaborative and, looking back on the last 10 years, the resulting collaboration can be seen as transformative.

Preston City Council started by working with its own anchor institutions, getting them to prioritize contracting with local companies. It began creating worker cooperatives and paying a real living wage. The city’s government pension fund is now investing locally. Plans for a community bank are in the works. Employment and affordable housing rates are up; child poverty is down.

Procurement dollars that stayed within the city have risen from \$46.8 million to \$138.4 million; anchor institutions are more connected to the local economy; and its residents and experience in supporting the development of new businesses and cooperatives have grown. According to Ted Howard of the Democracy Collaborative, the impact and potential of these combined efforts is “creating an ecosystem of change that will be the engine for a new, fairer economy.”

In a stunning turnaround, Preston was named the most improved city in the U.K. in 2018, and the “Preston Model” has become a household word. The Centre for Local Economic Strategies, or CLES, which was active in Preston, is now working with dozens of local authorities, anchor



An Evergreen laundry worker. (Photo: Evergreen Cooperatives)

institutions, and U.K. nations to develop community wealth building approaches that are appropriate to the context of their place. At the same time, it is also supporting similar efforts across Europe and as far afield as Australia and New Zealand.

Keeping small businesses alive in Denver

Back in the U.S., where similar models are spreading, Denver’s Center for Community Wealth Building, or CCWB, has just received a \$360,000 economic development grant for a three-year initiative to launch six to nine new cooperatives in Denver and neighboring Aurora. Such worker cooperatives can stabilize jobs and income for those who might otherwise be displaced by gentrification, while also help to keep small businesses — the heart of these communities — alive.

CCWB Executive Director Yessica Holguin was first hired as a fellow to work on building opportunity in low-income neighborhoods. Coming from a community organizing background, her first step was to go out and talk to the community. “I wanted to understand the experience of gentrification from the perspective of the residents. And I wanted to hear what solutions res-

onated with them,” Holguin explained in a press release. “When people own their jobs, when they own their businesses, own their lives, the ripple effects are felt throughout the community.”

Worker co-ops clearly resonated, and she jumped in to help launch two of them — both of which remain successful today: Mujeres Emprendadores, a catering service started by immigrant women, and Satya Yoga Cooperative, a yoga school run by and for people of color.

CCWB’s three-pronged strategy is modeled on the Evergreen co-ops: democratize ownership through worker co-ops, strengthen entrepreneurial opportunities for people of color and encourage anchor institutions to become local economic engines. To help the University of Denver shift its spending on catering from national chains, for example, CCWB organized a tasting event where over a hundred university event planners met and began building relationships with 11 community caterers.

To ensure that cooperatives can flourish, CCWB has developed a roadmap to guide various city departments to support awareness, skills and access. “It’s not just potential worker-owners who need to see the benefits of cooperative businesses” Holguin said. “We want the community to understand how widespread democratic ownership will benefit everyone.”

An economy like a little stream

This approach is proving flexible, resilient and effective. It is putting down roots and beginning to have an impact not only in Cleveland, Preston and Denver, but in an ever-growing number of cities around the world. It consistently supports both political and economic democracy, while also addressing the needs for better pay and a sharing of our common wealth.

We can use the analogy of water to think about how money moves in an economy. One model is like a storm water system, efficiently gathering water from many small sources, with the goal of consolidation and steady movement toward

a central location. A very different model is like a little stream meandering through a wetland, cleansing and nourishing everything it touches — an integral part of the ecosystem, not trying to get anywhere else.

In our current economic system, money functions like the former, steadily being siphoned from the hands of individuals and communities into those of great financial interests. Community wealth building is all about the latter — circulating and recirculating money in the local economy, in no hurry, allowing its benefits to serve all.

By offering a powerful framework and lever for moving toward greater local control over wealth, community wealth building is simply another way of getting to the roots. It provides an alternative to moneyed interests being in control and their bottom line trumping the common welfare.

Reflecting on the role of the Evergreen Laundry — established in a neighborhood of Cleveland where the average income is lower than 93.4 percent of U.S. communities — Howard told *The Guardian*: “A job is not enough. For people to stay out of poverty they need to be able to acquire assets.” Along with a job, the co-op offers pension payments and profit sharing, and has brought the possibility of home-ownership within reach.

From a new homeowner in Cleveland, to growing connections between university staff in Colorado and local catering co-ops, to the turnaround of a struggling city in northern England and beyond, the promise of community wealth building appears boundless. Bringing together Gandhi’s strategy of nonviolent direct action to confront injustice with a constructive program of steadily diverting resources from the powers-that-be back to the people, this model offers a powerful framework for reclaiming our democracy and our economy.

Bringing Together Economic Visions

Michael Albert

We can all list many perspectives that propose different post capitalist economic aims. Must we see each perspective as a contender against the rest? What if they have compatible aims? Could we try to combine their primary virtues into a new encompassing perspective? Would an encompassing perspective be able to fulfill all our main desires? Could it attain practical viability and include only worthy features?

Inspired by that hope, we here very briefly summarize nine currently contending economic perspectives. We then propose a tenth composite perspective conceived to bridge divisions and establish links among the nine others. Note, however, that we only consider post capitalist economics. One could also consider post racist, post sexist, post authoritarian, and post unsustainable societal components to similarly seek unanticipated but welcome synergy among “contending perspectives.” If economic perspectives can unify, perhaps perspectives for other aspects of life and then for a summation of all aspects can also unify.

Here then, are the main assertions of nine economic perspectives that often contend rather than unify.

1. Mainstream Marxist Economy (MME) mainly seeks to eliminate private ownership of the means of production to in turn eliminate an owning capitalist class that accrues profits and decides outcomes. MME’s advocates differ over what to do with liberated means of production. Make asset ownership statist? Deliver ownership of each workplace to its workers? Institute a productive commons? Despite those differences, MME’s advocates agree on the overall goal: End class rule by capitalists so that workers control their own circumstances and benefit from their own efforts. Beyond that, for allocation some MME advocates propose central planning. Others

propose markets. But MME advocates agree that allocation should provide workers and consumers control over worthy outcomes.

2. Councilist Marxist Economy (CME) extends from Anton Pannekoek to Rosa Luxembourg to Cornelius Castoriadis and beyond. CME wants workers councils to propose and decide workplace policies. It wants consumers councils to propose and decide individual and collective consumption. Some CME advocates say that such decisions should always be made by majority vote. Other CME advocates say actors should decide outcomes in proportion to the degree the outcomes affect them. This could be by majority vote, by consensus, or by whatever else works. CME wants allocation to achieve sought ends without wasting valued assets and to be self-managed. For that reason, CME typically rejects central planning and markets and seeks a decentralized alternative.
3. Anarchist Economy (AE) stretches from Bakunin through Kropotkin to Goldman, to Anarcho-Syndicalism, and more recently to Chomsky. AE rejects private ownership of means of production and all authoritarianism. It typically proposes a productive commons and council self-management. It recognizes the need for different voting methods and styles of deliberation in different situations. In particular, beyond all that, it adds to our emerging mix of desirable aims an insight that there is a third class which Bakunin initially called “intellectuals,” which Barbara and John Ehrenreich much later called the “professional managerial class,” and which Albert and Hahnel mere moments later called the “coordinator class,” but which all agree has the capacity to become a ruling class that operates over and above workers. AE seeks worthy production and consumption self-managed by those affected. Thus, AE rejects class rule. It adds to our emerging menu of aims that

we should eliminate the division of employees into an empowered class that rises to rule a dis-empowered class.

4. Solidarity Economy (SE) sees itself as an umbrella term more than a specific vision. It asks: Do people mutually benefit one another as compared to advancing at one another's expense? SE's aim is that workers and consumers should have mutual concern and shared interests. As to how precisely to achieve such aims, SE is highly diverse with much under its umbrella, but all its arrangements seek that actors move away from antagonism and toward solidarity. SE rejects that some benefit at the expense of others. It wants all to enjoy mutual benefit. It implicitly favors approaches that propel solidarity without undue detriments. It implicitly rejects approaches which obstructs solidarity, including class division and top down or competitive zero-sum allocation. It explicitly adds achieving solidarity to our emerging menu of aims.
5. Green Economy (GE) also has many versions, but they all agree that economic life should be sustainable and occur in reciprocity with environmental relations. Suppose some sector of production uses more of some critical resource than the environment or people are able to replace or substitute for each year. Clearly, that resource will in time run out. Similarly, suppose a sector produces some by-product that despoils the environment in a destructive manner that we can't reduce or mitigate each year. Clearly that despoliation can become unendurable. GE seeks institutions that account for reduction of needed inputs and profusion of harmful outputs. It favors institutions that facilitate environmental reciprocity. It rejects institutions that obstruct environmental reciprocity. Advocates of GE differ about how to accomplish their aims, but most agree that old economic forms of property ownership, decision making, and allocation are decidedly unecological.
6. Degrowth Economy (DGE) is a GE that determines that current use of irreplaceable resources and current output of damaging materials are, in sum, already too great to continue. DGE advises up front that some amount of current economic activity is unsustainable and highly unlikely to become sustainable by way of technological or social innovations. DGE urges that unsustainable industries need to "degrow." Degrowth advocates differ considerably over what we need to cut back by how much, but they agree that democratic decision making should inform such choices. DGE also typically advocates that the choices should de-colonize and pursue equity. It follows that a DGE, like a GE, adds to our encompassing agenda the need for production choices to properly judge sustainability and either what investment in correctives to make or what degrowth to undertake.
7. Feminist Economy (FE) looks at economic activity from the angle of kinship. It makes two primary additions to our agenda regarding specifically economic aims. 1) Economic life must not produce systemic differences in costs or benefits due to sex, gender, or any other kinship related attribute. 2) Economic life must respect, accommodate, and certainly not subvert additional implications of feminist social change including insights and changes in home life, in sexual preferences and practices, in relations of parents and children, and in the implications of caring activity on those who undertake it, including altered conceptions about who that should be.
8. Intercommunalist Economy (IE) looks at economic activity from the angle of cultural constituencies. It too makes two primary additions regarding specifically economic aims. 1) Economic life must not produce systemic differences in costs or benefits due to race, ethnicity, religion or any other community related attribute. 2) Economic life must respect, accommodate, and certainly not subvert additional implications of intercommunalist social change including, in particular, insights and changes regarding mutual relations of cultural communities and their borders and especially innovations regarding protection of all cultural communities from domination or negation by others.

9. Anti-Authoritarian Economy (AAE) looks at economic activity from the angle of citizenship and polity. It also makes two primary additions regarding specifically economic aims. 1) Economic life must not produce systemic differences in costs or benefits due to any social or personal attribute that would produce undue political elevation or subordination. 2) Economic life must respect, accommodate, and certainly not subvert additional implications of political social change including, in particular, politically mandated rights, responsibilities, and procedures.

Conceiving An Encompassing Economy

Even offered as ridiculously succinctly as above, our set of nine summaries is certainly a mouthful. We can't even pronounce the sum of it all, MMECME-AESEGEDGEFEIEAAE. But our concision in summarizing each perspective's main priorities was not random. We emphasized primary positive desires. We deemphasized differences over means to attain primary positive desires. Our resulting task: Propose a unifying perspective that can attain all nine perspectives' central positive insights and avoid features any of the nine perspectives would reject.

To start, to meet the core desires of mainstream Marxists clearly an encompassing vision will need to eliminate private ownership of productive assets. To that end, an encompassing perspective might propose a productive commons. If society judges prospective producers' proposals socially worthy and environmentally viable, they get to use commonly held productive assets to produce socially beneficial products.

Next, to attain councilist aims, an encompassing perspective could propose that to self-manage production and consumption workers and consumers could use suitably conceived venues, called councils. Not only the councilist perspective wants workers and consumers to oversee economic life, but so do the rest, supposing that workers and consumers doing so could be shown viable and consistent with each perspective's other aims. However, advocates of each of the nine perspectives might reasonably ask how an encompassing perspective proposes to ensure that

workers and consumers councils will make informed, wise decisions.

Moving to the Anarchists, how might a new perspective encompass AE's aim to eliminate an empowered class that rules over workers? How might it ensure that workers are well equipped to intelligently self-manage? Since a key factor bearing on these aims is the empowerment implications of day to day economic involvements, an encompassing perspective might seek conditions that prepare every employee to effectively participate in council deliberations and decisions. While only the anarchist perspective calls for this, if a new division of labor that delivers equal empowerment could be shown worthy and viable, it is hard to see why any of the eight other perspectives would oppose it.

The same calculus applies to attaining solidarity as emphasized by SE. Why would a new economy reject actors benefitting mutually instead of actors benefitting only at one another's expense? Thus an encompassing perspective might urge that production, consumption, and allocation should align all actors' interests as much as possible and certainly not force their interests into debilitating opposition. Instead of a rat race where only a few survive while the rest are humbled, subordinated, and impoverished, economic institutions should cause all economic actors to have mainly shared rather than mainly contrary interests. A primary step might be to make incomes equitable so that when I benefit you don't lose and vice versa. Another primary step might be to organize decision making that doesn't resemble a cauldron of contending interests. A third step might be to replace competitive allocation with allocation that unifies participants.

Next we have Green and Degrowth economies. Their addition to our growing list of aims is that when workers and consumers determine what to produce and consume, they should take into account environmental as well as personal and social costs and benefits. To this end, an encompassing perspective might propose a new allocation system in place of markets and central planning because by analysis of their incentives and logic, we know markets and



central planning establish a drive to accumulate irrespective of impact on anything other than enlarging profits while maintaining existing hierarchies of wealth and power. When to reduce or even reverse growth in a sector due to its use of essential resources or due to its production of damaging byproducts needs to be democratically decided. An economy should therefore reveal potentially mitigating replacements for dwindling resources or develop means to more frugally use them, and should develop means to reduce or remove of negative byproducts by way of organizational or technical innovations—or, when needed, should degrow equitably.

Finally, and of overarching impact, in accord with the aims of inter-communalist, feminist, and anti-authoritarian economy, an encompassing perspective might seek to prevent production or consumption that generate material or power hierarchies of wealth, circumstance, or influence. It might simultaneously respect achievements emanating from intersecting kin/gender, cultural/communal, and political innovations as each emerge from and are propelled by transformations of those economy-intersecting spheres of

life. And, of course, it might treat other economies outwardly in accord with the values it respects and fulfills inwardly.

Participatory Economy?!

The preceding discussion suggests what types of proposals might conceivably propel advocates of each of our nine highlighted perspectives to agree on an encompassing, overarching economic vision. And, indeed, an existing tenth perspective called participatory economics seeks to mature in precisely that direction. Its core economic institutions are a productive commons, workers and consumers self-managing councils, a new division of labor called balanced job complexes, equitable remuneration for duration, intensity, and onerousness of socially valued labor (plus full income for those who can't work), and, finally, for allocation, participatory planning in place of markets and central planning.

Here are the key aims of the nine perspectives where for each we very briefly note how participatory economics might meet them.

- Eliminate capitalist class rule. To achieve this, Participatory Economics replaces private ownership of productive assets with a productive commons from which producers propose to borrow assets to produce socially useful outputs.
- Institute workers and consumers self-managing councils. To achieve this, Participatory Economics directly institutes self-managing workers and consumers councils and federations of councils to self-manage local production and consumption and also larger scale allocation decisions.
- Ensure workers ability to make informed decisions and eliminate a class of empowered coordinators that rules workers from above. To achieve this, Participatory Economics eliminates the capitalist (and the twentieth century “socialist”) “corporate division of labor” which empowers roughly twenty percent of all producers over roughly eighty percent of all producers. In its place participatory economics institutes “balanced job complexes.” This constructs jobs as combinations of some empowering and some disempowering tasks, such that each job is comparably empowering to all other jobs. There is no empowered class above disempowered workers. More, all economic actors enjoy daily circumstances that convey information, skills, confidence, disposition, and access suitable to intelligent self-managed decision making.
- Ensure that workers and consumers enjoy solidarity. Participatory economics achieves solidarity by three main features. First, income is equitable for all and in no way a function of zero sum interactions. Your income climbs only for reasons of duration, intensity, or onerousness of your socially worthy work. This does not disadvantage anyone nor does income climb so high for anyone as to cause invidious comparison. When you get more you deserve it. Also, a person’s income climbs when everyone’s income climbs. Second, your say over decisions is like everyone else’s say over decisions. All abide by the same self-managing norm. Likewise, in participatory economics actors determine and express their preferences in accord with and informed by other’s preferences. Actors seek an overall outcome in light of implications for self and for others, rather than seek a solely personal outcome regardless of implications for others.
- Properly account for environmental effects of economic choices, including, when necessary, invest in sustainable means to accomplish desired production and consumption, or, when necessary, degrow unsustainable industries. To achieve this, Participatory Economics utilizes participatory planning to account for environmental effects. As well, a Participatory Economy can non-disruptively accommodate ecological innovations and policies conceived and decided beyond the economy.
- Do not allow for systemic material or influence advantages by kin, gender, age, sexual identity, race, ethnicity, nation, or other cultural differentiation. Respect extra economic aims as urged by Feminist, Intercommunalist, and Anti-Authoritarian economics. Participatory Economics achieves all this by the simple fact that in it no constituency can have systemic material or influence advantage because all income is equitable and all decision making is self-managed. To abide more subtle, complex, or other innovations bearing on kinship, culture, and political innovations, a participatory economy within a society must intersect with other realms consistently and the only aspects of a participatory economy that could interfere with that are its virtues regarding economic income, circumstances, and degree of decision making say.

We do not suggest that this short essay proves participatory economics can be a unifying tenth perspective for the other nine. We claim only that it makes sufficient headway in that direction so that if you think having a unifying economic vision would benefit anti-capitalist activism, then perhaps you might also agree that it is worth working to arrive at an encompassing perspective. One step might be to more comprehensively display, debate, and explore the ten approaches to economic vision offered here with a guiding hope to promote greater unity in place of proliferating contentiousness.

Does Participatory Economics encompass? Can Participatory Economics make MMECMEAE-SEGEDGEFEIEAAE into PE? That is for you and time to decide.

How to Revive the Labor Movement

Jeremy Brecher

Recent breakthroughs at Amazon and Starbucks—and the proliferation of informal direct action on the job in response to the COVID-19 pandemic—point to a new appetite for organizing among American workers. According to labor journalist Steven Greenhouse, “Workers have embraced a long-neglected strategy, called self-organizing or bottom-up organizing that’s proving highly successful.” Mark Dimondstein, the president of the American Postal Workers union, said in an interview with the New York Times that this strategy is “sending a wake-up call to the rest of the labor movement [that] we have to be homegrown—we have to be driven by workers—to give ourselves the best chance.”

Despite the courage and commitment of these workers, organized labor is in desperate decline. Barely 10 percent of U.S. workers are union members, and union membership has declined by 2 million people since 2000. Notwithstanding the upsurge in strikes in late 2021, dubbed “Striketober,” the total number of workers idled by work stoppages that year was barely 80,000, compared to 485,000 in 2018 and 2.8 million in 1974.

This decline comes despite highly favorable public opinion on unions. A Gallup poll conducted in August showed that 71 percent of Americans approve of labor unions—the highest rate since 1965. And a sizeable proportion of workers would like to be in a union. From October 2021 to June 2022, petitions to the National Labor Relations Board for union representation increased 58 percent from the same period a year earlier.

This upsurge in worker action and aspiration for organization has been accompanied by a lively debate on how workers can fight for better conditions and a better world. Erica Smiley and Sarita Gupta’s new book *The Future We Need: Organizing*

for a Better Democracy in the Twenty-First Century makes a significant and original contribution. Smiley and Gupta are, respectively, the present and past executive directors of Jobs With Justice, a labor rights organization with coalitions in over thirty cities and states advocating for collective bargaining for all workers. Jobs With Justice provides an ideal location to observe the difficulties and new developments in worker organization. The authors draw on their experience to offer an understanding of organized labor’s continuing crisis and a prescription for what to do about it that goes far beyond timid proposals like those for labor law reform and union budget reallocations.

Labor in a Changing World

The shape of the American labor movement can be traced back to the legal structure of collective bargaining established in 1935 by the National Labor Relations Act (also known as the Wagner Act, or labor’s Magna Carta). The NLRA established the right of workers to organize, bargain collectively with their employers, and engage in concerted action. Over the next decade, millions of workers joined unions and won higher wages and better working conditions.

But the NLRA excluded protection for employees in sectors with predominantly Black and brown workers, particularly domestic and farm work. Women concentrated in service industries were, in practice, rarely able to organize. Many unions themselves excluded or discriminated against female and African American workers. The result was a divided working class with a predominantly white male sector empowered by unions and the NLRA; women and people of color faced lower wages and were far less likely to be represented by unions. This arrangement, which we still live with today, “pits the interests of organized union workers against those of the unorganized majority,” Smiley and Gupta write.

Over the past fifty years, economic and social changes have reduced the power of all workers, including those who are organized. Hedge funds, private equity firms, and other forms of financial capital have replaced owners' interests in the long-term health of their corporations with the single-minded pursuit of short-term shareholder value. Corporations are free to move jobs to countries with the lowest wages and the least regulations, promoting a race to the bottom. The expansion of subcontracted, temporary, part-time, and other forms of contingent work undermines labor standards for all workers.

Smiley and Gupta give an overview of these changes while explaining how a “fissured” economy has fragmented work among multinational production

chains and subcontractors using “just-in-time” production practices and labor agencies. For example, a Marriott hotel may be owned by a small group of investors but managed by “management service providers” who then subcontract to different companies for office work, landscaping, food service, and cleaning—companies that may in turn contract out work to temp agencies and labor brokers.

As a result, Smiley and Gupta write, “managerial and technical workers now make up well over half the workforce.” The simple idea of the working class as composed of blue-collar manual laborers has itself become a divisive concept. Citing Charles C. Hecksher’s *The New Unionism*, Smiley and Gupta characterize the “cross-cutting identities of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and other social categories” that have become “increasingly import-



ant alternatives to older occupational identities of workers and managers.”

Smiley and Gupta make clear that these changes have been central to labor’s decline, but that the very structure of organized labor is also to blame. Under U.S. labor law and conventional trade union practice, unions are primarily a means for a particular group of workers to bargain with their immediate employer over wages and conditions on the job. But most of the forces that shape people’s lives lie beyond the direct relations they have with their employers. Problems outside the workplace—including inadequate healthcare, the breakdown of public services, racial injustice, and climate change—can’t be fixed at the bargaining table. Even within the realm of work, the immediate employer is often not the entity determining conditions on the job; thanks to the fissured economy, the company by whom workers are hired may be a franchise, subsidiary, agency, or shell owned by a chain of intermediaries with limited power to make significant changes.

Collective Bargaining for the Whole Worker

What is exciting about *The Future We Need* is not so much its familiar litany of organized labor’s difficulties as the creativity of the solutions it proposes. Smiley and Gupta call for “a new kind of movement for organizing and collective bargaining”—and they spell out what that would mean.

The centerpiece of their approach is extending collective bargaining beyond the workplace. They propose a “process whereby working people take collective action in negotiating with any entity that has power over their wages, living conditions, and overall economic well-being in a way that produces an enforceable agreement that can be renegotiated as conditions change.” The purpose of this expanded form of collective bargaining is to once again ground the workers’ movement in the needs of the worker as a whole person, with any number of identities. This means applying the mechanisms used by unions not just to the workplace, but to “all the ways in which humans relate to capital.”

The Future We Need presents dozens of examples of how expanded collective bargaining has already been used to change working peoples’ lives. Tenants, debtors, homeowners, consumers, and others have joined together to directly confront and negotiate with corporations, banks, and elements of the state through rent strikes, tenant unions, and transit rider unions. Smiley and Gupta also offer ideas for new coalitions. For example, they suggest that consumers, renters, debtors, and others with some sort of relationship to powerful economic forces could establish collective bargaining relations with banking and financial institutions. These initiatives could be even stronger if they represented disparate but allied forces. “Imagine transit riders negotiating directly alongside transit workers with similar proposals around wages and fares,” they write. “Imagine Amazon Prime members negotiating with the company alongside warehouse, tech, and delivery workers around the company’s behavior in their county or state.”

Why would a bank agree to bargain with these groups? The same reason employers eventually decide to bargain when their employees threaten to strike. The power of workers both at work and in the wider economy is based on “the power to collectively withhold participation in an economic relationship in order to force concessions from those who seek to get rich through exploitation,” Smiley and Gupta write. The authors call this strategy “community-driven bargaining”; the idea is that it would function much like collective bargaining in the workplace.

Community-driven bargaining complements another strategy for extending collective bargaining: “bargaining for the common good,” where unions build lasting alliances with community partners and bring community objectives—and, if possible, representatives from the community—to the bargaining table. The 2019 strike by the United Teachers of Los Angeles embodied this approach. As UTLA president Alex Caputo-Pearl is quoted in the book:

UTLA is part of a growing national movement that is centered on the idea of bargaining for the common good. By the time we get to the bargaining table, we're taking demands and proposals that have come out of months of working with community organizations, youth, and parents, and that bring to light things that are not typical, mandatory subjects of bargaining.

In Los Angeles, polls found that more than 80 percent of the public supported the strike; the union estimates that 50,000 people rallied in support. In addition to a wage increase, the strike won many demands that benefited teachers, students, parents, and the wider community, including a nurse in every school, a librarian in every secondary school, more counselors, a reduction in standardized testing, investments in community schools, limiting random searches of students, expansions of green space, and support for immigrant families.

The Future We Need emphasizes the importance of a labor movement that “fights against white supremacy, patriarchy, xenophobia, homophobia, and all other strategies of exclusion, division, and oppression” in order to meet the needs of the working class. The book provides many accounts—at once poignant and enraging—of abusive or condescending behavior by union leaders toward Black and brown communities.

Through Jobs With Justice, Smiley and Gupta have a wealth of experience involving those workers who have been excluded by labor law or union practice and have turned to the nonprofit to form independent unions and other worker organizations. Workers in industries ranging “from meatpacking to farming, hospital work to domestic employment, fast food restaurants to grocery stores, transportation to delivery services” have formed independent organizations that perform many of the roles of unions even if they are not recognized officially. Many of them have found support from Jobs With Justice.

Smiley and Gupta describe a range of achievements by such organizing initiatives. Domestic Workers United organized domestic workers, nannies, and

other caregivers to push New York State to include them in the basic labor protections afforded by law. (Domestic Workers United then helped form the National Domestic Workers Alliance and the International Domestic Workers Federation to push for the adoption of these protections at the federal and even global level.) The National Day Laborer Organizing Network established new standards in the residential construction industry. And the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and other farmworker organizations “leveraged consumer influence over multinational food brands to ensure safe, worker-defined standards.”

While Smiley and Gupta emphasize the importance of new forms of worker action from below, they also recognize the need for working-class movements to meet the globalization of corporations to counter “the futility of trying to organize and collectively bargain solely at the factory level.” To combat global capital, they write, “unions and progressive organizations will have to unite across national borders, not just in moral solidarity but also through shared organizing and collective bargaining demands on multinational corporations and their government supporters.”

For example, the Asia Floor Wage Alliance—a network of garment-sector unions and other worker organizations across the continent operating with support from Jobs With Justice and India's New Trade Union Initiative—calculates comparable living wage standards in different Asian countries so that worker organizations can use those standards to pressure transnational corporations to provide uniform minimum wages across the region. The idea is to put a common floor under wages to block the corporate race to the bottom. The standards allow “garment workers to negotiate with their direct employers in textile and apparel factories” while, the authors write, “undermin[ing] the ability of multinational corporations to pit one country's workers against another” in search of the lowest wage. AFWA has also pressured a number of multinational companies into agreeing to a global convention to end gender-based violence at work.

Finally, Smiley and Gupta take on the problem of the fissured economy and the elusive holders of its real power. They use the example of John Stumpf, who “had direct control over the working conditions of hundreds of thousands” of people as chairman and CEO of Wells Fargo but was also responsible for tens of thousands of subcontracted workers, such as security guards and custodial workers, as well as the debt—mortgages, credit cards, and loans—of millions of students, homeowners, and small businesspeople. County, state, and local governments; school districts; and other public entities rely on Wells Fargo for loans, bond financing, and banking services. In addition, the bank is a major shareholder of other corporations and a contributor to powerful political organizations like the American Legislative Exchange Council.

Workers increasingly find that their direct employer does not actually have the capability to change their conditions; the real leverage lies with big shots like Stumpf, whose power is concealed behind multiple layers of corporate deception. As a result, “there simply is no winning plan to build a shared prosperity without confronting these individual owners and their corporate power directly.” Smiley and Gupta call for a movement that engages the “ultimate profiteers” in the new global marketplace, “targeting and forcing to the bargaining table the individuals and organizations that control the international corporations that now wield most of the power over the lives of working people.” For example, governments could require that banks receiving benefits put popularly elected representatives on their boards. And homeowners could bargain with banks to collectively renegotiate unfair loans. In short, working people would “bargain with the ultimate profiteer.” Smiley and Gupta don’t propose a formula for how to do this; rather, they point to it as a direction for labor and allied movements to start exploring. The “bargaining for the common good” conducted by educators and their allies in Chicago, Los Angeles—where the school board represents the local power structure and includes multimillionaire members—and elsewhere provides a pioneering example.

Democratization Through Collective Bargaining

The Future We Need presents extended collective bargaining not just as a way for working people to address an immediate problem, but also as a way to “enable working people to play a permanent, direct role in governing the institutions that impact them rather than merely winning occasional concessions or policy improvements.” It could provide a means to establish economic democracy not only in the workplace but also “in our communities, our schools, our courthouses.”

Of course, making such change requires power, and that is often seen as being exclusively the possession of existing institutions. But Smiley and Gupta argue that “Power is not dependent on following traditionally prescribed paths. Instead, it grows from the collective action of people in shared economic relationships who are determined to work together to make their voices heard and to have their needs met from common decision-makers.”

Despite the encouraging growth in worker action and aspiration, putting the effervescent new wine of worker self-organization in the old bottles of a rigid, antiquated structure of organized labor is more likely to lead to massive frustration and despair than a revived labor movement. To meet new conditions, worker self-organization must ground itself in the real problems and the real power configurations faced by today’s workers. Workers have been disempowered by the economic and social changes so well delineated by Smiley and Gupta. But their potential power has in other ways been augmented by those same forces. The necessity for solidarity and mutual support goes beyond individual workplaces—and even beyond the workplace itself.

There are no guarantees that these new opportunities can or will be effectively acted on. But Smiley and Gupta’s analysis and prescription point the way forward.

Goodbye, Tyre

Leslie D. Gregory

When Tyre Nichols woke up the morning of the last day of his life, I feel certain that he wasn't thinking about racism or the chance that it might be his end, though he'd likely had "the talk" from his parents at an early age. He'd pushed it back, seeking peace and joy in a life he shared with friends, family, and his community. To do otherwise would create a constant state of fear, precluding any quality of life, the ability to just get through it all and grow up.

I feel this as a Black mother.

Nor did the officers who committed those heinous acts consider that their role in the depravity would be met with much swifter repercussions than their white brothers in blue. To do otherwise would have precluded doing their jobs, having any quality of life, or the ability to just get through and support their families.

After all, denial is a coping mechanism known too well by people caught in the history of hate that citizenship in America entails. So, we view each devastating incident as its own individual hell. Rinse and repeat. In a few weeks, Tyre Nichols will go the way of Michael Brown, Breonna Taylor, Rodney King, ad nauseam.

The problem is the approach of looking at each victim, each perpetrator in vacuums of misery. Using a trauma-informed frame, we ask, "who benefits and who's burdened?" and must take into account the broader picture of sustained racism under "investigation" by the Centers for Disease Control and Preventions as of 2021.

To study is important. But when does an issue become a crisis requiring serious remedial action? When does a crisis become an emergency? Whose responsibility is it to finally take the kind

of clinical action required in the face of mounting evidence and repeated violence?

Dr. Tom Frieden, former head of CDC, has recently written about how to fix that institution, stating it needs to be more nimble and less siloed, but when I wrote to him in 2015, some eight years ago when he was in a position with power to do something about this, asking that he declare racism a public health crisis, he forwarded it to the Office of Minority Health and Health Equity from which a Black woman refused to move on it, stating in essence, "Here's what we're doing instead," and was actually irritated with me during a subsequent interview by phone.

Like the Black officers who murdered Tyre, this person clearly suffered from internalized oppression, a legacy of our American history of racism that is older than the US itself, a history that begins with slavery and needs a deep healing to eventually repair.

These issues are related when viewed in a clinical context. Racism has overtaken this country's narrative but that's where it ends. As committees, counties, commissions, and communities around the country begin to recognize the public health crisis of racism, the declarations are largely performative.

In Oregon, it's taken three years of Zoom calls with public and private leadership; I have served in a steering role as a Black clinician to create a campaign, and finally, through team effort, we've seen the passage of House Bill 4052 making the declaration here in Oregon, resulting in a \$1.275mil budget.

The process has been agonizingly slow and now the funding is under threat of being returned if it's



not spent in three months, though it took three years to get it approved. Had we health care professionals known from the beginning that a laborious bureaucratic process would present further technical barriers, with the lives lost and impacted in the meantime, perhaps we could have met all such unknown requirements, but we have employees of the health system on the task force who simply were unaware and overmatched.

Across the country, we who work toward racial equity, toward an end to oppression of any origin, toward the simple yet elusive goal of human equity in all our social relationships, are so hurt when our uncompleted work is revealed in heinous acts as we saw in Memphis. We beg our officials to see this, to prioritize this, and to join with us as we struggle to finally fix the sharp pain of racism in all its manifestations—including Black police killing our own in the predictable yet preventable perversion of internalized oppression.

America seems to have a fascination with Black culture, a fear of Black bodies, and a disregard for Black lives. This bizarre confluence of phenomena further advances mental health challenges to all

Americans in the setting of our national identity as pluralistic and equitable.

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of this is that we have data to suggest evidence-based changes that can make a difference. From the American Psychological Association to Life Sciences, multiple strategies have been offered with little action taken by high level agencies. This includes the previous mandate for CDC to study the impacts of gun violence when that funding was withdrawn. Our national obsession with firearms is another aspect of disproportionate violence to be addressed.

When we take all appropriate measures, abide by the rules, and use every sanctioned method to create change using everything from nonviolent protests to voter registration drives, to petitions and speeches, board meetings and volunteering for years toward legislation and still face gaslighting, bait-switching and various methods of obfuscation, can we really claim ignorance and surprise when we again experience heartbreaking violence?

Doomism & Global Warming

Thomas Klikauer

Doomism is a kind of melancholic pessimism or as Germans call it, Weltschmerz. It is an overwhelming feeling of sadness and emotional anguish given what we see almost every day: war, torture, crime, human madness, nastiness and suffering, child labour, slavery, mass poverty, starvation, cancer, pandemics, environmental destruction, global warming, the 6th mass extinction, and – seemingly – the looming of an uninhabitable earth.

Doomerism describes people who are extremely pessimistic and fatalistic about the problems they face. Historically, such a pessimistic worldview was linked to the period of Romanticism – 1798 to 1837 – which was filled with unhappiness shaping an inward and conservative reaction to modernity.

The counter argument has been made by German philosopher Habermas in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment. The philosopher believes that the progressive promises of Enlightenment (e.g. true democracy, the end of human suffering, equality, etc.) have not yet been fulfilled and it is therefore an unfinished project – a project we are still working on.

Doomers believe that there is a distinct possibility – or even certainty – that altogether these problems will bring about human extinction in the very near future. Some climate scientists judged that we are doomed. It is like Hotel California, You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave. In short, we are trapped.

Yet, other climate scientists are convinced that no end of the world is in sight. They are convinced that the present climate crisis does not mean the end of the world.

To some extent, global warming might be seen as being about balancing doomism and the trivialization of global warming. Yet, given what we see on our TVs – almost daily – many people today fear that the end

of humanity is coming.

Many have argued that doomism – the belief in the end of the world – is, in-itself a disease. Yet in the early 2000s, some people still claimed that the sun was responsible for global warming. These sort of global warming deniers have moved to the outer fringes of society or have largely disappeared – just a decade later.

There is a somewhat macabre in the acceptance that climate science is progressing us towards certain death. Yet, there might also be some truth to that. Today, hardly anyone anymore says that global warming isn't real – apart from an isolated minority of hardcore deniers.

Instead, people keep on saying that climate scientists are understating how bad it is and how bad it will become. We know – if we carry on with “business as usual”, which we seem to do – by the year 2070, the world has a distinct likelihood that it will indeed be uninhabitable. Millions, perhaps billions of people will die.

We know that research on global warming uses climate modelling to ascertain the veracity of what we are facing. These models have informed on the UN World Climate Report. Some people even know Greta Thunberg's new Climate Book, published last year.

Meanwhile, climate scientists like NASA's Kate Marvel rejects the idea that today's children are doomed to have an unhappy life – or no life at all. One might sum all this up that doomism is unjustified while global warming still represents a huge problem.

Global warming also signifies one of – if not – “the” most important challenges of the 21st century. Yet, the world is not on track to tackle it effectively. As António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, recently said,

Greenhouse gas emissions keep growing.

Global temperatures keep rising.

And our planet is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible.

We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator.

While the idea of an imminent doomsday might be a bit like a social disease and is a little exaggerated, doomism still has a rather big influence on how bad it will get. Yet, there are many positive trends, such as, for example:

- falling prices of clean energy,
- a flattening of global emissions,
- increased commitments by countries to reach net zero.

In any case, to say that we must prepare for the end of the world is rather disempowering. It also carries the risk that the greedy profits interest of fossil fuel corporations will win. Perhaps just because people no longer get involved. In other words, doomism actually assists polluting corporations such as, for example:

- Peabody Energy, Kuwait Petroleum Corp, ConocoPhillips, Chevron, Saudi Aramco, ExxonMobil, BP (greenwashed by renaming it from British Petroleum to Beyond Petroleum), National Iranian Oil Co, and Royal Dutch Shell.

Doomism and worse, its evil twin brothers of fatalism and determinism, suggest that nothing can be done. All is predetermined. Our faith is sealed. This assists capitalism by taking us – as a critical agency – out of the equation.

It destroys German philosopher Adorno's Mündigkeit or self-reflective maturity. All three – doomism, fatalism, and determinism – often run under the self-defeating motto of, it can't be helped; it can't be changed; we are doomed.

These hallucinations assist the power elite in render-

ing us not only passive but, worse, asphyxiated inside pre-existing structure – the manipulative media structure of capitalism. It favours the politics of resignation.

Interestingly, nothing in the IPCC reports and nothing else written by almost all climate scientists actually supports the idea of an imminent extinction of humanity and that we will die out this century due to global warming.

Yet, global warming will certainly have very bad affects – especially in the poorer regions of the world. But this largely depends on our actions.

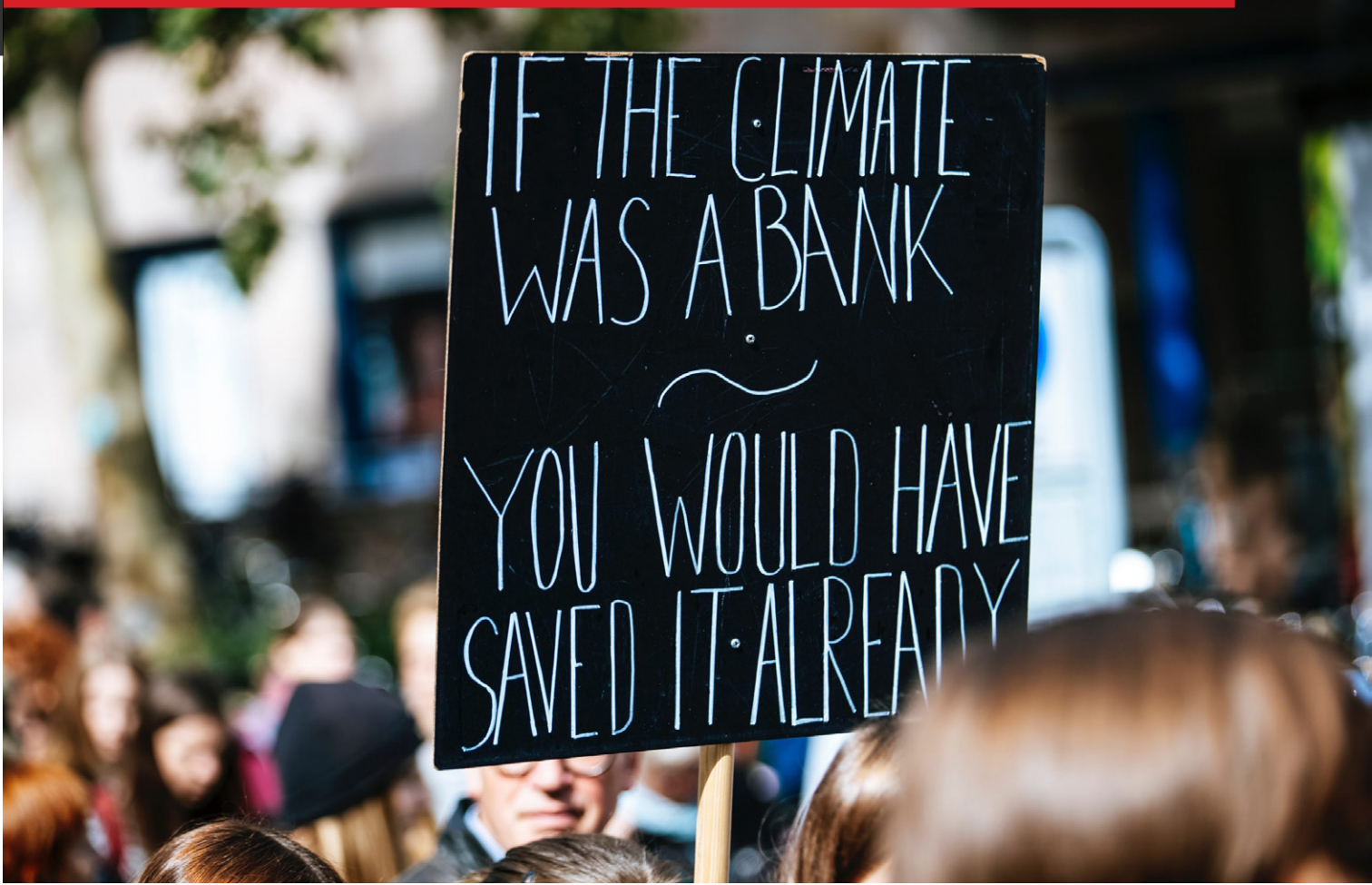
The overwhelming research in recent years suggests that we are probably heading for a warming of about 30 C. Three degrees sound small but with 3 degrees of warming, the world will be hit hard.

This is not a world that we want to leave to future generations. It will be catastrophic for regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. To make things worse, these countries – that are not responsible for global warming – have a very low adaptability to global warming. Yet, even with global warming, it will be a world in which humanity can survive.

On the upswing, there are already commitments from countries and measures have been taken that go far beyond what was common policy only a few years ago. In other words, the world is seemingly beginning to bend the rising temperature curve downwards. Yet on the downswing, it could very well be that we will not reach the most ambitious climate target of 1.5 degrees of warming.

However, there is also a huge range of environmental improvements aiming to keep the world well below 3 degrees. What earth needs to achieve is to remain well below 2 degrees. Ultimately, climate change is a matter of degrees – not thresholds. There might not be a tipping point of no return.

There really is no specific limit in the climate where 1.4 degrees is okay, and 1.5 degrees is not. Or 1.9 degrees means earth is habitable, while at 2 degrees



feedback sets in, and when the world gets 5 (or more) degrees warmer – we are all doomed.

This is not how the climate works, as far as we have been able to determine. In other words, it appears to many – if not most – scientists reject the notion of tipping points. Instead, regional systems such as ice sheets, the Amazon rainforest, ecosystems in the northern hemisphere of the earth, and coral reefs may have tipping elements. But perhaps not earth as such.

Significantly, many researchers oppose doomism and so does Greta Thunberg in her climate book. The publisher had invited about 100 scientists to be involved in the book. Many scientists who reviewed the book praised the quality of the book. These scientists also reject crippling fatalism as well as the trivialization of global warming.

To put simply, the extent to which global warming would be catastrophic depends highly on us. We need to push governments, corporations, and companies to take action – and much faster than ever before.

But here, too, the following applies – it's not about everything or nothing. It is, to some extent, about how far we can ease the impact of global warming. This sort of argument makes more sense, because an “all-or-nothing” view reinforces the idea that we are either saved or doomed.

Beyond all that, we will all suffer from global warming in the near and distant future. Worse, we will not be able to stop emissions tomorrow – no matter what we do.

Perhaps one of the key questions are, how much suffering is caused and how much we can save? It is often said, that humanity's ability to adapt to global warming is underestimated. Yet, many people still live in the harshest environments on earth – from the arctic circle to the Sahara.

However, we – at least those living in wealthy countries – can not just adapt to changes and believe everything is fine. We need to alleviate human suffering on a global scale. We also know that it is cheaper and more effective to avoid any

To fight global warming, we urgently need a very different and more equal world, have stronger democratic institutions, better security arrangements, a great awareness about global warming, and that doomism is counterproductive.

We cannot separate the effects of global warming from the general human development. Our ability to adapt depends on how well we progress in solving two key problems: polluting corporations and the Uber-consumption of the rich.

If we can solve these two problems, humanity no longer needs to be afraid of the future. This also means that if we fail to solve these two problems – the elimination of polluting corporations and the rampant over-consumerism of present day capitalism – it could end very badly.

In other words, we do not take stronger measures than we take today. More needs to be done – rather urgently. One also needs to fight doomism that prevents us from acting. Instead of fatalism, we have reasons to be cautiously hopeful.

On the downside, we probably will have to live in a world we don't want even in the coming decades down the track. But it can be a world where children can still live a happy life.

Perhaps there is a reason to be 80% pessimistic about global warming, and 20% optimistic. It is, in fact this 20% why I go to work every day.



A Radical President?! Pandemonium!

Michael Albert

Consider the potential of certain progressives winning high office in the U.S. Beyond their being much better than who they defeat, would they turn out to be allies of corporate continuity? Would they turn out to be agents of change? We know the government is structured to serve power and wealth. We know the deck is stacked. But is there any room for maneuver? And if there is room for maneuver, and if there is sufficient support to push maneuver to go further and further toward radical change, would elected progressives aid that radical change?

Let's make the picture more specific. Suppose AOC runs for and becomes President in 2024? Or Sanders does. Or whoever else does who is equally or still more progressive but whose name I don't even know. Suppose grassroots activism is widespread and deep. Would the program the new President espoused in the campaign move from progressive to radical to revolutionary in office? Or would it move from progressive to liberal to reactionary despite public desires?

Imagine it is Inauguration Day. The new president gives her opening presidential speech. Phones are off. The whole country, literally everyone, glues their attention to live TV coverage.

What words would indicate forthcoming sell out?
What words would indicate forthcoming ideal behavior?
What words would indicate behavior that someone like me or you would love to celebrate, but that would likely over-extend current reality and therefore not be ideal?

I think these are hard questions, especially the second. The difficulty is that to sensibly consider the possibilities we would have to consider not just the new

president's words, but also the national context and, in particular, the new president's support. So let's start with the first question, then the third, and only then try the hardest one, the second. And let's keep in mind we aren't thinking about this because we wonder what is inside the new President's heart, gut, or mind. We are not deciding whether to take a walk in the park together. We are not deciding whether to go on a date. We care about what the new President is going to do. We wonder how to gauge likely future impact.

So, what words would indicate forthcoming sell out? Sell-out would be for the new President to utilize her power to preserve existing economic, kinship, cultural, political or other hierarchies. It would be to pursue daily life as usual, legislation as usual, adjudication as usual, holidays as usual, entertainment as usual, education as usual, health as usual, production and consumption as usual, and war as usual, each to benefit masters and deprive everyone else. It would be to act in accord with the structures and pressures of today, not with the structures and pressures of a better tomorrow. An opening speech that reveals future sell-out would say "my fellow Americans, blah, blah, blah." You want exact words? Fine, go online and click on any inauguration speech. Biden, Trump, Obama...and from my youth, Kennedy too. Or you could even ask chatGPT to write you one. There is no need to dwell on what we have all endlessly heard. We know the stuff of system maintenance. It goes Blah blah blah. And we all slip slide toward societal suicide.

Okay, so regarding the third question, what would be music to our ears on Inauguration Day, but also beyond optimal for the new President because she needs to describe not what you or I or she would most love to immediately do, but instead what public sentiments

make the best that she can successfully immediately do. To make this exercise a little entertaining, stare at your TV and imagine the new President stares back and says to you the following, or, at any rate, something like the following. You and the whole world watch:

“Good Afternoon. I have a lot of ground to cover but I want to be succinct and to the point, so let’s settle down and begin. First, I have some apologies to make. Second, I have some promises to make. And third, I think a few moments of celebration are in order.

“In the name of my country I apologize for our military and fiscal role in international mayhem and injustice from Latin America to Asia and from Europe to Africa.

“I apologize to Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Guyana, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, the Congo/Zaire, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba.

“I apologize to Chile, Greece, East Timor, Nicaragua, Grenada, El Salvador, Libya, Panama, Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti, Yugoslavia, Iran, Venezuela, Somalia, Syria, and Ukraine too.

“I apologize for our support of dictators, for our exploitative extractions, for our arms shipments and for our arms use. For every provocation. For every violation.

“I apologize for threats, boycotts, and destruction, for massacring native Americans, for our slavery and racism, for our sexism and sexual predation, for Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and for exploitative trade, extortion and more.

“But I know apologies are not enough.

“So I promise that in the next four years we will together reverse our history of exploitation and violence and in its place enact a new agenda of sharing and respect.

“I promise we will study war no more and instead foster solidarity and mutual aid with the same energy

and effort that we previously put to war-making and profit-seeking.

“To that end, in my first year I will transfer to the auspices of their local hosts all our overseas military bases to henceforth used for peacetime solidarity and socially beneficial work.

“I promise to evidence an entirely new and compassionate, internationalist mindset.

“And to that end, also in my first year, I will reduce the U.S. war budget by half, then by half again, down to a fourth, in my second year.

“I will recommission that our domestic bases switch to socially beneficial pursuits such as developing public housing and aiding society-wide transition away from fossil fuel and toward sustainable energy. That will defend against real danger, not create manufactured danger.

“And what of the enormous savings of resources and energies gained by scaling military expenditures to sane levels? Isn’t it obvious? I have talked about it all campaign long.

“I will institute free enriched medical care for all. Free and greatly expanded education for all. Free solar panels for every dwelling, and affordable dwellings for all. And that is just the beginning of what our new government will do to advance social well being and development.

“Together we will steadily transform our domestic institutions of polity, economy, culture, and kinship to remove hierarchies of wealth and power and to attain a just and liberating new beginning.

“Together we will transform our relation to the natural environment to make it not simply sustainable but properly reciprocal for us and for the world around us.

“And this isn’t a one nation, one constituency, one government, much less a one person program. This is humanity’s path forward. And I promise to aid and learn from all those who have already or who will now

take up similar aims by whatever means they deem suitable, throughout the United States and worldwide.

“Amidst our tremendous, sustaining, and enriching diversity, we need to embrace our shared universal humanity.

“We need to celebrate and apply our shared values of human liberation to provide solidarity, diversity, equity, self-management, international peace, and environmental balance to every home, playground, school, workplace, community, county, and country, each in mutual aid with all the rest.

“We must reject greed and profit-seeking.

“We must reject self aggrandizement and power-broking.

“We must embrace our natural home, our planet. We must replenish it, not despoil it.

“We must usher in a new era of human empathy, a new time of joyous exploration of humanity’s collective capacities.

“We must all participate and none dominate. We must all participate and none be dominated.

“As an emissary and servant of the aroused and intent people of the United States and in accord with their emerging and evolving wishes and learning from their incredible grassroots endeavors in our workplaces and neighborhoods, I celebrate all people around the world who will do similarly.

“Forward together toward no more war. No more war-makers. No more war profiteers.

“Forward together toward no more environmental despoliation. No more bossing and no more bosses. No more oppressing and no more oppressors.

“We can’t do all this over night, but we can start tonight. And we can continue tomorrow. And on. And on. Day after day. Together. No surrender.



”I will do my best as a humble President who wishes to serve you.

And you all, you now listening, will do your best as the power and the glory of our shared revolutionary journey.

“I thank you for the opportunity I have to serve. And may we all be strong and blessed with wisdom and courage for the tasks ahead.

“We begin. (Mic drop)

I can’t say for you, but if a new President did deliver anything like that speech, and if the population by a large majority reacted as I would react, to say it would be the happiest, most excited, most elated, most inspiring, most everything, best moment of my life and of most everyone else’s life up to that moment, would understate that moment.

But that moment isn’t yet real.

So now comes the hard part. Our second question. The new President, who, I am assuming, would love

more than anything to give a more eloquent version of the above speech, also understands that the country isn't yet where she, (or, for that matter, you and I) are. More, she understands that in many cases people in the country may not only have reservations that need to be addressed but also insights that need to be heard and accounted for before even arriving at, much less implementing, a viable, worthy, and encompassing agenda.

She understands that there is therefore vast listening and organizing to be done before the above speech or any speech like it could become the agenda of the land. So her opening speech needs to kick off a new level of listening and organizing. It needs to inspire and discover. Here is what I would be ecstatic to hear in light of real current wants and possibilities.

"Good Afternoon.

"You have heard me repeatedly, endlessly throughout the campaign. But now the hour is getting late. Now it is action time, not more words time. So I am going to be brief.

"First, I want to sincerely thank all those who voted for the outcome you have enacted. This is your victory. And it is just a start. I and this new administration now have a responsibility not only to deliver on our campaign program, but also, with your support and guided by directions you deliver, to proceed beyond our campaign program toward the better world we seek.

"You know our program: end the electoral college, institute ranked choice voting, institute community oversight of police; expand free health care for all including preschool childcare; build needed housing/schools/clinics, institute major gun reform, institute free higher education for all, cancel student debt; raise the minimum wage to \$20 an hour, shorten the work week to 35 hours with double hourly pay for overtime; aggressively tax the rich, their profits, property, and luxury consumption; institute national workplace health, safety, and union organizing reforms; slash the military budget, end fossil fuel consumption, greatly expand solar, wind, and other sustainable energy

sources, and much more; all as we have agitated for throughout our campaign.

"Do you remember the town halls, the meetings in towns and cities where we called on you to say what you need, what you want? Where we called on you to present your stories and even more, to present your ideas for positively altering those stories?

We told you we want our administration to be your government. We told you we intend to serve you, the people who endure injustices, the people who bravely navigate countless, needless, unjust, alienating, oppressive affronts, the people who daily suffer obstacles and deprivations that have for so long stood in the way of your fullest human well being and development.

"Well, now is the time for us to deliver. But how? Here I am now talking at millions upon millions of you. But that is not the way. The way is to have you talk at me. It is to have you govern our new administration.

"How can we do that? I don't have all the answers to all the good and worthy questions that face us. But I perhaps have a few ideas about how to hear from you that we can hear, test, and refine as we go.

"So, along with pursuing the earlier summarized program you voted for, in the first few weeks of our administration I intend to:

"Develop and implement mechanisms to hold national plebiscites on important issues.

"Develop and implement mechanisms for public participation in determining local and federal government budgets. That is called participatory budgeting. It will be a step towards politics by and for the people.

"Mandate the nighttime use of public school buildings for adult night school classes, for reading groups and social and interest group clubs for citizens, and in particular for twice a month meetings by area residents to discuss local problems and needs and positive programs.

"Provide federal aid to residents who seek to create

assemblies to begin to guide and hold accountable local government.

“Provide federal aid to employees who seek to create councils in their workplaces to discover and air grievances and to develop positive ways to implement corrections and institute new relations.

“Establish and staff a Department of Peace, a Department of Ecology, a Department of Governmental Participation, and a Department of Economic Democracy, as well as reconsider, re-conceive, and then restart existing Departments all in accord with popular grassroots democracy and participation.

“All that and more to involve our population in providing guiding aims to promote solidarity, diversity, self management, equity, participation, peace, and environmentally responsible sustainability.

“And as I promised, that’s it for today. Just enough words to kick off actions that we will undertake together. I know you all know my love for certain popular music.

“So, together, it is time for us to ring the chimes of freedom, and to do it again, and again, and again, until all are free, all are nourished, all are lovers and thinkers and doers, traveling together into a liberated and liberating future.

“We are not just going to fight a good fight. We are going to win our good fight.

“Thank you again for trusting me to serve – and now, on to acts. Good night.”

Would the above be great to hear if “our she” had won 51 to 49? If our she had won 55 to 45? What would it take? That? More? Whatever it would take, maybe looking forward to 2024 that ought to be our agenda. Not to stop Trump. Not to stop Santos. Not to stop fucking fascism to only re-establish decrepit, rotten, soul destroying, slip sliding to societal suicide continuity. But to have our she win against their he while we organize a public which agitates for the likes of the above pragmatic, ecstatic leap forward.

But wait a minute. A she who wins. Is that not already a ridiculous delusion? The campaign is “our she” against their Trump, or their Santos, or their whoever the fuck else they come up with, plus against the mass media, against Wall Street, against the mainstream of the Democratic Party, against every odds maker. And we imagine she wins? Delusion?

As a partial possible answer let’s imagine one last foray before the TV. The election has been a wild affair. Our she has been honest and very very aggressive throughout. Their he has been a lying, manipulative, slug throughout. Our she has been part of a steadily growing, steadily deepening, grassroots movement. Their he has been point man for steadily withering reaction. And now you sit. Not in motion but just contemplative for the first time in months. You stare at the TV. The concluding debate is down to its concluding remarks. Here they are. Your fingers cross. Your gut clenches. Who wins?

Their He: “How can you possibly have the audacity to stand before the American people and say they should elect you, make you the Commander in Chief, make you the President? You, a woman who anarchistically aims to overthrow our government, a woman who socialistically wants to obliterate our property rights, a woman who feminazilike threatens to topple society’s family fabric? You, a woman who would cravenly reduce our armaments, armed forces, and police to passivity, a woman who would make our country pitifully weak, not even a paper tiger. You, a woman who denies religion, attacks individual creativity, promotes soul-destroying collectivism and denigrates our foundational white roots.

“It will be a pleasure to ship you and your movement’s pathetic power-envy, psychotic animalistic anger back to the fringe communities that spawned it. I happily cede to you my remaining time. Take as long as you like to reply. Your words will only deepen the horror our audience already feels at your vile intentions.”

Our She: “You have no more to say? No more vague, wild assertions? Nothing positive to offer? Okay, I will gladly use your remaining time.

“You wonder at my wanting to anarchistically overthrow our government. I plead guilty.

“Unlike you, I don’t want to preserve elitist, centralizing, mind-numbingly antidemocratic bureaucratic structures against participation by the American people just to preserve the power of centralizing sycophants like yourself who unaccountably control the destiny of millions. I prefer popular self management. I prefer political arrangements that empower and serve the public, not institutions that serve only you and your rich buddies.

“You decry my socialistically opposing few hands holding productive property, and I again plead guilty.

“Unlike you, I am not enamored of enriching property holders beyond the wildest dreams of past kings. I do not think being born with a deed in your hand is the highest form of human achievement. I do not think it is any achievement at all. I reject that people like yourself should own society’s rivers, lakes, resources, machinery, and places of production. I reject that you or anyone should rule over them like tin-pot dictators.

“You ought to be aware, however, that you missed a further target to ridicule. I also oppose a relatively small sector of the population monopolizing empowering work. I want to share work more equally so everyone is prepared by their work to participate in social decisions. Unlike you, I want equitable incomes for all. I want empowering dignified work for all.

“I want people able to decide their own working lives. I would say it is a wonder that you don’t want these gains for all humanity, but your attitude isn’t a wonder. It is unmitigated, self seeking, anti-social greed.

“You say I want to feminazi-like topple the familial fabric of civilization. Why do you say that? Is it because I want young and old people to have a say over their own lives? Because I want families and all living units to freely nurture the next generation without imposing preordained definitions of what boys and girls have to become? Because I want parents and children and extended families to have optimal health

care, empowering work, and shared responsibility for their own and for all social life? Because I want women respected and empowered, because I want sexual preference to be whatever free people prefer. Because I reject turning back the gender clock a century?

“Well you are right, I do want all that. Why don’t you? Is it because you a misogynistic, homophobic, transphobic, narcissistic brute?

“The human, nurturing fabric of society is already at risk. People like you don’t see its deep scars despite your own broken homes and the bedlam so visibly endured by so many all around you. You can’t see the truth of our times because your heart is a cash register and your paranoid eyes perceive only profit potentials.

“I want to restore and enrich society’s fabric. You want to rape and plunder society.

“I see all families as able to be repositories of love and sources of wise, confident participation. You see most families as sources of cheap, obedient labor.

“I see society’s countless communities as allied and equal centers of creative diversity. You see all but your own community as fringe targets to ridicule, restrain, and repress.

“You say I would disarm the country and leave us helpless because I reject siphoning society’s wealth into useless and pointless weapons that, were they used, would destroy all humanity.

“You say I would neuter the police because I want properly paid and empowered justice workers that serve the public and not power, and because I want our children’s and our children’s children’s human potentials to develop free from war, pestilence, coercion, and restriction in a world of shared peace and plenty.

“I am guilty again. You are absolutely right I want all that.

“You call it making our country weak and defenseless. I call it making our country worth defending.

“You say I deny religion and sublimate the individual to the collective. Why? Because I want all religions, races, ethnicities, and nationalities to be free of fear of imposition and negation from without and because I want individuals and collectives prepared and in position to self-manage their destinies without having to submit to the whims of the rich and domineering elites you serve.

“You are right again. I do reject your racism, your sexism, your homophobia. I am guilty as charged.

“You say that it was a pleasure to have run against me, and that it will be a pleasure to ship me and my pathetic envy and psychotic animalistic anger back to the fringe dwellings that spawned it. Well, I have some news for you. Those fringe dwellings are the soup kitchens, apartment buildings, private homes, schools, hospitals, ball fields, churches, and workplaces of America.

“They are fringe to your gilded billionaire lifestyle, yes they are. But we will see soon enough what goes away, and what goes forward.

“Will the American people vote against the movement I come from and their own futures? Or will the American people elect a very new type President and continue their steadily escalating popular participation in revolutionizing all sides of all of our lives?

“After your display here tonight, I too feel ready to predict the outcome. I predict that some folks will vote for you due to fearing the make-believe demons that you and your media moguls have manufactured. And I predict some will vote for you to defend their elite interests with no concern for society. But I predict most people will see past the confusions and prejudices that have historically allowed the likes of you to win office.

“Your ignorant posturing, your bullying, your pathetically hypocritical life and your self-serving views, all admittedly more eloquently expressed than some others of your ilk who came before you could manage, have lost too much of their deceiving power for you to push anything aside, much less to push aside the most grassroots, democratic, participatory, multi-focused

movement this country has ever seen. Good luck with that.

“I wish I could be a gentlewoman and say it was a pleasure to run against you. But I can’t. It would be a lie. And I won’t lie. It has been a bore to run against you because you are an empty vessel of hate. It has been depressing, because even in one lonely body, such an amalgamation of narcissistic evil as you embrace is seriously depressing to behold.

“We will soon see what the country decides. Will it opt for you and your hate and fear? Will it opt for the billionaires who pray that you will prevail and then help them amass still more millions and billions?

Or will the country opt for the hopes and thoughts that have risen, rallied, marched, and most of all organized all across the country? Will the country opt for the women and men, boys and girls, and movements and activists who have worked tirelessly for our campaign to prevail so that we can in turn aid their efforts to build a vastly better future?

Time is on our side. Your day is slip-sliding away. Good riddance.

Pandemonium...

I admit I had “our she” go all out. Couldn’t restrain myself. Too much? Beyond possibility? I don’t know. Maybe looking forward to 2024 our agenda should not be to stop Trump. Nor to stop Santos. Nor to stop fucking fascism to only re-establish decrepit, rotten, soul destroying, slip sliding to societal suicide continuity. Maybe that sets the bar too low. Maybe our agenda should be to have “our she” win against “their he” plus to organize a public which not only votes but agitates and assembles for the likes of an ecstatic leap forward.

Maybe we should start to ring them chimes now. If not now, when? After the deluge?

Can Europe Survive This Moment?

Boaventura de Sousa Santos

A new-old ghost is hovering over Europe—war. The most violent continent in the world in terms of the number of deaths caused by warfare during the last 100 years (not to go back any further and include the deaths suffered by Europe during religious wars and the deaths inflicted by Europeans on peoples subjected to colonialism) is heading for a new war.

Almost 80 years after World War II, the most violent conflict so far, which led to the death of between 70 and 85 million people, the war on its way may be even more deadly. All previous conflicts started apparently without a strong reason and were supposed to last for a short time. At the beginning of these conflicts, most of the well-to-do population went on with their normal lives—shopping and going to the theater, reading newspapers, taking vacations, and enjoying idly chatting about politics. Whenever a localized violent conflict arose, it was the prevailing belief that it would be resolved locally. For example, very few people (including politicians) thought that the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), which led to the death of more than 500,000 people, would be the harbinger of a wider war—World War II—even though the conditions on the ground pointed to that. While knowing that history does not repeat itself, it is legitimate to ask whether the current war between Russia and Ukraine is not the harbinger of a new, much wider war.

Signs are accumulating that a greater danger may be on the horizon. At the level of public opinion and dominant political discourse, the presence of this danger is surfacing in two opposing symptoms. On the one hand, conservative political forces not only control the ideological initiatives but also enjoy a privileged reception in the media. They are polarizing enemies of complexity and calm argumentation, who use extremely

aggressive words and make inflammatory appeals to hatred. These conservative political forces are not bothered by the double standards with which they comment on conflicts and death (for example, between the deaths resulting from the conflicts in Ukraine and in Palestine), nor by the hypocrisy of appealing to values that they deny by their practice (they expose the corruption of their opponents to hide their own). In this current of conservative opinion, more and more right-wing and far-right positions are intermingled, and the greatest dynamism (tolerated aggressiveness) comes from the latter. This device aims to inculcate the idea of the need to eliminate the enemy. Elimination by words leads to a predisposition of public opinion toward elimination by deeds. Although in a democracy there are no internal enemies, only adversaries, the logic of war is insidiously transposed to assume the presence of internal enemies, whose voices must first be silenced. In parliaments, conservative forces dominate the political initiative; while leftist forces, disoriented or lost in ideological labyrinths or incomprehensible electoral calculations, revert to a defense as paralyzing as it is incomprehensible. As in the 1930s, the apology for fascism is made in the name of democracy; the apology for war is made in the name of peace.

But this political-ideological atmosphere is signaled by an opposite symptom. The most attentive observers or commentators are aware of the ghost that haunts Europe and have surprisingly converged while expressing their concerns regarding the matter. In recent times, I have identified with analyses by commentators that I have always recognized as belonging to a different political family from my own: conservative, moderate-rightist commentators. What we have in common is the distinction we make between the issues of war and peace and the issues of democracy. We may diverge on the former and

converge on the latter. We all agree that only the strengthening of democracy in Europe can lead to the containment of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and, ideally, lead to its peaceful solution. Without vigorous democracy, Europe will continue sleepwalking toward a new war and its own destruction.

Is there time to avoid catastrophe? I would like to say yes, but I cannot. The signs are very worrying. First, the far right is growing globally, driven and financed by the same interested parties who meet in Davos to take care of their business. In the 1930s, they were much more afraid of communism than of fascism, today, without the communist threat, they are afraid of the revolt of the impoverished masses and propose violent police and military repression as the only response. Their parliamentary voice is that of the extreme right. Internal war and external war are the two faces of the same monster, and the arms industry gains equally from both these wars.

Secondly, the Ukraine war seems more confined than what it is in reality. The current scourge, raging on the continent, where 80 years ago so many thousands of innocents (a majority of them Jews) died, looks very much like self-flagellation. Russia up to the Urals is as European as Ukraine, and with this illegal war, in addition to the loss of innocent lives, many of whom will be Russian-speaking individuals, Russia is destroying the infrastructures that it itself built under the former Soviet Union. The history and ethnic-cultural identities between Russia and Ukraine are far more intertwined than with other countries that once occupied Ukraine and now support it. Ukraine and Russia both need to ensure a greater emphasis on their democratic processes to end the war and secure peace. Europe is much larger than the eyes of Brussels can reach. At the European Commission headquarters (or NATO headquarters, which is the same thing), the logic of peace according to the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 dominates, and not the one established under the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The former humiliated the defeated power (Germany) after



World War I, and the humiliation led to a new war 20 years later; the latter honored the defeated power (Napoleonic France) and guaranteed a century of peace in Europe. The peace being proposed today is the one of the Treaty of Versailles. It presupposes the total defeat of Russia, just as Adolf Hitler imagined it when he invaded the Soviet Union in 1941. Even assuming that this occurs at the level of conventional war, it is easy to predict that if the losing power has nuclear weapons, it will not hesitate to use them. There will be a nuclear holocaust. American neoconservatives already include this eventuality in their calculations, convinced in their blindness that it will all occur thousands of miles from their borders. America first... and last. It is quite possible that they are already thinking about a new Marshall Plan, this time to store the atomic waste accumulated in the ruins of Europe.

Without Russia, Europe is half of itself, economically and culturally. The greatest illusion inculcated in Europeans by the information war over the past year is that Europe, once amputated from Russia, will be able to regain its integrity with the U.S.'s help, which takes very good care of its interests. History shows that a declining empire always tries to drag along its zones of influence to slow down the decline. If only Europe knew how to take care of its own interests.

Who's Winning and losing the Economic War over Ukraine?

Medea Benjamin, Nicolas J.S. Davies

With the Ukraine war now reaching its one-year mark on February 24, the Russians have not achieved a military victory but neither has the West achieved its goals on the economic front. When Russia invaded Ukraine, the United States and its European allies vowed to impose crippling sanctions that would bring Russia to its knees and force it to withdraw.

Western sanctions would erect a new Iron Curtain, hundreds of miles to the east of the old one, separating an isolated, defeated, bankrupt Russia from a reunited, triumphant and prosperous West. Not only has Russia withstood the economic assault, but the sanctions have boomeranged—hitting the very countries that imposed them.

Western sanctions on Russia reduced the global supply of oil and natural gas, but also pushed up prices. So Russia profited from the higher prices, even as its export volume decreased. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports that Russia's economy only contracted by 2.2% in 2022, compared with the 8.5% contraction it had forecast, and it predicts that the Russian economy will actually grow by 0.3% in 2023.

On the other hand, Ukraine's economy has shrunk by 35% or more, despite \$46 billion in economic aid from generous U.S. taxpayers, on top of \$67 billion in military aid.

European economies are also taking a hit. After growing by 3.5% in 2022, the Euro area economy is expected to stagnate and grow only 0.7% in 2023, while the British economy is projected to actually contract by 0.6%. Germany was more dependent on imported Russian energy than other large European countries so, after growing a meager 1.9% in 2022, it is predicted to have negligible 0.1% growth

in 2023. German industry is set to pay about 40% more for energy in 2023 than it did in 2021.

The United States is less directly impacted than Europe, but its growth shrank from 5.9% in 2021 to 2% in 2022, and is projected to keep shrinking, to 1.4% in 2023 and 1% in 2024. Meanwhile India, which has remained neutral while buying oil from Russia at a discounted price, is projected to maintain its 2022 growth rate of over 6% per year all through 2023 and 2024. China has also benefited from buying discounted Russian oil and from an overall trade increase with Russia of 30% in 2022. China's economy is expected to grow at 5% this year.

Other oil and gas producers reaped windfall profits from the effects of the sanctions. Saudi Arabia's GDP grew by 8.7%, the fastest of all large economies, while Western oil companies laughed all the way to the bank to deposit \$200 billion in profits: ExxonMobil made \$56 billion, an all-time record for an oil company, while Shell made \$40 billion and Chevron and Total gained \$36 billion each. BP made "only" \$28 billion, as it closed down its operations in Russia, but it still doubled its 2021 profits.

As for natural gas, U.S. LNG (liquefied natural gas) suppliers like Cheniere and companies like Total that distribute the gas in Europe are replacing Europe's supply of Russian natural gas with fracked gas from the United States, at about four times the prices U.S. customers pay, and with the dreadful climate impacts of fracking. A mild winter in Europe and a whopping \$850 billion in European government subsidies to households and companies brought retail energy prices back down to 2021 levels, but only after they spiked five times higher over the summer of 2022.

While the war restored Europe's subservience to U.S. hegemony in the short term, these real-world impacts of the war could have quite different results in the long term. French President Emmanuel Macron remarked, "In today's geopolitical context, among countries that support Ukraine, there are two categories being created in the gas market: those who are paying dearly and those who are selling at very high prices... The United States is a producer of cheap gas that they are selling at a high price... I don't think that's friendly."

An even more unfriendly act was the sabotage of the Nord Stream undersea gas pipelines that brought Russian gas to Germany. Seymour Hersh reported that the pipelines were blown up by the United States, with the help of Norway—the two countries that have displaced Russia as Europe's two largest natural gas suppliers. Coupled with the high price of U.S. fracked gas, this has fueled anger among the European public. In the long term, European leaders may well conclude that the region's future lies in political and economic independence from countries that launch military attacks on it, and that would include the United States as well as Russia.

The other big winners of the war in Ukraine will of course be the weapons makers, dominated globally by the U.S. "big five": Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon and General Dynamics. Most of the weapons so far sent to Ukraine have come from existing stockpiles in the United States and NATO countries. Authorization to build even bigger new stockpiles flew through Congress in December, but the resulting contracts have not yet shown up in the arms firms' sales figures or profit statements.

The Reed-Inhofe substitute amendment to the FY2023 National Defense Authorization Act authorized "wartime" multi-year, no-bid contracts to "replenish" stocks of weapons sent to Ukraine, but the quantities of weapons to be procured outstrip the amounts shipped to Ukraine by up to 500 to one. Former senior OMB official Marc Cancian commented, "This isn't replacing what we've giv-

en [Ukraine]. It's building stockpiles for a major ground war [with Russia] in the future."

Since weapons have only just started rolling off production lines to build these stockpiles, the scale of war profits anticipated by the arms industry is best reflected, for now, in the 2022 increases in their stock prices: Lockheed Martin, up 37%; Northrop Grumman, up 41%; Raytheon, up 17%; and General Dynamics, up 19%.

While a few countries and companies have profited from the war, countries far from the scene of the conflict have been reeling from the economic fallout. Russia and Ukraine have been critical suppliers of wheat, corn, cooking oil and fertilizers to much of the world. The war and sanctions have caused shortages in all these commodities, as well as fuel to transport them, pushing global food prices to all-time highs.

So the other big losers in this war are people in the Global South who depend on imports of food and fertilizers from Russia and Ukraine simply to feed their families. Egypt and Turkey are the largest importers of Russian and Ukrainian wheat, while a dozen other highly vulnerable countries depend almost entirely on Russia and Ukraine for their wheat supply, from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Laos to Benin, Rwanda and Somalia. Fifteen African countries imported more than half their supply of wheat from Russia and Ukraine in 2020.

The Black Sea Grain Initiative brokered by the UN and Turkey has eased the food crisis for some countries, but the agreement remains precarious. It must be renewed by the UN Security Council before it expires on March 18, 2023, but Western sanctions are still blocking Russian fertilizer exports, which are supposed to be exempt from sanctions under the grain initiative. UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths told Agence France-Presse on February 15 that freeing up Russian fertilizer exports is "of the highest priority."

After a year of slaughter and destruction in Ukraine, we can declare that the economic winners

of this war are: Saudi Arabia; ExxonMobil and its fellow oil giants; Lockheed Martin; and Northrop Grumman.

The losers are, first and foremost, the sacrificed people of Ukraine, on both sides of the front lines, all the soldiers who have lost their lives and families who have lost their loved ones. But also in the losing column are working and poor people everywhere, especially in the countries in the Global South that are most dependent on imported food

and energy. Last but not least is the Earth, its atmosphere and its climate—all sacrificed to the God of War.

That is why, as the war enters its second year, there is a mounting global outcry for the parties to the conflict to find solutions. The words of Brazil's President Lula reflect that growing sentiment. When pressured by President Biden to send weapons to Ukraine, he said, "I don't want to join this war, I want to end it."



A Month's Notice: Why Burkina Faso Ordered French Troops out of the Country

Ramzy Baroud

Though it was clear that Burkina Faso was eventually going to follow in the footsteps of Mali and the Central African Republic (CAR), Ouagadougou's decision to break military ties with France was not as simple as media sound bites want us to believe.

The conventional wisdom is that these countries are walking away from their former colonial master, France, to forge alternative alliances with a new ally, Russia. These convenient analyses are largely shaped by the geopolitical tug-of-war between old and new superpowers: The US and its NATO allies on the one hand, and Russia and China on the other.

Though global rivalry, especially on the resource-rich African continent, is an important component in understanding Burkina Faso's decision – and earlier, similar decisions by Mali in April, and CAR in December – more attention needs to be paid to the logic of these African countries' own political discourse.

On January 21, Burkina Faso officially asked France to withdraw its troops from the country within a month. French President Emmanuel Macron seemed perplexed by the request. He answered that he was awaiting clarifications from Burkina Faso's transitional President, Ibrahim Traore.

Paris' confusion did not last long, however. "At the current stage, we don't see how to be more clear than this," the Burkina Faso government's spokesperson, Rimtalba Jean Emmanuel Ouedraogo, speaking on national television, said on January 23. Ouagadougou's decision was in reference to 400

French soldiers stationed in the country following a military agreement signed with Paris in 2018. But what were these soldiers doing in Burkina Faso, in the first place?

The agreement between Paris and Ouagadougou was part of a series of agreements signed between France and several African countries to form regional economic and military alliances, with the understanding that France would be helping these countries achieve stability amid threats of various militant groups.

Mali, which suffered a series of military coups and deadly rebellions that threatened to divide the country, was the focal point of the French military redeployment into Africa, resulting in the launch of several major campaigns starting in January 2013 with Operation Serval and, later, Operation Barkhane.

As time passed, the French government claimed one victory after another against various militant groups, always rationalizing its action as part of regional accords signed per the invitation of African countries, which are mostly based in the Sahel region.

Critics often hit back, saying that France, which effectively controls the economies of fourteen African countries by having a major stake in their currencies and national reserves, is not an equal partner in Africa, but a meddler.

The latter claim began acquiring more credibility, as there was no proof that Operations Serval and Barkhane achieved their intended goals, or that any of



Demonstration against the French military presence in Burkina Faso in Ouagadougou, 20 January. Photo: Olympia de Maismont

the countries involved in the French scheme achieved political or economic stability.

Though military coups were a common occurrence in many African countries following the formal end of colonialism on the continent, the new governments in Mali, CAR and Burkina Faso used a different kind of political discourse, which accused the former regimes of treason, while also blaming France for much of these countries' corruption.

Burkina Faso was not the exception.

On September 30, a military coup in Burkina Faso overthrew the government. Anti-French sentiments were apparent in the language and chants on the streets, and the French flag was repeatedly burned and replaced by the Russian flag.

This is where news analyses often go wrong. When Russian flags were raised in abundance in the streets of Burkina Faso, many assumed that the entire spectacle was an outcome of French-Russian rivalry in that region. Though this geopolitical conflict is real, the behavior of Burkina Faso's Traore's government cannot be reduced to political opportunism and military or financial bribery.

Like Mali and CAR – and other African countries – Burkina Faso never had real political margins that would allow it to operate independently from its former colonial masters. These margins did exist,

but were almost completely shut down following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The USSR was seen as a trusted ally by various African governments, which used Soviet support to balance out Western influences and pressures on the highly contested continent.

The demise of the USSR meant the end of that balancing act and the full return of Africa to the grip of the western sphere.

The changing global political dynamics resulting from the US/NATO-Russia/China rivalries have, again, opened some of these margins. The countries that dared to be first to cross to the other camp – Mali, CAR, and now Burkina Faso – were the countries that had little to lose as a result of this political gamble. They enjoyed no political stability, little sovereignty and no economic prospects.

This means that the future could also witness more such geopolitical shifts. The nature and speed of these shifts will be largely determined by the outcome of the ongoing global conflict.

Burkina Faso's decision to order French troops out of the country had something to do with global geopolitics, but only in terms of timing. The actual reason is that the French military presence in the country was of no real benefit to Burkina Faso. Ouagadougou seems to have reached the same conclusion as Bamako and Bangui did in the previous month. Indeed, it was only a matter of time.