



MAGAZINE

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Expands

US Electoral Politics

Mutual Aid In The Flood



"Most countries in the world claim to have democratic regimes, but no party with any electoral significance, from left to right, considers war an imminent danger and takes up the fight for peace as its main banner."

-Boaventura de Sousa Santos



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A Year of Israel's Genocide in Gaza: A Reflection

Stephen McCloskey

On 6th October 2023, I received an update on an education project at the half-way point of delivery in the Gaza strip managed in partnership with a Palestinian NGO. Attached to the report were multiple photographs of smiling children, relaxed in each other's company, enjoying their journey in education. Four hundred children were enrolled in the programme from Beit Lahia in the north, Deir al-Balah and Maghazi in the centre, and Rafah in the south. They are all places that have been burned into our psyches by endless atrocities over the past year. They have at times masqueraded as 'safe zones' as Palestinians in Gaza, the majority of whom were already refugees from the 1948 Nakba, have been forcibly displaced multiple times. The world has discovered that there are no safe zones in Gaza.

I have lost contact with the children on our programme and have no way of knowing if they

are alive or dead, have suffered bereavement or life-changing injuries, or are among the 17,000 young people unaccompanied or separated from their guardians. They are almost certainly in need of mental health and psychosocial support, living in tents or schools converted into make-shift shelters, malnourished, dehydrated and suffering from infectious diseases such as diarrhoea, jaundice and acute respiratory infections. They may count among the 10,119 students killed or 15,739 injured over the past year and definitely number among the 625,000 young people who were unable to access formal education for the second consecutive year in September 2024. I have received intermittent contact through social media from the Director of our partner in Gaza, who is still striving, in the most appalling of circumstances, to organise structured play and mental health programmes for displaced children.



A history of oppression

For many in the media, the historical starting point of the conflict in Gaza was the Hamas attack on southern Israel on 7 October 2023 that killed 1,139 people. History had in fact led us to that point. My organisation, the Centre for Global Education, was providing formal education classes to children in Gaza because nearly 200 schools were forced to double-shift, meaning that two school populations shared the same building, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Double-shifting became necessary because of Israel's blockade of Gaza since 2007 which prevented the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) from importing the construction materials to build the number of schools needed for Gaza's 290,000 school students. Israel considered such materials to be 'dual use' with the potential to be co-opted for military purposes. This security imperative was repeatedly invoked to impose a blockade that decimated the economy and reduced the majority of Gazans to penury. By 2015, the World Bank found that Gaza had the highest unemployment rate in the world at 43 percent and UNRWA alerted the world to the fact that without 'remedial action', Gaza would not be a liveable place by 2020. The world instead ignored the warnings and Gaza's crumbling infrastructure was unequal to the demands of its two million citizens. Living conditions deteriorated further when Israel launched four military campaigns on Gaza in 2008-09, 2011, 2014 and 2021 that followed Hamas's taking control of the strip in 2007. Israel's military described these campaigns as 'mowing the lawn', which involved periodically denuding the military capacity of Hamas but caused thousands of civilian casualties and deliberately targeted civilian infrastructure.

It was the former British prime-minister, David Cameron, who described Gaza as a 'giant, open prison' but such rhetoric was not converted into sanctions on Israel which blockaded Gaza with impunity and enjoyed lucrative trading relations with the European Union under the 'EU-Israel Association Agreement'. And, of course, Israel's

largest donor and protector is the US which has just supplied an arms package of \$8.7 billion at the same time as it is allegedly working toward a ceasefire in Lebanon and one year into a genocide in Gaza. That is additional to \$3.8 billion given in aid to Israel annually. Small wonder that Israel continues to turn its face against meaningful negotiations toward a ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon when it continues to enjoy the bountiful trade, arms, finance and diplomatic protection of its European and North American allies. Israel's enablers have been recklessly prepared to set aside international law and, in particular, the July 2024 ruling of the International Court of Justice, the world's highest court, that declared Israel's occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, as unlawful under international law. The Reverend Dr Munther Isaac spoke for many when he delivered a devastating Christmas sermon in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bethlehem. The 'hypocrisy and racism of the Western world is transparent and appalling', argued Rev Isaac while reflecting on the genocide in Gaza. Never again did he want to receive a lecture on human rights from the west and asked: 'For those who are complicit, will you ever recover from this?'. That is a question the global North would do well to ruminate on as the 'rules-based order' lies in tatters.

Settler colonialism

Of course, the genocide in Gaza has been accompanied by an upsurge in human rights abuses against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank carried out by an emboldened Israeli military and colonist population. According to the UN, since 7 October, 676 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank with another twelve people killed by colonists. By comparison, 23 Israelis, including 17 members of Israeli forces and five settlers, were killed by Palestinians. Since 7 October 2023, 277 Palestinian households comprising 1,628 people, including 794 children, have been forcibly displaced in incidents involving colonists. In an interview with Lubnah Shomali, Advocacy Manager with the Palestinian NGO,

BADIL, she told me there had been inadequate monitoring of where displaced Palestinians had taken refuge and how they were coping with the loss of their homes and livelihoods.

The number of Palestinians incarcerated in the West Bank since 7 October has surpassed 10,000, of whom nearly 5,000 are imprisoned under administrative detention orders meaning that they are held indefinitely without trial. In a report called 'Welcome to Hell', the Israeli human rights organisation, B'tselem gathered testimonies from Palestinian prisoners on their treatment in Israeli jails which revealed a regime that included:

“unrelenting physical and psychological violence, denial of medical treatment, starvation, withholding of water, sleep deprivation, and confiscation

of all personal belongings. The overall picture indicates abuse and torture carried out under orders, in utter defiance of Israel's obligations under domestic law and under international law”.

Meanwhile, Israel's colonisation of the West Bank continues apace with between 600,000 and 750,000 colonists living in 290 illegal colonies and outposts devouring Palestinian land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The West Bank has been in lockdown for much of the past year and there have been regular incursions into Palestinian refugee camps, particularly those in the northern West Bank such as Jenin, Tulkaram and Al Far'a. A total of 793 obstacles in the West Bank, including 89 permanently staffed checkpoints and 196 road gates, heavily restrict movement and deny access to services, an increase of 23 percent



since June 2023. This fragmentation of the West Bank is exacerbated by Israel's 'separation barrier' – deemed unlawful by the International Court of Justice in an advisory opinion in 2004 – as it breaks up contiguous Palestinian urban and rural areas and severs community ties. B'tselem estimates that it has resulted in the annexation of almost 10 percent of the West Bank. These facts on the ground make a mockery of the two-state solution repeatedly proposed by the US as the only means to ending the conflict in the Middle-East.

A year of genocide

As we approach the first anniversary of Israel's genocide in Gaza, which has claimed 41,000 Palestinian lives, it will echo through history as another example of Western powers prioritising selfish strategic interests above the rights of people in the global South. In the case of Palestine, from the 1917 Balfour Declaration, in which Britain pledged to establish a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, to Western complicity in the occupation and accelerated colonisation of Palestinian land, we have witnessed the disposability of peoples of the South. Colombian president, Gustavo Petro, recognised in the Gaza genocide, a warning: "What we see in Palestine will also be the sufferings in the world of all the peoples of the South". Picking up on this, Naomi Klein identified Israel's "unending campaign" as a message: "that the gilded bubbles of relative safety and luxury that are dotted across our cruelly divided and fast-warming world will be protected at all costs. Up to and including with genocidal violence".

And, now, Israel has turned this genocidal violence on Lebanon where there have been 1,600 deaths since 7 October 2023, 65 percent of whom have been killed in the past two weeks. We have seen the same pattern of mass displacement in Lebanon as witnessed in Gaza, with 150,000 internally displaced persons taking refuge in 800 shelters, mostly public schools, as another student population is denied access to education. Nesrine Malik, correctly identifies that "in terms of real and grave threats to regional stability, Israel

is the pugnacious out-of-control force". Hamas's allies, Hezbollah and the Houthis in Yemen, have pledged to stand-down when there is a permanent ceasefire in Gaza which would also result in the release of Israeli hostages. The road to de-escalation is a clear and obvious one but has been consistently rejected by Israel's far-right government.

Since the Nakba in 1948, Palestinians have repeatedly resisted the erasure of their political, social, and cultural identity. South Africa's application for proceedings against Israel under the Genocide Convention at the International Court of Justice, documented the extent of Israel's scholasticide and attempts to erase historical memory in Gaza. Cheikh Niang, Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, argued that Israel no "longer hides its true intentions of 'a second Nakba', leaving the Palestinians [in Gaza] with three options: displacement, subjugation, or deaths — in other words, ethnic cleansing, apartheid, or genocide". "The Nakba, thus, is an ongoing process affecting the Palestinian people over generations". Only courage and resilience have prevented the displacement of Palestinians from Gaza. Abu Rushdi, a 64-year-old grandfather from Gaza, speaking for many, said "We can build another house. But we can't have another land that we can call home. We only have one, and that's Palestine".

Drawing upon this courage, activists across the world have tirelessly campaigned for a ceasefire and taken non-violent direct action to support the Boycott Divestment Sanctions Movement from student encampments for Palestine to the Belgian trade unionists who refused to handle arm shipments to Israel. We have witnessed the emergence of a powerful international solidarity movement for Palestine that rejects the craven complicity of Western states. As we approach the first anniversary of the genocide, we should sit upon the inspiring words of Irish novelist, Sally Rooney, "not to turn away, not to give into despair or fatigue, to keep protesting, to keep speaking out, to keep demanding an end to this horrifying war. It is the least that we can do".

Despite the Unbelievable Pain, Palestinians Emerge Stronger

Ramzy Baroud

No one had expected that one year would be enough to recenter the Palestinian cause as the world's most pressing issue, and that millions of people across the globe, would, once again rally for Palestinian freedom.

The last year witnessed an Israeli genocide in Gaza, unprecedented violence in the West Bank, but also legendary expressions of Palestinian *sumud*, or steadfastness.

It is not the enormity of the Israeli war, but the degree of the Palestinian *sumud* that has challenged what once seemed to be a foregone conclusion to the Palestinian struggle.

Yet, it turned out that the last chapter on Palestine was not yet ready to be written, and that it would not be Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who would write it.

The ongoing war has exposed the limits of Israel's military machine. The typical trajectory of Israel's relationship with the occupied Palestinians has been predicated on unhindered Israeli violence and deafening international silence. It was largely Israel that alone determined the timing and objectives of war. Its enemies, until recently, seemed to have no say over the matter.

Yet, this is no longer the case. Israeli war crimes are now met with Palestinian unity, Arab, Muslim and international solidarity, and early, albeit serious signs of legal accountability as well.

This is hardly what Netanyahu was hoping to achieve; just days before the start of the war, he stood in the United Nations General Assembly Hall carrying a map of a 'New Middle East', a

map that had completely erased Palestine and the Palestinians.

"We must not give the Palestinians a veto over (...) peace," he said, as "Palestinians are only 2% of the Arab world." His arrogance didn't last long, as that supposedly triumphant moment was short-lived.

Embattled Netanyahu is now mostly concerned about his own political survival. He is expanding the war front to escape his army's humiliation in Gaza and is terrified by the prospect of an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court.

And as the International Court of Justice (ICJ) continues to look into an ever-expanding file, accusing Israel of deliberate genocide in the Strip, the UNGA, on September 18, resolved that Israel must end its illegal occupation of Palestine within a year from the passing of its resolution on the matter.

It must be utterly disappointing for Netanyahu – who has worked tirelessly to normalize his occupation of Palestine – to be met with total and thundering international rejection of his schemes. The advisory opinion of the ICJ, on July 19, declaring that "Israel's presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (is) unlawful" was another blow to Tel Aviv, which despite unlimited US support, failed to change international consensus on the illegality of the occupation.

In addition to the relentless Israeli violence, the Palestinian people have been marginalized as political actors. Since the Oslo Accords in 1993,



their fate has been largely entrusted to a mostly unelected Palestinian leadership, which, with time, monopolized the Palestinian cause for its own financial and political interests.

The sumud of the Palestinians in Gaza, who have endured a year of mass killing, deliberate starvation and total destruction of all aspects of life, is helping reassert the political significance of a long-marginalized nation.

This shift is fundamental as it runs opposite to everything that Netanyahu had tried to achieve. In the years prior to the war, Israel seemed to be writing the final chapter of its settler colonial project in Palestine. It had subdued or co-opted

the Palestinian leadership, perfected its siege on Gaza and was ready to annex much of the West Bank.

Gaza became the least of Israel's concerns, as any discussion around it was confined to the hermetic Israeli siege and the resulting humanitarian, though not political crisis.

While Palestinians in Gaza have tirelessly implored the world to pressure Israel to end the protracted siege, imposed in earnest in 2007, Tel Aviv continued to conduct its policies in the Strip according to the infamous logic of former top Israeli official, Dov Weissglas, who explained the rationale behind the blockade as "to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger."

But a year into the war, Palestinians, due to their own steadfastness, have become the center of any serious discussion on a peaceful future in the Middle East. Their collective courage and steadfastness have neutralized the Israeli military machine's ability to exact political outcomes through violence.

True, the number of dead, missing or wounded in Gaza has already exceeded 150,000. The Strip, impoverished and dilapidated to begin with, is in total ruins. Every mosque, church or hospital has been destroyed or seriously damaged. Most of the region's educational infrastructure has been obliterated. Yet, Israel hasn't achieved any of its strategic objectives, which are ultimately united by a single goal, that of silencing the Palestinian quest for freedom, forever.

Despite the unbelievable pain and loss, there is now a powerful energy that is unifying Palestinians around their cause, and the Arabs and the whole world around Palestine. This shall have consequences that will last for many years, long after Netanyahu and his ilk of extremists are gone.

Israel Has Provoked Iran to Enter War

Mireille Rebeiz interviewed by C.J. Polychroniou

After nearly a year since the Hamas-led terror attack on southern Israel that resulted in the deaths of close to 1200 people (roughly 800 civilians and nearly 400 security forces though some Israeli civilians and soldiers may have been killed by friendly fire as the controversial “Hannibal Directive” was deployed on that date, according to reported testimonies of soldiers and officers), Israel’s destruction of Gaza continues unabated. Israel has rejected calls from the international community for a ceasefire/prisoner swap deal and blatantly ignored an International Court of Justice ruling not to engage in any military offensive in Rafah where the situation in the southern Gaza city was already “disastrous.” Now, however, after having killed more than 41,000 Palestinians (though the toll could reach up to 186,000 dead according to a study published in early July in the prestigious medical journal Lancet) and making Gaza practically unlivable, Netanyahu’s neo-fascist government that makes Europe’s right-wing extremists seem like little farceurs has turned its focus to Lebanon. A joint operation between the IDF and Mossad spread terror by exploding walkie-talkies and pagers that people in Lebanon used, killing many and severely wounding thousands, while the Israeli military carried out massive airstrikes across southern Lebanon that have already killed more than 1,000 people, including many children, and wounded thousands. Airstrikes have killed scores of senior Hezbollah figures, including its long-time leader, Hassan Nasrallah. But the airstrikes on Lebanon did not stop even after Nasrallah’s death despite calls for de-escalation, raising fears of a regional war between Israel and Iran. The Israeli military has even targeted central Beirut, and up to one million people may have been displaced. And as even further evidence that Israel is seeking to provoke a regional war, it launched a ground offensive in the south of Lebanon where heavy fighting is apparently taking place between Israeli forces and Hezbollah

fighters. Indeed, Iran seems now to have been dragged into a regional war by launching a major missile attack on Israel.

What is Israel after in Lebanon? Has Nasrallah’s death altered the direction of the conflict? Are we on the brink of a full-blown war in the Middle East? In the interview that follows, Mireille Rebeiz, a Lebanon and Hezbollah expert tackles these and other related questions. Rebeiz is Chair of Middle East Studies and Associate Professor of Francophone Studies & Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Dickinson College (Pennsylvania).

C. J. Polychroniou: Almost a year after launching its devastating attack on Gaza, which the International Court of Justice, scores of international human rights organizations and leading international law scholars and historians have called a genocide, Israel has turned its focus on Lebanon. It blew up communication devices that the armed group Hezbollah had ordered months before the explosions, killing dozens and wounding thousands, and the Israeli military launched a wave of deadly attacks on Lebanon’s capital, one of which struck Hezbollah’s headquarters killing its long-time leader, Hassan Nasrallah. Israel’s war objectives in the Gaza Strip are to wipe Hamas off the earth and make Gaza unlivable. What is Israel trying to accomplish with its attacks on Hezbollah and Lebanon?

Mireille Rebeiz: From Israel’s point of view, the on-going war on Lebanon falls under its right to self-defense against terrorism.

Last week, we saw a series of attacks on Hezbollah fighters including the explosions of pagers and other wireless devices and the assassinations of several leaders. Although Israel has not officially



Site of Israeli bombing of Iranian embassy in Damascus, Syria.

commented on the attacks, evidence suggests that it has been planning this action for some time now.

Escalation continued with the assassination of Hezbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah and several other commanders. Israel dropped at least fifteen-times, American – manufactured, 2,000-pound bombs on south Beirut. Dubbed the “bunker busters” for their ability to pierce the ground before detonating, these bombs leveled several concrete buildings.

More recently, Israel started a ground invasion on south Lebanon and bombed Damascus by air.

The announced goals are clear: eliminate Hezbollah at all costs and send a message to Iran and Syria that Israel will no longer tolerate Iranian-backed militias in the region.

On the surface, one may look at these facts and

consider that Israel is justified in its actions. However, international law tells a different story for Israel is piling violations of several rules and regulations related to armed conflicts. Furthermore, the war on terrorism is never innocent and always carries other motives.

Article 7 of Amended Protocol II on the Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices, to which Lebanon, Israel, and the United States are parties, explicitly bans these types of weapons and methods of warfare. Article 2(4) of Amended Protocol II defines “booby-trap” as “any device or material which is designed, constructed, or adapted to kill or injure, and which functions unexpectedly when a person disturbs or approaches an apparently harmless object or performs an apparently safe act.”

Clearly, the pagers and other wireless devices have been tampered with to cause harm irrespective of its holder. As a result, at least 32 people, includ-

ing two children were killed and thousands more were injured, and it is impossible to argue that every single person killed or injured is a Hezbollah fighter.

Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions specifically states that persons not taking part in the hostilities and those placed “hors de combat” should not be targeted and shall be treated humanely. The wireless communication device explosions and the intense bombing of south Beirut cannot guarantee any protection to civilians and those unrelated to Hezbollah. Many civilians — Lebanese citizens, Palestinians and Syrian refugees — live in south Beirut for its affordable housing.

Beirut itself ranks as the 6th most expensive city in the Arab world, coming after Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Riyadh, and Jeddah. Globally, it ranks as the 113th most expensive city out of 178.

According to the World Bank 2023 report, inflation rate in Lebanon is in the triple-digit. There is serious decline in income as the Lebanese pound lost over 90% of its value. This led to the erosion of the middle class, and half of the population plunged under poverty line with unemployment nearing 30%.

Major events aggravated the financial crisis in Lebanon: the collapse of the infrastructure, the severe shortage of fuel, the pandemic that put a lot of stress on medical care, and finally the Beirut port explosion of 2020.

These factors pushed many Lebanese and others to rent apartments in south Beirut, and Israel cannot guarantee that every resident of this part of town is a Hezbollah fighter.

There is no doubt that these tactics imply a major escalation and a serious violation of international law. Former CIA director Leon Panetta labelled these attacks in Lebanon as terrorism: “I don’t think there’s any question that it’s a form of terrorism.”

Since the United States of America is the one providing many of these weapons, there might be criminal implications under U.S Law as the violation of Article 7 (2) could amount to federal offense. This prompted Secretary of State Anthony Blinken to quickly dissociate the US from the attacks and call for restraints. This comes at a time when the Biden Administration is under investigation for the export of billions of dollars in arms to Israel in assistance of a foreign government accused of committing gross human rights violations including blocking humanitarian aid.

Furthermore, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has a strategy that goes beyond the Israel – Hezbollah war. His political survival is dependent on him staying in power.

Before the October 7 attacks, Netanyahu was on trial for corruption. After winning the election, he aligned himself with extremists, forming a far-right government, one that sought to transform Israel into an autocratic theocracy. For instance, his government proposed a contentious law to reduce minority rights, make it harder to file complaints against corruption, and legalize the annexation of the West Bank. His plans triggered massive protests around the country.

The October 7 attacks were heinous, and they provided Netanyahu with the perfect excuse that would allow him to stay in power: he shifted the narrative to Palestinian rights – including the right to self-determination – as an existential threat to all Jews, justifying thus the need for a long war in Gaza.

In other words, it is in Netanyahu’s interest to keep Israel in a permanent state of war. To do so, he must reject all diplomatic negotiations and place the blame of their failure on the other party.

At this point, Netanyahu is buying time to present the messianic radicals, on whom he relies on to stay in power, with concrete results, ones that would save his image and political career. His undeclared goals would be the annexation of Gaza,

the West Bank, and possibly south Lebanon. The hostages are not among his primary concerns.

Under international law, annexation of territory is illegal. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) said Israel's occupation of the West Bank is illegal and ordered Israel to stop its illegal settlements in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza strip. The United Nations even declared these settlements as "settler-colonialism." Netanyahu's response was that the ICJ's decision is based on lies.

The occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights is equally illegal, and the on-going ground invasion in Lebanon is not only a violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and an act of war, but also may be the excuse to occupy south Lebanon and annex it.

Hezbollah emerged in Lebanon largely in response to the Israeli invasion of that country in 1982. It is an Iran-backed Shiite Islamist militant group and political party with lawmakers in the Lebanese parliament and is seen in fact as something like "a state within a state." What does Hezbollah do in Lebanon and how much support does it have?

Over time, Hezbollah's popularity shifted inside Lebanon. Hezbollah itself was born in 1982 when Israel invaded Lebanon and imposed a brutal two-months siege on Beirut killing an estimated number of 17,000 to 19,000 people. While Israel retreated from Beirut, it kept south Lebanon under occupation till 2000. During this period, it illegally detained thousands of Lebanese resisting the occupation. Over 200 were detained and tortured in the Khiam Detention Center.

From 1982 till early 2000, many Lebanese supported Hezbollah and saw it as the guardian of Lebanon's sovereignty and its liberator. The shift began in 2000 when Israel withdrew from the south. Many Lebanese started speaking up against Hezbollah's armed presence in Lebanon, its alliance to the Syrian regime, and its commitment to Iranian ideology.

As a matter of fact, Hezbollah explicitly supported the Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad despite the numerous reports of severe human rights violations in Syria. As to Iran, in its 1985 Manifesto, Hezbollah vowed its allegiance to Iran's Supreme Leader Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini and made explicit its wish to create an Islamic state in Lebanon.

And many paid a heavy price for speaking out. Former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri was assassinated on February 14, 2005, and fingers pointed at Hezbollah and Syria. Many Lebanese journalists and political figures were also assassinated: a blast killed the anti-Syrian journalist, Samir Kassir. The former Communist party leader George Hawi and the journalist and lawmaker Gibran Tueni were also killed in car bombs.

This wave of killings sparked the Cedar Revolution, which clearly expressed the Lebanese's opposition to Hezbollah and Syria.

In the past two decades, this opposition continued and took different forms.

In 2005, the anti-Hezbollah and anti-Syria bloc won the parliamentary elections.

In 2015, the environmental movement "You Stink" was born. It criticized the State's inability to sustainably manage waste, and it opposed all political parties, including Hezbollah. In 2019, massive protests erupted all over the country under the slogan of "All Means All" to denounce the corrupt elites.

There is no doubt that Hezbollah operates as "a state within a state": in light of the weakness of the State of Lebanon, Hezbollah offers its own healthcare, education system and other social services to the Shiite community. It functions inside and outside the governmental structure and unilaterally holds the decision for peace/war.

In 1992, Hezbollah participated in parliamentary elections and won several seats in the Parliament.

In 2005, it entered the government. Alone, they were never a majority. However, their presence was strong enough to oppose any parliamentary or governmental decision that would go against their own interests.

Nasrallah was being considered as something of a pragmatist rather than an ideologue. It is now quite conceivable that the next Hezbollah leadership might be more driven by revenge than Nasrallah was. At any rate, what does Nasrallah's death mean for Hezbollah, Lebanon, and the Middle East? Will Iran become directly involved in the conflict?

Nasrallah's death is a definite blow to the group, and it did not take long for Iran to respond. In fact, Iran launched several missiles into Israel to avenge the killing of three of its top leaders: Hamas Chairman Ismail Haniyeh, Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, and Deputy Commander in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Abbas Nilforushan. Iran made it clear that this is a self-defense attack and that it will respond further should Israel attack Iran.

Ironically, Hezbollah started this war to support Hamas and the Palestinian cause. Now, the attention has completely shifted from Gaza and the West Bank to Iran, Israel, and the United States.

Under president Joe Biden, US foreign policy in the Middle East has been a complete failure. Over the past several months, Biden has said on countless occasions that "we are closer than ever" to a Gaza ceasefire only to see Netanyahu turn Gaza into a graveyard. Biden called for a 21-day ceasefire along the Israel-Lebanon border only to see Netanyahu make him look again like a bumbling idiot. How do you explain the US-Israel relationship?

Mireille Rebeiz: The US is Israel's closest and proudest ally. However, the failure of US foreign policy in the Middle East is in large part to blame for the recent events. At no point in the past two

decades did the US lead any serious diplomatic dialogue on Israel – Palestine.

President Biden continues to support a far-right government in Israel irrespective of the consequences in the region and the major escalation we are witnessing. Many Americans are horrified by this support and the US' potential complicity in atrocities in Gaza.

Netanyahu's visit to the United Nations, his rejection of the 21-day cease-fire, and the immediate attacks that followed in Lebanon indicate a clear separation between what the US would like to see and what Israel wants.

Stephen Collinson speaks of a humiliating pattern indicating American impotency in curtailing Israel's defiance, and the results are obvious: Gaza is leveled with over 41,000 civilians killed, of which 17,000 are children. Lebanon is under attack with a ground invasion in progress, and violence is escalating in the West Bank.

C. J. Polychroniou: Gaza is gone, and there are fears that Israel could turn Lebanon into a second Gaza. In your view, what does the future hold for Lebanon?

Mireille Rebeiz: So far, the rhetoric is that Israel will only bomb areas where Hezbollah fighters are located or areas suspected of storing Hezbollah's weapons.

The level of destruction is massive, and the number of casualties is on the rise. I would like to believe that Lebanon will not turn into a second Gaza. However, the situation is fluid, and it depends on on-going diplomatic negotiations and the arrival of other actors on the scene such as the Houthis in Yemen or Kata'ib Hizballah in Iraq or even Iran. In any case, I pray that Lebanon will be spared. Lebanon is in the middle of a major storm. As US-backed Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah militants are exchanging fires and settling debts, the Lebanese people are caught in the middle of the crossfire.

Election 2024

Michael Albert, Stephen R. Shalom

As the U.S. election nears, there is considerable controversy, confusion, consternation, and sometimes recrimination on the left. But most of all, there is a lot of anguish over the terrible choices we have. Here we offer our take on the situation. Our basic view is that in swing states—where the outcome is not a foregone conclusion—it is crucial to cast ballots for Kamala Harris as a means of defeating Donald Trump. A Trump victory would be catastrophic in terms of the future of democracy, climate change, reproductive and LGBTQ rights, racial justice, immigration, labor rights, and a host of other issues. A Trump victory would also empower rightwing zealots on the state and local level, who want to do such things as monitor menstrual cycles and mandate the incorporation of the Bible into school lesson plans.

Why is Trump's threat to democracy so worrying? We had four years of him before, amid dire warnings, and we survived that.

Last time around Trump was blocked from carrying out many of the policies that he and his most aggressive acolytes favored. The blocking came from courts, from his own vice president and top officials, and from the government bureaucracy. But this time, Trump faces a judiciary headed by a Supreme Court with a rightwing majority (half chosen by him) that has already given him “presumptive immunity” for any official acts he might carry out as president. He has learned from his mistake of choosing a vice president who was not 100% submissive, this time choosing the supine JD Vance as his running mate. And one can be sure that this time he will not appoint “adults in the room” as his cabinet officers and leading officials. More, Project 2025, which advances a thoroughly reactionary and even fascistic agenda, includes, for example, a plan to remove government officials from civil service protections and hire in their place thousands

of MAGA advocates to staff his administration. (Trump claims no knowledge of Project 2025, despite having declared at the Heritage Foundation's kick off of the project, “this is a great group. And they're going to lay the groundwork and detail plans for exactly what our movement will do and what your movement will do when the American people give us a colossal mandate to save America....”) So when Trump says that he will be a dictator (“on day one”) and emphasizes retribution, we should believe him.

But hasn't Harris been retreating from one progressive position after another?

She has. Distressingly, she has been running to the center, trying to secure wavering moderate voters rather than addressing the real needs of the American people. Nevertheless, even in their most centrist incarnation, her positions are qualitatively better than Trump's. She has reversed herself on fracking, but her commitment to the environment—which activists have rightly warned is on a precipice—is light years ahead of Trump's, who considers climate change a hoax, believes in “drill, baby, drill,” and withdrew the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement (reversed by Biden). Does anyone doubt that immigrants will be treated more humanely under Harris than under those who are trying to fan race war in Springfield, Ohio? Which candidate will better champion reproductive rights? Or protect transgender rights? Or labor rights? It is no surprise that the overwhelming majority of organizations advocating for the environment, immigration rights, labor unions, reproductive rights, racial justice, and gun control are supporting Harris. And as Harris supporters, these groups will be far better able to influence Harris in a positive direction on any of these issues than to influence Trump.

What about post-election activism? Does it matter whether Harris or Trump becomes President?

Yes, in two main ways. First, Trump would be far more aggressive than Harris in reacting to protests and would encourage local police to be far more repressive. Trump would implicitly, and maybe even explicitly, welcome citizen vigilantes to violently repress resistance in a throwback to the days of the “hard hat riots” against anti-war protestors in 1970, or even to KKK tactics against anti-racist organizers—or worse.

For example: In 2020, one week after the start of the Black Lives Matter protests, Trump “strongly recommended” that every governor deploy the National Guard to “dominate the streets.” If states or cities refuse to act, he said, “then I will deploy the U.S. military and quickly solve the problem for them.” Trump declared, “when the looting starts, the shooting starts.” And when demonstrators were protesting around the White House, Trump said to his Secretary of Defense: “Can’t you just shoot them? Just shoot them in the legs or something?” To be sure, he didn’t carry this out, but after Trump removes the obstacles to his will, what happens next time?

In November 2023, Trump said about immigrant rights activists: “For any radical left charity, non-profit, or so called aid organizations supporting these caravans and illegal aliens, we will prosecute them for their participation in human trafficking, child smuggling, and every other crime we can find.”

Trump called pro-Palestine activists “raging lunatics.” “To every college president, I say remove the encampments immediately.” After police were called onto the Columbia campus and protesters were roughly cleared out of a building, Trump said “It was a beautiful thing to watch. New York’s finest.” “Any student that protests,” he stated, “I throw them out of the country. You know, there are a lot of foreign students. As soon as they hear that, they’re going to behave.” Trump assured wealthy

donors, “if you get me reelected, we’re going to set that movement back 25 or 30 years.” In the meantime, Trump allies in Congress have called on the IRS to revoke the tax-exempt status of many organizations, including American Muslims for Palestine, Students for Justice in Palestine, Jewish Voice for Peace, the Adalah Justice Project, and the Palestinian Youth Movement.

There’s a second reason that the election matters for activism. Imagine it is Election Day plus one. You wake up. Harris has won. Movements are eager to pursue positive aims they have been elaborating. There is no honeymoon for Harris, there is activism for society. The focus of protest is government, the two parties, racism, sexism, corporations, international relations, Israel’s widening war and attacks on Palestinians, and global warming. The overriding concern is attaining progressive gains and moving toward implementing still more progressive gains, and then more.

Compare that with waking up after Election Day and finding that Trump has won. Racism surges. Sexism explodes. People of good will are shell-shocked. Movements scramble to find voices to oppose a drastic shift rightward. Activists battle to preserve what, with Harris in office, they would have tried to go beyond. The focus of protest is Trump, his policies, and repression. Positive aspirations are back-burnered by the urgency to prevent gruesome reaction and even fascist violence. The overriding concern is survival, repelling reaction, and getting back to what is remembered as the relative sanity, albeit objective criminality, of Biden/Harris.

Under a Trump presidency, we will be fighting from day one to prevent the loss of our rights. Under a Harris presidency, we will be fighting from day one to expand our rights.

If we assume that Trump is a hell of a lot more evil than Harris, what should we do: try to stop the greater evil or avoid supporting the lesser evil?

Here is how this concern is generally broached: We have to do one or the other but not both. But why can't we work to stop the greater evil without uncritically supporting the lesser evil? Is there fear that we will jettison our broader beliefs and commitments to be, what, loyal? Can't one want Trump to lose and so vote for Harris to win (because if she doesn't win, Trump will), but, at the same time, understand that Harris and the Democratic Party are not tribunes of the people, but huge obstacles to justice, equity, peace, and all that we favor? And if Democrats win, can't we remember that our job is not to cozy up to them, but to critique and oppose them, to force them into choices they would not otherwise make? We believe we can. We think everyone who puts forth this concern can. Why do some doubt that?

But how can one vote for Harris given the Biden-Harris complicity in Israel's genocidal violence against Palestinians?

The Biden-Harris policy on Palestine is indeed vile. The U.S. government is financing, arming, providing intelligence to, cheerleading, providing diplomatic support for, and otherwise abetting the spreading slaughter. For many leftists this is a bridge too far. One can talk all one wants about lesser and greater evils, but how can one be asked to vote for genocide? What is more evil than that?

But we are not being asked to participate in a referendum on genocide. ("Raise your hand if you are in favor of genocide.") Rather we are asked to determine the occupant of the White House, which may offer different degrees of horrors for Palestinians (and Lebanon and the world). By refusing to choose, we may help consign Palestinians to their worst possible fate rather than their second worst possible fate. One might sneer at the difference, but to those living through it, the difference is rather significant.

On every aspect of the Palestine conflict, Trump is at least as vile as Biden-Harris, and often much worse. Yes, Harris's expressed sympathy for Palestinians is just words in the absence of real ac-

tions to stop their being slaughtered. But Trump uses the word "Palestinian" as a slur. Yes, the Biden-Harris one-time suspension of 2000-pound bomb deliveries was meaningless in the face of the otherwise uninterrupted flow of arms. But Trump denounced the suspension as a betrayal and vowed to give Israel what it needed. Yes, Harris's call for a two-state solution, with dignity and self-determination for Palestinians, bears tenuous connection to reality, but Trump rejects the two-state solution—and not because he favors a single democratic state. He recognized Israel's annexation of the Golan, moved the US Embassy to Jerusalem, and declared Israeli settlements legal. We can compare the likely impacts of Harris and Trump by noting that Itamar Ben-Gvir, Israel's fascist minister of national security, has endorsed Donald Trump. We note as well that the "Uncommitted" campaign declined to endorse Harris because of her Gaza position, but it also stated, "We must block Donald Trump, which is why we urge Uncommitted voters to vote against him and avoid third-party candidates that could inadvertently boost his chances."

But even if none of these differences mattered, there is another question. Would uncompromising pro-Palestinian activism be more likely to have an impact on policy with Harris as president or with Trump? The argument that support for Palestine would be less effective with Harris as President rests on the idea that critics would be less willing to make demands of and demonstrate against Harris than they would against Trump. But pro-Palestine advocates have not been shy in the past year. Why would joy over stopping Trump morph into passivity regarding Harris? As you read this, do you think that would happen for you?

Yes, there are many wealthy Zionists backing Harris. But the wealthy Zionists backing Trump are even more reactionary. Harris will be presiding over a party 83% of whose supporters want a ceasefire, compared to 56% for Trump; only 47% of Democrats have a favorable view of Israel compared to 77% of Republicans. So, there is a greater potential to sway Harris than Trump.

But couldn't a victory of the greater evil hasten progressive change?

Going backward to go forward can make sense when retreat is a shortcut that leaps ahead. But a path forward from a Trump-led society would—at best—lead right back to some Democrat, maybe even Harris herself. It would entail postponing progress for four or more years, and also the massive pain that a Trump administration would impose on many people, not to mention the delay in addressing global warming and all the consequences of that.

Has any labor organizer ever wished owners would cut salaries or worsen conditions so that labor can leap forward? Has any anti-war organizer, feminist organizer, anti-racist organizer, climate organizer, or other organizer called upon the establishment to make things much worse in order to arrive at much better? Of course not, and for good reason.

But didn't the neoliberal Democratic Party pave the way for Trump, and wouldn't having more liberals in office due to electing Harris lead to more "Trumps" later?

Yes, Democratic Party policies, particularly paying little attention to the declining income, increasing alienation, worsening health care, and even the plummeting lifespan of white working people have aided Trump's rise, as has the Democrat's unwillingness to comprehend and relate to working class issues in a sincere fashion. (Though, truth be told, leftists too have been comparably unsuccessful at reaching out to alienated angry white working-class constituencies, contributing to Trump's rise.)

And yes, having Harris in office with no effective opposition to force better policies and develop lasting movements, could lead to a still worse and still more effective "Trump" running in the future, particularly if Harris in office were to effectively ignore or denigrate working class people, leaving them feeling even more estranged and angry than now.

But who proposes that scenario? And why should we expect it? If Harris wins, she will immediately confront an electorate and especially an activist community that will fight for change. Inside her own Party she will face a seriously divided base in which many, if not most, lean somewhat left and favor developing programs that benefit the working class.

On the other hand, if Trump wins, he will operate in a Party that backs his most aggressive choices, is utterly disdainful of all opposition, and is also hell-bent on delivering a worse "Trump" later.

It is relevant to note that Hitler surely arose from the terrible failures of the German capitalist and social democratic parties to deal with the Depression, but that doesn't mean it was sensible for leftists to refuse an alliance with the social democrats to stop Hitler.

So what approach to voting do you recommend?

We recommend strategic lesser-evil voting. This means you vote in light of the implications of your choice for the future. It means, also, that you look not only at the short and long-term consequences for human well-being of each candidate winning, but also at the likelihood of each candidate winning. It means you consider, as well, the impact on yourself, not on how you feel at the moment, but on your ongoing capacities and inclinations.

Strategic lesser-evil voting means looking at the likely overall benefit and harms of casting your vote in a particular state for Harris versus the overall benefit and harm of abstaining or casting your vote in that state for a third-party candidate with no chance of winning. If polling in a state shows a close race between Harris and Trump, then a really small number of additional votes could determine which of the two candidates gets all the state's electoral votes. On the other hand, if polls show that the race is not close, then a strategic lesser-evil voter can vote for the Greens or any other third party or abstain without impacting the Presidential outcome.

What is the impact on the Green Party of Green supporters voting for Harris or for Jill Stein in contested states? Suppose the Greens were to put all their energies into safe-state campaigning; they could win nearly as many and perhaps even many more overall votes, especially since they wouldn't lose the support of safe-state voters who considered an all-states campaign irresponsible. But even if the Greens lost some votes by declining to campaign for presidential votes in contested states, the impact of these lost presidential votes on future Green prospects would be quite modest. And why wouldn't Greens who vote for Harris emerge from the voting booth with the same views they would have had if their state had been safe and they had voted for Stein? Why wouldn't they work just as hard for Green policy positions in either case? And if Trump went on to lose, great—but, in the horrible event that Trump won, Greens would not be called the cause of it, with disastrous results for the Party.

So even ignoring implications of a Trump victory for the country and the world, Greens would at most be marginally hurt by promoting a safe state strategy, and they might even benefit from doing so. And, of course, we should never ignore implications for others.

Some will argue further that there are three reasons why it also makes sense to vote for Harris in safe states: 1. To increase her popular vote, which may be a factor in deterring and resisting post-election challenges and even coups. 2. To communicate to the Greens and others that they will alienate safe state voters if they continue to campaign in swing states. 3. In the event of a Trump Electoral College victory, the biggest Harris popular vote margin would aid the campaign for a National Popular Vote. Our own mixed reaction to this argument reflects the difficulty of assessing the relevant costs and benefits. What is not difficult to assess, however, is that for Jill Stein or Cornel West to seek votes in contested states is not a good way to build the left. It won't build the left any more now than it has in the past, and it may have horribly harmful consequences.

But if we're always committed to lesser-evil voting, won't that mean we're always going to be voting for a reactionary capitalist party and therefore the development of an alternative will be impossible?

If all we do is vote every four years, then no matter how we vote, we will never get major change. What is crucial is whether we build effective movements to generate sufficient support for change throughout society to not only win changes in many realms but to carry a really worthy candidate into contention, and then to victory, whether in a mainstream party, as Sanders attempted, or in a third party. And what determines that is overwhelmingly what we are doing other than voting, like the work of Occupy, Black Lives Matter, MeToo, the poor people's campaigns, pro-Palestine activism, climate organizing, labor organizing, and so many other projects. But it depends as well on whether our periodic voting creates conditions conducive to activist progress, and on whether our third-party work locally creates a steadily enlarging base.

Consider progressives and leftists in safe states who generally support strategic lesser-evil voting and who think the gain from more Harris votes is smaller than the benefit of more votes for Stein in those safe states. These progressives and leftists can vote their preference without concern that they will aid Trump. In contested states, however, lesser-evil votes for Harris will further the prospects for Greens by contributing to stopping Trump. In contrast, if progressives in contested states reject voting for Harris and it turns out that Trump wins, they would have helped consign people to four years of Trump and also impeded prospects for Green gains under the ensuing Trump administration.

But doesn't advocating lesser-evil voting mean one doesn't care about the long term and that one has, as some commentators suggest, abandoned one's left values?

It can mean or lead to that, but we very explicitly

propose and favor full revolutionary alternatives to existing political, economic, and social systems. Nonetheless, and even because of that, we also think voting for Harris in contested states will help block Trump's horrible agenda and, in that way, simultaneously improve the prospects for greater activism to come.

We have the lesser-evil inclination in this election not because we are suddenly inexplicably beholden to the powers and institutions we have fought against for decades, nor because we have lost our nerve, nor our way, nor because we have disavowed our clear and fundamental desires for new institutions, but because we have for all our adult lives sought and will keep on seeking long term transformation of our society. We simply are convinced that in our country's current circumstance, lesser-evil voting in contested states aids the struggle against wealth, power, racism, and misogyny at home and support of unjust war and oppression abroad.

Does refusing to vote for Harris even in contested states mean one doesn't care about the well-being of constituencies that will suffer more under Trump than under Harris?

Callousness or ignorance of consequences can play a role, but we don't assume that all or even most who refuse to vote for Harris even in contested states while agreeing that Trump is the far greater evil are callous or ignorant of consequences. Rather, we believe that many progressive and leftists, whom we respect, feel a tremendous urgency to transcend not just neoliberal policies, but the whole political, economic, and social system we currently endure, and that they just don't want to—and would indeed feel sick to the core to—pull a lever that seems to ratify all that they justifiably despise.

The problem is, even with all these fully warranted and admirable feelings causing their refusal, the refusal itself could elect Trump and unleash horrifically worse outcomes on many, many people, and arguably on the whole species.

Does anyone believe a progressive, leftist, or revolutionary who pulls the lever for Harris in a contested state must in any way suffer diminished ability to fight on? Why can't we hold our nose, cast our vote, and then go right back to the struggle for a new society? Why can't we stop Trump and also build new political, organizational, and movement alternatives?

But isn't voting for Harris a slippery slope? First you resolve to vote for her, then you don't want to criticize her before the election (for fear you'll help the greater evil), then you tone down your criticism of her after the election (because you'll be helping some greater evil defeat her four years later)...

We all like to feel good about ourselves and we all at times rationalize our choices. But even so, this trajectory is not inevitable. We can vote for Harris while indicating we do not support her and that we will oppose her, and we can then do just that.

Indeed, if the overwhelming message of leftists in talks and writing in the coming weeks is that we should vote strategically and also fight on, it is hard to see why pulling the lever for Harris in a contested state should interfere with that voter becoming one of Harris's most steadfast and effective opponents, or, for that matter, with that voter becoming one of the Green Party's most steadfast and effective supporters and participants.

But I want to vote my conscience.

So should we all. But why isn't part of voting our consciences taking into account the impact of our choice on the well-being of others and on future organizing?

But isn't it harmful to vote based on fear rather than positive program?

It would be great if we had nothing to fear and the only question before us was which of various progressive programs we most wanted to posi-

tively support. But how can we not be fearful of climate catastrophe or nuclear war or mass deportations or racist and fascist violence or misogynistic culture, or widening income disparities?

Regrettably, we need to focus on both offense and defense. We need to advance positive programs while, by our vote in swing states, we block our most feared outcomes.

Isn't it true that I don't owe my vote to anyone, that politicians are not entitled to it, they need to earn it?

You are not voting as a favor or a reward to a candidate. You are not voting for a candidate because you think they are admirable; you may indeed abhor them. You are voting so as to benefit oppressed communities and enhance prospects for more benefits to come. A candidate may be totally unworthy of your support, but if voting for them lessens the dangers of climate catastrophe or mass deportations or the squelching of democracy, then it makes sense to vote for them. If voting for them provides the greatest opportunity for activism to win more positive change, then it makes sense to vote for them.

But Trump's not going to win...

Pundits on the left and elsewhere have consistently underestimated Trump's prospects. Today the polls are very tight, and it would be reckless to assume that Harris's victory is a foregone conclusion. If, in early November, it is clear—taking into account the unreliability of the polls—that Trump has no chance of winning, then one can vote for a third party or abstain everywhere. If it is clear that some state that was previously considered up for grabs was now decisively in one column or another, voters there could likewise vote for a third party or abstain without concern.

A related claim is that it is unlikely that our votes will cause Trump to win. Obviously, the odds of any one vote making the difference in the election are infinitesimally small. But when swing

states have been carried by far fewer votes than those cast for the Greens, when polls show that third parties are getting more votes than the difference between Harris and Trump, the danger of affecting the outcome is very real.

Isn't it true that most of the people who vote for the Greens were not going to vote for a Democrat anyway?

Perhaps some would have voted for Trump though that seems highly unlikely, but some might have stayed home. In any case, isn't it the obligation of a progressive third party to encourage its supporters to do what will yield the greatest social benefit? Is the prospect of getting 1.1 percent rather than 1.0 percent of the popular vote for a third party more important in terms of social benefit than what could be the difference between Harris or Trump winning?

The bottom line is, if you agree that Harris is the lesser of the evils, then a vote for her in a contested state, rather than for a third party, could have a dramatic effect on human well-being now and into the future.

Why are the Democrats more hostile to the Greens than the Republicans are?

The Democrats have tried hard to restrict votes for the Greens. Republicans, on the other hand, have done what they can to help the Greens get on as many state ballots as possible. The reason isn't a mystery. It's because everyone understands that the Greens take more votes from Harris than from Trump. As Trump explained, "Jill Stein, I like her very much. You know why? She takes 100% from [Democrats]." And that's why we see reports such as the one in the Wall Street Journal that "some Republicans are supporting Green Party candidate Jill Stein's long-shot bid for the presidency, attempting to bolster a campaign that could siphon liberal voters from Vice President Kamala Harris." It is why right-wing lawyers have gone to work for Stein.

Needless to say, the GOP enthusiasm for Stein does not indicate a commitment to Green values or to third parties. They have worked hard to keep rightwing third parties off the ballot, while the Democrats have tried to help such parties.

Since the dilemma that voting for a third party might help your least favorite candidate win—the “spoiler” effect—could be solved by using ranked choice voting (RCV) or some such alternative, shouldn’t the blame for third party votes causing a Trump victory be laid at the doorstep of the major parties (who insist on plurality voting) rather than on third party voters?

RCV doesn’t necessarily solve the problem. Those who say they are voting for a third party because they can’t in good conscience vote for the lesser evil may well refuse to indicate a second choice on their ballot, thus still leading to the spoiler effect. But, in any event, blame can be shared. That the major parties are in part responsible for the spoiler effect doesn’t mean that those who vote for a third party in a swing state are not also morally responsible for the potentially awful outcome.

Even if one agrees that individually voting for Harris in a swing state is important, does that mean we should use scarce resources—time and money—to support Harris when these might be used instead for building the left?

The choice of either participating in the election or building the movement is a false dichotomy. For most people, participating in the election is just a question of taking an hour or so to go to the polling place to vote or to fill out a ballot and mail it. Even for those who decide to work for Harris, this may not take you away from your movement building, because you may be working with people in your environmental, women’s, LGBTQ, Black, or Latino movement or from your labor union. You may, through such a campaign, make new relationships and deepen the ones you have. But even if you gave

up two months of putting time and energy into your movement work, it will still be there after November 5 when you return to it. Most of our movements are not so flimsy and feeble as to die in two months’ time.

There are obvious tradeoffs here that will depend on how effective one believes their investment of time and money will be in achieving a Harris victory or achieving left advancement. To take the two extremes, if you could use all your time between now and election day to sway the opinion of two swing voters who would flip the election—that would be an incredibly productive use of your time even in terms of helping the left (given how much better the left will fare under Harris than Trump). On the other hand, a \$10 donation or really any donation from you to the Harris campaign that has already received gazillions of dollars will have no impact at all.

Every one of us is in a different situation, so there’s no fixed answer. We are writing this article on the election, rather than on some other left topic, because we believe that our potential impact in swaying progressive voters in swing states where the polls are very tight is a worthwhile use of our time. Others will have to draw their own conclusions based on their specific circumstances.

Sometimes there are opportunities to use one’s resources in a way that both builds the left and increases the chances of defeating Trump. For example, those with money to donate might consider Movement Voter PAC (<http://movement.vote>), which provides support to grassroots organizations engaged in local voter engagement. Similarly, those giving time to winning votes for Harris and/or removing votes from Trump, may seek to simultaneously raise broader issues.

What is most important, post election? Is it left unity? Is it who is president? Is it what new organizations and activism we have put in place to go forward? Is it successful outreach to wider and deeper constituencies?

All four are important. Efforts at progressive change in the United States cannot succeed, long or short term, unless all who favor these ends work together in a spirit of mutual aid. So we need left unity, and we have to be trying for it, not assaulting one another, even as we seek other gains as well.

Aside from affecting many people's lives today, who is president empowers various views, establishes context, and also affects government responses to dissent. Will activists have to primarily fight against policies that seek to move us back in time, or will activists be able to focus on positive aspirations linked to long-term aims?

Change depends on the levels of activism and organization we have in place and the width and depth of our support, and these in turn depend on the extent to which we develop organization and activism as opposed to only immersing ourselves in seeking vote tallies. So, while we work to generate unity, and to expand popular support including from those who most disagree with us, Trump's voters, and to prevent a Trump presidency, we need to also build new organizations that can sustain activism in the years ahead.

What is Trump's appeal to white working-class people? How might it best be addressed? Why address it?

Trump partly creates and appeals to illegitimate racist and sexist fears, but he also appeals to legitimate though misdirected concerns about severely worsening life conditions.

Republicans cater to business owners and try to win over workers with lies, posturing, fear of terrorism, and racism/sexism, and anti-immigrant hysteria. Democrats serve business owners, cater to what might be called empowered employees, and try to modestly accommodate workers within system limits to gain their votes.

Not believing campaign speeches, people often vote for whom they feel understands their

situation better. But if many of Trump's working-class supporters are not supporting him because they want him and others like him to get even more disgustingly rich at working people's expense, if they are not supporting him because he is a real estate tycoon, if they are not supporting him because he is abominably racist and sexist, then perhaps they are supporting him because he appears to them unafraid to say what he thinks. He is not polished and academic. He seems to talk straight. He does not appear to be the kind of person who looks down on workers and who day to day constantly exerts direct power over them.

If so, progressives need to speak directly to Trump's supporters, to acknowledge their pain and respect their anger and to provide real but also believable policy answers to their concerns. This is both because it is right, and because future progress depends on enlarging progressive support. To stop Trump includes reaching out to his voters, roughly half the voting population.

What might a person seeking a comprehensive revolution in U.S. institutions do at a time like this? What ought such a person not do?

There are countless possible answers as to what one might usefully do in these times. Try to preserve and enlarge the momentum that has developed from past efforts to date, while we also ensure that Trump loses. Work to create new organizations. Work to develop and spread a revolutionary vision and consistent program feeding into that vision. Reach out to wider and wider circles of people, in particular those who do not yet support change. Support diverse movements and seek to mutually align them into larger endeavors.

As to what not to do, of course, that too has many answers, but the most germane might be—don't escalate time-bound differences into hostile disputes and then into dismissals of allies and potential allies.

What We Can Learn from Gen Z Workers

Sonali Kolhatkar

My oldest born is a high school junior, taking his first steps into the hypercompetitive and bewildering world of undergraduate college applications and future careers. So, I was drawn to a recent headline in *Fortune* proclaiming, “Bosses Are Firing Gen Z Grads Just Months After Hiring Them—Here’s What They Say Needs to Change.” The story covers a new study about hiring trends among employers and rather than examine what employers need to do to attract and retain new graduates—generous salaries, good benefits, work-life balance, creativity, and job security—it was a diatribe against new graduates.

Not only do employers accuse young people of a “lack of motivation or initiative,” they complain that they are “late to work and meetings often, not wearing office-appropriate clothing, and using language appropriate for the workspace.”

Nowhere in the story is it mentioned that the class of 2024 entered as freshmen the year the world shut down. The COVID-19 pandemic and its resultant lockdowns impacted young people disproportionately. At a time in their lives when social interaction was just as important as academic work, if not more, they were forced to isolate, albeit for good reason. But their mental health suffered and we as a society made no systemic effort to address it. Instead, they were left to their own devices, to care for their mental health, and to sort out their attitudes toward work and careers.

Also, nowhere in the story is there an acknowledgment of the fact that young people’s futures have been sacrificed on the altar of corporate oil profits. As the world burns and floods and faces storms and as catastrophic climate forecasts erase Gen Z’s future, society demands they sport good attitudes

and behave as though nothing is wrong and no mass intervention is needed to rectify the situation. Instead, Gen Z has to face climate devastation as individuals.

What the *Fortune* story covering the study of newly graduated employees does mention is how schools are trying to prepare kids for the corporate grind, citing one high school in London that “is trialing a 12-hour school day to prepare pupils for adult life.” This is shared with no sense of irony about the fact that workdays in a civilized society ought to be no more than 8 hours long.

Employers are apparently looking for workers who have “a positive attitude and more initiative.” If that sounds out of touch, there’s more. A career adviser told *Fortune* that young hires would do well to “[b]uild a reputation for dependability by maintaining a positive attitude, meeting deadlines, and volunteering for projects, even those outside your immediate responsibilities.” In other words, if you want to keep your job, take on more work than you were hired to do.

Long hours and extra work are part of the ethos of a dying corporate culture where workers sacrificed their lives and well-being for their bosses, and—a few decades ago—might have been rewarded with enough to live on. That capitalist contract is defunct. A separate September 2024 study of Gen Z salary satisfaction showed that 87 percent of those surveyed felt they were underpaid. A Pew study from May 2020 concluded that today’s youth “are on track to be the most well-educated generation yet.” This naturally leads to high expectations of employers. But nearly half of those surveyed in September earn only between \$30,000 and \$60,000 a year, which in today’s economy is not enough to



live on. If young workers lack a positive attitude, they have good reason.

Pew also found that “Members of Gen Z are more racially and ethnically diverse than any previous generation.” In the past year especially, young Americans have watched an unfolding genocide in Gaza aimed at people who look a lot like them. That genocide, funded by their parents’ tax dollars and their college endowments, has played out in horrifying detail on their Instagram and TikTok accounts, inuring them from the political punditry downplaying Israel’s culpability. Their college campus protests and encampments haven’t worked to stop U.S. funding to Israel.

It’s no wonder that Gen Z is breaking from older generations by being disproportionately and unapologetically pro-Palestinian. It’s also no wonder that they are jaded about their own future in a nation whose government actively cheers on the extermination of their Palestinian peers.

Gen Z is left to deal with massive systemic failures—climate change, pandemics, and genocide—as individuals. Why are we shocked then that they are prioritizing their own physical and mental health? No one else is doing so.

A February 2024 Stanford Report article on Gen Z workers interrogated the employment values and expectations of young people and concluded that they “question everything and everyone—from their peers, parents, or people at work,” and “[t]hey are also not afraid to challenge why things are done the way they are.” They prefer collaboration and consensus over hierarchy and, most importantly, they value mental health and work-life balance.

Gen Z workers grew up seeing their parents bring work home, work after hours, work overtime without compensation, and make themselves available to answer phone calls and emails at all hours. In return, they watched older generations suffer mass layoffs, failed union drives, and stagnating salaries. If they reject the idea of one’s work life ruling one’s home life, it seems that young workers have a lot to teach their older peers and employers rather than the other way around.

In spite of myself, I often urge my 17-year-old to focus on getting good grades so that he can get into a good college and land a good job that pays well enough to live on. But such logic assumes we live in a merit-based economy where hard work pays off. Those of us who are 40 and older know firsthand how much of a lie this is. I can tell my snarky teen barely humors me when I urge him to prioritize his grades. And I can imagine him doing the same to a future boss who might urge him to have a “positive attitude” at work.

Rutgers University public relations professor Mark Beal, author of *Decoding Gen Z*, told *Fortune*, “Gen Xers, boomers, even older millennials, they live to work. Work is driving them. It’s energizing them.” Meanwhile, “Gen Z works to live.” They prioritize their mental health over Wall Street’s financial health.

Are they on to something? Instead of excoriating young people for prioritizing their well-being over work, we would do well to learn from them. Gen Z is shifting our collective ethos to normalize asking what bosses owe workers instead of the other way around.

Techno-Fascism, Techno-Terrorism, And Global War

Boaventura de Sousa Santos

The world is moving inexorably towards war. Any imaginary poll of the world's population would show that nobody wants war. But war will probably break out before the end of the decade. Most countries in the world claim to have democratic regimes, but no party with any electoral significance, from left to right, considers war an imminent danger and takes up the fight for peace as its main banner. Peace doesn't win votes. War brings dead people and dead people don't vote. No party can imagine carrying out electoral propaganda in cemeteries or mass graves. Nor does it imagine that without the living there are no parties. All this seems absurd, but absurdity happens when reason sleeps, as Francisco de Goya warned us 225 years ago in his painting *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos*. We don't need to go that far back.

The lessons (or illusions) of history

Let's go back to 1900. England was then the most powerful country in the world. But as every apogee means the beginning of decline, the peaceful competition of the US was beginning to be feared. Economic growth in the US was vertiginous, the latest inventions of the industrial revolution were taking place there and, among the many advantages over Europe, one was particularly precious: the US spent very little money on weapons. According to reports at the time, a country of 75 million inhabitants had an army of 25,000 men and a ridiculous defense budget for a country of that size. On the other hand, the most developed European countries (England, Germany and France) were in increasingly fierce competition with each other over colonial sharing and industrial superiority (Germany was increasingly in the spotlight) and were entering the arms race. In addition, between 1899 and 1902, England was fighting a sordid

colonial war against the Boers in South Africa. At stake was the control of gold production and Cecil Rhodes' imperial dream: from the railroad between Cape Town and Cairo to total control of the world so that "wars would become impossible for the good of mankind". Imperial capitalist domination demanded war and the arms race, allegedly to make war impossible in the future. Are there any similarities with the current war speeches of the US and the European Union to defeat Russia and China? There are, but there are differences.

In the first decade of the 20th century, two movements were visible: one in public opinion and the other in business. Public opinion was dominated by an apology for peace against the dangers of a war that would be fatally deadly. The 20th century was to be the century of peace, without which the prosperity that was being announced would not be possible. In 1899, the first International Peace Conference was held in The Hague and, the following year, there was the World Peace Congress. From then on, there were many international congresses and meetings on peace. It was deplored that international cooperation was deepening in all areas (postal services, railways, etc.) except politics. Between 1893 and 1912, 25 books were published against the arms race. *Who is Who in the Peace Movement* was widely published. Recent inventions in war material (smokeless gunpowder, rapid-fire rifles, explosive substances such as lyddite, melinite and nitroglycerine, etc.) were said to make war not only very deadly, but impossible to win for either side in the conflict. War would always end in a stalemate and after much death and devastation. A journalist from the *English Echo* resigned from the paper so that he wouldn't have to defend the war against the Boers, and 200 high-profile English intellectuals organized



a dinner in his honor. Between 1900 and 1910, more than a thousand pacifist congresses were held: workers, anarchists, socialists, freethinkers, Esperantists, women. The growth of democracy in Europe and the USA was said to be incompatible with war and that the large number of arbitration agreements was the best demonstration of this. The Russian sociologist Jakov Novikov demonstrated that the well-being of the masses had never improved with the wars, quite the opposite. People wrote about “the illusion of war” and the publications sold many thousands of copies.

There was a current of opinion that the real illusion would be the “illusion of peace” if the struggle were not reoriented against capitalism. If this didn’t happen, war would be inevitable. This was the position of socialists, anarchists, and the workers’ movement, which socialists and anarchists sought to control. War was the great obsta-

cle to social revolution. The general strike and the refusal of military service were two of the most frequently mentioned forms of struggle.

But the world of public opinion was one thing and the world of business was another. In the business world, since 1899 the arms race had been advancing at a rapid but discreet pace. At the 1907 International Workers’ Congress in Stuttgart, Karl Liebknecht revealed the extraordinary growth in arms spending, which meant that countries were in fact preparing for war. The profits of the big arms companies reflected this: Krupp in Germany, Vickers-Armstrong in England, Schneider-Creusot in France, Cockerill in Belgium, Skoda in Bohemia and Putilov in Russia. It was clear that the accumulation of weapons would lead to war. In fact, the big companies were beginning to use a new propaganda weapon: paying journalists and newspaper owners to publish fake news about the

growing armament of their probable opponents in the coming war in order to justify spending more on weapons. Sounds familiar to today's ears? Yes, but there are differences and for the worse, much worse.

The socialists were right: the fight is against capitalism

The apogee of US-led global capitalism came in 1991 with the end of the Soviet Bloc. Just like a hundred years before, the apogee of the most powerful power meant the beginning of its decline. And just as before, the most profitable industry in periods of decline is the one that produces goods whose use consists of destroying and being destroyed. Such goods have to be ceaselessly replaced by others for as long as the war lasts. The longer the war lasts, the greater the profits. Eternal war is therefore the most profitable. Now the big arms companies are no longer European, they are American, and the US, unlike a hundred years ago, is by far the country that spends the most on armaments and therefore has the greatest need to use them (that is, to use by destroying and replacing). The US spends a trillion dollars on armaments, but it's certainly not enough because war entrepreneurs invent disadvantages for the US in relation to its enemies which have to be overcome promptly.

The struggle for peace is now more than ever a struggle against capitalism. Why more than ever? If, in the wake of Immanuel Wallerstein, we take the world as a unit of analysis, we can say that between 1917 and 1991 the world experienced a period of intense transnational civil war. It was a civil war because it took place within a single system – the modern world system. Although globally dominant, capitalism had to contend with another strongly competing economic system, state socialism, whose influence extended far beyond the Soviet Union. This civil war was fought by multiple means, including counter-insurgency, development aid to dependent countries and proxy wars (Korean War, Vietnam War, etc.).

The Second World War was a period of calm in this civil war, since the USA and the USSR were allies against German Nazism. With the end of the Soviet Union and the transformations that had taken place in China in the meantime, which would integrate the Chinese economy into the world capitalist economy, albeit with some specificities (maintaining national control of financial capital), the transnational civil war between capitalism and socialism ended. There was an interregnum, which lasted just over ten years, in which Russia was a capitalist country of intermediate development like any other and China was an economic partner, also of intermediate development, but with strategic value for US multinational companies bent on the monopolistic conquest of the world.

After the global financial crisis of 2008, a new transnational civil war began, this time between the capitalism of US multinationals and the state capitalism of China. In order to neutralize China, it was necessary to block its access to Europe for two reasons: Europe was, alongside the US, the other major affluent consumer in the world; through cooperation with China, Europe could have some claim to escape the increasingly evident decline of the US in the world economy and become an additional factor of competition and weakness for the US. In order to block China's access to Europe and subject the latter to the US, it was necessary to separate Europe politically and economically from Russia (whose territory is mostly in Europe). Russia, with its thousands of kilometers of borders with China, is not only China's access route to Europe, but also the strategic territory of Eurasia. The idea that whoever controls Eurasia controls the world has been around for a long time. This has led to a new transnational civil war, the first proxy wars of which are the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Palestine war.

This civil war is totally different from the previous one. In the previous one, the struggle was between two economic systems (capitalism versus socialism), while now it is between two versions of the same economic system (multinational capitalism

versus state capitalism). Nothing guarantees that this war will be less violent than the previous one. On the contrary, as we have seen, at the beginning of the 20th century, the dispute took place between countries with a long common past located in a small corner of Eurasia. Today, it is a struggle for global domination that extends beyond the planet. Monopoly capitalism was born in 1900 when US financial capital began to expand into railroads and from there into many other sectors and, potentially, into every country in the world.

For monopoly capitalism, the idea of a multipolar world is as threatening as the idea of competition with other economic systems, and the same destructive drive is present in both cases. What's more, the potential and degree of destruction are now immensely greater than before. I'm not referring to the existence of nuclear weapons, a life-destroying technological innovation that makes the preoccupation of commentators at the beginning of the last century with the warlike inventions of their time ridiculous. I'm talking about the nature of today's global capitalism and (dis)governance, and the emergence of two of its consequences. We are entering an era in which forms of potentially destructive power without limits are strong enough to neutralize, circumvent or eliminate any democratic process that seeks to put limits on them.

Global techno-fascism: Elon Musk

At the beginning of the 20th century, we saw that the struggle for peace and the peaceful resolution of conflicts saw sovereign states as the units of analysis and the privileged political actors. We know that sovereignty was an abstract good that only the most developed countries could really enjoy, and that much of the world was subject to colonialism or the tutelary influence of Europe. Today, however, technological development, neoliberal globalization and the concentration of wealth mean that the power to control human and non-human life is no longer subject to democratic scrutiny. At the beginning of the 20th century, the illusion of peace was based on the

rise and strengthening of democratic governments. After all, democracy was based on replacing enemies to be defeated by war with political opponents to be defeated by voting. Hence the mobilizing capacity of the fight for suffrage. For many, democracy had the capacity not only to promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts, but also to regulate capitalism in order to neutralize its "excesses".

Today, most national governments consider themselves democratic, but democracy, if it was ever capable of regulating capitalism in any country, is now strictly regulated by it, and is only tolerated insofar as it is functional for the infinite expansion of capitalist accumulation. Undoubtedly, the most powerful national states continue to exercise formal power, but the real power that controls their decisions is concentrated in a very small number of plutocrats, some with their faces blatantly visible, others, the majority, faceless. Real power is enhanced to an extent that is hard to imagine by a toxic fusion of the technological capacity to control the human life of vast populations down to the smallest detail and regardless of their nationality, with the financial capacity to buy, co-opt, blackmail or obliterate any obstacle to its purposes of domination.

This is a new kind of fascist power, a global techno-fascism that knows no national boundaries. Elon Musk is the metaphor for this new type of power. Unlike Adolf Hitler or Benito Mussolini, Musk's specific personality, although repugnant, is of little importance, since what matters is the power structure that he commands today and that tomorrow may be commanded by another individual. The strength of this new global techno-fascism is well expressed in the worldwide dramatization of the struggle of a relatively powerful national state against a simple foreign individual simply because he is a global techno-fascist. When, on August 31st of this year, the X network was suspended in Brazil by a decision of the Supreme Court because its owner refused to delete accounts on the network that reached millions of people and whose content spread fake

news, seriously violated the most basic democratic values and incited hatred, violence and even murder, it was news all over the world. Was it imaginable ten years ago that a lone individual, and a foreigner at that, could affront a sovereign state?

Global techno-terrorism: from the Trojan Horse to killer pagers

On September 18th, thousands of pagers and walkie-talkies exploded in Lebanon, killing dozens of people (including children) and injuring thousands. These transmitters had been bought by Hezbollah apparently because they are secure devices that allow communications without locating the users. This terrorist act has been attributed to Israel's secret services and its origin was the implantation of an explosive substance next to the battery, coded to explode by remote control.

The killer pagers are not just a new edition of the Trojan Horse, the huge hollow wooden horse built by the Greeks to enter Troy during the Trojan War. The horse was built by Epeius, a master carpenter and boxer. The Greeks, pretending to abandon the war, sailed to the nearby island of Tenedos, leaving behind the false deserter Sinon, who persuaded the Trojans that the horse was an offering to Athena (goddess of war) that would make Troy impregnable. Despite warnings from Laocoon and Cassandra, the horse was taken inside the city gates. That night, Greek warriors got off the horse and opened the gates to let the Greek army in. The story is told in detail in Book II of the Aeneid.

The similarity between the Trojan Horse and the killer pagers lies only in the fact that the term "Trojan Horse" has come to designate subversion introduced from the outside. The visibility and transparency of the device, embodied in an object that was not in common use, prevented it from being realistically reproduced (if ever) effectively in the future. On the contrary, killer pagers signify a qualitative change in the technology of war and population control. The same technology and

the same murderous complicity that insidiously installed explosive material in these devices could tomorrow install in any other electronic device (cell phone or computer) any substance that, instead of killing, might damage the health, create panic or alter the behavior of its user, without any possibility of control by the user. With the development and spread of artificial intelligence, any everyday device can be used for this purpose, whether it's a car or a microwave.

The international conventions against terrorism, which the Gaza genocide reduced to a dead letter, will no longer even make sense in the future when any citizen not fighting in any war is condemned to live in a society in which the most trivial act of consumption can bring with it, in addition to the guarantee and the expiry date, your death certificate, your certificate of mental insanity or your compulsion to commit a crime.

The international division of the labor of war and Cassandra's curse

In an environment of global techno-fascism and techno-terrorism, Euro-North American capitalism is actively preparing to move from cold war to hot war. Faced with the blank or revoltingly impotent gaze of its citizens, a strange international division of the work of killing is being prepared: Europe will take care of beating Russia while the US will take care of beating China. At almost the same time, the European Union's first defense commissioner, Andrius Kubilius, former prime minister of Lithuania, says that Europe must be prepared for war with Russia in 6-8 years, and a high-ranking US Navy officer declares that the US must be prepared for war with China in 2027.

There is little point in predicting that the war will take place, but that its outcome will be very different from what is imagined by these war entrepreneurs intoxicated by the think tanks financed by arms producers. Cassandra's curse hangs over the few who dare to see what is obvious.

Crises in France

Pierre Rousset



On 9 June, Emmanuel Macron unexpectedly decided to dissolve the National Assembly, just as the Rassemblement Nationale (far-right National Rally party of Marine Le Pen) was gaining momentum. Three weeks later, the results of the first round of voting were unequivocal: the parties of the presidential bloc were crushed, and in the second round the National Rally could hope to win an absolute majority of seats in Parliament, or at least be the largest party. (The French electoral system uses two rounds of voting. If no candidate gets an absolute majority in the first round, the names of the top candidates go to a second round. The one with the most votes in the second round wins).

These hopes were dashed. After the second round, the far right ended up in third place, behind the

Nouveau Front populaire (the New People's Front formed by parties of the broad Left) and the presidential party.

The electorate wanted neither Macronism nor the National Rally in the corridors of power. Today, thanks to Macron, it has both. It took him eight weeks to choose a prime minister: Michel Barnier, a member of Les Républicains party, which won only 5% of the vote. He had previously negotiated this appointment with Marine Le Pen, to ensure that she would not immediately table a vote of no confidence against him. Madame agreed... conditionally.

Now, the choice of a prime minister depends on the goodwill of the far right!

Government and parliamentary crisis

The new parliament (577 MPs) is even more fragmented than the previous one:

The New People's Front (NFP) came first, by a slim margin, with approximately 193 seats. It includes four main parties: the Greens, La France Insoumise (LFI), the Communist Party (PCF), and the Socialist Party (PS), and allies. But it was also supported by a vast mobilisation of trade unions and associations. By convention, the president first asks the largest group to present a candidate for Prime Minister. Macron could easily have respected this, betting that an NFP government would be brought down by a vote of no confidence. But he preferred instead to send a political message: the NFP's questioning of Macron's neoliberal measures was out of the question.

The 'presidential camp' got 168 seats, down from its previous 250. This "presidential majority" suffered an electoral disaster. With the next presidential election on the horizon, disunity and rival ambitions are becoming the norm (Macron cannot stand for a third term).

Les Républicains, the former governing party of the traditional right, is now only the fifth largest party (43 seats). Some members left to the National Rally. Now that the prime minister, chosen by Macron (and tolerated by the National Rally), belongs to their party, they are demanding full implementation of their programme! But Michel Barnier, as prime minister, will have to work with Macron's party and assert some independence from Les Républicains.

The National Rally, with 143 seats, had a mixed result. Although far from what it had hoped, it almost doubled its number of MPs. This doubles its financial resources, as well as various parliamentary privileges.

No stable majority is in sight; new legislative elections cannot be held before June 2025.

Democratic crisis: marching towards a new authoritarianism

The constitution of the Fifth Republic is one of the most undemocratic in Western Europe. But this is not enough for Macron and the proponents of neoliberalism. The previous (minority) government had already distorted and abused an article of the Constitution (49.3) which allows a law to be passed without a vote, to legislate pension reform. This was rejected by 90% of active workers, by all unions, and by parliament. Millions of people took to the streets to oppose it. But the government remained inflexible, hoping to crush the will to resist.

This denial of democracy has become natural, a given, for a whole 'social elite' that has taken it upon itself to ensure the direct domination of capital over society. It is dismantling the social gains achieved in the aftermath of World War II and after May 1968. It is transferring all profitable activities to the private sector, while leaving the unprofitable ones to the public sector. And it is marginalising "intermediary bodies" (trade unions...), sites of counter-power—and more.

France's surveillance society is one of the most developed in Western Europe. The powers of the security services have been reinforced. The police are militarised. The army is playing an increasing role inside the country. A shadowy centre of governance has been established. The environmental movement has been criminalised. The influence of dominant ideology is growing. Civil, social, and environmental rights are being curtailed. A preventive civil war apparatus is being put in place.

The regime crisis

The constitution was designed to protect those in power from any social or political disruption. It provides the framework for the hyper-presidential system driven by Emmanuel Macron. In the process, he is breaking the balance that has allowed this regime to endure: between the presidency and parliament, between the state and capital, between repression

and reform... Convention dictated that, if millions of people protested, parliament, even a Gaullist one, would give something in return. That understanding is now over.

We are changing regimes. Macron has embarked on what many analysts call a “conservative revolution”, but in a chaotic manner. The National Rally fits into the same dynamic: the “confrontation-cooperation” combination we are witnessing is not accidental.

A new opportunity for the Left?

The formation of the NFP, and the unexpected success of its electoral campaign, have rekindled hope. But we know that this is only a reprieve. The rise of the National Rally continues, and the dynamic of popular mobilisation remains fragile, but the time gained can be put to good use. After the summer holidays and the Olympic Games, the autumn began with demonstrations in France, on 7 September, against Barnier’s appointment (around 30,000 in Paris, mostly young militants). More are expected.

The unity in the NFP has been maintained, though not without crises and disputes that demoralised grassroots activists in June and again in September, with a violent polemic between François Ruffin, who left the LFI, and Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s staff. Such posturing is unwelcome. Unity is a struggle, but how it is pursued matters.

The initial success of the NFP was due, in part, to four factors: the state of emergency caused by the National Rally threat; the Left’s history of unity; decisive pressure from mobilisation of trade unions and popular organisations in favour of political unity; and the fact that the dissolution of parliament meant that there was little contestation over constituencies.

The political spectrum in the NFP was broad. All non-sectarian components of the far Left were able to join and campaign. On the right flank, former President François Hollande invited himself into the elections, and was elected under the NFP banner.

The Socialist Party, the Communist Party, and the

Greens had all suffered resounding electoral defeats, although they have regained some momentum by displaying a ‘left’ profile. Conversely, LFI’s image was tarnished when its leader, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, excluded several outgoing MPs who had shown too much independence. Despite this, five of them were re-elected under the NFP banner, against Mélenchonist candidates. The purge was deeply resented in left-wing activist circles, and the defeat sounded a warning for Mélenchon.

Several well-known LFI MPs have denounced the lack of democracy in LFI, which continues to face internal criticism on this issue. The movement has managed to build an electoral base in popular neighbourhoods and suburbs by bringing abstentionists (often Muslims) to the polls. It has consistently advocated a programme of breaking with the neoliberal order (while prioritising state geopolitics internationally). It has been built as an electoral machine, with the presidential election as its permanent horizon. It is a ‘fluid’ movement, without formal membership lists or internal rules.

A limit may have been reached. Can LFI expand its territorial base without enriching its political discourse and organisational framework? Can it advocate democracy in society while failing to implement it within itself? Can it oppose violence against women, but too easily cover it up internally? What happens to LFI is of concern to all components of the Left.

The current conditions favour the unity of the NFP. This will be determined in the coming weeks. Will the proliferation of local committees allow it to integrate all the available grassroots forces?

A new generation of young people is stepping onto the scene, bringing with them commitments to solidarity (with Palestinians, migrants, and people facing racism). Social precariousness and the impact of the climate-ecological crisis provide fertile ground for multiple forms of resistance. Everything must be done to encourage their convergence. But to achieve this, the Left must break with its presidential obsession. A real cultural revolution is needed.

Reunification – A Roadmap to Eco-Social Transformation On the Island of Ireland

Sean Fearon

For a commentary reflecting on the barriers partition places in front of a radical eco-social programme on the island of Ireland, it is possibly hackneyed to frame a set of arguments on partitionist lines. This programme, however, slogs through a mire of two different kinds in the North and South of Ireland, and it is therefore helpful to look at them separately.

For the North, it is easy to address the core of the problem bluntly and directly. For creating ecological crisis, dealing with these crises as they arise, and in forming radical policy to prevent further crises in the future, Northern Ireland is a failed state.

Much of the reason for this powerlessness to address its own policy failures lies in the political economy of partition. Devolved states in the UK, and particularly the North of Ireland, are deprived of the ability to make powerful interventions in the economy in the interests of people and planet.

These interventions include punishing exploitative and polluting behaviour, taxing wealth and excessive income to curb overconsumption and inequality, and borrowing to roll out unprecedented investment in modern public transport infrastructure, for example. The state must build and own a huge suite of renewable energy assets, which can generate income for reinvestment in society, and it must provide the basic services required for a dignified life as a right, not a market opportunity.

Progressives across the world recognise these policies as prerequisites for a just transition to a sustainable and fairer society. They also correctly identify the chaos and self-interest of the market as singularly ill-equipped to achieve these objectives. It should be said clearly, then, that partition makes the above objectives impossible. They cannot and will not happen in the North of Ireland whilst partition persists.

Disempowered by the devolutionary set-up, and unable to marshal the resources required to make meaningful investment for a rapid green transition, the Northern Ireland Executive is forced to rely on private interests and the market to achieve policy objectives. In energy, state policy seeks to entice private renewable energy giants to build wind farms for the benefits of their shareholders, because the capital does not exist for the state to build and own these assets. Green ambition is restricted in housing, too, where policy focuses on giving landlords deadlines to insulate their houses because the state cannot build modern, affordable, and zero-carbon homes itself. Europe's biggest illegal landfill festers outside Derry City in part because the state is unable to afford a clean-up. The compulsory purchase of a dying Lough Neagh may face the same barrier.

Environmentalists and radical progressives, therefore, face a problem which cannot be resolved by tweaks and by shuffling seats in the Assembly chamber. In the North of Ireland, the state is kept on a leash to the detriment of citizens, whilst the dogs of the market run, and eat. This problem is structural. It is constitutional. The state has no money to invest, no power to raise money, and no chance of procuring more power in the democratic deficit of devolution in the UK.

It is understandably difficult for many environmentalists in the North to engage with an alternative constitutional future which can offer us a more positive eco-social horizon. This hesitancy to engage with the opportunities of reunification may stem from the fear that politics of this kind will create a divisive sideshow to the main focus of the environmental movement – restoring the natural world and shielding it from the carnivorous appetites of the superrich. These fears, though well-meaning, are misguided. Reunification offers the North the only feasible avenue through



Mural by UV Arts Derry

which we can fundamentally reshape society-economy-ecology relationships.

The above arguments should not be taken as ignorance of the Republic of Ireland and the state of the non-human living world on the island of Ireland more generally. The post-colonial nature of the Irish economy has produced a growth regime which is perhaps distinctly intensive relative to other small, high-income economies. But partition cannot be blamed for capitalism, and the rampant exploitation of living and breathing nature by the demands of the market.

The southern Irish economy is intensely destructive. It is among the most material and carbon intensive economies in Europe. It has shattered planetary boundaries. If the world economy had the same footprint as the Republic of Ireland, we would need three planet earths to get by.

It has also produced huge quantities of wealth at great social and ecological cost to Ireland and the rest of the world. Some of the ten multinational companies which pay 1 in every 6 euros in tax collected by the Irish state – Apple, Google, Intel, and Microsoft among them – are responsible for disfigured landscapes in the developing world. Parts of the super-profits accumulated by these firms are achieved

by sending unprotected, and often underage, workers into cobalt and lithium mines, so that batteries for iPhones and laptops can be made. Exploited labour extracts the minerals for luxury products, mega-companies sell them around the world, and Ireland collects some of the tax.

This unedifying growth model is unsustainable not simply on an ecological basis – though this is true – it is also morally untenable, particularly for a country which still shows its own post-colonial scars. Yet the mainstream case for reunification relies on these tax receipts and an intensification of this growth model.

A remodelling of the Irish economy, north and south, is needed to achieve a truly sustainable way of guaranteeing the basic needs of all on the island of Ireland as a human right. It must build a model that achieves this without relying on an ‘imperial mode of living’, and without sacrificing the non-human living world to meet the profiteering demands of multinationals and large domestic firms. Reunification presents a historic and unmissable opportunity to build this model together, with eco-social rights imbued in a new constitution, and with the North of Ireland unmoored from the shackles of the neoliberal devolutionary environment.

Democracy Dies in Crude Oil

Adem Ay

After a historic referendum, Ecuador's government had a year to stop drilling oil in a protected part of the Amazon. Now the deadline has passed, but the oil still flows. Behind the inaction is a story of corruption, murder, social breakdown, and tenacious activists who want the world to know about it.

Environmental activists rarely get to celebrate a major win for the planet, but that's what happened in Ecuador in August last year. After a decade-long struggle between activists and the government, a referendum was held on whether to continue drilling for oil in a protected part of the Amazon. The people voted to kick the oil industry out.

The government and the state oil company, Petroecuador, had tried every trick in the book to get a different result. There was a disinformation campaign, threats of austerity, even an attempt to void hundreds of thousands of signatures that were collected for the referendum to happen.

But the vote eventually went ahead, and 60 percent chose to champion biodiversity and keep more than a billion barrels of oil in the ground. Ecuador's Constitutional Court gave the government a year to dismantle the infrastructure of three oil fields under Yasuní national park, both a biodiversity hotspot and a home to Indigenous communities, some still living in isolation.

Here was a glorious example of how democracy, not disruptive protest, could deliver the policies needed to overcome capitalism's drive for profit. For the first time, a nation had decided to forego billions of dollars to preserve its nature. Activists around the world eagerly started planning referendums of their own.

But even as they celebrated, the activists in Ecuador knew they had to remain vigilant. The alliance of Indigenous, environmental and social campaigners

had battled three consecutive governments to get this far, and the country was still reeling from a series of political, economic and social crises. Nothing could be taken for granted.

They were right to be wary. This August marked the first anniversary of the referendum, and the passing of the court-set deadline to stop the oil. Yet nothing in the Ecuadorian Amazon has changed. Petroecuador is still extracting around 60,000 barrels of oil a day from Yasuní national park. The Indigenous communities who live there are still fighting for their survival. And activists around the country are still campaigning alongside them to try and push the oil industry out.

How could this happen? How could Ecuador's largest democratic mandate since its return to democracy in the 1970s be simply ignored? And why weren't the millions of disenfranchised voters out on the streets?

Mafia wars

Back in May 2021, as the world was emerging from the COVID pandemic, Ecuador's first right-wing president in two decades was being sworn into office. Guillermo Lasso, a mild-mannered former bank CEO, vowed to make COVID vaccinations more widespread, to privatize the economy and to expand oil production in the Amazon.

His success with the first pledge only helped to fuel the mass protests against the other two. His economic reforms caused fuel and food prices to rise, while his oil plans threatened to destroy the Indigenous communities who lived around the wells. As thousands of people marched through the capital Quito, a major prison riot in Guayaquil triggered an unprecedented nationwide turf war among four drug gangs. The murder rate started to soar.



Activists in Quito demand the referendum on drilling oil after years of delays. Photo: Fernando Muñoz-Miño

Unable to contain the chaos, Lasso turned to authoritarianism. He suspended social media and civil liberties, let police use deadly force, deployed soldiers on the streets, even pushed civilians to arm themselves. But then he became entwined in a major corruption scandal which tied his brother-in-law to an Albanian cocaine trafficker.

In a desperate bid to escape impeachment and calm the country, Lasso dissolved congress and called a snap election in which he would not stand, scheduling the Yasuní oil referendum for the same day. But the chaos continued. During the election campaign a presidential candidate who, as an investigative journalist, had made many powerful enemies including Lasso, was assassinated by Colombian hitmen.

The eventual winner, the telegenic 35-year-old Daniel Noboa, promised to wage a war against the drug gangs and respect the referendum result. But he was also the son of a billionaire banana exporter, and more staunchly to the right than Lasso. Could he

really be trusted to put planet before profit? Lasso, for his part, was recorded days after the vote saying that abandoning Yasuní's oil was "not possible."

And so it has proven. Since his inauguration, President Noboa has simply played for time as his administration lurches from one major scandal to another, prices keep rising and Ecuador's streets continue to be plagued by violence. Noboa has even claimed that Yasuní's oil revenues are sustaining his endless war on the drug gangs.

In June of this year, eight months after the referendum result, his government unveiled a special committee to finally implement it. The team included the CEO of Petroecuador, three government ministers, and nobody from civil society, Indigenous or otherwise. Of the ministers involved, one voiced support for a repeat of the referendum, another said that winding down oil production could take 14 years. So far, the committee has achieved nothing of note.

Dispatches from Asheville: The Utopia We Dream of Becomes Most Visible in the Dark

Firestorm Cooperative

Natural disasters bring people together, they bring out our best instincts towards altruism, cooperation, and creativity—they should also make us furious at those responsible for them. The death and destruction in Buncombe County is a direct result of capitalism, and environmental extractivism—a logical extension of colonialism and Appalachia's two hundred year status as a national sacrifice zone.

The following are several dispatches from Firestorm, a radical anarchist community center and cooperative bookstore in Asheville, NC, which in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, has become a growing

hub of mutual aid and autonomous disaster relief efforts in the area.

September 29

We're four days into the most significant natural disaster in the recorded history of our region. Our community is experiencing an ongoing crisis created by infrastructural collapse and the profound failure of capitalism to value and sustain life. No state or federal aid has yet reached Asheville, but all around us we're seeing regular people acting autonomously to address immediate needs and meet one another



Destruction in western North Carolina from hurricane Helene. Photo: Firestorm Books



Photo: Firestorm Books

with care. We hope to write soon about the beautiful and resourceful things we've witnessed.

Our co-op is physically intact and our members are accounted for. Although we've fared better than many, we're experiencing this crisis physically and emotionally. We're exhausted, largely without power, water, or internet. Cell service is poor, and when we are able to connect, the volume of information is overwhelming. Right now our priority is supporting and facilitating mutual aid efforts and we ask for your patience as we cannot keep up with emails, texts, and DMs.

Firestorm will continue to act as an in-person resource and information hub over the coming days, with staffing from noon to 4pm. A daily meeting at 2pm serves as a space for neighbors to get verified updates and coordinate mutual aid efforts. Other hubs have arisen organically in other parts of town and we're doing our best to share and connect resources.

If you would like to donate to grassroots recovery ef-

forts, please send funds to our friends at Mutual Aid Disaster Relief or Appalachian Medical Solidarity, who have been caring for our community 365 days/year.

October 2

The day after Hurricane Helene hit our region, Buncombe County's assistant emergency services director called the devastation "biblical." The phrase has been repeated by other officials and quoted widely in the media. While it's understandable that a religious reference would resonate in a place that remains deeply impacted by Christianity, the phrase serves more to conceal than illuminate.

A biblical event is divine, a catastrophic exercise of power over humanity, an act of punishment. Appalachia's "biblical" destruction echoes the US Army Corps of Engineers declaration that Hurricane Katrina—which killed 1,392 people, most of them Black and working class—was an "Act of God." When people with power attribute the suffering of those without power to God, they're concealing culpability.

The death and destruction in Buncombe County is a direct result of capitalism, and environmental extractivism—a logical extension of colonialism and Appalachia’s two hundred year status as a national sacrifice zone.

One hundred thousand people in Asheville are not lacking water because of God’s wrath.

We’re without water because corporations and the political class have refused to take action on climate change. We’re without water because the city has systematically under-invested in infrastructure, while pumping money into tourism, for five decades. Water problems didn’t start with Helene, they’ve been a regular fact of life in Asheville for years.

Thousands of people in Buncombe County are not without food because of God’s wrath.

We’re without food because hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland in WNC have been converted into overpriced subdivisions. We’re without food because police departments prioritized protecting grocery stores from looters over wellness checks, while 600+ community members were missing. Natural disasters bring people together, they bring out our best instincts towards altruism, cooperation, and creativity—they should also make us furious. Our suffering is not biblical, it’s distinctively modern, and these leaders are responsible for it.

October 5

The morning Hurricane Helene hit Asheville, members of our collective sat in the dark, listening to the howling wind and the crack of huge trees falling all around. When we emerged Friday evening to take stock, a cardboard sign on our co-op’s door read “Community meeting here, Saturday at 2pm. Let’s talk about how we can take care of each other + community.” That first autonomous act by an anonymous neighbor set the stage for the week, with Firestorm becoming a container for other people’s brilliant, beautiful, and generous self-organizing.

About forty people attended the first meeting. Nearly

four hundred attended the next one. The gatherings, now a daily anchor, have generated a multitude of connections and volunteer powered projects. Before city officials had finished assessing the damage, community members were sharing supplies, doing wellness checks, and serving hot meals. Over the next few days, things became more organized. Anarchist arborists collected chainsaws and dispatched crews to clear roads for trapped residents; activists mobilized to build long term water distribution systems capable of delivering 6k gallons/day; bike punks offered free repair clinics; a farmer began driving regular water supply loops to Firestorm from a nearby spring; and an enthusiastic DIY-er set up a tent to distribute dry toilets made from affordable materials.

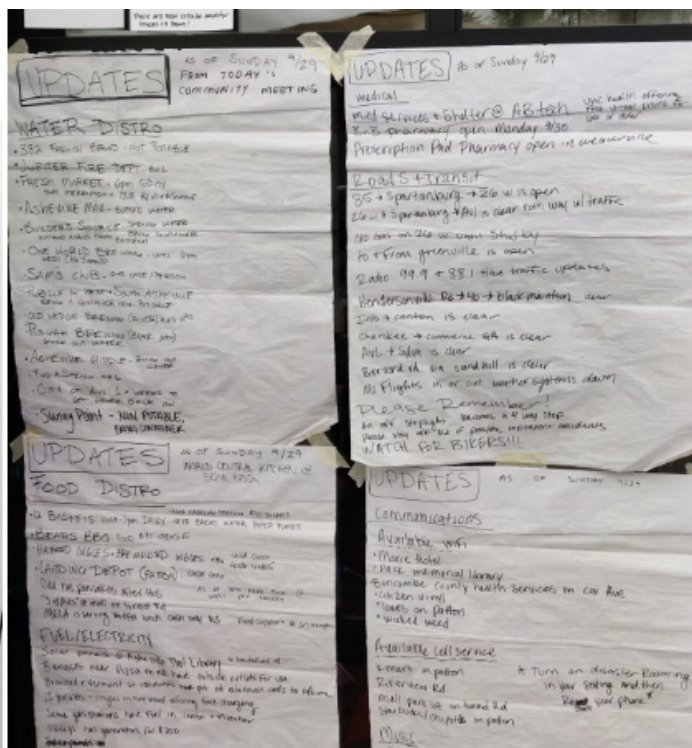
In the midst of this anarchic moment, Firestorm isn’t setting the agenda or directing anyone—we’re offering a space that welcomes independent initiative, we’re supporting the exchange of critical information, and we’re modeling a do-it-ourselves approach that’s responsive, experimental, and human-scale.

Yes, government and NGO aid is now flowing into the region—but the work of caring for one another continues to be done by neighbors, grassroots organizations, small businesses, and activists. It’s done voluntarily, with thousands of autonomous actions synchronized through a shared solidarity. For a brief moment, the logic of the market is suspended, care is given freely, and everyone contributes what they can.

It’s a strange paradox that the utopia we dream of becomes most visible in the dark.

October 6

Among other things, Firestorm has been operating as a distribution hub for relief supplies. With roads impassable, these supplies initially came from our homes and the refrigerators or garages of neighbors. On Sunday, the first deliveries—water, food, sanitary products, and baby supplies—arrived in cars and vans driven by folks from South Carolina. No one called ahead (they couldn’t), but somehow we weren’t surprised.



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Within a day, our distro was widely known. Elders evacuating with pets brought dog food and a farmer dropped off crates of fresh veggies. Folks living on our street—some of whom we were meeting for the first time—filled bags and offered one another support. The size of deliveries grew from sedans to U-Hauls and individuals from Deaverview and Pisgah View Apartments, public housing close to our co-op, began running loops to acquire necessities for neighbors. Unlike official distribution sites, no one was limiting what people could take, allowing folks to organically extend the supply lines from Firestorm into communities that were otherwise being overlooked.

Running a distro site requires a lot of human power: folks to unload trucks, to organize inventory, to portion and repackage supplies, to restock tables and manage trash, bilingual folks to answer questions and assist with specific needs, and “runners” to fill requests. We’re fortunate to have an incredible group that’s come back day after day; and each day, our systems have gotten a little better.

After some initial confusion (one person asked if *we* were FEMA!), participants clearly understood the idea of a mutual aid hub. Two women who had picked up food and water the day before returned with big boxes of sandwiches de carne, explaining that they wanted to give back. This pattern has repeated, over and over, with individuals taking what they need and contributing what they can. At the same time, we also rely on the distro to meet our own needs for food, water, and other essentials, subverting the binary of aid recipient and provider. In the words of Mutual Aid Disaster Relief, we’ve found ourselves and our community co-creating “solidarity, not charity.”

Firestorm is a collectively-owned radical bookstore and community event space in Asheville, North Carolina. Since 2008 they’ve supported grassroots movements in Southern Appalachia while developing a workplace on the basis of cooperation, empowerment and equity.