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- Tamara Pearson



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A New Year of Empire

Tamara Pearson

US starts 2026 by bombing Venezuela and kidnapping its president, setting a tone of imperialist violence for the year.

With its violent military intervention into Venezuela – a country I used to live in – the U.S. has begun this year with entitled and undisguised imperialism. The unapologetic kidnapping of Nicolas Maduro and of Celia Flores (not just a wife as the media refers to her, but also former head of the National Assembly) and killing of at least 40 Venezuelans aims to cement and normalize the U.S.’s standard operating procedure for international relations as violence and control. It will take Venezuela’s oil and the DRC’s tech minerals, and to hell with Global South self-determination, agency, and ownership.

I remember when I lived in Venezuela and we talked about what we would do if the U.S. attacked. We were already facing other kinds of attacks, including basic food shortages orchestrated by private companies, destabilization attempts, right-wing violence, and English-language mainstream media lies. The conversation particularly came up around elections, when the shortages and destabilization typically increased, and U.S. attacks felt less hypothetical.

Even then, though, we would balance the very real and long history of violent U.S. interventions in Latin America with skepticism. How could they kill innocent people and bomb what felt like to me the closest thing to paradise? Venezuela was never a utopia – there were mistakes and much work to do, but the Andean mountains were intensely green, the coastal waters a peaceful turquoise, the nights full of fairy fog that you could see drifting down the streets. The days were full of the laughter of the tiny children I taught as part of our participatory education project. We solved our own local problems as an organized community, turned empty lots into community gardens, and there was always, always, political debate and high political literacy. People

knew their constitution, often by heart, knew the laws, and the news. Venezuelans had and have this infinite urge to dance, even on moving buses or after two-day long meetings. How could anyone consider destroying that world? It felt inconceivable. It didn’t make sense, and it still doesn’t.

Yet we all know that beautiful Gaza, with its beaches, shops, delicious zaatar bread, hospitals, books, and resilient people, has been turned into rubble and whole families wiped out. The U.S.-led destruction of Afghanistan and Iraq ruined people, communities and saw key cultural and archaeological sites irreparably damaged, and artifacts looted. I live in Mexico now, and here alone, the U.S. has used NAFTA and the so-called “War on Drugs” to militarize this beautiful country and systematically turn it into a vast grave (with 131,000 forced disappearances) and into an obedient neoliberal production line for nearshoring U.S. companies. So, in Venezuela, I guess we should have been less skeptical. Friends there messaged me on Saturday in shock, their ears ringing from the sounds of bombs. New year week-end wasn’t meant to be this.

However, throughout 2025, the U.S. had asserted itself more openly as global police chief at the service of big business. It “negotiated” (pressured) a “ceasefire” in the DRC which would give it access to the country’s highly sought-after tech minerals and metals and to security control, and it has supported Israel, bombed Nigeria, and killed Venezuelans with complete impunity. It closed its borders to refugees in violation of international law, and breached migrant and human rights within its own borders. It also bombed Syria, Iraq, Iran, Yemen, and Somalia. It carried out or was partner to 622 overseas bombings in total, and also intervened in manipulative ways, such as Trump’s comments days before the Honduran election in November that led to the victory of the right-wing candidate he backed, or the U.S.’s role in the international “Gang Suppression Force” in Haiti.

While global institutions like the International Criminal Court and the UN have demonstrated their ineffectiveness at doing anything at all about the U.S.'s illegal sanctions against Cuba, the genocide in Gaza, or climate destruction, Trump has been able to fortify the U.S. as a force that actually decides international affairs.

In his press conference Saturday, Trump said the U.S. would be selling Venezuelan oil. Though he laid the groundwork for the military intervention into Venezuela with evidence-free talk of drug cartels, bombing what were likely fishing boats in the second half of 2025, most people knew this was always about regaining control over the country with the largest known oil reserves. However, Venezuela also represents defiance. The U.S. has sanctioned the country for such behavior for over a decade, killing or contributing to the deaths of over 40,000 people in 2017–18 alone.

The U.S. doesn't just treat the Global South as a resource buffet. In order to secure its access to the goods, it wants the countries' governments at its beck and call. Venezuela, especially during the 2010s and through initiatives like CELAC, was playing a role of uniting Latin America against such dominance and towards independence and social and economic alternatives.

The bombing of Venezuela, beyond the oil itself, is about U.S. control over Latin America and part of a right-wing push back against movements, grass-roots empowerment, and alternatives to violent capitalism. Beyond Bukele in El Salvador and Milei in Argentina, in 2025 the right wing also won in Bolivia, Honduras, and Chile. With Trump, these "leaders" are furthering racist, homophobic, sexist, and privatization agendas.

Normalizing empire and global human rights violations

Beyond the horrific event itself, the events of January 3 are part of a move towards normalizing a global state of danger, insecurity, human rights abuses, and disregard for international law. It does

not matter what anyone thinks of Maduro; whether he won the 2025 election is an important discussion for another place and time. The U.S. has no right to determine the heads of other countries. It wants to be, but is not the world boss, and beyond that, has no moral standing to decide or control anything.

But Saturday's move, as a continuation of U.S. policy in 2025, upholds military intervention as a solution to problems. It is a signal to wayward countries to obey. Such imperialism not only kills people, in the long term it perpetuates racist tropes of Global South countries that can't run themselves, while legitimizing U.S.- and euro-centrism that stipulates their monopoly on wisdom and democracy. Imperialism scares its victims into silence and submission and cements a global apartheid dynamic where some regions are politically and financially controlled, subjected to unlivable wages and to resource robbery. Through debt systems and trade and income inequalities, rich countries have drained US\$152 trillion from the Global South since 1960.

The intervention machine is rigging the world for U.S. big business interests, at the price of Global South dignity and agency. For invaded and intervened countries, there are hidden impacts as well; lower self-worth and an unsubstantiated belief that one's education, art, and inventions are inferior, disillusion with organizing and movements, and often, a need to migrate that is then met with rejection by those forces causing that need – as of course is the case with the U.S.

The Venezuelan people are not a threat. The country doesn't even produce or traffic significant amounts of drugs. In reality, much of the cruelty and harm globally is coming from the U.S. The Trump government and the U.S. elites are the ones committing human rights violations, shirking democracy by orchestrating coups like the one on Saturday morning and shirking legality let alone decency, by killing people in Venezuelan boats under the pretext of opposing drug trafficking, but without any trials or any proof. With each intervention Saturday's, the U.S. furthers its and Israel's impunity for war crimes, abuses, and violations.

Who's Really Running Venezuela?

Medea Benjamin, Nicolas J.S. Davies

As the Senate voted to advance a War Powers Resolution on Venezuela on January 8th, Republican Senator Susan Collins declared that she did not agree with “a sustained engagement “running” Venezuela.”

The world was mystified when President Trump first said that the United States would “run” Venezuela. He has since made it clear that he wants to control Venezuela by imposing a U.S. monopoly on selling its oil to the rest of the world, to trap the Venezuelan government in a subservient relationship with the United States.

The U.S. Energy Department has published a plan to sell Venezuelan oil already seized by the United States and then to use the same system for all future Venezuelan oil exports. The U.S. would dictate how the revenues are divided between the U.S. and Venezuela and continue this form of control indefinitely. Trump is planning to meet with U.S. oil company executives on Friday, January 9th, to discuss his plan.

Trump's plan would cut off Venezuela's trade with China, Russia, Iran and other countries, and force it to spend its oil revenues on goods and services from the United States. This new form of economic colonialism would also prevent Venezuela from continuing to spend the bulk of its oil revenues on its generous system of social spending, which has lifted millions of Venezuelans out of poverty.

However, on January 7th, the New York Times reported that Venezuela has other plans. “Venezuela's state-run oil company, Petróleos de Venezuela, confirmed for the first time that it was negotiating the “sale” of crude oil to the United States,” the Times reported. “It said in a statement on social media that it was using “frameworks similar to those currently in effect with international companies, such as Chevron, and is based on a strictly commercial transaction.”

Trump has threatened further military action to remove acting president Delcy Rodriguez from office if she does not comply with U.S. plans for Venezuela. But Trump has already bowed to reality in his decision to cooperate with Rodriguez, recognizing that Maria Corina Machado, the previous U.S. favorite, does not have popular support in Venezuela. The very presence of Delcy Rodriguez as acting president exposes the failure of Trump's regime change operation and his well-grounded reluctance to unleash yet another unwinnable U.S. war.

After the U.S. invasion and abduction of President Maduro on January 3rd, Delcy Rodriguez was sworn in as Acting President, reaffirming her loyalty to President Maduro and taking charge of running the country in his absence. But who is Delcy Rodriguez, and how is she likely to govern Venezuela? As a compliant and coerced U.S. puppet, or as the leader of an undefeated and independent Venezuela?

Delcy Rodriguez was seven years old in 1976, when her father was tortured and beaten to death as a political prisoner in Venezuela. Jorge Antonio Rodriguez was the 34-year-old co-founder of the Socialist League, a leftist political party, whom the government accused of a leading role in the kidnapping of William Niehaus, a suspected CIA officer working under cover as an Owens Corning executive.

Jorge Rodríguez was arrested and died in state custody after interrogation by Venezuelan intelligence agents. While the official cause of death was listed as a heart attack, his autopsy found that he had suffered severe injuries consistent with torture, including seven broken ribs, a collapsed chest, and a detached liver.

Delcy studied law in Caracas and Paris and became a labor lawyer, while her older brother Jorge became a psychiatrist. Delcy and her mother, Delcy



Gomez, were in London during the failed U.S.-backed coup in Venezuela in 2003, and they denounced the coup from the Venezuelan embassy in interviews with the BBC and CNN.

Delcy and her older brother Jorge soon joined Hugo Chavez's Bolivarian government, and rose to a series of senior positions under Chavez and then Maduro: Delcy served as Foreign Minister from 2014 to 2017, and Economy and Finance Minister from 2020 to 2024, as well as Oil Minister and Vice President; Jorge was Vice President for a year under Chavez and then Mayor of Caracas for 8 years.

On January 5th 2026, it fell to Jorge, now the president of the National Assembly, to swear in his sister

as acting president, after the illegal U.S. invasion and abduction of President Maduro. Delcy Rodriguez told her people and the world,

"I come as the executive vice president of the constitutional president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro Moros, to take the oath of office. I come with pain for the suffering that has been caused to the Venezuelan people after an illegitimate military aggression against our homeland. I come with pain for the kidnapping of two heroes who are being held hostage in the United States of America, President Nicolas Maduro and the first combatant, first lady of our country, Cilia Flores. I come with pain, but I must say that I also come with honor to swear in the name of all Venezue-

lans. I come to swear by our father, liberator Simon Bolivar.”

In other public statements, acting president Rodriguez has struck a fine balance between fierce assertions of Venezuela’s independence and a pragmatic readiness to cooperate peacefully with the United States.

On January 3rd, Delcy Rodriguez declared that Venezuela would “never again be anyone’s colony.” However, after chairing her first cabinet meeting the next day, she said that Venezuela was looking for a “balanced and respectful” relationship with the United States. She went on to say, “We extend an invitation to the government of the U.S. to work jointly on an agenda of cooperation, aimed at shared development, within the framework of international law, and that strengthens lasting peaceful coexistence,”

In a direct message to Trump, Rodriguez wrote, “President Donald Trump: our peoples and our region deserve peace and dialogue, not war. That has always been President Nicolás Maduro’s conviction and it is that of all Venezuela at this moment. This is the Venezuela I believe in and to which I have dedicated my life. My dream is for Venezuela to become a great power where all decent Venezuelans can come together. Venezuela has the right to peace, development, sovereignty and a future.”

Alan McPherson, who chairs the Center for the Study of Force and Diplomacy at Temple University in the U.S., calls Delcy Rodriguez “a pragmatist who helped stabilize the Venezuelan economy in recent times.” However, speaking to Al Jazeera, he cautioned that any perceived humiliation by the Trump administration or demands seen as excessive could “backfire and end the cooperation,” making the relationship a “difficult balance to achieve.”

After the U.S. invasion on January 3rd, at least a dozen oil tankers set sail from Venezuela with their location transponders turned off, carrying 12 million barrels of oil, mostly to China, effectively breaking the U.S. blockade. But then, on January

7th, U.S. forces boarded and seized two more oil tankers with links to Venezuela, one in the Caribbean and a Russian one in the north Atlantic that they had been tracking for some time, making it clear that Trump is still intent on selectively enforcing the U.S. blockade.

Chevron has recalled American employees to work in Venezuela and resumed normal shipments to U.S. refineries after a four-day pause. But other U.S. oil companies are not eager to charge into Venezuela, where Trump’s actions have so far only increased the political risks for any new U.S. investments, amid a global surplus of oil supplies, low prices, and a world transitioning to cleaner, renewable energy.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Justice is scrambling to make a case against President Maduro, after Trump’s lawless war plan led to Maduro’s illegal arrest as the leader of a non-existent drug cartel in a foreign country where U.S. domestic law does not apply. In his first court appearance in New York, Maduro identified himself as the president of Venezuela and a prisoner of war.

Continuing to seize ships at sea and trying to shake down Venezuela for control of its oil revenues are not the “balanced and respectful” relationship that Delcy Rodriguez and the government of Venezuela are looking for, and the U.S. position is not as strong as Trump and Rubio’s threats suggest. Under the influence of neocons like Marco Rubio and Lindsey Graham, Trump has marched the U.S. to the brink of a war in Latin America that very few Americans support and that most of the world is united against.

Mutual respect and cooperation with Rodriguez and other progressive Latin American leaders, like Lula in Brazil, Gustavo Petro in Colombia and Mexico’s Claudia Scheinbaum, offer Trump face-saving ways out of the ever-escalating crisis that he and his clueless advisers have blundered into.

Trump has an eminently viable alternative to being manipulated into war by Marco Rubio: what the Chinese like to call “win-win cooperation.” Most



Acting president Delcy Rodríguez

Americans would favor that over the zero-sum game of hegemonic imperialism into which Rubio and Trump are draining our hard-earned tax dollars.

The main obstacle to the peaceful cooperation that Trump says he wants is his own blind belief in U.S. militarism and military supremacy. He wants to redirect U.S. imperialism away from Europe, Asia and Africa toward Latin America, but this is no more winnable or any more legitimate under international law, and it's just as unpopular with the American people.

If anything, there is greater public opposition to U.S. aggression “in our backyard” than to U.S. wars 10,000 miles away. Cuba, Venezuela and Colombia are our close neighbors, and the consequences of plunging them into violence and chaos are more obvious to most Americans than the equally appalling human costs of more distant U.S. wars.

Trump understands that endless war is unpopular, but he still seems to believe that he can get away with “one and done” operations like bombing Iran and kidnapping President Maduro and his first lady. These attacks, however, have only

solved imaginary problems – Iran’s non-existent nuclear weapons and Maduro’s non-existent drug cartel – while exacerbating long-standing regional crises that U.S. policy is largely responsible for, and which have no military solutions.

Dealing with Trump is a difficult challenge for Delcy Rodríguez and other Latin American leaders, but they should all understand by now that caving to Trump or letting him pick them off one by one is a path to ruin. The world must stand together to deter aggression and defend the basic principles and rules of the UN Charter, under which all countries agree to settle disputes peacefully and not to threaten or use military force against each other. Any chance for a more peaceful world depends on finally starting to take those commitments seriously, as Trump’s predecessors also failed to do.

There is a growing movement organizing nationwide protests to tell Trump that the American people reject his wars and threats of war against our neighbors in Latin America and around the world. This is a critical moment to raise your voice and help to turn the tide against endless war.

Venezuela, the U.S. National Security Strategy, and the Crisis of Responsible Statehood

Michael John-Hopkins

When does permissible strategic competition become illegitimate coercion, and when does state power begin to resemble organised crime? What is the Trump administration's logic in pardoning former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández while indicting the sitting Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro on similar allegations of drug trafficking? This article examines the recent U.S. escalation from maritime interdiction in the Gulf of Mexico to the use of armed force against Venezuela as an unfolding crisis of responsible statehood.

There is a recurring instinct in American strategic culture when it comes to power, resources, and order. In some contexts it prefers management to mess, contracts to conquest, and leverage to occupation. The ideal outcome is not formal control but compliance so that oil flows, markets stabilise, rivals are excluded, and all of it happens through arrangements that appear legal and technical. Power, at its most comfortable, does not look like domination at all.

Yet Venezuela exposes the limits of that instinct. Because when consent is not forthcoming, contracts fail, when sanctions do not compel compliance, and when leverage runs out, power does not dissolve, but rather it escalates according to the dominant strategic culture of the time. What emerges is a movement from managerial control to coercive authority that is neither accidental nor aberrational. It is anticipated, structured, and in many respects brazenly and openly articulated in the 2025 U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS). Venezuela is not a deviation from American strategic culture, but very much demonstrative of its extremities.

What makes this moment significant is not simply the possibility of intervention or resource seizure. It is what the transition from contracts to coercion reveals about the nature of contemporary state power, its relationship to legality, and the fragility of

statehood as a normative project in a world increasingly crowded with alternative, often brutal, forms of governance.

The managerial model of power

For decades, in certain places and at certain times, U.S. power has been exercised primarily through indirect means. Control has rarely required installation of puppet regimes, annexation or formal occupation. Instead, it has been embedded in contracts, finance, sanctions regimes, supply chains, insurance markets, export controls, licensing frameworks, security partnerships, and dispute resolution through multilateral bodies. Oil, in particular, is ideally suited to this model. It is capital-intensive, infrastructure-bound, globally traded, and deeply entangled with finance and insurance. Whoever controls the rules of access can often control the resource without deploying a single soldier.

This is the world imagined by the NSS. Strategy is defined as the disciplined alignment of ends and means in pursuit of core national interests. The language is blunt and stripped of universalist aspiration. The purpose of foreign policy is not global transformation but the protection of American power, prosperity, and security. Markets, alliances, and institutions are tools, not ends in themselves.

As articulated by Madeleine Albright during her time as U.S. Secretary of State in the Clinton administration.

"We will act multilaterally when we can, and unilaterally when we must."

"If we have to use force, it is because we are America; we are the indispensable nation. We stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future."

Within this framework, sovereignty is tolerated so long as it behaves. States are free to govern, provided they do not disrupt strategic supply chains, invite rival powers into sensitive regions, or challenge the economic architecture that underpins American pre-eminence. When they do, sovereignty becomes conditional. It is no longer a shield but an obstacle to be overcome through the unilateral exercise of raw power.

The Western Hemisphere as a zone of enforced order

Nowhere is this logic clearer than in the NSS's treatment of the Western Hemisphere. The Strategy explicitly commits the United States to reasserting and enforcing a renewed Monroe Doctrine, framed as a "Trump Corollary," or more recently as the "Donroe Doctrine." Here, the Western Hemisphere is described not as a community of equal sovereigns, but as a zone whose stability, governance, and asset ownership must align with American interests.

The NSS is unusually explicit. The United States will deny non-hemispheric competitors control over strategically vital assets. It will condition aid, trade, and cooperation on alignment. It will discourage regional governments from collaborating with rival powers, such as China or Russia. And it will use financial, technological, and security, including military leverage to ensure compliance.

This is managerial imperialism in its purest form. The preferred tools are commercial diplomacy, private-sector coordination, and institutional leverage. The aim is not occupation but alignment. Yet the Strategy makes clear that this preference is conditional. When indirect instruments fail, and consent is not forthcoming, escalation is not ruled out, force is threatened, and used. Practices that might once have been labelled gunboat diplomacy or colonial intervention are instead normalised as law enforcement, perhaps to shield from future accountability.

Venezuela sits squarely within this logic. But the pattern is not unique. In the land domain, it is visible

in Eastern Europe in relation to Russia's imperial ambitions, and in East Asia in relation to China's posture toward Taiwan. In the maritime domain, similar logics are evident in contested spaces ranging from the Gulf of Mexico to the South China Sea.

Across these contexts, managerial control gives way to coercive assertion where alignment cannot be secured, often at the cost of the very strategic interests such practices are said to protect, including stability and predictability, particularly those bound up with freedom of navigation, alliance credibility, and treaty-based regimes such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

When consent to imperial interests is not forthcoming

The problem posed by Venezuela is not simply that it possesses oil. It is that it insists on controlling that oil outside the preferred frameworks. Sanctions, asset freezes, parallel recognition strategies, and financial isolation have all been deployed to compel realignment. These measures assume eventual compliance. They are designed to fracture elites, exhaust resources, and produce a government willing to play by the rules. But when compliance does not arrive, the managerial model reaches its limit.

At that point, power confronts an uncomfortable reality when markets, institutions, and sanctions fail to deliver outcomes, political control must replace economic leverage. What had been framed as governance becomes coercion. Influence gives way to domination. This shift is often presented as exceptional or reluctant, but historically it has been neither.

The turn from diplomatic and multilateral leverage within the rules based international order to coercive intervention outside this post 1945 international framework has appeared repeatedly across the Americas when governments pursued reforms that challenged U.S. strategic or economic dominance, particularly over land, labour, and natural resources. A brief, non-exhaustive chronology illustrates the pattern:

- Jacobo Árbenz (Guatemala, 1954): agrarian land reform targeting unused holdings of foreign corporations; U.S.-backed covert operation and proxy invasion; president overthrown, reforms reversed, decades of instability followed.
- João Goulart (Brazil, 1964): land reform, labour protections, limits on foreign profit remittances; military coup supported by U.S. diplomatic and intelligence backing; long dictatorship installed.
- Salvador Allende (Chile, 1970–73): nationalisation of copper and expansion of social programmes; economic pressure, destabilisation, and proxy support; military coup and installation of Augusto Pinochet.
- Juan Bosch (Dominican Republic, 1965): constitutional reform and land redistribution; U.S. military invasion; reformist government blocked from returning to power.
- Omar Torrijos (Panama, 1970s): assertion of sovereignty over the Panama Canal; suspicious death in a plane crash widely alleged to involve U.S. intelligence; leadership removed, reforms contained.
- Manuel Noriega (Panama, 1989): refusal to remain compliant after prior cooperation; U.S. invasion; leader captured and removed.
- Jean-Bertrand Aristide (Haiti, 1991 and 2004): minimum-wage increases and resistance to IMF restructuring; overthrown twice; exiled; state left politically and economically weakened.

This pattern reflects a recurring structural logic, that when reforms threaten strategic assets, capital flows, or geopolitical interests, and when indirect pressure fails, escalation follows. Contracts and diplomatic pressure give way to coercion not because domination is preferred, but because compliance is demanded.

Venezuela, in this sense, has been resisting incorporation into a system that treats its resources as instruments of someone else's security. The NSS does not deny this logic, it institutionalises it, emphasising the protection of strategic resources,

the securing of supply chains, and the exclusion of rivals from key regions when necessary.

Strategic culture, staging, and the turn to coercion

What is striking is not simply that escalation occurs, but how predictably it is staged. This reflects long-standing tensions within American strategic culture itself, tensions that shape not only outcomes but the sequencing of tools. At one level, U.S. power has often been exercised through a Hamiltonian logic of commercial governance, namely reliance on markets, finance, contracts, sanctions, and institutional leverage to secure influence while preserving the appearance of legality and consent. This is the managerial model the NSS still prefers in form.

Layered beneath it, however, is an older Monroe-style hemispheric logic, reinforced by more Jacksonian instincts when resistance persists. In this tradition, the Western Hemisphere is treated as a privileged security space, where external rivals are to be excluded, and recalcitrant governments are disciplined rather than accommodated. Law is instrumental rather than constitutive and it binds when useful and yields when it obstructs.

The 2025 NSS makes this layering unusually explicit. Sanctions are elevated from financial tools to core national-security instruments. Economic flows are framed as security threats. Maritime enforcement, interdiction, and exclusion are normalised as mechanisms of regional order. What begins in Hamiltonian language ends in Monroe-Jacksonian practice.

This helps explain why escalation does not feel, internally, like a rupture. It is experienced instead as a shift between co-existing strategic cultures: from management to enforcement, from commerce to coercion, from law-as-framework to law-as-obstacle. The sequencing of influence from Chavez to Maduro illustrates this well.

The return of raw power, if it ever went away during the 1990 (Panama)–2025 (Venezuela) hiatus

The moment officials speak openly about restructuring Venezuelan oil production, ensuring American access, or taking control of operational arrangements, the language shifts. Partnership gives way to trusteeship, but not in a pure fiduciary sense. The assumption becomes that the resource is too important to be left in the “wrong” hands, and that external management is necessary for the greater good. This logic is not new. It once justified protectorates, mandates, and colonial administration. Today it is rebranded as stabilisation, responsible governance, or strategic protection. The vocabulary has changed but the logic has not.

Modern power is allergic to the word “occupation,” but not to the practice. Control is exercised without flags, governors, or formal annexation. Yet when foreign forces determine economic arrangements, override local consent, and impose governance outcomes, including private corporate control and ownership, the distinction becomes cosmetic. Control without consent remains control – the task now is to dress this up as being consensual.

The NSS anticipates this slippage. It affirms non-interventionist instincts, but only insofar as they do not conflict with core interests. Sovereignty is respected until it obstructs strategic objectives. At that point, intervention is reframed as necessity and folded into the language of law enforcement and self-defence when multilateral authorisation is not forthcoming. The deeper problem, however, is that, unlike George H. W. Bush, who sought to maintain a relatively coherent and restrained justificatory narrative during the invasion of Panama, Donald J. Trump repeatedly slips into an overtly 19th-century imperial register during his press conferences put on at his Mar-a-Lago Club.

The emergence of a criminal imperial strategy

This is where the movement from competition to coercion becomes not merely political, but unlawful and illegal.

Under the Charter of the United Nations, the prohibition on the use of force is clear. Force is lawful only in self-defence or with Security Council authorisation. Resource control, strategic pre-eminence, and supply-chain security do not constitute lawful justifications. If coercive control over Venezuelan territory, infrastructure, or oil production were imposed without valid consent, it would fall squarely within the prohibition on the use of force. The managerial language of “protection” and domestic law enforcement does not change the legal character of the act.

Nor does the analysis stop there. Under the laws and customs of war, the exploitation of natural resources in occupied territory is tightly constrained. Pillage, the appropriation of property without lawful justification or genuine consent, is prohibited, and may constitute a war crime. Modern international humanitarian law does not require looting by individual soldiers to establish pillage. Systematic extraction, enforced contractual arrangements, or resource exploitation carried out under coercive conditions by private corporations may meet the same threshold. It is therefore unsurprising that contemporary strategies emphasise avoiding the appearance of occupation, and instead seek to identify or install ostensibly consenting partners within Venezuelan political and military elites.

What appears politically as strategic necessity begins to look, legally, like a form of organised predation that engages frameworks of international humanitarian law and international criminal law. These frameworks are resilient in the sense that they lie beyond the control of any single system of autocratic legalism and are capable of bearing witness to violations even when immediate enforcement is politically foreclosed.

Until such time as political conditions permit implementation and accountability, the resilience of international law often lies in its declaratory and promotional functions (that is, its capacity to articulate legal standards, name violations, and connect concrete harms to broader ideologies and geopolitical strategies). Crucially, this work operates not



only through the attribution of state responsibility under public international law and human rights law, but also through the preservation and articulation of individual criminal responsibility under international humanitarian law, even where prosecutions are delayed.

Arguably, it is precisely for this reason that coercive action is often reframed as law enforcement rather than warfare. Casting intervention as arrest, extradition, counter-narcotics enforcement, or sanctions implementation serves an important legal function. Namely, it seeks to situate the conduct outside the law on the use of force and outside the laws of armed conflict, thereby insulating decision-makers from exposure to war crimes, pillage, and universal jurisdiction doctrines. Law-enforcement paradigms invoke domestic criminal authority, consent by proxy, or transnational policing rationales, all of which dilute scrutiny under international humanitarian law. Yet this reclassification does not alter the underlying legal reality. Where force is used coercively against another state's territory, leadership, or resources without valid consent or Security Council authorisation, the applicable legal framework is determined by objective facts, not the labels chosen by the intervening power. Dressing invasion and

occupation in the language of law enforcement may seek plausible deniability, but it does not eliminate substantive justice.

Furthermore, framing coercive action as the domestic law enforcement of criminal charges against a sitting foreign head of state is not only unlawful, it is profoundly destabilising for the international system, and in no way aligned with American interests. Under customary international law, heads of state enjoy personal immunity and inviolability from foreign enforcement jurisdiction, regardless of recognition disputes or the quality of elections. This immunity reflects the principle of sovereign equality, not endorsement of conduct, of the type that Venezuela has been investigated for by the International Criminal Court. If states were permitted to project their own domestic criminal law extraterritorially against incumbent foreign leaders, the result would be systemic breakdown, such as reciprocal arrests, politicised prosecutions, and permanent escalation. International law draws a sharp line between collective accountability for international crimes, through international mechanisms, and unilateral enforcement of domestic law. Blurring that line does not strengthen legality, it dissolves it.

Raw parasitic power and criminal statecraft

This is where the concept of parasitism becomes analytically useful. Parasitic power does not invest in the long-term flourishing of the host. It extracts, drains, and moves on. It treats external resources as substitutes for internal reform. Rather than addressing structural fragility at home, financialisation, inequality, or energy dependence, it projects pressure outward. The NSS's emphasis on energy dominance, supply-chain security, and resource protection reflects this tension. Energy is framed not only as an economic good, but as a tool of leverage and power projection. When access is threatened, escalation is justified.

At this point, statecraft begins to resemble organised criminal enterprise, not in the sense of chaos or lawlessness, but in structure, namely, the fusion of political authority, economic extraction, coercion, and impunity. The difference between “strategy” and “racketeering” narrows when rules apply only to others, and force is used to secure advantage.

The crisis of responsible statehood

The consequences of this obviously extend beyond Venezuela, and are deeply troubling for the maintenance of peace and security in Europe, Asia, and Africa.

We are living in a crowded marketplace of governance. States no longer compete only with one another in terms of commerce. They compete with alternative governance models, such as authoritarian capitalism, techno-surveillance regimes, theocratic movements, and violent non-state actors offering order, identity, dispute resolution, or protection. China, Russia, and various militant theocracies all present themselves as viable alternatives to what is presented as liberal statehood in its various forms.

The claim long made by liberal states is that responsible statehood, grounded in law, accountability, and restraint, is more effective, legitimate, and rewarding than these alternatives. But that claim

depends on performance. When powerful states abandon legality in pursuit of advantage, when they treat sovereignty as conditional and resources as spoils, they undermine their own argument, and ultimately vital interests. They signal that statehood is merely a vehicle for extraction, not a framework for mutual benefit and restraint.

Worse still, they create space for organised criminal enterprises to flourish. Weak or coerced states become fertile ground for illicit economies, trafficking networks, and armed groups that thrive in the gaps between law and power. Parasitic statecraft breeds parasitic non-state actors, which may in turn serve as proxies for parasitic foreign powers.

Accountability or attrition, hegemony or survival. If states wish to promote responsible statehood as the preferred model of governance, they must be willing to hold one another accountable, not selectively or rhetorically, but substantively. That means insisting that strategic competition operates within legal bounds, even when inconvenient. It means recognising that legitimacy is not preserved by power alone. International civil society has a role to play, but it cannot substitute for state accountability. If states excuse their own violations while condemning others, the system erodes. The result is not stability, but attrition, a slow hollowing-out of the normative foundations of order, and in turn, peace, security, development, and human flourishing. In such a world, the appeal of alternative forms of governance grows, not because they are just, but because they are perceived as honest about power, predictable, and reliable.

Venezuela is not simply about oil. It is about whether the rules that states claim to uphold still bind them when the stakes are high. If they do not, the promise of responsible statehood rings hollow, and the future will belong to those who offer order without pretence, however brutal the cost. As the climate crisis rapidly narrows the safe and just space for humanity, the pursuit of hegemony must give way to survival. For under our current material conditions, where imperialism represents the latest stage of capitalism, there will be no winners.

Hugo Chávez Predicted This

Nuvpreet Kalra

On January 3rd, the United States invaded and bombed Venezuela and abducted President Maduro and First Lady Flores. This violent act of imperialist aggression by the Trump regime is a continuation of over two decades of hybrid warfare aimed at suppressing the Bolivarian Revolution. Over the past months, the US has been escalating aggression against Venezuela, but this abduction is the culmination of over two decades of imperialist war. In fact, it was predicted 20 years ago this year by Hugo Chávez, the first president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, at an address to the UN General Assembly.

In 2006, in what became one of his most iconic speeches, Hugo Chávez said:

“The government of the United States doesn’t want peace. It wants to exploit its system of exploitation, of pillage, of hegemony through war. It wants peace. But what’s happening in Iraq? What happened in Lebanon? In Palestine? What’s happening? What’s happened over the last 100 years in Latin America and in the world? And now threatening Venezuela — new threats against Venezuela, against Iran?”

Chávez could have made this exact speech today, last year, or really any time in the past two decades. His words are so apt for today because US foreign policy has not changed. It is the same violent maintenance and exertion of its hegemony and deadly system of exploitation and hegemony, no matter if orchestrated in blue or red. This is what we have been seeing with Israel’s genocide in Gaza, attacks on Lebanon and Yemen, regime change in Syria, threats and attacks on Iran, suffocation of Cuba, provocations and war preparation against China, proxy war in Ukraine, and continued regime change attempts against Venezuela. Chávez’s words will remain timeless as long as US imperialism remains intact and the smell of sulfur remains.

Since 1998, with the election of the revolutionary leader Hugo Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution, the United States has been hellbent on overthrowing the government of Venezuela. Before Chávez, American companies ran wild in Venezuela, extracting and exploiting natural resources and labor. In the 1980s, Venezuela adopted US-backed neoliberal reforms, which emphasized an open oil market, deregulation, and privatization, which accumulated huge profits for US companies at the expense of the Venezuelan people. This is the Venezuela that the United States wants; in fact, this is the US’s modus operandi across Latin America.

Today, the media class is doubling down on its line of Venezuela’s fall from grace as the richest country in Latin America. This regime change propaganda has been plastered across media platforms, like CBS’s 60 Minutes, to manufacture consent for US regime change operations, impending invasion, and for continued US war crimes against small boats in the Caribbean.

Coincidentally erased from these media narratives are the impacts of suffocation with US-led sanctions, which have slashed Venezuela’s oil revenues by 213% between January 2017 and December 2024. This amounts to \$77 million in losses every single day. These unilateral coercive measures are a form of warfare aimed at impoverishing the Venezuelan people, blaming the Bolivarian Revolution for hardships, and triggering regime change from utter suffering.

It is shameful, though unsurprising given these are the same media outlets justifying US-Israeli genocide, to peddle this lie, which purposefully erases the true history of neoliberal Venezuela. In this era, romanticized by these imperialist mouthpieces as a haven to which they want Venezuela to return, just 20% of the Venezuelan population was benefiting from oil wealth, while the other 80% suffered from



poverty. Also erased from these narratives are the horrors of IMF austerity, which overnight locked out millions of people from basic necessities and essential services, leading to Caracazo, an uprising of hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans opposing these neoliberal reforms. It is convenient for 60 Minutes and others to erase the deaths of over 3,000 people from the military crush of these protests, just as it is to remove all traces of the neoliberal crisis that the US enforced on the country. But despite attempts, they cannot redact how the horrific neoliberalism of the 1980s and 1990s brought about the popular uprising led by Commandante Hugo Chávez, which eventually led to his successful election as president in 1998.

While Chávez's victory did not immediately alert Washington, and the Clinton administration adopted a "wait and see" policy, in the years following, alarms certainly began to ring. Chávez's openly anti-imperialist politik, including selling oil to Cuba and supporting anti-imperialist resistance and governments, and the imposition of Venezuela's sovereignty, quickly made US politicians, oil tycoons, and those with stakes in the US empire tremble.

Sabotage Made in the White House (2001-4)

With the arrival of Bush in the White House in 2001, US policy towards Venezuela became more overtly aggressive, with Chávez as the target fresh from re-election victory. This shift was deepened in response to Chávez's opposition to Bush's so-called "war on terror" and refusal to join the "coalition of the willing, as well as Venezuela's escalating assertion of its oil sovereignty. As the US escalated attacks across Afghanistan and Iraq, Chávez criticized and called out the terror and violence the US imposed across the world and domestically. Chávez's bold opposition to US terror was a substantial threat to the imperialist coalition that sought to impose its violent will on the peoples of West Asia. In response, the US accelerated its hybrid warfare from a campaign of pressure and isolation to regime change.

This came to a head in 2002, when the US backed and coordinated right-wing elites to kidnap Chávez in an attempted coup where they tried to dissolve the constitution of the Bolivarian Republic. In quick succession, the US recognized the short-lived 47-hour coup, which embarrassingly failed as popular forces

rallied in tandem with the military to brush off the coup. Rather than demoralize the Venezuelan people, this coup galvanized the socialist project with oil revenues now reinvested in education, healthcare, and housing rather than the pockets of US tycoons. The government built 3,000 new schools and, by 2005, eradicated illiteracy with the support of Cuba; set up 6,000 community health clinics as 15,000 Cuban doctors provided healthcare for millions of Venezuelans; and by 2009, infant mortality was cut by 40%, and the free healthcare system was caring for millions of Venezuelans.

In the face of overwhelming support for the revolution, the US changed course and used economic and technological warfare to try to strangle the revenue the government was relying on to fund its sweeping reforms. 8 months after the failed coup, the US-backed opposition groups sabotaged the nationalized oil company, PDVSA, through INTESA (majority owned by US weapons company SAIC), a company working in PDVSA. At the same time, US-funded opposition groups provoked a “strike” at PDVSA. The strike and lockout cost the country \$20 billion, which could have been used to fund the healthcare system, to build a million homes, or continue to better the lives of Venezuelan people. In 2004, US-trained thugs violently attacked and killed people in Caracas in another attempt to oust Chávez. This was quickly followed by a NED- and USAID-funded campaign, led by US puppet Maria Corina Machado, for a referendum to recall President Chávez. This was yet another attempt to impose regime change that was crushed repeatedly by the streets.

Despite relentless attempts to overthrow Chávez, the revolutionary government pushed ahead with anti-imperialist worldbuilding in forming the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, or ALBA, as an anti-hegemonic alternative to the US ‘Free Trade Area of the Americas’ (FTAA) which prioritized social programme and solidarity over neoliberal, extractive “trade”; leadership of OPEC to facilitate development and constitute the progressive bloc across Latin America; and challenged US imperialist violence, with powerful statements like:

‘From Latin America, from Venezuela, we send out our heart to our brothers the Iraqi people, and the Arab peoples ... who are fighting the battle against the imperialist aggressor’ (Hugo Chávez, April 2004)

Second Offensive (2005-08)

As Venezuela continued using oil incomes to develop Venezuela in the interests of the people, the US imperialist aggression continued in full force. This pushed the United States into formulating a multi-pronged approach aimed at overthrowing the Bolivarian revolution. In 2005, the Bush administration imposed formal sanctions on Venezuela and funnelled millions of dollars into opposition figures to cause chaos and suffering. This approach has been tried and tested by the US empire across the world, most notably in Cuba, where a decades-long total blockade has sought to produce immense suffering amongst the Cuban people, that they support the overthrow of their own government via US-backed figures.

Between 2005 and 2012, the US used the National Endowment for Democracy to funnel \$30 million into opposition parties, non-governmental organizations, and other opposition groups in Venezuela. This spiked ahead of the December 2006 presidential election with the aim of propelling figures to undermine the democratic process and provide domestic calls for US invasion. One of the key figures to emerge from this money was Maria Corina Machado, the 2025 winner of the Nobel “Peace” Prize and vocal supporter of the US imperialist invasion of Venezuela. After the Trump regime killed over 110 Venezuelans and abducted their President, totally undermining the sovereignty of a country, Machado stated the US had fulfilled its promise to enforce the law. Such figures, despite being snubbed by their puppet master, Trump, are paraded to give the sense that imperialist invasion has a domestic face.

In 2005, the US officially labelled Venezuela a “non-cooperative” country and banned the sale of all weapons, parts, and software, including maintenance of F-16 fighter jets and any regional defense cooperation. Under the guise of “terror, the Bush administration effectively imposed an embargo on the country as an attempt to suppress its international solidarity, bold

policy, and socialist construction. Over the following years, the Bush administration continued imperialist attacks, including propaganda of “authoritarianism” and human rights abuses, lawfare imperialism via companies like Exxon, as well as escalating targeted sanctions, including on the financial sector, the first OFAC designations for senior Venezuelan officials, as well as other individuals and businesses at whim.

All the while, Venezuela was providing free heating oil to Americans across 25 states. The CITGO-Venezuela Heating Oil Program began in 2005 and provided over 2 million Americans with free and discounted heating services, including for homeless shelters and Native American communities. While the US was investing millions of dollars into attacking Venezuela and bringing about regime change, the Chávez government was providing aid to the American people.

This material international solidarity provided to exploited Americans was part of a wider and sweeping investment in public services in Venezuela itself. By 2008, Venezuela’s GDP grew by almost 5%, driven by the oil boom, which facilitated the massive investments in public spending. In this period, 25% of oil revenue went directly into the government’s Fondo national fund for direct investment into public projects for food sovereignty, housing, education, healthcare, transportation, cooperatives, sanitation, and socialist construction. Between 1998 and 2008, 17 large hospitals were built, primary-care physicians increased twelve-fold, infant mortality fell by more than a third, death from malnutrition cut by half, higher education enrolment more than doubled, foreign debt fell by more than half, five million people were brought into formal sanitation systems, major new transportation networkers were built, and 6,200 new cooperatives received funding. The Venezuelan people’s material conditions were vastly improved by this ambitious and socialist government, using oil revenue in the interests of the people. This, of course, motivated the United States’ coercive measures.

Coercion and control (2009-13)

The Obama regime’s first moves marked an escalation in direct attacks on revolutionary leaders in govern-

ment in Venezuela. Between 2010 and 2013, Obama sanctioned 19 Venezuelan officials, froze their assets, and denied them travel, all based on lies over “drugs.” Such a turn marked a move to designate individuals as enemies of the United States and provide propaganda points for further actions. Years before, Chávez predicted this labelling of “narco-trafficking” as justification for invasion and regime change. The same formula was also imposed on Diosdado Cabello and then Maduro. In an interview in 2005, Chávez said:

“Years ago, someone told me: ‘They’re going to end up accusing you of being a drug trafficker—you personally—you, Chávez. Not just that the government supports it, or permits it—no, no, no. They’re going to try to apply the Noriega formula to you.’”

In 2013, Hugo Chávez passed away, leaving behind a legacy inspiring Venezuelans and all those across the world who moved to build societies based on peace and justice. The Presidential election of 2013 set out the same playbook the US was to use in all preceding elections. The vote was won by Nicolás Maduro, who contested a NED-funded candidate, Henrique Capriles, who refused to accept his defeat and claimed it was a rigged election. The Obama regime used this opportunity to give grounds for regime change by denouncing the election results and labeling Maduro the illegitimate leader. Thus arose the newest villain in Venezuela, deemed an authoritarian human rights-abusing dictator, or whichever combination of words the US ruling class selected that day.

US-funded groups instigated violent riots across Venezuela, providing the ideal conditions for the “imperialism of peace” waged by the US on the country. The “Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act” passed in 2014 provided further basis for widespread sanctions, using so-called “human rights” as the rationale for interference and punitive measures. The most prominent propaganda lines the US used to peddle during this time were over “human rights”, “corruption”, and “drugs”, all to demonize Venezuela and justify all coercive measures, just as the lies of the “terror” threat were the rationalization for the US to kill over 4.5 million people.

Lethal Actions (2015-2019)

On March 9, 2015, the Obama regime labelled Venezuela an “extraordinary threat to US national security, invoking the Emergency Economic Powers Act to do so. This Executive Order froze the assets of seven senior Venezuelan officials and banned them from the US, as well as critically providing the legal scaffolding for all further unilateral coercive measures imposed on Venezuela by subsequent administrations. Obama seamlessly set up the scaffolding that enabled Trump’s more abrasive, lethal attacks on Venezuela.

Between 2015-17, the US Treasury pressured financial institutions to cease operations in Venezuela and to close the accounts of their clients. In quick succession, this economic strangulation had deadly effects: Citibank rejected Venezuela’s payment for 300,000 doses of insulin, UBS Swiss Bank delayed a purchase of vaccines for months, Pfizer, Abbot, and Baster refused to issue certificates for cancer drugs, and a \$9 million payment for dialysis supplies was blocked. The US deliberately disrupted the free healthcare the government was providing to Venezuelans.

In 2017, during Trump’s first presidency, the US imposed a more robust financial blockade on Venezuela, seeking to cut Venezuela off from financial markets. The US imposed bans on financial engagement between US and Venezuelan individuals and companies, and issued warnings of penalties for foreign banks if they did so. In an attempt to circumvent these attacks and fund public services, the Maduro government introduced the Petro, a cryptocurrency based on oil reserves. Immediately, the US sanctioned that too as it continued to stack lethal sanctions, blocks, and bans intended to destabilize, attack, and destroy the country’s ability to function on its own.

In 2019, the Trump regime escalated its terrorist maximum pressure campaign on Venezuela. They imposed a total oil embargo and de facto economic embargo, seized Venezuelan company CITGO, sanctioned the Central Bank of Venezuela, and continued to add officials to the sanctions list. While these coercive measures sought to economically strangle the country, the US continued to push opposition figures.

In January, Juan Guaidó declared himself president of Venezuela. With US pressure, at least 60 governments across the world were pushed into recognizing this illegitimate statement. In order to push him to challenge Maduro’s legitimate government, the US handed Guaidó control of foreign frozen Venezuelan assets, including CITGO, as well as Venezuelan embassies. Despite being handed all of the concessions needed, Guaidó failed to garner any popular support as people in Venezuela and across the world saw this as an open and weak attempt at regime change.

Between 2015 and 2019, food imports fell by 73%, which caused chronic hunger to skyrocket by 214%; 180,000 surgeries were halted due to a lack of antibiotics and anesthetics; 2.6 million children could not access vaccines; and over 60% of HIV/AIDS patients were forced to suspend their treatment. These all-out sanctions forced public services to cut their capacity by half as shortages of fuel, spare parts, and imports reduced their ability to function, according to UN Special Rapporteur Alena Douhan. US sanctions killed 40,000 people in one year, between 2017 and 2018. The true cost of US measures is in its hundreds of thousands, all victims of the US empire, hellbent on imposing its interests and will on a sovereign nation.

Suffocation (2020-2024)

In response to the Maduro government’s resilience and popular support, the US set a \$15 million bounty for the capture of Maduro and four other officials, as well as imposing ridiculous charges over “narco-terrorism” and corruption against Maduro and 14 other officials. US sanctions, mercenary-backed coup attempts, and Guaidó’s meddling continued to harm Venezuelan people as medicine shortages leaped, the US blocked aircraft and bullied foreign insurers to drop their coverage of oil tankers.

The sanctions regime caused a quarter of Venezuelans to leave the country, many to the United States, where they were told they would find safety. Migration has been weaponized, just like with Cuba, in order to build domestic pressure for those outside of Venezuela propagandized to believe the suffering in Venezuela is at the hands of the government, not US warfare.

Biden's government, purporting to be interested in "democracy" in Venezuela, made a big show of easing some sanctions in the run-up to the 2024 elections. This was set up in order to feign concern, attempt to hide US hybrid warfare, and to justify the propaganda push denouncing the elections. In quick succession, the US sanctioned more officials and seized Maduro's presidential plane.

Invasion (2025-26)

As power changed hands from Biden to Trump, the outgoing government imposed further fresh sanctions on Venezuelan officials, including Maduro, paving the way for further moves by the incoming Trump government.

The Trump regime designated US-created "drug cartels" as "foreign terrorist organizations. In August, the US raised the bounty on Maduro to \$50 million and began a renewed propaganda campaign on the grounds of "narco-terrorism" and "cartels. This all provided the justification for the escalated aggression against Venezuela, with repeated war crimes as the US bombed small boats in the Caribbean and Pacific, which killed over 117 people.

Despite negotiations and diplomacy on the part of the Maduro government, including when Trump deported thousands of Venezuelans, the US only ramped up its aggression. All the while, the US has been continuing its funding and promotion of opposition candidates in elections, pushing propaganda in domestic and international media, and attempting to wrangle control of Venezuela's oil.

In the past month, this aggression showed to the world just how the US operates without any consequence or accountability. On December 10, the US hijacked and stole 1.8 million barrels of Venezuelan oil and a tanker set for Cuba. A few weeks later, they hijacked and stole another oil tanker in international waters and tried and failed to hijack another. From December 21 until January 7, the US was chasing an empty oil tanker, which was put under Russian protection. Despite this, on January 7, the US hijacked and

stole this tanker in the North Atlantic as well as another tanker in the Caribbean. These continued attacks, while the US and Israel threaten to bomb Iran, continue a slower, quieter genocide in Gaza, and threaten to attack Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Colombia, are part of the US empire's monstrous operation. They seek to suffocate any challenge to its maintenance of an international system of plunder and exploitation.

Right now, the Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and First Lady Cilia Flores are captured in chains in New York, facing sham charges that are more for the spectacle than any justice. The US is continuing to steal Venezuela's oil, broadcasting videos and cheering about hijacking another tanker. They are throwing around threats and gloating about deadly bombings that have killed over 110 people. It can feel hopeless, just as over two years of US-Israeli genocide go on without any justice for those who carry it out, who justify it, and who protect it.

All over the world, people are rising up against the US empire. Chants of "Yankee go home" have rung out across the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa. Venezuelans have been taking to the streets every day, chanting "Maduro, aguanta, que el pueblo se levanta / Maduro, hold on, the people are rising up". When we take a look back at the past 20 years of US violence against Venezuela, we know that the biggest fear for the imperialists is a popular uprising. That is why they make the people suffer, that is why they fund figures to pretend to speak for them, that is why they spend billions of dollars on propaganda.

20 years ago this year, when Chávez took to the floor in the United Nations, he was not only speaking to the people of 2006 nor to Bush, but to us today as we rise up:

"What is happening is that the world is waking up and people everywhere are rising up. I tell the world dictator: I have a feeling that the rest of your days will be a living nightmare, because everywhere you will see us rising up against American imperialism, demanding freedom, equality of peoples, and respect for the sovereignty of nations. Yes, we may be described as extremists, but we are rising against the empire, against the model of domination."

Venezuela Won't Be the End. You're Naive if You Think So

Jared O. Bell

Late Friday night into early Saturday, I watched the news and scrolled through social media as reports of explosions in Caracas began to spread. I went to sleep unaware of what the morning would bring. Hours later, bleary-eyed and half-blind without my glasses, I woke to headlines announcing that the Trump administration had captured and arrested Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro in what it called “Operation Absolute Resolve,” transporting him to New York to face narco-trafficking charges. Maduro’s sudden removal is being celebrated by Venezuelans abroad and met with a mix of relief and unease inside the country. But beyond those reactions lies a far more troubling implication: Venezuela will not be the end.

And I mean that in multiple senses, domestic and international alike. Donald Trump has made it abundantly clear that he intends to operate above the law. Under U.S. law, Congress authorizes war, not the president acting unilaterally. For those who insist that Saturday’s operation was not an act of war, international law is far less forgiving. The forcible capture of the head of another state constitutes a use of force prohibited under Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter, which bars the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. Recognition disputes do not create legal loopholes. Even if the administration claims Maduro was not the legitimate president, customary international law, the principle of sovereign equality, and the doctrine of non-intervention make clear that sovereignty cannot be violated absent self-defense or explicit authorization by the UN Security Council, neither of which applies here.

The United States has a long and troubled history of interventions abroad, but this action is unprecedented, especially given that Trump recently pardoned Juan Orlando Hernández in early December of 2025, the former president of Honduras who had been serving a U.S. federal sentence after being convicted of conspiring with major drug traffickers and using the Honduran state apparatus to facilitate the flow of cocaine into the United States. That the same administration now claims moral and legal authority to abduct the sitting leader of another country on narco-trafficking grounds is a contradiction so stark it should set off alarm bells across the international system.

This move comes from an administration that has repeatedly flouted the Constitution and the rule of law, deporting individuals in defiance of federal court orders and judicial stays, undermining asylum and due-process protections, and openly attacking judges who rule against it. It has dismantled or hollowed out federal agencies without congressional authorization, sidelining career civil servants through mass firings and loyalty tests, reviving efforts to reclassify thousands of federal workers to strip them of civil-service protections, and purging inspectors general charged with oversight and accountability.

The administration has deployed federal forces and the National Guard in ways that raised serious legal questions about the limits of executive authority, while engaging in blatant nepotism by elevating family members and close political allies into positions of influence. All of this has unfolded alongside the routine use of the presidency as a vehicle for personal and family

enrichment, from steering government business toward Trump-owned properties to leveraging public office for private financial and political gain.

What still haunts me is the *Vanity Fair* article, a two-part profile by journalist and author Chris Whipple titled “Susie Wiles, JD Vance, and the ‘Junkyard Dogs’: The White House Chief of Staff on Trump’s Second Term.” Published in mid-December 2025, it was based on 11 on-the-record interviews with Trump’s chief of staff, Susie Wiles. The article was widely laughed off across social media as comedy, a knowing nod to truths many of us already sensed, its characters caricatured and cast aside in jest, but in retrospect it reads less like insider gossip and more like a warning flare. Wiles states plainly that Donald Trump operates with the belief that there is nothing he cannot do. Nothing. Zero. Nothing. A sitting president who believes there are no limits is not projecting strength. He is advertising danger, lawlessness, and impunity.

For Donald Trump and the cabal of wealthy patrons, both inside and outside his cabinet, the very idea of accountability feels foreign, a belief that by nearly every measure has been reinforced rather than challenged. But recognizing that reality means confronting another one. Venezuela will not be the end, not by a long shot. Whenever Trump needs a quick political win to satisfy his demand for ego and legitimacy, whether foreign or domestic, he has shown he will take it by any means necessary. Logic, strategy, vision, and responsible statecraft be damned. This is, after all, the same man who pressured a governor to “find” votes to overturn the 2020 election, conduct detailed in damning evidence and reinforced by Special Counsel Jack Smith’s recent congressional testimony, and who has consistently sought to deflect scrutiny from unresolved questions surrounding the Jeffrey Epstein files. There are several recent incidents that lay bare this irrational and impulsive governing style, including the rush to frame overseas violence as political theater rather than sober diplomacy and hollow ges-

tures at home dressed up as patriotism, such as the much-publicized \$1,776 bonuses supposedly derived from tariffs and issued to military members, later revealed to be repackaged housing allowances they were already entitled to receive. Each episode follows the same script: spectacle over substance, symbolism over strategy, distraction in place of accountability.

We do not need a history lesson or another ritual invocation of past horrors. The writing is already on the wall: we know what happens when autocrats go unchecked, and when imperial ambitions inevitably collide with reality.

How and whether our elected officials, and Americans at large, respond now will determine what comes next. Maybe it is Greenland. Maybe Mexico. Maybe Canada. Perhaps there really is a third term after all, or the arrest of political opponents and dissenters. Why not? The law no longer appears to function as a bulwark, a barrier, or a meaningful deterrent for this administration and its whims.

Some members of Congress across the aisle have begun expressing concern after the administration’s operation to capture Maduro, with debate largely tracking partisan lines. Democrats have raised objections with little emphasis on accountability, amounting to more performative bluster than consequence. Republicans have largely supported the operation, often to placate Trump and advance their own ambitions, though a smaller number have questioned how it aligns with the president’s professed “America First” agenda. Still others, exhausted by the daily chaos, are choosing to exit Congress rather than confront the consequences of speaking out.

Nonetheless, without real accountability, Venezuela will not be the last episode of lawlessness and chaos we witness. And without any desire to sound hyperbolic or paranoid, what comes next may be far more sinister.

Sovereignty Is a Sham: The Hypocrisy of State Power Playing the Rules It Pretends to Follow

Martina Moneke

From Ukraine to Venezuela, claims of sovereignty often conceal strategic self-interest, exposing how global norms are wielded selectively to justify power rather than enforced consistently.

The Kremlin's declaration that Venezuela "must be guaranteed the right to determine its own future without destructive external interference, particularly of a military nature," issued after American forces captured President Nicolás Maduro and First Lady Cilia Flores, was already fraught with contradiction. The sentence itself is almost textbook international law—sovereignty, self-determination, nonintervention. It could have been lifted from the UN Charter or the language of decolonization movements across the 20th century. And yet, spoken by a government that invaded Ukraine, leveled cities, displaced millions, and annexed territory by force, the words did not persuade. The words hovered, accusing even as they exposed the distance between what is said and what is done.

The easy response is to call the statement hypocritical and move on. Hypocrisy is a satisfying diagnosis because it preserves the underlying moral architecture. The rule is still sound; the speaker has merely violated it. The norm remains intact even if the norm-breaker does not. But this reassurance is false. What the statement reveals is not hypocrisy as a deviation, but as a structure. It shows how international norms actually function—not as shared commitments, but as instruments deployed when useful and discarded when costly.

This is not a Russian aberration. It is the condition

of modern geopolitics.

Sovereignty is one of the most potent ideas ever produced by political thought. It promised an end to endless war by locating authority within borders. It gave language to the anti-imperial struggle. It offered newly independent nations a claim to dignity, autonomy, and recognition. For much of the world, sovereignty was not an abstraction but a hard-won reprieve from domination.

And yet sovereignty has always carried a second face. The same principle that shields the weak also protects the strong. The same norm that prohibits invasion can be invoked to excuse repression. From its earliest articulations, sovereignty was less a moral achievement than a political compromise—a way of stabilizing power rather than transcending it.

After the devastation of World War II, international law attempted to discipline this compromise. The United Nations Charter outlawed aggressive war. It elevated self-determination. It gestured toward a world in which force would be constrained by rules rather than sanctified by victory. After 1945, this compromise was formalized in law. Article 2(4) of the UN Charter prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, an ambitious attempt to turn the moral intuition against conquest into a binding global rule—one that has been honored more often in rhetoric than in restraint. This legal architecture remains one of humanity's most ambitious moral projects. Ukraine's democracy sharpens the injustice of invasion, but it is not its source; the ban on conquest was meant to survive

the imperfections of governments, not reward virtue, because once sovereignty becomes conditional, it becomes permission. But ambition is not enforcement.

From the moment these norms were codified, they were bent. The United States defended sovereignty while orchestrating coups across Latin America and the Middle East. It invoked international law while bypassing it in Vietnam and Iraq. The Soviet Union spoke the language of socialist liberation while crushing uprisings in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. China defends noninterference while exerting relentless pressure on Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and Taiwan. Russia condemns Western meddling while redrawing borders at gunpoint.

No major power is exempt. The vocabulary changes. The justifications evolve. The structure persists.

Political theorist Stephen Krasner called this reality “organized hypocrisy,” a phrase that still unsettles because it refuses comfort. States do not fail to live up to norms accidentally; they affirm them precisely because norms confer legitimacy. Sovereignty is valuable not because it restrains power, but because it can be invoked to justify it. Norms are not abandoned when violated. They are repurposed.

This is why every intervention is framed as an exception. Every breach is temporary. Every violation is necessary. The rule is never denied—only deferred.

Liberals often resist this conclusion. Liberal internationalism depends on the belief that rules matter, that institutions restrain violence, and that progress, however fragile, is real. To admit that norms function instrumentally feels like surrendering to cynicism or realism in its crudest form. So liberal discourse clings to binaries: a rules-based order versus chaos, democracy versus authoritarianism, law versus lawlessness. Hypocrisy becomes evidence of moral failure rather than structural design.

Progressives, meanwhile, often fall into a different distortion. Deeply aware of Western imperialism, they sometimes treat sovereignty as sacred when invoked against Washington but negotiable when violated by states positioned as anti-Western. Power is condemned selectively, depending on who wields it. In early responses to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, some Western left critiques foregrounded NATO expansion as the central explanatory frame—contextualizing Moscow’s aggression primarily as a reaction to Western policy rather than as an exercise of imperial power in its own right. The result is not internationalism, but alignment.

Both responses mistake rhetoric for reality.

Carl Schmitt, a deeply compromised thinker whose insights nonetheless haunt modern politics, argued that sovereignty ultimately resides in the power to decide when rules no longer apply. As he writes in *Political Theology*, the sovereign is “he who decides on the exception”—highlighting how legalism and moral language can mask this truth. Liberalism, Schmitt warned, dresses up power in norms, making the suspension of rules appear as an anomaly rather than the ultimate expression of authority. History has repeatedly vindicated him. The exception is not an anomaly; it is the mechanism through which power asserts itself.

Humanitarian intervention illustrates this with brutal clarity. The language of human rights has been used to justify rescue and ruin, protection and plunder. Some interventions have saved lives. Others have destroyed states. The distinction is rarely adjudicated by law alone. It is settled by force, narrative control, and what the world chooses to remember.

Hannah Arendt understood that when states rely heavily on moral rhetoric to justify violence, it is often because legitimacy is already fraying; power, she argued, arises from collective consent and rational persuasion rather than coercion. Violence fills the void when that consent erodes. The louder the appeal to principle, the more precarious the authority behind it.

Literature has always seen this more clearly than policy.

George Orwell warned that political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable—to transform invasion into “intervention,” occupation into “security,” civilian death into “collateral damage.” This is not mere euphemism. It is a technology of rule, as he shows in *Politics and the English Language*.

Albert Camus, writing amid the wreckage of ideological violence, rejected both moral absolutism and moral relativism. He insisted that refusing injustice does not grant permission to commit it. His refusal to excuse revolutionary violence alienated him from the left and earned him suspicion from the right, but it preserved a form of moral seriousness that ideology corrodes, as he makes clear in *The Rebel*—a refusal to justify ends through violent means that undermines human dignity.

Poets like W.H. Auden captured the dissonance between abstract principle and embodied suffering—the way states speak in nouns while people bleed in verbs, as in his poem “Musée des Beaux Arts,” where the world “goes on” even as human suffering unfolds at its margins. Writers such as Chinua Achebe exposed how colonial power cloaked domination in the language of order and improvement, insisting that the greatest violence was not only material but epistemic: the theft of moral voice that denies whole peoples full humanity.

This is why hypocrisy endures. Not because leaders are uniquely immoral, but because norms function as currency. They legitimize action. They structure debate. Even when violated, they shape the argument. No one claims sovereignty is meaningless. They claim it applies here, not there.

The danger lies not in recognizing this, but in pretending otherwise.

For citizens of powerful democracies, selective outrage is not a personal failing so much as a sys-

temic one. Media ecosystems, partisan identities, and moral branding encourage us to see principle everywhere except where it implicates us. Our violations are tragic necessities. Theirs reveal character.

For the left, the challenge is sharper still. Anti-imperialism loses coherence when it excuses authoritarian violence simply because it opposes Western power. Solidarity with oppressed peoples cannot stop at borders drawn by empires. To critique NATO expansion does not require endorsing invasion. To expose U.S. hypocrisy does not require minimizing Ukrainian suffering. Moral clarity is not achieved by changing uniforms.

If norms are tools, the task is not to discard them—but to refuse their monopolization.

A more honest internationalism would begin by abandoning the fantasy that law floats above power. It would treat norms as fragile achievements rather than guarantees. It would demand consistency not as an expectation, but as a political struggle—one that begins at home.

Such an ethic would resist both cynicism and sanctimony. It would hold violations wrong even when committed by “our side.” It would treat sovereignty not as a slogan, but as a lived condition requiring economic, political, and social autonomy, not just territorial integrity.

When the Kremlin speaks of Venezuela’s right to self-determination, the statement is not false. It is incomplete. It omits Ukraine. It omits history. It omits the speaker.

The real danger is not that powerful states lie about norms. It is that we continue to treat those lies as deviations rather than disclosures—and exempt our own institutions from the scrutiny we so readily apply to others.

To name this is not to abandon hope. It is to ground it. Only by confronting how norms are used can we begin the far harder work of making them mean something at all.

From Öcalan To Maduro: On Imperialism's Logic Of Hostage-Taking

Mahir Engizek

Imperialism has never limited itself solely to military occupations, economic plunder, or diplomatic bullying. Its true power lies in its ability to construct mental and political mechanisms that paralyze the historical will of peoples.

Since the last quarter of the twentieth century, modern capitalist hegemony has centralized a more refined, insidious, and “extralegal but in the name of law” method to overcome the costs and legitimacy crises of classical colonialism: the taking of leaders who represent the hope of freedom as hostages.

This hostage-taking is not merely a physical liquidation; on the contrary, it is a multi layered regime of captivity aimed at targeting collective memory, humiliating collective will, and breaking a people's self-confidence. In this context, captivity is not a punishment for modern imperialism, but a technique of governance.

The Hegelian master-slave dialectic transcends its classical form here and is carried to a collective plane. The master no longer chains only the individual slave, but also the slave's capacity to dream, their claim to historical continuity, and their vision for the future.

The captured leader ceases to be a mere body; they become the symbolic carrier of a people's possible futures. Precisely for this reason, the imperialist mind does not judge these leaders, engage in polemics with them, or attempt to persuade them. It casts them outside the law, abducts them through piracy, criminalizes them, and thereby attempts to declare the political line they represent as illegitimate. Here, the discourse of law, human rights, and democracy turns into an ideological smokescreen covering imperialist violence.

While international law is operated as a set of norms that bind only the weak, lawlessness becomes a strategic privilege for imperialist centers. Abduction, illegal transfer, arbitrary detention, and character assassination are the practical tools of this privilege. Therefore, imperialism does not seek to defeat its rivals; it seeks to “pollute” them morally and politically.

Labels such as “terrorist,” “narco-terrorist,” or “dictator” function as ideological weapons rather than substantive criminal charges. The purpose of these labels is to push all social strata associated with the leader into an indefensible, silenced, and isolated position.

This strategy demonstrates that imperialism acts with a systematic, rather than accidental, logic. Hostage-taking is the most refined form of modern colonialism because it eliminates the need for occupation; it aims to produce surrender without awakening the reflex of resistance that tanks would trigger.

The capture of a leader is a message etched into the collective subconscious: “Look, the will you thought represented you is helpless.” In this respect, hostage operations are not just political but deep psychological warfare techniques.

Precisely at this point, the international conspiracy carried out against Kurdish Leader Abdullah Öcalan on February 15, 1999, should be read as the laboratory of modern imperialism.

This event was not an isolated violation of law, but an open confession of what means the hegemonic system deems legitimate to protect itself. This pirate coalition, led by the CIA and MOSSAD with the involvement of European intelligence services,



aimed to take hostage not just an individual, but the Kurdish people's claim to freedom.

The process stretching from Nairobi to Imrali is the permanentization of a "state of exception" in the sense described by Carl Schmitt. This state of exception reveals who the true sovereign is; the one who holds the power to suspend the law is the actual sovereign.

The February 15 conspiracy showed that the sovereignty of nation-states has long been eroded, and true sovereignty is now concentrated in global intelligence networks and imperialist centers. In this sense, Öcalan's captivity holds a universal lesson for all oppressed peoples: Imperialism views every thought, every paradigm, and every collective will that produces an alternative to itself as a potential threat and knows no limits in neutralizing this threat.

However, dialectical thought refuses to read this picture as one-sided. Captivity does not always mean absolute defeat. On the contrary, with a correct historical and ideological positioning, it can

transform into a new moment of liberation. This is where imperialism's greatest miscalculation lies. The intellectual production developed by Öcalan under conditions of heavy isolation in Imrali transformed the place of captivity into an arena for a revolution of the mind.

While imperialism chained the body, it failed to calculate the capacity of thought to become socialized. This situation demonstrated that the strategy of hostage-taking is not absolute; rather, it can be neutralized through a revolutionary line. Today, the operation targeting President Maduro and his spouse in Venezuela involving abduction and forced transfer to the USA is a contemporary manifestation of this historical continuity.

This is not an act of personal revenge; it is an attempt to symbolically liquidate a political line in Latin America that refuses to bow to imperialism. US economic sanctions, diplomatic siege, and character assassination have now moved to a more advanced stage: by piratically taking President Maduro hostage, the Bolivarian revolution has been left leaderless.

The similarities here are not coincidental. There is a methodological and ideological continuity between the isolation imposed on Öcalan and the threats directed at Maduro. In both cases, the target is a people's will to self-determination. In both cases, imperialism attempts to legitimize its own piracy through the discourse of "law." And in both cases, the fundamental question is: Does a revolution collapse when its leader is taken hostage, or does it enter a new historical phase?

The answer to this question compels us to rethink the relationship between the state, power, society, and freedom. Because the imperialist strategy of hostage-taking is not just an external attack; it is also a litmus test that reveals the internal weaknesses of revolutionary processes. Any revolutionary experiment that is state-centered, bureaucratized, and views the people's self-organization as secondary becomes excessively dependent on the physical presence of the leader. This dependency makes imperialist conspiracies more effective.

Precisely for this reason, grasping the dialectic of captivity is possible not only by exposing imperialism but by the revolutionary subject reconstructing itself. The international pirate operation of February 15, 1999, should be treated as a threshold that reveals the means by which imperialism reproduces itself, beyond the unlawful detention of a leader.

This event was not just the neutralization of a political actor, but an attempt to suspend the claim of a people to be political subjects on a global scale. The multi national character of the operation was structural, not accidental.

This mechanism showed that nation-state law has been effectively suspended. A leader was captured in a "void" that fell under no country's jurisdiction and was subsequently imprisoned on an island. This situation points to a plane that transcends Giorgio Agamben's concept of "bare life." What is targeted here is not just biological life, but the capacity to produce political meaning.

Imperialist logic preferred to silence and invisibilize Öcalan rather than eliminate his physical existence, hoping to neutralize his intellectual line over time. However, this preference worked contrary to the expected result. Captivity paradoxically laid the ground for thought to break away from material bonds and enter a broader social circulation.

The Imrali process must be evaluated as a phenomenon that transcends the logic of classical prisons. The isolation regime established there was built on the fragmentation of language, contact, and temporality. Yet, the intellectual production developed under these conditions evolved into an axis that redefines the relationship between state, power, and society.

The critique of state-centered liberation strategies, the exposure of the historical limits of the nation-state form, and the conception of social organization as an autonomous sphere are the theoretical outputs of this process. The fundamental error of imperialism lay in the assumption that by taking the leader hostage, the idea could also be taken hostage. Yet, in modern political struggles, an idea cannot be reduced to a body. This contradiction is embodied in the transformation of the Kurdish Freedom Movement.

The classical national liberation perspective centered on seizing the state gave way to an approach based on liberating society. This transformation is not just a tactical adaptation but an ontological break. In this sense, February 15 is not an end, but a beginning. The "decapitation" strategy of imperialism ironically contributed to a political model that is no longer leader-centric.

This situation contains an important lesson on how imperialism can be overcome with its own tools. The strategy of hostage-taking can only be effective if the line

represented by the leader has not been socialized. If an idea remains the property of a narrow cadre or a singular figure, it collapses with captivity. But

if the idea has become part of the social fabric, captivity makes it more visible. This lesson's universal dimension is even more evident in current developments in Latin America.

The siege of Venezuela is a political will-breaking operation. Targeting Maduro is targeting the Bolivarian process itself. However, a critical difference emerges: The paradigm developed by the Kurdish Freedom Movement after February 15 strengthened the social subject by moving the leader's physical presence away from the center. In Venezuela, the revolutionary process still largely shapes itself around the state apparatus and central power, creating a ground that makes imperialist interventions more effective.

Therefore, the true significance of February 15 is not just a reckoning with the past, but a warning for the present and future. Imperialism changes its methods but not its goals. Freedom depends on the leader's paradigm taking form in social relations.

The trajectory of aggression against Venezuela reveals that imperialism has never seen Latin America as anything more than a "backyard." Hugo Chávez's rise made Venezuela an intolerable deviation for the imperialist system. The pressure concentrated on Maduro is the targeting of the line he represents.

The media, as a strategic apparatus, presents the economic crisis as an internal failure, hiding the impact of sanctions. This discourse prepares the ideological ground for the abduction of a leader as "the establishment of justice." The methods used are nearly identical to the February 15 conspiracy: intense international defamation, diplomatic isolation, and then a pirate operation in the name of the "international community." This chain is the hallmark of imperialism.

However, dialectical analysis cannot merely expose external pressure. Imperialist interventions are effective when they connect with internal weaknesses. In Venezuela, the revolution's reli-

ance on oil revenues and a redistribution model failed to transform production relations in the long run.

The emergence of a new elite, the "Boliburgues a," has eroded the moral legitimacy of the revolution. This is where the critique of state-centered socialism becomes inevitable. When the state becomes a sacred carrier of revolution, it risks reducing the idea of freedom to technical management.

The critique of state-centered socialism is not to devalue the Bolivarian process, but to move it to a more sustainable line of freedom. Democratic Confederalism, as a paradigm, seeks not to conquer the state, but to transcend it by strengthening local and horizontal relations. This perspective transforms the understanding of leadership; the leader becomes a catalyst for social will rather than an authority that monopolizes it.

The universal dimension of Öcalan's paradigm is a general freedom strategy against modern power forms. In Venezuela, if the revolution remains a project of the state, it will always be shaken by external intervention.

But if the revolution takes root in neighborhoods, workplaces, and local councils, there is no longer a single center to target. Power becomes stronger as it is decentralized. The duty of revolutionaries is not just to defend Maduro, but to transform the resistance he represents into the daily practice of the people.

International solidarity must also transcend symbolic support. The line drawn between the Middle East and Latin America is a historical necessity. The Kurdish struggle and the Venezuelan resistance must be linked through a common paradigm of freedom. Internationalism is a vital need. Revolutionary action is about creating alternatives and organizing life itself. If this task is undertaken, no CIA-MOSSAD operation or pirate scenario from the USA can stop the march of peoples toward freedom.

Six Reasons Why Netanyahu is Prolonging Conflict in the Middle East

Ramzy Baroud

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has concluded his visit to the United States, returning home after reportedly securing yet another round of political backing from Donald Trump. As with previous encounters, the meeting provided Netanyahu with diplomatic cover and strategic reassurance, reinforcing Israel's ability to sustain its military posture in Gaza and across the region with limited external constraint.

The talks, held between December 29 and January 1, did not signal a shift toward de-escalation. Instead, they underscored Netanyahu's central objective: preserving a prolonged state of war in the Middle East.

This is not necessarily about maintaining full-scale genocide in Gaza at all times, but about keeping the Strip trapped in a condition of permanent instability—one that allows Israel to violate the October 10 ceasefire agreement at will, recalibrating violence while avoiding the political fallout associated with openly sustained mass killing.

This approach exposes a central contradiction in Israel's official narrative. Netanyahu and leading figures within his extremist coalition repeatedly claimed that Israel has already "won" the war. If that is the case, why insist on keeping the Gaza file open?

The answer lies in a convergence of political, ideological, and strategic calculations.

First, Netanyahu continues to gamble on the possibility that international and regional opinion may eventually become receptive to the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip—and subsequently, from the occupied West Bank. Sustained warfare, humanitarian collapse, and forced dis-

placement are not unfortunate byproducts of the conflict; they are essential mechanisms for keeping that option alive and politically imaginable.

This logic explains Israel's systematic manipulation of aid, including its haggling over food, medicine, fuel, and cement. These items bear little meaningful relationship to the strength of the Gaza resistance. Their restriction is designed to keep Gazans suspended between survival and death.

It also explains why Israel, after sustained pressure, agreed to open the Rafah border crossing from only one side—out of Gaza. This, too, is part of a broader scheme aimed at driving Palestinians out of the Strip incrementally, supported by a well-funded political and logistical machinery that has been operating for months.

Second, the genocidal war on Gaza is being actively exploited to escalate conditions in the occupied West Bank. Under the cover of regional war, Netanyahu and his coalition partners have accelerated settlement expansion, intensified repression, and advanced a long-term colonial project of de facto annexation with minimal international scrutiny.

Throughout the genocide, many observers rightly warned of the deteriorating situation in the West Bank—increased Israeli violence, mass arrests, and the ethnic cleansing of entire communities. While Gaza was experiencing annihilation, the West Bank appeared to fade from global attention. In reality, the two were linked from the very beginning.

The escalation in the West Bank was designed to achieve similar outcomes to those in Gaza—fragmentation, dispossession, and control—albeit through different tactics. Unlike Gaza, resistance in the West Bank has been largely subdued through



Photo: Artists Against Apartheid

joint Israeli–Palestinian Authority ‘security coordination’.

Third, the persistence of war serves a critical domestic function. By maintaining a permanent state of emergency, Netanyahu—and the Israeli far right more broadly—can preserve political relevance while postponing any serious reckoning over the failures of October 7 and the catastrophic war that followed. War suspends accountability, fractures opposition, and recasts political survival as a matter of national security.

This pattern has repeated itself since October 7, 2023. Each time Netanyahu faced mounting domestic pressure to investigate the events leading to the war, he destabilized the internal political front by escalating on one of several fronts he had deliberately kept active.

Fourth, closing the Gaza file would inevitably intensify pressure on Israel to pursue a political solution to the occupation of Palestine—precisely what Netanyahu seeks to avoid. Any meaningful political process would constrain his ability to gov-

ern through force, crisis management, and perpetual escalation.

This explains Netanyahu’s refusal to seriously engage in the Trump administration’s push for a broader regional settlement, despite the fact that the initiative was deliberately designed by Washington to overwhelmingly benefit Israel. For Netanyahu, even discussing resolutions implies a commitment to a longer, more sustainable ‘peace process’—the very antithesis of his governing strategy since first becoming prime minister in 1996.

Fifth, the narrative of “unfinished business” in Gaza is being deliberately leveraged to justify a broader regional agenda. Gaza functions as both a pretext and a testing ground for extending Israeli military and political ambitions into Lebanon, Syria, and beyond.

This assessment is reinforced by Netanyahu’s own language, including repeated references to reshaping the region into a “new Middle East” and rhetoric that aligns with the ideological concept of a “Greater Israel”—a long-standing aspiration within Israel’s far-right political imagination. In fact, Netanyahu was very clear that the latter was his exact objective, declaring last August that he is on a “historic and spiritual mission” to pursue the “vision” of Greater Israel.

Finally, any return to normalcy would place Netanyahu back at the center of Israel’s unresolved legal and political crises. Ending the war would strip away the shield of emergency rule and reopen scrutiny of corruption cases and institutional failures.

Here, Netanyahu’s legal team has played a decisive role, repeatedly invoking “national security” concerns to delay court appearances and stall proceedings.

In this sense, the war on Gaza is not merely a military campaign. It is the linchpin holding together Netanyahu’s political survival, ideological project, and regional ambitions—one he appears determined to keep firmly in place.

A Moment of Hope in Gaza

Kathy Kelly

On Thursday, December 25th, 2025, during Israel's ongoing genocide against Palestinians, 168 students graduated from medical school, in Gaza. Wearing their white coats, they stood in front of the ruined façade of what was formerly Gaza's largest hospital, the Al-Shifa Medical Complex. As a backdrop, the destroyed building realistically conveys perils the graduates faced while earning their medical degrees. Throughout the last two years of their studies, they risked assassination, injury, arrest, imprisonment, and torture, as well as attacks on their own family members.

Israel has waged a systematic campaign to destroy Gaza's health care delivery and to kill or imprison health care professionals. From October of 2023 to October of 2025, The World Health Organization documented 687 Israeli attacks on Gazan health care facilities and 211 attacks on ambulances. These attacks killed 985 people. In the same time period, Israel detained over 306 health care workers.

Health Care Workers Watch – Palestine, a nongovernmental organization, reports that 95 Palestinian health care workers are still in prison, eighty of whom are from Gaza. Prisoners who have been released from detention report that doctors are singled out for particularly brutal treatment.

Among the 80 Gazan health care workers who are still detained is the former director of Gaza's Kamal Adwan hospital, Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya. On December 27, 2025, Dr. Abu Safiya began his second year of imprisonment.

For over a year, prior to his incarceration, the Israeli military had subjected the Kamal Adwan hospital to repeated sieges and attacks. Dr. Abu Safiya and his staff, refusing to desert their patients, managed to increase the number of avail-

able beds in the hospital as theirs became one of the few hospitals still operating in northern Gaza.

On October 25, 2024, Israel raided the hospital, bombing its buildings, detaining many patients, and arresting all hospital staff, including Dr. Abu Safiya who was interrogated and released. On that same day, an Israeli drone attacked one of the hospital buildings and killed Dr. Abu Safiya's twenty-year-old son, Ibrahim. Dr. Abu Safiya buried his son on the hospital grounds and still refused to abandon the patients.

"The Israeli army does not know what it wants," Dr. Abu Safiya told a reporter with The Electronic Intifada. "They detained me for a few hours and interrogated me about whether there were fighters inside the hospital, and demanded that I evacuate the hospital completely, but I refused and assured them that there were only patients inside the hospital. But fifty-seven of the hospital's medical staff were arrested, (...) So we are suffering from a severe shortage of doctors, especially surgeons. Right now, we only have pediatricians — it is a huge challenge to work under these circumstances. I refused to leave the hospital and sacrifice my patients, so the army punished me by killing my son. I saw him die at the entrance gate — it was a great shock. I found a grave for him near one of the hospital's walls, so that he could stay close to me."

On December 27, 2024, when Israeli forces threatened to level the whole facility, Dr. Abu Safiya agreed to leave the hospital which was, by then, largely inoperable. An iconic video shows him, clad in his white coat, walking through the rubble toward two Israeli tanks.

He was held incommunicado, and then taken to the Sde Teiman prison, in the Negev desert, where



he was interrogated and beaten before being transferred to the Ofer prison. There, he is held in solitary confinement. Only his lawyer has been allowed to visit him. She expresses rising alarm over his weight loss, inadequate health care, and frequent beatings.

Amnesty International says he has been forcibly disappeared and arbitrarily held without charge. Even though no charges have been brought against him, an Israeli court has extended his detention multiple times. On October 16, 2025, Israel's Be'er Sheva District Court added an additional six months to his detention.

Who are the criminals? Israel and its partner, the United States, egregiously flaunt international law, committing numerous war crimes in the Occupied

Palestinian Territory. Dr. Abu Safiya endures daily punishments in return for his courageous dedication to serving victims of war.

In a better world, in a better future, we can hope that Palestinians graduating from medical school could assemble for an address delivered by Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya. Together, they could uphold "the Humanity Cohort," as the Gazan doctors who graduated in December 2025 call themselves, and safely commemorate the courageous health care workers who risked and lost their lives to care for patients during an Israeli genocide that is still ongoing. Confident that health care is never a crime, they could cite their fallen colleagues' historic and extraordinary adherence to the UN's core mission, "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

Britain's Leaders Are Hiding From AMOC Disaster

Ademy Ay

The plan was to stand outside the Houses of Parliament on Guy Fawkes Day with a large inflatable bomb. The protesters would then leaflet MPs as they arrived for Prime Minister's Questions. But on the day, the far-right put a stop to that. Their larger and far more rowdy protest started earlier, and swamped the allocated space.

The large public square opposite was cordoned off to protect the grass, so the 50 mostly elderly climate protesters had to line a narrow strip of pavement across the road. They stood stoically with their cartoon-styled bomb, eschewing chants and placards to focus attention on their black t-shirts that said 'Defuse the AMOC bomb'. A few meters away, 100 men wielding Union Jack flags screamed abuse about Kier Starmer into megaphones, let off bangers, and ended up surrounded by police.

The MPs, understandably, avoided this route into Parliament. And while the tourists chose to stream past the more orderly AMOC protest, and politely accepted their explanatory leaflets, all eyes were on the other protest across the road. Despite the bomb, the far right had stolen the limelight.

The scene encapsulated a terrible oversight happening in today's Britain. The government and media are so set on placating the increasingly popular far-right, and regurgitating their narrative that immigration is the premier threat to this country, that a genuine existential threat – one that has the potential to make the UK largely uninhabitable within a generation – is being overlooked. The AMOC bomb is ticking.

London temperatures could reach -20°C

AMOC stands for Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation. It's a vast cycle of ocean currents that

draw heat from the tropics and release it in the North Atlantic. If you've ever wondered why Canada has polar bears at roughly the same latitude that England has parakeets, the AMOC is your answer. The problem is that climate change is slowing it down. The AMOC requires salty seawater to drive its heat exchange, but the Atlantic is being flooded by freshwater from Greenland's melting ice sheets. As the salt content dilutes, the AMOC weakens, and at some point it could become so weak that it will irreversibly shut down.

Scientists have known for decades that the AMOC is slowing down. But it is only in the last few years that the chance of it grinding to a halt has gone from an unlikely event in the 22nd century, to something that might start happening in the next decade or two. The AMOC is extremely complex, and modelling it accurately has proven a huge challenge, meaning predictions by scientists in this field are broad and laden with caveats. But what is clear is that the AMOC problem has been badly underestimated by earlier climate models, including those used by the IPCC, whose reports define climate change risks for the political class.

While researching this article, I am told quite matter-of-factly by Professor Tim Lenton, one of the UK's leading climate scientists, that the tipping point for AMOC shutdown might already have passed. The AMOC is so vast that it could take another decade for initial impacts to be felt, and half a century for it to finally stop. We could all be sitting in a plane that's run out of fuel but, for now, glides through the sky untroubled.

If the AMOC does shut down, it will be a global event. Scientists predict an ocean swell that would flood the entire Eastern coast of the United States,



and a disastrous disruption of tropical monsoons. But in Northern Europe, particularly for Nordic countries and the UK, the results would be cataclysmic. The region would be plagued by long freezing winters. In Oslo, Norway, temperatures could plummet to -48°C . In London, temperatures could reach -20°C . Our infrastructure and our nature are not built for such conditions. Crop growing would be effectively over in the UK, and face extreme stresses beyond it. Food prices would skyrocket. It's hard to see how much of Britain could feed itself.

Complicating matters further is the fact that the AMOC is a network of currents that are unlikely to collapse in unison. The component expected to collapse first is the North Atlantic subpolar gyre (SPG), which arcs past Scotland, Iceland and Greenland. While less severe than a full AMOC shutdown, an SPG collapse could still cause major disruption to the UK, and accelerate the collapse of the rest of the AMOC. According to the latest modelling, the chances of this happening are scarily high. There is a 45% chance that an SPG collapse could happen as early as 2040.

Another important facet of the AMOC issue is that solutions are limited. For Northern Europe, adapting to such weather extremes is unrealistic. Geo-engineering the problem would involve dropping millions of kilograms of salt into the North Atlantic every second, which is not feasible. The only way to actively avoid disaster is to reduce carbon emissions as broadly and urgently as possible.

Over the last year and a half, climate scientists, researchers and activists have tried to make the UK and Nordic governments confront this terrifying new AMOC reality. Presentations have been given, letters have been passed, ministerial questions have been asked, and protests have been held. The results have been mixed. Iceland recently designated AMOC collapse both a national security concern and an existential threat, meaning its government is now on alert and assessing what further action is needed. The UK government has chosen a different path.

In October, UK intelligence chiefs were due to launch a report detailing how the country's security, economy, and food supplies were under severe and imminent threat from the climate crisis. But it was reportedly blocked at the last minute by the Prime Minister's office. This could optimistically be read as a sign that AMOC collapse is being taken seriously behind closed doors to avoid panic. But the government's attitude towards reducing carbon emissions suggests otherwise. Last month, it relaxed restrictions on drilling new oil and gas in the North Sea, and selected its preferred plan for expanding Heathrow Airport. These decisions carry vast carbon footprints that will further tip the balance towards AMOC collapse.

With uncanny timing, last month also saw the publication of an inquiry into the then-UK government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. The damning report highlighted how the slow decision-making, incoherent messaging, and scientific ignorance of politicians resulted in a pandemic response that was too little, too late,

and meant that tens of thousands of lives were needlessly lost. Could the UK government really be flying blind into yet another national crisis, one that utterly dwarfs the pandemic in potential severity?

Worst case scenarios are brushed aside

In 2023, the researcher Laurie Laybourn led a project to understand how people in the UK government understood the threat of climate change, and specifically climate tipping points like AMOC collapse. He and his team, which included Professor Lenton, spoke to people across the civil service, including members of the cabinet office, the environment and defence ministries, and the security services.

"Their understanding of climate change was actually quite limited," remembered Laybourn. "They thought it would evolve smoothly, and its consequences would be largely things that we often see on the news, like storms and heat waves. But tipping points like AMOC collapse show us that climate change... could be very chaotic and evolve very quickly. And that the consequences are not just the immediate, but also the domino effects which come after some of these disasters happen."

Laybourn was keen to clarify that this limited mindset was not universal. The parts of government working directly around climate science were well aware of the threat of tipping points. The misconceptions were found in "the community that has to make decisions on major security issues." For Laybourn and Lenton, the problem largely stems from how tipping points are communicated to politicians – using a scientific framing that can downplay risks and allow worst case scenarios to be brushed aside.

A case in point – the last time the government was asked about AMOC collapse, in 2024, a minister said it had played no part in their economic planning and that a collapse this century was "unlikely." He was parroting the language of

the last IPCC report, but in that context, “unlikely” has a specific probability range attached to it – between 0% and 33%. The minister had unwittingly inferred that there was up to a one-in-three chance that the UK could starve this century, and the government was ignoring it. But neither he nor the Lords listening had realised it.

In comparison, prior to COVID-19, the government considered an influenza pandemic the most pressing civil emergency risk facing the UK. This had a likelihood of just 3% in any given year, but was lavished with risk assessments, early warning systems, governance strategies, and cross-government exercises.

Laybourn and his team wrote a report on their findings – *The Security Blind Spot* – which concluded that the government was consistently and significantly underestimating security threats resulting from climate change. The authors noted worrying similarities to the situation prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. They urged the government to make climate change a core part of national security planning, and undertake a rapid risk assessment to identify the most critical threats.

One year on from the report’s publication, Laybourn is still waiting to see changes in the government’s approach. He views the recent block by Number 10 of a climate security report as a sign that “short term political considerations are getting in the way,” and references the testimony of Chris Witty, the government’s Chief Medical Adviser, during the COVID-19 inquiry. “Whitty said that ‘non-hostile threats’ are not taken as seriously, culturally, and particularly politically, as the more hostile threats like Russia or China. And I think that culture still clearly prevails.”

Laybourn is particularly dismayed by the lack of studies on SPG collapse, which he believes could plausibly start in the next 10 years, and usher in British winters like the abnormally severe one in 1962/63. This caused 90,000 excess deaths, disrupted food and water supplies, and nearly wiped

out certain bird populations. “We have some academic papers on what could happen to the climate system, but we don’t have a decision-useful risk assessment,” he said. “That’s the equivalent of... focusing purely on the epidemiology of how the pandemic could spread, and nothing about what it would mean for mortality or other things like that.”

Lenton notes that ARIA, the government’s new research funding agency, recently launched a program to develop an early warning system for climate tipping points, but is still frustrated by the lack of public money going into AMOC research. “You want to have some bright people work through scenarios of how [AMOC collapse] could interact and cascade across society,” he said. “Nobody’s been doing that, is the short version. Or we’re only just starting to, with minimal trust foundation kind of financial support – no public money, or nothing substantive, which is a bit odd.”

Having just attended the Climate Financial Risk Forum, a yearly event co-organised by the Bank of England, Lenton is more confident that the financial sector gets it. “They’re not stupid. They can see a serious reevaluation of assets downwards, and don’t want to be caught in that again after the crisis of 2007,” he said. “A lot of real estate assets in and around the UK would radically decline in value, and somebody holds that asset... often major pension funds.”

When I mention to Lenton that I’ve had problems sleeping while researching this article, he empathises, and later notes how a lot of climate scientists he knows are equally troubled. He paraphrases Greta Thunberg: instead of worrying about the future, try to change it. For Lenton, that means not waiting for the government to get its act together. “I don’t believe that the government is the most important or only actor,” he said. “They’re a very important one. But the transformative change that we need won’t come about just by waiting for the top-down to suddenly make it happen. That’s not the nature of

social change. You need a groundswell, you need a bottom up movement. You need some kind of reinforcing feedback between the bottom-up movement and the top-down. And we've had that at times, but we could do with more of it at the moment, that's for sure."

The government appear to be frightened

The protest outside parliament was the fifth and final AMOC bomb themed protest organised by Jon Fuller, a veteran climate activist and retired civil servant. He remembered first reading about AMOC collapse a decade ago, in an ICC report which presented the threat as "very unlikely" to happen this century. "I didn't pay too much attention to it," he recalled. "But it always struck me as immoral, this idea that there was a catastrophe that could happen further down the line, but because it wasn't going to impact people currently living on the planet, we could all ignore it."

When climate scientists started going public late last year with concerns that a collapse could be much more imminent, Fuller wrote to the heads of MI5, MI6, the civil service, and the London Assembly, warning them that they might one day be held accountable in a court of law for their failure to act. Only MI5 responded, to say Fuller didn't understand their mandate. He replied that they didn't understand, and that AMOC collapse was an unprecedented national security threat that could kill millions of British citizens. "I didn't get a reply to that second letter," said Fuller.

Fuller believed the scale of the disaster now being posited could be a social tipping point for climate action, and pooled interested activists into a WhatsApp group to share ideas on how to amplify awareness of the AMOC threat. The collective decision was to draw in the mainstream media, which had barely covered the issue. This could generate the public pressure needed to make politicians act. The idea of a giant inflatable AMOC bomb (that needed defusing) was born.

But despite laying their bomb outside the Ministry of Defence, City Hall, BBC Broadcasting House, ITN (the home of ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5) and the Houses of Parliament, media coverage of the protests and AMOC collapse itself has been almost non-existent. For now, the protesters have gone back to the drawing board, and are liaising with members of Scientist Rebellion on how to evolve their campaign.

Asked to explain the silence, Fuller points to the media executives and press barons, keen to stifle awareness about the climate crisis so they can retain their luxury lifestyles. But when it comes to the government's silence, he puts it down to simple cowardice in the face of a resurgent far-right. "Across Europe, hard-right political parties are pretending climate change isn't real, it's not happening, and we don't have to do anything about it," he said. "The Labour government appears to be frightened of talking too much about climate change, for fear of playing into the hands of Nigel Farage and his hard-right wing party here in the UK."

I approached three ministries and multiple members of the National Security Strategy Committee to clarify the UK government's perspective on AMOC collapse. My interview requests and written questions were blanked or politely declined. The Cabinet Office got in touch to ask who I was writing for and linked me to a short report from 2021 on how the Ministry of Defence planned to be net-zero by 2050. It made no mention of the AMOC, its potential collapse, or any climate tipping points at all.

A spokesperson for the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) referenced government support for research into climate risks by the Met Office and ARIA. Both the DSIT spokesperson and the Cabinet Office referenced the IPCC 6th Assessment Report from 2021 that said an abrupt collapse of the AMOC is unlikely during the 21st Century. At no point did the government address the change in scientific consensus since 2021, or explain how it will respond to the growing threat.

Meanwhile, the AMOC bomb keeps ticking...

The Core Meaning of the Climate Emergency for Movement Organizers

Sinan Eden

There is one crucial argument that the climate justice movement carried with it. For a brief period of time, it seemed like it was integrated into the general knowledge of social movements. It wasn't.

The argument is about the meaning of climate emergency.

It is not an argument about public discourse or even about policy. It is an argument carried at the core of the climate justice movement, an argument directed at all social movements. This argument wasn't integrated into social movements' collective knowledge.

This short note aims to clarify that the climate crisis is not just another crisis among crises and not a topic among many topics. There is something substantially unique about the climate crisis that transforms the terrain of struggle entirely and for everyone.

The climate crisis is an existential crisis.

The current trends of carbon emissions and the associated warming scenarios put at risk the viability of human civilization on Earth. When scientists warn about the increasing probability of "the end of the world as we know it", they are not using a metaphor. We genuinely do not know how to even model that planet. The scenario is not just "this world, but much worse"; it is actually a planet that we don't know about.

All ecosystems will be harmed, many beyond repair. All countries will enter into social and political crisis (there is good reason for the billionaires to build bunkers for themselves). This is not a worse situation of suffering, it is a completely new category of generalized (and still uneven and increasingly

uneven) suffering.

And don't forget: it is much worse than we think; for decades it has been worse than scientists' predictions; it will probably always be much worse than we will ever be able to conceive as a species.

The climate crisis gets worse under business-as-usual.

This is a unique phenomenon from a social struggle viewpoint.

If men kill 250 women per day today and if we let them act as they do now (no relaxation of current norms), then we would expect them to kill around 250 women per day in a decade from now.

If there is 30% youth unemployment in a country and if economic policies of the governments and the corporations remain the same, we would expect youth employment to remain around 30% next year.

In general, we would expect things to get worse due to novel decisions and new actions. Lives of migrants would worsen with the introduction of new xenophobic laws. Working conditions would worsen with right-wing labor reform.

This is not the case with the climate crisis. It is a very different monster.

A business-as-usual scenario (meaning running the fossil fuel industry as today) will create 5°C warming, in comparison to the 1.5°C warming so far.

This is hell on Earth. Most populations (humans and non-humans) will not be able to live where they are today.



Identifying the current status quo not just as the cause of the problem but also as the accelerator of the problem is a novel situation brought on by the climate emergency.

Abolition of fossil fuels from virtually all economic activity is a necessary condition to human existence. This will take a lot of work, particularly political work from the bottom and to the left – tough work that the climate justice movement of five years ago shied away from doing with due seriousness.

The climate crisis gets exponentially worse under business-as-usual.

This is also a unique phenomenon in another sense.

All emissions cause additional warming. They make things worse. But how much worse?

If we have 1.5°C so far, then should we expect 3°C to be double as bad? This would be the common sense interpretation of any social problem: if there are four ongoing regional conflicts rather than two, then we would expect the suffering to apply to more

or less double the population; if the price of bread doubles, then we would expect access to bread to halve.

This logic does not work for the climate crisis. We know that the difference between 1.5°C and 2°C is catastrophic. Many global ecosystems collapse at this point. From 2°C to 3°C, the question is about the habitability of large chunks of the planet. Many coastal cities will be semi-permanently inundated, entire countries will turn into deserts. From 3°C to 4°C, most economic activities (like producing food or trading at the international level) will be disrupted globally and for long periods. There will literally be not enough food available in the world while the temperature and humidity in the streets will be deadly for long periods. Social conflicts within and between countries will be the new norm. And we all know the weapons they already have and the ones they're developing. From 4°C onwards, we don't know, no fiction went that far.

The impacts grow exponentially. Each added carbon in the atmosphere has a cumulative, non-linear effect. That's why we have to stop fossil fuels today, and not tomorrow.

The climate crisis begins to automatically get worse after a certain point.

To complicate the matter further, there are physical and chemical processes embedded in the Earth system that make warming irreversible. Run-away climate change can be extremely counter-intuitive for movement organizers, so let me go over it.

The already emitted carbon is locked in. Only a minor part of this can be taken off. But that's not the problem.

The current increased temperature is locked in. Only a minor cooling can be caused. But that is also not the problem.

After a certain level of warming, the very fact that we reached a certain temperature will cause further warming. So, at some point, the acceleration of warming will be locked in. This is the problem.

A simplified example runs as follows. When we cross the 2°C warming threshold, the global forest ecosystems collapse. The burning trees emit carbon to the atmosphere. This added carbon already pushes us to further warming. So imagine a scenario where we cross 2°C warming but we stop the economy altogether. In that case, there are no new “human-made” emissions, because we stopped all economic activity. Yet, there are still new emissions causing new warming! From 3°C onwards, we expect methane reserves in the permafrost to enter into collapse. With 4°C warming, methane reserves under the ocean might be liberated. Each of these tipping points would push us to the next degree of warming. This domino effect is what keeps climate scientists awake at night.

Such dynamics are not present in any other social issue.

We can imagine peace in the world. It can take time, but it is possible. If we don't win it today, if

we don't win it next year, it will still be possible.

We can imagine a world without femicide. It can take decades, there can be advances and setbacks, but victory will remain within our horizon.

The fight against racism will never be lost. If we didn't win it in the 1960s, we can still continue fighting and the victory will always be accessible as functions of our determination and collective political intelligence.

We would never think of a problem becoming self-reinforcing to the extent that it becomes uncontrollable: that's unique for the climate crisis.

That is why stopping fossil fuels today has a qualitatively different impact than stopping them in two decades. Tomorrow will already be too late for hundreds of millions of lives down the line.

Strategizing under climate emergency

Let's recap:

- The climate crisis is an existential crisis.
- The climate crisis gets worse under business-as-usual.
- The climate crisis gets exponentially worse under business-as-usual.
- The climate crisis begins to automatically get worse after a certain point.

What does this mean for movement organizers? It means that all the parameters of struggle, of all struggles, changed. No previous experience, no past assumptions can be carried over to this new situation without major revision.

The climate justice movement did not grasp the full depth of these statements. Most of the co-optation, demobilization and political derailing can be explained with the lack of audacity that the movement had in relation to its own argument.

In terms of strategizing, here are a few immediate corollaries.

Things not getting worse is not enough.

The governments, the policies and the institutions that brought us here are the ones responsible for our predicament. They put on the line all human life on Earth. They kicked off a system of multiple, self-reinforcing genocides. They are not “the lesser evil” in any sense of the word. They are the main drivers of fascism. All. Of. Them.

The “minimal program” is revolution. Any strategy that washes the image of the establishment is complicit in mass murder. Any social movement organization following such a strategy is suicidal, as it participates in its own literal elimination.

Fossil fuels must go.

We cannot have a chance of winning unless we dismantle fossil capitalism very quickly. Emissions are undermining the ground on which we are fighting. This is not about “gaining time”, it is about gaining ground to stand up and fight. It is about having a physical reality in which struggles can still happen and hope to win.

The establishment is diverting the public attention with words like “transition” or “green investment”. These are off-topic. Wind turbines don’t cut emissions, cutting emissions cuts emissions. The point is to dismantle the fossil fuel industry in its entirety. This point is now a necessary criterion for any realistic strategy for any struggle.

We must aim for winning in the short-term.

Now, our struggles and movements can also be considered as the struggle and the movement. We can see ourselves fighting against the same enemy, capitalism, in different terrains. From a strategic viewpoint, some terrains can sometimes be more fruitful. Maybe a cost-of-living crisis would agitate better than any other subject for a period of time in a country. Perhaps migrant rights would give us better leverage to build class solidarity in a specific moment.

Whatever our specific struggle is, the climate crisis gives us new information: we have very little time left to win our entire agenda.

This is the core meaning of the climate emergency. The emergency is that we must have winning strategies, we must plan to win all, and we must have short-term plans to win all. This is an entirely new framework for strategizing. No one in our movement histories designed strategy under non-negotiable delivery deadlines given by physics and chemistry.

We must be extremely smart and extremely attentive.

We have very little time to win. So, on the one hand, we have no time to waste with bad strategy. We have no time to repeat mistakes. We don’t have time to ignore lessons gathered from past movement experience.

On the other hand, we have no time to waste with non-strategic activity. The climate emergency serves as a reality check for all our action plans. We must have observable and refutable strategic goals that are compatible with building people’s power, and concrete plans of actions that will deliver those goals in the short-term.

By this point in history, these four conclusions should have already been obvious to movement organizers of all areas of intervention. These conclusions provide us with an anchor to a strategy discipline of unprecedented clarity.

The subtle climate denialism entrenched within the social movements causes an unacceptable ambition gap in our organizing efforts and our strategies. We need to face the new reality in which we operate. This means revisiting our premises on globalization, class struggle, theories of change, and organizational models. The recently published book *All In: a revolutionary theory to stop climate collapse* aims to provide an honest, full-scale attempt in this direction.

Want to Stop ICE? Go After Its Corporate Collaborators

Eric Blanc, Claire Sandberg, Wes McEnany

Renee Nicole Good's murder by an ICE agent in Minneapolis has left millions of Americans wondering how we can stop ICE from terrorizing our communities any further. There are many well-known ICE-fighting tactics that we can and should use, like protests, know-your-rights trainings, and neighborhood watches. But two recent victories show a promising, relatively underutilized path forward—one that deserves to be pursued further: we can target businesses to break from ICE.

ICE relies heavily on the private sector to help carry out its Gestapo-like crusade against immigrants and their allies. Without the logistical, financial, and political support of business, its capacity to terrorize our communities would crumble.

Over the past week, activists around the country successfully pushed Avelo Airlines to stop running deportation charter flights, and workers in Minneapolis pushed a local Hilton affiliate to stop renting rooms to ICE agents. But these wins are just a fraction of what could be achieved if the millions of people who are outraged by ICE's thuggery organize to pressure all companies to stop working with ICE.

Anti-authoritarian scholars and organizers stress that the most important thing for pro-democracy movements to do is to peel away a regime's "pillars of support." Even the most despotic of regimes can't rule without the backing or consent of powerful external institutions. Businesses are society's most important non-state institutions, and most of the biggest ones in America are collaborating with Trump, making themselves a very steady pillar of support for his rule.

These mega-corporations have immense financial and political power. It may seem like there's nothing to be done to bring them to heel. But the successes with Avelo Airlines and the Minneapolis Hilton—as well as earlier pressure campaigns like the #Tesla Takedown, the fight to force Disney to rehire Jimmy Kimmel, and the boycott of Target over its Trump-friendly anti-DEI moves—show the immense leverage that consumers and workers have when provided an opportunity. We are not powerless, and there are concrete actions anyone can take to start eroding Trump's support from big business.

Consumer pressure campaigns can start with petition gathering and social media callouts, then escalate to coordinated one-day boycotts. Workers have even more leverage: employees can circulate internal petitions calling on their CEOs to cut ties with ICE and organize collective actions like sick-outs.

Tactics can include rallies in front of targeted stores, flyer-ing customers about a company's ICE contracts or collaboration, and nonviolent civil disobedience that makes clear that business as usual won't stand. Other creative ideas include setting up anonymous tip lines for employees to whistleblow on non-public ICE collaborations, pressuring job sites like Monster.com and Indeed to stop featuring ICE job listings, asking local small businesses to post "Immigrants Welcome Here" placards, and writing online reviews calling out companies' collaboration with ICE.

The key is providing people with concrete, outwards-facing activities they can take right now, while building an escalating national campaign that can culminate in larger coordinated days of nonviolent disruption—for example, on May 1, 2026.



National online mass calls and trainings can give large numbers of people the tools they need to get started. National unions, immigrant rights groups, and organizations like Indivisible and the Democratic Socialists of America can leverage their volunteer activists and resources to help launch and support the campaign. And high-profile politicians like Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Chris Murphy, and Zohran Mamdani can use their platforms to build momentum around this urgent fight.

The most strategic corporate targets fall into three categories: low-lift national targets, high-lift national targets, and local targets.

Low-lift national targets are mostly public-facing companies with relatively small ICE contracts that are set to expire soon, making them particularly vulnerable to consumer and employee pressure. Campaigns against companies like these can play a crucial role in generating further momentum against ICE, Trump, and their worst corporate collaborators.

Here are some examples:

- Dell (\$18.8 million contract with ICE for Microsoft software licenses, expiring March 2026)
- UPS (\$90,500 small package delivery contract with ICE, expiring March 2026)
- FedEx (\$1 million delivery services contract with ICE, expiring March 2026)
- Motorola Solutions (\$15.6 million tactical communication infrastructure contract with ICE, expiring May 2026)
- Comcast (\$24,600 internet services contract for ICE Seattle office, expiring May 2026 — this could be a great fight for new mayor Katie Wilson to take on).
- AT&T (\$83 million IT and network contract with ICE, with a potential end date of July 2032).
- LexisNexis (\$21 million data-brokerage contract with ICE — this company is particularly vulnerable to pressure from university students and professor unions, since much of its revenue comes from colleges.)
- Home Depot and Lowe's are using AI-powered license plate readers and feeding this data into law enforcement surveillance systems accessible to ICE. Their parking lots are also regular sites of ICE raids targeting day laborers.

High-lift national targets have deeper relationships with ICE, and will be harder to pressure. But two in particular need to be tackled.

- Amazon provides ICE with the digital backbone for its data and surveillance operations through Amazon Web Services. Amazon's Whole Foods stores are a rich potential target for nonviolent disruption on big days of action.
- Palantir provides ICE with core data platforms that integrate and analyze information from many databases so agents can search, link, and manage deportation operations.

It will take longer to force these behemoths—the two worst corporate collaborators with ICE—to cut their ties, but it's essential to publicize their centrality to Trump's deportation machine.

Local targets can be found in communities across the country, where hundreds of smaller business have ICE contracts. Local activists can research and target these businesses—from contractors providing services to ICE offices to suppliers selling equipment—creating distributed pressure campaigns in every region where ICE operates. Hotels that rent rooms to ICE agents are particularly vulnerable targets, as the Minneapolis example demonstrated, and hospitality unions can play a key role in these campaigns.

Breaking companies from ICE is a winnable struggle that can put serious pressure on the administration by raising the political cost of mass deportations and damaging ICE's ability to function. No administration can survive long without the consent of corporate America.

Obviously, the stakes are highest for our undocumented friends and family members. But this fight impacts all of us. To stop Trump's authoritarian oligarchy, we need millions of people — well beyond our normal circles of activists — to join the fight.

Who is going to stop Trump from invading more countries and stealing the 2026 and 2028 elections if not a mass movement from below? Who is going to force politicians, whether Republicans or Democrats, to stand up for immigrant communities? Who is going to make corporations pay a price for collaborating with the Trump regime? We need to start building the organizing muscle and connective tissue now for widespread nonviolent disruption. Strategic organizing to win justice for all is the best way to honor the memory of Renee Nicole Good and the countless other victims of Trump's inhumanity at home and abroad.

Organize! Yes, but How?

Rasmus Hästbacka

Organizing is – or should be – the core business of every labor union. That’s how ordinary workers become a force to be reckoned with in the workplace and society. But in Swedish unions today, organizing is noticeably absent.

It’s not that there’s all talk and no action. There’s barely even any talk about organizing, and very few seem to know what this skill and craft is about. Apart from the efforts of union educator Frances Tuuloskorpi, organizer training is almost dead in Sweden. Let me say it straight away: recruiting members and administering unions is good and necessary, but it is not organizing. So, what does organizing entail?

I will tackle the subject by drawing on three books: *Secrets of a Successful Organizer* (2016), *Swedish syndicalism* (2024) and *Something Has Happened* (2023). The first book is published by Labor Notes. The second is written by me, mainly for beginners in union work. The third is authored by syndicalists in the Stockholm Local of SAC and highlights union activity involving migrant workers.

Below, I will first define the term organizing, then describe an organizing method taught in SAC’s courses and finally discuss union structures that can promote and sustain organizing.

What is organizing?

Let’s start with a narrow definition. Organizing means that co-workers develop and use their collective strength in a systematic way.

Moving to a broader definition, organizing also entails workers at different workplaces building cohesion and acting together. It could be workers in the same industry meeting up and strategizing – or workers from different industries coming together

to support each other.

Thus, the common denominator is workers building and using their strength.

To make it more concrete, we can break organizing down into three dimensions: 1) building a formal organization, 2) developing a union movement, and 3) mobilizing for collective action and bargaining with management.

The first dimension is about building a union with a formal structure. At the local workplace, this structure is usually called a union club (within Swedish LO unions) or an operating section (within syndicalist SAC). The word “operating” refers to the long-term vision of workers taking over and operating the workplace. Swedish syndicalists often use the shorter term “section.”

The second dimension – developing a movement – is about cultivating community among co-workers and engagement around shared interests. It’s about creating a strong sense of “We” against management. Co-workers need good relationships so they can trust each other.

The third dimension, to mobilize, is about getting the workers collective moving for common demands and backing those demands with appropriate pressure – thus pushing management to make concessions.

Different forms of pressure

Pressure can range from soft methods to industrial action. Two examples of soft methods are petitions and speaking as one voice at meetings with the bosses.

Examples of industrial action include blockades and strikes. A strike shuts down the workplace by

means of work stoppage. A blockade is refusing to perform certain parts of the labor process, like refusing overtime work. A blockade can also mean stopping the delivery of goods and new labor power to a workplace.

The workers' pressure gives weight at the bargaining table. Negotiations can take the form of formal union negotiations (in Sweden according to the Co-Determination Act) but there are also informal ways to confront management, for example at staff meetings.

All three dimensions of organizing are needed. The union structure gives stability to the movement. The movement leads to collective action, making negotiations successful.

A concrete method

In an era when information technology has reached science fiction levels, Swedish popular movements have on the contrary regressed to a primitive stage.

Since the craft of organizing is more or less forgotten in Sweden, it's hard to discuss organizing without first outlining a concrete method. As far as I know, SAC is the only union in Sweden that teaches organizing in a systematic way. In SAC's courses, participants learn a four-phase method. Lately, we've started illustrating the method with an organizing wheel that looks like this.



The first phase is to map the workplace, the second phase is to assess, the third to act and the fourth to

evaluate the struggle. I'll explain each phase in turn. The common thread through all phases is organizing conversations – that is, talking and above all listening to co-workers.

Map

Mapping is about finding organizing issues. These are concrete issues that can rally co-workers. The goal is to find out which problems at work colleagues care about and ask what they are willing to do about them.

Mapping also means identifying key people – informal leaders among the staff. These are co-workers whom others trust and listen to a bit extra. Informal leaders have great influence in the group and can get people moving.

To succeed in organizing, it's important to get the informal leaders on board. If it's a large workplace with many departments and categories of staff, it's valuable to find informal leaders in each category and department.

As I mentioned, the common thread through all four phases is organizing conversations. This means talking to all employees, ideally one at a time. In English union jargon, these conversations are called One-On-Ones.

Organizing conversations can happen at work or outside. In Sweden, one factor that helps is being elected as a health and safety delegate (skyddsombud). Such delegates have the right to perform their tasks during paid working hours. That's a good foundation for walking around and talking to co-workers.

Assess

The second phase of the wheel is to assess which organizing issue is best to start with. There may be several issues that trigger the collective of workers. Then it's about choosing the one with the greatest potential to push the frontline forward.

It's also important to assess what's called the balance of pressure or balance of power. The central question is: How hard do workers have to push management for their demands to be accepted? I'll get to the balance of pressure in a moment, but first, a word about choosing organizing issues.

The authors of the book *Secrets of a Successful Organizer* have formulated four criteria for a good organizing issue. First, the issue should have breadth – that is, the issue engages many employees. Second, it should have depth – which means it engages people strongly. Third, the issue should be winnable through the workers' collective pressure. Fourth, a fight over the issue should make the collective stronger.

When it comes to assessing the balance of pressure, two concepts are useful: concession cost and damage cost. For employers, conceding to union demands often comes at a cost – a concession cost. The question is whether the workforce can inflict a damage cost greater than the concession cost. If workers can do that, the balance of pressure tilts in their favor. Then it's cheaper for management to say YES to the union's demands than to say NO. In other words, there's enough pressure for management to accept the demands.

Action plan

In the second phase, or no later than the third phase, it's time to make an action plan. The plan needs to be anchored with as many employees as possible. It should specify who does what and in what order.

There also needs to be readiness for various countermeasures from the employer side. Preparing for countermeasures is sometimes called union vaccination. It's about preparing protection before entering conflicts.

A countermeasure might be managers calling employees in for individual interrogations and scoldings. One way to prepare is co-workers promising each other to always approach the boss as a group.

Act

The third phase is putting the action plan into practice. Now it's time to mobilize for collective action and bargaining.

When it comes to methods of pressure, the authors of *Secrets of a Successful Organizer* offer four tips. First, the methods should be visible. That means all employees know pressure is being applied and understand why. It also means the methods are felt by management. But it doesn't have to be visible actions in front of the bosses. Pressure can be more hidden or anonymous, like slowdowns.

Second, the workers' demands and pressure should be properly addressed. That means demands are directed at managers who can actually act on the issue – and those managers should feel the pressure. Third, pressure should be collective. That's pretty obvious. The more employees who participate, the better.

Last but not least, collective pressure should follow a planned escalation. Workers can start with soft methods, like petitions and group visits to management, and then move on to more demanding and impactful actions, like slowdowns and overtime blockades.

Evaluate

The fourth phase is to evaluate the struggle. Evaluation isn't just about the obvious question: Did we win our demands or not? Just as important is for employees to assess their ability to stick and act together. Important questions include: How many participated in the struggle? Who didn't, and why? How can we get them involved next time?

One purpose of organizing is for the workers collective to become stronger and stronger. So, it's important to regularly check whether the collective has made progress.

When workers finish the fourth phase, they start

the next round of the wheel. They find new organizing issues to rally around or push the same issues further. In this way, a union movement can grow and develop more and more.

Union forms

In the absence of workers struggles through Swedish unions, spontaneous worker action sometimes arise outside unions. But it's usually short-lived. Activism flares up and fizzles out. That's why a union structure needs to be added.

I will limit the discussion to the structure at the local workplace – the union club or section. A syndicalist section holds formal member meetings year-round. The section's elected representatives also meet regularly, year-round. All organizing work becomes easier when there's a clear structure for gathering, making decisions and carrying them out.

The four phases of the organizing wheel can largely be carried out at section meetings – at least if the section has many members who attend. At meetings, members can discuss suitable organizing issues and draw up an action plan.

For the section to promote (rather than hinder) organizing, it's important that meeting time isn't wasted on purely individual cases. By that, I mean cases that can't rally co-workers – or cases that affected members don't want to rally colleagues around. Thus, section meetings should focus on the best organizing issues. Individual cases can instead be handled by the section board or a special bargaining committee.

Anchoring

Of course, it's not enough to sit in section meetings if the whole staff isn't participating. The section's organizers need to move throughout the workers collective to make an action plan that's broadly anchored and mobilizes many workers.

It is of great value that a formal section elects fellow workers to positions of trust. The elected reps can prepare member meetings so they're both democratic and effective. Reps can make sure that decisions taken are carried out.

Elected reps also make it easier to handle ups and downs in engagement at the workplace. They maintain continuity. At a minimum, the section should have an elected board. Beyond that, various committees can be elected with different areas of responsibility.

Dual tracks

Solidarity at work is undermined when unions fall into narrow turf thinking – when unions only look out for their own members (if even that) and ignore the rest of the collective.

Syndicalists instead try to work on two tracks at the same time. That means syndicalists foster solidarity both within the section and among the staff as a whole. The goal, of course, is to mobilize as many co-workers as possible in collective action and negotiations.

How can members of a section or union club work on dual tracks? The section or club can choose to hold meetings only for members or have meetings open to non-members as well.

If closed meetings are chosen, it's important that members also promote discussions for all employees who want to change the workplace. That could be, for example, cross-union lunches on a certain day each week, an online forum or after-work gatherings where co-workers strategize together.

When a workers collective proceed along to the organizing wheel – and keep going round after round – they can win more and more influence, better pay and improved working conditions. In this way, the organizing wheel can become an upward spiral. That's the beginning of a more reasonable world.

How Unions Provide a Counterweight to the Epstein Class

David McCall

Gary Cunningham remembers sitting at the dining room table as a boy, listening to his father relate stories about his work as a union grievance chairman.

One especially resonates with him today.

A woman, sexually harassed by a manager, appealed to the union for help. Cunningham's dad took careful note of her pain and distress. And then he unleashed the fury of the union on management, securing his coworker the safe, dignified work environment she deserved.

It's that deep concern for others, forged elbow-to-elbow on the shop floor and often handed down from generation to generation, that most distinguishes union members from the Jeffrey Epstein class of billionaires and other bullies who prey on the vulnerable.

Cunningham, who followed his father into the labor movement and blazed a decades-long career as a United Steelworkers (USW) activist, knows that unions remain the staunchest bulwark against the 1 percenters who are dividing America into a land of haves and have-nots.

"They just don't care," Cunningham, now vice president of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) chapter in Albany, New York, said of Epstein and others of his ilk.

Epstein, a one-time money manager who committed suicide in 2019, spent decades trafficking women and teenage girls to the nation's wealthy and powerful.

As revelations of his crimes stirred revulsion

among ordinary Americans, Epstein also came to symbolize something more—a broader system that's rigged for the rich and engineered to exploit everyone else.

The betrayal starts at the very top, observed Cunningham, noting that Donald Trump, a billionaire, is building a \$350 million ballroom with the help of rich friends while Americans stagger every day under the affordability crisis he fueled.

"He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth," Cunningham observed of Trump. "He had everything handed to him. His priorities are with the rich. He doesn't care about the middle class or even the poor."

Millions of Americans work two or more jobs yet still struggle to make ends meet because employers like Jeff Bezos, the billionaire founder of Amazon, and Brian Niccol, the multimillionaire CEO of Starbucks, refuse to pay fair wages.

But the exploitation of working people goes far beyond the workplace.

Parents strain to feed their families amid price gouging by food manufacturers and grocery chains. Because there's no sating their craving for more of everything, the wealthy also snap up houses as investment properties, driving up prices and denying working people the satisfaction of homeownership.

Working people even resort to rationing expensive medications. Sadly, drug company executives prefer to ravage communities with illegal opioids—and make a killing fostering people's addictions—than focus on fixing a broken health care system.

“There are so many people in need,” said Cunningham, who helps to operate a drive-through food pantry in the Albany area, noting some clients arrive in vehicles so run down that “you wonder how they got there.”

There’s no reason for Americans to put up with any of this.

In stark contrast to the Epstein class are stalwart union members, who stand up to injustice and look out for others, especially those most at risk.

Union workers advocate for good jobs, family-sustaining wages, affordable health care, and retirement security, all of which are essential to building the middle class and sustaining a vibrant democracy.

In addition, unions fight for the paid leave benefits that help domestic violence survivors get away from their abusers. They embrace empowerment efforts, such as the USW’s Women of Steel and Veterans of Steel initiatives, to ensure a path forward for everyone. And union members negotiate the contract language essential for protecting one another from mistreatment and holding management accountable.

The uber wealthy who use people and throw them away will never understand the bond among union members, who earn every penny they put in their pockets. Having struggled, they gladly sacrifice to help others get ahead.

For example, Cunningham’s father grew up poor, in a house without central heating, and felt so embarrassed by his circumstances that he hesitated to let his future wife visit when they started dating.

But a good union job enabled him both to build a better life for his own family and to help pave the way for others. He stood with his coworkers, leveraging the power of the union to give everyone a fair share and a seat at the table.

“My dad completely understood where the working class was coming from,” Cunningham explained.

Cunningham emulated his father’s example, serving as a Local 9265 negotiator, as a frequent presence at rallies and picket lines, and as an activist promoting pro-worker legislation through USW’s Rapid Response advocacy team.

Among many other examples, union activists in recent years successfully fought to provide paid sick leave to workers in Colorado, to make workers’ rights a constitutional amendment in Illinois, and to save the pensions of more than a million Americans across the country.

This union counterbalance against the Epstein class is more essential than ever.

Billionaires are hoarding wealth and fueling unprecedented levels of economic inequality as they attempt to foreclose on the American dream.

It’s no coincidence that some of the best seats at Trump’s inauguration went to Bezos and other billionaires. Trump went on to stock his administration with a record 13 billionaires. This coterie boasts a combined worth of \$450 billion, bigger than the economies of many nations.

The nation’s median household income hovers around \$83,730, even as the cost of living soars.

Yet the spending bill Trump signed in 2025 cuts Medicaid, food assistance, and other lifelines while giving more tax breaks to the wealthy. Trump even mocked struggling Americans just a few days ago, calling the affordability crisis a “hoax.”

Fortunately, activists like Cunningham stand in the breach. They’ll continue to fight the conniving rich and harness union power for shared prosperity.

“It’s what gave me a better upbringing than my dad,” Cunningham said.

Will Employers Invest in Our Kids?

Nancy Folbre interviewed by C.J. Polychroniou

The Trump administration has suspended over \$10 billion of federal childcare funds for five Democratic-led states over alleged fraud. So what if childcare in the United States is already outrageously expensive, much higher than in other developed countries? But why is it that childcare costs in the US are so high? Socialist and feminist economist Nancy Folbre sheds light into this question in the interview that follows by pointing out the various changes that have taken place over time at the organization of social reproduction and argues, in turn, that universal childcare, an idea that is becoming increasingly popular with voters across many parts of the United States, is very much needed. Nancy Folbre is professor emerita of economics and director of the Program on Gender and Care Work at the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

C. J. Polychroniou: You've written widely about the rising price of parenting. Despite concerns about a national birthrate that is now below replacement level, there seems to be relatively little public effort to increase economic support for parents and children in this country. Why?

Nancy Folbre: The undeclared wars the Trump administration is conducting include a brazen process of reducing public support for the next generation. This process began last spring when billionaire Elon Musk spearheaded budget cuts and layoffs in programs benefiting children and began dismantling the Department of Education. It escalated in the first week of 2026 when the administration used accusations of fraud from a partisan video of child care centers in Minnesota as an excuse to freeze federal child care funds to five Democratic states.

The strategy is transparent: tar all social spending with a sticky claim of fraud and abuse. This includes spending on parents and children, already hurt by cuts to Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, and the Supplemen-

tal Nutritional Assistance Program. These cuts have reduced the affordability of family care for all but the affluent, making a mockery of the Trump administration's promises of prosperity for all.

An understanding of the deeper forces driving this strategy requires a deep dive into historical changes in the organization of our social reproduction.

Children are getting more expensive for parents even as investment in future workers is becoming less cost-effective for employers. Economic pressures became evident centuries ago when child labor was outlawed and technological change increased the demand for skilled labor. This shift in demand helped incentivize investments in public health and education that were financed by higher taxes. The need for future workers—and soldiers—also intensified the need for wages sufficient to support at least a modicum of family care.

While employers constantly sought ways to reduce labor costs, their need for an ample supply of skilled labor at least partially aligned their incentives with those of workers themselves through support for the so-called welfare state (better termed a “social investment” state), that helped develop and maintain the capabilities of the working population.

Fast forward to the present. The huge amounts of money being invested in artificial intelligence represent a new bet on reducing labor costs both directly (through reduced employment and wages) and indirectly (through reduced investment in health, education and social services).

A recent Wall Street Journal headline put it this way: “AI Job Losses Are Coming, Tech Execs Say. The Question: Who's Most at Risk?” The answer: most of us—because general artificial intelligence (AI) is likely to reduce private incentives to invest in humans rather than data centers. Elon Musk, who spearheaded efforts to cut fed-

eral spending in early 2025, is happily promoting Tesla's new Optimus robot.

You seem to be suggesting that class conflict affects public policies, which affect demographic outcomes (and vice versa). How do most economists think about these issues?

Mainstream economists seldom pay much attention to collective identities or interests such as those based on class, gender, citizenship or parenthood. Their general confidence in the efficiency of market forces makes them hopeful that the labor market will adjust to changing prices—that new jobs will replace those rendered obsolete. However, college-educated entry-level workers in the U.S. are already experiencing diminished job prospects. Some economists predict that the “adjustment costs” will be high—a polite way of saying that the younger generation is in for an unpleasant economic shock.

Some ideological adjustment is also underway. The theory of “human capital” successfully promoted the view that the labor market would reward the skills represented by a college degree, reinforcing the claim that employees are generally paid according to the value of what they produce. The very term “human capital” suggests that there is no real distinction between capitalists and workers—everyone can be a capitalist by investing in their own earning power.

This utopian fantasy has long been countered by evidence that the environment people grow up in—including many factors well beyond their own control—shape their economic trajectory. The fantasy is countered even more powerfully by evidence that the returns to a college education are now declining for individuals coming from low-income families. The surge of investment in AI raises the distinct possibility that the supply of “human capital” is likely to further exceed the demand for it, threatening downward mobility for a segment of the paid labor force once considered relatively secure.

Of course, even conservative economists recognize that a good education—from preschool to college—does more than merely increase lifetime earnings. It enhances the skills that people need to manage their own

lives—skills like troubleshooting phones, making good decisions about what to buy, how to save, how to vote, and how to parent. Well-educated people live longer—and not just because they tend to earn more money.

But these benefits are not as profitable as increased productivity for a private firm.

Because they have characteristics of a public good, their economic contribution is difficult to measure, much less privately capture. Policies such as universal childcare, paid family/sick leave, and options to engage in employment from home yield significant economic returns, but these are not channeled directly to those who pay for them.

Standard economics textbooks note that firms have economic incentives to pollute the environment if this increases profitability, even if future inhabitants of the planet will pay a high price. A similar logic applies in a different direction to investments in us and our children—why risk them if they are not cost-effective? Robots may soon be cheaper and they never go on strike OR vote.

It sounds like you're arguing that the theory of “human capital” no longer holds much water. But there are some economists out there who have articulated larger criticisms of capitalist institutions in general. How do these criticisms connect the rising private cost of children, fertility decline, and the possible obsolescence of the white-collar labor force?

Kind of a long story, but I'll keep it short! Economists like myself, influenced by socialist and feminist ideas, highlight the institutional arrangements that shape the distribution of the costs of raising children and the reproduction of human society itself. In many precapitalist societies, parents enjoyed at least partial payback for the costs of childrearing, as adult children contributed to family income and the support of their elders. Capitalist institutions encouraged labor mobility and reliance on individual earnings, weakening such family and community-based transfers.

Democratic engagement and bargaining over the role of the state gradually led to a different system of intergen-

erational transfers, taxing employers and the working-age population to help finance public education for the young and pensions and health care for the elderly.

This institutional compromise helped stabilize the process of “social reproduction” but also led to unequal distribution of its costs. It allowed employers to keep their contributions to the production of the next generation relatively low. It delivered fewer benefits to parents (those devoting time and money to producing new workers and taxpayers) than to non-parents. It also reinforced a gender division of labor that imposed a disproportionate share of the private costs of family care on women.

These inequalities amplified increases in the private cost of raising children (for mothers in particular), encouraging efforts to limit family size. New technologies, increased demand for skills, and opportunities for employment outside the home also played an obvious role.

Until recently, fertility decline was considered an economic boon, allowing more women to enter paid employment and promoting the growth of Gross Domestic Product. As is now widely recognized, however, below-replacement fertility poses problems of its own. When women bear less than about 2.1 children over their lifetime, they don’t generate enough surviving children to “replace” their biological parents.

If this rate persists, the size of the youngest generation declines steadily over time, increasing the share of the elderly population relative to the employment-age, tax-paying population. The economic burden of increased old-age dependency increases political conflict over who should pay the costs—and can intensify the economic stresses of caring for younger dependents as well.

Reduction in the size of the global population offer some potential benefits, given current threats to the global environment (not to mention the dicey future of decent jobs). But if we prove unable to get back up to replacement levels of fertility at some point in the future, we will render ourselves extinct. I’d call that a pretty acute crisis of social reproduction.

How can we avert such a crisis? Are you suggesting that we adopt pronatalist policies? How do responses in other countries differ from those in the U.S.?

No. We’re not in a state of demographic emergency and we don’t need to encourage a higher birth rate. Much of the global population is suffering from lack of decent employment. And the number of children in the U.S. harmed by poverty makes investment in child health and education a much higher priority than increasing births here.

However, investments in child “quality” can help stabilize and strengthen private commitments. Many other countries are implementing policies designed to make family care more affordable. As is well-known, most affluent European countries have put such policies in place. South Korea began providing universal child care services in 2013 and is now increasing parental leave allowances. Canada is a more nearby example, with its rollout of a new federal child care system that will offer universal child care services at a private cost of \$10 a day. Within the U.S., both New Mexico and New York City are setting an example with new initiatives.

The U.S. as a whole is lagging beyond for several reasons. Racial/ethnic divisions, regional differences, and exceptionally high levels of earnings inequality have weakened the solidarity needed to build a “pro-care” coalition. Imperialist rhetoric and illegal military actions have literally bloodied the water.

As I argue in my forthcoming book, *Making Care Work*, we need to do a better job explaining the public benefits of investment in human capabilities, including the care of people experiencing illness, frailty or disability. We can’t continue to treat care as a kind of expensive hobby rather than a productive contribution to our collective future.

Let’s talk about how to move forward in another interview—I think that a universal basic income will be part of the solution, even though it will face vehement opposition. Will employers invest in our kids? Only if we can make them.