



MAGAZINE

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- Yorgos Mitralias



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The Collapse is Real—Lebanon Ceasefire Marks a Historic Strategic Defeat

Ramzy Baroud

A ceasefire in Lebanon was announced on April 16th by US President Donald Trump, but its reality tells a very different story. The ceasefire was not the product of American diplomacy, nor Israeli strategic calculation. It was imposed—largely as a result of sustained Iranian pressure.

Washington, Tel Aviv, and their allies—including some within Lebanon itself—will continue to deny this reality. Acknowledging Iran's role would mean admitting that a historic precedent has been set: for the first time, forces opposing the United States and Israel have succeeded in imposing conditions on both.

This is not a minor development. It is a strategic rupture. But it is not the only fundamental shift now underway: Israel's very approach to war and diplomacy is itself changing.

After failing to secure victory through overwhelming violence, Israel is increasingly relying on coercive diplomacy to impose political outcomes.

Over the past two to three decades, this Israeli strategy has become unmistakably clear: achieving through diplomacy what it has failed to impose on the battlefield.

'Diplomacy' as War

Israeli 'diplomacy' does not conform to the conventional meaning of the term. It is not negotiation between equals, nor a genuine pursuit of peace. Rather, it is diplomacy fused with violence: assassinations, sieges, blockades, political coercion, and the systematic manipulation of internal divisions within opposing societies. It is diplomacy as an extension of war by other means.

Likewise, Israel's conception of the 'battlefield' is fundamentally different. The deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure is not incidental, nor

merely 'collateral damage'; it is central to the strategy itself.

Nowhere is this clearer than in Gaza. Following the ongoing genocide, vast swathes of Gaza have been reduced to rubble, with estimates indicating that around 90 percent of the whole of Gaza has been destroyed. According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, women and children consistently account for roughly 70 percent of all of Gaza's casualties.

This is not collateral damage. It is the deliberate destruction of a civilian population, an act of genocide that is designed to force mass displacement and remake the political and demographic reality in Israel's favor.

The same logic extends beyond Gaza. It shapes Israel's wars in Lebanon against Hezbollah and its broader confrontation with Iran.

The United States, Israel's principal ally, has historically operated within a similar paradigm. From Vietnam to Iraq, civilian populations, infrastructure, and even the environment itself have borne the brunt of American warfare.

A Faltering Model

It is often argued that Israel turned to 'diplomacy' following its forced withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 under resistance pressure. While this moment was pivotal, it was not the beginning.

Earlier precedents exist. The First Intifada (1987–1993) demonstrated that a sustained popular uprising could not be crushed through brute force alone. Despite Israel's extensive repression, the revolt endured.

It was in this context that the Oslo Accords emerged—not as a genuine peace process, but as a strategic lifeline.



Through Oslo, Israel achieved politically what it could not impose militarily: the pacification of the uprising, the institutionalization of Palestinian political fragmentation, and the transformation of the Palestinian Authority into a mechanism for internal control.

Meanwhile, settlement expansion accelerated, and Israel reaped the global legitimacy of appearing as a 'peace-seeking' state.

Yet the last two decades have exposed the limits of this model.

From Lebanon in 2006 to repeated wars on Gaza (2008–09, 2012, 2014, 2021, and the ongoing genocide since 2023), Israel has failed to secure decisive strategic victories. Its ongoing confrontations with Hezbollah and Iran further underscore this failure.

Not only has Israel been unable to achieve its stated military objectives, but it has also failed to translate overwhelming firepower—even genocide—into lasting political gains.

Some interpret this as a shift toward perpetual war under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. But this reading is incomplete.

Perpetual War?

Netanyahu understands that these wars cannot be sustained indefinitely. Yet ending them without victory would carry even greater consequences: the collapse of Israel's deterrence doctrine and, potentially, the unraveling of its broader project of regional dominance.

This dilemma strikes at the heart of Zionist ideology, particularly Ze'ev Jabotinsky's concept of the 'Iron Wall'—the belief that overwhelming, unrelenting force would eventually compel indigenous resistance to surrender.

Today, that premise is being tested—and found wanting.

Netanyahu has repeatedly framed current wars as existential, comparable in significance to 1948—the war that resulted in the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians during the Nakba and the establishment of Israel.

Indeed, the parallels are unmistakable: mass displacement, civilian terror, systematic destruction, and unwavering Western backing—once from Britain, now from the United States.

But there is a critical difference: The 1948 war led to the creation of Israel; the current wars are about its survival as an exclusivist settler colonial project.

And herein lies the paradox: the longer these wars continue, the more they expose Israel's inability to secure decisive outcomes. Yet ending them without victory risks a historic defeat—not only for Netanyahu, but for the ideological foundations of the Israeli state itself.

Israeli society appears to recognize the stakes. Polls throughout 2024 and 2025 have shown overwhelming support among Israeli Jews for continued military campaigns in Gaza and confrontations with Iran and Lebanon.

Public discourse frames this support in terms of 'security' and 'deterrence.' But the underlying reality is deeper: a collective recognition that the long-standing project of military supremacy is faltering.

Having failed to subdue Gaza despite the genocide, Israel is now attempting to achieve through diplomatic maneuvering what it could not secure through war. Proposals for international oversight, stabilization forces, and externally imposed governance structures are all variations of this approach.

But these efforts are unlikely to succeed.

Gaza is no longer isolated. The regional dimension of the conflict has expanded, linking Lebanon, Iran, and other actors into a broader, interconnected front.

Balance is Shifting

In Lebanon, Israel has been repeatedly forced toward ceasefire arrangements not out of choice, but because it failed to defeat Hezbollah or break the will of the Lebanese people.

This dynamic extends to Iran. Following the joint aggression on Iran starting February 28, both the United States and Israel were compelled to accept de-escalation frameworks after failing to achieve rapid or decisive outcomes.

The expectation that Iran could be quickly destabilized—replicating the models of Iraq or Libya—proved illusory. Instead, the confrontation revealed the limits of military escalation and forced a return to negotiations.

This is the essence of Israel's current predicament.

Diplomacy, in this model, is not an alternative to war—it is a pause within it. A temporary tool used to regroup before the next phase of confrontation.

But in Israel's case, this aggressive 'diplomacy' is increasingly becoming the only available tool, precisely because its military strategy has failed to deliver victory.

Lebanon was meant to be the exception—a theater where Israel could isolate and defeat Hezbollah. Instead, it became further evidence of strategic failure.

Efforts to separate the fronts—Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen, Iran—have collapsed. Iran has explicitly linked its diplomatic engagement to developments on other fronts, forcing Israel into a broader strategic entanglement it cannot control.

This marks a profound shift.

The foundational pillars of Israeli strategy—overwhelming force, fragmentation of adversaries, narrative control, and political engineering—are no longer functioning as they once did.

Yet Netanyahu continues to project victory, declaring success at regular intervals, invoking deterrence, and framing ongoing wars as strategic achievements.

But these narratives ring hollow.

The reality, increasingly evident to observers across the region and beyond, is that the balance is finally shifting.

For the first time in decades, the trajectory of history is no longer bending in Israel's favor.

Congress's To-Do List As It Returns To Washington –End The War On Iran, Stop Weapons To Israel, Impeach The President

Kevin Martin

Reasonable people wonder if it was a coincidence the escalation (and now fragile ceasefire) of the massively unpopular, senseless, illegal US-Israeli war of aggression on Iran occurred while Congress was away from Capitol Hill for two weeks. Maybe so, but speculation aside, it soon won't matter, as Congress returns to Washington to resume legislative business Tuesday, April 14.

In the wake of President Trump's monstrous nuclear threat to obliterate Iran's civilization, calls for his removal from office are rising, understandably. Doing so via the 25th Amendment, which would require Vice President J.D. Vance and the spineless supine sycophants in the Cabinet to certify Trump unfit for office, is the longest of long shots, though U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD), a former Constitutional law professor and ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, notes the amendment mentions the ability for Congress to establish its own mechanism to remove an incompetent chief executive.

While that seems remote, the more familiar route would be impeachment by the House of Representatives, followed by a trial by the Senate, and removal from office. Trump is of course familiar with this as he was impeached twice by the House, but not convicted by the Senate. US Rep. John Larson (D-CT) recently filed Articles of Impeachment, and for what it's worth, the betting platform Kalshi put the likelihood of it succeeding at 27%, higher than it had been, but still low.

Anyone who wants to rein in this traitorous regime should press in any way possible, including calling for the 25th Amendment and impeachment, but should not expect those to bear fruit anytime soon.

However, Congress will soon be forced to vote on Iran War Powers Resolutions (WPRs) to declare its opposition to the war on Iran, and Joint Resolutions of Disapproval (JRDs) to prevent transfers of US bombs and bulldozers to Israel.

On War Powers, recent votes were close, and almost entirely partisan; with only a few exceptions, Republicans in both Houses of Congress voted against, and Democrats voted for, rebuking the Administration and reclaiming its clear Constitutional authority over the grave matter of taking the country to war. The House might muster the votes to pass an Iran War Powers Resolution, sponsored by US Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-NY), though the Senate is unlikely to do so. While it would not end the war immediately, a House vote in favor of the WPR would be important in representing the clear will of the American people, and clarify the president has no legal authority for its war of choice.

The votes on Joint Resolutions of Disapproval on bombs and bulldozers to Israel, brought forward by US Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT), with co-sponsors Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Peter Welch (D-VT), will be interesting, to put it mildly. The Trump Administration, as it has often done, bypassed the usual Congressional notification on these weapons transfers, spuriously claiming a national emergency. The "emergency" is Israel may be running low on bombs to drop on the people of Gaza, Iran, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. Israel is also running low on interceptor missiles, but this JRD is only about the delivery of 12,000 half-ton bombs. The Caterpillar bulldozers have long been used in demolitions of Palestinian homes, to make room for expanding Israeli settlements on Palestinian land, mostly in the West Bank.



Photo by: Anthony Crider

The political dynamics of these JRD votes will be relatively simple. Expect all Republicans to vote no, with the possible exception of Rand Paul (R-KY). On the Democratic side, while the most recent JRD votes on other weapons sales to Israel last July garnered (for the first time), majority support among Senate Democrats, they still lost decisively. The difficulty for certain Democratic Senators such as Cory Booker (NJ), Chuck Schumer (NY), Kirsten Gillibrand (NY), Adam Schiff and Alex Padilla (both of California) and others who are rightly slamming Trump's unauthorized war on Iran, is they never vote to prevent weapons transfers to Israel. Their constituents, facing increased economic hardship caused by this foolish war, which as the New York Times reported Trump was all too easily persuaded to wage by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, will certainly be unhappy with this contradiction.

Going forward, if the Administration comes to Congress with a war funding request for up to

\$200 billion (on top of its unprecedented proposal for \$1.5 trillion for the Pentagon's "regular" budget), possibly dressed up with sweeteners such as farm aid (necessary as farmers are hurting not just from increased fuel and fertilizer costs from the war, but also from Trump's tariffs), said senators will be challenged to adopt Sen. Van Hollen's position of "hell no," not another dime for the Iran war.

Political calculations aside, any and all attempts are welcome to stop this awful war, to end the needless death and suffering of Iranians, Lebanese, Israelis, Americans and people in the Gulf states, and to alleviate the shock to the global economy.

We live in a flawed but still functioning democracy. The American people are solidly, sensibly against this stupid war, and need to make sure their lawmakers get the message – Congress, do your job, and stop this madness, by any and all means at your disposal.

Trapped in Iran, Trump Can Only Be Stopped By The American People!

Yorgos Mitralias

While, despite the two-week ceasefire, the war continues to rage, claiming thousands of lives and causing widespread destruction in the Middle East (Persian Gulf) and the Near East (Lebanon), everything now indicates that this Trump—battered by the Iranians, raving mad, delusional, trapped by his own hand, and threatened with soon finding himself in a position of... Checkmate (as if by chance, the expression derives from the Persian *shâh mât*, meaning “the king is ambushed/helpless”), is willing to commit—and to claim! —the worst war crimes and crimes against humanity in order not to lose face and to cling to power. Moreover, everything indicates too that there is no country capable of or determined to stop Trump and his apocalyptic delusions.

Thus, a nearly unanimous realization is taking hold: salvation from the existential threat to humanity posed by Trump can come only from within his own country, from the American people themselves! These American people, who, moreover, not only already overwhelmingly oppose Trump’s wars and policies, but are also beginning to take to the streets en masse across the country to protest against “King” Trump and his nightmarish messianism. And it is no coincidence that the first to acknowledge and take this prospect very seriously is Trump himself. A Trump who is already doing everything in his power to prevent this possibility, which could play out disastrously for him in the highly critical midterm elections this coming November.

So, given everything we already know about the utter contempt Trump harbors for the laws and constitution of his own bourgeois and capitalist class, we can legitimately ask the following

question, which is by no means rhetorical: Who would dare to claim that Trump is willing to accept, without reacting violently, an electoral defeat that would result in new parliamentary majorities (in the Senate and the House of Representatives) voting for his “impeachment,” and thus his removal from power?

However, it would be naive to believe that Trump will calmly await the results of these midterm elections before reacting violently. In reality, it is more than likely that, anticipating this disastrous outcome for himself, Trump will not hesitate to do everything in his power to prevent these elections from taking place. How? By inventing a (new) war or any major crisis that would serve as a pretext to declare a state of emergency in the country. This would allow him not only to drastically restrict democratic rights and freedoms, but also to realize his long-held dream: to rule his country—the world’s leading superpower—as a dictator! This, of course, will not happen without triggering a chain of (violent) reactions, particularly within the presidential majority and the already severely fractured MAGA movement.⁽¹⁾ Not to mention the U.S. military, where the first calls for disobedience to the White House’s (illegal) orders have been made public; nor the country’s economic elites, now divided; nor the rest of American society—and especially those from below—who may want to settle the score once and for all...

This is no longer a political fiction scenario, nor a distant possibility. Preparations for this showdown are already in full swing, with only eight months to go before the midterm elections. It is clear, then, that the current situation is fraught with unexpected twists and surprises that are blurring the traditional view of the U.S. politi-

cal landscape, dominated by a two-party system that monopolizes power and the White House. Indeed, the trend observed over the past several years—marked by Americans’ disaffection with the two traditional parties, as well as by the extreme political polarization of American society—continues and is even intensifying to the point of reaching historic highs. But what is perhaps even more significant is that this disaffection is more pronounced among Democrats, even though their party is no longer in power.

Thus, according to a CNN poll published a few days ago,⁽²⁾ those who say they intend to vote for the Democrats in the midterm elections appreciate their Democratic Party far less than those who will vote Republican appreciate theirs. In short, Democrats will turn out en masse to vote against Trump rather than in favor of their party, which they view as discredited! And the same holds true for those classified as “independents,” who plan to turn out in droves to punish Trump’s Republicans, while also opposing the Democratic Party’s lackluster resistance to the Trump administration.

The lesson to be drawn from the results of this survey—which, incidentally, are confirmed daily by the twists and turns of the country’s political and social life—is that the American two-party system is currently undergoing its most serious crisis, its historic crisis. Above all, the even deeper crisis within the Democratic Party and its “establishment” makes the creation of a third mass party—one that autonomously and independently represents workers and those at the bottom—not only possible but imperative.

However, it must be acknowledged that, for the time being, the voices in favor of creating this third workers’ party in the United States can be counted on one hand. Virtually no one among the leading figures of the independent or semi-independent left within the Democratic Party dares yet to publicly call for either a definitive break with that party or the building of a new major socialist organization. And this

is despite the fact that progressive organizations like Working Families and socialist groups like the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) boast more than 600,000 members in the former and more than 100,000 members in the latter.

And also, and above all, even though the various political clones of New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani are multiplying all over the country, following the example of this new rising star of the Democrats in... Texas, the young and utterly atypical pastor James Talarico, who is making a splash by declaring all-out war on “Christian Nationalists,” with very radical views on burning issues ranging from workers’ rights, women’s and LGBT rights to the uncompromising defense of Palestinians against Israel, the denunciation of war against Iran, and the unequivocal condemnation of fossil fuel policies in the name of the fight against climate catastrophe.

However, let us not despair, for this lack of clear and unambiguous positions in favor of the third major left-wing party is likely to be short-lived. Why? Because we firmly believe that Trump will never admit defeat, and, bolstered by that solid 32–33% of Americans who blindly follow him and have supported even his worst “madness” for the past 10 years, he will do absolutely everything to cling to power. And this is true even if he loses the midterm elections, resulting in his impeachment by the new majorities in the Senate and the House of Representatives. In such a situation, which would foreshadow a veritable civil war, the creation of this third party of workers and all those willing to fight against Trump and his fascist reaction will appear as an almost existential necessity.

Therefore, the duty of leftists who are even slightly far-sighted and responsible is not to wait until the last minute, but to begin preparations now for the creation of this great fighting force of those from below. For now every minute counts, and the class enemy is powerful, terribly ferocious, and no longer hides its apocalyptic intentions...

How the US Became an International Serial Killer

Medea Benjamin, Nicolas J.S. Davies

For decades, the United States moved from covert assassination plots to openly embracing assassination or “targeted killing” as policy. Now, in its war with Iran, that evolution is reaching its most dangerous phase.

On March 17th and 18th, the United States and Israel assassinated three senior Iranian government officials in targeted air strikes: Ali Larijani, the secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council; Brigadier General Gholamreza Soleimani, the commander of Iran’s Basij domestic security forces; and Esmail Khatib, Iran’s Intelligence Minister.

The missile that killed Ali Larijani also demolished an apartment building and killed more than a hundred people. Israeli defense minister Israel Katz announced that Israeli forces were now authorized to assassinate any senior Iranian official whenever they can, and they have continued to do so, bringing the number of Iranian officials assassinated in the past year to at least seventy.

The assassination of Ali Larijani is a blow to the already fraught chances for a negotiated peace between Iran and the United States and Israel. Ali Larijani was an experienced, pragmatic senior official who had played leading roles in negotiations with the US and other world powers since 2005.

Larijani had degrees in math and computer science, attended the revered seminary in Qom, and fought in the Iran-Iraq War, rising to the rank of brigadier-general in Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps. After the war, he managed Iran’s state broadcasting service, earned a doctorate

in Western Philosophy from the University of Tehran, and wrote three books on the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, before entering politics and government in 2005. In 2024, Larijani wrote a book on political philosophy, titled *Reason and Tranquility in Governance*.

If the U.S. hoped to make peace and restore relations with Iran, Ali Larijani would have been a potential negotiating partner. The decision to assassinate Larijani two weeks into this war suggests that US leaders had no interest in negotiations.

Another possibility is even more chilling. Israeli leaders may have viewed Larijani as a potential off-ramp and deliberately eliminated him to ensure the war continues.

That killing was followed by an unprecedented Israeli strike on Iran’s South Pars gas field—the largest in the world and a shared resource with Qatar. Iran retaliated with missile strikes on energy infrastructure across Israel and the Gulf. In Qatar, damage to the Ras Laffan LNG terminal—one of the world’s most critical gas hubs—could take years and billions of dollars to repair.

As global energy markets reeled, U.S. officials confirmed to *The Wall Street Journal* that the South Pars attack had been coordinated with Washington, contradicting denials from President Trump.

The pattern is unmistakable. As one analyst put it, Israel appears to be escalating deliberately—eliminating moderates within Iran while striking critical infrastructure—to provoke a wider regional war that leaves no room for de-escalation.



Analysts debate how much Israel is driving this escalation and how much U.S. officials are fully aligned. But an imperial power cannot outsource responsibility. As Harry Truman’s famous desk sign declared: The buck stops here.

In its alliance with Israel, the United States has normalized the systematic assassination of foreign leaders—from Palestine, and Lebanon, to Syria, Yemen and now Iran. This is not new. In 2020, President Trump ordered the drone strike that killed Iranian General Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy head of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) that had joined with US forces to fight the Islamic State.

Yet assassination is explicitly prohibited under U.S. law. Executive Order 12333 states clearly: “No person employed by or acting on behalf of the United States Government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, assassination.”

That prohibition emerged from the Church Committee’s investigation into U.S. assassination plots against Fidel Castro in Cuba, Patrice Lumumba in the Congo, Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam and General René Schneider in Chile.

It also reflects long-standing international law, including the Hague and Geneva Conventions.

After 9/11, however, the United States systematically ignored or circumvented many of the constraints of U.S. and international law. As U.S. invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq led to widespread armed resistance, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld began arguing for what he called “manhunts,” to deploy US special operations forces to hunt down suspected resistance leaders and kill them, as Israeli undercover units already did in occupied Palestine.

General Charles Holland, the head of US Special Operations Command, refused to authorize such operations, but his retirement in October 2003 allowed Rumsfeld to appoint more like-minded officials to senior positions and bring in the Israelis to train American death squads in Israel and North Carolina.

“Dead men tell no tales,” as the saying goes, and there has been almost no accountability for the resulting killings, which systematically killed thousands of civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan. Two senior US commanders told the Washington Post that only about 50% of “kill or capture” raids by Joint Special Operations Command targeted the “right” or intended people or homes, while troops involved in these raids said that that assessment greatly overstated their rate of success.

Drone warfare accelerated the trend. Under President Obama, strikes expanded tenfold, turning targeted killing into a central pillar of U.S. policy. By 2011, night raids in Afghanistan numbered in the hundreds each month, alienating the Afghan people and ultimately ensuring the defeat of the US occupation and the return of the Taliban.

Now US and Israeli forces are using air and drone strikes to assassinate Iranian leaders and kill civilians in Palestine, Lebanon and Iran. The language of restraint has disappeared, replaced by open celebration of “lethality” and threats of further war crimes.

What was once covert, controversial, and constrained is now overt, normalized, and defended.

The cumulative effect is stark: the United States has made assassination and extrajudicial killing routine instruments of policy, as it tramples the UN Charter, the Hague and Geneva Conventions and its own laws—undermining the very international legal order it claims to uphold.

Meanwhile, a multipolar world is emerging, driven largely by nations of the Global South. But the transition to a peaceful, sustainable world is far from certain. The greatest obstacle in its way is the continued reliance of the United States on the illegal threat and use of military force and economic coercion to try to maintain its own dominance.

Iran exercised restraint for decades in the face of false accusations regarding nuclear weapons, “maximum pressure” economic sanctions and escalating threats and attacks by the US and Israel. It quietly built up its defenses and military strategies for the day that it would need them, and that day has come.

The failure of the international community to stop successive U.S. wars of aggression poses an existential threat to the UN Charter and the post-World War II order. As Colombian President Gustavo Petro warned at the CELAC Summit on March 21: “The more serious humanity’s problems become, the fewer tools we have for collective action. And that path leads only to barbarism.”

The United States now faces a stark choice: to continue down this path of lawless violence, or to turn the page on our nation’s life of international crime and finally, genuinely embrace diplomacy and peaceful coexistence with our neighbors, as the UN Charter requires.

For Americans—and for the world—that choice is becoming a matter of survival.

Four Preliminary Considerations Regarding the 2026 Elections in Peru

José Carlos Llerena Robles

On Sunday, 12 April 2026, Peru held presidential and parliamentary elections for the 2026–2031 term. The deepening political crisis in which Peru has been mired since 2017, the social and economic crisis—recently characterized by issues of public safety and rising fuel prices, respectively—and the return to a bicameral legislature (Senate and Chamber of Deputies) signaled that we were in for a unique electoral process. However, no one expected that the logistical aspects of the electoral process would be the main factor differentiating these elections. Due to operational problems on the part of the state entity responsible for administering the process (ONPE, National Office of Electoral Processes), for the first time in Peru’s republican history, the presidential and parliamentary elections lasted two consecutive days. Because of this negligence (or sabotage?), the top officials of the ONPE are currently facing criminal charges.

Given these circumstances, at the time of writing, the ONPE’s official count stands at just 76 percent. However, despite the sense of uncertainty that has prevailed in the national landscape since Sunday, 12 April, we can draw some conclusions based on the preliminary information available.

Keiko Fujimori Is the Winner in the First Round of the Election

This is a fact, regardless of how the electoral process ultimately concludes. The Ipsos poll (95 percent quick count) places her in first place with 17.1 percent, and it is very likely that this will be confirmed by the official results released by the ONPE. This data shows a categorical finding: Fujimorism remains alive and well in Peru. Despite a proven track record of corruption and human rights violations, Fujimorism is not only still present but, it seems,

is successfully navigating the challenges inherent in Peru’s political crisis. The death of the patriarch Alberto Fujimori has led to the unification of the party around the leadership of his daughter Keiko, and the factions that ran in the 2021 presidential elections appear to have faded away. Her slogan, which emphasizes ‘order,’ resonates with a Peruvian society fed up with the social problems plaguing it and the political parties’ inability to address demands such as public safety, among others. Today, Fujimorism is united and strong.

Pedro Castillo and His Supporters, Present

Although not with the same force as in the 2021 elections, the vote of supporters of President Pedro Castillo Terrones—a victim of lawfare—is reflected in the initial results (Ipsos quick count), which place presidential candidate Roberto Sánchez, of the Juntos por el Perú political party, in the presidential runoff against Keiko Fujimori. What is interesting here, beyond whether or not to recognize Pedro Castillo’s leadership within a ‘leftist’ and/or progressive bloc, is understanding the motivations underlying the pull that Pedro Castillo exerts on the votes that currently favor Roberto Sánchez. Five years have passed since the election in which Pedro Castillo emerged victorious in the first round, and there is still much to study about the electorate, including from the popular or leftist side. It is worth recalling that a poll conducted around the time of the 2021 runoff between Pedro Castillo and Keiko Fujimori identified the main motivation for Professor Castillo’s voters as the fact that he resembles an ordinary person (‘he’s just like me’), far surpassing motivations that were simply anti-Fujimori. Sánchez’s advancement to the runoff leaves a necessary task—in addition to safeguarding the vote, since the powerful groups

will certainly try to prevent a runoff with a ‘left-wing’ candidate—regarding understanding the impact of Pedro Castillo on the working-class electorate in Peru’s regions.

In Peru, the Left-Right Spectrum is Unhelpful for a Real Understanding of the Electoral Situation

We already made this point in 2021 based on the phenomenon that marked Pedro Castillo’s victory in the corresponding presidential elections. That is why we never characterized Professor Castillo as someone on the left but rather as a popular leader with a sense of sovereignty and social justice. Likewise, the motivations and preferences underlying the popular support of ‘Unofficial Peru’ for Pedro Castillo did not seem to align with the ideological boundaries of a strictly leftist identity. It would be capricious and inaccurate to identify Castillo’s voters as left-wing voters. This consideration is further underscored in these elections; for example, if we examine how to explain that in southern Peru—always characterized as left-leaning—a candidate like Ricardo Belmont Casinelli (a businessman, TV host, and owner of a television channel, hailing from one of the wealthiest families of Lima’s aristocracy) has eroded a significant number of votes that were initially expected to go to Roberto Sánchez. Once again, the problem stems from using the left-right axes to understand Peru based on its electoral preferences. In contemporary Peru, the most evident contradiction—and one that has been reflected most forcefully since the 2021 elections—is not between left and right, or even in terms of capital versus labor. The main contradiction transcends the left-right divide and is more closely linked to issues inherent to coloniality and the relationships between Lima, the capital, and the other regions of Peru.

Porky’s New Right Sets the Stage for the Next Battle

Renovación Popular, led by candidate Rafael López Aliaga—the mayor of Lima who resigned

from that post to run for president—has been working for several years to occupy the space that, in various countries across Latin America, is currently being reshaped: the new right. Referring to the continental perspective is not gratuitous, given that this party’s political project—which has grown in organizational strength over the years—draws on the same rhetoric as its counterparts in Argentina, Brazil, and the United States. Its main banner is to wage ‘the culture war’ against the ‘woke’ or, as it is called in Lima, ‘caviar’ progressivism. These banners, as can be seen as the ONPE publishes the election results, have traction only in Lima and some urban centers. Therefore, at this moment, with 76 percent of ballots counted and the votes from Lima and urban centers already tallied, there is a perceived stagnation in López Aliaga’s momentum and a rise in support for Roberto Sánchez driven by votes from rural areas. This is compounded by the fact that, unlike other right-wing candidates, López Aliaga—popularly known as Porky—has resorted to explicitly racist rhetoric against the Andean provinces of southern Peru. Notwithstanding, and given that he will not advance to the runoff, following the style and playbook of the Latin American and Western ‘new right,’ Renovación Popular is already announcing and denouncing electoral fraud—which they will undoubtedly take to court to sustain their organizational and mobilization platform, primarily in Lima, in the face of an impending ‘illegitimate’ government.

Finally, despite trends in the ONPE’s vote count and results from the most reputable polls placing Roberto Sánchez as Keiko Fujimori’s opponent in the presidential runoff, nothing is certain in a country like Peru, which is mired in a serious political crisis. The historic task lies in safeguarding the popular vote for Juntos por el Perú and working on proposals to address the issues that urgently affect Peruvians in their daily lives (security, transportation, food, health, etc.)—issues that undoubtedly stem from structural problems within our economic, political, and social model.

What I Saw in Cuba Was Resilience

Gerargo Delgado

I traveled to Cuba this month. As a Cuban American, that sentence carries the weight of longing born of an estrangement from my roots. For much of my life, Cuba existed as a distant story, a place I knew only through descriptions from my father.

I was there as part of an international solidarity convoy; over 500 representatives from more than 30 countries, united by a simple conviction: no country has the right to strangle another simply because it chose a different path. I cannot stand by while the island of my family's heritage is suffocated.

What I witnessed over those days was not the Cuba of Western propaganda. It was a country enduring a 66-year siege, and a people who, against all odds, continue to build, create, and care for one another.

A Public Health System Under Siege

One of the most profound visits was to a neighborhood polyclinic in Havana. These clinics are the backbone of Cuba's public health system. Doctors live on the second floor, above where they work. They know every patient in their community by name. They treat physical and psychological health alike, and they embody a model of care that prioritizes people over profit.

But the doctors I met face heartbreaking constraints. They are highly trained professionals who know exactly what their patients need, and they know those treatments exist. Due to the U.S. embargo, they cannot access them. Imagine living every day with the skill to heal and being blocked by a political and economic siege.

We brought what we could: 6,300 pounds of medical supplies delivered by our delegation, including neonatal equipment, analgesics, catheters, and other critical materials, valued at \$433,000 and more still in unquantifiable amounts stuffed into carry-on and

personal bags, sacrificing space for our own clothing and toiletries. Cuban doctors told us about nights when the power goes out, and medical students rush to respirators, manually pumping air for hours until electricity is restored. They save lives with their bare hands.

Community and Creativity in the Face of Scarcity
Everywhere we went, I saw people organizing to survive. In a central Havana neighborhood, we helped refurbish a crumbling playground. We brought paint and new swings. A local man who maintains the park offered to take the swings down each night so they wouldn't be taken, then put them back up each morning for the children. That kind of mutual care was everywhere.

We met an artist named Lázaro, who collects garbage and old newspapers to create recycled art. He teaches neighborhood kids to do the same. His studio walls are covered in vibrant works that double as expressions of resistance and creativity.

On another day, we set up a table outside Lázaro's studio with construction paper, markers, and glue. Children from the neighborhood gathered to write letters to pen pals in Singapore. I translated letters from English to Spanish, helping each child respond in Spanish and illustrate their replies. Parents played drums and danced while the kids painted and wrote. It was a profound moment of cross-border connection—kids building relationships through art and translation, across continents, across the blockade.

For Cuban Americans, there is something like a spiritual cost that is paid for quietly going along with the status quo in the face of the many injustices we have grown up with for decades, which seem to us to have intensified in these recent years. But the children I saw in Havana had their spirit intact.



Billboard quoting Cuban independence leader José Martí: "Either Free Forever, or Forever Fighting to Be Free." Photo: The City Project

The Human Cost of the Embargo

The blockade is not an abstraction. Poverty is real. I gave what I could, but as individuals, we cannot meet that scale of need brought upon by a systemic crisis created by U.S. policy.

Rolling blackouts on the island are the result of a strategy of siege warfare intensified in January. Cuba has gone months without fuel imports due to sanctions and naval pressure aimed at stopping oil shipments to the island. Power plants cannot run consistently. Hospitals cannot perform necessary surgeries. Water pumping infrastructure fails. This is not a natural disaster. It is man-made violence; it is a silent war.

And yet, the Cuban people do not wait for rescue. They organize. They adapt. They invent.

Solidarity and a Call to Action

As a Cuban American, I have heard all my life that Cuba is a country ruled by capricious autocrats. That the Cuban people are waiting to be liberated. That their strangulation is meant to help them. But standing on that island, talking to doctors and artists and

children and families, I saw something else entirely. I saw a people who are already free—free to define their own destiny, even under the weight of a siege designed to break them.

Cuba is open to dialogue and investment with respect for its sovereignty. But the U.S. continues to enforce a policy that even much of the world condemns. Year after year, the United Nations General Assembly votes overwhelmingly to end the embargo. Year after year, the U.S. ignores it.

I came back with a deeper sense of what solidarity looks like: showing up, listening, sharing what we can, and staying connected to the work. But solidarity cannot end after a single delegation. We need to break the siege. We need to end this decades-long economic warfare.

Cubans have a right to self-governance. They have a right to medicine, to electricity, to water, to dignity. My father chose to leave Cuba in the face of poverty brought on by a cruel sanctions regime. I chose to return for the same reason.

Let Cuba live.

Boomerangs of Empire: Latin America as Colonial Laboratory

Romina Green Rioja, Sergio Beltrán-García

Masked federal agents kidnap a father as he waits to pick up his child from school. An ice cream cart is abandoned on the sidewalk, its vendor disappeared. A young man is arrested at his job and secretly transported to a terrorism confinement prison in another country. These stories are not from Cold War Latin America, but shared by immigrants—undocumented, asylum seekers, green card holders—living in the United States since President Donald J. Trump assumed office in January 2025.

The kidnapped father was Juan José Martínez Cortes, taken while waiting in his car outside of Linda Vista Elementary School in San Diego. The paletero, Ambrocio Lozano, known to his beloved community as Enrique, became the subject of protests demanding his release. Andry Hernández Romero, a Venezuelan gay makeup artist, was arrested in South Carolina and sent to the infamous Terrorism Confinement Center (CECOT) in El Salvador, where he was held for 125 days until his release as part of a prisoner swap between the United States and Venezuelan governments.

Mirroring the many accounts of state violence throughout 20th-century Latin America, similar events are now surfacing in the United States. As we witness these horrors in person and online, Aimé Césaire's words in *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950) reverberate: "[O]ne fine day the bourgeoisie is awakened by a terrific boomerang effect: the gestapos are busy, the prisons fill up, the torturers standing around the racks invent, refine, discuss." What Césaire once diagnosed as a colonial return now shapes the everyday, the imperial boomerang of our lived histories, our identities, of the stories and histories we wish to tell. It is this returning and disseminating violence, including its architectures, justifications, and resistances,

that guides this issue's analytical and historical content.

"Boomerangs of Empire and the Technofascist Turn" takes Césaire's insight not as a metaphor but as a method. The imperial boomerang functions as a historical circuit in which tactics of imperial domination tested abroad return home, reshaping the very societies that invented them. By emphasizing process over parallel examples, we push contributors and readers to consider why these systems of state repression have become models for replication. Our concern is not simply that U.S. policies echo past empires, but that repression itself has become a transferable technology: an experiment refined in the colonial laboratories of the Americas and now redeployed within the borders of the United States.

We asked contributors to probe what makes this moment distinct. Their collective responses converged on two themes. First, the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) and Military Industrial Complex (MIC)—braided through racialized logistics, infrastructures, industries, and algorithmic computing—now operate as a single apparatus that manages dissent, migration, and everyday life. Second, popular resistance, the response to methods of repression, emerges to protect those being targeted and reaffirm social rights. The essays that follow trace this machinery across borders and centuries, from border militarization and migrant criminalization to algorithmic surveillance and ecological extraction.

Césaire foresaw "the American hour" as an age of "violence, excess, waste, mercantilism, bluff, conformism, stupidity, vulgarity, disorder." Our time demands that we meet it analytically and through activism. Naming this machine is a condition for

interrupting it. In keeping with NACLA's tradition, our editorial stance is double: to expose the architectures of technofascism and to foreground the counter-methods that boomerang back as resistance.

Thingification

Césaire's stark equation that "colonization = 'thingification'" clarifies how colonization reduces life—person, culture, and ecology—into a non-entity to be sorted, priced, moved, and extracted. The colonial apparatus operates through administrative bureaucracies that strip singularity from the beings they process. What feels particular to this moment is not the process of thingification itself but its interoperability, where sonic thresholds, hydraulic schedules, and colonial urban geometries now plug into one another through infrastructures and logistics that bind extraction—human and nonhuman alike—to markets and security workflows.

In the Gulf of Mexico, Jerónimo Reyes-Retana shows how a small fishing border town is reframed by space-industry routines—launch corridors, shock-wave tolerances, and debris-recovery pathways—that rearticulate the lives of its fishermen and marine species in service of space colonialism. Further up the Río Grande, Federico Pérez Villoro tracks how dam-release timetables recalibrate the river's dangers, reducing migrant lives to actuarial risk variables. And in Tovaangar/ Los Angeles, Daniel P. Gámez reads the Castilian imposition of the urban grid as a mechanism that both exposes and contains dissidence, a mechanism still activated today through police kettling. As Mike Davis warned, the dystopian future is not ahead of us but built into the infrastructural present and its architectures, where life is parsed into parameters—decibels, flow rates, lines of sight—so it can be priced, routed, or neutralized.

Read together, the border pieces do more than illustrate thingification; they render its architectures visible. Reyes-Retana maps how aerospace regulation reconfigures a coastal commons into a

mere service corridor; Pérez Villoro details how engineered water surges reprogram a river into a weapon; and Gámez reminds us how the colonial grid persists as a sorting machine for contemporary policing and repression. Together, these texts insist that architecture is not a backdrop but an instrument—spaceports, dams, and grids—that makes the routines of thingification interoperable.

The Law of Progressive Dehumanization

The rise of the U.S. empire turned the Americas into a continuous field of experimentation. From the Cold War's "development" projects to the 21st century's migration and surveillance regimes, the United States perfected a technocratic colonialism that organizes difference rather than erases it. In this landscape, deportation files, visa categories, and media representations perform the work once carried out by armies. Césaire's warning that "there is a law of progressive dehumanization" names precisely this transformation: the conversion of life into data, labor into numbers, and citizenship into a conditional privilege measured by productivity and obedience. Dehumanization no longer requires ideology; it requires logistics.

In Jennifer Martínez-Medina's "The Hidden Agrarian Transformation Behind Mass Deportation," the Cold War's counterinsurgency wars return as immigration policy. Martínez-Medina reveals how the racial hierarchies that once justified hemispheric "development" now govern U.S. agricultural fields, where the H-2A visa program updates mid-century tactics of control for a 21st century economy. The deported worker replaces the disappeared guerrillero, both rendered expendable in the name of national security and agricultural "efficiency." In her reading, the farm becomes the new frontier of dehumanization—the plantation reborn through data and deportation.

Turning to Brazil, Omawu Diane Enobabor and Karina Quintanilha's "Contesting Border Violence from São Paulo to New York" traces the afterlives of U.S. border enforcement in the detention camps and refugee airports of the Global South, where

Black and African migrants navigate a transnational regime of racial profiling wrapped in humanitarian language. They show that the border, once a territorial line, has become a network—an algorithmic infrastructure stretching from Brooklyn’s migrant shelters to São Paulo’s immigration terminals—where mutual aid and community organizing fill the voids left by deliberate state neglect.

Marycarmen Lara-Villanueva turns Césaire’s phrase back onto its most contemporary surface: visibility itself. In “Anti-Racism as Spectacle: Visibility, Social Media, and the Afterlives of Mestizaje,” she argues that Mexico’s digital campaigns against racism reproduce the very “violence, corruption, and barbarism” Césaire identified, this time through the market of representation. What began as mestizaje—the 20th century Mexican state project to whiten and unify—returns in the 21st as a politics of inclusion that leaves racial capitalism intact. The colonial wound becomes a marketing category; dehumanization becomes an aesthetic.

Lastly, Chris Durán’s “Imprisoning Nations: Incarceration and Imperialism in Chile and the United States” traces how struggles against dehumanization—from the 1960s to today—provoke its renewal yet also generate the possibility of liberation. Focusing on the experience of political prisoners, Durán links the U.S. Black freedom movement and the Mapuche struggle for land against the Chilean state, showing how imprisonment becomes both a tool of repression and a crucible of resistance. In his reading, captivity does not extinguish resistance but refines it, transforming the site of containment into a school of revolution where the fight to reclaim life continues.

The Age of Tyrants

Césaire’s “circuit of mutual service and complicity” in the age of tyrants captures the long life of domination in the Americas, where empire’s administrators and neoliberal strongmen have continually borrowed from one another’s reper-

toires of control. From the 1930s onward, tyranny evolved through alliance: colonial paternalism merged with the spectacle of mass politics, and the vocabulary of development disguised dispossession as progress. Across the hemisphere, authoritarian projects drew legitimacy from the same sources as democracy—modernization, order, and the promise of national rebirth. Sam Markwell’s moving essay, “Submerged Pluralist Possibilities in the Pueblo Indian Homelands,” opens in this historical moment. Writing through the history of the Pueblo Indian homelands in the 1930s and 1940s, Markwell shows how Indigenous communities sought to build a genuinely plural society that took up the mantle against fascism while defending their sovereignty. Pueblo leaders and their allies envisioned a model of governance rooted in reciprocity and coexistence, a proto-plurinational order that countered both the racial hierarchies of settler democracy and the authoritarian unity of fascism abroad. Yet the U.S. state’s developmental agenda—its dams, bureaucracies, and modernization schemes—proceeded without them. Markwell’s conclusion lingers as both an indictment and a warning: the infrastructures that promised progress drowned the alternatives to tyranny that once flourished along the Rio Grande.

Cristina Awadalla’s “Authoritarian Aesthetics: Ortega, Bukele, and the Bodies that Sustain Power” brings Césaire’s circuit into the present. Across Central America, she traces how Nicaragua’s Daniel Ortega and El Salvador’s Nayib Bukele inherit and reinvent the visual and affective technologies of Cold War rule. Ortega’s revolutionary nostalgia and Bukele’s social-media populism converge in a politics of spectacle where incarceration, obedience, and digital charisma become indistinguishable. The old tyrant’s charisma and the new influencer’s algorithm meet in mutual service: each governs by staging the body as proof of order and legitimacy. Awadalla exposes this alliance, both regional and global, as an aesthetic of domination that travels easily across regimes.

In this same register, Simón Rodríguez shows how the Dominican Republic’s regime, once cast as

a regional pariah, has become a proving ground whose techniques of retroactive denationalization, racialized raids, and mass deportation quotas are now openly courted by the U.S. far right. The traffic is bidirectional: Trumpism's legal fictions and carceral spectacle find in Santo Domingo not merely a model but a partner that furnishes ready-made instruments and a veneer of legitimacy. Césaire's "circuit of mutual service and complicity" is thus made contemporary: old and new tyrannies exchange methods, narratives, and even markets, until apartheid governance becomes common sense across the hemisphere. By closing the loop between Caribbean laboratories and North Atlantic power, Rodríguez reveals that the age of tyrants is less a genealogy of leaders than a shared infrastructure of rule—one that can only be interrupted by circuits of solidarity as agile as those of domination.

Mechanization

In his final reflections, Césaire evokes the "prodigious mechanization, the mechanization of man; the gigantic rape of everything intimate, undamaged, undefiled that, despoiled as we are, our human spirit has still managed to preserve" in modern life. Drawing on Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics, the Mexican anthropologist Rossana Reguillo names this the *necromáquina*, "a death device that advances by swallowing territories, bodies and futures." The danger, as Césaire warned, is immense. In the same passages he cautions that "American domination [is] the only domination from which one never recovers... unscarred."

In this light, Trumpism appears less as an aberration than as an intensification of "conformism, stupidity, vulgarity, disorder." It recodes punitive governance and infrastructural chauvinism as common sense, aestheticizes humiliation as order, and licenses off—to federal agents or private tech—a managerial contempt for the inconvenient particularities of life. The boomerang is visible not only in policy but in style: the swaggering promise of this new American hour is to accelerate ex-

traction, to police and militarize all space—physical, digital, discursive, and extraterrestrial—and to collapse all possibilities of political imagination into a repertoire of violent heuristics where cruelty is misrecognized as efficiency. Mechanization thrives on this confusion, turning collective resentments and cultural grudges into manipulable user interfaces at the disposal of colonial power.

Lost in this confusion is original thinking. The current rush toward large language models (LLMs)—misnamed "artificial intelligence"—invites the mass renunciation of judgment in favor of predictive mimicry, outsourcing observation, embodied knowledge, and even ethical reasoning to systems trained on past colonial normalities. Troublingly, we editors received multiple proposals—and even drafts—that leaned heavily on AI-generated content. The irony was not lost on us that the very technologies of imperial governance this issue critiques are being uncritically employed in the production of writing itself.

This raises uncomfortable questions about Audre Lorde's famous assertion that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." Can these algorithms and LLMs, trained on imperial archives and corporate datasets, confront the imperial boomerang? Césaire's many warnings resonate that we are at risk of transforming radical thought into mere throughput—another task to be checked off, another data point to be processed, predicted, neutralized. As our contributing poet, *césar montero*, writes from Los Angeles, California, reflecting on the imperial return:

Oh Great Smoking Mirror

Tezcatlipoca

Give me guidance

Allow me to see

Through the smoke and mirrors

The other side of your obsidian dreams

8 Lessons from 3 Tesla Unions in 3 Countries

Thomas Klikauer

In 2023, mechanical engineers – members of the Swedish Industrifacket Metall (IFM) union – dared to walk out of a Tesla repair shop. This set in motion what was to become one of the country's most significant industrial disputes in recent history.

Yet, the number of workers on strike remained rather small – just 45 – but it hit Hitler-salute-giving Musk's corporation hard. Soon, other trade unions – in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland – started to reject working on Tesla cars.

Corporate managers quickly brought in strike-breakers to replace the striking mechanics – an old strategy. They also started importing cars from Germany. These were violations of the norms of employer behavior – though Elon Musk hardly depicts normal norms of employer behavior.

Since Tesla avoids collective bargaining and resents union recognition, this is a matter of the principles of macho-management. Two years later, 70 of approximately 130 mechanical engineers were still on strike.

A similar story developed in Tesla's German Grünheide company, which continues to violate established industrial relations norms. Its corporate managers ruled out signing a collective agreement – with success so far. Tesla's German setup has also successfully stacked the works council with its lackeys and flunkies. Tesla has committed numerous labor law violations. Yet, the very purpose of labor law is to make capitalism work – not to help workers.

Worse, in 2026, Germany's IGM union suffered a stern loss in a hard-fought works council election. Musk won while workers lost. Things aren't better in Trumpland – formerly known as the USA – where Musk's management has fought trade unions ever since Tesla appeared on the scene. An organiz-

ing campaign (2017) by the UAW union failed.

In the second (2023), the company committed labor law violations – including firing workers for being union supporters. Surprise, surprise: Tesla's macho-management denied breaking the law. Unthinkable – corporations breaking the law!

Riding the environmental wave, Tesla's workforce reached 126,000 in 2024, producing 1.8 million cars in Austin, Fremont, and Nevada. Tesla has more workers than any of the unionized Detroit factories. Tesla's global sales have suffered since 2023 due to public opposition to the far-right – some say neo-Nazi – activities of Tesla boss Elon Musk. Bumper stickers reading “This Tesla does not endorse fascists” have appeared in Europe as well as in the US.

Hitler-saluting Musk and Tesla seem like a usual American corporation destabilizing European labor institutions by importing union-busting from the USA. Yet, the actions of Tesla might result in institutional changes in all three countries targeted by Musk.

Musk's power comes from his concentrated control of capital and his public Mussolini-style appearances. Together, they give his corporation the – perceived – strength to weaken labor institutions. These institutions once limited the attacks of corporations on US workers.

There is a real danger in Europe that Musk's union-busting methods may shift employer practices towards anti-unionism. This is why European trade unions see the anti-unionism shown by Tesla as crucial, and as more relevant beyond what Musk's managerial henchmen do in his factories. All in all, there are eight commonalities in Musk's anti-unionism:



Image by Shushugah

1. Collective bargaining: There is a resentment and rejection of collective bargaining with unions and of signing collective agreements.
2. Anti-Unionism: Musk and his managerial bedfellows spend significant energy evading and thwarting unions.
3. Surveillance: Inside their factories, they run a system of surveillance of workers that extends to sick leave and infiltrates workers' use of online platforms.
4. Fordism: Musk's neo-Fordism runs an exceptionally brutal working environment.
5. Competition: Worse, the ideologically obsessed free-marketeer forces workers into competition with one another.
6. OHS: The managerially driven work regimes are spiced with numerous occupational health and safety violations.
7. Time: The factory system runs a methodical and far-reaching overtime regime.
8. Inexperience: Tesla prefers the employment of young and ethnically diverse workers with next to no work experience.

Many of Musk's eight anti-union, dehumanizing, and anti-worker strategies can be used by trade unions to organize workers. Improving Musk's harsh working conditions is in the interest of most workers. Trade unions can improve solidarity

among workers – creating mutual aid across workplaces, factories, and even countries. Trade unions can also inform Tesla workers that others work under the same inhumane conditions.

Often, simply knowing “you are not alone” can be a powerful motivator. Building on this, trade unions in all three countries – Sweden, Germany, and the USA – but also elsewhere, might focus on four key issues:

Tesla's Self-image is Important.

Despite his South African far-right and racist background, Musk and Tesla brand themselves as environmentally conscious and innovative. Yet, the many scandals have sternly discolored the fine image corporate public relations has painted of Tesla.

The fairytale told by corporate public relations – or rather corporate propaganda – of Tesla as a force for good sharply contradicts what workers and unions have experienced, day in and day out, in Tesla's factories. Inside these factories, Tesla's green transition has been a transition to an authoritarian and despotic work regime.

Tesla's prehistoric, outdated yet deeply embedded anti-unionism does not gel with its previously much-trumpeted goodwill image. Perhaps Tesla's

progressively minded customer base might not appreciate these facts. Highlighting Tesla's anti-unionism and inhumane treatment of workers can not only damage its image but also strengthen the case of trade unions.

Such a symbolic company may shift toward a sustainable economy but cannot simultaneously and routinely violate workers' rights. In other words, Tesla's image is full of holes. Emphasizing this – despite the power of the corporate press – will hit Tesla.

Union Organizing.

Sadly, it has become rather common for union apparatchiks to take their own power for granted. This is no longer the case. Unions are only as strong as their members – not as a Michelsian bureaucracy. Tesla shows that – even in highly unionized Sweden and the German auto industry – union bureaucracies may lack the tools needed to maintain membership.

High unionization rates do not automatically ensure that members will join a strike. Recognizing Tesla's despotic management does not necessarily translate into a willingness to act. In other words, recruiting union members remains imperative.

Mobilization drives are important, but high membership alone does not suffice. Trade unions must ensure that workers translate harsh work experiences into political consciousness. It is workers' responsibility to change Tesla's despotic management regime. On the upside, strikes will almost inevitably grow membership and support long-term union goals. On the downside, Tesla's aggressive management has the financial resources to pursue anti-union strategies and ignore established workplace norms.

In Sweden, Tesla avoids collective bargaining by evading primary and solidarity strikes. In Germany, its macho-management has undermined works councils by installing anti-union candidates. In the US, Tesla simply fires union supporters, buoyed

by pro-business labor laws and weak enforcement shaped by neoliberal ideology. Given all this, union power depends on persistent organizing. Solidarity must move from the national to the international level – just as capitalism and Tesla have done.

Union Solidarity.

International, European, national, regional, and local solidarity remain underdeveloped, as the Tesla case shows. Yet, this is a key power resource for unions. Tesla benefits from the free mobility of capital, labor, and services within the EU, using these conditions to weaken unionization and worker solidarity. For example, it has brought in workers from other countries to replace striking mechanics in Sweden.

Meanwhile, despite EU-wide labor regulations, unions remain largely confined to national frameworks. To counter this, Tesla unions must foster international solidarity. Organizing Tesla remains difficult given the combined strength of neoliberal states, resistant corporations, and a supportive corporate press. Still, unions have important tools: they can target Tesla's corporate reputation and, within the EU, make use of institutional pathways such as the (admittedly weak) European Works Council.

Environmental Industry Policy.

Global policies and frameworks on reducing carbon emissions have been framed too narrowly. Tesla shows that these policies remain disconnected from institutions that protect workers from profit-maximizing corporations and macho-management.

For example, an EU directive allows social and environmental criteria to be included – though often in bureaucratic language. Tesla profits from green policy frameworks; these benefits should also flow to workers, not merely accumulate in the pockets of Elon Musk. The labor movement can highlight the need for a just transition – one that includes not only environmental sustainability but also the sustainability of workers.

Why Capitalism Relies on Nature and Care Work It Does Not Pay For

Gunnar Rundgren

Modern economies depend on a range of essential inputs that are not fully priced or exchanged in markets. These include ecosystem functions—such as clean air, climate regulation, and biodiversity—as well as care and reproductive work, including raising children, maintaining households, and supporting the elderly. Despite their immense value, they have been privatized or commodified only to a limited extent. This presents a tension at the core of capitalism: a system expected to be expansionist and to convert ever more aspects of human life into markets continues to rely on forms of nature and human activity that resist enclosure, ownership, and pricing, even as they are subject to degradation. In this sense, the system depends on conditions it does not fully reproduce and may, over time, undermine.

One explanation for this limited commodification is that many ecosystem functions are inherently difficult to define, enclose, and trade. Even the term “ecosystem services” can be somewhat misleading, as it suggests a bounded, deliverable output, whereas many of these processes are better understood as ongoing functions or flows within complex systems. They are not easily reduced to discrete units of ownership, and in many cases, they are mobile, such as the air we breathe or species that migrate across regions. Others are not mobile enough to capitalize on, as their benefits are tied to specific places—you can only make use of the shade of a tree where it stands. These functions cannot be stored, and their reproduction depends on intact ecosystems rather than isolated production processes. Most are also non-exclusive, meaning that many people benefit from them simultaneously. Those natural resources that can be more easily enclosed and measured—such as farmland or mineral

deposits—have largely already been privatized, leaving behind a set of ecological functions that are structurally resistant to commodification. The limited development of markets for nature reflects these constraints. Environmental markets that do exist are typically not spontaneous outcomes of market expansion but are created through administrative or institutional frameworks. Carbon trading systems such as the EU’s Emissions Trading System are a prominent example. Their effectiveness depends less on market dynamics than on externally imposed limits, such as emissions caps set by governments. Within these systems, market mechanisms may determine the allocation of emissions among participants, but they do not necessarily generate new value in aggregate or drive capital accumulation as conventional markets do. The overall level of emissions is set politically, not by supply and demand, which means that the “market” operates within boundaries that it does not determine. In that sense, what is often described as a market for nature is, to a significant extent, an administratively constructed mechanism.

A related line of argument questions whether nature can be meaningfully assigned a monetary value. If money is understood not simply as a representation of value but as the system through which value is defined and measured, then those aspects of the world that are not priced may appear to have no value within economic systems. This turns a common assumption on its head. Rather than money reflecting pre-existing values, it may be more accurate to say that monetary systems play a central role in determining what counts as value in the first place. Ecosystems may therefore be treated as valueless not because they lack importance, but because they fall outside the forms of valuation that markets can recognize.



Attempts to calculate the value of ecosystem “services” can be seen as efforts to translate complex, interdependent processes into monetary terms, often with limited success and significant simplification.

A similar dynamic can be observed in relation to care and reproductive work. Activities such as education, cooking, childcare, and eldercare have increasingly been moved out of households and into wage labor, with these services provided in both public and private sectors. In this sense, capitalism has expanded into domains previously organized outside the market. By making these activities into salaried work, economic activity is extended, as wages are spent in markets or collected through taxation and redistributed by governments, which in turn fund further wage-based activity. This creates a reinforcing dynamic in which more aspects of life are drawn into monetary exchange systems. At the same time, much of this work remains only partially commodified or continues to take place outside

formal markets. The generation and maintenance of human life—sometimes described as social reproduction—remain essential to the functioning of the economy, yet they are often undervalued in economic terms or treated as external to the production of value.

The partial commodification of care work also highlights how market expansion can intersect with broader social and cultural changes. The movement of household labor into wage labor has been associated with shifts in gender roles and increased labor force participation, particularly among women, while also creating new markets for services such as childcare, prepared food, and domestic labor-saving technologies. In some cases, these developments have been framed as forms of increased choice or liberation, even as they expand the reach of market systems into everyday life. Historical examples of marketing have explicitly linked convenience and consumption to such narratives, illustrating how economic and cultural shifts can reinforce one

another. This does not necessarily resolve the underlying tension between market valuation and the activities required to sustain human life, but rather reorganizes how that tension is expressed.

The parallel between nature and care work points to a broader structural feature. Many forms of labor and natural processes widely recognized as necessary for sustaining human life are not fully captured by systems of monetary valuation. If economic value is defined primarily by prices, then activities and processes that resist pricing may appear to have little or no value, despite their fundamental importance. This is not simply a gap in accounting. It reflects a deeper misalignment between what is economically rewarded and what is required for the continued reproduction of both ecological and social systems.

The consequences of this tension can be observed in both environmental and social domains. The degradation of ecosystems is well documented and has direct implications for the continued functioning of natural systems on which economic activity depends. At the same time, there are concerns about the erosion of social structures that support care and reproduction, including households, extended families, and communities. Some of these functions have been taken over by the state or the market, while others have diminished without clear substitutes. In this sense, the degradation of natural systems has a parallel in the strain placed on systems of social reproduction, as both are drawn into and reshaped by economic pressures. Broader cultural shifts toward individualism may also weaken non-market forms of care. These developments have been discussed in relation to declining fertility rates, rising loneliness, and pressures on systems of care—sometimes interpreted as part of broader structural pressures, although the causal relationships remain debated.

These dynamics can also be understood through the concept of the commons. Many ecosystem functions and aspects of social reproduction have characteristics of common resources: they

are shared, difficult to exclude users from, and vulnerable to overuse or degradation. When such resources are subjected to market pressures, they may be transformed into sources of profit, thereby intensifying competition and straining the underlying systems. The interaction between markets and commons is therefore not neutral. Introducing market logics into shared systems can alter patterns of use and responsibility in ways that do not necessarily support long-term sustainability.

Historical examples illustrate how economic systems can draw people into market relations even where alternative forms of livelihood exist. In colonial contexts, for instance, taxes were sometimes imposed in monetary form, requiring individuals to earn wages in order to meet those obligations. This helped to create labor markets and integrate populations into cash-based economies, even in settings where subsistence systems had previously dominated. As noted by Wangari Maathai, such policies effectively compelled participation in wage labor without formal coercion by making access to money a condition of social and economic survival. These dynamics highlight how participation in market systems is often shaped by institutional structures rather than being purely a matter of individual choice.

Taken together, these dynamics suggest that capitalism depends on forms of value that it neither fully recognizes nor reproduces through market mechanisms. The reliance on unpriced ecosystem functions and undervalued care and reproductive work highlights limits in how economic systems account for the conditions of their own existence. Rather than being peripheral, these “free” inputs are central to economic activity, even as they remain only partially integrated into systems of exchange and valuation. This creates a structural tension in which the system depends on resources and forms of labor that it does not adequately sustain, raising the possibility that it may, over time, erode the very foundations on which it relies.

No Kings: Internationalism, Localism, or Both

Michael Albert

You live somewhere. You care not only about there, but about elsewhere. You care about your home, neighborhood, state, country, region, continent, and world. A violation anywhere pains you. To help overcome violations everywhere attracts you. That is internationalism. It's exemplary. Set aside differences you might have over what constitutes violations or what to do about them. What might nonetheless go wrong about being internationalist?

On the other hand, you live somewhere. That is where your opinion, your mobilization and your organizing can have most effect. In your home they have more effect than in your neighborhood. In your country they have more effect than in some other country. To act where you are feels more responsible and rooted. Its greater effectiveness attracts you. Call that localism. It too is exemplary. Assume your assessments of local circumstances are wise. What might nonetheless go wrong with being localist?

Consider the problems and benefits of internationalism's emphasized focus and of localism's emphasized focus. Can a worthy approach avoid the problems of each and embody the benefits of both?

Consider internationalism. What could go wrong? If we fix our eyes mostly on what is distant we may under-address what is near. We may talk and write about distant battles, wars, and oppressions. We may fill our minds with the intimacies and dynamics of distant things. If we are a speaker, we may increasingly give brilliant and caring accounts of distant circumstances, but say little about what's happening at home. We may write, or, if we team together with some publishing project partners,

we may post articles such that the preponderance of our daily articles increasingly address the causes, implications, personal thoughts, and movement motivations of distant events. Our attention to what is at our own doorstep in our own town or perhaps even in our own country, and to its causes, implications, and the associated thoughts and motivations may become increasingly sparse. The problem with this is not that we are concerned about distant events, their implications, and our possible effects on them. That is good. The problem arises when distant focus crowds out local focus.

You may reply that we can be internationalist but avoid the ills of becoming aloof from our own circumstances. I agree that we can do that, yes, okay, but how? After all, the ills of internationalism do often arise.

What about localism? What could go wrong? If we focus our eyes and emotions overly on what is close we may gloss over what is distant. What appears close may so dominate our feelings that we increasingly miss what is distant. We may increasingly miss or even deny distant oppressions. Our ensuing aloofness may so corrupt our values that it eventually distorts even what we can see locally. Consider discussions of the war on Iran which quite rightly oppose it, but may increasingly do so because Trump doesn't have a clear plan, or because it costs so much, or because oil prices are hurting us, or because Americans may die. Point being, a localist may start to oppose the war due to its effects where the localist resides, not due to the murder and mayhem it rains down on distant others. But if we feel diminishing concern for what is distant we may start to minimize our sensitivity to the pain of others. We may increasingly high-



Image by G. Edward Johnson

light effects on self to the extent that our radius of caring shrinks. We start to powerfully emphasize what's in our country but to barely register what's on the other side of the world. We may increasingly care about what's happening in our house but not care what's happening on the other side of our country or even across our town. We may increasingly care about people who look like us, but not care about people who look different. We may start to care about people who see things our way locally but not care about people who see things other ways.

You may reply that we can act locally but avoid the narrowing ills that to be localist can engender. Yes, okay, I agree that we can do that, but how? After all, the ills of localism do often arise.

This is not unlike an activist becoming so attentive to class concerns, or to race concerns, or to gender concerns, or to authority concerns, or to ecological concerns, that they lose track of the other key priorities. A dwindling scope isn't something we seek. Myopia isn't a worthy goal. But myopia happens. And to avoid it we know that collectively we can't let fear that what we incline most strongly toward will get ignored cause us to increasingly ignore the rest. I fear class or race or gender etc., will be minimized or ignored so I advocate emphasizing it and it alone. I don't intentionally

pursue myopia but I may arrive there. And it is the same for local and international. We worry that what is over there will get ignored, or we worry that what is near will get ignored. We start to emphasize one at the expense of the other. But both/and is a better approach than either/or.

Consider No Kings, a U.S. project. It certainly needs to address U.S. circumstances, constituencies, mindsets, motives, implications, tactics, and strategy. What factors propel or block participation by different constituencies? What new tactics might advance resistance? Having been born in the USA, No Kings nonetheless needs to simultaneously address international events as they affect and are affected by the U.S. and in their own rights as well. My impression is many are trying to do just that. But some others are not.

To take one more example, imagine a publishing operation. It wants to advance resistance to fascism but it also wants to increase the likelihood that our resistance efforts won't settle for restoring pre-Trump racial, gender, class, political, international, and ecological conditions. Our publishing project instead wants to propel struggle to win fundamentally new defining relations and another worthy and possible world. Like a movement, it should avoid the ills of excess localism but also the ills of excess internationalism.

All this may seem utterly obvious and if so, that's good. It should. But it turns out that in practice we often open ourselves to seeing these sorts of dynamics regarding possible problems with one orientation but not with both orientations. When that happens to avoid the ills we do see, we can drift into perpetrating the ills we don't see. It's better to see it all. It's better to avoid all the potential ills.

And while we are at it, it is better to support No Kings, celebrate its growth, and work to expand and diversify it, than it is to ignore or deny its growth and moan about its needing to do more and reject it.

Less Analysis, More Organizing

Vincent Emanuele

Why do people spend so much time analyzing and documenting the seemingly never-ending horrors taking place throughout the world at the hands of Trump & Co, but not nearly as much time proposing what to do about them or fighting back? This was the question posed by Michael Albert in a recent episode of *Revolution Z: Life After Capitalism*.

It's a question I've reflected on more and more since 2013, back when tens of millions of Americans acquired iPhones and created social media accounts. Before the era of nonstop social media posting, people would grapple with and debate issues, such as analysis vs. action, in person during organizing meetings, electoral campaigns, direct actions, strikes, rallies, and strategy retreats. You know, back when people did things together, in person, in the real world.

Today, however, Americans spend an inordinate amount of time online, posting, liking, sharing, and commenting. Each time I log into my social media accounts, my timelines are filled with posts examining Trump's foreign policy decisions, denouncing ICE, and pointing out the obvious absurdities and lies of the administration's public statements. Of course, none of this builds actual political power, but it does allow people to feel engaged and informed, however shallow that engagement and information may be. Indeed, posting hot takes on social media requires little effort or sacrifice — both prerequisites for serious political involvement.

In my thinking, the reasons for this unfortunate dynamic are quite straightforward and simple to understand. Likewise, the remedies are equally uncomplicated. People are alienated and disempowered. They are atomized and unorganized. As Robert Putman's work shows, that's been true for decades. Yet, in my experience, action breeds action. Activism creates more activism. And organizing produces (or at least it should produce) more organizers. The

more people spend time together, the more likely they are to develop trustworthy bonds and personal relationships. Those bonds and relationships should form the foundation of future political actions and campaigns.

The only way to combat these trends is through political organizing, creating alternative cultures, and rejecting the social pressures of capitalism and the attention economy. Solidarity and resistance are the antidotes to hyper-individualism and passivity.

Institutionalizing Education and Knowledge

It would be irresponsible to argue that better understanding history and analyzing current events is a completely useless exercise. But an overemphasis on analysis and the growing tendency of people documenting horrors ad nauseam has become a problem. Furthermore, to the degree that existing analysis is useful, it must also become institutionalized, which isn't happening.

There are two ways in which political knowledge can become institutionalized: first, through state institutions. Second, through political organizations and institutions that operate independently from the state. Public education, arguably the crown jewel of American progressivism, has been gutted, censored, and viciously attacked by both right-wing free marketeers and neoliberal Democrats such as Arnie Duncan and Rahm Emanuel. That said, it's not as if Americans were beneficiaries of a robust, critical, and empowering form of public education before the neoliberal assault on state institutions. For the most part, Americans received a rather milquetoast version of history and politics.

Yet, the whitewashed history of the United States that Americans receive in public schools is still far better than the unregulated and often regressive

education Americans receive in private schools or through homeschooling (a growing trend in the U.S.). Most importantly, state institutions standardize and regulate the education curriculum. Children attending public schools generally receive the same training, the same information, and the same opportunities to learn. That training and knowledge are then passed down through generations of public school attendees, providing everyone with a generalized understanding of historical and current events, how to think about such issues, and the objective facts accompanying them.

The alternative option, radical popular education — the sort of education that empowers poor and working-class people with the tools necessary to not only better understand the economy, the government, and so forth, but also the knowledge and information necessary to effectively fight back — is also largely absent in our current political context. That knowledge, too, can be institutionalized, but only through the existence of vibrant, cohesive, and robust independent political organizations. Historically, unions played this role in various regions and localities, as did student organizations and social movements.

In today's context, the ever-present digital landscape has filled the gap. In fact, the majority of Americans now receive their news and political analysis from social media. As a result, the quality of analysis is not only declining, but it's also less institutionalized than ever before. Unlike classrooms or union halls, where dozens or hundreds of people gather in person to learn, reflect, and debate, social media allows individuals to sit at home, isolated from their fellow citizens and coworkers. And the results are clear: American attitudes toward any number of issues are incoherent and, many times, completely absurd. Conspiracy theories proliferate. Deepfake A.I. videos become the norm. A fragmented cultural landscape doesn't bode well for political organizing efforts.

The response, in my mind, is twofold: first, build the sort of independent political organizations that are capable of providing alternative, yet institutional-

ized forms of popular education — unions, student groups, community organizations, neighborhood committees, tenant rights groups, party apparatuses, etc. Such an undertaking will require consistent and effective activism and organizing on behalf of ordinary Americans. No amount of advocacy or marginalized efforts will suffice. We need tens of millions of people involved. And we need local, regional, state-wide, and national organizations. Ideally, we would develop a potentially universal curriculum with the aim of connecting political movements across continents.

Second, rebuild public institutions with the same vision and curriculum as those expressed in independent social and political circles. In other words, the former should influence and develop the latter. Since the state apparatus is unlikely to evaporate anytime soon, the emphasis on public institutions is both practical and ideological. We're a nation of roughly 340 million people. The idea that independent organizations alone can provide a worthwhile education for all Americans — young and old alike — is not realistic. Right now, the only institution capable of scaling up to such a task is the government. But that doesn't mean the government must remain in its current form. The Constitution can change. Public institutions can be reimaged. All of this is possible with enough political power.

Today, it's true: many Americans view the government as a sort of alien entity, and not one that holds the best interests of its citizens. People are extremely cynical about the ability of the government to enact meaningful reforms, let alone radical changes that would benefit their lives. And we all know that elected officials will not take it upon themselves to restructure the education system, nor is that ideal. Reordering the system and developing alternative forms of education is a direct threat to the top-down approach preferred by those in power. The prospect of developing independent organizations with the aim of institutionalizing our collective knowledge in ways that benefit ordinary people is a lofty but necessary goal if we hope to defeat those in power and create a more humane society.

Writers and Podcasters Don't Organize, and Organizers Don't Write or Podcast

Focusing specifically on left-wing media outlets, I think there's a rather simple explanation as to why there's so much analysis and not much commentary about what people can do about the horrible situation in which we find ourselves: namely, most of the people writing and commenting are not currently engaged in political organizing efforts. That's been the case since I became involved with the anti-war movement back in 2006. One of the reasons why I was granted opportunities to write and interview people, podcast, and so forth, is because I was directly engaged in existing campaigns and social movements. Over time, I realized that was a rare thing, especially for an organizer based in the Rust Belt.

Likewise, most of the organizers and activists I've met over the years didn't have the time to write, or they didn't find that writing and commenting were useful ways of spending their time. Occasionally, you'd find an article in *The Nation*, *In These Times*, *Jacobin*, or *ZNet* written by an activist or organizer who's on the ground, but the ratio is still lopsided. Visit any left-wing alternative media site of your choosing, and take a look at the author bios of those regularly pumping out articles. You won't find many organizers. You'll find some activists, sure. But you'll mostly find academics and others who haven't spent much time organizing poor and working-class people.

That's not to say that their input is worthless. I've gained important insights about the world through reading the work of academics and various other commentators. Yet, I do think this schism is real and not talked about nearly enough. In my view, the work of activists and organizers should influence the writing of public intellectuals, and vice versa. Solid analysis should influence our organizing efforts. And our organizing efforts should influence the analysis of those who write and podcast. That, to me, is a dynamic inherent to vibrant political movements, campaigns, and organizations.

When People Do Propose Ideas, They're Filleeted

Another obvious reason people refrain from proposing what to do about the various injustices and atrocities taking place in the world is due to the overwhelmingly negative response they receive as a result of proposing alternative visions, ideas, methods, and tactics. At best, they're ignored, which can prove as hurtful as venomous attacks. At least you know that someone has read your work if they're taking the time to attack you. For some reason, perhaps out of alienation and an overwhelming sense of powerlessness, people on the left respond to proposals of what to do with the sharpest criticism.

Without doubt, this dynamic prevents more people from offering up ideas, organizing methods, and visions for the future. For instance, I don't agree with everything the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) proposes, but they've built the largest left-wing organization in the U.S., and they've had many electoral and non-electoral victories. We should take their work seriously, always supporting and highlighting successes. We should also provide critiques, always in solidarity, and to create more effective organizations and movements. In short, we can be critical without being assholes.

People must get beyond the notion that in order to support a candidate, a campaign, movement, or organization, we must agree 100% of the time. That's not realistic, nor ideal. Constructive criticism and debate are essential components of successful political movements and institutions. It's okay to disagree. We're engaged in a fight against one of the most retrograde political forces this country has ever produced. We need a united front. We need as much solidarity and cohesion as possible. To win, we must work with people who hold different views about how we should respond to right-wing extremists.

People Feel Powerless

You can find a hundred studies that show Americans are disempowered and completely discon-



nected from the political process. Anecdotally, I can say that my experiences of organizing in the Chicagoland Region have taught me that most people know things are terrible. They understand corporations are destroying their lives and the environment. They know that most politicians are dumb, corrupt, and/or hold radically different values than their own. Most people don't want more wars. They don't want data centers. And they don't want ICE executing people in the streets. But they also feel like there's nothing they can do about those issues that will make a difference.

As a result, people are relegated to posting their outrage in various online mediums: YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, X, SnapChat, TikTok, Discord, and so on. However, by doing so, people are only feeding the alienation and powerlessness they inherently feel. Of course, this is precisely what the tech oligarchs want: a distracted population posting, sharing, liking, and commenting. Doing so poses no threat to those in power. Posting doesn't change policy, but it lines the pockets of the billionaires in Silicon Valley. The internet provides a mirage of civic engagement. These days, it seems as if people have confused being informed with having influence. There's also the subjective psychological-physiological aspect of posting to social media: people receive a dopamine hit whenever they open their apps and see those little red

notification bubbles pop up. Again, all of this is by design, as those who've previously worked for the social media companies have testified.

The antidote to this futile approach is in-person organizing efforts. Obviously, people are outraged, and rightly so. That's the good part. Fortunately, we're not living in a completely dystopian reality where everyone thinks everything is okay, and Americans are marching in lock-step with the Trump regime. The bad part is that people don't know what to do. They don't know what to do because the left is so small, so marginalized, that it doesn't have the capacity to bring millions of Americans into the fold. The only way that will change is through organizing efforts. Everything else is cosplay politics.

People Are Not Organized

Back in 2016, when Sergio and I opened Politics Art Roots Culture (PARC), a community-cultural center and organizing hub located in the deindustrialized Rust Belt town of Michigan City, Indiana, our primary goal was to get people off their computers and phones. At the time, we believed (and still do) that states like Indiana and former Democratic strongholds like Michigan City that, over time, have drifted toward Trump were key locations for political struggle. For us, the idea of moving to a major

metropolitan area to do political work didn't make sense.

Over time, we built PARC into a functioning entity capable of bringing a wide range of people together for a multitude of causes, projects, and campaigns. People felt connected and empowered. For the first time in their lives, many people became members of an organization, Organized and United Residents of Michigan City (OURMC). By providing a physical space for people to gather, socialize, and organize, they didn't feel as alienated and disempowered as they did prior to entering the space and connecting with their neighbors and the broader community.

Throughout this process, people sacrificed countless hours in the pursuit of better political, economic, environmental, and social policies. Yes, we spent time analyzing and theorizing, but only insofar as those things were connected to the work we were doing on the ground. Theory without action is intellectual masturbation. Action without theory is often misguided. In our experience, people were less inclined to provide never-ending analysis once they became involved with OURMC and started attending events at PARC. Instead of going home and shit-posting to social media, people went home and used social media as a way to promote local events, connect with various other political organizations, both locally and nationally, and to encourage their family and friends to show up (in person) to upcoming events.

While I wish more people would encourage their friends, family, coworkers, and neighbors to disengage from social media, simply discouraging such behavior is easy and limited. Without providing people with alternatives to digital zombieism, we can't expect that people will untether themselves from the holographic heroin on their own accord. Plus, it's always easy to criticize something, generally speaking. Identifying problems, cultural or otherwise, doesn't require much effort. However, creating political and cultural alternatives is a different matter. Doing so requires effort, sacrifice, and discipline. But it's doable.

Taking Responsibility and Action

In the end, each of us who takes the time to write articles, record podcasts, and post public statements has a responsibility to encourage, promote, and aid existing organizing efforts. Instead of opening our laptops to highlight or denounce Trump's latest personal transgression or insane policy decision, we should reflect on what we're hoping to achieve by doing so. Right now, for example, Americans can find thousands of social media videos, memes, posts, articles, and podcasts analyzing the war in Iran. The same was true of Israel's genocide in Gaza. Public opinion polls show that Americans strongly oppose the war. Attitudes concerning Israel have radically shifted over the past two years. But US policy hasn't radically changed.

Part of the role left writers and podcasters can play is to constantly encourage people to organize. Whenever I watch a video on YouTube, I see commentators with decent audiences (400,000 – 800,000 views per video) sign off asking their viewers to 'Subscribe' and 'Like' their content. Each time, my head wants to explode. What if these commentators asked their audiences to join a local organization, start a political organization, or provided a list of groups and movements people could connect with in the aim of actually stopping the wars, as opposed to incessantly examining and denouncing them?

What if the folks pumping out weekly essays illustrating the decay of the American Empire took the time to instead write about how Americans might effectively oppose, restructure, dismantle, or envision the American political and economic system? At this point, for every one article written about how bad the situation is, there should be ten articles written about how we can fight back and change this rotten system. The more people become engaged in organizing efforts, the easier this will become. Individually, each of us has a choice to make whenever we open our laptops to write or record: do we add to the deluge of negative information, or do we offer up alternatives?

It's Time to Tax the Rich

Lawrence S. Wittner

With the deadline for paying federal income taxes fast approaching, the thoughts of American taxpayers turn naturally toward the age-old question: Why isn't there a fairer tax system?

Currently, in fact, campaigns for state tax-the-rich legislation are flourishing in California, Colorado, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, and Virginia, and have already succeeded in getting such legislation adopted in Massachusetts and Washington. Similarly, in Congress, Senator Elizabeth Warren and Representative Pramila Jayapal have introduced the Ultra-Millionaire Tax Act, while Senator Bernie Sanders and Representative Ro Khanna are sponsoring the Make Billionaires Pay Their Fair Share Act. The tax-the-rich proposals range from increasing the tax rate for the very highest annual income earners, to instituting an annual wealth tax on the very richest Americans, to a combination of both.

Although the most affluent Americans, like other Americans, have always paid taxes to fund public services, the dispute has been over how much they should pay. Sales taxes and property taxes place a heavy burden on people of modest means, but a much lighter burden on the wealthy. Therefore, the wealthy have tended to favor these generators of public revenue and to oppose a progressive income tax, under which the rich would pay at a higher rate than the poor. A lengthy political battle for a tax system based upon ability to pay led to passage of the 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which empowered Congress to levy an income tax.

Initially, the new income tax, though progressive, was rather small-scale. But as the federal government took on new and costly tasks - particularly funding U.S. participation in two world wars and the Cold War - the federal income tax grew accordingly. By 1944, the official tax rate for the highest income earners stood at 94 percent - although,

thanks to deductions, loopholes and the rate's confinement to the top increment of their income, the richest Americans actually paid at a much lower rate.

Like their well-heeled predecessors, many wealthy Americans were outraged at funding public services that benefited people whom they often regarded as their inferiors. Why, they wondered, was their money being "wasted" on things like public schools, public housing, and public healthcare, when "the best people" went to private schools, lived in private mansions or gated communities, and employed private "concierge doctors"? While chatting with their friends over lunch on their yachts or at their tennis clubs, they complained of "welfare queens" and the "ungrateful poor."

Consequently, Congress - badgered by the wealthy, their corporations, and conservative ideologues - cut the progressivity of the federal income tax. In 1964, the top marginal tax rate was reduced from 91 percent to 70 percent, in 1981 to 50 percent, and in 2018 to 37 percent.

Given these dramatic cuts in the federal income tax rate, plus preferential tax treatment for dividends and appreciation in the value of stock, bonds, and other investments - the wealthiest Americans managed to secure a much lower tax rate than most Americans. According to a ProPublica investigation, the 25 richest Americans, who had \$401 billion in income from 2014 to 2018, paid taxes on it at a rate of just 3.4 percent. Indeed, during some years, the world's top billionaires - including Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Michael Bloomberg, and Carl Icahn - paid no federal income taxes at all.

When it came to corporate income, the federal government slashed the corporate tax rate from 53 percent to 21 percent between 1969 and 2025. And this, too, produced enormous benefits for very



affluent Americans, who own most stock market wealth. According to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, 23 of the largest and most profitable U.S. companies paid no federal corporate income taxes at all from 2018 to 2022. And 109 corporations paid no federal tax in at least one of those years.

The Trump administration's tax policies lifted the fortunes of the wealthy to unprecedented heights. According to a September 2025 report by Americans for Tax Fairness, the wealth of the 15 richest U.S. billionaires increased by over 300 percent after the passage of the first Trump-GOP tax cut in December 2017. The wealth of the very richest of them, Elon Musk, grew 20-fold. In the first year of Trump's second term, marked by another huge tax cut for the rich, U.S. billionaire wealth jumped from \$6.7 trillion to \$8.2 trillion.

Not surprisingly, government taxation policy - coming on top of low wage rates, corporate outsourcing, assaults on unions, and government subsidies for big business - has resulted in rising economic inequality in the United States. By late 2025, the richest 1 percent of Americans possessed some \$55 trillion in assets - roughly equal to the wealth held by the bottom 90 percent. "Household wealth is highly concentrated and becoming steadily more concentrated," reported the chief economist

at Moody's Analytics, a major financial research firm.

This rising economic inequality enhances the growing power of the wealthy in public affairs. Increasingly, in politics, big money talks - and on behalf of Republicans. Federal election contributions from the nation's 100 richest Americans averaged \$21 million between 2000 and 2010, but rose beyond \$1 billion in 2024. In that year, contributions to Republicans surged from roughly \$300 million to just under \$1 billion, while donations to Democrats dropped from roughly \$300 million to less than \$200 million. A rightwing political party, led by a demagogic billionaire promising more tax cuts, proved irresistible.

By contrast, most Americans support proposals to raise taxes on the rich. According to a March 2025 Pew Research Center poll, large majorities of Americans surveyed favored increasing taxes on the wealthy and corporations. In January 2026, an Economist/YouGov poll reported that 80 percent of American respondents viewed wealth inequality as a problem, 80 percent said the rich had too much political power, and 78 percent said taxes on billionaires were too low.

It's time to tax the rich. Or, as Pete Seeger used to sing: "Take it easy, but take it."

As the Green Space Gap Grows, Parks Are Becoming a Global North Luxury

Tamara Pearson

Sometimes, walking around the concrete jungle of Puebla city, in central Mexico, the only trees I see are the hardy, invasive ones growing out of the cracked walls of abandoned buildings. The government planted a few trees around the city center two years ago, but with no nearby rubbish bins, the young, skinny trees, completely surrounded by concrete, often become de facto rubbish traps. The contrast with many Global North cities, with nature strips next to most footpaths and huge central parks and botanical gardens, is stark.

Canberra is the top city globally for green space with 420m²/person, followed by Wellington, Ottawa, Helsinki, Oslo, and Stockholm. Sydney is 19th, with 220m²/person, and all of the top 20 cities are in the Global North. Puebla has just 2.4m²/person—1% of Sydney's rate, and other Global South cities are not too much better off, with Mexico City at 6m² and Bogotá at 5m².

Even when measured as a percentage of total area, the top cities are all in the Global North; Moscow (54%), Singapore (47%), Sydney (46%), and Vienna (45.5%) and the bottom cities are in the Global South; Dubai (2%), Istanbul (2.2%), and Mumbai (2.5%). Within both Global North and South cities, there are further inequalities, with green areas typically concentrated in wealthier suburbs.

The WHO set a minimum of 9m²/person, with an ideal of 50m² per capita. There are serious environmental and health consequences for low green space levels, but despite that, the city and state Puebla governments are planning a massive transport project that would reduce the city's green space even further. Shrouded in corporate interests and opacity, and prioritizing the needs of foreign and domestic tourists over locals, the project is typical of investor-led urban policies that only increase the global green space gap.

Disposable parks

The Morena Puebla state government first announced the Cablebús transport project in December last year, with protests against it beginning in February. With a budget of 6.75 billion pesos (AU\$555 million), the aerial cable car system would only cover 13 kilometers, and require 96 towers and 9 stations located in the few remaining parks, as well as in public spaces or squares.

Almost a thousand mature trees would be chopped down, and the project bypasses lower income areas of the city where more people rely on public transport. Also, while a cable car system makes some sense in Mexico City, with its large swaths of informal and low-income housing on steep hillsides, Puebla is flat.

"Parks represent less than 1% of the city of Puebla. Ecological corridors are increasingly fragmented, and that threatens wildlife, like the Coopers hawk. The Cablebús is also an attack on our right to a healthy environment," Antonio Ferrer tells me. He and fellow activist, Selene Agustín, are members of the Puebla-based Citizen's Agenda for Trees and Green Areas.

In Puebla, the last few decades of urban planning beyond the historic center have been modeled on the US, often with US companies and contractors often directly involved. This means car-first urban planning and large department stores (mostly transnationals), in a region where the majority can't afford cars. The public transport system is disorganized and neglected, and buses and shuttle van buses are over-crowded. it can take an hour just to travel 5 kilometers.

"We need more buses, a larger and better bike path network, better pedestrian infrastructure, more local and city parks," says Agustín.



A March 1 protest against the Cablebús in Puebla city. Photo by Tamara Pearson.

Why green spaces matter

Green spaces are vital for cooling (suburbs with vegetation can be up to 14°C cooler), improving air quality, reducing noise, supporting biodiversity, and better water quality. For cities like Puebla, with low-quality infrastructure and drainage and short but intense rainy seasons, green spaces can be vital in preventing floods, by absorbing water and reducing surface runoff.

Spending at least two hours a week in nature is associated with good health, including a lower risk of chronic diseases and accelerated recovery from surgery, as well as reduced stress, anxiety, and fatigue, and better cognitive performance.

Green spaces are also important recreational and social spaces. The scarcity of parks can lead to fear and distrust of public areas and dependence on commercial spaces and consumerism for socializing. Those with little disposable income can feel locked out of socializing all together.

“It’s become so normalized. People are growing up without trees or green spaces nearby, and then have little sense of how to appreciate them or look after them. And in a city like this, grey, concrete, with crap public transport, owning a car becomes something to

aspire to – even a necessity, to avoid the over-crowded busses and the blazing sun,” says Agustín.

“Living in Puebla, with so little green space, makes us feel stressed, irritable, and sometimes even hopeless,” says Ferrer.

Urban green spaces decreasing worldwide

Global South cities overall have just one third of the green space that Global North cities have, due to lower state income and budgets for street infrastructure, and high levels of exploitation by the Global North.

While wealthier cities are treated primarily as places to live in, cities like Puebla are used by transnationals for car manufacturing (Audi and Volkswagen in Puebla’s case), textiles and other kinds of export industries supplying Global North markets. Unequal trade agreements, like NAFTA, signed between Mexico, the US, and Canada, forced millions of small farmers to migrate to the cities, where they settled in informal housing, with no planned parks.

In addition to worldwide challenges like gentrification, many Global South cities also navigate the legacies of colonialism and imperialism, with often large slums, favelas, or informal settlements, and higher rates of

urban growth. Under pressure from transnationals and organizations like the IMF, cities like Puebla and Mexico City are constantly being privatized, and corporations take over public spaces, including parks, squares, and cultural buildings, and commercialize them.

Since public parks are much less profitable uses of land compared to say, AI data centers, industry, or residential towers, urban green space is declining globally. One study of 344 cities found an overall reduction of 63 million m² from 2023 to 2024.

Imposing public works

The Morena state government is bending over backwards for big business, awarding a European company, Doppelmayr, the contract for the Cablebús, and announcing yet another industrial park for Puebla. Promoted by the national government as “Economic Development Hubs,” these industrial towns include public funding for business infrastructure, with water, electricity and other services provided, and incentives for transnational and domestic big business.

Announced late last year, the hub in Puebla will be located in San José Chiapa, a lower-income area with a Nahua community and small farmers, and will include pharmaceutical and food companies and a Google AI laboratory. More than 100 companies will benefit from 275 hectares of state-owned land. The project will consume precious water—severely scarce in the region—and generate copious amounts of rubbish and contamination.

Doppelmayr already holds multiple cable car contracts across Mexico for cable cars, where state governments are paying it a total of 22 billion pesos (AU\$1.8 billion) to build the systems, then more money for maintenance and operation. With contracts like these, companies often bribe officials to get the contracts, overestimate costs in order to receive bigger payouts, then cut corners in construction.

In Michoacán state, there were significant protests against Doppelmayr’s cable bus system last year, and Isidro Ramos Sandoval, the lawyer who filed a case

to stop the project was then murdered in March that year. No one has yet been prosecuted.

Doppelmayr and local governments in both Puebla and in Mexico City have not conducted the legally required studies before project approval, including environmental impact studies, technical, financial, and mobility studies. In Puebla, the government said the studies that it has conducted are “reserved” for the next five years, meaning the public isn’t able to see them.

Agustín notes that Mexico has ratified the Escazú Agreement, a landmark 2018 treaty for Latin America and the Caribbean mandating public participation in environmental decision-making.

“The Cablebús project isn’t based on any real analysis of mobility needs in Puebla. Any such analysis should consider accessibility, short trips by carers, and sustainability. It also doesn’t have the necessary land-use permits. It is incompatible with various laws and regulations, but the mayor, José Chedraui, says he will change whatever he has to to ensure the project goes ahead,” says Ferrer.

Defending green spaces

Communities where Cablebús stations will be installed in parks have organized locally, and have marched together with academics, student groups, transport and environmental collectives, lawyers’ organizations, and other civil society groups.

“Apart from the marches, there have been information requests, lawsuits, declarations, forums, artistic actions and creative workshops, and social media campaigns, says Agustín, “The movement is growing.”

“But in response, the (Morena) state and city authorities have only insulted us, accusing us of being “bots” and members of the opposition, or of having political party interests,” says Ferrer, “But we don’t—we’re just citizens fighting for our right to information, fighting for an appropriate use of public funds, wanting to live in a healthy environment, and for the few remaining green spaces to be protected.”

How Microplastics Threaten Marine Ecosystems and the Food Chain

Erica Cirino

Microplastics, plastic particles smaller than 5 millimeters, can be found in land, air, and water, and have infiltrated our food chain, resulting in far-reaching health consequences for humans and nonhumans alike. In 2020, scientists discovered the “highest level of microplastic ever recorded on the seafloor,” revealing the extent of their impact on the marine ecosystem.

The lead author of the study, Ian Kane from the University of Manchester, said: “Almost everybody has heard of the infamous ocean ‘garbage patches’ of floating plastic, but we were shocked at the high concentrations of microplastics we found in the deep-seafloor.”

These microplastics enter the marine ecosystem directly and indirectly, for example, from landfills, where they are carried by wind into rivers and seas. “It is estimated that 8 million tonnes of plastics enter the seas and oceans each year,” stated a 2021 study published in MDPI.

Mussels can act as sentinels to assess and monitor microplastic pollution. Globally distributed in both freshwater and saltwater ecosystems as filter feeders, mussels are both sensitive to environmental pollution and play a key role in engineering aquatic ecosystems by processing huge quantities of water.

With serious concerns about microplastic contamination of food, particularly seafood, and human bodies growing, mussels will inevitably serve as an increasingly important bioindicator of microplastic pollution from the present into the future.

The Impacts of Plastic Disintegration

Manmade, fossil fuel-based plastics don’t biodegrade like natural materials; instead, they break up into increasingly tiny plastic particles. Scientists

categorize these particles by size: those 5–10 millimeters are called “mesoplastics,” those between 1 nanometer and 5 millimeters (about the diameter of a pencil eraser) are called “microplastics,” and those 1 nanometer (a human hair is 80,000–100,000 times nanometers wide) and smaller are “nanoplastics.” While nanoplastics are too small to be seen, microplastics and mesoplastics are fairly visible.

Microplastics that are “intentionally produced” for inclusion in cosmetics or exfoliating products, such as soap scrubs and toothpastes, are typically manufactured as tiny beads or flat pieces of glitter. These ready-made microplastics are called “primary” microplastics. Primary microplastics also include nurdles—small pellets of plastic melted down into the plastic products we are familiar with. Nurdles are often discharged into waterways through industrial wastewater runoff from plastic production facilities, and during shipping fires and spills from cargo ships. About 445,970 tons of nurdles are estimated to directly pollute the environment globally every year, especially aquatic ecosystems.

Plastic particles that form due to the disintegration of plastic materials are called “secondary” microplastics. These particles may be pieces of plastic film, fibers (from textiles and rope), foam, hard or soft fragments, and lines (such as from fishing gear). They break down from plastic packaging, synthetic textiles, paint, and other plastic materials used in our homes. Plastic’s breakdown is accelerated by sunlight, extreme temperatures, exposure to bacteria, fungi, and water, and by weathering.

These particles were first documented in marine ecosystems in the early 1970s and have since been found in indoor and outdoor air, drinking water, fresh and processed foods, fresh waters, household

dust, plants and trees, oceans, soils, and in animals—including humans.

Plastics are not only harmful to our health but also impose significant economic costs. “Estimates suggest that plastic pollution causes about \$75 billion per year in environmental damages, with \$13 billion of this tied to marine ecosystems. For example, plastic pollution can deplete fish stocks and impact coastal tourism by littering popular beaches. It can damage infrastructure like urban drainage systems. It can even de-operationalize or sink ships by entangling propellers or clogging water intake systems responsible for cooling their engines,” pointed out the World Resources Institute.

Microplastics Threaten Marine Life

While plastic particles have virtually contaminated the entire Earth due to their constant movement through the biosphere, marine ecosystems in particular are a major repository for mesoplastics, microplastics, and nanoplastics. Freshwater systems empty into the oceans, and populous coastal areas—especially those that have been industrialized—are major sources of microplastic pollution in marine ecosystems. About 80 percent of plastics in the oceans are estimated to have traveled there via rivers and other freshwater systems. Flooding and weather events can push microplastics into rivers in significant quantities.

A 2021 report by the UN Environment Program (UNEP) stated that plastic accounts for 85 percent of marine litter, and by 2040, we can expect the volume of plastic pollution to nearly triple if we don’t take preventative measures.

Fish and other marine animals are exposed to microplastics in waters and sediments, from the sea surface to the seafloor. Many animals, including some fish species that people eat, consume nurdles and other round microplastics because they resemble their usual food sources, such as fish eggs and other plankton. Some fish species and marine animals are attracted to the smell of weathered plastic particles. Even relatively small amounts of

plastic can be deadly to marine wildlife. For example, a 2025 study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences suggests consuming the equivalent volume of less than one sugar cube of plastic can kill one in two Atlantic puffins; less than half a baseball’s size in plastics can kill one in two Loggerhead turtles; and the amount of plastic in less than a sixth of a soccer ball can kill one in two harbor porpoises.

Microplastic consumption has been linked to adverse health effects in marine animals, including mussels. “Circulatory system of fish is impacted by the microplastic bioaccumulation in their tissues, influencing a number of hematological indices that are connected with immunity, osmotic pressure, blood clotting, molecular transport and fat metabolism,” stated a 2024 study in Toxicology Reports. Microplastics and plastic chemicals have also been linked to gastrointestinal blockages, neurological issues, starvation, toxicity, and reproductive issues in marine life.

Filter feeders, including mussels, have limited abilities to sort and reject plastic particles as they siphon water for food. Mussels pull in about one-fourth cup of sea water per minute, a huge volume for a small animal. Studies have shown mussels from different regions with varying quantities and types of microplastics in their soft tissues and digestive systems. Mussels and other filter-feeding shellfish ingest greater amounts of microplastics than other marine creatures. Like other pollutants, microplastics bioaccumulate up the food web, concentrating inside the bodies of predators as they consume prey.

Ingestion of polyester plastic fibers has been shown to stunt the growth of young blue mussels by more than one-third. Smaller mussels with lower growth rates and stressors like inflammation can reduce the survival of mussels, and thus the overall availability of food sources for animals that prey on them, from birds to crabs, starfish, whelks, and, of course, people. Microplastics have also been linked to cellular and molecular damage in mussels.

What's more, chemicals commonly manufactured into plastics, such as heavy metals, phthalates, and PFAS, have also been shown to bioaccumulate in the marine food web.

Marine Microplastic Pollution Raises Human Health Concerns

Microplastics have been detected throughout the human body, in people's bloodstreams, bones, bone marrow, brains, breast milk, urine and feces of adults and infants, hair, hearts, kidneys, livers, lungs, penises, placentas, saliva and sputum, semen, skin, spleens, stomachs, testes, throat and airways, uteruses, and veins.

The presence of microplastics in people has been linked to Alzheimer's disease, dementia (in mice), Parkinson's disease, and other neurodegenerative disorders; inflammation, heart attack, stroke, and death; they have been found in samples of bladder cancer; and are suspected to harm human fertility and reproductive health. Exposure to microplastic particles is also linked to cell damage and death.

Exactly how and why microplastics cause harm is under investigation. But scientists do know that microplastic particles can contain any number of 16,000 plastic chemicals, at least 4,200 of which have already been linked to adverse human health effects, including causing cancer and disrupting hormones.

In fish, microplastics tend to accumulate in the gills and digestive system, so it would seem that eviscerating fish before human consumption would minimize exposure. However, gilling and gutting fish does not necessarily eliminate microplastics. What's more, some seafood, including some bivalves, crustaceans, and oilfish like sardines, are typically eaten whole, and it's not always possible or practical to excise microplastic hotspots in their bodies. Seafood may contain more microplastics during certain seasons due to changes in ocean currents, rainfall and runoff, flooding, and other factors that increase pollution.

"Researchers estimate that adults in the United States may ingest nearly 4 million microplastic particles per year from protein sources alone," stated EarthDay.org.

Scientists are still determining the full range of risks linked to human consumption of microplastics. Recommendations on the frequency and type of seafood consumption, based on age, sex, and pregnancy status, currently exist in the United States and Europe to minimize exposure to chemicals like PCBs and mercury. However, pollutants on which such guidelines have been developed do not necessarily include microplastics.

The Way Forward

The fact that seafood—and other major sources of nutrition, including fresh fruits and vegetables—are increasingly polluted with microplastics is a serious concern for human health. Billions of people around the world depend on seafood as a key source of nourishment (not to mention their livelihoods).

Scientists continue to search for microplastics inside the flesh, gills, and guts of marine animals eaten as seafood, including mussels. Researchers have found microplastics in all of the most-eaten mussel species purchased from markets, with an average of 0.13 to 2.45 microplastic particles per gram of mussel meat. The most contaminated organisms were found in the North Atlantic and South Pacific. In another 2024 study, researchers found that 99 percent of seafood samples purchased in stores and collected from fishing vessels on the U.S. West Coast contained microplastics, with shrimp being the most contaminated type of seafood studied.

The study and understanding of how microplastics affect food safety is still in its "infancy." Advanced analytical methods can help ensure more accurate detection of microplastic levels in certain foods, thereby enhancing monitoring. Governments, meanwhile, need to step up regulations and ensure "specific practices in food production, processing, and packaging to minimize the introduction and

spread of microplastics,” according to an article in *Smart Food Safe*. Greater Industrial and international cooperation to address the issue can lead to consistent standards to make the food chain safer from microplastics. Moreover, “Regularly updating methodologies and standards based on new scientific findings ensures that strategies remain effective and aligned with the latest knowledge,” added the article.

California is leading the U.S. in monitoring microplastics in the marine environment. In 2022, it established its Statewide Microplastics Strategy, focusing on identifying microplastic pollution trends, risks, and sources. Academics continue to focus on monitoring microplastics, increasingly in sentinel species like mussels, often with the help of community scientists.

Mitigating Plastic Pollution Needs to Start at the Source

Pressure from consumers and strong policies, such as bans and taxes on single-use plastic products, can help eliminate plastic that inevitably breaks down into secondary microplastics. These actions are necessary to force businesses to move away from plastic and adopt plastic-free practices and products. Other laws, like the European Parliament’s 2025 legally binding regulation implementing mandatory prevention measures relating to “pellet loss” and the U.S. Microbead-Free Waters Act of 2015, which “prohibits the manufacturing, packaging, and distribution of rinse-off cosmetics containing plastic microbeads,” further help address the issue of primary sources of microplastic pollution upstream.

Litigation is also another tool utilized by communities and organizations to hold polluters accountable. Some cases successfully target downstream pollution resulting from microplastics. Others are working to address longstanding systemic issues like racism that perpetuate the unjust targeting of underserved communities as “sacrifice zones” for industrial polluters. While some others are challenging polluters’ use of false and misleading marketing claims around their plastic products labeled as “sustainable” or “healthy.”

The key to mitigating plastic pollution is starting at the source, with fossil fuel extraction and plastic production. Ultimately, society needs to shift its reliance on fossil fuels and plastics toward safe, plastic-free reuse and regenerative solutions at a systemic level.

Plastic recycling is not a solution in and of itself; it actually can perpetuate plastic production and requires virgin (new) plastic and plastic additives, as plastic diminishes in quality with each round of recycling.

“Fossil fuel and other petrochemical companies have used the false promise of plastic recycling to exponentially increase virgin plastic production over the last six decades, creating and perpetuating the global plastic waste crisis and imposing high costs on communities that are left to pay for the consequences... As of 2021, the U.S. recycling rate for plastic is estimated to be only 5-6 percent,” according to a 2024 report by the Center for Climate Integrity.

Plastic and fossil fuel corporations have long pushed recycling as a solution to plastic pollution, when in reality, ceasing plastic production is the core solution. Inevitably, some recycling may be required in the future to address the plastic already in circulation, but recycling practices might be improved to prevent further harm. Similarly, while cleanups cannot solve the problem, they will inevitably be needed in the future to reduce the risks posed by microplastics.

Microplastics are a systemic pollution problem requiring a coordinated global response, such as a strong Global Plastics Treaty that addresses plastic pollution throughout its toxic life cycle. While negotiations on the treaty continue, countries need to take steps to reduce plastic production and use, and consumers need to make better choices to drive change at the individual level. These steps are necessary to mitigate the damage already caused by the unchecked plastic use and to ensure a more sustainable future.