



MAGAZINE
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Action

Strategies for the Future

Forever Wars

*“... there is indeed an
arsenal of bold policies to
defeat fascism, preserve
democracy, and help
create a greener, stronger
and fairer economy for
American workers.”*

- Gerald Epstein



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Greentech New Deals in the Cities

Jeremy Brecher

In Trump's America the Greentech Revolution is being waged from below.

Although Trump's attacks have slowed the advance of fossil-free technologies in the US, they have not prevented communities, cities, and states from creating their own Greentech New Deals. They are taking advantage of the enormous reduction in the cost of renewable energy and of technologies that use it despite Trump's attempts to obliterate them.

Alongside the widespread pro-democracy resistance to Trump and MAGA, there is a constructive program being developed and implemented from below, utilizing the Greentech Revolution to make Green New Deals practical and affordable. Greentech and climate protection are at its core. But it also includes the full range of pro-people, pro-social programs represented by the Green New Deal.

Back in 2007, Xcel Energy won backing from the governor of Minnesota for a gas power plant in Becker, near Minneapolis, designed to replace coal-fired generators scheduled for shutdown in the mid-2020s. But clean energy advocates campaigned for better and cheaper alternatives, and regulators eventually balked at the \$1 billion price tag. Xcel gave up on the gas plant plan and instead proposed the Sherco Energy Hub, a 710-megawatt solar facility which includes a 600-megawatt storage system, the largest battery energy storage system in the Midwest. An Xcel spokesperson said, "Batteries help us store energy when it's inexpensive to produce and dispatch it when needed, allowing us to continue delivering reliable electricity to customers while keeping bills low." The site will also provide grazing for nearly 2,000 sheep, reducing mowing costs while also letting local sheep farmers expand their herds. Xcel also announced plans to close all its remaining coal fired plants in the region. Sherco's solar plant will start producing electricity in 2026.

Sherco shows how Greentech's reduction in the cost

of energy and facilitation of battery storage opens the door for communities and governments to demand that fossil fuels be replaced by renewable energy. As climate journalist Tina Casey commented on CleanTechnica, the Sherco facility "demonstrates how community efforts and basic economics can push the needle on the energy transition."

Manchester Public Schools is a suburban school district outside of Hartford CT with 17 schools, four of which are Title I schools serving low-income communities. While the state had many solar programs, by 2020 private solar developers had concluded that Manchester would "never do a project." But in 2022, with support from the Connecticut Green Bank, solar panels were installed at 6 of Manchester's 17 public schools, adding 1.6 MW to the town's solar energy capacity. Now Manchester has three net-zero energy school buildings and is adopting cutting-edge technologies like ground source heat pumps. Manchester also has additional ongoing investments in net-zero buildings, including a new library. Solar installations are projected to save the Town of Manchester approximately \$100,000 annually. Beyond financial savings, these renewable energy systems are now valuable educational tools, reportedly sparking curiosity and environmental awareness among students.

In Seattle, drayage trucks contribute significantly to air pollution, disproportionately impacting low-income communities along freight corridors in the Duwamish Valley. According to Seattle's then-mayor Bruce Harrell, "Seattle's port is the backbone of our economy, but diesel drayage trucks that transport goods are some of the Duwamish Valley neighborhoods' heaviest polluters." Seattle has now developed a Heavy Duty Electric Trucks Pilot to provide incentives for purchasing electric drayage trucks. The program results in part from interviews conducted with drayage truck drivers who pointed out electric trucks were too expensive for them to buy. The drivers'



insights helped shape a new approach that, according to the city's Office of Sustainability and Environment, "centers equity to ensure a just transition for truck drivers, particularly independent owner-operators, who are critical to our region's supply chain and who bear disproportionate environmental and economic burdens."

Funding for the program comes from Seattle's JumpStart Payroll Expense Tax on extremely high salaries. The funding was recommended by Seattle's Green New Deal Oversight Board, which develops budget and policy recommendations for environmental initiatives in partnership with communities. Said then-Mayor Harrell, "Through the Heavy Duty Electric Trucks Pilot, we're investing in the technology that will ultimately reduce emissions in frontline communities while also supporting drivers to ensure they have real opportunities in the zero-emission economy." The trucks are expected to be in operation by the end of 2026.

The drayage truck program is only one small component of Seattle's much broader community participation climate effort. For example, Greenspace, Seattle's Office of Sustainability & Environment, partnered with Seattle's Green New Deal Oversight Board, the Martin Luther King Jr. County Labor Council (MLK Labor), and the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle to pilot "climate community assemblies" that

included union members and workers, community members, and social justice and youth advocates to make decisions, influence government, and shape solutions. The Urban League's neighborhood-based assembly focused on climate preparedness for BIPOC and working-class community members. MLK Labor, a labor council representing more than 100,000 workers in King County, led a worker assembly focused on workplace safety, green job standards, and improving public infrastructure to be ready for extreme weather. A follow-on project will turn ideas developed by the assemblies into policies for the city. And future community assemblies will help shape Seattle's Climate Action Plan Update.

On the site of an abandoned psychiatric hospital in Southeast Washington, DC, a renewable energy project called Sycamore & Oak has just opened a "micro-grid" — a self-contained system that includes energy generation and consumption. Solar panels provide electricity during daylight hours and charge batteries that continue to provide electricity during the night. The project's workforce development program trained a cohort of 10 local residents, most of whom are from Ward 8 where the project is located, for the installation. According to Jordan Taylor of GRID Alternatives, the nonprofit that provides solar installation and workforce development for the project, "Ultimately the Black-owned businesses that are supported by Sycamore & Oak get to receive lower-cost

power.” With fuel-based energy, “you’re emitting fossil fuel pollution into the local community,” which is “usually a low-income or disadvantaged community.” Taylor said that improvements in building science are not only better for the environment, but more cost-effective. These range from construction techniques to long-term energy usage over the lifetime of a building. “We can build the same structure for 90% less energy consumption. That’s both a cost-savings measure, as well as an energy efficiency and ecologically friendly one.”

In June 2026, Montgomery County MD announced 20 clean energy and energy efficiency projects. According to the Montgomery County Executive, the initiatives will “support practical projects that improve energy efficiency, strengthen emergency preparedness, and create more resilient public spaces, particularly in communities that are more vulnerable during extreme weather events. These investments will lower long-term operating costs for taxpayers while helping the County make meaningful progress toward our climate goals.”

The projects have a strong Greentech element. They include solar-powered backup systems at seven recreation centers; an agrivoltaics demonstration project at the Agricultural History Farm Park; and building automation system upgrades. County official David Dise says, “We are proudly advancing Montgomery County’s climate goals through innovative green energy solutions, including microgrids and resilience hubs.”

In the Bryant community in Ann Arbor MI, a quarter of residents spend more than a third of their incomes on utilities. After years of campaigning by local energy activists, 80% of Ann Arbor voters approved a new Sustainable Energy Utility. Operating alongside the existing privately-owned utility, the SEU will purchase, install, and maintain solar panels, battery backup systems, and other fossil-free energy infrastructure in residents’ homes. Those who choose to join pay a small monthly fee – far less than they save from their free solar installation. The city will own the facilities, but residents can sell whatever electricity they don’t need themselves. The plan will pilot in Bryant and spread to other locations in the

city. The SEU could also build its own microgrids, for example putting solar panels on schools to provide power during school hours and then supplying other SEU users when school is out. Derrick Miller of the nonprofit Community Action Network says, “When we started having a conversation about how to decarbonize the neighborhood about four years ago, it felt outlandish. Now, it doesn’t feel like anyone can stop us.”

Alongside the Cow Palace arena just south of San Francisco, construction has begun on the Cormorant Energy Storage Project, whose 250-megawatt capacity will make it the largest battery array in any major US urban area. It will supply energy to MCE, a community choice aggregator which purchases electricity on behalf of local residents as an alternative to for-profit utilities. The battery will bring \$73 million of property tax revenue to Daly City; the developer will donate \$1.5 million in community benefits.

These are only a small sampling of the Greentech-facilitated programs in American cities, but they illustrate the diversity of such initiatives. They show that Greentech-facilitated programs are in place in every region of the country, in jurisdictions large and small, and in localities blue and red, exhibiting myriad forms of both energy production and energy consumption.

Such initiatives have been retarded by Trump’s attempts to wipe out Greentech. They have also met resistance from local MAGA and NIMBY forces. But as these examples show, they are continuing to bloom.

These initiatives are significant for several reasons. They directly improve the lives of the people they affect and reduce the emission of climate-destroying greenhouse gases. They demonstrate concretely how climate protection, racial and economic justice, grassroots democracy, and quality of life can be combined. They show that people acting together can overcome Trump’s anti-Greentech counter-revolution. And looking forward, they lay a foundation for the triumph of a Greentech New Deal once Trumpian resistance is overcome.

10 Ways to Reduce Climate-Harming Subsidies in Germany

Thomas Klikauer

Seemingly, climate change and capitalism have an incompatible relationship. One seeks to preserve life on Earth while the other is a profit-driven system that delivers consumer goods but also exploits the Earth beyond its capacity to sustain it.

To make matters worse, the camouflaging ideology of the free market assures corporations that they can receive handsome subsidies from the government. These are monetary benefits and other assistance provided by a government – the German government, for example – to businesses, industries, companies and corporations.

According to one of Germany's main corporate lobbying associations – in this case represented by the Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft – Germany's state supports capitalism rather generously. In October 2025, the IWD noted that Germany's conservative Merz government plans to spend around €78 billion on financial aid and tax breaks for capital in 2026. €78bn looks like this: 78.000.000.000. It also means that everyone, including babies, hands over €1,000 to companies and corporate bosses.

Besides the sheer, almost unimaginable number of 78.000.000.000 Euro, the mere fact that a government hands out so much dosh to corporate bosses should make the apostles of the free market wonder: why? Why is this needed when the free market is supposed to do it all?

Yet, the state looks like an institution that is bitterly needed by free market capitalism. At least German capitalism has 78 billion very good reasons to love the state – while carrying on with its neoliberal ideology of a free market.

But wait, it gets worse. Not only does German

capital treat the state as a supermarket without a checkout, it also cashes in when it comes to subsidies – many of them will destroy Earth – and, most likely, us with it.

Given this level of state support for polluting industries, there is no reduction of environmentally harmful subsidies (EHS). The opposite is the case. There is a ramping up of such subsidies. Worse, environmentally damaging economic practices are still rewarded in Germany. Year after year, billions in incentives and subsidies flow into the consumption of oil, gas and coal. Still more worryingly, Germany's current conservative-social-democratic coalition government is significantly increasing the cash handed out to counterproductive industries.

To camouflage all this, terms like “sustainability” and “a sustainable future” have featured heavily in the Sunday speeches of German politicians – year after year. It might follow the proven propaganda model of repeating it often enough until everyone believes it! Mass marketing has known this since the 1930s.

Yet, neatly hidden behind the Orwellian double-speak of politicians, unsustainable and environmentally damaging economic practices continue to be “re”-warded, if not “a”-warded in Germany. In the past, such climate-damaging subsidies have, at times, amounted to as much as €65bn per year, as calculated by Germany's own Umweltbundesamt.

It gets worse. There are also hidden subsidies tucked away deep inside Germany's annual budget. For example, the figure above doesn't even include the billions of euros in agricultural subsidies received by Germany's monoculture-pushing

agro-monsters – via the EU budget. Here is the trick. Germany gives money to the EU. The EU returns it as subsidies to industrial-style farmers. And the German state can claim that the money came from the EU.

Meanwhile, many of these subsidies – hidden or otherwise – are environmentally harmful. In 2026, Germany's conservative government implemented measures that “promote” (!) oil and gas consumption. The generous state support for capital amounted to a whopping eleven billion euros (\$12.5bn), according to calculations by Germany's Forum Ökologisch-Soziale Marktwirtschaft (FÖS). And where is the free market in all this? Nowhere to be seen. It only turns up when ideological justifications are needed.

Germany's state subsidies include, for example, the abolished gas storage levy [Gasspeicherumlage]. This is a zero-sum game. The government loses €3bn. Companies cash in. Similarly, the fuel discount to limit the impact of oil corporations cranking up prices in the wake of the USA's attack on Iran, which was limited to two months, “cost” the federal government €1.6 billion. This supports petrol cars – not electric cars. Yet, what is framed as a “cost” actually lowers the government's tax revenue – less money for hospitals, roads, schools etc.

With goodies like these handed out to petro-guzzling motorists and corporations, no wonder the coalition is under considerable pressure to close the gaps in its budget planning. Merz's conservative coalition is desperately searching for ways to save money – usually health and education, not the military – while, simultaneously, squandering billions on ever more climate-damaging subsidies generously handed over to businesses. This is not only a haphazard and directionless fiscal policy, it is also extremely damaging to the environment.

Meanwhile, the USA-Iran war and the resulting price shocks for oil and gas are causing clean alternatives like heat pumps, electric cars and public transportation to boom in Germany.

These are huge opportunities to make Germans less dependent on oil and gas.

The German government should utilise this momentum by fostering a smart combination of financial incentives and targeted support for those hardest hit, instead of artificially making oil and gas cheaper. The money for this is available if harmful subsidies like the increased commuter allowance or exemptions for agricultural diesel are eliminated. This is not to be expected from a government that calls itself conservative but has next to no interest in conserving the environment.

This comes despite the fact that – as early as 2016 – all seven major industrialized nations (the G7) decided in Japan to reduce harmful subsidies, such as those for coal, oil, and gas. Above all, they set a date for phasing out subsidies. This was a minor sensation. The G7's 2016 final declaration said: we remain committed to eliminating inefficient subsidies for fossil fuels and encourage all countries to follow our lead by 2025.

In 2025, it was time to know what had happened since then. Is Germany – together with other G7 countries – on track to fulfil the G7 promise? The devastating answer is: they are not. This is supported by a study of the Forum Ökologisch-Soziale Marktwirtschaft (FÖS).

The opposite is the case. These were “empty promises.” In fact, the total amount of fossil fuel subsidies has increased by 15% since 2016. This is the exact opposite of the G7's promise to eliminate inefficient subsidies for fossil fuels.

It gets worse as the underlying figures from the – otherwise rather neoliberal – International Monetary Fund recorded \$1.4 trillion of subsidies for 2023 alone. In other words, despite or perhaps because of the G7's 2016 promise, the seven richest countries hand over cash to polluting industries – big time.

Even more worryingly. In Germany, tax breaks



for fossil fuels increased by a staggering 49% during this period – paying half the tax they paid before. This cranks up pollution, moving us ever faster towards what Mr Guterres (UN) calls “climate hell”.

On the way to climate hell, Germany’s conservative government has, in the course of its first year in office, adopted a number of environmentally damaging subsidies and incentives amounting to around €11 billion in the year 2026. In the face of scarce public resources, this measure will cause damage to Germany’s climate policy.

In spite of numerous briefings, there has been insufficient progress in the reform of environmentally harmful subsidies. In many cases, these have a regressive structure. They disproportionately favour wealthy households.

At the same time, their removal would open up considerable potential for a social (less inequality creating) and climate (less damaging to the environment) consolidation directed towards a balanced transition towards a socially acceptable and sustainable future.

In view of the foreseeable funding gaps and savings constraints, Germany's next budget is currently under intensive discussion by the government with the goal of either targeting subsidies even better or, alternatively, a lawnmower-style reduction [Rasenmäher-Ansatz] – a tiny reduction of subsidies for each and every company.

Worse, the CDU-SPD agreement for their coalition government contains a number of measures to escalate already existing environmentally harmful subsidies or even to expand them. Since taking office, the government has already pushed several such projects. This includes the re-introduction of an agricultural diesel subsidy; the expansion of the commuter tax that supports car use; the reduction in the air transport tax; and additional tax relief for energy companies and energy-intensive companies. Germany's government has already adopted three key measures that are environmentally damaging and harmful to the climate:

1. Increases or the introduction of direct financial assistance to lower energy costs for companies.
2. Increases or the introduction of tax reductions for companies.
3. Withdrawals or reductions of existing (or already adopted) instruments to reduce environmental costs for companies.

Interestingly, the government uses the word "Umweltkosten", indicating that it sees the environment [Umwelt] merely as a cost [Kosten]. This further implies, as it does in corporate financing, a reduction of such costs. This is done in a two-step process. Firstly, the environment is reduced to a cost and secondly this "cost" is reduced.

As mentioned, the financial impact of all this for the year 2026 is around €11 billion. Worse, Germany's conservative government spends more money on subsidies than the €10 billion it spends on investing in climate protection and into what

Germans call the "Klima- und Transformationsfonds (KTF)" – funding the transition towards a sustainable future. Seemingly, this is something of a low priority for the Merz government.

If one divides Germany's corporate subsidies into companies engaged in transportation, energy companies, manufacturing industry and agriculture, the biggest support goes to energy corporations (€6bn). This is followed by transport (€3bn), manufacturing (€2.2bn), and agriculture (€320 million).

Despite all these rather grim illustrations, there are, however, ten avenues to reduce the harmful impact of state subsidies for German corporations. The first three measures alone would save the German government approximately 73 million tons of CO₂ and €18 billion in lost taxes annually. Ranked according to where the greatest tax savings could be achieved, the list starts with:

1. The elimination of the tax exemption for kerosene used to fuel aircrafts.
2. The reduction of electricity subsidies for industry.
3. The abolition of tax breaks for polluting electricity generation.
4. No VAT exemptions for international flights.
5. Cancellation of the commuter allowance that pushes petrol cars.
6. A reduction of the VAT on animal products (for example, cow's milk is taxed at 7% in Germany while oat milk is taxed at 19%).
7. The abolition of the diesel tax privilege that allows diesel vehicles to be refuelled more cheaply.
8. Cutting down on subsidies for company car tax breaks.
9. Eliminating tax breaks for polluting energy industries.
10. Ending tax breaks for agricultural diesel.

International Climate Negotiations at a Cross Road

Robin Hahnel

It is easy to conclude that thirty years of intransigence by more developed countries doom hopes of any effective international agreement, as many climate activists have done. But I believe it is premature to throw in the towel on international negotiations, not only because if they are not eventually successful, we will not avoid cataclysmic climate change, but also because careful examination reveals a silver lining in the pledges countries have already made.

However, let me begin by acknowledging that it is certainly possible to be discouraged by the failure of every more developed country to pledge to do its fair share of greenhouse gas emission reductions given their greater responsibility for having created the problem and their greater capacity to contribute toward its solution, as was once again demonstrated at the latest COP 30 in Brazil. Nor, as justified as their frustration is, unfortunately in my opinion the recent meeting of delegates from less developed countries in Santa Marta Colombia failed to agree on a plan likely to break the deadlock.

Global emission reductions

Climate Scientists have told us in no uncertain terms that unless global carbon emissions are reduced by at least 80% by 2050, and, if possible, by even more, humanity is taking a risk no sane person would take. It's that simple. So why isn't the solution simply to hold every country responsible for reducing its national emissions by the same percentage, i.e. by at least 80% by 2050?

National "Fair Shares"

Beginning in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and at every COP meeting since, those assembled have acknowl-

edged the principle that countries' responsibilities for emission reductions should be guided by different responsibilities for having caused the problem, and different capabilities for contributing to its solution, or what is referred to as common but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities, or CBDRC. However, for decades nobody knew how to make the principle of common but differentiated responsibility operational, that is how to calculate national fair shares of emission reductions. Fortunately, the intellectual problem of how to measure differential responsibility and capability has now been solved by several research groups, and anyone can now use EcoEquity's Climate Equity Reference Project calculator, <https://calculator.climateequityreference.org/>, to see if a country is pledging to do its fair share of emission reductions.

When using the calculator one must choose: (1) a "level of ambition," i.e. how much to reduce global emissions, (2) how much weight to put on "responsibility" vs. "capability," (3) what year to begin when calculating countries' "historic responsibilities," and (4) a subsistence income level below which people are not expected to contribute to solving climate change until they have met their minimal economic needs. For the calculations below I chose to use the 1.5 degrees Celsius "standard pathway" for "ambition," 50% weights for both "responsibility" and "capability," 1990 as the year to start measuring historic emissions, and a minimal subsistence income of \$7,500 per year. If one chooses different weights results will differ, but only rarely will results for a country differ significantly for different choices for weights because when countries began to develop economically, and how developed they now are, not surprisingly turns out to be highly correlated.

What do we find?

- The good news is that by 2022 almost every less developed country had already pledged to reduce its emissions by what it is fair to expect them to do given their lower levels of responsibility and capability. And if all countries would do likewise, we would be within reach of an effective and equitable international climate agreement.
- The bad news is that no more developed country has yet to pledge to do its fair share given their higher levels of responsibility and capability.

For example, the latest United States' pledge was 16.1 metric tons per capita below its fair share, and the European Union's pledge was 9.0 metric tons per capita below its fair share. In contrast, South Africa's pledge was 0.4 metric tons per capita above its fair share. Nigeria's pledge was 0.4 metric tons per capita above its fair share. Senegal's pledge was 0.1 metric tons per capita above its fair share. Kenya's pledge was 0.5 metric tons per capita above its fair share. Mozambique's pledge was 0.5 metric tons per capita above its fair share. And Egypt's pledge was only 0.1 metric tons per capita below its fair share.

A Silver Lining

However, a careful examination of more developed country pledges reveals that many more developed countries have already pledged to reduce their domestic emissions sufficiently. As readers can verify for themselves using the Climate Equity Calculator, on three occasions, but only when a Democrat was in the White House, the US has pledged to reduce emissions by amounts that are what it can be reasonably expected to accomplish domestically. What the US has failed to do, however, is to pledge to pay for additional reductions the US should take responsibility for which could be done more cheaply elsewhere. Moreover, this is a common pattern for most MDCs. Put differently, the problem is that more developed countries' greater responsibility

and capability require them to pay for considerably more emission reduction than they can accomplish reasonably cheaply through domestic reductions.

But that need not mean "game over." Fortunately, more developed countries can make up for the remainder of their fair share of reductions at a reasonable cost if emission sources in more developed countries are allowed to buy "certified emission reduction credits," or CERs, from sources in less developed countries as I explain below. For example, a recent study by the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts estimates the cost of both domestic reductions and credits purchased for reductions elsewhere for the US to do its fair share would be roughly 1.5% of US GDP... which is far less than the 3.5% of GDP the US currently spends on our military.

How to Police an International Carbon Market

I am painfully aware that "carbon markets" have become a virtual bugaboo among climate activists. Nothing disgusts many climate activists more than the idea of selling the right to pollute, and stories of bogus carbon credits awarded in the European Union as well as in the Clean Development Mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol are legion. But the hard truth is this:

It is all but impossible to reduce the cost of deep developed country reductions to levels their governments will accept without permitting sources in more developed countries to purchase reduction credits from sources in less developed countries for less than those reductions would cost them to do domestically.

Fortunately, there is a way to insulate buying and selling CERs from the kinds of loopholes and shenanigans that have plagued ill-designed programs to date. This is all countries need to agree to:

(1) **If they wish** any country government should be allowed to certify emission reduction credits for emitters within its national territory who apply for credits to sell.

(2) When calculating whether a country has complied with its national pledge to reduce emissions, any emission reduction credits purchased by anyone within the country will be **added** to the country's national emission allowance, and any emission reduction credits sold by anyone within the country will be **subtracted** from the country's national emission allowance.

A country's allowance sets a limit on its national emissions, and when set according to differential responsibility and capability allowances will be more restrictive the more developed a country is. Under my proposal a country can meet its emissions cap in two ways:

1. Sources of emissions within the country can reduce their emissions.
2. Or they can pay for reductions to be done elsewhere by purchasing certified emission reduction credits.

When sources in a country buy emission reduction credits this allows the country to emit more domestically than the emission cap the international agreement assigned to the country. When sources in a country sell emission reduction credits this requires the country to emit less domestically than the emission cap the international agreement assigned the country. Because it is generally cheaper for sources in lesser developed countries to reduce their emissions than it is for sources in more developed countries to do so, sources in lesser developed countries would generally be sellers of emission reduction credits and sources in more developed countries would generally be buyers of emission reduction credits under my proposal.

Why This Can Work

But why would this prevent the problem of bogus certification and phantom reductions critics have complained so much about in the past with good reason? It is difficult to determine how many credits to award an applicant for reductions that are additional to what would have occurred in any case. This requires not only verifying if the emission

reduction credits which an applicant applies for are real, and not fictitious, which is hard enough for a certification agency to do. It also requires a certification agency to estimate what would have happened in any case, i.e. had the applicant for the credits done nothing. In other words, the certification agency must determine if the reductions are "additional" to what would have happened in any case. As anyone working in the field knows, judging "additionality" is even more difficult than deciding if the reductions an applicant for certification claims a project will yield are realistic and not over exaggerated.

It is because these two tasks are difficult and subject to challenge, and because there are clearly cases where "excessive" and even "bogus" credits have been awarded in various programs to date, that critics have understandably soured on carbon markets. However, while it is admittedly difficult to decide how many credits a particular project deserves, perhaps surprisingly it is relatively easy to measure actual annual national emissions, which must be measured in any case to determine if a country is in compliance with any international agreement. Which brings us to the crucial point:

If a country government makes a mistake and awards more credits than it should, **as long as national emissions are capped and compliance with national emissions are enforced**, any mistake in awarding credits **cannot** undermine **global** reductions. Instead, the erroneous awarding of credits only harms others within the country who will have to make up the difference if the country's certifying agency awards excessive, or bogus credits.

In other words, as long as any credits sold abroad are added to the amount of emissions a country is required to reduce, and any credits purchased from abroad are subtracted from the amount of emissions a country is required to reduce; global emissions reductions will be exactly what the international agreement called for. Because this can be difficult to wrap one's mind around, in chapter 14 of my book, *Climate Change Policy: The Eleventh Hour*, I provide an example to explain how it would

work in which I assume that sources applying for credits may well try to cheat, and government agencies granting credits may well collude with cheaters. To be clear, my proposal does not prevent crimes from being committed, nor eliminate victims. When emitters in less developed countries cheat, and when agencies in less developed countries either make honest mistakes when carrying out what is admittedly a difficult task – awarding reduction credits accurately – or conspire with cheaters, there are victims! But the victims are whoever must reduce emissions by more than they should have had to inside the country where bogus credits are awarded. In short, my proposal does not prevent mistakes from being made, nor eliminate victims. What it does is change who those victims are.

Because victims of cheating are innocent parties I recommend that countries should be allowed to certify emission reduction credits for sale only if they wish to do so. And I point out that countries would be well advised to consider whether they are up to this difficult task. As I explain, it is hard to judge how many credits should be awarded for a project. And there are perverse incentives for applicants and officials who evaluate proposals to cheat. And, when bogus credits are awarded, this will impose hardships on others inside the country, who must then reduce emissions more than they should have had to. So, if a country government does not feel up to this task, it should not certify credits for sale.

However, because it would be highly advantageous for emitters in less developed countries with low reduction costs to sell legitimate reduction credits for more than the emission reductions would cost them to emitters in more developed countries with high reduction costs, it would be very helpful if the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) offered to provide technical assistance to any government in a less developed country which asks for help to make their certification process as competent as can be hoped for. Under the Kyoto Protocol the executive board of the Clean Development Mechanism developed considerable expertise in this kind of work. While the absence of caps on

less developed country emissions under Kyoto was a fatal flaw, and the backlog of applications also caused problems which critics jumped all over; in many ways the historical record of the Clean Development Mechanism suggests that the IPPC could be of great help to less developed countries asking for its technical assistance in evaluating applications for reduction credits.³

A Hypothetical Example to Explain How This Works

Suppose there is an electric utility in the US. Suppose laws in the US have already induced the US utility to shift from coal to natural gas to reduce its carbon emissions by 1 gigaton. But now US law requires the US utility to reduce its emissions by an additional gigaton, and reducing this second gigaton will be considerably more expensive than reducing the first gigaton was. Suppose there is also an electric utility in India which is still producing all its electricity by burning low grade coal. And suppose that by substituting natural gas for some of the low-grade coal it is burning, it can reduce its emissions by 1 gigaton comparatively cheaply.

If the utility in the US does not reduce the second gigaton domestically but instead buys emission reduction credits for 1 gigaton from the utility in India, and the utility in India truly does reduce its emissions by 1 gigaton, global carbon emissions have been reduced by 1 gigaton. They were simply reduced in India, where they were cheaper to reduce, rather than in the US, where it would have been more expensive to reduce them. And the price the US utility pays the utility in India for 1 gigaton of emission reduction credits simply divides this “efficiency gain” from relocating them from the US to India between the two utilities. At least this is how we economists teach it in our environmental economics classes. But would it really work this way? Let me walk readers through a worst-case scenario where actors with an incentive to cheat get away with cheating — the nightmare scenario that keeps critics of carbon markets awake at night. What if the certifying agency in India — say India’s Environmental Protection Agency, or EPA — does a

terrible job of judging whether the emission reduction credits the electric utility in India is applying to have approved are real? What if the utility in India lies about making reductions? What if it claims it reduced its emissions by 1 gigaton, but in truth it did not reduce its emissions at all — it goes right on producing all its electricity by burning low grade coal and therefore emitting the same large amount of greenhouse gases as before. However, assume the EPA in India certifies that the Indian utility did really reduce its emissions by 1 gigaton, and awards it credits for 1 gigaton. This might be because the India EPA made an honest mistake. As explained above, it is often not easy to ascertain how much emissions will be reduced, much less how much more they will be reduced than they would have been reduced in any case. Or it could be that the India EPA was bamboozled by the India utility's clever misrepresentation. Or it could be that the officials working for India's EPA were corrupt, and in cahoots with the utility, and knew they were awarding bogus credits, but did so because the utility bribed them. The important point is that there is clearly what economists call a perverse incentive for the Indian utility to try to cheat, and also a perverse incentive for corrupt officials at the Indian EPA to co-conspire... because the Indian utility is going to get paid for the credits it will sell, and in my example of a worst case scenario, the Indian utility has incurred no expense at all. What will happen?

We have no real reduction of 1 gigaton of greenhouse gas emissions by the utility in India, which continues to burn very low-grade coal just as before. But that utility in India is awarded credits for 1 gigaton by India's EPA... which the Indian utility sells to the utility in the US... which satisfies its obligation to reduce its emissions by an additional 1 gigaton by turning in the credits for 1 gigaton of reductions it purchased from the utility in India to the US EPA. What is the result?

One gigaton which the US utility would have had to reduce in the US if there were no credits to be purchased is now no longer reduced in the US. But there is no reduction in India, or at least no reduction which would not have taken place in any case.

At this point in the analysis, it looks like the nightmare critics of international carbon trading fear and loath, who therefore conclude: "You see? We're now 1 gigaton of greenhouse gas reduction short. All of us fighting to prevent climate change, and all who suffer when we fail to do so, have been cheated." However — and this is the key feature of my proposal — despite first appearances, this bogus emission reduction credit scam will not diminish global reductions one iota under my proposal. And this is why: The country of India is still responsible for whatever reductions it was responsible for under the treaty.

It is true that India is a less developed country with low responsibility and capability, so India's fair share of reductions is low compared to the responsibilities and capabilities of more developed countries like the US. But under the treaty India is still responsible for whatever reductions its responsibility and capability warrant. And when the India EPA certifies 1 gigaton of reductions for the utility in India to sell, now India is responsible for 1 gigaton more than India would have been responsible for had the India EPA not certified the 1 gigaton of bogus credits. Of course, if the reduction by the utility in India had been real, then the real reduction would exactly make up for the additional responsibility. But there was no real reduction. So, what will happen under the treaty I propose?

India now must come up with 1 gigaton of reductions it would otherwise not have had to achieve to meet its treaty obligations. Put differently, when the treaty is enforced, India will be found in non-compliance unless someone else in India reduces emissions by 1 gigaton, that is, 1 gigaton of reductions which someone else in India would not have had to reduce had the bogus credits not been certified by India's EPA and sold to the utility in the US.

In sum: If there is no cheating of course everything works out for the best. The global cost of achieving reductions is reduced by locating them where they cost the least, and both the utility in the US and the utility in India are better off financially than had the utility in the US not been permitted to buy credits from the utility in India. In the second scenario,

however, either an honest mistake was made by the India EPA, or crimes were committed by the utility in India who misrepresented their reductions, and/or corrupt officials in India's EPA who approved bogus credits. And whether it was an honest mistake or a crime, there are victims! **But the victims are whoever in India ends up having to reduce emissions by 1 gigaton more than they otherwise would have had to.** The International community is not harmed by the crime. Nobody outside India is harmed by the crime. What my proposal does is immunize or insulate everyone outside India from becoming victims of either honest mistakes or cheating by an Indian utility and perhaps corrupt officials working for the India EPA.

As should now be clear, my proposal does not prevent crimes from being committed, nor eliminate victims. When emitters in less developed countries cheat, and when EPAs in less developed countries either make honest mistakes when carrying out what is admittedly a difficult task – awarding reduction credits accurately – or conspire with cheaters, there are victims! But the victims are whoever must reduce emissions by more than they should have had to inside India.

Because victims of cheating are innocent parties inside India is why I recommend that countries should be allowed to certify emission reduction credits for sale, only if they wish, or choose to do so. Countries would be well advised to consider whether they are up to a difficult task. As explained, it is hard to judge how many credits to award for a project. And there are perverse incentives for applicants and officials who evaluate proposals to cheat. And, when bogus credits are awarded, this will impose hardships on others inside the country, who must then reduce emissions more than they should have had to. So, if a country's government does not feel up to this task, they should not certify credits for sale.

However, because it would be highly advantageous for emitters in less developed countries with low reduction costs to sell legitimate reduction credits for more than the emission reductions would cost them to emitters in more developed countries with

high reduction costs, it would be very helpful if the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) offered to provide technical assistance to any government in a less developed country which asks for help to make their certification process as competent as can be hoped for. Under the Kyoto Protocol the executive board of the Clean Development Mechanism developed considerable expertise in this kind of work. While the absence of caps on less developed country emissions under Kyoto was a fatal flaw, and the backlog of applications also caused problems which critics jumped all over; in many ways the historical record of the Clean Development Mechanism suggests that the IPCC could be of great help to less developed countries asking for its technical assistance in evaluating applications for reduction credits.⁴

Conclusion

For all the reasons critics have pointed out it is often very difficult to make an honest assessment of how much and when any project will reduce carbon emissions. Moreover, there is every reason to assume there will be two kinds of dishonest actors: (1) Applicants who know full well their project will not reduce emissions by as much as they claim it will. And (2) officials with the power to award credits who can be induced to award more than they know are deserved in exchange for a bribe from the applicant. And finally, whether mistakes are honest or due to corruption, there will be victims! My proposal does not prevent mistakes from being made, nor eliminate victims. What it does is reduce the cost of taking responsibility for their "fair share" of global emission reductions for MDCs, and change who mistakes and cheating victimizes. When bogus credits are sold by emitters in a country whose national emissions are capped, the victims will not be, indeed cannot be those who suffer everywhere in the world from climate change, because the country's emissions are capped and therefore are not increased. Instead, the victims are others within the country which is awarding bogus emission credits who must make up the difference so the country's national emissions will still be under its national cap.

What the Saharan Ksours Can Teach an Overheated World

El Habib Ben Amara

That Friday in the southwestern Algerian Sahara was scorching hot, with temperatures soaring well above 40°C. The horizon vibrated under the weight of the sun. It wasn't only hot — it was suffocating, the air pressing down like something solid. Walking felt like walking into a blowtorch held at arm's length, the heat arriving on your skin before you'd even taken the next step. My eyes stung. Every breath took a little more effort than the last, as if the air itself had thickened.

I had friends with me that day, and I'd brought them out into that heat on purpose. I grew up in this ksar — I know what's waiting a few hundred meters ahead, even if they don't.

Before reaching the narrow alleys of the ksar, we passed through a gate, then a porch, into the open square where the village assembly — the djemaa — has always gathered to deliberate. Several alleys begin from that square, branching off in different directions.

The world changed. Long before stepping inside a house, we were greeted by a gentle, refreshing coolness. It was not the harsh, artificial chill of an air conditioner, but a soft, living freshness that seemed to embrace us naturally and effortlessly. One of my friends actually said something — I don't remember the words, just the tone, somewhere between confusion and relief. I've seen that reaction before, and it still doesn't get old.

This was no accident. It was the result of centuries of accumulated wisdom — a remarkable mastery of architecture, urban planning, and climate adaptation developed by the inhabitants of the Sahara. In places like Taghit, every street, wall, courtyard, and opening was designed with a deep, intuitive understanding of sun, wind, shade, and water.

The question we must ask ourselves today is simple yet devastating: How did modern civilization, with all its technological supremacy, lose the ability to achieve what traditional builders did with earth and wind alone?

The Genius of Intelligent Design vs. The Brutality of Machinery

The Saharan ksour achieved thermal comfort without consuming a single watt of electricity. They relied entirely on intelligent design and a profound respect for the local environment. The inhabitants did not fight the climate; they danced with it.

- **The Geometry of Shade:** The narrow, winding alleys were intentionally built to minimize direct exposure to the fierce desert sun, ensuring that walls shaded one another throughout the day.
- **Thermal Inertia:** Thick earthen (adobe) walls absorbed the brutal heat during the day and released it slowly at night when the desert temperatures dropped, regulating the indoor climate naturally.
- **Microclimatic Alliances:** Buildings were arranged to channel cooling air currents through the settlement, while nearby palm groves further moderated temperatures, creating a beneficial microclimate that extended from the oasis directly into the heart of the ksar.

But the ksar on its own only tells half the story. You cannot really understand it without standing it next to the palm grove, because they were never two separate things — they are one system wearing two different shapes. The ksar is dense, vertical, closed: built to keep heat out. The palmeraie is open, layered, breathing: a place that pulls water up



out of the ground and releases it back into the air, palm by palm, hour by hour. The ksar shelters the body. The palmeraie feeds the air the ksar depends on. Neither one explains the coolness alone. I grew up walking between the two without ever thinking of them as separate — the ksar was where we lived, the palmeraie was where the water was, and the air moved between them like it belonged to both.

A History That Still Surprises Me

There is a part of this story that has nothing to do with the ksar itself, and yet I think about it often.

When the French colonial administration arrived in this region, they saw what the builders of Taghit, Béchar, and Kenadsa had achieved — and for a while, they actually tried to imitate it. Walk through the older administrative quarters of Béchar or Kenadsa today and you will find colonial-era government buildings built in adobe, the same earth brick,

the same material. But they could not leave it alone. They finished it with a straightedge and a square, gave it a European symmetry, an imported austerity — a building that borrowed the material and missed the spirit. It copied the brick and ignored the wisdom that shaped it, and the result still sits oddly today against the ksar's own sobriety. I remember being struck, the first time I really looked at these buildings, that the colonial administration had recognized something true about adobe — and still gotten it wrong.

I want to be careful here, because I have no interest in any apology for colonialism, and I won't have this read as one. But the fact remains, and it is worth saying plainly: in terms of actually adapting to this desert's climate, the generations of architects and urban planners who came after that period got it wrong, for decades, and at some level, they know it. Somewhere along the way, the idea took hold that a beautiful façade has to be glass and alumi-

num panel, even if what sits behind it is an oven by two in the afternoon. Add to that the very mundane interests of the concrete lobby — an entire industry with no reason to celebrate a technique that requires no cement, no steel, nothing imported — and it becomes easier to understand why earth construction was pushed aside. Not because it stopped working. Because nobody profited from it working.

Earth never betrayed anyone. It is the oldest building material humans have ever had, and it has sheltered us since the beginning without asking anything in return. Hassan Fathy understood this with painful clarity in the middle of the last century, when he tried to bring mud-brick construction back to Egyptian villages and ran into a wall of contempt — from officials, from contractors, from people who had been taught that progress meant glass and concrete and anything that glittered. He spent a career proving that earth could be dignified, and watched the establishment refuse to believe him anyway.

I think about that contempt for earth sometimes, and it strikes me as a strange thing for any of us to carry, given where this all ends regardless. We spend our lives building further and further away from the ground — glass towers, steel frames, anything that announces we have left the dirt behind. And then it is the dirt that takes us back, in the end, along with the worms.

The Vicious Cycle of Modern “Cooling”

Today, despite our advanced technologies, many modern architects and urban planners struggle to reproduce such an achievement. We build cities that are increasingly dependent on mechanical air conditioning, yet we utterly fail to create comfortable outdoor spaces.

The paradox is striking: modern cooling systems may make buildings habitable, but they do so by transferring heat from the interior to the exterior. Every air conditioner cools a room by expelling even more heat into the surrounding environment. In many hot cities, thousands of air-conditioning

units operate simultaneously, warming streets and public spaces and contributing to the catastrophic urban heat island effect.

We consume vast amounts of energy to correct problems that traditional builders solved through design alone.

The contrast is a critique of our modern lifestyle. The ksour created cool public spaces before one even entered a building, fostering community and outdoor life. Modern cities, by comparison, offer air-conditioned interiors surrounded by overheated, hostile streets and plazas. The result is a vicious cycle: hotter outdoor environments increase the demand for mechanical cooling, which in turn releases more heat outdoors.

A Blueprint for the Future, Not Nostalgia

The ksour of southern Algeria are therefore much more than historical monuments or tourist attractions. They are living lessons in bioclimatic architecture and sustainable urbanism. They remind us that our ancestors possessed a sophisticated, scientific understanding of environmental design — one that modern society has too often neglected, marginalized, or forgotten under the guise of “progress.”

Standing in the shaded alleys of Taghit on a day when the desert temperature exceeds 40°C, one cannot help but wonder: how did we abandon such knowledge? How did we trade self-sufficient harmony for energetic dependency?

And perhaps more importantly, how can we recover and adapt this wisdom to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century?

The answer to climate change and rising energy costs may lie not in ever more powerful air conditioners, but in rediscovering the principles that made the ksour of Taghit so comfortable, resilient, and harmonious with their environment in the first place. These ancient settlements offer something far more valuable than nostalgia: they offer a blueprint for a livable future.

How Agave Agroforestry Can Restore Drylands and Strengthen Climate Resilience

Ronnie Cummins, Dada Maheshvarananda

Sixty to seventy percent of Mexico's terrain is classified as arid or semiarid desert, typically with no rain for eight to nine months a year. La pipa, the water truck, brings enough water to supply farms for a day or two at most. Meanwhile, 86 percent of Mexican farmers lack a well and are unlikely to have one. In arid and semiarid drylands, deep irrigation wells are very expensive, water rights are hard to obtain, and many, if not most, underground aquifers are overexploited. This makes it very difficult to provide livestock with forage during the dry season.

Purchasing hay and alfalfa is expensive, especially given the low-to-nonexistent market for livestock products produced by subsistence farmers. Many traditional dryland farmers are still planting corn at the beginning of the rainy season—in June or July—but the lack of a dependable irrigation system, droughts, and unpredictable rainfall mean that the country doesn't even get mature mazorcas or corncobs most years. The harvest, usually limited to corn stalks or rastrojo, can be fed to animals during the dry season, but it requires considerable work and expense for what is ultimately a low-quality feed supplement.

Typically, only large landowners or agro-export farms have irrigation wells, while smaller farms must rely mostly on rainfall. In addition to the high costs of buying water rights and drilling down 650 feet or more to hit water, most aquifers in the regional La Independencia watershed are depleted and/or contaminated with heavy metals.

In the mid-2010s, the 75-acre Vía Orgánica Agroecology Center and research farm prided itself on maintaining its greenhouses and gardens, pastures, and wooded nature refuge area without a well. However, after expanding the market gardens and milpa (corn, beans, and squash) and starting to reforest the land, the organization began spending several thousand

dollars a week during the dry season on water truck deliveries just to stay afloat. Geographers and climate scientists have described the prolonged drying of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico as a climate-driven “megadrought,” with some studies concluding the region is experiencing its driest conditions in at least 1,200 years.

The costs of organic grain (for the poultry and pigs) and alfalfa and hay (for the other animals) during the long dry season are unsustainable. It has led many farmers in our area to largely abandon their corn fields or milpas. Their main agricultural pursuit is to put their routinely malnourished animals out to fend for themselves on the sparse vegetation of their shared (eroded and badly overgrazed) communal rangelands (ejidos).

More than half of Mexico's 450-million-acre land base is composed of communally owned ejidos, a transformation that occurred after the Mexican Revolution of 1910–1920, when most of the large colonial plantations or estates were broken up and distributed among the nation's small farmer communities. Most of Mexico's 28,000 ejidos, however, are situated on semiarid and arid lands—deforested, eroded, and overgrazed, usually with no year-round water sources or irrigation. Overgrazing on the brittle lands has created a vicious cycle of degradation—fewer plants, less forage, high runoff and low water retention, soil erosion, and fewer vital minerals—amplified by climate change.

Solution to the Animal Feed Problem

A chance meeting between Ronnie Cummins and Dr. Juan Frias, a retired university professor and a noted expert on agaves and mesquite trees, however, led to a conversation about how the agave plant could be the solution to all the problems being faced by farmers in Mexico and could be used to regenerate agricultural

soils, reduce erosion, and improve water capture.

“Ronnie,” Frias asked, “have you ever heard of pruning and finely chopping up the pencas of these maguey (agaves)? With a machine, you can shred them up finely, and then after fermenting the pencas anaerobically in closed containers, you can use the fermented agave silage as animal feed.” Rather surprised to hear this, Cummins replied that he had not.

Frias told Cummins about a goat and lamb ranch in San Luis de la Paz, called Hacienda Zamarripa, where the Flores González brothers have been planting and intercropping agaves and mesquite trees for over a decade, reforesting the parched agostadero (rangeland) and producing tons of fermented agave silage, which they feed to their animals as a primary forage. Their animals “survive and thrive solely on a diet of fermented agave and their mothers’ milk, while 80 percent of the adult animals’ diets are supplied by the fermented leaves of the agave.”

Frias further explained that the production costs of this fermented agave are about 1 peso (5 cents) per kilo (2.2 pounds), making it the cheapest animal silage in Mexico, if not the world. The use of agave forage as a major part of the animals’ diets, Frias explained, can eliminate overgrazing (the animals can graze for several hours a day instead of all day) and thereby help restore the rangelands during the dry season.

Juan went on: “According to the U.S. agave expert, Dr. Park Nobel, agaves can draw down and sequester more atmospheric carbon than almost any other plant or tree on Earth. And, of course, agaves can do all this with no irrigation whatsoever.”

If billions of agaves and companion trees could be grown and interplanted across millions of acres of degraded rangelands, they could conceivably draw down a critical mass of excess carbon from the atmosphere (where too much CO₂ contributes to climate change), transferring it into the plants and trees above ground, and into the soil below ground, where it belongs. By greening deserts and drylands, these systems can dramatically increase soil fertility, retain and store rainfall, restore landscapes and biodiversity, reforest semides-

ert areas, regenerate rural livelihoods, and eventually restabilize the climate.

A visit to Hacienda Zamarripa revealed that the Zamarripa agaves were the same native varieties used for pulque at Vía Orgánica. Juan explained that these varieties grow throughout much of Mexico. Juan explained that an agroforestry system like Zamarripa’s—containing 2,000 agaves and 400 nitrogen-fixing trees for every 2.5 acres—could produce massive amounts of silage while maintaining a sustainable balance of nitrogen and nutrients in the soil.

Agave and the Beginnings of an Agricultural Revolution

Over the years, in San Miguel and Mexico City, Vía Orgánica became a leader in the anti-GMO and pro-organic movement in Mexico. The organization’s staff, comprising Mexican citizens and international volunteers, grew to 70 people. The organization operated an organic restaurant, grocery store, website, newsletter, and farm school, gaining recognition and support from farmers and consumers alike. However, until the organization discovered ‘agave power,’ our efforts to spark an organic agricultural revolution were limited, despite their well-intention.

André Leu later visited San Miguel de Allende from Australia to evaluate the reported benefits, yields, and improvements firsthand. By then, Ronnie Cummins had already begun trialing the agave agroforestry system by planting many acres with agaves and mesquite trees. Cummins and Juan Frias showed Leu the planted fields during the dry season, when the livestock were penned up for the evening and being fed silage. The animals readily consumed it and appeared to be in excellent condition, suggesting that the fermentation process had transformed formerly inedible plants into nutritious feed.

Most ecosystems experience periods of low pasture growth during cool, dry seasons due to overgrazing, leading to environmental degradation. Fermented forage, such as silage, can be used as feed during these periods to take animals off pastures and native ecosystems, allowing them time to recover. Recovery time



Sonoran desert, Mexico (Photo: Tomas Castelazo)

is essential to successful regenerative grazing systems. During these periods, livestock often lose body condition due to a lack of feed. Agave and mesquite silage benefited both the environment and the livestock. This system filled a significant gap in the evolving area of agroforestry and silvopastoral systems.

Agave agroforestry can readily be scaled up on hundreds of millions of acres of underutilized or nonproductive landscapes, transforming currently degraded, deforested, overgrazed, and poverty-ridden lands. These are the lands that will never be able to sustain adequate food production, livestock, animal husbandry, or incomes for the billions of people who live there, unless farmers and ranchers are motivated (and paid) to restore their lands and deploy this game-changing agroforestry system.

Very significantly, it can be scaled up to all continents using their endemic legume trees. There are thousands of species of legume trees. Every continent—Africa, Australia, Eurasia, North America, and South America—has several hundred species adapted to its arid, semiarid, and higher-rainfall regions.

Deep-rooted legume trees, such as mesquite, acacia, sesbania, inga, leucaena, and faidherbia, offer an effective way to drought-proof drylands and dry seasons, as their roots extend deeper into the soil than those of grasses, allowing them to access water. Agaves require no irrigation. They efficiently store seasonal rainfall and atmospheric moisture in their thick leaves, stems, or hearts. This enables the plant to grow and produce significant biomass even under prolonged droughts. Since various agave species are naturalized across all continents, scaling up this agroforestry system with native legume trees and agaves will not pose an environmental weed problem. Cover crops and perennial pastures can be planted to increase fodder production and improve soil fertility.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification states that 500 million pastoralists herd their animals across highly diverse, grass-dominated rangelands that cover more than half the Earth's land surface.

Most of these rangelands are unsuitable for annual crops as tillage erodes and damages the soil. In many cases, the amount and timing of rainfall are inade-

quate to grow row crops such as grains, fruits, and vegetables without irrigation. Many of these ecosystems have been badly degraded by overgrazing, resulting in eroded, human-created desert landscapes, and animals are kept in poor condition during drier periods due to a lack of feed.

By implementing these agroforestry practices, farmers and ranchers can begin to regenerate arid landscapes and improve the health and productivity of their livestock. The advantage of the agave agroforestry system is that, apart from watering the seedlings at initial planting, it requires no further irrigation. After several years, the agroforestry system can provide affordable food and income for families, improving their livelihoods.

It also delivers valuable ecosystem functions such as reducing soil erosion, recharging water tables, and drawing down and storing large amounts of atmospheric carbon dioxide in plant biomass and soils, both above and below the ground.

Agave and other agroforestry systems can end hunger, poverty, conflict, and environmental degradation by regenerating endemic native plant and animal biodiversity, providing food and income for residents. Scaling them up is also an effective strategy for mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Deforestation

Anthropogenic greenhouse gases are just one type of climate forcing. Forests, vegetation cover, and soils profoundly affect local and global temperatures, water vapor transpiration, and atmospheric and terrestrial hydrology. Forests absorb heat and energy through photosynthesis, shade the ground, and cool the planet through transpiration.

Deforestation results in the land absorbing sunlight and heating up, making this a significant climate forcing. According to Our World in Data, 1.5 billion hectares (3.7 billion acres) of forest have been cleared over the last 300 years—since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. That's equivalent to an area 1.5 times the size of the United States. Ten million hect-

ares (25 million acres) of forest are destroyed every year. Ninety-five percent of this deforestation occurs in the tropics.

The European Investment Bank estimates that around 15 to 18 million hectares (up to 45 million acres) of forest are destroyed each year, with 2,400 trees cut down every minute.

This loss of forest cover is a significant contributor to increasing global temperatures. A high proportion of this deforestation is driven by consumers in the world's richest countries: Cleared land is used to produce soy and maize to feed cruel, confined animal feeding operations (factory farms) in Western Europe and East Asia.

These feeding systems are incredibly inefficient. Industrial livestock systems require substantially more land, feed, and water than plant-based food production. There is no justification for clearing these forests to “feed the world” when they do not resolve food insecurity.

Industrial agriculture poses an existential threat to the planet through deforestation, biodiversity loss, toxic chemicals, soil loss, eutrophication, and greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, industrial agriculture is directly and indirectly responsible for nearly 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions.

So far, mainstream solutions have not made any difference to the emissions rate, which continues to increase. The International Energy Agency projects that achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 will require a dramatic increase in renewable energy capacity, including significant expansions in solar and wind power worldwide. At industrial scales, however, these transitions could also intensify ecosystem loss, mining pressures, land-use conflicts, and other forms of environmental damage.

Regenerative Farming

The good news is that multiple examples of regenerative agricultural systems are being scaled up globally to restore biodiversity, strengthen communities,

improve climate resilience, and support our health. This is not a complex, impractical academic dream or a long-winded proposal by bureaucrats. It is happening with minimal support from government, academia, or industry. Regenerative agriculture is a grassroots revolution pioneered mainly by farmers and ranchers.

Most people are familiar with the (now overused) term “sustainable,” which characterizes practices that maintain resources and the environment without degrading them. In an already degraded system, however, it is necessary to do more than sustain the status quo: We need to set it on the path to healing—or regeneration. Regenerative systems, therefore, not only sustain existing systems but also improve them. For agriculture and environmental management, this means improving the welfare of soil, plants, and animals, as well as human health and community well-being. Significantly, it includes practices that increase resilience to climate change–induced weather impacts and reduce production costs while ensuring reasonable returns to farmers and land managers. This ability to improve climate change adaptation and economic viability is essential for the future of agriculture and ecosystem regeneration.

The opposite of regenerative is degenerative. This is an essential distinction for agricultural activities. Agricultural systems that use degenerative practices and inputs damage the environment, soil, health, genes, and communities and involve animal cruelty, are not regenerative, and never will be (no matter how much they’re greenwashed). The use of synthetic toxic pesticides, synthetic water-soluble fertilizers, and GMOs, the clearing of ecosystems, confined animal feeding operations; exploitative marketing and wage systems, and destructive tillage systems are examples of degenerative practices.

Regenerative agriculture, on the other hand, includes farming systems that use techniques such as longer rotations, cover crops, green manures, legumes, compost, and organic fertilizers. More specifically, regenerative agriculture maximizes plant photosynthesis to capture CO₂ and sequester it as soil organic matter (SOM). It can be applied to all agricultural

sectors, including cropping, grazing, and perennial horticulture. It is used as an umbrella term for a range of systems, including organic agriculture, agroforestry, agroecology, permaculture, adaptive multi-paddock grazing, silvopasture, analog forestry, syntropic farming, pasture cropping, and other agricultural systems that can increase SOM.

Regeneration International asserts that to heal our planet, all agricultural systems should be regenerative, organic, and based on the science of agroecology.

Although the different practices may differ—and often overlap—they share the use of highly biodiverse perennial plants and animals in farming systems, rather than seasonal monocultures, often scaled to create new permanent agroecosystems that regenerate landscapes and their communities.

For example, the agave agroforestry system is designed to regenerate degraded arid and semiarid regions. Numerous other agroforestry systems have been developed for all climates and soil types.

Agave agroforestry systems, along with other game-changing best practices in organic and regenerative farming and forestry, can be financed and scaled up in Mexico and across the world.

Agave Power

The agave-powered agroforestry and livestock management system demonstrates how long-overlooked native desert plants can regenerate drylands, provide inexpensive animal feed, reduce pressure on overgrazed rangelands, improve animal health, rehydrate soils, and alleviate rural poverty.

Moving beyond conventional monoculture and chemical-intensive farming practices, and combining traditional Indigenous knowledge of native desert plants with natural fermentation, Mexico-based farmers have learned to reforest and green their drylands, all without irrigation or expensive, toxic agricultural inputs.

Building an Economy That Works for Working Americans

Gerald Epstein interviewed by C.J. Polychroniou

The United States is a plutocracy. Its economy works for the wealthy and powerful at the expense of working people. It is a broken politico-economic system in need of major repairs, but as leading progressive economist Gerald Epstein points out in the interview that follows, there is indeed an arsenal of bold policies to “defeat fascism, preserve democracy, and help create a greener, stronger and fairer economy for American workers.” Epstein is professor of economics and a founding co-director of the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

C. J. Polychroniou: It’s often been said that progressives are good in offering stinging critiques of the status quo and even making appealing policy proposals, but there is still a short supply of game changing strategies. I take it that this is the aim of Game Changers: Economic Policies for a Working America, an exciting new project from the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. You conceived of the project and serve as its director, so tell us more about it. Why now the launching of such a project, what are the major issues covered, and what do you hope will be achieved?

Gerald Epstein: I launched the Game Changers project, along with my colleagues James Boyce of the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Juliet Schor of Boston College, because of the emerging perception that progressives in the United States could not gain political power and defeat the fascists and MAGA simply by leveling criticisms and epithets against Trump and his associates. Working people in the United States are hurting and angry after decades of neoliberal economic policies implemented, with some exceptions, by both Republican and Democratic administrations. Looking

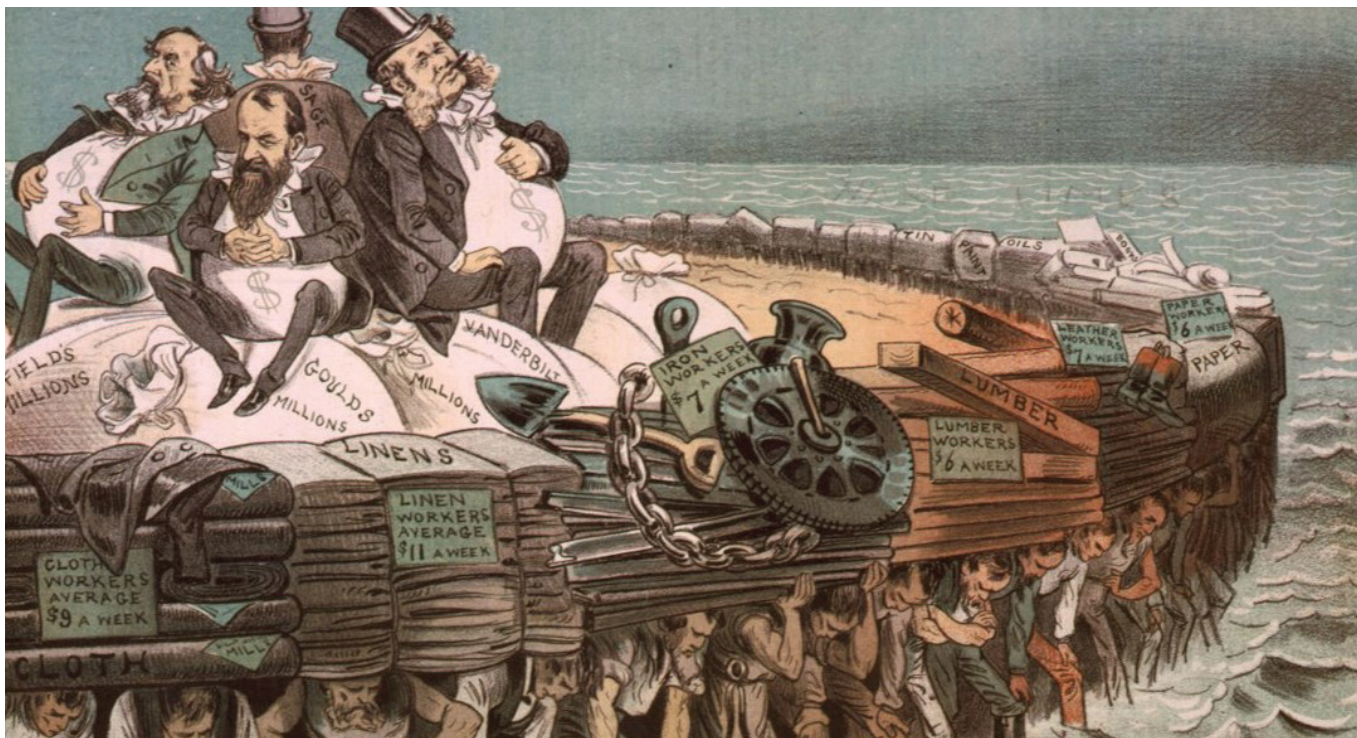
for answers to their legitimate problems, many American voters either simply sit out elections, or pull the lever for extreme candidates that seek to manipulate them by identifying scapegoats — such as immigrants — as the source of their problems.

So, we launched Game Changers to be a positive source of real answers to real problems facing working Americans. The idea is to offer activists, political candidates, and government officials with policy ideas that bridge the gulf between the transformative and the practical, ideas that can envisage the way to an economy that is fairer, greener, more productive and more democratic. These are ideas, we believe, that are also practical enough to offer hope to those who want to help to mobilize the political forces that can help bring them into fruition.

Importantly, though, we are not intending to offer a comprehensive program for the American left. We felt that would be presumptuous for us to do and beyond our competence and standing. Ours is more of a menu of ideas that can be picked up by those who need them and who want to mobilize on their behalf.

We geared the timing of this project so that the policy ideas would be ready by the Congressional elections in November of 2026. In fact, we are launching policy proposals this month of July 2026. They can be found at <https://gamechangerspolicy.org>. Some of these ideas might be taken up by candidates. If they win, they might be taken up when they serve in Congress. Some of these ideas may percolate and emerge in future campaigns and legislative actions, as well as be taken up by progressive organizations. That is our hope, anyway.

The Game Changers project consists of 9 teams of



experts and practitioners, (about 45 people in total) working on a range of subjects: Care, Finance and Financial Regulation, Health Care, Housing, Immigration, Macroeconomics, Trade and Labor, and Work and Jobs. All in all, these teams have developed about 25 different policy proposals.

The range of policies is striking. They include: “The Wealth of Welcome: Immigration Reform that Works for America”; “America’s Workers Deserve a Four Day Week”; A Universal Basic Income for Children”; “Medicare for All”; “Polluters Pay – The Extreme Weather Superfund”; “Democratize North American Trade”; “Housing as a Human Right”; “National Rent Control”; “Public Banking”; “No More Bailouts”. (For the whole list, see GameChangersPolicy.org).

Since the project is about advancing progressive economic alternatives to the problems and challenges facing the US economy, one would assume that the economists invited to be part of the project represent a common tradition in the discipline. If so, how would you define this tradition, and is it important that there is a consensus among them as to what constitutes progressive economic policies over key issues? We know that

the Left has always been divided over ideology and policymaking. It is divided over the scope of government intervention in capitalist economies, and there is even disagreement over several specific issues, such as the Universal Basic Income, how to reduce inequality, and how to combat the climate crisis.

What unites the economists and other experts involved in Game Changers is a commitment to defeat fascism, preserve democracy, and help create a greener, stronger and fairer economy for American workers. We did not invite experts based on a theoretical, methodological or ideological litmus test. Indeed, I would say that is one of the strengths of our project. The left often has great difficulties uniting sufficiently to engage in practical tasks like winning elections, or even achieving small practical goals, because they are riven by ideological, theoretical or methodological differences. We are not subject to that problem. Big egos are also a problem in politics -left, right and center and, for sure, in academia. Thankfully, we have avoided that problem as well. For us, the litmus test was a commitment to the ideals of Game Changers, expertise in their subject areas, and, for the most part, a willingness to volunteer their time.

The 1930s posed the biggest and most severe challenge in US economic history. The New Deal was a response to the calamity of the Great Depression and reshaped the United States in a major and profound way. But the New Deal ultimately gave way to the neoliberal order and the results have been nothing but catastrophic for working-class people. Is the US today in a similar state of affairs as it was in the 1930s in the sense that the system is badly broken? Is this the message behind the launching of Game Changers? If so, can different issues still be addressed separately, or does the entire system need restructuring before anything meaningful can be done?

You are certainly correct that the neoliberal order wreaked havoc on America's workers, but now things are even worse. In the US, we are facing a particularly pernicious form of capitalism, an authoritarian, and profoundly corrupt version that is dominated by a self-seeking Presidential family and a lethal coalition of techno-fossil-fuel-financialized capitalists. While our specific issues and policy proposals stand on their own terms, we see them as part of a broader vision of what our economy needs to overcome this lethal form of capitalism. The antidote is to recognize the equal dignity of every human being and work to guarantee their right to economic security, the opportunity to thrive, a livable planet, a world free of racism, and democratic governance of our lives, societies, and economies.

More specifically, Game Changers is posing a set of policies to help defeat this form of capitalism by "changing the game," based on three principles.

Changing the game means (1) investing in each other through public provisioning of care, health-care and other critical services; (2) securing our future by, for example, breaking the power of the fossil fuel capitalists and addressing climate change; and (3) righting the rules, by ending reckless and predatory financial practices, changing tax policies so that the super-rich have less wealth and contribute a bigger share for the operations of our government, preventing capitalists from firing workers arbitrarily and without just cause.

At one level, these, of course, are not revolutionary demands in a traditional sense. But if widely implemented, they would bring about a revolutionary improvement in the lives of working people, not only in the short term but in the longer term as well.

In your view, what are the most pressing issues facing today the US economy and working-class people?

While the US economy's productivity has grown significantly over the last forty years, the standard of living of American workers has, for the most part, barely budged. This is especially true if one includes American workers' ability to acquire many of the most important basics of life: housing, time and the wherewithal to care for children, family members and their communities; a sustainable environment in the face of climate change and degradation; quality health care and education; and dignity, respect, and a voice in their workplace. American capitalists, especially but not exclusively those on Wall Street, engage in speculative and extractive activities rather than investing in socially productive assets for the future. Even when a new technology is developed that could improve workers' lives, such as AI, these are weaponized by big capitalists in their efforts to control and extract wealth from American workers. We have a bailout economy, whereby Wall Street financiers undertake highly risky investments, grab the rewards and when these threaten themselves and the economy, they get bailed out by the government. All of this has led to an obscene level of income and wealth inequality. And we have a politico-economic system where those at the top use xenophobia, and racial and ethnic baiting and oppression to try to divide and conquer America's workers in order to stay in control.

At Game Changers, we are trying to do our small part to help overturn this immoral and destructive system.

Ideology: What Is It, Why Have It?

Michael Albert

Most of this article was conceived and written back in the early 1970s. It is excerpted from a book published in 1974. The book was and is titled *What Is To Be Undone*, a word play on Lenin's famous title. The article may feel a bit academic, something some philosophy class might conceivably address. And since I can't go on forever, it may also feel like it lacks sufficient examples along the way. But there is reason in the method.

I want to look at classical ideologies in an effort to discern flaws that we need to escape. I will be looking at them from the vantage I had in 1972-1973 which was when some people think leftists took a wrong turn away from classical ideologies. But did we? Well, that was when I, for one, got serious about trying to think about new ideology. So the core writing in this article is partly a communique from then, partly a time capsule message from then. I will however interject some more current takes on the material at times, as we proceed.

But still, why talk about ideology in general, much less abstractly? Well, it is to get on the same page, or at least to know what page we are all on, as we start to get into more specific assessments. And it is also to get some idea of what kinds of assessments and what kind of approach to take.

This excerpted chapter started with an offset quotation from the then very popular historian of science, Thomas Kuhn:

"What a person sees depends upon both what he looks at and also what her previous visual-conceptual experience has taught him to see. In the absence of such training there can only be in William James's phrase, 'a bloomin' buzzin' confusion.'"

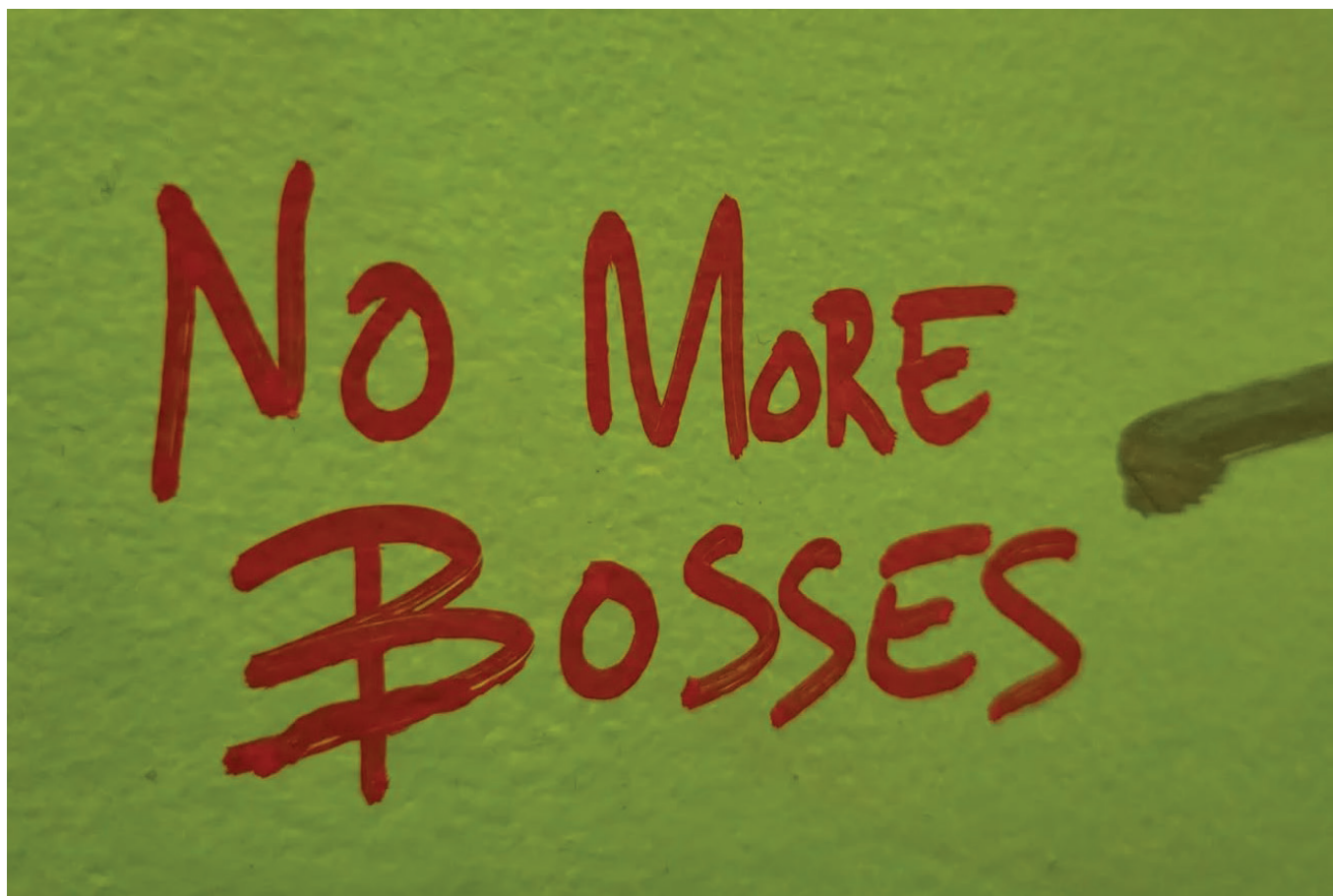
Then the chapter proceeded: Wanting to get beyond "confusion," we want to present and then assess Classical Marxism Leninism to develop insights for

improving it to fit our own modern contexts. But what in Marxism Leninism should we focus on? What aspects of the whole should we emphasize? In what order should we discuss those aspects? Can we give our study of Marxism Leninism or any proposed ideology an initial thrust to help organize the whole effort? For that matter, in a prior sense, can we even motivate studying classical ideology by arriving at a clear understanding of how theories are generally developed and judged?

I wrote back then that we base our approach on a general store of scientific training and an extension of Thomas Kuhn's analyses of similar issues because those analyses seem the most accepted, the most suited to our ends, and the most correct of any available.

Kuhn says the natural sciences [like physics, chemistry, biology, and so on] move forward by way of alternating evolutionary and then revolutionary periods. During evolutionary development a widely held collection of thoughts, methods, beliefs, and so on, are advanced in accord with their own internally determined dictates. In contrast, during revolutionary development the same "consciousness collection," or, as Kuhn calls it, the same paradigm, is contested and finally negated and replaced due to developments extending beyond its own previous focus.

In the evolutionary period we have what Kuhn calls normal science. The generally accepted paradigm is applied to ever greater numbers of phenomena. Scientists improve, verify, enlarge, and adapt it by constant reapplications. Essentially, in Kuhn's words, they engage in "puzzle solving." They try to fit the world to their paradigm's categories and dynamic expectations. They guide their efforts according to their paradigm's dictates. They approach problems because their paradigm orients them to do so and because it says they can succeed in finding solutions.



Closely examined, whether historically or in the contemporary laboratory, their enterprise seems an attempt to force nature into the preformed and relatively inflexible box that the paradigm supplies. But during the evolutionary period, as the many new problems to which any paradigm gives rise are being sorted out and solved, some prove intractable. Others, also intractable, are discovered accidentally, outside the realms toward which the paradigm actually pushes its practitioners. Eventually there is an accumulation of problems which practitioners find important and troubling, but which are seen as unimportant within the context of their paradigm and are in any case unsolvable by it.

At that point, many practitioners simply put the problems aside (and often don't even notice them in the first place) due to their normal-science faith in their well-tested beliefs. Other practitioners, however, can't help but see the importance of the problems and they begin to try to alter their paradigms as normal science reaches what Kuhn calls a state of

"crisis activity."

Crisis resolution comes by way of supercession of old paradigms by new ones. The scientist who saw reality in terms of one set of beliefs, concepts, and methods before such resolution sees it by a different set after. Practitioners' world views alter. But the debate between old and new during transition is typically extremely impassioned and confused. Each side approaches issues differently. What one side says is important evidence in favor of its paradigm is felt irrelevant by the other and vice versa. Nonetheless, there is a gradual transition to a new paradigm and then to a new normal science.

I interject, my reaction to the problems of the Sixties back then (and still) was to feel that our ways of thinking, evaluating and doing were insufficient to ward off problems that severely hurt our efforts. As a result, I felt we needed a new paradigm or ideology. I thought the way to decide if that feeling was valid was to critically consider paradigms that were then

available. Another option would have been to just double down with one of them, as some did, or to decide we didn't need shared views and strategy at all, with some others. Instead, I and some like me, opted for a critical evaluation, and thus emerged *What Is To Be Undone*.

In moving from the hard to the social sciences, details alter but nonetheless Kuhn's model remains at least roughly applicable. Thus regarding "revolution-aiding science" meant to understand the world in order to to change it, so that paradigm equaled ideology; ideology equaled theory, strategy, and practice; and classical ideology equaled Marxism Leninism, Anarchism, or Maoism.

The chapter continued: There are three questions to answer to apply Kuhn's model to our subject. First, what is the purpose of a revolutionary paradigm and of each of its parts? Second what are the parts in more detail, including potential roots of their strengths and weaknesses? And third, how do the parts interrelate to form a whole and what are the whole's specific dynamics? For any ideology, do they work for us, or fail us?

A physics paradigm of the kind Kuhn centers his studies on informs its holders about the real physical world and gives them ways of understanding and affecting it. It guides their endeavors by giving methods and directions of concern.

Similarly a "revolution-aiding" paradigm, or an ideology, informs its holders about the socio-political-economic world, gives them ways to understand and affect that world, and guides their efforts by providing methods and areas of concern.

Yet even though each type paradigm seems to do pretty much the same things for its practitioners, the ultimate purposes of the two types of paradigm—natural science and social "revolution-aiding"—are somewhat skewed from one another. With a physics paradigm the ultimate emphasis is on knowledge. With a "revolution-aiding" paradigm the ultimate emphasis is on change.

For both the physicist and the social revolutionary, knowledge and activity are to serve each other. Each must provide guidelines and ways of improving the other. And yet in the last analysis, the physicist does experiments to further knowledge; while the revolutionary uses knowledge to further experiments, which is to say struggle.

There is a critical inversion of theory/practice priorities and it is this that complicates a Kuhnian analysis of socio-political paradigm development, and that must be recognized to answer the question, "What is the purpose of a revolutionary paradigm?" and to get at the more detailed analysis of the purposes of revolutionary theory, strategy, and practice.

Normal science in the revolutionary context is the process by which, for example, Marxist Leninists, Anarchists or Maoists pursue studies of the world and engage in practice in accord with their ideology's dictates. Thus each group sees things somewhat differently from the others, employs somewhat different priorities, and so on, but at least when functioning normally, each moves steadily and calmly forward in self-consistent ways.

Like for the hard scientist functioning normally, day-to-day normal revolutionary practice encounters few surprises and is essentially a puzzle solving (and doing) dynamic that occurs very much in expected and preordained ways. Crisis revolutionary practice is, on the other hand, the process by which contending paradigms or ideologies struggle with one another and with non-revolutionary alternatives for social dominance. They debate each others' suppositions, and even more than with the hard sciences (because of the extra involved interests) the debate is a tortuous and even violent one in which no side gives much credence to the formulations of any other. Resolution would be the success of any one revolutionary paradigm in gaining nearly full domination over all the others.

For the purposes of this exploration, however, we begin by asserting such a resolution, with Classical Marxism Leninism as a core around which normal activities proceed. Later, after dealing with Classical

Marxism Leninism as if it were the only ideological possibility, we admit the existence of Anarchism, Maoism, and some contemporary neo-Marxist views and consider them too.

Thus for the moment our available revolutionary paradigm is Classical Marxism Leninism. And we [or at least I, in the early 1970s, and now too] feel a definite crisis. The “anomalous problems” to which it denies importance, and, in any case does not help us solve related concerns, revolve around usability, racism, sexism, authority, socialization dynamics, the relationships between consciousness and general day-to-day activity, the dynamics between social and movement relations and people’s consciousnesses needs, and feelings, the nature of bureaucracy, the ability of people to understand local situations and analyze local tactics, and to settle on what we seek, or vision. It is a substantial list. Our critical study thus feels justified by the state of crisis we perceive in Classical Marxism Leninism’s abilities to handle today’s crucial revolutionary problems.

I interject, this was as I saw the problems existed coming out of the Sixties, when, remember, one current 2026 interpretation of the emerging situation is that we activists made the mistake of getting tricked, coerced, or enticed into jettisoning too many Classical insights. It is that view that I am currently assessing even as, back in the early 1970s, I was as well.

The chapter continues: A good result of our study would be either a recognition of how the Classical paradigm can finally solve our problems or of why it can’t and how an altered new paradigm might be able to. How then should we proceed with our critical study? In what order should we approach the body of Classical Marxist Leninist thought? What should we emphasize and what should we only gloss over?

To answer requires a better understanding of the internal relations of any revolutionary paradigm’s three component parts: theory, strategy, and practice. Such an understanding will tell us how to study each part with an eye toward most readily discovering from where the whole’s weaknesses derive.

So, first, what are theories, how are they constructed and used, what are the loci of their strengths and weaknesses, and how might they be studied most effectively, especially when one is looking to assess and perhaps overthrow them and their whole parent paradigm?

Theories are collections of ideas that people use to understand the realities they encounter. Theories have one part which describes the elements of reality and another part which talks about how those elements interact, where the latter allows predictions concerning what the elements will do in varying situations. Leave out or get an important element wrong, and you will miss its effects which might be crucial.

Social theories refer to realities of people and institutions, but are necessarily abstract: they do not focus on everything in their reference systems but only on those parts considered important. Thus ‘what is important’ and included in discussion, and ‘what is unimportant’ and abstracted out, become crucial questions in social theorizing.

As Paul Sweezy—who was, I interject, a central figure of the Marxist Monthly Review Press back then—wrote:

“The legitimate purpose of abstraction in social science is never to get away from the real world but rather to isolate certain aspects of the real world for intensive investigation. When, therefore, we say that we are operating at a high level of abstraction we mean that we are dealing with a relatively small number of aspects of reality; we emphatically do not mean that those aspects with which we are dealing are not capable of historical investigation and factual illustration.”

Thus we have our first guideline for theory construction: for clarity, conciseness, and useability one must abstract out all that is unimportant; but for correctness and wholeness one must include all that is important. One must abstract away the unessential while making sure not to eliminate from consideration anything essential.

This raises a problem. How does one determine what is essential before having a theory which explains the whole? The wise way around this problem is caution and a flexible willingness to reformulate one's views over and over as one's insights grow more and more complete. The subjective and obviously flawed way around the problem is to determine what is important on the basis of self-interested speculations, and to then bend everything to suit that first determination rather than vice versa.

For example: a factory owner runs his enterprise according to a certain social economic theory of business. The business produces well, profits continually rise, his business life goes according to plan, and he is reasonably content with the whole situation. He barely notices his factory's effects on his employees' lives, or on their families, or on the ecology, or on its consumers. His theory obscures all that, effectively removing it all from his awareness [except to the extent any of it threatens his profits]. As a result others bear the costs of his profit-taking while he goes unaware of all that occurs outside the abstractions of his business-school theories of life.

Then his workers strike and he alters his views somewhat by including references to salaries in his calculations. Not the effect on his workers but only on his profits and his ability to keep collecting them. Then consumers protest and ecologists clamor and again he adapts his theories precisely to the extent to which effects on his profit and power gain his attention.

The lesson of our capitalist's behavior is relatively clear. Social theories are often rooted in self-interested desires. Beyond that they are often blind but nonetheless their users typically convince themselves their theories are not narrow but complete. They get away with this self-interested self-deception precisely because their theory's narrowness obligingly hides from view, in a sense behind its own absent elements.

Narrow theories often nonetheless seem complete because they are logically sound regarding the elements they include, and force their practitioners

to overlook what they don't include by steering their attentions away from the ensuing flawed results. Narrow theories appear good to their believers because they are perceived through self-created blinders especially adapted to block out all that is flawed.

All of this can apply to leftists as well as to capitalists. When revolutionists use a narrow theory they too can be expected to create partially counter-productive programs that ignore certain relevant aspects of the total spectrum of effects of their implementation. Narrow-minded revolutionists function [in that respect] very similarly to narrow-minded capitalists. They too blunder on in their mistakes, blind to the realities around them, precisely because their theories so constrain their perceptions.

I have to interject: reading this, I suspect I had lurking in my mind even back then what would shortly later become and remain a central focus of mine, that the classical ideology included distorted class concepts that ignored and obscured the existence of a third class between labor and capital...or perhaps I stumbled onto that recognition later because of a prior awareness of the kinds of flaw an ideology might have.

Either way, the chapter from *What Is To Be Undone* continued: Theories can therefore be weak in at least two different ways. First, they can have inaccurate or incomplete descriptions of important realities. They include some but not all important elements. Second, they can have incorrect understandings of the ways important realities interact. They see some but not all implications of choices they confront.

Thus social theory must correspond to social reality as closely as possible and all its lacks of correspondence must be well understood by its practitioners. Its positive assertions and its abstractions must be equally justified. To construct a social theory we should try to organize our efforts in light of these insights. In criticizing a theory we can profitably do the same.

We will set out descriptions of Classical Marxism Leninism's views of social reality and of social inter-

actions. We will examine the relations between its theory and its practitioners, and we will take into account the accuracy and justification for its abstractions of all types.

But just understanding, even in rather deep complexity, is never quite enough; one wants also to affect. Marxist Leninists with goals and general theoretic understandings form more or less detailed plans of action or strategy. To have a full plan for analyzing the Marxist Leninist paradigm we must also know how we should approach its strategic aspects.

Strategies guide us toward desired goals. How well do they derive from theory, do they get us where we wish to go, and do they minimize 'expenses' and side complications? These are criteria for judging strategies and they are certainly easy enough to apply, at least if one is an objective and well informed evaluator rather than a biased or ill-informed participant in a specific set of events.

The communist, for example, feels that the capitalist's approach to transportation problems is idiotic precisely because it creates even larger problems for working people than those it was ostensibly aiming to solve. The communist thinks that capitalist strategy is poor and would at least in some cases explain it by saying that capitalist theory is self-interestedly narrow.

On the other side of the coin, the capitalist says that communist strategy is ridiculous because even if it does solve a few social inadequacies it does so at too great a cost in never-to-be-regained lost human freedoms, but he means lost profits. Here too the smart capitalist would probably find the roots of the purported problem in self-interestedly narrow authoritarian theory rather than in the incompetence of the theory's practitioners.

Strategies move from vagueness to preciseness as their practitioners learn ever more about the properties of systems on which they are working, goals they are seeking, and tools they are using. Strategy emerges from theory. The more comprehensive the theory, the more potentially precise the strategy. The

more incomplete the theory, the more vague the strategy and greater the need for constant enhancement.

So analyzing strategies is essentially a problem of seeing whether they really do fit the environs they are applied to and aim consistently at the goals they are supposedly seeking. The problem exists in translating an understanding of a theory's strengths and weaknesses to the level of its compatible and thus similarly powerful or afflicted strategy.

What about tactics and practice? Practice is a favorite word of leftists, usually used in reference to the activities of people trying to change their environments and in turn being changed by those environments. Tactics, another often used word, are well defined ways of practicing that occur over and over whenever roughly the same conditions arise. So there are military tactics, race car driving tactics, medical tactics, business tactics, production line tactics, literary tactics, and revolutionary tactics. Most practice is simply the application of variations of available tactics in concrete situations.

Tactics are chosen because of the ways they fulfill strategic dictates. When there is no strategy, tactics become guesswork and practice becomes problematic and thus ineffectual. Strategy affects tactics and vice versa. Strategy allows a rational choice of tactics, and knowledge of available tactics allows formulation of the most economical strategies.

Consider two military strategists. Confronted with obstacles and a goal, an effective strategist knows available tactics and has a theory for understanding the whole situation and the varying effects that different chosen acts would have upon it. The ineffective one does not.

The effective one forms a strategy based on a complete understanding of all important factors and begins implementing it and thus moving toward likely success. The ineffective one perhaps forms a plan that depends on tactics that aren't even available options, or whose effects are misunderstood,

or perhaps forms no plan at all, merely blundering ahead in redundancy and error.

Good strategy uses whatever is available to accomplish as much as possible. Knowledge of tactical options and their likely outcomes provides a foundation for creating powerful strategy and good strategy in turn provides general criteria for deciding what tactics to actually use in what sequences.

But even when a practitioner has highly accurate theory, good knowledge of tactics, and good strategic sense, things are unlikely to occur exactly as planned, if not because of error, then certainly because real practice often leads to unforeseen developments which then demand changes in theory or strategy.

The militarist comes up against an unforeseen situation in the field and alters strategy, or someone discovers new forms of weaponry and that leads to an enrichment of military theory. Or similarly for the doctor, revolutionist, or whoever.

In general, social theories are incomplete and depend on descriptions of very complicated 'objects'. They must constantly adapt to accord with new experiences and insights discovered through on-going normal practice. Only then can they approach correctness and provide a basis for ever enriched strategy.

In summary, strategy provides criteria for choosing tactics. Practice is the means for implementing and correcting theory and strategy. Theory provides the framework within which strategy and tactics function, a means for anticipating their various possible effects, and a means for understanding what goals are realistic for any whole situation.

Revolutionaries are usually concerned with changing the whole natures of their societies. In their work they want the smallest possible margin for error, and especially for the repetition of error. They thus require that the flow from theory to strategy to practice and back include effective corrective mechanisms.

Ideally the revolutionist functions with a good social theory and a broad flexible strategy for change. He or she develops a full understanding of as many tactics as possible, (strikes, boycotts, parliamentary electoral tactics, ways of organizing and communicating, civil disobedience, marches, sabotage, styles of behavior and living, etc.) and of the ways their use affects various relevant situations, and then engages in self-conscious practice. Ideally the revolutionist learns more and more about tactics while constantly refining strategy and theory to make them more accurate and richer in content.

So, good revolutionary theory, strategy, and practice, or good revolutionary ideology and practice is a totality which is always incomplete but constantly going forward, each aspect providing the criteria for the worth and growth of the others.

Theory provides world view. Long term strategy provides guidelines for activity. In conjunction with a goal—what we seek—theory and strategy together compose a revolutionary paradigm which guides revolutionary thought, analysis, planning, and action.

To minimize errors and dogmatism such consciousness must be self-correcting and growth-oriented. It must not stagnate. It must alter to fit changing realities rather than to merely rationalize changing realities in order to preserve itself. It must be rational verifiable rather than irrational 'religious'.

Though a revolutionary ideology may have weaknesses, it should eliminate them over time. Indeed, good revolutionary consciousness should have a tendency toward continual re-alteration built right into its methods and especially into its strategy and associated practice.

So, what have we? Classical Marxism is a revolutionary social theory and Classical Marxism Leninism is a revolutionary ideology. Virtually all Marxist Leninist organizations I have had contact with [back then, as of 1974, and also now, still] operate as if they believe their social theory and strategy im-

mutable, and indeed seem to get their identities and authority from that avowed permanence.

This constitutes a dismal state of affairs, because of the stagnation involved, and still more so if the theory and strategy are actually flawed. Our purpose is to formulate Classical Marxism Leninism in as clear a manner as we can so that we might discover what parts of it are useful, what parts are not, and in what ways it might be enriched or altered. To the same ends we shall also talk about Maoism and Anarchism.

Since we already know [back then from our Sixties experiences] that [then] present consciousness needs and correlated immediate revolutionary crises revolve in part around getting new methodologies as well as new, very organic, useable understandings of racism, sexism, authority, consciousness, and motivation in general, we organize our expositions of Classical Marxism Leninism, Anarchism, and Maoism in accord.

We go step by step examining those aspects that reflect most on our particular needs, to eventually build edifices in which the origin of the strengths and weaknesses with regard to our needs are clearly evident.

Finally, as an answer to our need for a 'plan of approach' we will first present Classical Marxist Leninist theory and Leninist strategy, and then criticize practice, strategy, and theory in sequence, with a final summary for clarification.

In the end we hope to have some agreement about the worth of the Classical Marxist Leninist paradigm. Then after discussion of the Anarchist and Maoist alternatives we hope to have some agreement about where to jump off in either advocating an existing paradigm or constructing something new that could more effectively guide future revolutionary practice. I felt in the mid seventies that it was necessary for us to move energetically but also competently. I still feel that way. As Fidel Castro put it:

"The duty of every revolutionary is to make the revolution. It is known that the revolution will triumph in America and throughout the world, but it is not for revolutionaries to sit in the doorways of their houses waiting for the corpses of imperialism to pass by. The role of Job doesn't suit a revolutionary. Each year that the liberation of America is speeded up will mean the lives of millions of children saved, millions of intelligences saved for culture, an infinite quantity of pain spared the people."

That was how I ended that chapter of *What Is To Be Undone*.

And so, where are we at in a sequence of articles about ideology that we have begun so as to address the questions: Is current left ideology fine or flawed? Does it need continued allegiance, overhaul, or replacement?

Back in the early seventies *What Is To Be Undone* looked at the recent practice of the new left and found lots of problems. The question arose, did we need to merely do a better job understanding and applying Marxist Leninist or Anarchist or Maoist insights while we avoided temptation or coercion that might divert us from that already available and worthy choice? Were our heads already on right? Did we, in other words, just need to do normal revolutionary pursuits better?

Or did we need to look closely at our then existent ideologies to reveal their flaws, and revolutionize our thoughts to find new ideology? Did we need to persist with ideas from dead men's minds firmly cemented into our own heads? Or did we need to consult our own experiences and revamp our theory, strategy, and tactics to reorient our heads?

Similarly, not then but now, do we need to turn back to classical Marxism Leninism or other old options, or do we need to develop new ideology? I hope that question is meaningful for all who read this. I hope whichever way you lean, you will want to help the work of thinking through the options.

The Not-So-Secret Israeli Strategy: This is the Real Gaza Plan

Ramzy Baroud

Here is the bottom line: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has no intention of leaving Gaza, either before Israel's general elections—likely to be held in October—or after. Conceding an inch from the roughly 70 percent of the territory his army currently occupies in Gaza will be considered a weakness by the majority of Israeli voters and would result in an open revolt within his extremist coalition.

He has made his intentions clear time and again. Recent by Israel's political leadership have only reinforced that reality, with officials insisting that Israel must maintain indefinite military dominance over the Strip and explicitly rejecting any framework that requires a full withdrawal of troops. To Netanyahu, the military footprint in Gaza is a permanent fixture, not a temporary bargaining chip.

Some may argue that Netanyahu's statements are merely political fodder aimed at prolonging his career and avoiding the disastrous outcomes awaiting him—in terms of state investigations and court trials—should he be ejected from power. However, his extremist policies throughout his entire career at the helm of Israeli politics say otherwise. There has never been a period in Netanyahu's history in which he showed a genuine willingness to compromise or engage in an authentic political process with the Palestinians.

This reduces the point of the Washington-led Board of Peace and its subsequent administrative bodies to near irrelevance. These entities—including the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG) and a multinational International Stabilization Force (ISF)—were supposedly assembled with the sole aim of managing a transitional phase, delivering humanitarian aid, and deploying a peacekeeping buffer to facilitate a gradual Israeli military withdrawal.

It seems that two separate, irreconcilable tracks are taking shape. One is the Israeli track of continued war, entrenched military occupation, and prolonged genocide. The other is an international track, controlled firmly by Washington, aimed largely at finding alternative ways to manage Gaza on behalf of Israel.

Yet even with its obvious limitations, the Gaza plan's first phase theoretically promises a phased Israeli military repositioning, a sustainable ceasefire, a massive influx of reconstruction aid, and the gradual handover of civil administration to a non-factional Palestinian authority.

Little of that has actually been delivered. While the United States and international envoys claim the ceasefire hinges on disarmament, Israel has used the diplomatic deadlock to its troops further into the Strip rather than withdrawing them. Aid remains choked at the borders, and the promised reconstruction has not even begun.

Indirect talks are ongoing in Cairo, though it seems that only Palestinians are being held accountable or expected to carry out heavy concessions. Moreover, after 19 years of Hamas governing Gaza, the movement announced on July 6 that it has officially dissolved the Emergency Committee that has been administering the Strip. The movement declared its full readiness to transfer governance to the National Committee, intended to administer Gaza under the framework of the US-brokered plan.

On paper, this suggests that a political transition is finally underway. In reality, no such transition is taking place.

Israel is actively this technocratic government from assuming any real duties. Rather than facilitating a



Photo: Alisdare Hickson

civil handover, the Israeli political security cabinet has completely dismissed the transition. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar openly labeled the move a “trick,” arguing that a technocratic administration would merely be responsible for municipal tasks like garbage collection while allowing resistance networks to persist.

Instead, Israel’s military strategy continues to fuel conditions that undermine any possibility of stabilizing the devastated Strip. Its objective is not merely to reject an alternative Palestinian administration, but to ensure that no functioning Palestinian governing authority can emerge at all. By doing so, Tel Aviv wants to create a permanent governance vacuum, sowing further chaos and fragmentation.

If no alternative Palestinian political body is permitted to stabilize Gaza, the default collapse will inevitably force local factions to reassert control over daily survival, thus giving Israel yet more pretenses to exact more punishment on a helpless population.

Following the Hamas political move, Israel simply responded with its standard currency: immediate violence. This was starkly illustrated on July 9, when Israeli forces carried out a targeted airstrike on a vehicle in Gaza City in a failed attempt to assassinate Hamas

spokesman Hazem Qassem. Though the assassination attempt failed, the strike sent a clear message that Israel has no intention of respecting political transformations or ceasefires.

While no houses are being built, no schools are being constructed, and no hospitals are being revived, the only numbers that keep growing are those of the dead and wounded. The human cost has reached unfathomable proportions: the Palestinian death toll in Gaza has surpassed 73,000, with the number of wounded exceeding 173,200. Tragically, these numbers continue to climb daily: over 1,098 Palestinians have been killed since the so-called ceasefire framework was initially agreed upon, proving that the truce exists only in media rhetoric, not on the ground.

This leaves us with a single, inescapable conclusion: the political track aimed at reconstructing Gaza and ending the Israeli military presence has little bearing on the grim realities unfolding on the ground.

The only way out is a stronger, independent international will that wrestles the future of Gaza from the grip of Netanyahu, translating political agreements into immediate humanitarian outcomes and a definitive end to the Israeli occupation.

Eight Contradictions Behind Nato's Summit of "Love"

Medea Benjamin

"I just want to say there was tremendous love in that room," President Trump declared as he wrapped up the 2026 NATO summit in Ankara.

But anyone looking beyond the carefully choreographed photo-ops saw an alliance beset by public feuds, competing visions of security, and widening political divisions.

Here are eight contradictions that defined the Ankara summit—and raise fundamental questions about NATO's future.

1. Military Spending vs. Real Security

NATO leaders had already agreed at the previous summit to move toward spending 5 percent of GDP on military-related expenditures, but Ankara exposed how divisive that commitment remains. Trump used the meeting to chastise allies for failing to meet even the old 2 percent benchmark, arguing that most allies were not paying what they should. Spain became the main target because it refused to commit to the full 5 percent goal, prompting Trump to call it "a terrible partner in NATO" and threaten trade retaliation.

The timing made the debate especially striking. As leaders met to discuss pouring hundreds of billions more into weapons and armies, Europe was enduring one of the most severe heatwaves in its recorded history, with deadly temperatures, wildfires, strained electricity grids, and mounting pressure on public health systems. The contrast raised an unavoidable question: at a time when climate change is already killing people and overwhelming governments, why



is the overriding political priority dramatically expanding military budgets instead of investing in the threats people are facing today?

2. NATO Countries Reluctant to Support Trump on Iran

The recent U.S.-Israeli war on Iran cast a long shadow over the summit. While most European leaders continued calling for diplomacy and de-escalation, the summit itself began with renewed U.S. bombing of Iranian targets after attacks in the Strait of Hormuz. During the meeting, Trump declared the U.S.-Iran memorandum of understanding "over," dismissed further negotiations as "a waste of time," and referred to Iran's leaders as "scum."

Trump also complained that European allies had failed to support Washington's military campaign, saying, "We are there for them, but they are not there for us." Spain was among the

strongest critics of the war, and Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez refused U.S. requests to allow American bases in Spain to be used for offensive operations against Iran. Before the summit, Trump publicly feuded with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni after she likewise refused to allow Italian bases to be used for attacks on Iran. Germany and France also declined to participate militarily.

The contradiction was unmistakable: NATO presents itself as a defensive alliance, yet its most powerful member expected allies to support an offensive war against a country thousands of miles from the North Atlantic that had not attacked a single NATO member.

3. Europe Pushes Support for Ukraine as the United States Pulls Back

Missing from NATO's final declaration was its previous pledge that Ukraine would eventually become a member of the alliance—a notable concession to Trump's opposition. Ukraine's prospective NATO membership, first strongly backed by President George W. Bush at the alliance's 2008 Bucharest summit, has long been one of Russia's central stated objections and was repeatedly cited by Putin as a justification for the 2022 invasion. Its omission from the declaration reflects a significant shift in NATO's position.

The declaration pledged roughly \$82 billion in military assistance for Ukraine in both 2026 and 2027, but unlike in previous years, the overwhelming share will come from European allies and Canada rather than the United States. After Washington poured well over \$100 billion into Ukraine's war effort, the United States is now stepping back. That reflects a growing sentiment among Trump supporters that the U.S. should stop financing what they see as another endless foreign war. Many European governments, however, continue to see Russia as a direct threat and remain committed to arming Ukraine rather than pushing for a diplomatic solution.

4. Europe Still Wants U.S. Troops While Trump Wants Fewer Overseas Commitments

Before the summit, Trump reportedly floated the idea of reducing the U.S. military presence in Europe by as much as one-third, raising questions about the future of the roughly 80,000–90,000 U.S. troops currently stationed across NATO countries.

While U.S. bases remain deeply controversial among peace movements in NATO countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom, their governments continue to regard the U.S. military presence as essential to European security and have resisted calls for their removal. Trump's willingness to reduce that presence exposed another growing contradiction: many European governments want Washington's security guarantee to remain firmly in place, while many Americans increasingly question why tens of thousands of U.S. troops should remain stationed in Europe more than three decades after the Cold War ended.

5. Trump Keeps Questioning Denmark's Sovereignty Over Greenland

Trump again insisted that the United States should control Greenland. Denmark, backed by the rest of NATO, firmly rejected the idea, insisting that Greenland's future is for Greenlanders and Denmark—not Washington—to decide. Danish officials also note that the United States already enjoys extensive military access to Greenland under a 1951 defense agreement, making U.S. ownership unnecessary to protect its security interests.

At the NATO summit, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen reaffirmed that Denmark would “defend every inch” of the Kingdom of Denmark, including Greenland, while reiterating that the island is not for sale and that its future must be decided by Greenlanders.

The episode laid bare one of the summit's sharpest contradictions: an alliance that claims to defend the

territorial integrity of its members was forced to confront its most powerful member openly challenging the sovereignty of one of them.

6. Turkey Exposes NATO's Democracy Dilemma

There was a striking irony in holding NATO's summit in Turkey. Inside the conference halls, leaders celebrated democracy, freedom, and shared values. Outside, Turkish authorities banned anti-NATO demonstrations and arrested hundreds of protesters, journalists, lawyers, and activists engaged in peaceful protest. Trump praised President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as "a very strong leader," even as Erdoğan has spent years systematically suppressing dissent, jailing critics, restricting press freedom, and targeting political opponents.

Trump also used the summit to signal his willingness to restore Turkey's access to advanced U.S. weapons, including the F-35 fighter jet program, from which it had been suspended after purchasing Russia's S-400 air defense system.

Turkey, however, is hardly unique. Across NATO countries, governments that proclaim their commitment to democracy and human rights have increasingly cracked down on dissent, particularly pro-Palestinian activism. From police raids and protest restrictions to arrests, prosecutions, and efforts to silence critics in the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere, NATO governments have repeatedly shown that democratic freedoms become conditional when they collide with political and strategic priorities.

7. Europe Is Expected to Defend Itself — but Still Rely on NATO

One question lingered behind the scenes throughout the summit: if Europe is now expected to invest more in its military, pay for the war in Ukraine, and prepare for a reduced U.S. military presence, what exactly is NATO's future role? European leaders continue to describe the alliance as indispensable, but

Washington increasingly expects Europe to stand on its own while remaining available to support U.S.-led military operations elsewhere.

That contradiction is fueling a broader debate across Europe. If Europeans are expected to pay more, defend themselves, and shoulder greater responsibility for their own security, why should they remain dependent on an alliance dominated by Washington?

8. Should NATO Still Exist?

The biggest question hanging over the Ankara summit was not inside the conference halls but in the streets: should NATO still exist? Created in 1949 to contain the Soviet Union, the alliance steadily expanded its mission long after the Cold War ended, intervening in places from the Balkans to Afghanistan and increasingly projecting military power far beyond its original mandate.

The protests in Ankara were part of a broader international movement represented by the No to NATO Network, which brings together peace organizations across NATO countries calling for the alliance to be replaced with a common security architecture based on diplomacy, disarmament, and cooperation.

Trump's claim that there was "tremendous love in that room" may have made for a memorable soundbite, but it bore little resemblance to the summit itself. Ankara exposed an alliance divided over military spending, Ukraine, Iran, democracy, sovereignty, and even its own purpose.

For peace activists across NATO countries, those contradictions only reinforce what they have argued for decades: Europe needs a new security architecture based on diplomacy, arms control, common security, and cooperation, while the United States needs a foreign policy that relies on diplomacy rather than militarism. For them, the ultimate lesson is clear: the time has come to dissolve NATO and replace it with a security system that reduces tensions instead of fueling arms races and preparing for endless war.

Obliterating Gaza's Children: The Damning UN Report

Dan Steinbock

When I was working on *The Fall of Israel* (2024) and particularly *The Obliteration Doctrine* (2025), what I found most repulsive was the targeting of children in the Gaza Strip.

By late 2024, the testimonies of health professionals on location indicated that the deaths of many children in Gaza were not just collateral damage, but outcomes of deliberate, targeted actions.

The testimony of Dr. Feroze Sidhwa, a young American trauma and general surgeon who had volunteered in Palestine including the European Hospital in Khan Younis, was particularly compelling.

"I've seen violence and worked in conflict zones," Sidhwa said. "But of the many things that stood out about working in a hospital in Gaza, one got to me: Nearly every day I was there, I saw a new young child who had been shot in the head or the chest, virtually all of whom went on to die."

The statement of Dr. Sidhwa, who subsequently became one of the endorsers of *The Obliteration Doctrine*, was supported by dozens of other remarkable and courageous medical volunteers in Gaza. And these testimonies, in turn, have been supported by many reports of multiple international NGOs and multilateral organizations.

So, the latest report of the UN Independent International Commission is hardly new. Nonetheless, it is among the most consequential documents to emerge from the Gaza war. Its conclusion is stark: Israeli authorities and security forces have deliberately targeted Palestinian children, actions that the Commission argues constitute genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

The Commission's findings

The Commission's report concludes that the deliberate targeting of Palestinian children is not incidental collateral damage but part of a recurring pattern of conduct. In line with the Genocide Convention, it argues that such actions are a key indicator of genocidal intent because they strike at the future existence of the Palestinian people.

According to the inquiry, more than 20,000 Palestinian children were killed between October 2023 and October 2025, representing roughly 30 percent of all fatalities, while over 44,000 were injured. Even after the October 2025 ceasefire, children reportedly continue to be killed and maimed.

The Commission cites cases involving sniper fire, quadcopter drones, precision-guided munitions, and high-yield bombs used in densely populated civilian areas. It argues that the nature of these weapons systems often allowed operators to identify their targets, including whether they were children.

Israel has rejected the findings as biased and defamatory.

Regardless of political positions, the significance of the report lies in its accumulation of evidence, legal analysis, forensic testimony, and witness accounts. It represents one of the most comprehensive international investigations yet conducted on the impact of the war on children.

It is a condemnation that casts a long dark shadow over the entire Israeli war government and its international collaborators, arms suppliers and financiers.

Children and the logic of genocide

In *The Obliteration Doctrine*, I showed that modern warfare in Gaza evolved beyond traditional military objectives toward the destruction of the social foundations of Palestinian existence. The Commission's findings reinforce this interpretation.

Historically, genocide scholars have emphasized that attacks on children occupy a unique place in genocidal campaigns. The 1948 Genocide Convention identifies not only direct killing but also the infliction of conditions calculated to destroy a protected group. In Gaza, famine served the same genocidal function as starvation in the Warsaw ghetto.

Children embody demographic continuity, cultural reproduction, and collective future. Consequently, systematic violence against children has appeared repeatedly in cases later recognized as genocide, from the Armenian genocide to Rwanda.

The Commission explicitly states that targeting children attacks "the very capacity of the Palestinian people to exist and determine their future." Its findings connect killings to broader patterns: destruction of schools, hospitals, pediatric facilities, neonatal care units, food systems, and water infrastructure.

That's the ultimate objective: the genocide and ecocide of Palestine, its culture and children. Israel's devastation of Lebanon follows in the footprints.

From an empirical perspective, the cumulative effect is measurable. Public-health research consistently demonstrates that childhood exposure to mass violence produces lifelong deficits in physical health, educational attainment, psychological resilience, and economic productivity.

Israel did not triumph in Gaza. Moral darkness did.

Human cost beyond death statistics

Death tolls alone understate the catastrophe. The Commission reports more than 44,000 wounded children.

Gaza now reportedly has one of the world's highest concentrations of child amputees. Thousands face permanent disability from burns, blast injuries, spinal trauma, vision loss, and neurological damage. Worse, Israel has often denied treatment to thousands of Gazans who lost limbs in Israeli attacks.

Research from conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Bosnia demonstrates that severely injured children often experience decades of adverse outcomes.

Rates of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety disorders, and developmental impairments can remain elevated throughout adulthood. Educational interruptions reduce lifetime earnings. Family structures collapse under caregiving burdens.

The Commission also documents starvation, disease outbreaks, displacement, and collapse of medical services. Such conditions affect not only present survival but the health of future generations through malnutrition, impaired fetal development, and maternal health crises.

The result is not merely a humanitarian emergency. It is the systematic destruction of human development on a societal scale.

Hind Rajab, the voice that refuses to disappear

This tragedy is symbolized by the short life and unwarranted execution of six-year-old Hind Rajab.

Trapped in a vehicle with relatives during military operations in Gaza, Hind's desperate phone

calls became known worldwide. Audio recordings captured a terrified child trapped in a car in Gaza, pleading for rescue while surrounded by the bodies of family members.

The story is depicted by a Venice-awarded 2025 docudrama by Kaouther Ben Hania about the young girl, whose desperate calls for help to the Red Crescent were recorded and went viral.

Rescue efforts reportedly failed, and Hind was later found dead. The Commission specifically references the case as emblematic of broader patterns under investigation.

Historically, certain victims become moral symbols because they crystallize a larger reality. During the Vietnam War, the photograph of Kim Phúc became such a symbol.

Hind Rajab has become one of the defining voices of Gaza because her case transforms abstraction into human reality.

Statistical discussions of thousands of deaths become impossible to separate from the image of a frightened child waiting for help that never arrived.

High technology and moral decay

One of the most troubling aspects of the Commission's report is the relationship between technological sophistication and ethical collapse.

Israel possesses some of the world's most advanced military technologies, including AI-assisted targeting systems, drones, surveillance platforms, precision-guided munitions, biometric monitoring, and integrated battlefield intelligence.

In theory, such capabilities should reduce civilian casualties by improving discrimination between combatants and noncombatants.

Already in The Fall of Israel, two long years ago, I showed that precisely the reverse has taken place.

Despite all the official rhetoric of "targeting," the Palestinians in Gaza were hammered for months by indiscriminate bombing, as even the U.S. intelligence community acknowledged already in late 2023.

In line with the Obliteration Doctrine, modern technology – AI-amplified bombing, or alcocide – was not deployed to optimize precision-targeting. Rather, it was used to maximize deaths. The execution of innocent civilians, particularly children, was no longer just collateral damage, but the tacit objective.

Even as these realities became known, that did not halt bombing, which prevailed over months despite official indignation. The maximized mass atrocities slowed only when the arms transfer supply chains could no longer satisfy the demand.

The Commission concurs. It points to incidents in which advanced systems allegedly enabled more precise killing rather than greater protection. Precision technology does not inherently produce ethical outcomes; it amplifies the intentions guiding its use.

In The Fall of Israel, this was one of the central themes. Technological superiority cannot compensate for moral deterioration. States may achieve unprecedented operational efficiency while simultaneously eroding the ethical restraints necessary for legitimate military conduct.

That's the rotting moral swamp where the international community stands today.

The cost to Israeli society and soldiers

The consequences do not end with Palestinian victims. When perpetrators are done with their victims, they act out their moral ambivalence on themselves and their loved ones, one way or another.

A growing body of clinical evidence from military psychology demonstrates that participation in, witnessing of, or exposure to violence against civilians, especially children, can generate profound psychological injury among soldiers themselves.

This is what trauma centers in Israel know only too well (and what the government struggles to suppress from the media). The men who return from the indiscriminate killing fields of Gaza – and increasingly Lebanon – are no longer men. They are walking time bombs.

When you are expected to kill without any moral consideration, you continue killing: if not others, then yourself. Research on U.S. veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan has identified high rates of PTSD, depression, substance abuse, suicide risk, and what clinicians increasingly term “moral injury”—psychological damage resulting from participation in, failure to prevent, or witnessing acts that violate deeply held moral beliefs.

Studies consistently show that moral injury can be more persistent than fear-based trauma because it attacks personal identity and ethical self-understanding.

Prolonged occupation and repeated campaigns of collective punishment have contributed to a process of extraordinary social brutalization within Israeli society. The concern is not merely political polarization but normalization of violence. When civilian suffering becomes routine, moral thresholds shift.

History offers sobering parallels. Colonial wars in Algeria, Indochina, and elsewhere often left lasting psychological scars not only on the colonized but on the societies conducting the campaigns.

That’s what happens when the living dead return home.

If Gaza becomes the new norm

The broader international implications may be even more alarming. If the deliberate targeting of children becomes normalized, the consequences extend far, far beyond the Middle East.

International humanitarian law depends fundamentally on protecting civilians, especially children. If powerful states can openly disregard these norms without meaningful accountability, the deterrent effect of international law weakens everywhere.

Empirical evidence suggests that impunity encourages repetition. The failures to prevent atrocities in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur contributed to future violations by signaling weak enforcement. Conversely, successful accountability mechanisms have historically reduced recurrence.

The risks include greater regional radicalization, transnational terrorism, refugee flows, intensified great-power rivalry, erosion of international institutions, and the spread of increasingly unrestricted warfare.

In *The Obliteration Doctrine*, I warned repeatedly that what happened in Gaza won’t stay in Gaza. The Strip became a laboratory for new forms of warfare later exported elsewhere.

The Commission’s findings raise precisely that concern. If the systematic destruction of children, schools, hospitals, and civilian infrastructure becomes accepted in one conflict, future belligerents may invoke the precedent.

The ultimate question raised by the report is therefore not only what happened to Gaza’s children. It is whether the international community is willing to preserve the principle that children remain beyond the reach of war itself.

For if that principle fails in Gaza, it will not survive elsewhere.

Women as the Primary Bearers of War

Majid Maleki Meighani

In peripheral capitalist formations, women are not merely a gendered or social category. They occupy a structural position at the intersection of capitalist accumulation, state formation, and global geopolitical hierarchies. In this sense, they function as one of the primary sites onto which the costs of systemic crisis are displaced.

Their condition is shaped by three interrelated dynamics: patriarchal social structures at the national level, the political economy of dependent development, and the persistent pressures of militarization and imperial intervention at the global level.

From this perspective, war cannot be understood as a discrete or exceptional event. It is better understood as a continuation of structural violence by other means—violence that predates armed conflict and persists long after its formal conclusion. Iran offers a clear illustration of this continuity.

Following the 1979 Revolution, the new state undertook a rapid reorganization of gender relations in both public life and wage labor. In the early post-revolutionary period, significant numbers of women were excluded from state institutions and formal employment through both ideological and administrative mechanisms.

However, this trajectory was neither linear nor stable. The post-Iran-Iraq War reconstruction period, followed by the neoliberal restructuring of the 1990s, gradually reintegrated women into higher education and labor markets. Yet this reintegration occurred under conditions defined by cheap, flexible, and highly precarious labor—consistent with the logic of peripheral capitalism and the controlled incorporation of women into the workforce.

Long-term economic sanctions imposed on Iran must also be understood beyond their stated political objectives. They function as a form of structural vio-

lence that directly disrupts and degrades the conditions of social reproduction of the working class.

In this context, women—who are disproportionately responsible for sustaining household economies—absorb the shocks of inflation, currency devaluation, and shortages of essential goods. Macro-level economic crisis is thus transferred to the micro-level of daily reproduction, where it becomes deeply gendered.

At the same time, ongoing militarization in the Middle East and repeated cycles of war and threat intensify these dynamics. War is not an exception to regional order but a constitutive element of a global system of uneven development and coercive stability.

Historical experience demonstrates that in both war and post-war periods, women are among the first groups to be displaced from formal labor markets. Iran is no exception. While crisis periods may temporarily expand women's labor participation, phases of restructuring and austerity systematically push them back into economic marginality.

Following the Iran-Iraq War, structural adjustment policies and privatization processes—amplified by external pressures—expanded informal and low-wage labor markets. Women became increasingly concentrated in insecure, underpaid, and informal sectors of employment.

From the late 1990s onward, the expansion of women's higher education, the growth of civil society networks, and increased social participation produced a real but constrained transformation. However, this transformation unfolded within a rigid political economy that limited its structural impact.

Successive governments, despite ideological differences, oscillated between reform and control, without fundamentally altering the structural reproduc-



FOUR VICTIMS OF CHEAP PATRIOTISM

tion of gender inequality embedded in the political economy. As a result, women's social advancement has coexisted with persistent economic insecurity and institutional fragility.

The recent escalation of military tensions and attacks by the United States and Israel against Iran has produced a severe economic shock, characterized by production shutdowns, disruptions in services, and widespread layoffs. This is not a temporary disturbance but part of a longer political economy of crisis reproduction in peripheral societies.

Within this context, women are disproportionately affected by exclusion from labor markets due to their concentration in precarious, contractual, and low-wage sectors. At the same time, the closure of educational institutions and the absence of public care infrastructures shift the burden of social reproduction back onto households, and specifically onto women.

As a result, many women are forced into unpaid leave, reduced working hours, or full withdrawal from formal employment in order to sustain household survival.

This process demonstrates that war does not only destroy economic infrastructure. It intensifies the feminization of crisis by transferring the costs of survival into everyday life through the expansion of unpaid domestic labor—deepening and extending the structural effects of sanctions and austerity.

Women's position in Iran and other peripheral societies cannot be understood through cultural or national frameworks alone. It must be situated within the global structure of capitalism and imperial power relations.

Sanctions, wars, and geopolitical interventions are not separate phenomena but interconnected mechanisms of crisis production, through which the burdens of social reproduction are systematically displaced onto the most vulnerable segments of the working class—especially women.

In this framework, women are not only victims of war, but also of a continuous and cumulative regime of economic, political, and military violence that begins before war and persists long after its formal end.