

America's Flawed Democracy



One of the basic principles of democracy is "one person, one vote". Other criteria for an efficient and robust model of democracy include an informed and critically inclined citizenry and the

presence of a political culture catering to the "common good" instead of the self-centred whims and boundless greed of the rich and powerful.

Unfortunately, none of the above are representative features of American democracy: American politics is increasingly ruled by a moneyed oligarchy that calls the shots, while the country has shifted from a society of citizens to a society of consumers.

The highly flawed nature of American democracy has become more striking in recent years as the absence of political ethos works in tandem with massive economic inequality, job insecurity, and a declining standard of living to produce conditions ripe for corruption, manipulation of public opinion, and authoritarianism.

Indeed, the presidential election of 2016 speaks volumes of the crisis facing American democracy, making the world's richest and most powerful nation resemble a "banana republic".

Electing the electors

For starters, the contest for the White House was between a megalomaniac billionaire with no experience whatsoever in the "art of the possible" (but competent with entanglements with foreign governments and leaders, and an uncanny ability in twisting the tax law to his advantage) and a lifelong politician, widely regarded as a darling of Wall Street as well as a warmonger.

If this is not a sign of a moribund political system, the candidate elected to become the 45th president of the United States lost the popular vote by a bigger margin than of any other US President. Donald Trump was elected president by trailing Hillary Clinton by nearly three million votes.

This "democratic" anomaly is owing to the fact that US presidents are chosen by electors, not by popular vote.

To be sure, there is nothing in the constitution that grants American voters the

right to choose their president. When American voters go to the polls to vote for a presidential candidate, what they are essentially doing is casting a vote for their preferred party's nominated slate of electors.

The electoral college system is democracy's ugliest anachronism. Because of the design of the electoral college, intended by the founding fathers to prevent the masses from choosing directly who will run the country, a candidate can win the nationwide popular vote and still lose the presidency.

This is what happened in 2000, when Al Gore won nearly half a million more votes than George W Bush, but it was Bush who won the presidency by being declared winner in the state of Florida by less than 540 votes. And, of course, history repeated itself in the 2016 election.

Takeover of 'friendly fascism'

But this is not all. Voter turnout for the presidential elections in the world's outdated democratic model is consistently disturbingly low, an indication that many Americans may feel their vote doesn't count.

Indeed, voter turnout in the US is incredibly low compared with other advanced democratic nations around the world, ranking 31 out of 35 developed countries.

Some of the reasons for the low voter turnout in the US are attributed to the existence of the electoral college system itself, the two-party system, and even to the fact that elections are being held on a day when most people work.

More than 90 million eligible voters did not vote in the 2016 US presidential election - even though this was deemed to have been one of the most critical elections in recent memory owing to the highly inflammatory statements made by Trump about Mexicans, women, Muslims, and gays.

The reason why so many Americans are abstaining from voting, a cornerstone of democracy, is intrinsically related to the long-stemming pathologies of the American political culture, namely an individualistic and consumer-driven society where the great majority of people cannot name a single Supreme Court justice but trust the military to act in the public interest and act as a cheerleader for the US' militaristic adventures and wars, and a political system increasingly controlled by the wealthy and business.

The manufacturing of an individualistic, consumer-driven culture is intended to promote conformism, ignorance and apathy about public affairs, but also a

perverted sense of patriotism which targets critically oriented voices as being “anti-American”, thereby opening up a political space for the rise of the likes of Trump, Bush, and Ronald Reagan. That is to say, authoritarian, anti-labour, neoliberal, and jingoist politicians who wish to roll back whatever economic and social progress average Americans have made since the 1960s and maintain the empire.

Undoubtedly, ever since the 1980s, the US has been moving closer and closer to a social order that Bertram Gross identified some 35 years ago as “friendly fascism”, an ever closer symbiosis between big business and big government, while citizens are relegated to the sphere of the purely “private”, enjoying material goods in exchange for social and political rights.

Indeed, looked at from various perspectives, it would seem that the 2016 US presidential election has brought to the surface all of the ills of America’s flawed democracy.

What happens next is hard to predict, but it is likely that very interesting times lie ahead both for “the land of the free and the home of the brave” as well as for the rest of the world.

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A World In Shambles: An Interview With C.J. Polychroniou



“We live in ominously dangerous times” stated the opening line of an article by C.J. Polychroniou (with Lily Sage) titled [“A New Economic System for a World in Rapid Disintegration,”](#) which was recently published in Truthout. And while the aforementioned piece was mainly a scathing critique of global neoliberal capitalism and a call for a new system of economic and social organization, its underlying thesis was that the world system is breaking down and that contemporary societies are in disarray.

Is the (Western) world in shambles? We interviewed C.J. Polychroniou about the current world situation, with emphasis on developments in Europe and the United States, and sought his views on a host of pertinent political, economic and social issues, including the rise of the far right and the capitulation of the left.

Marcus Rolle and Alexandra Boutri: Let’s start by asking — what exactly do you have in mind when you say, “We live in ominously dangerous times?”

C.J. Polychroniou: We live in a period of great global complexity, confusion and uncertainty. It should be beyond dispute that we are in the midst of a whirlpool of events and developments that are eroding our capability to manage human affairs in a way that is conducive to the attainment of a political and economic order based on stability, justice and sustainability. Indeed, the contemporary world is fraught with perils and challenges that will test severely humanity’s ability to maintain a steady course towards anything resembling a civilized life.

For starters, we have been witnessing the gradual erosion of socio-economic gains in much of the advanced industrialized world since at least the early 1980s, along with the rollback of the social state, while a tiny percentage of the population is amazingly wealthy beyond imagination that compromises democracy, subverts the “common good” and promotes a culture of dog-eat-dog world.

The pitfalls of massive economic inequality were identified even by ancient scholars, such as Aristotle, and yet we are still allowing the rich and powerful not only to dictate the nature of society we live in but also to impose conditions that

make it seem as if there is no alternative to the dominance of a system in which the interests of big business have primacy over social needs.

In this context, the political system known as representative democracy has fallen completely into the hands of a moneyed oligarchy which controls humanity's future. Democracy no longer exists. The main function of the citizenry in so-called "democratic" societies is to elect periodically the officials who are going to manage a system designed to serve the interests of a plutocracy and of global capitalism. The "common good" is dead, and in its place we have atomized, segmented societies in which the weak, the poor and powerless are left at the mercy of the gods.

I contend that the above features capture rather accurately the political culture and socio-economic landscape of "late capitalism." Nonetheless, the prospects for radical social change do not appear promising in light of the huge absence of unified ideological gestalts guiding social and political action. What we may see emerge in the years ahead is an even harsher and more authoritarian form of capitalism.

Then, there is the global warming phenomenon, which threatens to lead to the collapse of much of civilized life if it continues unabated. The extent to which the contemporary world is capable of addressing the effects of global climate change — frequent wildfires, longer periods of drought, rising sea levels, waves of mass migration — is indeed very much in doubt. Moreover, it is also unclear if a transition to clean energy sources suffices at this point in order to contain the further rising of temperatures. To be sure, global climate change will produce in the not-too-distant future major economic disasters, social upheavals and political instability.

If the climate change crisis is not enough to make one convinced that we live in ominously dangerous times, add to the above picture the ever-present threat of nuclear weapons. In fact, the threat of a nuclear war or the possibility of nuclear attacks is more pronounced in today's global environment than any other time since the dawn of the atomic age. A multi-polar world with nuclear weapons is a far more unstable environment than a bipolar world with nuclear weapons, particularly if we take into account the growing presence and influence of non-state actors, such as extreme terrorist organizations, and the spread of irrational and/or fundamentalist thinking, which has emerged as the new plague in many

countries around the world, including first and foremost the United States.

What is the state of the Left in today's Europe?

Since the collapse of Soviet communism, the European Left has been in a state of complete disarray, although the crisis of Europe's Left dates back to the 1970s — i.e., long before the collapse of “actually existing socialism.” But let's be clear. What do we mean today by the term European Left? The European Socialist and Social Democratic parties abandoned long ago any pretext to being “socialistic” and, in fact, have become advocates of austerity and staunch supporters of free-market capitalism. There are some communist parties still around, but most of them are completely marginalized and lack political influence.

Only in Greece do you have a communist party that still carries some influence inside the labor movement, but it is essentially a Stalinist party and has actually worked hard to maintain political stability and thus the status quo. Nonetheless, until very recently, the Greek Communist Party was far more popular than the Coalition of the Radical Left, popularly known as Syriza, which has been in government since January 2015, thanks to the terrible financial and economic crisis that broke out in early 2010 and has since converted the country to a German/European protectorate.

There are, of course, grassroots movements and parties of the radical Left to be found in virtually every European country, but they lack mass popular support. The rise of Syriza in Greece was seen as representing a new dawn for the European Left, but its complete sellout to the euro masters and its actual conversion to a neoliberal and thoroughly corrupt political party has actually been one of the biggest setbacks for progressive forces throughout the continent.

You were expressing strong reservations about Syriza, in fact through these pages, long before its rise to power. What actually went wrong with the Greek Radical Left?

Syriza was a loose organization of various leftist groups (old-fashioned euro communists, anarcho-communists, Maoists and even social democrats), and its appeal was confined mainly to the intellectual class. It lacked a cohesive ideological worldview and, in fact, [it] was difficult to pinpoint its stance on a variety of crucial issues due to the many political factions that it represented.

Naturally, the great majority of the Greek voters saw Syriza as being nothing

more than a movement of political clowns, with Alexis Tsipras at its helm. However, a close look around Syriza's core leadership would have revealed a group of people who were simply political opportunists, people hungry for power. To me, therefore, it was obvious that, in the event that Syriza came to power, two things would happen: first, a split between radicals and opportunists, and second, the capitulation of the opportunists (Alexis Tsipras and his gang) to the domestic economic elite and the euromasters. And this is precisely what has happened.

After five years of brutal austerity and the sharpest decline of the standard of living in any postwar European country, the Greek people voted into power Syriza, believing that its leader, Alexis Tsipras, would carry through with his pre-election promises of ending austerity and subsequently re-boosting the economy, tearing into pieces the EU/IMF bailout agreements, and forc[ing] the cancellation of a major portion of the debt. But shortly after coming to power, the opportunists realized that the option was either complete surrender to the capitalist forces or stepping down from power. They opted for the former, just so they could stay in power, even if it meant completing the carry out of the neoliberal agenda of the European Union and the IMF as part of the financial bailout of the country.

Syriza has been in power for nearly two years now, and, during this time, it has shoved the neoliberal agenda down the throat of the Greek people with more forcefulness and determination than any previous government. It agreed to a new, far more brutal and humiliating bailout plan, and is now overseeing the complete privatization of the economy and the further deterioration of the standard of living, thereby fulfilling the long-held view of the European neoliberal masters that Greek wages and the nation's standard of living should not be above those found in nearby Balkan countries like Bulgaria and Romania. Any public official or government minister standing in the way to the implementation of the neoliberal agenda was either isolated or pushed out of the government. Indeed, one of Tsipras' most pronounced traits as prime minister of Greece is the ease with which he is selling out his former comrades.

To secure his goals and aims, i.e., the sellout of the country, he even ended up recruiting as his lackeys academics from abroad, such as the president of the (allegedly progressive) Levy Institute, Dimitri Papadimitriou, and his wife, Rania Antonopoulos, who is currently serving as the Greek Alternate Minister for Combatting Unemployment. Shortly after having accepted the position of Minister of Economy and Development as a result of a recent cabinet reshuffle,

Papadimitriou — when asked about his research as an economist in which he challenged the European dogmas of austerity and neoliberalism and advocated the introduction of a “parallel” currency for the deeply ailing Greek economy — replied by saying that, “until last week I was an academic, and academics may say ... things. But when the time comes to implement a program, then they realize that some things may have been wrong!”

Of course, the Greek media had a feast over the amazing opportunism and the hypocrisy of this man, but his reaction has been rather typical among pseudo-progressives and social democrats all throughout modern history. Unsurprisingly, Papadimitriou also went on to say that Greeks, Spaniards and Italians live beyond their means, thereby displaying his obedience to the EU and IMF masters, and that one of the major comparative advantages that Greece now enjoys is that it is a country with “cheap labor.”

What has been happening in Greece may represent an extreme example because of the actual state of the economy, but it is quite representative of the state of politics of contemporary European Left. That is, a Left without political convictions and values, a Machiavellian Left that prefers to serve the Masters of Mankind than seek to reorganize society from below.

What is your explanation for the rise of Donald Trump, and do you actually see a future in “Trumpism”?

Understanding the phenomenon of Donald Trump demands that we look beyond the individual himself and, instead, into the way US society has evolved over the last few decades. Millions of Americans have seen their livelihoods either entirely collapse or be threatened by economic forces which they neither understand or control. For example, they (and Donald Trump) blame Mexico and China for the loss of American jobs, but no one is taking the trouble to point out to them that the bulk of the products that China, for example, exports to the United States are being produced by US or multinational corporations who opted to move their operations outside the US in order to take advantage of cheap labor opportunities. In the meantime, wages in the US have remained stagnant over the course of the last 25 years for the great majority of the population, while the economy has grown considerably. But the economic gains end up almost exclusively in the hands of a tiny corporate and financial elite, which also controls the political agenda.

“Trumpism” and disingenuous populism represent the future of American politics, especially since the economic policies that the Trump administration will implement will surely further deteriorate the state of inequality in this country and thus do nothing to ameliorate anger and anxiety about the future, which were the driving forces that sent so many people into Donald Trump’s arms.

Note: This interview has been condensed and edited for concision.

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What Is Participatory Economics? An Interview With Michael Albert



Photo: youtube.com

Participatory economics has long been proposed as an alternative to capitalism and centralized planning. It remains, nonetheless, a misunderstood concept and continues to find opposition among both capitalists and anticapitalists. So, what exactly is “participatory economics” and how does it fit with the socialist vision of a classless society? In this interview, Michael Albert, founder of *Z Magazine* and one of the leading advocates of the movement toward a “participatory society” addresses key questions about capitalism, socialism and the implications of a participatory economy.

C.J. Polychroniou: Any discussion of economic systems revolves essentially around

two apparently opposed poles — capitalism and socialism. In reality, however, most of the actually existing economies in the modern world have been “mixed economies.” Be that as it may, what’s your understanding of capitalism, and what are the distinguished features of socialism?

Michael Albert: Capitalism is an economic system in which people own workplaces and resources, employ workers for wages to produce outputs and overwhelmingly employ market allocation to mediate how the outputs are dispersed. Typically also, and I would say inevitably if it has the first two features, it will also have what I call a corporate division of labor in which about 80 percent of the workforce does overwhelmingly rote, obedient and mainly disempowering tasks, and the other 20 percent monopolizes empowering tasks. Income will be a function of property and bargaining power.

In my view, there are, therefore, three main classes in capitalism: a working class doing the disempowering work [whose members] have low income and nearly no influence; a capitalist class that employs workers, sells their product and tries to reap profits, and which, due to those profits, enjoys tremendous wealth and dominant power; and a coordinator class situated between the other two, doing the empowering work, and, due to that, having the power to accrue high income and substantial influence.

Socialism is trickier to pinpoint. For some it is an economy in which those who produce decide all the outcomes, so it is classless, or, if you like, has only one class, the workers, all of whom have the same overall economic status. For others, socialism is a society with a polity that greatly influences economic outcomes on behalf of the public, even while owners still reap profits. For still others, socialism is an economy that has public or state ownership plus central planning or markets for allocation.

I think this last is what socialism in practice has been, plus having a corporate division of labor that arises inexorably due to its forms of allocation but is also preferred, plus an authoritarian polity. However, I call this type of economy “coordinatorism” for the clear and obvious reason that its institutions eliminate capitalist ownership but elevate the 20 percent coordinator class to ruling status. Out with the old boss: the owner, the capitalist class; in with the new boss: managers, doctors, lawyers and so on, the coordinator class.

So, if you like socialism because you hope for classlessness, you are pretty likely

nowadays to have in mind some kind of worker-controlled economy but typically without offering clarification of what institutions can deliver that.

If you don't like the idea of full classlessness — either fearing that it would be dysfunctional or wishing to maintain coordinator class advantages — as socialism, you likely have in mind some variant on classical Marxist coordinatorist formulations.

I prefer classlessness — which, in my mind, is like preferring freedom to servitude — but I also see a need to have an institutional vision able to give it substance, which is what participatory economics, or if you prefer, participatory socialism tries to provide.

“Actually existing socialism” failed because, to a large extent, it was an authoritarian political system, the economy was guided from above, and social and cultural freedom was dictated from party apparatchiks. In your view, was this system salvageable, or was its downfall inevitable and necessary?

The latter, but I would like to clarify the picture just a bit.

I don't think “actually existing socialism” had an OK economy, for example, that was made unacceptable by a repressive or authoritarian state. I think “actually existing socialism,” or “20th-century socialism” or socialism as it is outlined in almost every serious scholarly presentation that goes beyond just positive adjectives, includes either markets (sometimes), or central planning (more often), a corporate division of labor, remuneration for output or bargaining power and some other less critical economic features. Then, in an actual country, it must, of course, also have an associated political system, kinship arrangements, cultural institutions and so on. And yes, those latter will all have to be at least compatible with the economic features or the society will be in turmoil, and one political arrangement strongly consistent with a central planning “actually existing socialism” model, is an authoritarian government.

So the best version of this socialism would be market allocation, public ownership and a parliamentary government. The worst version would be centrally planned allocation, state ownership and an authoritarian government or outright dictatorship. But again, the problem with the economics of both these options is not that it is neutral or good and only made bad by other institutions imposing. The economic aspects are intrinsically bad. They intrinsically elevate a coordinator class above workers, rather than generating classlessness.

In any contemporary discussions of alternative economic systems, there is

considerable emphasis on the need for participatory economics. What exactly is participatory economics, and does it fit under both capitalism and socialism?

Participatory economics proposes just a few key institutions for a new way of conducting economics. It starts with worker- and consumer-councils as decision-making bodies and elevates the idea that each participant in economic life should have a say over outcomes in proportion as they are affected by them — which it calls “self-management.”

It then proposes a new way to define jobs to generate a new division of labor, which is called “balanced job complexes.” This combines tasks into jobs so that each person working in the economy does a mix of tasks in their daily labors such that the “empowerment effect” of each worker’s situation is equal to that of every other worker’s situation, which eliminates the basis for a coordinator-class/working-class division.

Next, participatory economics proposes a new equitable basis for earning income. Instead of our incomes being determined by property ownership, bargaining power or even the value of our product, it should derive only from how hard we work, how long we work and the onerousness of the conditions under which we work at socially useful production.

And finally, participatory economics utilizes participatory planning instead of markets or central planning. Markets and central planning are horrendously destructive of equity, ecological sustainability, sociality and people’s ability and even inclination to control their own lives — and also entirely contrary to our other positive aims, noted above. In contrast, participatory planning is a process of collective negotiation of inputs and outputs in light of their full social, personal and ecological costs and benefits. The process has no center, no top, no bottom and conveys self-managing say to all participants. It literally augments rather than destroys solidarity, diversity, equity and collective self-management.

Of course, the above very condensed presentation of participatory economics isn’t enough to be compelling, nor does it address issues of attaining the goal, but perhaps it at least suggests that this alternative bears attention. There are many places online and in book-length presentations, videos and the like to look to see more, so one can more fully assess for oneself.

Does participatory economics support or undermine private property?

Of course, in a participatory economy, you would still own your shirt, and

countless other such items. Your phone is yours. Your violin is yours, and so on. But I assume you are referring to people owning means of production like natural resources, assembly lines, the tools used in workplaces and the workplaces themselves, and participatory economics doesn't really support or undermine that — it literally totally eliminates it.

Participatory economics institutions simply do not involve any of the aspects of private ownership of productive profits. There are no profits since income is only for duration, intensity and onerousness of socially valued labor. There is no personal control of asset use since decisions are made via collective self-management. If Joe actually had a deed to a workplace in a participatory economy, it would give Joe precisely zero returns — material, organizational or social — so, of course, such deeds will not exist.

What do you envision to be the role of the state under participatory economics?

There is a parallel vision, if you will, of participatory politics. Stephen Shalom and I are key proponents of this vision of a future polity operating alongside a participatory economy. This polity would still legislate laws for the population, adjudicate disputes, handle various kinds of security issues and deal with various “executive” matters of implementation. For example, it would oversee the Centers for Disease Control, since it would need some special executive powers not common to less governmental and solely economic institutions — but it would also operate like other workplaces, of course.

In each case, there would be major changes, not least due to having participatory economic relations in the structure of government institutions and in their purposes and agendas.

If you think of the economy and the polity — and kinship and culture too — as being like schools that impact the lives and views of their participants, it becomes clear why they must be compatible. It would be dysfunctional and disruptive to have the polity producing people with values, habits and expectations contrary to those which the economy they must engage with needs to operate, just as it would be dysfunctional and disruptive to have an economy producing people with values, habits and expectations contrary to what the polity they must engage with needs to operate.

It is not for us to decide future people's daily lives. It is for us to deliver to future people a set of institutions that let them make those decisions themselves.

Assuming that participatory economics is feasible and widespread within a given social formation, what model of democracy would be appropriate for this type of an economy?

Political participatory self-management, which is a set of nested assemblies (neighborhood, county, state and national) that become the primary seat of government legislative and executive decision-making. They are organized to deliver influence to individuals and constituencies in proportion as they are affected.

Workers' cooperatives are spreading in various parts of the world, with certain regions of Spain and Italy having developed rather extensive networks of cooperative enterprises. Are such developments consistent with the type of participatory economics that you advocate?

Yes, but there are also pitfalls possible. That is, when workers take over a plant, their act is potentially moving toward a participatory economic future. Even more so if they make their income policies equitable. Still more so, if they institute balanced job complexes. And finally, yet more so, if they start to override market pressures by negotiating just outcomes with other units and consumers.

On the other hand, if they retain the old corporate division of labor, then in time, a coordinator class will dominate outcomes and dissolve their other achievements. This points up the importance of institutional choices. What we want matters greatly, of course. But so do the arrangements we adopt. If we want classlessness, for example, but we adopt a corporate division of labor and/or markets or central planning, those choices will overcome our good intentions.

Does a desire to attain participatory economics in a participatory society have any implications for the present?

To win a new society, what we choose to do in the present has to lead toward what we want for the future: we must plant the seeds of the future in the present.

Wanting participatory economics means we want classlessness and we want some very specific defining institutions. Our own organizations should therefore reflect these desires, move us toward them and be consistent with arriving at them.

This is easier said than done. Sometimes we create a political institution with participatory intentions that then devolves toward authoritarian results. Or we develop a movement against capitalist profit-seeking, but we make it top-heavy with coordinator class leadership and values, and so we wind up not with

participatory economics, but with our movement either unravelling due to insufficient worker support (due to workers being alienated by the movement's coordinator bias) or with our movement winning a coordinatorist economy, but not participatory economics.

In each institution, we must ask: How should decisions be made? How should work be divided among participants? How should remuneration be organized? And how should the organization relate to other organizations? Participatory economics provides norms and aims for each of these choices.

One more point on this. If a particular set of aims becomes prominent on the left, this implies it will impact various decisions and choices in the present. When movements going into the late sixties became collectively explicitly committed to reducing and eliminating racism and sexism in society, it meant that movement organizations and projects could no longer have racist and sexist internal roles and allotments of tasks. This was, of course, positive but also no small implication and actually engendered considerable turmoil with established whites and men reticent, shall we say, about the changes, and the task isn't even fully resolved to this day.

My point is, the same kind of dynamic would follow from participatory economics becoming a shared guiding priority for movements. It would mean that movement organizations and projects could no longer have classist internal roles and allotments of tasks — but in this case, that would mean they would have to become collectively self-managing and have to have all participants able to fully contribute, which would in turn mean adopting balanced job complexes. But that transformation would mean people who currently dominate our projects and movements would have to become participants like all others, something they would not all welcome, partly for reasons of simple class interest trying to block a decline in personal income and influence, and partly sincerely believing that it would harm the projects.

So people who run left institutions have deep and powerful reasons to want to prevent participatory economics from becoming a widely shared aim since, if it did, that would lead in relatively rapid time to a kind of revolution within the left, not unlike the sexual and racial revolutions within the left, but this time about class — and not anti-owners, but about eliminating the class hierarchy between workers and coordinators, which would mean implementing balanced job

complexes. This dynamic within left media makes it hard for participatory economics to get a wide and serious hearing.

One final question: What type of economic policies do you think will be implemented by the Trump administration?

I think he actually probably does want to do major infrastructure overhaul, but, other than that, and as a higher priority, he wants to elevate corporate dominance of government policy even further than what already exists, and, most devastating, he wants to ignore and even worsen global warming and other similar potentially devastating ecological trends.

How successful this all is will depend, of course, on how unrelenting his opposition will prove to be. Progressives and radicals must amass the strongest and most sustained possible opposition across all relevant constituencies.

Note: This interview has been lightly edited for concision.

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C.J. Polychroniou is a political economist/political scientist who has taught and worked in universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. His main research interests are in European economic integration, globalization, the political economy of the United States and the deconstruction of neoliberalism's politico-economic project. He is a regular contributor to Truthout as well as a member of Truthout's Public Intellectual Project. He has published several books and his articles have appeared in a variety of journals, magazines, newspapers and popular news websites. Many of his publications have been translated into several foreign languages, including Croatian, French, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish.

David Kenning ~ Spinoza -

Philosopher Of Counter-Radicalization

Read: <http://rozenbergquarterly.com/spinoza-the-philosopher-of-counter-radicalization/>

Amsterdamse Spinoza Kring: <http://www.amsterdamespinozakring.nl/>

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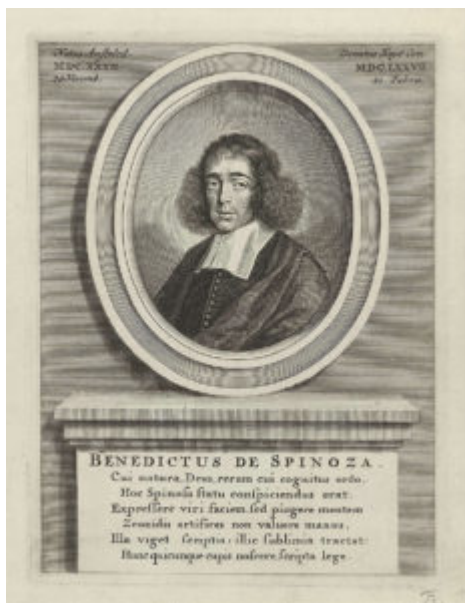
~ Paul Bell - Isis and Violent Extremism: Is the West's Counter-Narrative Making the Problem worse? *Influence:* <http://influence.cipr.co.uk/isis-violent-extremism->

~ David Ignatius - The Islamic State feeds off Western Islamophobia ~ *Washington Post*

Post:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/the-islamic-state-is-fueled-by-islamophobia>

The Spinoza Web



The Spinoza Web is a website that seeks to make the Dutch philosopher Benedictus de Spinoza (1632-1677) accessible to a wide range of users from interested novices to advanced scholars, and everything in between. It is a continually developing, active project whose success depends on its users. Please contact us with feedback, suggestions, and ideas!

At present our website offers two points of entry. The *'Timeline Experience'* tells the story of Spinoza, using rich graphic and other supporting material through

which the user can navigate to enter and experience his very world. The *'Database Search'* is a gateway to an enormous repository for the study of Spinoza, whose goal is eventually to assemble all first-hand documentation pertaining to him. Attractively designed without compromising on scholarly standards, our website promotes a source-based contextual approach to Spinoza who, revered and reviled, has had countless rumours and myths attached to his name over the course of the centuries.

'Spinoza's web'-project

The Spinoza Web is a creation of the ['Spinoza's Web'](#)-project of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Utrecht University, funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). It traces back to an early initiative of its main executive, [Jeroen van de Ven](#), and was implemented by the project's principal investigator, [Piet Steenbakkers](#), who had entertained a long-time wish for a website dedicated to Spinoza. In 2014 postdoctoral researcher [Albert Gootjes](#) joined their ranks in a largely advisory capacity. Later that year the team commissioned the Rotterdam-based advertising agency [Nijgh](#), which gladly welcomed the new challenge of combining creative inspiration with scholarly rigour.

Beta release

After extensive planning and user tests, November 2016 saw the beta release of The Spinoza Web, notably featuring the *'Timeline Experience'* and *Database* with entries largely based on the historical and bibliographical research by Jeroen van de Ven. Subsequent releases are scheduled to boost the *'Database Search'* by making available in open access Spinoza's writings both in their original editions and in an authoritative English translation. Further plans include the addition of an interactive element facilitating Spinoza studies. To help us realize our pursuits, we welcome all contributions including but not limited to financial support. Potential contributors are encouraged to get in touch using the [Contact page](#).

See: <http://spinozaweb.org/>

We Stand For Peace And Justice ~ Petition



We see an organized anti worker, anti minority, anti immigrant, anti woman, anti LGBTQ, anti ecological, pro imperial, incarceration minded, surveillance employing, authoritarian reaction proliferating around the world. It calls itself right wing populist but is arguably more accurately termed neofascist. It

preys on fear as well as often warranted anger. It manipulates and misleads with false promises and outright lies. It is trying to create an international alliance. Courageous responses are emerging and will proliferate around issue after issue, and in country after country. These responses will challenge the unworthy emotions, the vicious lies, and the vile policies. They will reject right wing rollback and repression. But to ward off an international, multi issue, reactionary assault shouldn't we be internationalist and multi issue? Shouldn't we reject reaction but also seek positive, forward looking, inspiring progress? To those ends:

We stand for the growing activism on behalf of progressive change around the world, and their positive campaigns for a better world, and we stand against the rising reactionary usurpers of power around the world and their lies, manipulations, and policies.

We stand for peace, human rights, and international law against the conditions, mentalities, institutions, weapons and dissemination of weapons that breed and nurture war and injustice.

We stand for healthcare, education, housing, and jobs against war and military spending.

We stand for internationalism, indigenous, and native rights, and a democratic foreign policy against empire, dictatorship, and political and religious fundamentalism.

We stand for justice against economic, political, and cultural institutions that promote huge economic and power inequalities, corporate domination, privatization, wage slavery, racism, gender and sexual hierarchy, and the devolution of human kindness and wisdom under assault by celebrated authority and enforced passivity.

We stand for democracy and autonomy against authoritarianism and subjugation. We stand for prisoner rights against prison profiteering. We stand for participation against surveillance. We stand for freedom and equity against repression and control.

We stand for national sovereignty against occupation and apartheid. We oppose overtly brutal regimes everywhere. We oppose less overtly brutal but still horribly constricting electoral subversion, government and corporate surveillance, and mass media manipulation.

We stand for equity against exploitation by corporations of their workers and consumers and by empires of subordinated countries. We stand for solidarity of and with the poor and the excluded everywhere.

We stand for diversity against homogeneity and for dignity against racism. We stand for multi-cultural, internationalist, community rights, against cultural, economic, and social repression of immigrants and other subordinated communities in our own countries and around the world.

We stand for gender equality against misogyny and machismo. We stand for sexual freedom against sexual repression, homogenization, homophobia, and transphobia.

We stand for ecological wisdom against the destruction of forests, soil, water, environmental resources, and the biodiversity on which all life depends. We stand for ecological sanity against ecological suicide.

We stand for a world whose political, economic, and social institutions foster solidarity, promote equity, maximize participation, celebrate diversity, and encourage full democracy.

We will not be a least common denominator single issue or single focus coalition. We will be a massive movement of movements with a huge range of concerns,

ideas, and aims, united by what we stand for and against.

We will enjoy and be strengthened by shared respect and mutual aid while we together reject sectarian hostilities and posturing.

We stand for and pledge to work for peace and justice.

We the initial signers of this “We Stand” statement, listed to the left of this page, upon reaching a critical mass of total signers will consult all signers and collectively discuss and use vote tallying from all signers to join with many other emerging efforts to arrive at more specific demands for warding off reaction, winning worthy gains in the present, and developing grounds upon which to pursue more fundamental changes in the future.

Gaining further numbers, we will all together begin, if we haven’t already, coalescing with our neighbors and work and schoolmates to explore how to best fight against reaction and for our positive demands.

After culling significant shared experiences if possible we will begin to hold gatherings and even conventions in our various countries to join with others to create lasting organizational vehicles and program to continue pursuing our collective agendas.

We initial signers, will seek support, promote unity, and collectively facilitate the emergence of effective means for collective participatory policy-making and program development by all signers as best we can.

Go to: <https://www.standforpeaceandjustice.org/>