

Minouche Shafik - Samen - Een nieuw sociaal contract voor de 21e eeuw



*Minouche Shafik - Ills.:
Joseph Sassoon Semah*

‘Wij hebben een nieuw sociaal contract nodig dat beter in elkaar zit, dat zekerheid en kansen biedt voor iedereen. Een sociaal contract dat minder gaat over ‘mij’ en meer over ‘wij’, dat onze onderlinge afhankelijkheid onderkent en daar tot ons wederzijds profijt gebruik van maakt.’

Het huidige sociale contract staat onder druk. Het is het moment om tot een eerlijker sociaal contract te komen, het lijkt alsof we het huidige neoliberalisme in bepaalde mate achter ons willen laten, aldus Minouche Shafik. Ons sociaal contract is bezwaken onder de druk van technologische en demografische veranderingen. Ze hebben onze wereld ingrijpend getransformeerd, met gevolgen voor inkomensverschillen, gendergelijkheid, onderwijs, gezondheidszorg en werk. We leven steeds vaker in een je-staat-er-alleen voor samenleving, hetgeen niet alleen onrechtvaardig is, maar ook veel minder efficiënt en productief dan wanneer de risico's worden gespreid over de hele samenleving.

Minouche Shafik neemt ons mee door de stadia van het leven- opvoeden van

kinderen, volgen van onderwijs, ziek worden, oud worden- en maakt duidelijk hoe we onze samenleving in elk stadium en op elk niveau kunnen herordenen.

Ze pleit voor zekerheid voor iedereen middels een gegarandeerd minimuminkomen, recht op onderwijs, basisgezondheidszorg en bescherming tegen armoede tijdens de ouderdom.

Ze pleit voor een maximaal investeren in capaciteiten zodat de productiviteit wordt verhoogd, onder andere met hulp van digitale techniek in bijvoorbeeld de gezondheidszorg.

Er is ook veel ongebruikt talent van opgeleide vrouwen, minderheden en kinderen uit arme gezinnen. En ze pleit voor een eerlijke en efficiënte spreiding van risico's. In het toekomstige sociaal contract zal toenemende flexibiliteit in arbeidskrachten gecombineerd moeten worden met meer zekerheid. Jonge mensen moeten worden erkend in een sociaal contract tussen de generaties, zij die nu leven moeten iets doen aan de erfenis van milieuschade (we hebben een veel te grote aanslag op het milieu gepleegd) en staatsschulden.

Iedereen moet zo lang mogelijk een bijdrage leveren aan de samenleving en burgers zullen ook meer verantwoordelijkheid moeten nemen voor hun gezondheid.

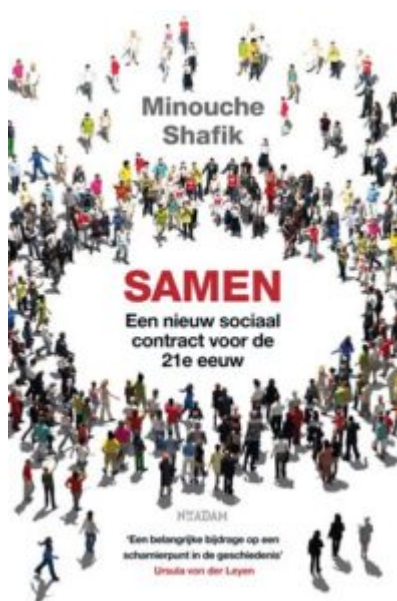
Ze stelt zichzelf de vraag hoe we nieuw sociaal contract moeten financieren in een richting die haalbaar is. Betekent een nieuw sociaal contract een enorme toename van de overheidsuitgaven en een sterke verhoging van de belastingen om een gesubsidieerde kinderopvang, voorschoolse educatie en permanente scholing, toegankelijke gezondheidszorg en een staatspensioen mogelijk te maken? Shafik ziet een deel van deze uitgaven als investering, die in de toekomst hogere belastinginkomsten zullen genereren, maar ook het milieu zullen verbeteren. Dat biedt de mogelijkheid kapitaal te lenen. Een aantal posten keren echter steeds terug, zoals pensioenen en een deel van de gezondheidszorg. Deze kosten moeten daarom worden gefinancierd uit belastingheffing, tenminste in de hoogontwikkelde landen.

Om de klimaatverandering af te remmen moeten we Co2-belasting heffen.

Een nieuw sociaal contract vraagt ook een andere rol van overheid en bedrijfsleven. Het bedrijfsleven zou zich moeten richten op meer winnaars door te investeren in onderwijs en vaardigheden, door achtergebleven regio's te voorzien van een betere infrastructuur en door innovatie en productiviteit te bevorderen. De overheid zal verantwoordelijk moeten zijn voor een minimaal stelsel van

voorzieningen, die iedereen beschermen tegen grote tegenslagen en die worden betaald uit de belastingen, aldus Shafik. De belastingdruk moet verschuiven zodat een gelijk spelveld ontstaat tussen kapitaal en arbeid. Er moet worden opgetreden tegen het ontwijken van vennootschapsbelasting.

De ontwikkeling van het sociaal contract is in de meeste landen afhankelijk van de structuur van het politieke bestel, de effectiviteit van de controlerende mechanismen, de opkomst van politieke coalities en de kansen die voortkomen uit crises, zoals nu de coronacrisis, waarbij vooral de meest kwetsbaren lijden onder de pandemie en het heeft laten zien wat de zwakke plekken zijn van de gezondheidszorg en ouderenzorg. Landen met een presidentieel en meerderheidsstelsel en autoritaire regimes kennen meestal een kleiner overheidsapparaat en een minder genereus sociaal contract. Er zijn minder prikkels om rekening te houden met minderheden. Landen met een stelsel van evenredige vertegenwoordiging en die inclusiever zijn bieden de beste kansen voor een goed functionerend sociaal contract.



De coalitie voor een nieuw sociaal contract is in potentie groot en divers. Jonge mensen zijn gemobiliseerd door middel van acties voor een beter milieu en de mogelijkheden van een levenslang onderwijstegoed, als compensatie voor wat ze zijn kwijtgeraakt. Mensen zonder vast contract zullen vaker om zekerheid, opleidingen en omscholingsmogelijkheden gaan vragen. Het belang van een toegankelijke gezondheidszorg, het aanmoedigen van preventiemaatregelen zijn aangetoond in de pandemie.

In *Samen* draagt Minouche Shafik de bouwstenen aan voor een nieuw sociaal contract, waarin meer onze onderlinge afhankelijkheden wordt onderkend, meer in mensen wordt geïnvesteerd, maar ook meer van individuen wordt verwacht.

Minouche Shafik - *Samen. Een nieuw sociaal contract voor de 21 e eeuw.* Uitgeverij Nieuw Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 2021. ISBN: 9789046826799

Minouche Shafik is directeur van de London School of Economics and Political Science. Ze was vicepresident van de Wereldbank en bekleedde hoge posities bij

het IMF en de Bank of England.

Zie ook:

Professor Amartya Sen, Lamont University Professor and Professor of Economics and Philosophy, Harvard, deliver a Distinguished Public Lecture on 18 January 2017 in the Sheldonian Theatre: *Democracy and Social Decisions*

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The World Trade Organization Is Threatening Vaccine Equity And Climate Goals



Jayati Ghosh - Photo:
en.wikipedia.org

The huge COVID-19 vaccine supply gap between rich and poor countries exposes the deadly problem of intellectual property (IP) rights and the dangerous monopoly power of Big Pharma. It also exposes in glaring terms the failures of the

entire system of global trading rules regulated by the World Trade Organization (WTO). In this exclusive interview for *Truthout*, Jayati Ghosh, one of the world's leading development economists, dissects the question of intellectual property rights relating to vaccines and argues that the WTO is a vehicle for international imperialism. Ghosh taught economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for nearly 35 years, and has been professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst since 2021. This year, the United Nations named her to be on the High-Level Advisory Board on Economics and Social Affairs.

C.J. Polychroniou: The COVID-19 health disaster brought to the surface a multitude of issues, problems and faults associated with the workings of a capitalist world, not least of which are the rules of the WTO overintellectual property rights relating to vaccines. What are the facts and the myths behind WTO's intellectual property rules?

Jayati Ghosh: Intellectual property is governed at the global level by a World Trade Organization treaty called the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement. This agreement was itself the result of active corporate lobbying: [Susan Sell has provided a detailed and devastating account](#) of how 12 powerful men from pharma, software and entertainment effectively lobbied to make the U.S. government insist on inclusion of this agreement in the set of agreements negotiated at the Uruguay Round of GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), which was signed in 1994. The TRIPS agreement intervened in legal systems of all member countries, by putting the burden of proof on the accused rather than the accuser, adopting a much looser definition of "invention" that allowed much more private control of knowledge, and then by making all the rules much stricter and more stringent so that it became much easier to claim infringement. This effectively grants a monopoly over knowledge that companies can use to limit production and increase their own market power. Over the past decades, this has become a major limitation on the dissemination of knowledge and technology for the common good, and essentially benefited large companies who now hold most of the IP rights in the world.

Patents and other intellectual property rules are usually seen as providing a necessary financial reward for invention/innovation, without which technological change would either not occur or be more limited. The pharma industry argues that costs of developing new drugs are very high and there are high risks involved, because the drugs may not succeed even after years of effort, and so

they must be granted property rights over this knowledge and be allowed to charge high prices thereafter.

But actually, pharma companies typically only do the “last mile” research for most drugs, vaccines and therapeutics: the bulk of the research — not just the basic science, but also more advanced discoveries that enable breakthroughs — is publicly funded. Big companies increasingly just acquire promising compounds and other knowledge from labs and smaller companies that benefit from public investments. Pharma companies in the U.S., for example, have [spent relatively little on R&D](#) — much less than they spend on advertising and marketing, and a small fraction of what they pay out to shareholders or spend in share buybacks designed to increase stock prices.

In addition, in the specific case of COVID-19 vaccines, big pharma companies not only [benefited from prior publicly funded research](#) and reduced costs of clinical testing because of more unpaid volunteers for trials, they received massive subsidies from governments that have mostly covered their R&D costs. In the U.S. alone, the [six major vaccine companies received over \\$12 billion in public subsidies](#); other rich-country governments also provided subsidies to these companies for developing these vaccines. Yet the companies were granted exclusive rights over this knowledge, which they are now using to limit supply and keep prices high even as the global pandemic rages on in the developing world.

Consider the AstraZeneca vaccine, developed by a publicly funded lab in Oxford University. The original distribution model was for an open-license platform, designed to make the vaccine freely available for any manufacturer. However, the Gates Foundation, which had donated \$750 million to Oxford for health-related research, persuaded the university to sign [an exclusive vaccine deal with AstraZeneca](#) that gave the pharmaceutical giant sole rights. The company promised not to make profits on the vaccine during the pandemic, but because of the competition for doses and opacity in contracts, the [range of reported prices of vaccines is vast](#), from \$2.19 to as much as \$40 per dose. The major pharma companies producing COVID-19 vaccines are already estimating massive super-profits in 2021 because of the artificially created shortage [effected by the] control over knowledge.

In October 2020, South Africa and India proposed a waiver of IP rights for COVID-19 vaccines. In an unexpected but welcome move, the Biden

administration also backed the waiver and encouraged other countries to do the same on account of some extraordinary circumstances at play. The move has now received support from over 120 countries, but it has been opposed by pharmaceutical companies. Should the waiver be temporary, or apply permanently to all private patents on technologies, knowledge and vaccines related to COVID-19 and vital medicines?

India and South Africa requested the WTO to allow all countries to choose to neither grant nor enforce patents and other IP related to COVID-19 drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, and other technologies for the duration of the pandemic, until global herd immunity is achieved. This waiver would apply only to COVID-19-related vaccines, drugs and treatments; it does not mean a waiver from all TRIPS obligations. They could also more easily collaborate in research and development, technology transfer, manufacturing, scaling up and supplying COVID-19 tools.

This is a very limited demand, which develops the argument already in the TRIPS agreement that intellectual property rules can be waived “in exceptional circumstances.” All it does is to protect countries from having trade-dispute mechanisms brought against them by rich country governments in the WTO — it does not ensure the transfer of the required knowledge, for which further measures are required: for example, by governments forcing the companies that benefited from public subsidies to share their technology with other producers.

Some argue that the TRIPS agreement already contains a clause on compulsory licensing by countries that do have production capacity that provides flexibility on patents. But this is too limited in scope and time-consuming, since it must be done item-by-item between companies, and could then be subject to disputes in the WTO.

Even this very limited demand is being fought tooth-and-nail by pharma companies (and consequently by some rich country governments). It is good news that President Biden has dropped U.S. opposition to this waiver, but several European governments with big pharma companies are still opposing it. This is surprising, because such suspension would also benefit their own populations if it made available more vaccines quickly, and larger supply would reduce costs of additional vaccines, making them cheaper for governments and taxpayers across the world, with hopes of finally bringing the pandemic under control.

This is a system that is broken and needs to be fixed urgently. The only beneficiaries are big pharma companies — people across the world suffer, and so do other businesses, as economic activity cannot recover as long as the virus continues to spread and destroy lives and livelihoods. The current demand for a waiver applies only to this pandemic, but it is clear that the entire system of health-related innovation, which is really subsidized and funded by the public, must be restructured to make sure that it operates for public benefit across the world. Otherwise, future health threats will also be hard to combat collectively. Even the recent report of the UN Secretary General's [High-Level Panel on Access to Medicines](#) had recommended that governments increase their own investment in health-related innovations and ensure wider access to the outcomes by preventing privatization of the knowledge.

What about trade secrets as a class of protected right for intellectual property rights holders? Should they also be suspended?

The current proposal in the WTO correctly asks for a waiver on all intellectual property related to preventive, diagnostic and treatment tools, because many of the restrictions in supply come from other IP rights like those for industrial design and trade secrets.

For example, it has been estimated that there are around 64 different IP rights involved in the production of the mRNA vaccines, which have been licensed to Moderna and Pfizer — but new producers would then have to also apply for all of these licenses. A waiver would solve that problem. But, I repeat that the TRIPS waiver is only a first step. It does not ensure that the requisite knowledge will be shared — for that, further pressure needs to be applied by governments to the concerned companies.

It has been argued that WTO rules restrict the policy space of developing countries in particular. How so, and does world trade really need the World Trade Organization?

The TRIPS agreement is a particularly extreme example of how the WTO rules affect the policy space of developing countries, but it is by no means the only one. Many agreements of the WTO operate to restrict development policies of countries, including many of the strategies that were adopted by the rich countries when they were at earlier stages of development. Most industrialized

countries protected their “infant industries,” from the U.K. in the 16th and 17th centuries, the U.S. in the 18th and 19th century, and Germany in the 19th century, to Japan, South Korea, and most recently, China in the 20th century. Yet most of the policies they adopted are no longer permitted by the WTO and its various agreements.

Even concerns like preventing hunger and ensuring food security for a poor population are under threat. When India sought to implement a National Food Security Act that would ensure access to minimum food grain provision among the poor population by procuring this from farmers and selling at a slightly subsidized price to poor households, it immediately faced a dispute against it in the WTO brought by the U.S. government. This dispute relied on detailed wording in the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, which prevents this even though it allows the U.S. to spend many times that amount in providing food stamps to its own poor population. India had to struggle to obtain a “Peace Clause” to allow it to continue its public food distribution program, but the dispute still hangs over it.

Similarly, developed countries keep demanding that developing countries also reduce their carbon emissions (even though their per capita emissions are tiny compared to those of the Global North). But when they try to promote renewable energy by providing subsidies, they once again face cases in the WTO. Both China and India have had to deal with disputes brought by the WTO against the subsidies they have provided to solar and wind energy producers. So even globally desirable environmental goals are threatened by the way that the WTO functions.

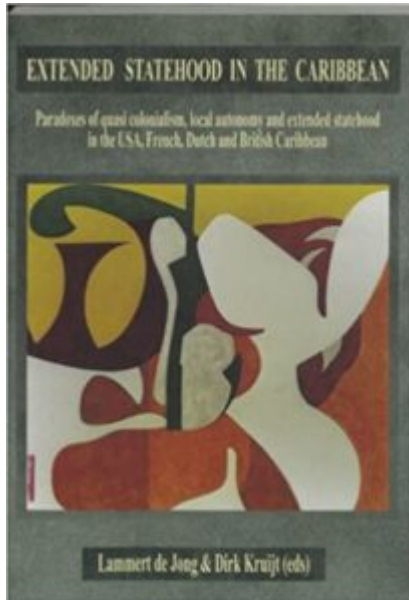
It is true that in an unequal world in which economic and geopolitical power is so unevenly distributed, multilateralism is always better than a situation in which the powerful players can pick on weaker countries individually. But the way in which the WTO has functioned raises serious questions about its ability to rectify these power imbalances. Instead, it has often been one of the various ways in which the international legal architecture operates to support imperialism.

Source: <https://truthout.org/articles/the-world-trade-organization>

C.J. Polychroniou is a political economist/political scientist who has taught and worked in numerous universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. Currently, his main research interests are in European economic

integration, globalization, climate change, 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 scores of 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 Arabic, Croatian, Dutch, French, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Turkish. His latest books are [*Optimism Over Despair: Noam Chomsky On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change*](#), an anthology of interviews with Chomsky originally published at *Truthout* and collected by Haymarket Books; *Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal: The Political Economy of Saving the Planet* (with Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin as primary authors); and *The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic, and the Urgent Need for Radical Change*, an anthology of interviews with Chomsky originally published at *Truthout* and collected by Haymarket Books (scheduled for publication in June 2021).

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colonialism, local autonomy and
extended statehood in the USA,
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Caribbean**



Lammert de Jong & Dirk Kruijt (eds). - *Extended Statehood in the Caribbean Paradoxes of quasi colonialism, local autonomy and extended statehood in the USA, French, Dutch and British Caribbean*
Rozenberg Publishers 2005 - ISBN 90 5170 686 3

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Uit de Inleiding:

Misschien is de belangrijkste trek die alcohol met literatuur gemeen heeft wel zijn sublieme vluchtigheid. Vederlichte extases voor wie een ogenblik aan de verveling van het bestaan wil ontkomen of strategische vervoering om de grenzen van de zwaartekracht te verkennen. Zelfs de zwartste romans uit de naturalistische koker gaan op de tenen lopen als het alcoholpercentage stijgt, en de verschrikkingen van het delirium tremens gaan meestal toch gepaard met zotte spotlachjes of dromen van een overkant. Inspiratie lijkt als twee druppels wodka op een roes en dichterlijke verzen spreken vaak een nostalgie naar het bacchantenleven uit. Het boek en de fles zijn zo een onlosmakelijk duo in schertsende dialoog of in vinnig twistgesprek.

Natuurlijk kent de relatie tussen de letteren en de etherische genoegens van de drank vele varianten, zowel wanneer men langs de lijnen van de geschiedenis kijkt als ook wanneer verschillende culturen nader beschouwd worden. De voorliggende verzameling van rond alcohol gesitueerde essays tracht deze menigvoud steekproefsgewijs in beeld te brengen waarbij trouwens ook de betrokkenheid van de auteur bij de drank kan variëren: van de nuchtere dronkenschap die Sem Dresden Montaigne toedichtte tot de ultieme helderheid van het laatste glas bij Malcolm Lowry.

Wanneer we even de alcohol als decorvulling buiten beschouwing laten (ook al is dan inderdaad het decor vlug overvol gelijk in de western waar we voorvoelen dat het eerste uitgeschonken glas in de bar onherroepelijk leidt tot een vuurgevecht

waarbij alle flessen door de spiegelwand worden geprojecteerd), kunnen we een viertal *mise en scènes* onderkennen die samen de horizon van behoefte, vraag en verlangen afbakenen.

Arij Ouweneel - Gabriel Garcia Marquez 1927 - 2014. Terug naar Macondo - Het spook van Honderd jaar eenzaamheid en het inheemse innerlijk van de Mesties



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Rozenberg Publishers 2007

ISBN 978 90 5170 813 4

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Great Power Competition Is Escalating To Dangerous Levels: An Interview With Richard Falk



Richard Falk

Great power competition has emerged as a key priority for U.S. foreign policy under the Biden administration. In fact, we may be already at the start of a new New Cold War, according to Richard Falk, one of the world's leading scholars in the fields of global politics and international law, in the interview below. Falk has also been a leading activist since the Vietnam war, and has published more than fifty books and thousands of essays. His latest book is a political memoir titled [Public Intellectual: The Life of a Citizen Pilgrim](#) (Clarity Press, 2021). Falk is Professor Emeritus of International Law at Princeton University, where he taught for nearly half a century, and Chair of Global Law at Queen Mary University of London.

C. J. Polychroniou: Richard, US foreign policy under the Biden administration is geared toward escalating the strategic competition with both China and Russia.

Indeed, the Interim National Strategic Guidance, released in March 2021, makes it abundantly clear that the US intends to deter its adversaries from “inhibiting access to global commons, or dominating key regions” and that, moreover, this work cannot be done alone, as was the case under Trump, but will require the reinvigoration and modernization of the alliance system across the world. Does this read to you like a call for the start of a new New Cold War?

Richard Falk: Yes, I would say it is more than ‘the call’ for a New Cold War, but its start. The focus is presently much more China than Russia, because China is seen by Washington as posing the primary threat, and besides, it regards Russia as a traditional rival while China poses novel and more fundamental challenges. Russia, while behaving in an unsavory manner, dramatized by the crude handling of the opposition figure Alexei Navalny, is seen as manageable geopolitically. Euro-American strategy is to stiffen resistance to Russian pressure being exerted along some of its borders, and as in the Cold War can be handled by refurbished versions of ‘containment’ and ‘deterrence.’

China is another matter entirely. The most serious perceived threats are mainly associated with non-military sectors of Western, and particularly, U.S., primacy, its dominance over a dynamic productive economy, especially with respect to frontier technologies. The remarkable developmental dynamism of the Chinese economy has far outstripped anything ever achieved in the West. The United States Government under Biden seems stubbornly blindsided, seemingly determined to address these Chinese threats as if they could be effectively addressed by a combination of ideological confrontation and as with Soviet Union, containment and deterrence. So far, the Biden response is fundamentally mistaken in its approach, which is to view China as a similar adversary than was the Soviet Union. This Chinese challenge cannot be successfully met frontally. It can only be met by a diagnosis of the relative decline of the West by way of self-scrutiny, selective emulation, and a surge of creative adaptive energies. Such a response needs to be accompanied by a reformist agenda of socio-economic equity, massive infrastructure investment, the adoption of fairer wealth and income tax structures, and a commitment to a style of global leadership that identified the national interest to a greater extent with global public goods. Instead of focusing on holding China in check, the United States would do much better by learning from its successes, and adapting them to the distinctiveness of its national circumstances.

It is to be regretted that the present mode of response to China is dangerous and anachronistic for four principal reasons. Firstly, the mischaracterization of the Chinese challenge betrays a lack of self-confidence and understanding by the American Biden/Blinken foreign policy leadership. Secondly, the chosen path of confrontation risks a fateful clash in South China Seas, an area that according to the precepts of traditional geopolitics falls within the Chinese sphere of influence, and a context within which Chinese firmness is perceived as 'defensive' by Beijing while the U.S. military presence is regarded as intrusive, if not 'hegemonic.' These perceptions are aggravated by the U.S. effort to augment its role as upholding alliance commitments in South Asia, recently reaffirmed by a clear anti-Chinese animus in the shape of the QUAD (Australia, Japan, India, and the U.S.), formally named Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, which despite the euphemism intends to signify enhanced military cooperation and shared security concerns.

Thirdly, the longtime U.S. military superiority in the Pacific region may not reflect the current regional balance of forces in the East and South China Seas. Pentagon public assertions have been sounding the alarm, insisting that in the event of a military confrontation, China would likely come out on top unless the U.S. resorts to nuclear weapons. According to an article written by Admiral Charles Richard, who currently heads National Strategic Command, this assessment has been confirmed by recent Pentagon war games and conflict simulations.

Taking account of this view, Admiral Richard advises that U.S. preparations for such an armed encounter be changed from the possibility recourse to nuclear weaponry to its probability. The implicit assumption, which is scary, is that U.S. must do whatever it takes to avoid an unacceptable political outcome even if it requires crossing the nuclear threshold. It may be instructive to recall the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 when Soviet moves to deploy defensive missile systems in Cuba in response to renewed U.S. intervention to impose regime change. It is instructive to recall that Cuba was accepted as independent sovereign state entitled under international law to uphold its national security as it sees fit, while Taiwan has been consistently falling within the historical limits of Chinese territorial sovereignty. The credibility of the Chinese claim was given diplomatic weight in the Shanghai point Communiqué that re-established U.S./China relations in 1972. Kissinger recalled that in the negotiations leading to a renewal of bilateral relations the greatly admired Chinese Foreign Minister, Chou En-Lai,

was flexible on every issue except Taiwan. That is, China has a strong legal and historical basis for reclaiming Taiwan as an integral part of its sovereign territory considering its armed severance from China as a result of Japanese imperialism. China governed the area now known as Taiwan from 1683-1895. In 1895 it was conquered and ruled by Japan until 1945 when it was reabsorbed and became a part of the Republic of China. After 1949 when the Chinese Communists took over control of China, Taiwan was renamed Republic of China on Taiwan. From the Chinese perspective, this historical past upholds the basic contention that Taiwan is part of China and not entitled to be treated as a separate state.

Fourthly, and maybe decisively, the international claims on the energies and resources of the United States are quite different than they were during the Old Cold War. There was no impending catastrophe resulting from climate change to worry about or decaying infrastructure desperately needing expensive repair or under-investment in social protection by government in the area of health, housing, and education.

CJP: Isn't it possible that the approach of the Biden administration to the future environment of great power competition could lead to the formation of a Russia-China military alliance, especially since alliance formation constitutes a key element of state interaction? Indeed, Vladimir Putin has already said that the prospect of such partnership is "theoretically... quite possible," so the question is this: What would be the implications for global order if a Sino-Russian military alliance were to be formed?

RF: I think we are in a period of renewed alliance diplomacy recalling the feverish attempts of the United States to surround the Soviet Union with deployed military forces, which was a way of communicating to Moscow that the Soviet Union could not expand their borders territorially without anticipating a military encounter with the United States. At first glance, alliances conceived in these traditional terms make little sense. Except in Taiwan it is unlikely that China would seek to enlarge its territorial domain by the threat use of force. In this sense, the ad hoc diplomacy of alliance formation, typified by the QUAD seems anachronistic, and could lead to warfare as one among several unintended consequences.

However, realignment as distinct from alliance frameworks does make sense in an international atmosphere in which the United States is trying to confront its

international adversaries with sanctions and a variety of measures of coercive diplomacy that are intended to constrain its policy options. Many states are dependent on international supply chains for energy and food, as well as reliable trade and investment relations. Reverting to the Cold War the Soviet Union was relatively autonomous. This is much less true under present conditions in which the higher densities of interdependence are linked to acute security vulnerability to cyber attacks, and where access to drone technologies and computer knowhow make non-state actors, extremist political movements, and criminal syndicates an increasingly troublesome part of the global political landscape. In such an emergent global setting, traditional reliance on deterrence, defense capabilities, and retaliatory action are often ineffectual, and quite often even counter-productive. The purpose of contemporary patterns of realignment is less to augment defenses against intervention and aggression than to broaden policy options for countries that need to reach beyond their borders to achieve economic viability. Another motivation is to deflect geopolitical bullying tactics intended to isolate adversaries. As China and Russia are being portrayed as the enemies of the West, their alignment with one another makes sense if thought of as a reciprocally beneficial 'security community.' Compared to past configurations of conflictual relations, current geopolitical maneuvers such as realignment are less concerned with weaponry and war and more with attaining developmental stability, intelligence sharing, and reduced vulnerability to the distinctive threats and parameters of the Cyber Age.

The logic of realignment gives to countries like China and Russia opportunities to increase their geopolitical footprint without relying on ideological affinities or coercion. Such a change in the nature of world politics is more broadly evident. For instance, important countries such as Iran and Turkey use realignment as a diplomatic tool to offset pressures and security encroachments by U.S. and Israel. In Iran's case despite radical differences in ideology and governing style it is turning to China and Russia so as to protect its national sovereignty from a range of destabilizing measures adopted by its adversaries. Whereas Turkey, while being devalued as an alliance partner in the NATO context, may be satisfying its overall needs by turning to China and Russia than by sticking to its traditional role of a junior participant in the most potent of Western alliance structures.

CJP: Certain mainstream foreign policy analysts are rehashing old arguments about the US-China competition, in particular, by claiming that this is really an

ideological battle between democracy and authoritarianism. What's your own take on this matter?

RF: I think even more so than in the Cold War the ideological battleground is a smokescreen behind which lurk fears and perceived threats to the Western dominance of the world economy and of innovative military technologies. In the last half century China has already staked a strong claim to have demonstrated a superior development model ('socialism with Chinese characteristics') to that produced in the capitalist United States. This Chinese achievement is quite clearly explained and documented by the outstanding Indian liberal economist, Deepak Nayyar, in his important study, *Asian Resurgence: Diversity in Development* (2019). Great emphasis is placed by Nayyar on the high rate of savings enabling China to finance and strategically manage targeted investment of public funds. Nayyar downplays the role of ideology and stresses these economic factors, as he analyzes the development achievements of 14 countries in Asia.

The reality of the Chinese rise makes a mockery of the triumphalist claims of Francis Fukuyama in *The End of History and The Last Man* (1992), even more so in George W. Bush's covering letter to the 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States in which he claims that the 20th century ended with "a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise." How dated and misplaced such language seems twenty years later!

If China now additionally manages to challenge successfully the U.S. in such vital areas of technological innovation as artificial intelligence and robotics it will undoubtedly reinforce this image of Chinese ascendancy on the 21st century world stage. It is this prospect of being relegated to the technological shadowland that had made bipartisan elites in the United States so anxious of late. In fact, even Republican stalwarts are willing to put aside their polarizing hostility to join with Democrats in mounting a diplomatic offensive against China that could become war-mongering interaction if Beijing responds in kind. Graham Allison has reminded us that historical instances where a previously ascendent power is threatened by a rising one has often resulted in disastrous warfare. Such belligerence is usually initiated by the political actor that feels displaced by the changing hierarchy of influence, wealth, and status in world order, yielding to pressure to engage the challenger while it still possesses military superiority.

[See Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape the Thucydides Trap* (2017)]

CJP: Nuclear weapons and climate change represent by far humanity's two greatest existential crises. Can we really be hopeful that these threats can be managed tamed within the existing international system? If not, what changes are required in current interstate relations?

RF: Of course, at this time we have become acutely aware of such global existential threats by experiencing the ordeal of the COVID pandemic, which has revealed the conflictual state-centric manner of dealing with a situation that could have been more effectively addressed if responding by way of global solidarity. As the pandemic now appears to be subsiding in most parts of the world, we cannot be encouraged by the weakness of cooperative impulses despite the obvious self-interested benefits for all if a global commons approach had been adopted with respect to testing, treatment, and distribution of vaccines. This negative background suggests that it a somewhat vain hope to suppose that the threats posed by nuclear weapons and climate change can be successfully managed over time. Each of these mega-threats disclose different features of an essentially dysfunctional and inequitable system of world order. World history has now entered a bio-political phase where civilizational achievements are at risk and even the survival of the human species is in doubt. Analogous dysfunctions of a different nature are evident in the internal political and economic life of most sovereign states.

The relationship to nuclear weapons has been problematic from the beginning, starting from the decision to drop atomic bombs on Japanese cities in 1945 as the war was nearing its end. The horrifying civilian consequences seared the consciences of collective human conscience almost to the extent of the Holocaust. The two realities exemplifying the atrocities of World War II are Auschwitz and Hiroshima. It is illuminating that in the first instance the behavior of the loser in the war was criminalized in the Genocide Convention while that of the winner in the second instance was legitimated although left under a dark cloud that lingers until now. The reality is that nuclear weapons are retained for possible use by nine states, including the most militarily powerful countries. The fact that the great majority of non-nuclear governments and the sentiments of most people in the world unconditionally oppose such weaponry has hardly mattered. The UN recently sponsored the Treaty of Prohibition of Nuclear

Weapons (TPNW) that entered into force in January 2021; however, neither law nor morality can challenge the resolve of the nuclear weapons states to retain their freedom to possess, deploy, develop, and even threaten or use such weaponry of mass destruction. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council, the first states to develop nuclear weapons, have issued a formal statement expressing their belief in the non-proliferation regime and deterrence as a preferred model of nuclear war prevention to that associated with a norm of unconditional prohibition reinforced by phased, monitored, and verified disarmament treaty process.

Martin Sherwin in his definitive study, *Gambling with Armageddon: Nuclear Roulette from Hiroshima to the Cuban Missile Crisis* (2020), convincingly shows that the avoidance of nuclear war has been a consequence of dumb luck, not rational oversight or the inhibitions on use associated with deterrence. The point being that despite the magnitude of the threats posed by the existence of nuclear weapons the structures of Westphalian statism has prevailed over considerations of law, morality, common sense, and rationality. What is absent with regard to these existential global threats is a sufficient political will to transform the underlying structural features by which authority, power, and identity have been managed on a global level for last several centuries. The absence of trust among countries is given precedence, and is further reinforced by the weakness of global solidarity mechanisms, resulting on leaving this ultimate weapon in potentially irresponsible hands, the fate of the earth in Jonathan Schell's book bearing that title, published in 1982.

Climate change has dramatized a different facet of this statist structure of world order. The need for the cooperative and urgent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions has been validated by a strong consensus of scientific opinion. The effects of inaction or insufficient action are being concretely experienced in the form of global warming, ocean levels rising, extreme weather events, glacial melting, and migrations from droughts and floods. Yet effective responsive action is blocked by inequalities of circumstances and perception that generate disagreements about the allocation of responsibility and by short-termism that makes private and public sector decision makers reluctant to depress performance statistics by expensive adjustments that cut profits and development. There is a widespread recognition of the need for drastic action, but the best that the collective will of governments have been able to do is to produce

the Paris Agreement in 2015, which leaves it up to the good will and responsible voluntary behavior of governments to reduce emissions, a rather wobbly foundation on which to stake the future of humanity.

The UN as now constituted cannot provide platforms for addressing global existential threats in an effective and equitable manner. The responses to the COVID pandemic offer a template for such a negative assessment. It was obvious that short-term national economic and diplomatic interests prevailed at the expense of minimizing the health hazards of virus COVID-19. Once these interests were satisfied the richer countries felt virtuous by resorting to feel good philanthropy, which was masked as empathy for poorer countries and their populations. These societies had been left almost totally without access to the protective medical equipment, ventilators, and vaccines during the height of the health hazards.

A revealing extreme instance of the pattern was embodied in the Israeli approach which was very effective within Israel, while withholding vaccines from the approximately five million Palestinians living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This disparity ignored Israel's explicit obligation under Article 56 of the Fourth Geneva Convention to accord protection to an occupied people in the event of an epidemic. What is disclosed beyond reasonable doubt is the structural dominance of statist and market forces combined with the weakness of existing mechanisms of global solidarity, which are preconditions for upholding global public goods. An analogous dynamic occurs within states, reflecting the class, gender, and race interests and the disproportionate burdens borne by the poor, women, and marginalized minorities.

Source:

<https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/great-power-competition-escalating-dangerous-levels-interview-richard-falk>

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and hundreds of articles and essays, many of which have been translated into scores of foreign languages. His latest book is a collection of interviews with Noam Chomsky titled [Optimism Over Despair: On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change](#) (Haymarket Books, 2017).