

# De wegbereiders

Er moet een dag geweest zijn dat iemand bedacht dat er een parallel is tussen het ombrengen van miljoenen mensen en de gevolgen van de beslissing geen vaccin te nemen. De mens is in staat verstandeloze gedachten voort te brengen.

Het gebruik van een gele ster in de strijd tegen coronamaatregelen is geen gebrek aan historisch besef, het is de keuze voor een wereldbeeld waarbij achter de noemer globalistisch socialisme abjecte ideeën over de natiestaat, raszuiverheid en antisemitisme terug zijn in het politieke debat.

Tijdens de Algemene Beschouwingen deze week liet de denker van deze beweging geen twijfel bestaan over de omarming van dit gedachtegoed.

De wegbereiders voor een bruine toekomst zitten in ons parlement.

Aldus mijn tachtigjarige buurman vanochtend in een lange e-mail over de Algemene Beschouwingen.

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## **Goethe-Institut Amsterdam - Joseph Sassoon Semah - Exhibition 'On Friendship / (Collateral Damage) IV'**

*Goethe-Institut Amsterdam, Herengracht 470, Amsterdam*

*28 October 2021- 30 December 2021, Joseph Sassoon Semah - Exhibition 'On Friendship / (Collateral Damage) IV'*

28 October 2021, 20.00 p.m. Performance and Meeting

*Mati Shemoelof (Poet, Author, Editor, Journalist, Berlin, <https://mati-s.com>) & Joseph Sassoon Semah (Amsterdam, <http://www.josephsemah.nl>), English*

The discussion about the creative activities of Joseph Beuys adhere to Eurocentric culture in general and to post-war German culture in particular. And yet, what will happen when two Iraqi Jews, i.e. Babylonian Jews - who live in two European capitals, Berlin and Amsterdam, respectively - decided to deconstruct Beuys's post war art production. Could we give these two guests who became our host free speech, and should we listen to their desire to reclaim the Jewish Babylonian tradition from Joseph Beuys's art? Most of the research on Joseph Beuys artistic activity has been generated by theories concerning Eurocentric culture, values and experiences, however this time we have the opportunity to hear other voices, a different reading which comes from the East, i.e. from thousand years of Babylonian Jewish interpretive texts and thoughts that criticize Beuys' work.

*11 November 2021, 20.00 p.m. Performance and Meeting*

*Rick Vercauteren (publicist and art historian) & Joseph Sassoon Semah  
'Joseph Beuys and Wolf Vostell: Zwischen Dichtung und Wahrheit'*

Joseph Beuys manifested himself post-war as the new Messiah, as a healer, as a shaman for the Germans, to free himself as perpetrator and free the Germans of their guilt. Vostell embodies the victim and claims to embody the German guilt, to fill the vacuum that the genocide left behind. Wolf Vostell claimed since the early 1950's that his mother was a Sephardic Jew. However, it wasn't until many years later that scholars began to inquire about Wolf's 'fabricated' autobiography.

Joseph Sassoon Semah and Rick Vercauteren will focus on the German artist duo Joseph Beuys and Wolf Vostell.

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## **So-Called Democratic "Moderates"**

# Are Actually Right-Wingers Who Have Always Thrown Up Roadblocks To Social Progress



CJ

*Polychroniou*

The U.S. is the only liberal-democratic country in the world with a political system set up for two mainstream parties, a long and continuous history of union suppression, and without a major socialist party at the national level.

*How is it possible* that the world's largest economy has a crumbling infrastructure ("shabby beyond belief" is how the CEO of Legal & General, a multinational financial services and asset management company, described it back in 2016), and ranks in the lower half of second tier countries, behind economic powerhouses Cyprus and Greece, on the [2020 Social Progress Index](#)?

It's the politics, stupid!

The United States is the only liberal-democratic country in the world with a political system set up for two mainstream parties, a long and continuous history of union suppression, and without a major socialist party at the national level. Indeed, the countries that perform best on the Social Progress Index have multi-party systems, strong labor unions, a plethora of left-wing parties, and adhere to the social democratic model.

In other words, politics explains why the United States did not develop a European-style welfare state. Political factors also explain why economic inequalities are so huge in the US and the middle class is shrinking; why the quality of America's health care system is dead last when compared with other western, industrialized nations; why there are millions of homeless people; and why the infrastructure resembles that of a third-world country.

However, for the first time in many decades, the country faces the prospect of the

reshaping of federal government priorities, thanks to a large social spending package which includes an infrastructure bill with \$550 billion in new spending and a \$3.5 trillion budget blueprint intended for investments in social programs and combatting global warming. Sen. Bernie Sanders has described the \$3.5 trillion budget plan as “the most consequential piece of legislation for working people, the elderly, the children, the sick and the poor since FDR and the New Deal of the 1930s,” although it is highly questionable if the funding level of the reconciliation bill is sufficient enough to address the pressing needs of the country. [There Is a Problem With the Infrastructure and Budget Bills—They’re Too Small \(truthout.org\)](#) More importantly, poll after poll shows that the majority of the American people support Biden’s social spending package, [Most back Biden’s infrastructure bill and budget plan: Poll \(usatoday.com\)](#), even though the President’s approval rating is slipping fast [Polls show Biden’s approval rating sliding to new lows—POLITICO](#) and Republicans may very well flip the House in 2022.

But huge contradictions have become, after all, the centerpiece of US politics, as we will see below.

Now, in the event that the Democrats manage to pass the reconciliation bill (which they can do with a simple majority rule), America’s social safety net will undoubtedly be expanded, but it will still fall short of closing the gap with its liberal-democratic peers with respect to social protection policies. The reason is that the American welfare state is organized around different principles (it functions primarily around tax expenditures and public-private partnerships) than the welfare state in other advanced nations, thanks to the dominance of conservative modes of thinking with regard to the relationship between individual and society (partly due to the influence of the Protestant work ethic which looked with suspicion of anyone who is poor, and partly due to free-market economics which rejected outright the role of the government in promoting overall social well-being), but also due to the uniqueness of American federalism.

European governments, to be sure, and regardless of whether they are using the Nordic or the Christian-Democratic socioeconomic model, have far more generous social programs than those provided by the US government (total expenditure on social protection benefits in the EU is equivalent to approximately 27 percent of GDP, while in the US it is just over 18 percent of GDP) and they reach a significantly larger share of citizens. Europeans spend several times more on

unemployment insurance, and their governments engage in more direct regulations in order to protect workers against business interests.

Unsurprisingly therefore, even in the age of global neoliberalism, where social programs are under constant siege, the welfare state [remains](#) an ideal that most Europeans treasure regardless of partisanship. For instance, the National Health Service ranks consistently as the institution that brings more pride to British people, far more so than British history, the Armed Forces, and the Royal Family.

Indeed, why would anyone, other than the very rich, be opposed to the idea of universal health care, let alone vacation as a right guaranteed by law?

But let's return to Biden's \$3.5 trillion budget plan, which heralds a new era of "big" government in U.S politics. We already know that no Republican will support it. Republican lawmakers oppose expanding federal spending on social programs, but do support extra spending on immigration enforcement and defense. And they are unified in the effort to protect Trump tax cuts, which means they oppose Democrats' plan to increase taxes on corporations and the very rich.

When not reciting bogus arguments about deficits and debt in connection with increased federal spending, Republicans have always opposed every new social program targeted on the poor and average folks on purely ideological grounds. For them, the welfare state leads inevitably to socialism (and, for the grandfather of neoliberalism, F. A. Hayek, to totalitarianism), but naturally they keep silent about the massive government support that the corporate and financial industries receive when their fortunes turn sour. [Neoliberalism's Bailout Problem | Boston Review](#) So it's Ok to offer socialism to the rich. But for everyone else, brutal capitalism should be the order of the day.

Indeed, it is worth recalling why Ronald Reagan opposed the enactment of Medicare in the early 1960s. He [warned](#) that if it was enacted, "behind it will come other federal programs that will invade every area of freedom as we have known it in this country. Until, one day, as Norman Thomas said, we will awake to find that we have socialism."

However, it is not only Republican lawmakers who resist social welfare programs. So-called "moderate" Democrats also have an ugly history of throwing up roadblocks. After all, it was Democratic President Bill Clinton who made the

biggest reactionary shift in social policy since the Great Depression when he signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, which essentially put an end to welfare as an entitlement program.

Today, “moderate” Democrats are also [throwing up](#) roadblocks to Biden’s \$3.5 trillion budget plan, with Senator Joe Manchin leading the way. He considers the price tag of the reconciliation bill too big (of course, he would never express opposition to the humongous amount of money the US spends annually on the military—\$704 billion for the fiscal year 2021, which amounts to 11 percent of federal spending), and objects to efforts in the bill to combat the climate crisis by spending money for a transition to clean energy.

As things stand, “moderate” Senate Democrats like Manchin will most likely consent only to a much smaller price tag of the reconciliation bill and as long as there are no taxes on the superrich or corporations.

Why Manchin, who opposed the For the People Act, has taken a strong position against ending or even weakening the filibuster, and has always sided with business interests, is considered by the media and political pundits in this country as a centrist or so-called “moderate” Democrat will surely baffle anyone outside the United States. In the political culture of European states, Manchin’s stance on critical economic, social, political, and environmental issues places him squarely in the reactionary camp. He would be seen and treated as an outright right-winger.

In a similar vein, most so-called “progressive” lawmakers in the US would be regarded as “moderates” at best in the European political spectrum. Financial Times editor Rana Foroohar may have engaged in a slight exaggeration when she remarked in a recent video interview that Bernie Sanders’ policies place him “pretty close to your average German Christian Democrat,” [Age of Economics](#) but not by much at all when we consider the fact that Bernie Sanders is fighting for economic and social rights that already exist in most European countries.

A similar point can also be made with regard to the climate emergency. While most Europeans [believe](#) the climate crisis is real and caused by human activities, in the US there is still a debate about what is happening to the planet and why, which surely [explains](#) the reason why the US is lagging far behind Europe on climate change goals. Even Europe’s oil and gas companies are way ahead of their rivals in the US in [reducing](#) their reliance on fossil-fuel sales, and they are investing far more on renewable energy, carbon capture, and other

decarbonization undertakings.

All of the above are connected to the nature of the political spectrum that exists in Europe and, more specifically, to the European social model with its emphasis on social protection, pensions, public services, workers' rights, quality of jobs, working conditions, and environmental concerns, even though, it should be pointed out, the social model has been under attack since the early 1980s and has certainly been weakened as a result of European Union policies promoting market efficiencies, liberalization and competition law, privatization, and financialization.

Moreover, none of the above is meant to convey the idea that the US should necessarily try to imitate the European Social Model. At this historical juncture, the US should be leaning forward into a path of economic development, social justice, and environmental sustainability structured around a Green New Deal. This is a truly bold plan to reshape the US economy and eliminate the greenhouse gases responsible for global warming. The switch to 100 percent clean and renewable energy sources will surely change the face of "really existing capitalism."

In the meantime, it is vitally important that we keep in mind the reasons why the US has a third-world infrastructure and ranks far behind virtually all other advanced countries on the Social Progress Index. And let's stop using meaningless terms to describe the policies and ideological stance of people like Joe Manchin. So-called Democratic "moderates" are dark political forces that belong without the slightest doubt to the reactionary Right of the political spectrum.

Source:

<https://www.commondreams.org/so-called-democratic-moderates-are-actually-right-wingers-who-have-always-thrown>

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[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. His latest books are [Optimism Over Despair: Noam Chomsky On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change](#) and [Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal: The Political Economy of Saving the Planet](#)" (with Noam Chomsky and

Robert Pollin as primary authors).

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## **De huurder als dividendvoer**

In een land waar institutionele beleggers uit bijvoorbeeld de VS aan mogen schuiven op een ministerie om uit te leggen dat ze graag duizenden huizen willen overnemen van woningcorporaties omdat ze rente moeten betalen aan bevriende bankiers over hun miljarden en de Nederlandse huurwet garant staat voor een alleszins redelijk rendement, moet je niet opkijken dat huurders worden gezien als dividendvoer

Deze handelswijze is illustratief voor de denkwereld van Ayn Randadept Mark Rutte.

In die denkwereld geldt egoïsme, vermomd als objectivisme, als een deugd.

In tegenstelling tot het gedachtegoed van Max Stirner, waarbij het begrip egoïsme waarde vrij moet worden gelezen, ontdaan van de negatieve connotatie, legaliseert de filosofie van RandRutte het recht van de sterkste. Kapitalisme als uitkomst van de evolutietheorie.

Aldus mijn tachtigjarige buurman vanochtend in een lange e-mail over de woningnood in dit land.

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## **There Is A Problem With The Infrastructure And Budget Bills —**



# They're Too Small



*Robert Pollin*

The United States is an outlier among advanced democratic countries in terms of societal well-being. In the [2020 Social Progress Index](#) rankings, the U.S. is 28th, in the lower half of the second tier of nations, behind economic powerhouses Cyprus and Greece. The countries that perform best in the societal well-being index adhere to the social democratic model and have strong labor unions and a long tradition of left-wing parties.

The dismal performance of the United States in well-being, which includes having dilapidated and uneven infrastructure, could change in the next few years if the Democrats manage to get their act together and pass the infrastructure and reconciliation bills. These pieces of legislation, although hardly adequate in terms of size to address the country's urgent needs, would be undoubtedly a step forward in terms of changing the federal government's priorities, according to *Robert Pollin*, distinguished professor of economics and co-director of the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. But we have to see whether the so-called U.S. "moderates" (who would be seen as right-wingers in the European political spectrum) inside the Democratic Party can put the interests of the people ahead of those of big business, or whether the so-called "progressives" (who would be seen as "moderates" in most European multi-party systems) will even back the infrastructure bill if the accompanying spending bill fails to get the necessary support. In U.S. politics, change rarely, if ever, comes from the top.

*C.J. Polychroniou: After decades of political inaction on a dangerously*

*overstretched infrastructure which lags far behind those of most other advanced countries, the U.S. Senate has finally approved a bipartisan \$1 trillion infrastructure package which is on a path to final passage in the House. Lawmakers have also agreed to a \$3.5 trillion budget process, although its status remains less certain as some moderate Senate Democrats find the total size of the budget to be too large. But let us first discuss the infrastructure bill whose current proposal targets spending over a five-year period. First, how does the world's leading economy end up with such poor infrastructure, and what can we expect to be the economic impact of the infrastructure bill?*

*Robert Pollin:* Let's first be clear on the actual size of the bipartisan infrastructure bill. In fact, the version of the bill that passed in the Senate on August 10 allocates [\\$550 billion over 5 years for the infrastructure investments](#), not \$1 trillion, [as widely reported](#). The bill mostly supports investments in traditional infrastructure areas, such as roads, bridges, airports, rail, ports, water management and the electric grid. It does also provide funds, if to a generally lesser extent, to high-speed internet, public transportation, electric vehicles and charging stations, and climate resilience.

Of course, the total price tag sounds gigantic, but in fact it is quite small, along multiple dimensions. First of all, spread over five years, the total spending averages to \$110 billion per year. That is equal to less than one-half of one percent of current overall U.S. economic activity — i.e., U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In addition, this overall level of spending on upgrading the U.S. infrastructure falls far below what objective analysts have concluded is necessary to bring U.S. infrastructure up to a reasonable level. Specifically, the American Society of Civil Engineers recently concluded that the U.S. would need to spend an average of \$260 billion per year for 10 years to bring the U.S. only up to a "B" level of infrastructure quality from [its current "C-" level](#). So the bipartisan bill provides only about 40 percent of what the leading professional society of civil engineers says is needed for the U.S. to maintain an adequate infrastructure in traditional areas. Without the full funding in the range of \$260 billion per year, the civil engineers anticipate the U.S. infrastructure continuing its longstanding pattern of deterioration. Beyond that, this bill also provides only miniscule amounts relative to what is needed to advance a viable U.S. climate stabilization project.

The U.S. infrastructure today is in poor condition today for the simple reason that

under 40 years of neoliberalism, the idea of undertaking major public investments in strengthening the domestic economy was pushed to the bottom of the federal government's priorities. Virtually all Republican members of Congress have been doing this pushing, with enough congressional Democrats following along, regardless of whether a Democrat or Republican was in the White House. The top priorities of these members of Congress have been cutting taxes for the rich and continuing to expand the massive military budget. The military budget for 2021, at \$704 billion, is *nearly 7 times greater* than what would be allocated for all the infrastructure projects if the bipartisan bill were to pass. Passing this bill is certainly preferable than having no new support for infrastructure projects. It will also have a modest positive impact on jobs. But let's also be clear that this level of funding will produce none of the pressures on the federal budget or on inflation, as is being charged by critics. The funding level is just too small for that.

*The \$3.5 trillion budget package, if enacted, will be a huge step toward a progressive reshaping of the federal government. It will be "the most consequential legislation for working people since the New Deal," according to Bernie Sanders, while it will also help to combat the climate crisis. Still, is the size of the reconciliation bill big enough to address the damage that 40 years of neoliberal policies have had on working people, the economy and our climate?*

The \$3.5 trillion bill goes far beyond the \$550 billion bipartisan infrastructure bill in critical ways. First of all, obviously, just in terms of its size. This bill also devotes significant levels of funds to build a clean energy economy and stabilizing the climate. It also provides significant support in the areas of elder and child care, health care and housing. So let's call it the *climate and social infrastructure* bill. But the fact is that even this \$3.5 trillion proposal is not large relative to the size of the U.S. economy, much less relative to the country's pressing needs, both in terms of climate stabilization and advancing social justice. In other words, I don't agree with Bernie Sanders's assessment as to the historic magnitude of this bill as it is currently written. I certainly have a great deal of respect for what Bernie is trying to accomplish with this climate and social infrastructure bill. I wish I could agree with his assessment.

Here are the basics: The \$3.5 trillion in spending would be spread over 10 years. So that gets us to \$350 billion per year. Once again, the number sounds gigantic. But it amounts to about 1.5 percent of current U.S. GDP. About one-third of the

total funding is devoted to fighting climate change — let's say around \$120 billion per year. That would be a huge boost relative to the paltry amounts being spent now by the federal government on what is, ever more obviously, an existential ecological crisis. But, in my view, it amounts to only about 25 percent of the \$500 billion per year that is needed to have a chance of reducing CO2 emissions in the U.S. economy by 50 percent as of 2030. In terms of a climate stabilization project, we would therefore still need to find around \$400 billion per year to build a clean energy economy. These funds would be separate from support needed to create much greater resiliency in the face of the increasingly severe climate disasters — i.e., the floods, wildfires, droughts and heat extremes that are now part of the everyday global news cycle. It would also be separate from the funding needed to provide a just transition for workers and communities that are now dependent on the fossil fuel industry.

The additional investment levels needed to create a zero-emissions energy system funding could possibly come from private investors, but realistically, only if the federal government enacts stringent regulations through which the fossil fuel industry is truly phased out over the next 20 to 30 years. So far at least, I am not aware of any federal initiative to impose any such stringent regulations, such as requiring that all fossil fuel companies cut their production and sales of oil, coal and natural gas by, say, 5 percent per year, every year, or face criminal liability.

In terms of other categories of spending, such as child and elder care, the climate and social infrastructure bill is a major breakthrough in recognizing these areas as vital to improving people's lives and creating a decent society. For example, this bill would support client-employed provider programs in the area of elder care, through which elderly people in need of care are able to stay in their homes and hire the home-based provider of their choice. Adult children, spouses, other family members, neighbors and friends would be eligible to be hired under this type of program. As it is, at present, most hours of elder care support are provided by family and friends on a voluntary basis. Providing financial support for a client-employed provider program would enable these voluntary providers to be paid for at least some of the hours of work they now provide voluntarily. These family members and friends would then be better able to concentrate their paid working hours on care provision, rather than having to also be employed at separate paid jobs in order to earn sufficient income.

The problem with the bill, at 1.5 percent of GDP per year for 10 years, is that the

funding level, again, is too small. In fact, we have right now an important benchmark against which to compare this climate and social infrastructure bill. This is the THRIVE Act, which is a bill introduced in Congress in April 2021, aiming to “Transform, Heal and Renew by Investing in a Vibrant Economy” — i.e., THRIVE — through a range of investments to rebuild the U.S. economy. The THRIVE Act was the work of the national Green New Deal Network, [a coalition of 15 grassroots organizations](#), including the Center for Popular Democracy, Climate Justice Alliance, Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, Greenpeace, Indigenous Environmental Network, Indivisible, Movement for Black Lives, MoveOn, People’s Action, Right To The City Alliance, Service Employees International Union, Sierra Club, Sunrise Movement, US Climate Action Network, and the Working Families Party. The THRIVE Act was introduced in Congress by Sen. Ed Markey of Massachusetts and Congresswoman Debbie Dingell of Michigan.

The THRIVE Act proposes to provide over \$1 trillion in investments per year for 10 years — i.e., \$10 trillion in total — in four major areas: clean renewable energy and energy efficiency; infrastructure; agriculture and land restoration; and the care economy, public health and the postal system. On average then, the funding levels supported by the THRIVE Act are in the range of 2-3 times larger than the combined figures for the \$110 billion/year (over 5 years) infrastructure bill and the \$350 billion/year (over 10 years) climate and social infrastructure bill.

To see the type of impact the THRIVE Act could have on individual communities throughout the country, consider, for example, [the situation for the metropolitan area around Louisville, Kentucky](#). With THRIVE Act funding, solar panels could be installed on rooftops, over parking lots and on other artificial surfaces all over the city to provide over 10 percent of the area’s overall electricity demand. All public buildings could be retrofitted to raise energy efficiency levels significantly and save the city lots of money. Both the solar and building efficiency investments would contribute toward pushing down CO2 emissions in Louisville, to the point where reducing overall emissions by 50 percent as of 2030 becomes a realistic target.

In addition, there are about 10,000 elderly residents of the area who require personal care. The THRIVE Act could enable all of these people to hire whomever they wanted — family members or friends — to support them and be paid decently for some of their hours of care. The THRIVE Act would also enable Louisville to address the fact that the city has become an “urban heat island” — i.e., a city in

which summer temperatures can be up to 20 degrees F hotter than nearby rural areas, creating health hazards for the city's population. Through THRIVE, the city could follow through on plans to expand the city's tree canopy and create cool surfaces on roads and rooftops. Still further, Louisville could invest adequately in upgrading its sewer system. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has assessed the area's flood protection system to be "high risk."

Overall, investing in these and related projects through THRIVE would generate about 15,000 jobs in Louisville and surrounding communities, equal to about 4 percent of the area's current employment level.

The THRIVE Act would have similar impacts in all communities throughout the country. The \$350 billion/year climate and social infrastructure bill could also deliver positive results in Louisville and elsewhere, but only at about one-third the level of the THRIVE Act. We then have to ask: which parts of the THRIVE Act do we sacrifice? Do we abandon the idea of advancing a climate stabilization program that has a serious chance of cutting U.S. emissions by 50 percent as of 2030? Do we give up the idea of supporting family members and friends who are providing critical elder care? Should Louisville's summer temperatures be allowed to rise by, say, 25 degrees F relative to surrounding rural areas? And with expanding employment opportunities: should we be satisfied with creating 5,000 more jobs in Louisville when we could create 15,000 through THRIVE?

I want to emphasize again that I am not disparaging the climate and social infrastructure bill being advanced by Bernie Sanders and other Congressional Democrats. Without question, it is pushing in the right direction. But we also have to be clear-eyed as to the actual size of this measure and what its impact can be relative to the climate and social crises that we face. The grassroots activists throughout the country in the Green New Deal Network, who crafted the THRIVE Act, have established the standard that we need to be reaching for now as best we can.

Source:

<https://truthout.org/there-is-a-problem-with-the-infrastructure-and-budget-bills-theyre-too-small/>

*C.J. Polychroniou* is a political scientist/political economist, author, and journalist who has taught and worked in numerous universities and research centers in

Europe and the United States. Currently, his main research interests are in U.S. politics and the political economy of the United States, European economic integration, globalization, climate change and environmental economics, 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 over 1,000 articles which have appeared in a variety of journals, magazines, newspapers and popular news websites. Many of his publications have been translated into a multitude of different languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Turkish. His latest books are *Optimism Over Despair: Noam Chomsky On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change* (2017); *Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal: The Political Economy of Saving the Planet* (with Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin as primary authors, 2020); *The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic, and the Urgent Need for Radical Change* (an anthology of interviews with Noam Chomsky, 2021); and *Economics and the Left: Interviews with Progressive Economists* (2021).

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## **Noam Chomsky: The US-Led “War On Terror” Has Devastated Much Of The World**



Twenty years ago this week, the terrorist organization al-Qaeda, whose origins date back to 1979 when Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan, hijacked four airplanes and carried out suicide attacks against the Twin Towers and the Pentagon in the United States. Shortly thereafter, the administration of George W. Bush embarked on a “global war on terror”: It invaded Afghanistan and, a year later, after having toppled the Taliban

government, raised the specter of an “Axis of Evil” comprising Iraq, Iran and North Korea, thereby preparing the stage for more invasions. Interestingly enough, Saudi Arabia, whose royal family, according to certain intelligence reports, had been financing al-Qaeda, was not included on the list. Instead, it was Iraq that the U.S. invaded in 2003, toppling a brutal dictator (Saddam Hussein) who had committed most of his crimes as a U.S. ally and was a sworn enemy of al-Qaeda and of other Islamic fundamentalist terrorist organizations because of the threat they posed to his secular regime.

The outcome of the 20-year war on terror, which ended with the Taliban’s return to power, has been disastrous on multiple fronts, as Noam Chomsky pointedly elaborates in a breathtaking interview, which also reveals the massive level of hypocrisy that belies the actions of the global empire.

*C.J. Polychroniou: Nearly 20 years have passed since the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001. With nearly 3,000 dead, this was the deadliest attack on U.S. soil in history and produced dramatic ramifications for global affairs, as well as startling impacts on domestic society. I want to start by asking you to reflect on the alleged revamping of U.S. foreign policy under George W. Bush as part of his administration’s reaction to the rise of Osama bin Laden and the jihadist phenomenon. First, was there anything new to the [Bush Doctrine](#), or was it simply a codification of what we had already seen take place in the 1990s in Iraq, Panama, Bosnia and Kosovo? Second, was the U.S.-NATO led invasion of Afghanistan legal under international law? And third, was the U.S. ever committed to nation-building in Afghanistan?*

*Noam Chomsky: Washington’s immediate reaction to 9/11/2001 was to invade Afghanistan. The withdrawal of U.S. ground forces was timed to (virtually) coincide with the 20th anniversary of the invasion. There has been a flood of commentary on the 9/11 anniversary and the termination of the ground war. It is highly illuminating, and consequential. It reveals how the course of events is perceived by the political class, and provides useful background for considering the substantive questions about the Bush Doctrine. It also yields some indication of what is likely to ensue.*

Of utmost importance at this historic moment would be the reflections of “the decider,” as he called himself. And indeed, there was an interview with George W. Bush as the withdrawal reached its final stage, in the *Washington Post*.



## [In the Style section.](#)

The article and interview introduce us to a lovable, goofy grandpa, enjoying banter with his children, admiring the portraits he had painted of Great Men that he had known in his days of glory. There was an incidental comment on his exploits in Afghanistan and the follow-up episode in Iraq:

*Bush may have started the Iraq War on false pretenses, but at least he hadn't inspired an insurrection that turned the U.S. Capitol into a combat zone. At least he had made efforts to [distance himself from the racists and xenophobes](#) in his party rather than cultivate their support. At least he hadn't gone so far as to [call his domestic adversaries "evil."](#)*

"He looks like the Babe Ruth of presidents when you compare him to Trump," former Senate Majority Leader and one-time Bush nemesis Harry M. Reid (D-Nevada) said in an interview. "Now, I look back on Bush with a degree of nostalgia, with some affection, which I never thought I would do."

Way down on the list, meriting only incidental allusion, is the slaughter of hundreds of thousands; many millions of refugees; vast destruction; a regime of hideous torture; incitement of ethnic conflicts that have torn the whole region apart; and as a direct legacy, two of the most miserable countries on Earth.

First things first. He didn't bad-mouth fellow Americans.

The sole interview with Bush captures well the essence of the flood of commentary. What matters is *us*. There are many laments about the cost of these ventures: [the cost to us](#), that is, which "have exceeded \$8 trillion, according to new estimates by the Costs of War project at Brown University," along with American lives lost and disruption of our fragile society.

Next time we should assess the costs to us more carefully, and do better.

There are also well-justified laments about the fate of women under Taliban rule. The laments sometimes are no doubt sincere, though a natural question arises: Why weren't they voiced 30 years ago when U.S. favorites, armed and enthusiastically supported by Washington, were terrorizing young women in Kabul who were wearing the "wrong" clothes, throwing acid in their faces and other abuses? Particularly vicious were the forces of the arch-terrorist, [Gulbuddin](#)

[Hekmatyar](#), recently on the U.S. negotiating team.

The achievements in women's rights in Russian-controlled cities in the late '80s, and the threats they faced from the CIA-mobilized radical Islamist forces, were reported at the time by a highly credible source, Rasil Basu, a distinguished international feminist activist who was UN representative in Afghanistan in those years, with special concern for women's rights.

Basu [reports](#):

*During the [Russian] occupation, in fact, women made enormous strides: illiteracy declined from 98% to 75%, and they were granted equal rights with men in civil law, and in the Constitution. This is not to say that there was complete gender equality. Unjust patriarchal relations still prevailed in the workplace and in the family with women occupying lower level sex-type jobs. But the strides they took in education and employment were very impressive.*

Basu submitted articles on these matters to the major U.S. journals, along with the feminist journal *Ms. Magazine*. No takers, wrong story. She was, however, able to publish her report in *Asia: Asian Age*, on December 3, 2001.

We can learn more about how Afghans in Kabul perceive the late years of the Russian occupation, and what followed, from another expert source, Rodric Braithwaite, British ambassador to Moscow from 1988 to 1992, and then chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, also author of the major scholarly work on the Soviets in Afghanistan.

Braithwaite visited Kabul in 2008, and reported his findings in the *London Financial Times*:

*In Afghanistan today new myths are building up. They bode ill for current western policy. On a recent visit I spoke to Afghan journalists, former Mujahideen, professionals, people working for the 'coalition' — natural supporters for its claims to bring peace and reconstruction. They were contemptuous of [US-imposed] President Hamid Karzai, whom they compared to Shah Shujah, the British puppet installed during the first Afghan war. Most preferred Mohammad Najibullah, the last communist president, who attempted to reconcile the nation within an Islamic state, and was butchered by the Taliban in 1996: DVDs of his speeches are being sold on the streets. Things were, they said, better under the*

*Soviets. Kabul was secure, women were employed, the Soviets built factories, roads, schools and hospitals, Russian children played safely in the streets. The Russian soldiers fought bravely on the ground like real warriors, instead of killing women and children from the air. Even the Taliban were not so bad: they were good Muslims, kept order, and respected women in their own way. These myths may not reflect historical reality, but they do measure a deep disillusionment with the 'coalition' and its policies.*

The policies of the “coalition” were brought to the public in *New York Times* correspondent Tim Weiner’s history of the CIA. The goal was to “kill Soviet Soldiers,” the CIA station chief in Islamabad declared, making it clear that “the mission was not to liberate Afghanistan.”

His understanding of the policies he was ordered to execute under President Ronald Reagan is fully in accord with [the boasts of President Jimmy Carter’s National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski](#) about their decision to support radical Islamist jihadis in 1979 in order to draw the Russians into Afghanistan, and his pleasure in the outcome after hundreds of thousands of Afghans were killed and much of the country wrecked: “What is more important in world history? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some agitated Moslems or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the cold war?”

It was recognized early on by informed observers that the Russian invaders were eager to withdraw without delay. [The study of Russian archives by historian David Gibbs](#) resolves any doubts on the matter. But it was much more useful for Washington to issue rousing proclamations about Russia’s terrifying expansionist goals, compelling the U.S., in defense, to greatly expand its own domination of the region, with violence when needed (the Carter Doctrine, a precursor of the Bush Doctrine).

The Russian withdrawal left a relatively popular government in place under Najibullah, with a functioning army that was able to hold its own for several years until the U.S.-backed radical Islamists took over and instituted a reign of terror so extreme that the Taliban were widely welcomed when they invaded, instituting their own harsh regime. They kept on fairly good terms with Washington until 9/11.

Returning to the present, we should indeed be concerned with the fate of women,

and others, as the Taliban return to power. For those sincerely concerned to design policies that might benefit them, a little historical memory doesn't hurt.

The same is true in other respects as well. The Taliban have promised not to harbor terrorists, but how can we believe them, commentators warn, when this promise is coupled with the outrageous claim by their spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid that there is "[no proof](#)" that Osama bin Laden was responsible for the 9/11 attack?

There is one problem with the general ridicule of this shocking statement. What Mujahid actually said was both accurate and very much worth hearing. In his words, "When Osama bin Laden became an issue for the Americans, he was in Afghanistan. Although there was no proof he was involved" in 9/11.

Let's check. In June 2002, eight months after 9/11, FBI Director Robert Mueller made his most extensive presentation to the national press about the results of what was probably the most intensive investigation in history. [In his words](#), "investigators believe the idea of the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon came from al Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan," though the plotting and financing apparently trace to Germany and the United Arab Emirates. "We think the masterminds of it were in Afghanistan, high in the al Qaeda leadership."

What was only surmised in June 2002 could not have been known eight months earlier when the U.S. invaded. Mujahid's outrageous comment was accurate. The ridicule is another example of convenient amnesia.

Keeping Mujahid's accurate statement in mind, along with Mueller's confirmation of it, we can move towards understanding the Bush Doctrine.

While doing so, we might listen to Afghan voices. One of the most respected was Abdul Haq, the leading figure in the anti-Taliban Afghan resistance and a former leader of the U.S.-backed Mujahideen resistance to the Russian invasion. A few weeks after the U.S. invasion, he had [an interview with Asia scholar Anatol Lieven](#).

Haq bitterly condemned the U.S. invasion, which, he recognized, would kill many Afghans and undermine the efforts to overthrow the Taliban from within. He said that "the US is trying to show its muscle, score a victory and scare everyone in the world. They don't care about the suffering of the Afghans or how many people

we will lose.”

Haq was not alone in this view. A meeting of 1,000 tribal elders in October 2001 unanimously demanded an end to the bombing, which, they declared, is targeting “innocent people.” They urged that means other than slaughter and destruction be employed to overthrow the hated Taliban regime.

The leading Afghan women’s rights organization, Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), issued a declaration on October 11, 2001, strongly opposing the “vast aggression on our country” by the U.S., which will shed the blood of innocent civilians. The declaration called for “eradication of the plague of the Taliban and al-Qaeda” by the “uprising of the Afghan nation,” not by a murderous assault of foreign aggressors.

All public at the time, all ignored as irrelevant, all forgotten. The opinions of Afghans are not our concern when we invade and occupy their country.

The perception of the anti-Taliban Afghan resistance was not far from the stance of President Bush and his Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Both dismissed Taliban initiatives to send bin Laden for trial abroad despite Washington’s refusal to provide evidence (which it didn’t have). Finally, they refused Taliban offers to surrender. As the president put it, “When I said no negotiations, I meant no negotiations.” [Rumsfeld added](#), “We don’t negotiate surrenders.” E.g., *we’re going to show our muscle and scare everyone in the world.*

The imperial pronouncement at the time was that those who harbor terrorists are as guilty as the terrorists themselves. The shocking audacity of that proclamation passed almost unnoticed. It was not accompanied by a call to bomb Washington, as it obviously implied. Even putting aside the world-class terrorists in high places, the U.S. [harbors and abets retail terrorists](#) who keep to such acts as blowing up Cuban commercial airliners, killing many people, part of the long U.S. terrorist war against Cuba.

Quite apart from that scandal, it is worth stating the unspeakable: The U.S. had no charge against the Taliban. No charge, before 9/11 or ever. Before 9/11, Washington was on fairly good terms with the Taliban. After 9/11, it demanded extradition (without even a pretense of providing required evidence), and when the Taliban agreed, Washington refused the offers: “We don’t negotiate surrenders.” The invasion was not only a violation of international law, as

marginal a concern in Washington as the anti-Taliban Afghan resistance, but also had no credible pretext on any grounds.

Pure criminality.

Furthermore, ample evidence is now available showing that Afghanistan and al-Qaeda were not of much interest to the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld triumvirate. They had their eyes on much bigger game than Afghanistan. Iraq would be the first step, then the entire region. I won't review the record here. It's well-documented in Scott Horton's book, *Fool's Errand*.

That's the Bush Doctrine. Rule the region, rule the world, show our muscle so that the world knows that "What we say goes," as Bush I [George H.W. Bush] put it.

It's hardly a new U.S. doctrine. It's also easy to find precursors in imperial history. Simply consider our predecessor in world control, Britain, a grand master of war crimes, whose wealth and power derived from piracy, slavery and the world's greatest narco-trafficking enterprise.

And in the last analysis, "Whatever happens, we have got, The Maxim gun, and they have not." Hilaire Belloc's rendition of Western civilization. And pretty much Abdul Haq's insight into the imperial mindset.

Nothing reveals reigning values more clearly than the mode of withdrawal. The Afghan population was scarcely a consideration. The imperial "deciders" do not trouble to ask what people might want in the rural areas of this overwhelmingly rural society where the Taliban live and find their support, perhaps grudging support as the best of bad alternatives. Formerly a Pashtun movement, the "new Taliban" evidently have a much broader base. That was dramatically revealed by [the quick collapse of their former enemies](#), the vicious warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum, along with Ismail Khan, bringing other ethnic groups within the Taliban network. There are also Afghan peace forces that should not be summarily dismissed. What would the Afghan population want if they had a choice? Could they, perhaps, reach local accommodations if given time before a precipitous withdrawal? Whatever the possibilities might have been, they do not seem to have been considered.

The depth of contempt for Afghans was, predictably, reached by Donald Trump. In his unilateral withdrawal agreement with the Taliban in February 2020, he did

not even bother to consult with the official Afghan government. Worse still, [Bush administration foreign policy specialist Kori Schake reports](#), Trump forced the Afghan government to release 5,000 Taliban fighters and relax economic sanctions. He agreed that the Taliban could continue to commit violence against the government we were there to support, against innocent people and against those who'd assisted our efforts to keep Americans safe. All the Taliban had to do was say they would stop targeting U.S. or coalition forces, not permit al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations to use Afghan territory to threaten U.S. security and subsequently hold negotiations with the Afghan government.

As usual, what matters is *us*, this time amplified by Trump's signature cruelty. The fate of Afghans is of zero concern.

Trump timed the withdrawal for the onset of the summer fighting season, reducing the hope for some kind of preparation. President Joe Biden improved the terms of withdrawal a little, but not enough to prevent the [anticipated debacle](#). Then came the predictable reaction of the increasingly shameless Republican leadership. They were barely able to remove their gushing tributes to Trump's "[historic peace agreement](#)" from their web page in time to denounce Biden and call for his impeachment for pursuing an improved version of Trump's ignominious betrayal.

Meanwhile, the Afghans are again hung out to dry.

Returning to the original question, the Bush Doctrine may have been formulated more crudely than the usual practice, but it is hardly new. The invasion violated international law (and Article VI of the U.S. Constitution), but Bush's legal team had determined that such sentimentality was "quaint" and "obsolete," again breaking little new ground except for brazen defiance. As to "nation building," one way to measure the commitment to this goal is to ask what portion of the trillions of dollars expended went to the Afghan population, and what portion went to the U.S. military system and its mercenaries ("contractors") along with the morass of corruption in Kabul and the warlords the U.S. established in power.

At the outset, I referred to 9/11/2001, not just 9/11. There's a good reason. What we call 9/11 is the second 9/11. The first 9/11 was far more destructive and brutal by any reasonable measure: 9/11/73. To see why, consider per capita equivalents, the right measure. Suppose that on 9/11/2001, 30,000 people had been killed,

500,000 viciously tortured, the government overthrown and a brutal dictatorship installed. That would have been worse than what we call 9/11.

It happened. It wasn't deplored by the U.S. government, or by private capital, or by the international financial institutions that the U.S. largely controls, or by the leading figures of "libertarianism." Rather, it was lauded and granted enormous support. The perpetrators, like Henry Kissinger, are highly honored. I suppose bin Laden is lauded among jihadis.

All should recognize that I am referring to Chile, 9/11/1973.

Another topic that might inspire reflection is the notion of "forever wars," finally put to rest with the withdrawal from Afghanistan. From the perspective of the victims, when did the forever wars begin? For the United States, they began in 1783. With the British yoke removed, the new nation was free to invade "Indian country," to attack Indigenous nations with campaigns of slaughter, terror, ethnic cleansing, violation of treaties — all on a massive scale, meanwhile picking up half of Mexico, then onto much of the world. A longer view traces our forever wars back to 1492, as historian Walter Hixson argues.

From the viewpoint of the victims, history looks different from the stance of those with the maxim gun and their descendants.

*In March 2003, the U.S. initiated a war against Iraq as part of the neoconservative vision of remaking the Middle East and removing leaders that posed a threat to the interests and "integrity" of the United States. Knowing that the regime of Saddam Hussein had nothing to do with the 9/11 terrorist attacks, possessed no weapons of mass destruction and subsequently posed no threat to the U.S., why did Bush invade Iraq, [which left hundreds of thousands of Iraqis dead](#) and may have cost more than \$3 trillion?*

9/11 provided the occasion for the invasion of Iraq, which, unlike Afghanistan, is a real prize: a major petro-state right at the heart of the world's prime oil-producing region. As the twin towers were still smoldering, Rumsfeld was telling his staff that it's time to "go massive — sweep it all up, things related and not," including Iraq. Goals quickly became far more expansive. Bush and associates made it quite clear that bin Laden was small potatoes, of little interest (see Horton for many details).



The Bush legal team determined that the UN Charter, which explicitly bars preemptive/preventive wars, actually authorizes them — formalizing what had long been operative doctrine. The official reason for war was the “single question”: Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction. When the question received the wrong answer, the reason for aggression instantly switched to “democracy promotion,” a transparent fairy tale swallowed enthusiastically by the educated classes — though some demurred, including 99 percent of Iraqis, according to polls.

Some are now praised for having opposed the war from the start, notably Barack Obama, who criticized it as a strategic blunder. Perhaps my memory is faulty, but I don’t recall praise for Nazi generals who regarded Hitler’s Operation Barbarossa as a strategic blunder: They should have knocked out Britain first. A different judgment was rendered by the Nuremberg Tribunal. But the U.S. doesn’t commit crimes, by definition; only blunders.

*The regime-change agenda that had defined U.S. foreign policy under the Bush administration was apparently behind NATO’s decision to remove Muammar Qaddafi from power in Libya in the wake of the “Arab Spring” revolutions in late 2010 and early 2011. But as in the case of Iraq, what were the real reasons for dealing with the leader of an alleged “rogue state” that had long ceased being one?*

The Libya intervention was initiated by France, partly in reaction to humanitarian posturing of some French intellectuals, partly I suppose (we don’t have much evidence) as part of France’s effort to sustain its imperial role in Francophone Africa. Britain joined in. Then Obama-Clinton joined, “leading from behind” as some White House official is supposed to have said. As Qaddafi’s forces were converging on Benghazi, there were loud cries of impending genocide, leading to a UN Security Council resolution imposing a no-fly zone and calling for negotiations. That was reasonable in my opinion; there were legitimate concerns. The African Union proposed a ceasefire with negotiations with the Benghazi rebel about reforms. [Qaddafi accepted it; the rebels refused.](#)

At that point, the France-Britain-U.S. coalition decided to violate the Security Council resolution they had introduced and to become, in effect, the air force of the rebels. That enabled the rebel forces to advance on ground, finally capturing and sadistically murdering Qaddafi. Hillary Clinton found that quite amusing, and

joked with the press that, “We came, We saw, He died.”

The country then collapsed into total chaos, with sharp escalation in killings and other atrocities. It also led to a flow of jihadis and weapons to other parts of Africa, stirring up major disasters there. Intervention extended to Russia and Turkey, and the Arab dictatorships, supporting warring groups. The whole episode has been a catastrophe for Libya and much of West Africa. Clinton is not on record, as far as I know, as to whether this is also amusing.

Libya was a major oil producer. It’s hard to doubt that that was a factor in the various interventions, but lacking internal records, little can be said with confidence.

*The debacle in Afghanistan has shown beyond any doubt the failure of U.S. strategy in the war on terror and of the regime-change operations. However, there is something more disturbing than these facts, which is that, after each intervention, the United States leaves behind “black holes” and even betrays those that fought on its side against terrorism. Two interrelated questions: First, do you think that the failed war on terror will produce any new lessons for future U.S. foreign policymakers? And second, does this failure reveal anything about U.S. supremacy in world affairs?*

Failure is in the eyes of the beholder. Let’s first recall that Bush II didn’t declare the global war on terror. He re-declared it. It was Reagan and his Secretary of State George Shultz who came into office declaring the global war on terror, a campaign to destroy the “the evil scourge of terrorism,” particularly state-backed international terrorism, a “plague spread by depraved opponents of civilization itself [in a] return to barbarism in the modern age.”

The global war on terror quickly became a huge terrorist war directed or supported by Washington, concentrating on Central America but extending to the Middle East, Africa and Asia. The global war on terror even led to a World Court judgment condemning the Reagan administration for “unlawful use of force” — aka, international terrorism — and ordering the U.S. to pay substantial reparations for its crimes.

The U.S. of course dismissed all of this and stepped up the “unlawful use of force.” That was quite proper, the editors of *The New York Times* explained. The World Court was a “hostile forum,” as proven by the fact that it condemned the

blameless U.S. A few years earlier it had been a model of probity when it sided with the U.S. in a case against Iran.

The U.S. then vetoed a Security Council resolution calling on all states to observe international law, mentioning no one, although it was clear what was intended. I'm not sure whether it was even reported.

But we solemnly declare that states that harbor terrorists are as guilty as the terrorists themselves. So the invasion of Afghanistan was "right" and "just," though ill-conceived and too costly. *To us.*

Was it a failure? For U.S. imperial goals? In some cases, yes. Reagan was the last supporter of the Apartheid regime in South Africa, but was unable to sustain it. In general, though, it extended Washington's imperial reach.

Bush's renewal of the global war on terror has not had similar success. When the U.S. invaded Afghanistan, the base for radical Islamic fundamentalist terrorism was largely confined to a corner of Afghanistan. Now it is all over the world. The devastation of much of Central Asia and the Middle East has not enhanced U.S. power.

I doubt that it has much impact on U.S. global supremacy, which remains overwhelming. In the military dimension, the U.S. stands alone. Its military spending eclipses rivals — in 2020, \$778 billion as compared to China's \$252 billion and Russia's \$62 billion. The U.S. military is also far more advanced technologically. U.S. security is unrivaled. The alleged threats are at the borders of enemies, which are ringed with nuclear-armed missiles in some of the 800 U.S. military bases around the world (China has one: Djibouti).

Power also has economic dimensions. At the peak of U.S. power after World War II, the U.S. had perhaps 40 percent of global wealth, a preponderance that inevitably declined. But as political economist Sean Starrs has observed, in the world of neoliberal globalization, national accounts are not the only measure of economic power. His research shows that U.S.-based multinationals control a staggering 50 percent of global wealth and are first (sometimes second) in just about every sector.

Another dimension is "soft power." Here, America has seriously declined, well before Trump's harsh blows to the country's reputation. Even under Clinton,

leading political scientists recognized that most of the world regarded America as the world's "prime rogue state" and "the single greatest external threat to their societies" (to quote Samuel Huntington and Robert Jervis, respectively). In the Obama years, international polls found that the U.S. was considered the greatest threat to world peace, with no contender even close.

U.S. leaders can continue to undermine the country, if they choose, but its enormous power and unrivaled advantages make that a hard task, even for the Trump wrecking ball.

*A look back at the 9/11 attacks also reveals that the war on terror had numerous consequences on domestic society in the U.S. Can you comment on the impact of the war on terror on American democracy and human rights?*

In this regard, the topic has been well enough covered so that not much comment is necessary. Another illustration just appeared in *The New York Times Review of the Week*, [the eloquent testimony](#) by a courageous FBI agent who was so disillusioned by his task of "destroying people" (Muslims) in the war on terror that he decided to leak documents exposing the crimes and to go to prison. That fate is reserved to those who expose state crimes, not the perpetrators, who are respected, like the goofy grandpa, George W. Bush.

There has of course been a serious assault on civil liberties and human rights, in some cases utterly unspeakable, like Guantánamo, where tortured prisoners still languish after many years without charges or because the torture was so hideous that judges refuse to allow them to be brought to trial. It's by now conceded that "the worst of the worst" (as they were called) were mostly innocent bystanders.

At home, the framework of a surveillance state with utterly illegitimate power has been established. The victims as usual are the most vulnerable, but others might want to reflect on [Pastor Niemöller's famous plea under Nazi rule](#).

*C.J. Polychroniou* is a political scientist/political economist, author, and journalist who has taught and worked in numerous universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. Currently, his main research interests are in U.S. politics and the political economy of the United States, European economic integration, globalization, climate change and environmental economics, 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 over 1,000 articles which have appeared in a variety of journals, magazines, newspapers and popular news websites. Many of his publications have been translated into a multitude of different languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Turkish. His latest books are *Optimism Over Despair: Noam Chomsky On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change* (2017); *Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal: The Political Economy of Saving the Planet* (with Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin as primary authors, 2020); *The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic, and the Urgent Need for Radical Change* (an anthology of interviews with Noam Chomsky, 2021); and *Economics and the Left: Interviews with Progressive Economists* (2021).