

Urgently Needed: A Global Green New Deal From Below



CJ

Polychroniou

Restructuring the international economic order to avert cataclysmic climate change demands bottom-up participation.

Solving global warming is humanity's greatest challenge. It can be done, but it is exceedingly difficult as it requires a fundamental restructuring of the world economy.

There are, for all intents and purposes, three paths of restructuring the global economic order in order to keep catastrophic climate change at bay: (a) dismantle capitalism; (b) shrink dramatically economic activity; and (c) implement a Global Green New Deal.

We have both the technological know-how and the economic resources to make the transition to a "green economy." The only thing that's missing from making this happen is the political will.

The first path is hardly realistic at the current juncture. Socialists everywhere are in retreat, while socialism continues to have multiple meanings and interpretations. There is not a single place on earth where a socialist revolution is brewing. In this context, I think we can safely say that the dismantlement of global capitalism through a world socialist revolution is nothing more than fantasy.

The second path is almost equally unrealistic, as well as exceedingly dangerous. This is what may be called as the "lazy" approach to tackling the climate crisis. A dramatic contraction of economic activity will lead to mass unemployment, rise in poverty to unprecedented levels, political instability, and social chaos. Neither rich nor poor nations will benefit from intentional policies to shrink economic activity, and surely no one can imagine any government in any part of the world

embarking on such an undertaking in hopes that it will help save the planet from the menace of global warming due to anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions.

More important, reducing global economic activity won't save the planet from global warming. As economist Robert Pollin has argued in [*Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal: The Political Economy of Saving the Planet*](#) (co-authored with Noam Chomsky), even if global GDP were to contract by 10 percent over the next 10 years (which, incidentally, would be several times larger than what was experienced over the global financial crisis of 2007-09), carbon dioxide emissions would be pushed down by precisely 10 percent (p. 117). So the world economy remains far away from reaching zero emissions, while workers suffer massive damage to their livelihoods.

The third path, the implementation of a Global Green New Deal, is the only realistic one for humanity to avert a catastrophic climate breakdown. A Global Green New Deal is essentially a call on all governments around the world to use the power of state intervention to halt global warming by stopping fossil fuel emissions and making a transition to clean and renewable sources of energy. The Green New Deal will stimulate the economy while eliminating the bad side of growth.

We have both the technological know-how and the economic resources to [make the transition to a "green economy."](#) The only thing that's missing from making this happen is the political will—in spite of so many international climate summits having taken place so far.

Indeed, at COP26, the lack of political will among the world's leaders to take drastic action to combat the climate crisis is more than obvious and incredibly disconcerting. "Tough talk," but no commitment to a Global Green New Deal, which is why thousands of protesters [took to the streets in Glasgow](#) during the COP26 conference.

As things stand, the most promising way out of the impasse lies with [revolutionary activism](#). Change, as always, will take place from the bottom up. Indeed, a Global Green New Deal will materialize only when citizens of the world demand it.

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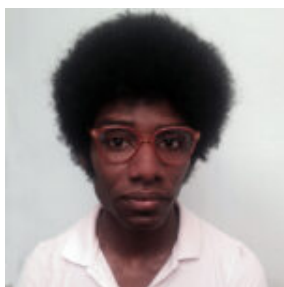
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People Worldwide Name US As A Major Threat To World Peace. Here's Why.



Khury Petersen-Smith Photo: *ips-dc.org*

How is it that people across the globe have come to agree that the United States is now [one of the primary threats to world peace and democracy](#)?

Having leveled two Japanese cities with atomic bombs and established itself as the world's top superpower following the collapse of the international order in the

aftermath of World War II, the U.S. quickly became intoxicated by its newfound military superiority.

The U.S. soon went on to introduce a doctrine that positioned itself as the world's police, drop more bombs in the Korean and Vietnamese wars than there had been dropped in the whole course of World War II, and orchestrate military coups against democratically elected governments throughout Latin America. It ended up in turn supporting brutal dictatorships and establishing more foreign military bases than any other nation or empire in history all over the globe.

All this occurred within the first 30 or so years after the end of World War II. By the time the 21st century came around, the U.S. was the only military and economic superpower in the world. Yet, that did not put an end to U.S. imperial ambitions. A "global war on terrorism" was initiated in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, with the U.S. ending up by 2013 being seen by people around the world as "[the greatest threat to world peace.](#)"

What are the roots of U.S. imperialism? What has been the impact of imperial expansion and wars on democracy at home? Is the U.S. empire in retreat? In this interview, scholar and activist Khury Petersen-Smith, who is Michael Ratner Middle East Fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, discusses how U.S. imperialism has undermined democracy, both home and abroad, with the wars abroad even being tied to police brutality at home.

C.J. Polychroniou: The U.S. has a long history of war-on-terror campaigns going all the way back to the spread of anarchism in late 19th century. During the Cold War era, communists were routinely labelled as "terrorists," and the first systematic war on terror unfolded during the Reagan administration. Following the September 11 attacks, the Bush administration renewed the war on terror by implementing a series of far-reaching policy initiatives, many of which, incidentally, went unnoticed by the public but also continued during the Obama and Trump administrations, respectively, which subverted democracy and the rule of law. Can you elaborate about the impact of war-on-terror policies in the dismantling of U.S. democracy?

Khury Petersen-Smith: It's true: The tactics and beliefs that the U.S. has deployed in the war on terror have deep roots that stretch well before our current time. I would argue that the U.S. has never been a democracy, and that a key reason is

its basically permanent state of war, which began with its founding. New England settlers, for example, waged a war of counterinsurgency against Indigenous peoples here who resisted colonization in King Philip's War. The settlers besieged Indigenous nations, considering communities of adults and children to be "enemies" and punishing them with incredible violence. This was in the 1670s.

In a different U.S. counterinsurgency, in the Philippines in the early 20th century, American soldiers used "the water cure," a torture tactic comparable to the "waterboarding" that the U.S. has used in the war on terror. This was one feature of a horrific war of scorched earth that the U.S. waged as Filipino revolutionaries fought for an independent country after Spanish colonization. The U.S. killed tens of thousands of Filipino fighters, and hundreds of thousands — up to a million — civilians. There was also a staggering amount of death due to secondary violence, such as starvation and cholera outbreaks, and due to the U.S. declaration that civilians were fair game to target (as seen in the infamous Balangiga Massacre). It was during that episode in 1901 on the island of Samar, when an American general ordered troops to kill everyone over the age of 10. The designation of whole populations as the "enemy" — and therefore targets for violence — has echoes that reverberate in Somalia, Yemen, Iraq and other places where the U.S. has fought the war on terror.

This is to say that there are different chapters in the history of U.S. empire, but there is a throughline of justifying military violence and the denial of human rights in defense of U.S. power and "the American way of life." This history of wars informs those of the present.

In the 20th century, labeling various activities "terrorism" was one way of rationalizing the use of force. The U.S. did this especially with its allies in response to anti-colonial liberation movements. So the South African apartheid regime called anti-apartheid resistance "terrorism," and the Israeli state did (and continues to do) the same to Palestinian resistance, however nonviolent. The U.S. has armed and defended these states, embracing and promoting the rhetoric of war against "terrorism."

The flip side of "terrorism" — the blanket enemy against which all violence is justified — is "democracy" — the all-encompassing thing that the U.S. claims to defend in its foreign policy. But again, the 20th century saw the U.S. embrace, arm and wage war with and on behalf of anti-democratic, dictatorial forces on

every continent. The decades of violence that the U.S. carried out and supported throughout Latin America in the latter part of the 20th century, in response to waves of popular resistance for social and economic justice, serve as a brutal chapter of examples.

All of these things helped constitute the foundation upon which the Bush administration launched the war on terror.

To answer your question more directly, military violence always requires dehumanization and the denial of rights — and this inevitably corrupts any notions of democracy. War, in fact, always involves an attack on democratic rights at large. When the U.S. launched the war on terror in 2001, the federal government simultaneously waged military campaigns abroad *and* passed legislation like the USA PATRIOT Act, issued legal guidelines and other practices that introduced new levels of surveillance, denial of due process, rationalization of torture and other attacks on civil liberties. These efforts especially targeted Muslims and people of South Asian, Central Asian, Southwest Asian and North African origin — all of whom were subject to being cast as “terrorists” or “suspected terrorists.”

It is worth noting that while Bush drew upon the deep roots of U.S. violence to launch the war on terror, there has been incredible continuity, escalation and expansion throughout it. Bush launched the drone war, for example, and President Barack Obama then wildly [expanded and escalated it](#). President Donald Trump then [escalated](#) it further.

Have the war-on-terror policies also affected struggles for racial and migrant justice?

The war on terror has been devastating for racial and migrant justice. The Islamophobic domestic programs that the U.S. has carried out are racist. And once they were piloted against parts of the population, they could be expanded to others. This is how U.S. state violence works. Indeed, the mass policing, mass incarceration regime built up in the 1990s — which was supposedly directed at “fighting crime,” and the “war on drugs” — targeted Black people and Latinos in particular, building an infrastructure that was then deployed against Muslims and others in the war on terror. With policing vastly expanded in the name of the war on terror, its force came back to Black and Indigenous communities — as it

always does in the United States.

It is important to acknowledge the new level of credibility and power that the police attained after 9/11 and in the war on terror. There was actually a powerful wave of anti-racist protest against the police in the 1990s — especially strong in cities like New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and Los Angeles. In New York, thousands mobilized to demand justice for Amadou Diallo, Abner Louima, Patrick Dorismond, and others brutalized and killed by the New York City Police Department. The police were on the defensive. They seized upon the post-9/11 moment and the beginning of the war on terror to rehabilitate their image and attain new powers.

With this in mind, I wonder if the current moment of “racial reckoning” unfolding in the U.S. over these two years — brilliant and important as it is — could have actually happened 20 years ago. I think that anti-racist movements were on track to do it, and the war on terror set us back two decades. Consider all of the Black lives lost in that time.

And yes, the war on terror has been catastrophic for migrant justice. One of the early measures was the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, which forced the registration of non-citizens from South and Central Asian, Middle Eastern, and North and East African countries. It was largely unopposed, setting the stage for more racist, targeted policies, like the Muslim ban. Before the war on terror, there was no Department of Homeland Security, no Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The U.S. government seized the opportunity of the war on terror to build on the long history of white supremacy in controlling migration and open a new chapter of border militarization, policing and surveillance of migrants, and deportation.

The United Nations condemned this past summer, for the 29th year in a row, the U.S. trade embargo on Cuba. Indeed, the U.S. is notorious around the world for violations of international law and has been widely perceived as the greatest threat to world peace. However, the influence of the U.S. in world affairs is sharply in decline and its so-called “soft” power has all but evaporated. Are we living through the death of an empire?

I’m afraid that U.S. empire is far from death, or even dying.

From the perspective of humanity and the planet, the war on terror has been

catastrophic in its levels of destruction and death. But from the perspective of the proponents of U.S. empire, those at its helm, it was a gamble. Bush administration officials were clear from the start that the invasion of Afghanistan was the opening of what they conceived of as a series of invasions and other military operations to demonstrate U.S. hegemony, and punish the minority of states located in the most strategic regions of the world that were not solidly in the American orbit. After invading Afghanistan, Bush declared the “Axis of Evil,” targeting Iraq, Iran and North Korea. The U.S. then invaded Iraq, implying that Iran and North Korea could be next. The idea was to project U.S. power and to disrupt and prevent the rise of potential rivals to it.

The U.S. lost the gamble. Not only did untold millions of people around the world suffer from the wars, but the U.S. also failed in its strategic objectives. The regional and world powers whose ascension the U.S. sought to curtail — especially Iran, Russia and China — emerged more powerful, while U.S. power was set back.

But the U.S. remains, far and away, the most powerful country in the world. And it will not surrender that status quietly. On the contrary, even as it continues and supports military operations as part of the war on terror, it is very openly preparing for confrontation with China. It is pursuing a belligerent path that is driving rivalry and militarization — a path toward conflict.

The story of the path the U.S. is pursuing regarding hostility toward China is another that reveals the subterranean, forward motion of empire that continues across presidential administrations. President George W. Bush’s [2002 National Security Strategy](#) first signaled that, “We are attentive to the possible renewal of old patterns of great power competition,” and identified China as one potential competitor. In 2006, the Bush administration gestured further toward identifying China as posing a problem for U.S. empire, [saying](#), “Our strategy seeks to encourage China to make the right strategic choices for its people, while we hedge against other possibilities.”

When President Obama took office, the U.S. foreign policy establishment had clearly united behind the notion that China was an enemy to be isolated and whose rise was to be curtailed. Then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton [declared](#) “America’s Pacific Century” and argued for a winding down of American attention to Iraq and Afghanistan, and a new strategic focus on Asia and the Pacific. Obama

launched the “Pivot to Asia,” which involved shifting military weapons and personnel to the region and building more facilities there, all aimed at addressing China’s ascension. President Trump, of course, brought anti-China hostility to a fever pitch, blaming China for the COVID-19 pandemic, openly using crude, racist language directed at China (but impacting Chinese American people and many other Asian Americans), and opening the door for *Fox News* personalities and officials like Sen. Tom Cotton to talk directly about the supposed “threat” that China poses and call for military action against it. That brings us to today, where there is near consensus between both parties that the U.S. should be gearing up in armed competition with China.

Unfortunately, empires do not simply die. This means that we — around the world, and especially those of us located in the United States — are called upon to resist, undermine and disrupt empire. We need to, across borders, envision a radically different world, and fight for it.

This interview has been lightly edited for clarity.

Source: <https://truthout.org/people-worldwide/>

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*

Besame Mucho - Een saxofonist verstript



De muziek van de film *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* uit 1958 – regie Louis Malle – is bekender dan de film zelf. Miles Davis maakte de soundtrack, die niet alleen bij jazzliefhebbers bekend is. Vaak is de muziek te horen als achtergrond bij documentaires of televisiereportages. Het onmiskenbare trompetspel van Davis wordt afgewisseld met melancholische saxofoonklanken. Er ontstaat een serie lang uitgesponnen saxofoon- en trompetsolo's met een simpel, telkens

terugkerend thema, zonder echte melodie, wat zich eindeloos lijkt te herhalen. Filmkijkers herinneren zich vooral deze muziek bij de scènes waarin een

wanhopige Jeanne Moreau, op hakjes, verdwaasd over de beregende kinderhoofdjes van straten in Parijs beweegt. Het zijn ook de enige beelden uit de film die blijven hangen. Zonder de muziek van Miles Davis zou de film waarschijnlijk al lang in de vergetelheid zou zijn geraakt.

Film noir

Ascenseur pour l'échafaud is de eerste lange speelfilm van regisseur Louis Malle (1932-1995). Het is een in zwart/wit gedraaide film noir die bij vlagen hitchcock-achtig aandoet.

Een vrouw – Jeanne Moreau in de rol die haar doorbraak zou betekenen – en haar minnaar zijn van plan haar echtgenoot te vermoorden. Het plan dreigt te mislukken wanneer de minnaar opgesloten raakt in een lift in een verder verlaten kantoorgebouw en zo zijn afspraak met de vrouw misloopt. Wanhopig dwaalt ze 's nachts door een uitgaanswijk van Parijs, in café's en nachtclubs op zoek naar haar minnaar.

Nouvelle Vague

Hoewel *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* niet door alle filmhistorici gerekend wordt tot de Nouvelle Vague, de Franse filmstroming die brak met de traditionele wijze van filmen, geldt de film wel als voorloper ervan. Zeker is dat de film een belangrijke inspiratiebron was voor regisseurs als François Truffaut en Jean-Luc Godard, toonaangevende vertegenwoordigers van de Nouvelle Vague.

Eind jaren vijftig en in het begin van de jaren zestig weken Truffaut en Godard, maar ook regisseurs als Claude Chabrol, Eric Rohmer en Agnès Varda, met hun werkwijze fundamenteel af van de tot dan toe heersende filmtradities. Hun aanpak was niet gebaseerd op van te voren geprogrammeerde scènes en dichtgetimmerde scenario's, maar ging uit van experiment en improvisatie tijdens de opnames, in camerawerk, chronologie en editing, net als de soundtrack.



Jean Seberg en Jean-Paul Belmondo

Straatscènes

Als een van de eersten nam Louis Malle – later de regisseur van onder meer *Zazie dans le Metro* (1960), *Pretty Baby* (1978) en *My Dinner with André* (1981) – de camera mee de straat op. Niet om vanuit een vast standpunt te filmen, maar juist om op straat met personages mee te kunnen bewegen. Om Jeanne Moreau lopend door straten te kunnen filmen, werd de camera op een kinderwagen gemonteerd zodat ze overal gevolgd kon worden. François Truffaut filmde later op soortgelijke wijze straatscènes in Parijs voor zijn debuutfilm *Le Quatre Cents Coup* (1959). Truffaut liet de camera op een 2CV zonder dak monteren om de jonge Antoine Doinel te kunnen volgen op zijn zwerftochten door Parijs.

Schatplichtig aan *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* is ook de beroemde straatscène in Godards *A Bout de Souffle* (1959), waarin Jean Seberg de *Herald Tribune* verkoopt op de Avenue des Champs-Élysées en door Jean-Paul Belmondo wordt aangesproken. Door – op de openingsscène na – de hele film op locatie te draaien in plaats van in een studio, doorbrak Godard fundamenteel de bestaande filmtraditie en baande hij de weg voor een nieuwe manier van film maken.



Jeanne Moreau en Miles Davis

Jazz in Parijs

In november 1957 was Miles Davis voor enkele optredens geboekt in de Club Saint-Germain in Parijs, een bekende jazzclub in de Rue Saint-Benoît. Franse jazzmusici als Barney Wilen, Stéphane Grapelli, René Urtreger en Boris Vian traden er frequent op, maar ook voor Amerikaanse jazzmuzikanten als Art Blakey, Kenny Dorham, Bud Powell en Kenny Clarke was het een geliefde plek. Parijs was een stad waar Amerikaanse musici graag verbleven.

Trompettist Chet Baker nam in Parijs een aantal van zijn beste platen op (op cd als *Chet in Paris vol. 1-4*).

In de jaren vijftig werd Parijs de stad 'waar het gebeurde'. Europa herstelde zich van de Tweede Wereldoorlog, en Parijs was de stad waar de voorhoede van een nieuwe toekomst zich leek te kunnen manifesteren. Nieuwe stromingen in kunst, mode, cultuur en filosofie kondigden zich aan. Hoogwaardige journalistiek - de *International Herald Tribune* vindt zijn oorsprong in Parijs - en literaire tijdschriften als *The Paris Review* en *Les Temps Modernes* (onder redactie van Jean-Paul Sartre en Simone de Beauvoir) bepaalden mede het sociaal-culturele klimaat.

Drugs

Zwarte musici hadden er nauwelijks last van racistische vooroordelen en discriminatie zoals ze dat in de Verenigde Staten meemaakten. Bovendien heerste er een gunstiger klimaat ten opzichte van drugsgebruik. Heroïne was een veel gebruikte drug onder musici. In Parijs was het niet al te problematisch om in die

behoefte te kunnen voorzien. Bovendien was het Franse rechtssysteem aanzienlijk minder streng ten opzichte van het gebruik van harddrugs in vergelijking met de Verenigde Staten, waar de criminalisering en segregatie hand in hand gingen.

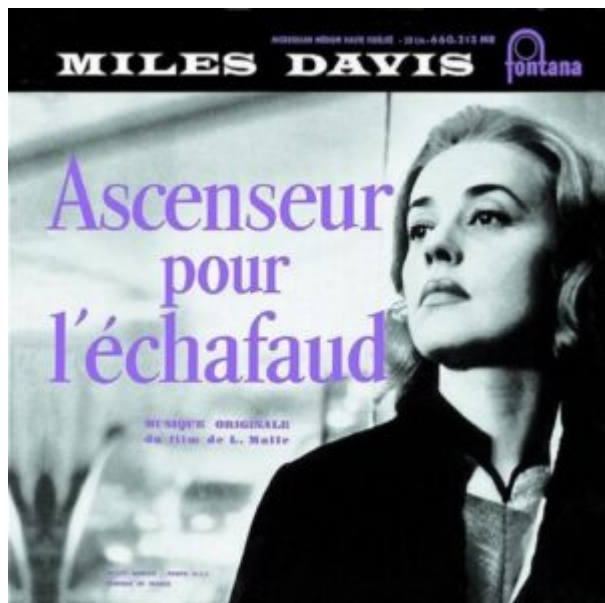


Juliette Gréco en Miles Davis

Saint-Germain

Het was niet het eerste bezoek van Miles Davis aan Parijs. Al in 1949 had hij in Parijse clubs gespeeld. De Amerikaanse bebop was in Parijs ongekend populair, met name in de jazzcafé's in Saint-Germain-des-Près. In Parijs werd Davis verliefd op chanteuse en actrice Juliette Gréco, die in bohemienachtige, existentialistische kringen rondom Jean-Paul Sartre verkeerde. In 1957 hernieuwde hij in Parijs zijn relatie met Gréco. Inmiddels was hij wereldberoemd, na het uitbrengen van de legendarische serie platen *Cookin'-, Relaxin'-, Workin'- and Steamin' with The Miles Davis Quintet*.

Jean-Paul Rappeneau, jazzfan en assistent van Malle, kwam met de suggestie Davis te vragen voor de filmmuziek. Voor Louis Malle een uitgelezen kans zijn film publicitair een stuk aantrekkelijker te maken.



Improvisatie

De opnames vonden plaats op 4 en 5 december 1957 in de Le Poste Parisien Studio in Parijs, 116bis Avenue Champs-Élysées. Behalve Miles Davis, bestond de band uit de Amerikaan Kenny Clarke op drums, en de Franse musici Barney Wilen op tenorsax, René Urtreger op piano en Pierre Michelot, bass. Davis gaf de andere bandleden slechts wat globale aanwijzingen over de harmoniestructuur en volgorde van

akkoorden. Terwijl scènes uit de film in de studio op een doek werden geprojecteerd, improviseerden de bandleden op de beelden.

Het samenspel met de bandleden en de ingetogen, trage soundtrack inspireerden Davis vervolgens tot het maken van de plaat *Milestones* (1958) en van *Kind of Blue* (1959), volgens velen de beste jazzplaat ooit gemaakt.

In Europa werd de soundtrack door Fontana uitgebracht op een ten-inch elpee. De eind jaren tachtig verschenen cd bevat ook de alternate takes.



Barney Wilen

Filmmuziek

Voor saxofonist Barney Wilen (1937-1996) geldt *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* als de start van zijn carrière. Direct werd hij gevraagd de filmmuziek voor een tweetal

Franse films te componeren: *Un témoin dans le ville* (1958) en *Jazz sur scène* (1958), waaraan Kenny Clarke meewerkte. Ook maakte hij de muziek bij *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (1959) van regisseur Roger Vadim, met medewerking van Thelonius Monk. Ook trad hij op het Newport Jazz Festival op.

In de jaren zestig experimenteerde hij met free jazz en ging zich oriënteren op niet-westerse muziek. In 1968 bracht hij de plaat *Dear Prof. Leary* uit, een eerbetoon aan lsd-profeet Timothy Leary. In de jaren zeventig en tachtig maakte hij muzikale uitstapjes naar de rock en punk en bracht hij lange tijd in Afrika door, waar hij speelde en toerde met Afrikaanse musici.

Uit het Franse clubcircuit was hij verdwenen. Zo nu en dan maakte hij nog een plaat en produceerde hij muziek van anderen.



Stripverhaal

Wilen moet stomverbaasd zijn geweest toen hij in 1987 in een Franse kiosk exemplaren aantrof van het striptijdschrift (*A Suivre*), met daarin het stripverhaal *Barney et la note bleue*.

Overduidelijk hadden scenarist Phillipe Paringaux en tekenaar Jacques Loustal zich voor de strip laten inspireren door het leven van Barney Wilen. Het verhaal: een jonge tenorsaxofonist genaamd Barney, die een opmerkelijke gelijkenis vertoont met Barney Wilen, speelt in de jaren vijftig met jazzmusici als Art Blakey en Kenny Clark, raakt verslaafd aan heroïne en beleeft meerdere tragische affaires met vrouwen. Hij moet in zijn onderhoud voorzien door te spelen in tweederangs jazzorkestjes, die een weinig indrukwekkend repertoire van uitgemolken jazzstandards spelen. Tegen wil en dank wordt het nummer *Besame Mucho* zijn handelsmerk. Het trieste bestaan van Barney speelt zich af in troosteloze casino's, verlaten Franse badplaatsen en derderangs clubs, om vervolgens iedere dag op een haveloze hotelkamer een spuit met heroïne in zijn arm te kunnen zetten. Vergeten door jazzliefhebbers en zonder vrienden sterft hij in alle eenzaamheid.



Barney Wilen bekijkt de tentoonstelling met tekeningen uit La Note Bleue

Comeback

Waarheidsgetrouw was het verhaal zeker niet, want Barney Wilen was springlevend, en ook Wilens levensloop had zich duidelijk anders voltrokken. Juist vanwege deze verschillen meende Wilen bij de makers van de strip verhaal te moeten halen. Er volgden pittige gesprekken tussen Wilen, Paringaux en Loustal. Het verhaal – inmiddels als stripalbum gepubliceerd – was wel degelijk bedoeld als eerbetoon aan Wilen, zo was de verklaring van de makers, maar hun research was niet al te nauwkeurig geweest. Onterecht hadden ze gemeend dat Barney reeds was overleden.



Er kwam een compromis, die zowel voor Wilen als de makers publicitair een gouden vondst bleek te zijn. Wilen nam een nieuwe cd op getiteld *La Note Bleue*, met nieuwe nummers en enkele standards, inclusief *Besame Mucho*. De nummers kregen de titels van de hoofdstukken in het stripalbum, Loustal maakte het hoesontwerp. Wilen maakte met de cd een

comeback, Loustal kreeg een tentoonstelling met zijn werk en zou later furore maken als striptekenaar en illustrator. Het stripalbum moest meerdere malen worden herdrukt.

In 1987 kreeg de cd de prijs voor het beste Franse jazzalbum van dat jaar. In de

herfst van datzelfde jaar speelde Wilen avond aan avond in de Parijse jazzclub Le Petit Opportun nummers van de cd. Dankzij de strip voor een opvallend jong publiek. Vaste prik iedere avond is een enthousiast gespeelde versie van *Besame Mucho*.

Soundtrack Ascenseur pour l'échafaud

Barney Wilen, Bud Powell, Kenny Clark e.a, Club Saint-Germain, 6 November 1959

Barney Wilen Quartet, Antibes Jazz Festival, Juli 1961

Chomsky: Build Back Better Fiasco Exposes How Both Parties Serve Corporate Power



Noam Chomsky

The United States is an abysmal outlier among its economic peers when it comes to social protection programs. Consider, for example, paid parental leave. According to a survey of the parental leave systems of 41 members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Union, the U.S. was [the only country that does not mandate a single week of paid parental leave](#). It also has an infrastructure bordering on the verge of collapse, including crumbling roads and bridges, water and energy systems.

For specific historical and political reasons, the U.S. never developed a European-style social welfare state. However, since the election of President Joe Biden, and thanks to pressures from the progressive wing of the Democratic Party, bills have been introduced to fill some glaring gaps. The Build Back Better budget reconciliation bill, in particular, focuses on a long list of social programs that would help close the U.S.'s gap with its liberal-democratic peers when it comes to social protection programs. It would also help fight the climate crisis. But so-called moderate Democrats ([actually right-wingers](#)) in Congress have been opponents of such progressive policies from day one and threaten to derail the best opportunity available to transform federal priorities and move U.S. society away from its traditional dog-eat-world mentality.

In the interview that follows, world-renowned public intellectual Noam Chomsky assesses the ongoing drama in Congress over President Biden's spending bills and the political ramifications of the Democrats failing to carry out sweeping social and climate reforms.

C.J. Polychroniou: Noam, more than two decades after the "[end \[of\] welfare as we know it](#)," Democrats have the chance to reshape the country's safety net and close the gap with the U.S.'s liberal-democratic peers on social protection programs, as well as fight the climate crisis. However, in perhaps a rather unsurprising development, it looks like the obstructionist elements inside the Democratic Party will make sure that the U.S. remains a noticeable outlier among developed countries by not having a major social welfare state. Indeed, Joe Manchin, one of the Democratic senators standing in the way of the passage of the reconciliation bill, said that the U.S. should not turn into an "entitlement society." How do you assess all the drama in Congress around the \$3.5 trillion in infrastructure, social programs and combatting the climate crisis, and what does this whole experience reveal to us about the state of U.S. politics in the post-Trump era?

Noam Chomsky: It's not post-Trump, unfortunately. Former President Donald Trump's heavy hand has not been lifted. He owns the increasingly radicalized voting base of the Republican Party. The leadership slinks to his Mar-a-Lago palace to plead for his blessing, and the few who dare to raise their heads have them lopped off quickly.

The right-wing Democrats (misabeled "moderate") follow along for their own

reasons. These are not hard to discern in some cases: It's not a great surprise that a coal baron who is Congress's leading recipient of fossil fuel funding (Manchin) should proclaim the fossil fuel industry's "no elimination" slogan, or that a top recipient of donations from the pharmaceutical industry (Sen. Kyrsten Sinema) should be holding back badly need drug pricing reforms. That's normal in a political system mired in corruption.

But the rot runs deeper.

It's often been observed that the U.S. has a one-party political system — the business party — with two factions, Democrats and Republicans. In the past, the Republican faction has tended to be more dedicated to the concerns of extreme wealth and the corporate sector, but with the resurgence of the one-sided class war called "neoliberalism" under President Ronald Reagan, the leadership has been going off the rails. By now they barely resemble a political party in a functioning democracy.

Since the late President Jimmy Carter years, the Democrats have not lagged far behind, becoming a party of affluent professionals and Wall Street donors with the working class handed over to their bitter class enemy.

One of Trump's occasional true statements was that Republicans could never win a fair election on their actual programs. Recognizing this, since President Richard Nixon's Southern strategy, the party has been mobilizing voters on "cultural issues" — white supremacy, abortion, guns, traditional patriarchal families, God (favoring the evangelical Christian variety)... anything that doesn't lift the veil on their loyal service to their prime constituency. That way they can at least stay in the running, exploiting the deeply undemocratic features of the electoral system with its built-in advantages for their largely rural voting base.

All this and much more has been extensively discussed elsewhere. We need not elaborate here. It's playing out in the halls of Congress right now. The extent to which the U.S. is an "outlier" glares at us wherever we look, sometimes in ways that verge on obscenity. Take paid maternity leave. In the U.S.: none. In the next largest country in the hemisphere, Brazil: about four months. That's in addition to the universal health care, free higher education, and other public benefits that are found almost everywhere.

To be fair, the richest country in the world, with unparalleled advantages, is not alone in [denying paid leave to new mothers](#). (Fathers? Forget about it.) The U.S. is joined by the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea and Tonga.

Recently a lead columnist for the London *Financial Times* quipped that if Sen. Bernie Sanders was in Germany, he could be running on the right-wing Christian Democrat ticket. Not just a witticism, and not a comment on Sanders. Rather, on the socioeconomic system that has been created in the one-party state, dramatically so in the era of vicious class war since Reagan.

It was not always thus. In the 1930s, while continental Europe succumbed to fascism, the U.S. forged a path toward social democracy on a wave of militant labor activism, lively and diverse politics, and a sympathetic administration. Years earlier, the U.S. had pioneered mass public education, a major contribution to democracy and social justice; Europe lagged far behind.

It's beyond irony that now Europe is upholding a tattered social democracy while the U.S. declines to Trump-led proto-fascism, or that under Trump, the secretary of education sought to dismantle public education, carrying forward the neoliberal principles that underlie the sharp defunding of public education aimed at its elimination. All this is rooted in the ["libertarian" doctrines](#) of Milton Friedman, James Buchanan and other leading figures of the movement, closely linked from its origins to the attack against government "overreach" by desegregating schools.

It's worth recalling that these doctrines had their origin in bitter class war in interwar Austria, as we've discussed before. They are well-suited for its resumption in the neoliberal era.

The Biden effort to move the U.S. somewhat toward the humane norms of other OECD countries is still not dead, but it has been virtually neutralized in Congress. The Republican organization is rock-solid opposed. Its red lines include preservation in full of their one legislative achievement under Trump, "the U.S. Donor Relief Act of 2017," [as Joseph Stiglitz termed the wholesale robbery](#), which punched a huge hole in the deficit (for a "good" cause, so OK). By charming coincidence this near-\$2 trillion gift to the very rich and the corporate sector is about the same as the measly remnants of the Biden reconciliation bill (spread

over 10 years) that have [barely survived the right-wing assault](#).

This time the “deficit threat” is definitely not OK, as is loudly proclaimed. Not a good cause this time. Wrong recipients: the poor, workers, mothers and other “unpeople.”

Should the progressives remain opposed to the infrastructure bill if Congress refuses to pass the social safety net bill in its original version?

It's question of tactics, not principle. That's not to say that it's unimportant. Choice of tactics can have very far-reaching consequences. Rather, it means that it's not easy to answer. There are many imponderables, not least, how it will affect the coming elections. In earlier years, it was often not too important which faction of the business party took power. In recent years, it has been. Proto-fascism is on the march. Worse still, as we've discussed elsewhere, we're advancing to a precipice from which there will be no return. Four more years of Trumpism might well tip the balance.

Which answer to the question you raise will reduce the likelihood of impending disasters? I don't see an easy answer. The question may by now be moot, with the vicious cuts in the reconciliation bill.

Won't there be grave political consequences if Democrats blow the chance to reshape federal priorities? After all, the majority of U.S. people seem to be in support of Biden's Build Back Better Act.

The Republicans have been pursuing a careful and well-thought-out policy of maintaining power as a minority party dedicated to great wealth and corporate power. It has been openly announced by the most malicious and politically powerful of the gang: Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, repeating what worked well for his reactionary cause during the President Barack Obama years (helped by Obama's quick betrayal of those who believed the pretty rhetoric about “hope and change”).

So far, it's working. If it does work, with Trump and acolytes returning to power thanks to this malevolence, we will be well on our way to proto-fascism and to falling off the precipice. Failure of Biden's efforts to reshape federal priorities will have a terrible human cost. Beyond that, it will also provide a weapon for the McConnell strategy of harming the country as much as possible and blaming the

outcome on the Democrats.

Brutal, but not stupid.

Is there a way to fend off these grave political consequences? Not within the confines of the deeply corrupt and undemocratic political system. The only way that has ever worked, and can work now, is mass popular pressure — what the powerful call “the peasants coming with their pitchforks.”

Trump has been out of office for several months, yet his influence among Republican voters remains unwavering. What continues to drive the pro-Trump crowd?

We’ve often discussed it before, and there has been extensive investigation by social scientists — most convincingly, in my opinion, by Tony DiMaggio.

It’s not just Trump, though he has shown real genius in tapping poisons that run deep in U.S. history and contemporary culture, and in portraying himself as “your savior” — even “the chosen one” — while stabbing you in the back. That’s no small accomplishment for a person with few talents other than chicanery, fraud, and wielding the wrecking ball to destroy everything he can’t claim as his own.

But it’s not just Trump. We can also ask why Nixon’s racist Southern strategy succeeded, or Reagan’s quite overt racism — in his case, apparently sincerely held. We can ask why the abortion and gun frauds took hold, or why in the face of overwhelming evidence, segments of the left join the far right in anti-vax campaigns, at enormous human costs, or why “more than half of President Trump’s supporters [in 2020] [embraced the QAnon conspiracy theory](#) of a global satanic pedophile ring that was plotting against the 45th president of the United States,” who was valiantly trying to save the children from such “prominent pedophiles” as Biden, Hillary Clinton, and other “Deep State” suspects.

The signs of collapse of the social order are too numerous and familiar to review once again. To a large extent, it can be attributed to the impact of the one-sided and vicious class war of the past 40-plus years. There are deeper cultural and historical roots. It’s not just the U.S. European racism and xenophobia is even more malevolent in some respects. One sign is the corpses in the Mediterranean, victims of the frenzy of Europe’s dedication to torture the survivors of its centuries of destruction of Africa.

The effort to reveal the roots of such pathologies is no mere academic enterprise, and not just these. We can add the pathologies of the rich and powerful, including the deplorables who hurl the epithet at others. These have been far more consequential. Efforts to understand are of value primarily as a guide to self-reflection and to action to find remedies.

And quickly. Our strange species doesn't have a lot of time to spare.

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