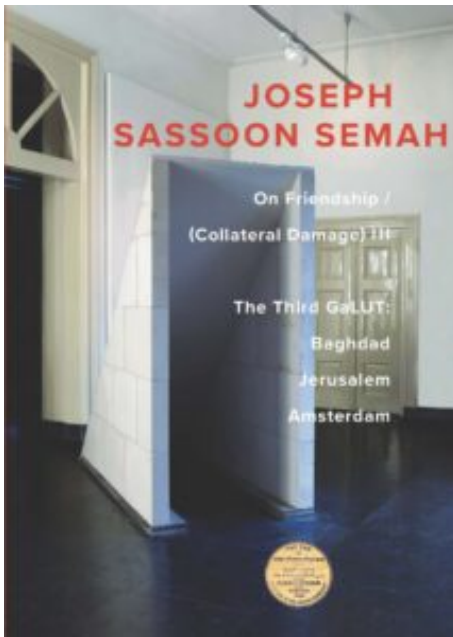


# Linda Bouws ~ Joseph Sassoon Semah Semah: Re-Thinking The Concept Of GaLUT, Re-Claiming The Lost Culture

Click to enlarge



## Joseph Sassoon Semah: Re-thinking the concept of GaLUT, re-claiming the lost culture

Linda Bouws *Journal Manager/Editorial Board Program*

### Baghdad, Jerusalem, Amsterdam



Joseph Sassoon Semah



The Semah family home in Baghdad, Iraq



The Semah family home in Jerusalem, Israel

Baghdad was one of the most diverse and tolerant cities in the world. Jews, Muslims, and Christians were all treated. One of the most famous of Baghdad's Jews, Joseph Semah, lived in the city for over 100 years. He was a prominent figure in the city's Jewish community and was known for his generosity and kindness. He was a member of the Baghdad Jewish community and was known for his generosity and kindness. He was a member of the Baghdad Jewish community and was known for his generosity and kindness.

In the end of June 1941 a pogrom erupted in Baghdad. Jewish Semahs were expelled from the Jewish community in Baghdad. In 1948, after the establishment of the State of Israel, Joseph Semah and his family moved to Jerusalem. He lived in Jerusalem until his death in 1988. He was a member of the Jerusalem Jewish community and was known for his generosity and kindness.



From 1941, the year of independence for Israel, life for Jews in Iraq became extremely difficult. In order to survive, many Jews fled to other countries. In 1948, after the establishment of the State of Israel, many Jews fled to Jerusalem. Joseph Semah and his family were among them. They lived in Jerusalem until his death in 1988.

Joseph Semah and his family were among the Jews who fled to Jerusalem. They lived in Jerusalem until his death in 1988. He was a member of the Jerusalem Jewish community and was known for his generosity and kindness.

Joseph Semah and his family were among the Jews who fled to Jerusalem. They lived in Jerusalem until his death in 1988. He was a member of the Jerusalem Jewish community and was known for his generosity and kindness.

Joseph Semah and his family were among the Jews who fled to Jerusalem. They lived in Jerusalem until his death in 1988. He was a member of the Jerusalem Jewish community and was known for his generosity and kindness.



Joseph Semah and his family were among the Jews who fled to Jerusalem. They lived in Jerusalem until his death in 1988. He was a member of the Jerusalem Jewish community and was known for his generosity and kindness.

Joseph Semah and his family were among the Jews who fled to Jerusalem. They lived in Jerusalem until his death in 1988. He was a member of the Jerusalem Jewish community and was known for his generosity and kindness.

The concept of GaLUT is a complex one, involving the loss of a culture and the struggle to reclaim it. It is a concept that has been used by many people in many different contexts. It is a concept that has been used by many people in many different contexts.

The concept of GaLUT is a complex one, involving the loss of a culture and the struggle to reclaim it. It is a concept that has been used by many people in many different contexts. It is a concept that has been used by many people in many different contexts.

The concept of GaLUT is a complex one, involving the loss of a culture and the struggle to reclaim it. It is a concept that has been used by many people in many different contexts. It is a concept that has been used by many people in many different contexts.

The concept of GaLUT is a complex one, involving the loss of a culture and the struggle to reclaim it. It is a concept that has been used by many people in many different contexts. It is a concept that has been used by many people in many different contexts.

The concept of GaLUT is a complex one, involving the loss of a culture and the struggle to reclaim it. It is a concept that has been used by many people in many different contexts. It is a concept that has been used by many people in many different contexts.

The concept of GaLUT is a complex one, involving the loss of a culture and the struggle to reclaim it. It is a concept that has been used by many people in many different contexts. It is a concept that has been used by many people in many different contexts.

The concept of GaLUT is a complex one, involving the loss of a culture and the struggle to reclaim it. It is a concept that has been used by many people in many different contexts. It is a concept that has been used by many people in many different contexts.

The concept of GaLUT is a complex one, involving the loss of a culture and the struggle to reclaim it. It is a concept that has been used by many people in many different contexts. It is a concept that has been used by many people in many different contexts.

Before being asked to see the exhibition in order to be asked 'The Third Floor' when he had just been in an art museum elsewhere (London 2008), he wanted to experience that 17

in 2008. He wanted to see the exhibition in order to be asked 'The Third Floor' when he had just been in an art museum elsewhere (London 2008), he wanted to experience that 17

The only way to see what he had, he had to see it at a distance rather than through the

**Performance**  
A woman with a performance in the presence of a professional dancer... the Third Floor... performance... the only way to see what he had, he had to see it at a distance rather than through the

the only way to see what he had, he had to see it at a distance rather than through the

The public is not simply a spectator of the

The public is not simply a spectator of the



Two photographs showing performance events from the exhibition.

RESEARCH | DOCUMENT | ANALYSIS | DESIGN | CONSTRUCTION



Two photographs showing performance events from the exhibition.

**Site: The Third Floor**  
The City of London | The City of London | The City of London

In the 17th century... the Third Floor... the City of London... the City of London... the City of London



Two photographs showing interior architectural spaces from the exhibition.

The stage of the exhibition is based on a different way of seeing the public domain as a kind

The 'Third Floor' when it is closed has a different way of seeing the public domain as a kind

RESEARCH | DOCUMENT | ANALYSIS | DESIGN | CONSTRUCTION



The effect of this, the invisible square space, is a result of the construction. The City of ...

From historical ... to a question ...



In this invisible square space, ...

### MATHIS to MATHIS

We can talk for ... about the ...

The ... of MATHIS ...



... of ...

During the ... of ...

In ...

The ...



The process is a way of making an art installation that is not only for the eye but also for the ear. The artist has to think about the space and the way the sound will be perceived. It is not just about the visual but also about the way the sound will be perceived. It is not just about the visual but also about the way the sound will be perceived.

**Notes**

The artist has to think about the space and the way the sound will be perceived. It is not just about the visual but also about the way the sound will be perceived. It is not just about the visual but also about the way the sound will be perceived.

The artist has to think about the space and the way the sound will be perceived. It is not just about the visual but also about the way the sound will be perceived. It is not just about the visual but also about the way the sound will be perceived.





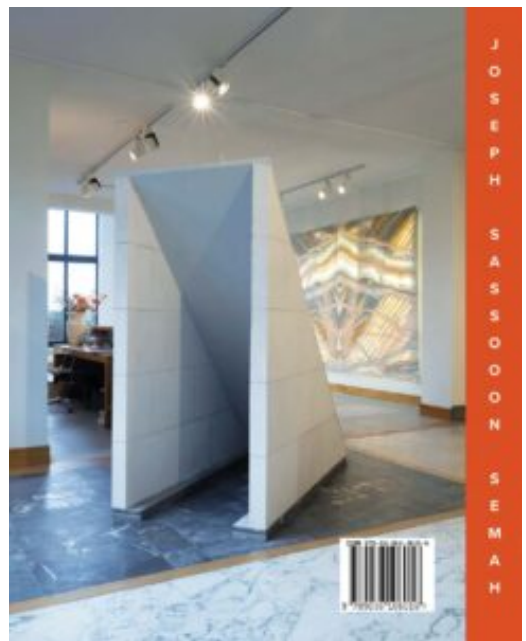
Two photographs of art installations. The left one is a white modular structure on a wooden stand. The right one is a white modular structure on a wooden stand.

**Colophon**

The book is a collection of essays and photographs. It is a collection of essays and photographs. It is a collection of essays and photographs. It is a collection of essays and photographs.

The book is a collection of essays and photographs. It is a collection of essays and photographs. It is a collection of essays and photographs. It is a collection of essays and photographs.

The book is a collection of essays and photographs. It is a collection of essays and photographs. It is a collection of essays and photographs. It is a collection of essays and photographs.

From: Linda Bouws & Joseph Sassoon Semah (Eds.) - Joseph Sassoon Semah - On Friendship/(Collateral Damage) III - The Third GaLUT: Baghdad, Jerusalem, Amsterdam, 2020. ISBN 978 90 361 0601 6.

To order the book, please send e-mail to Stichting Metropool Internationale Kunstprojecten, € 39,95 excl. shipping costs, rek.nr. NL 42 INGB 0006 9281 68 o.v.v. On Friendship III, please add name & address. Contact: <https://www.metropool-projects.com/contact>

Photo's: Ilya Rabinovich

---

# Killing Nature Must Be Treated As A Crime On A Par With Genocide And War Crimes



CJ

Polychroniou

*The time has come for drastic measures to protect the environment and save the world from a climate catastrophe.*

The first United Nations Scientific Conference on the Environment, also known as the First Earth Summit, was held in Stockholm, Sweden, from June 6-15, 1972. It [established](#) a Declaration of Principles and adopted an action plan with recommendations for the preservation and enhancement of the environment. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, it led to the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Since then, environmental issues and climate evolution have figured prominently on the global agenda, yet pledges made to protect the environment and reduce emissions are not being fulfilled. Without an international enforcement mechanism, governments are not legally bound to make good on their commitments, for example, to slash greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2040, which is what Biden [pledged](#) that the US will do.

Equally significant, environmental legislation aimed at imposing criminal penalties on corporations and their officials remains weak and, in some countries, even non-existent. In the US, where several types of criminal violations are specified in the Clean Air Act and whose definition of an air pollutant includes greenhouse gas emissions, following a 2007 US Supreme Court ruling on the matter, many states regularly look the other way when it comes to protecting public health and the environment from illegal air pollution from oil refineries and

chemical plants. Texas, for example, [failed](#) between 2011 and 2016 to penalize 97 percent of illegal polluters.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the top two US greenhouse gas emitting companies listed in the new edition of [Greenhouse 100 Polluters Index Report](#) by researchers at the renowned Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst are based in Texas. Vista Energy and Duke Energy released a combined 194 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere in 2019, and this figure does not include biogenic carbon dioxide emissions (emissions released by a stationary facility from the combustion or decomposition of biologically-based materials other than fossil fuels).

Under the Trump administration, polluters and corporate interests had more freedom than any other time over the past few decades to destroy the environment. More than 125 environmental regulations were rolled back during Trump's nightmarish reign of power.

Of course, let's not forget the US military's carbon footprint, which spews so much greenhouse gas emissions from fuel usage alone that if it were a country it would rank as the 47th worst polluter in the world, according to a 2019 report [released](#) by social scientists at Durham University and Lancaster University in UK.

In the meantime, China has [emerged](#) as the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitter, with 60 percent of its power provided by coal, although it is still [far behind](#) the US in terms of per capita emissions.

Thus, nearly half a century after the First Earth Summit, most environmental problems have worsened, and nature and climate are subsequently on the verge of breakdown. The rate of species extinction is accelerating, [according](#) to scores of scientific studies, and there continues to be a [relentless rise](#) in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere caused by the burning of fossil fuels like coal and oil which causes temperatures to rise, producing the phenomenon of global warming.

Essentially, what we have is a cause-and-effect relationship between anthropogenic climate change and species extinction. Higher temperatures lead to a chain reaction of other changes around the globe, with tremendous impact not simply on people but also on wildlife and biodiversity. Today's extinctions proceed at a pace faster than ever before, with around one million species already facing extinction, "many within decades," according to a major United Nations

2019 [report](#).

The time has come for drastic measures to protect the environment and save the world from a climate catastrophe. Polluting the environment is a crime, but environmental criminals are almost never prosecuted. Environmental crime is still regarded a “white collar crime,” subject mostly to civil charges and accompanied by fines, when the reality on the state of the planet mandates that environmental destruction be conceptualized as a crime against humanity.

Fines are surely not enough to deter greedy and ruthless capitalists from destroying the environment, even if fines happen to be as steep as those involved in the historic greenhouse gas enforcement case between the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Hyundai and Kia that forced the automakers to pay \$100 million civil penalty for, among other wrongdoings, [emitting more greenhouse gases than reported to EPA](#) or, even more recently, of the seemingly humongous fine of \$1 billion levied against German automakers Volkswagen and BMW by the European Union. Both automakers were [fined](#) for colluding to curb the use of emissions cleaning technology.

For the record, Volkswagen has a long cheating emissions history, yet it continues to get off easy. The reason is that Germany doesn’t even have criminal liability for corporations, and only recently has there been a move to [introduce such a legal framework](#). In Europe, in fact, “there is no penalty for environmental crime,” [according](#) to EU environmental commissioner Virginijus Sinkevicius.

Yet another reason why fines won’t deter polluters is because the costs of such penalties get passed onto shareholders and even to consumers rather than being borne by the culpable individuals.

Prison sentences must be embraced for environmental crimes, although it is clear that environmental crime cannot be synthesized into a single category. Severe environmental crimes (any crime that brings about an alteration of global commons or the Earth’s ecological system, such as, for example, the destruction of the Amazon forest under the Bolsonaro administration) should be accompanied by severe imprisonment sentences.

The harmful effects of environmental degradation—impact on human health, loss of biodiversity, atmospheric changes, scarcity of natural resources—are beyond dispute. Therefore, the killing of nature must be [added to the list of the most horrific crimes imaginable](#). Ecocide must be elevated into an international crime—on a par with genocide and war crimes—and fall within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

If we want to save the Earth, there is no way around it.

As for those who may object to severe imprisonment sentences as an effective answer to severe environmental crimes, there is considerable evidence from available studies looking into whether the criminal prosecution of war criminals [can prevent and deter crimes against humanity](#) indicating that everything depends on the credibility of the institutions involved and that the conditions have to be just right.

Still, even if doubts persist about the deterrent effects of harsh imprisonment for systemic environmental damage, one thing is certain: leaving intact the existing legal response to environmental crime will ensure that the planet is doomed.

Source:

<https://www.commondreams.org/killing-nature-must-be-treated-crime-par-genocide-and-war-crimes>

*Our work is licensed under Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0). Feel free to republish and share widely.*

*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 [The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic and the Urgent Need for Social Change](#) (A collection of interviews with Noam Chomsky; Haymarket Books, 2021), and [Economics and the Left: Interviews with Progressive Economists](#) (Verso, 2021).

---

## **Chomsky: Outdated US Cold War Policy Worsens Ongoing Russia-**



# Ukraine Conflict



*Noam Chomsky*

The tension on the Russia-Ukraine border represents an ongoing conflict between two nations with many cultural affinities, but is also part of a much larger rivalry between the U.S. and Europe on one side, and Russia on the other. As Noam Chomsky reminds us in the exclusive interview for *Truthout* that follows, in 2014, a Russia-supported government in Ukraine was forcefully removed from power by a coup supported by the U.S. and replaced by a U.S. and European-backed government. It was a development that brought closer to war the two main antagonists of the Cold War era, as Moscow regards both U.S. and European involvement in Ukraine and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) continued eastward expansion as part of a well-orchestrated strategy to encircle Russia. The strategy of encirclement is indeed as old as NATO itself, and this is the reason why Russian President Vladimir Putin issued recently [a list of demands to the U.S. and NATO](#) with regard to their actions in Ukraine and even parts of the former Soviet space. In the meantime, senior-level Russian officials have gone even further by [warning of military response if NATO continues](#) to ignore Moscow's security concerns.

As Chomsky notes below, the Russia-Ukraine conflict is a solvable problem, but one wonders if the U.S. will remain dedicated to a "zombie policy" that could produce potentially awful consequences in the event of a diplomatic failure.

Noam Chomsky is internationally recognized as one of the most important intellectuals alive. His intellectual stature has been compared to that of Galileo, Newton and Descartes as his work has had tremendous influence on a variety of areas of scholarly and scientific inquiry, including linguistics, logic and mathematics, computer science, psychology, media studies, philosophy, politics

and international affairs. He is the author of some 150 books and recipient of scores of highly prestigious awards, including the Sydney Peace Prize and the Kyoto Prize (Japan's equivalent of the Nobel Prize), and of dozens of honorary doctorate degrees from the world's most renowned universities. Chomsky is Institute Professor Emeritus at MIT and currently Laureate Professor at the University of Arizona.

*C.J. Polychroniou: Following the undoing of the USSR between 1980-1991, people in Ukraine voted overwhelmingly in 1991 to declare independence from the crumbling communist empire. Since then, Ukraine has sought to align closely with the European Union (EU) and NATO, but Moscow has objected to such plans, as it has always considered Ukraine to be part of Russia, and, accordingly, continued to meddle in the country's internal affairs. In fact, Ukraine became a battleground in 2014 when Putin decided to annex Crimea, which he called the "spiritual source" of the Russian state, and, since then, tensions between the two countries have been very hard to diffuse. In your own view, what's really behind the conflict between Russia and Ukraine?*

*Noam Chomsky: There's more to add, of course. What happened in 2014, whatever one thinks of it, amounted to a coup with U.S. support that replaced the Russia-oriented government by a Western-oriented one. That led Russia to annex Crimea, mainly to protect its sole warm water port and naval base, and apparently with the agreement of a considerable majority of the Crimean population. There's extensive scholarship on the complexities, particularly Richard Sakwa's *Frontline Ukraine* and more recent work.*

There's an excellent discussion of the current situation in a recent article in *The Nation* by Anatol Lieven. Lieven argues realistically that Ukraine is "[the most dangerous \[immediate\] problem in the world](#)," and "also in principle the most easily solved." The solution has already been proposed and accepted — in principle: the Minsk II agreement, adopted by France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine in 2015, and endorsed unanimously by the UN Security Council. The agreement tacitly presupposes withdrawal of George W. Bush's invitation to Ukraine to join NATO, reaffirmed by Barack Obama, vetoed by France and Germany, an outcome that no Russian leader is likely to accept. It calls for disarmament of the separatist Russia-oriented region (Donbas) and withdrawal of Russian forces ("volunteers"), and spells out the key elements of settlement, with "[three essential and mutually dependent](#) parts: demilitarization; a restoration of

Ukrainian sovereignty, including control of the border with Russia; and full autonomy for the Donbas in the context of the decentralization of power in Ukraine as a whole.” Such an outcome, Lieven observes, would not be unlike other federations, including the U.S.

Minsk II has not been implemented because of disagreements about timing of its various measures. The issue has been “buried” in U.S. political circles and media, Lieven writes, “because of the refusal of Ukrainian governments to implement the solution and the refusal of the United States to put pressure on them to do so.” The U.S., he concludes, has been keeping to “a zombie policy — a dead strategy that is wandering around pretending to be alive and getting in everyone’s way, because U.S. policy-makers have not been able to bring themselves to bury it.”

The imminent dangers make it imperative to bury the policy and adopt a sound one.

To overcome the impasse will not be easy, but as Lieven observes, the only alternatives are too horrendous to consider. The essentials are understood: Austrian-style neutrality for Ukraine, which means no military alliances or foreign military bases, and an internal resolution in the general terms of Minsk II.

“The most dangerous problem in the world” can therefore be solved with a modicum of rationality.

The broader context reaches back to the collapse of the Soviet Union 30 years ago. There were three contrasting visions of the global order that should be established in the wake of its collapse. All accepted that Germany would be unified and would join NATO — a remarkable concession by Russia, considering that Germany alone, not part of a hostile military alliance, had virtually destroyed Russia twice in the past century, a third time joining with the West (including the U.S.), in the “intervention” immediately after the Bolsheviks took power.

One proposal was Mikhail Gorbachev’s: a Eurasian security system from the Atlantic to Vladivostok, with no military blocs. The U.S. never considered that as an option. A second proposal was offered by George H.W. Bush and his Secretary of State James Baker, endorsed by West Germany: NATO would not move “one inch to the East,” meaning East Berlin; nothing beyond was contemplated, at least publicly. The third was Bill Clinton’s: NATO would move all the way to the

Russian border, carry out military maneuvers in the states adjoining Russia, and place weapons on the Russian border that the U.S. would certainly regard as offensive weapons in the (inconceivable) event that it would even tolerate anything remotely comparable anywhere in its vicinity. It was the Clinton Doctrine that was implemented.

The asymmetry is far more deeply rooted. It is a core component of the “rule-based international order” that the U.S. advocates (while by coincidence, setting the rules), replacing the supposedly archaic UN-based international order that bans “the threat or use of force” in international affairs. The latter condition is unacceptable to rogue states that demand the right to employ the threat of force constantly, and to resort to force at will. An important topic that we have discussed before.

One crucial illustration of the rule-based asymmetry that should be familiar is President Kennedy’s response to Nikita Khrushchev’s sending of nuclear missiles to Cuba — in reaction to the threat of invasion as the culmination of JFK’s terrorist war against Cuba, and to his huge arms buildup in response to Khrushchev’s offer for mutual reduction of offensive weapons even though the U.S. was far in the lead. The critical issue that almost led to devastating war was the status of U.S. nuclear-armed missiles aimed at Russia in Turkey. As the crisis moved ominously close to war, the key issue was whether the missiles should be publicly withdrawn (as Khrushchev requested) or only secretly (as Kennedy demanded). In fact, the U.S. had already ordered them withdrawn to be replaced by far more menacing Polaris submarines, so there was no withdrawal at all, only escalation.

The crucial asymmetry is presupposed, an inviolable principle of world order, established more extensively as the Clinton’s NATO Doctrine was imposed.

It should be recalled that this was only one component of a more expansive Clinton Doctrine, which accords the U.S. the right to use military force “unilaterally when necessary” to defend vital interests such as “ensuring uninhibited access to key markets, energy supplies and strategic resources.” No one else can claim such a right.

There is extensive scholarly debate about the status of the Bush-Baker proposal. The agreement was only verbal, as argued in justification when Washington

instantly violated it, moving troops to East Berlin. But the basic facts are not seriously in doubt.

*NATO was founded in response to the alleged threat posed to Western democracies by the Soviet Union. Yet, NATO not only did not disappear after the end of the Cold War, but continued its expansion eastwards and, as a matter of fact, regards Ukraine today as a potential member. What is the relevance of NATO today, and to what extent is it responsible for escalating tensions on Russia's borders and for potentially ushering in a new Cold War?*

The expansion to the East, including regular military maneuvers and threatening weapons systems, is clearly a factor in escalating tensions, the offer to Ukraine to join NATO even more so, as just discussed.

In thinking about the acutely dangerous current situation, it's useful to bear in mind the founding of NATO and the "alleged threat." There's a good deal to say about that topic, specifically about how the Russian threat was actually perceived by planners. Inquiry shows that it was quite different from the fevered rhetoric employed "to scare the hell out of the country" in a manner "clearer than truth" (Sen. Arthur Vandenberg and Dean Acheson, respectively).

It is well-known that the influential planner George Kennan considered the Russian threat to be political and ideological, not military. He was, in fact, sent out to pasture early on for failure to join in the largely manufactured panic. Still, it's always instructive to see how the world is perceived at the dovish extreme.

As head of the State Department planning staff, Kennan was so concerned about the threat from postwar Russia in 1946 that he felt that partition of Germany might be necessary in violation of wartime agreements. The reason was the need to "rescue Western zones of Germany by walling them off against Eastern penetration," not, of course, by military force, but by "political penetration," where the Russians had the advantage. In 1948, Kennan advised that, "The problem of Indonesia [is] the most crucial issue of the moment in our struggle with the Kremlin," even though the Kremlin was nowhere in sight. The reason was that if Indonesia falls under "Communism" it could be an "infection [that] would sweep westward" through all of South Asia, even endangering U.S. control of the Middle East.

The internal record is littered with similar illustrations of oblique, sometimes

quite explicit, recognition of reality. In general, “The Kremlin” became a metaphor for anything that might fall out of U.S. control — until 1949, when the “Sino-Soviet conspiracy” could sometimes fill the bill.

Russia was indeed a threat, within its Eastern European domains, just as many around the world can attest to threats of the U.S. and its Western allies. There should be no need to sample that awful history. NATO had little role in it.

With the collapse of the USSR, the official justification for NATO was gone, and something new had to be devised. More generally, some new pretext had to be devised for violence and subversion. One device, quickly seized upon, was “humanitarian intervention.” This was soon framed within the doctrine of “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P). Two versions were formulated. The official version was adopted by the UN in 2005. It keeps to the strictures of the UN Charter banning the threat or use of force in international affairs apart from conditions irrelevant to R2P, proceeding beyond only in calling on states to observe humanitarian law.

That’s the official version of R2P. A second version was formulated by the Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty on Responsibility to Protect (2001), produced under the initiative of former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans. It departs from the official version in one crucial respect: a situation in which “the Security Council rejects a proposal or fails to deal with it in a reasonable time.” In that case, the Report authorizes “action within area of jurisdiction by regional or sub-regional organizations under Chapter VIII of the Charter, subject to their seeking subsequent authorization from the Security Council.”

In practice, the right to intervene is reserved to the powerful — in today’s world, to the NATO powers, which are also unilaterally able to determine their own “area of jurisdiction.” They did in fact do so. NATO unilaterally determined that its “area of jurisdiction” includes the Balkans, then Afghanistan, and well beyond. NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer instructed a NATO meeting in June 2007 that, “NATO troops have to guard pipelines that transport oil and gas that is directed for the West,” and more generally have to protect sea routes used by tankers and other “crucial infrastructure” of the energy system. NATO’s area of jurisdiction is therefore worldwide.

To be sure, some do not agree; in particular, the traditional victims of the kind tutelage of Europe and its offshoots. Their opinion, as always dismissed, was made explicit in the first meeting of the South Summit of 133 states (April 2000). Its declaration, surely with the recent bombing of Serbia in mind, rejected “the so-called ‘right’ of humanitarian intervention, which has no legal basis in the United Nations Charter or in the general principles of international law.” The wording of the declaration reaffirms earlier UN declarations to the same effect, and is mirrored in the official version of R2P.

Standard practice since has been to refer to the official UN version as justification for whatever is done but to keep to the Evans Commission version for determination of choice of action.

*There are indications that Russia is building capacity to attack Ukraine, with some military analysts claiming that this could happen in the first couple months of the new year. While it is not likely that NATO would intervene militarily in a conflict between Russia and Ukraine, a Russian invasion of Ukraine would surely bring about a dramatic transformation of the international landscape. What would be the most realistic solution to the Ukraine conflict?*

The indications are real, and ominous. Most serious analysts doubt that Putin would launch an invasion. He would have a great deal to lose — maybe everything if the U.S. reacted with force, as we all might. At best from his perspective, Russia would be engaged in a bitter “endless war” and subjected to very severe sanctions and other harsh measures. I presume that Putin’s intention is to warn the West not to disregard what he takes to be Russian interests, with some justice.

There is a realistic solution: the one that Anatol Lieven outlined. As he discusses, it is not easy to imagine another one. And none has been proposed.

Fortunately, this solution is within reach. It is of great importance to keep popular opinion from being inflamed by all-too familiar devices that have led to catastrophe in the past.

*Copyright © Truthout. May not be reprinted without [permission](#).*

*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).

---

## **Noam Chomsky: US-China Cooperation Is Essential To Avert A New Cold War**



*Noam Chomsky*



We live at a critical juncture in world history. In spite of immense progress in some areas of human civilization, the prospects of annihilation caused by interstate conflict among competing powers with unimaginably destructive weapons continue to haunt human relations in the early part of the 21st century even when challenges such as climatic catastrophes may end up being disastrous for all forms of life on planet Earth. A few decades ago, it was the U.S.-USSR conflict that threatened to blow up the planet, thanks to the imperial ambitions of a newly emerged empire in world history to remake the world in its own image. Today, it is the U.S.-China conflict that threatens us with a futuristic scenario of global annihilation as the Western empire in decline continues to insist upon dictating the direction of world affairs according to its own image and interests.

In the interview below, one of our most esteemed public intellectuals of the last half century, whose intellectual stature has been compared to that of Galileo, Newton and Descartes, offers us his own views and assessment of the increasingly dangerous tension between the United States and China. *Noam Chomsky* is Institute Professor Emeritus at MIT and currently Laureate Professor at the University of Arizona. The recipient of scores of highly prestigious awards, including the Sydney Peace Prize and the Kyoto Prize (Japan's equivalent of the Nobel Prize), of dozens of honorary doctorate degrees from the world's most renowned universities, and author of some 150 books on linguistics, politics, international affairs, history and media studies, Chomsky has had tremendous influence on a variety of areas of scholarly and scientific inquiry, including linguistics, logic and mathematics, computer science, psychology, media studies, philosophy, politics and international affairs.

*C.J. Polychroniou: Noam, the U.S.-China relationship has gone through ups and downs over the course of the last 30 or so years. Clearly, the sort of relationship that exists today between the two countries is far more antagonistic than it was even 10 years ago. In your own view, what forces or processes are responsible for the increasing tensions we are witnessing today in U.S.-China relations?*

*Noam Chomsky: After the fall of the USSR, there was much euphoria about the end of history with "liberal democracy" (a code word for the U.S.) having achieved total victory. A corollary was that China could now be brought within the "rule-based international order."*

The latter is a now-conventional phrase, one worth pondering. It refers to an

international order in which the U.S. sets the rules, displacing the international order established by the United Nations, which the U.S. deems antiquated and irrelevant. The UN Charter is the Supreme Law of the Land under the U.S. Constitution, constantly violated, a matter of no concern to those who pledge reverence for the Holy Text. Its provisions have been considered inappropriate for the modern world ever since the U.S. lost control of the UN with decolonization, and occasional backsliding among the privileged as well. UN members no longer know “how to play,” to borrow Thomas Friedman’s ridicule of France when it failed to support the benign U.S. invasion of Iraq, accompanied by his call for the miscreant to be deprived of its permanent membership in the Security Council. The self-described “world’s greatest deliberative body” contented itself with renaming French fries as “Freedom fries” in the Senate cafeteria.

Right-thinking people understand that the outdated UN-based international order is to be replaced by the rule-based order, including such constructions as the highly protectionist “free-trade agreements,” right now yielding such pleasures as barring a “people’s vaccine” that would alleviate the COVID disaster. The Clintonites were particularly enthusiastic about incorporating a well-disciplined China within this forward-looking rule-based order.

It didn’t work as planned. China refuses to play when it doesn’t want to. Worse still, it can’t be intimidated. It goes its own way. That way is often ugly, but that’s of no relevance to the rule-based order, which easily tolerates vicious crimes by the righteous — notably the Master — with equanimity and often approval.

China is not Europe. The countries of Europe may fume when the U.S. decides to destroy the joint agreement with Iran (the JCPOA) and to impose harsh sanctions to punish Iran for Washington’s demolition of the agreement. They may even proclaim that they will develop ways to avoid the murderous U.S. sanctions. But in the end, they go along, not willing to incur the wrath of the Godfather, or his punitive measures, such as expulsion from the international financial system, controlled by Washington. Same in many other cases.

China is different. It insists on the UN-based system (which it violates when it chooses to). As former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating explained, the much-heralded “China threat” reduces to the fact that China exists and is successfully defying the rules.

It is not the first to do so. The charge of “successful defiance” comes from the annals of the U.S. State Department in the 1960s. It was directed against the “Cuban threat,” namely, Cuba’s “successful defiance” of U.S. policies dating back to the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, which declared Washington’s intention to dominate the hemisphere once the British nuisance had been removed. That was anticipated by the great grand strategist John Quincy Adams, intellectual author of Manifest Destiny. He instructed his cabinet colleagues that U.S. power would increase while Britain’s declined, so that Cuba (indeed the hemisphere) would fall into U.S. hands by the laws of “political gravitation” as an apple falls from a tree. That happened in 1898 when the U.S. intervened to prevent Cuba’s liberation from Spanish rule, turning Cuba into a virtual colony, events recorded in properly sanitized history as Washington’s “liberation” of Cuba.

Cuba has been punished viciously for this successful defiance, including John F. Kennedy’s terrorist war, which almost brought about terminal nuclear war, and a crushing blockade. U.S. punishment of Cuba is opposed by the whole world: 184-2 in the latest UN vote, with Israel alone voting with its U.S. protector. But Europe obeys, however reluctantly.

Sometimes China’s practices sink to almost indescribable depths of evil. Once Washington realized that China is successfully defying the rules, it turned to the project of impeding China’s technological development — harming itself in the process, but overcoming the “China threat” is of transcendent importance. One aspect of the campaign to impede Chinese development is to keep others from using Chinese technology. But the devious Chinese are defying the rule-based international order by “setting up a network of vocational colleges around the world [to] train students in dozens of countries in technical areas ... on Chinese technology with Chinese standards as part of a full court press to globalize Chinese tech. It is a component of a bigger effort to tighten the economic linkages between China and the Global South, which Beijing sees as key to competition with the United States,” [according to](#) foreign policy scholars Niva Yau and Dirk van der Kley. Worse still, they note, “the Chinese government has been willing to listen to host countries,” and is training local instructors who will upgrade the skills of the local trainees and be able to develop their own societies, within the Chinese orbit and using Chinese technology.

These projects fall within the broader Chinese global policy framework now being realized most extensively throughout Eurasia, probably soon reaching to Turkey

and on to Eastern and Central Europe. If Afghanistan can survive U.S. sanctions, it too will probably be brought within the orbit of the China-based Shanghai Cooperation Organization, joining Russia, India, Pakistan, Iran and the Central Asian states. China might manage to shift Afghanistan's economy from opium export, the staple when it was under U.S. control, to exploiting its considerable mineral resources, to China's benefit. Chinese economic initiatives also extend to Southeast Asia, Africa, the Middle East (including Israel) and even to Washington's backyard in Latin America, despite strenuous U.S. efforts to block such intrusion.

Critics of these initiatives "[accuse China of pursuing a policy of 'debt-trap diplomacy'](#): luring poor, developing countries into agreeing [to] unsustainable loans to pursue infrastructure projects so that, when they experience financial difficulty, Beijing can seize the asset, thereby extending its strategic or military reach." Perhaps, but the charges are contested by reputable Western sources, including a Chatham House [study](#) that "demonstrates that the evidence for such views is limited," and studies by [U.S. researchers](#) assert that these charges, including those leveled by Donald Trump and Mike Pompeo, are baseless and that, "Chinese banks are willing to restructure the terms of existing loans and have never actually seized an asset from any country," in particular, the prize example in the charges, a port in Sri Lanka.

Nonetheless, debt traps are a concern, one that the U.S. understands well. Right now, for example, Washington is deeply concerned about a debt trap afflicting Cambodia, which is under pressure to repay a loan as it easily can, the lender claims, also arguing that it "[would set a bad precedent for other states](#)" if the debt were cancelled.

The lender is, of course, Washington. The debt was incurred by the government the U.S. was supporting (or more realistically, had imposed), in the early 1970s, when official U.S. policy, in Henry Kissinger's immortal words, was "massive bombing campaign in Cambodia.... Anything that flies on anything that moves," a call for genocide that would be hard to match in the archival record. The consequences were, predictably, horrendous. The perpetrator is greatly honored. The victims must repay their debts. We wouldn't want to set a bad precedent.

Occasionally, depravity reaches such a level that words fail.

The report on Cambodia's debt trap adds that, "if Washington were to wipe out a large chunk of the debt, it would only do so if it believed this gesture was met by good-faith reciprocity from Phnom Penh. Frankly, there's zero reason for such a belief now. A case in point occurred last month, when, after [U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy] Sherman's visit to Phnom Penh, the Cambodian government allowed the defense attaché at the U.S. Embassy, Marcus M. Ferrara, to tour the Ream Naval Base.... Yet he turned up to find that he was [only allowed](#) to visit parts of the site. Phnom Penh was in its rights to limit Ferrara's visit, yet it did nothing to absolve U.S. fears that Cambodia is hiding something."

It might be hiding a deal with China, which never ceases its malevolence.

As we have discussed earlier, much of the frenzied rhetoric about the China threat concerns alleged threats off the coast of China, where the U.S. military advantage is overwhelming (and a small fraction of the U.S. military advantage worldwide). That was so even before the recent U.S.-U.K. decision to provide Australia with a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines to confront China's four old noisy diesel submarines bottled up by U.S. power in the South China Sea.

The U.S. claims to be defending freedom of navigation with its military maneuvers in China's Exclusive Economic Zone — pure fraud, as we have already discussed. There are actually serious issues concerning Chinese abuses of the Law of the Sea, which has been ratified by all maritime powers except one: the usual outlier, the U.S. These should be addressed by diplomacy led by the regional powers, not by highly provocative acts that increase the threat of escalation to full-scale war.

*Taiwan has returned as one of the thorniest issues in U.S.-Chinese relations. The Chinese military has stepped up its activities in the Taiwan Strait and, according to some military experts, is even acquiring the equipment necessary for an invasion. In fact, Taipei has warned that China is getting ready to invade the island by 2025, although one would have to assume that such a scenario is most unlikely because of the impact that it would have on China's relations with the rest of the world. Still, would it be likely, as president Biden stated in late October during a CNN "town hall," that the U.S. would defend Taiwan if China invaded? And is there really a "Taiwan agreement" between the U.S. and China, as Biden also seems to have suggested earlier in that month?*

The critical agreement is the "one-China" doctrine that has been held for over 40

years. It is kept ambiguous. The rational policy now is for both the U.S. and China to refrain from provocative acts, and for Taiwan to adhere to the ambiguous agreement, the best outcome that can be hoped for at this point.

*As China is bent on expanding its nuclear arsenal, the U.S. appears willing now to push for arms-control talks. What are the lessons from the Cold War era to help us feel confident that a U.S.-China arms race can be prevented?*

The main lesson from the Cold War era is that it's a virtual miracle that we have survived. There should be no need here to run through the record once again, but it is worth remembering how many opportunities to reduce the dangers radically were lost.

The most instructive case I think was 60 years ago. Nikita Khrushchev understood well that Russia could not carry out the economic development he hoped for if it was trapped in an arms race with a far richer and more powerful adversary. He therefore proposed sharp mutual reductions in offensive weapons. The incoming Kennedy administration considered the offer and rejected it, instead turning to rapid military expansion, even though it was already far in the lead. The prominent international relations scholar Kenneth Waltz described what happened at the time: the Kennedy administration "undertook the largest strategic and conventional peace-time military build-up the world has yet seen ... even as Khrushchev was trying at once to carry through a major reduction in the conventional forces and to follow a strategy of minimum deterrence, and we did so even though the balance of strategic weapons greatly favored the United States."

As often has been the case, the policy harmed national security while enhancing state power, what really matters to Washington.

By now it's widely recognized — including a joint statement by Henry Kissinger, Reagan's Secretary of State George Shultz, the Senate's leading specialist on armaments Sam Nunn and former Secretary of Defense William Perry — that we should move expeditiously to eliminate nuclear weapons, a process that the signers of the nonproliferation treaty are obligated to undertake. The UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons entered into force this year. Though not yet implemented because of U.S. interference, nuclear weapons-free zones have been established in much of the world.

In brief, there are ways to greatly enhance security.

China so far has held back in nuclear weapons development. It would be wise to continue this policy. The U.S. can facilitate it by ending its highly provocative actions and moving towards an arms-control agreement with China. There are feasible means, [outlined by arms control specialists](#). While the Republican administrations since 2000 have been dismantling the arms control regime that has been laboriously constructed over the past 60 years, even Trump's wrecking ball didn't manage to demolish all of them; Biden was able to rescue the New Start Treaty just before its expiration. The system can be resurrected and carried forward to the point where this scourge is removed from the Earth.

The essential conclusion is simple: either the U.S. and China will work together on the critical issues that we all face, or they will expire together, bringing the rest of the world down with them.

*Copyright © Truthout. May not be reprinted without [permission](#).*

*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).

---

# Biden's "Democracy Summit" Prioritized US Hegemony Over Democratic Ideals



CJ

*Polychroniou*

For stark evidence that we live in a world where political hypocrisy reigns supreme, one need look no further than Biden's recent [Democracy Summit](#).

The United States — which was rated for the fifth consecutive year as a "[flawed democracy](#)" by a "leader in business intelligence" — sought to project itself at last week's summit as a leader in the fight to preserve global democracy, despite its long and dark history of overthrowing democratically elected governments and installing military dictatorships, and in spite of its ongoing support for any regime, however autocratic, that supports the interests and the objectives of the U.S. empire.

As if this wasn't hypocritical or farcical enough, many of the countries invited to take part in the summit are governed by leaders with little concern for democratic norms, such as India's Narendra Modi, Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro and Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines. These are authoritarian-led nations, but they enjoy robust economic and political relations with the United States.

China and Russia were not invited. Neither was Turkey because of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's extensive military deals with Russia.

The summit brought together leaders from government and the private sector, all of whom seem to have accepted the fact that democracy is under strain in today's world, but there was no acknowledgement of the factors responsible for the weakening of democratic governance and the resurgence of authoritarianism.



What one heard were pledges to strengthen democratic accountability, expand economic opportunities and protect human rights. In other words, the same blah, blah, blah, delivered by leaders at COP26.

In sum, the Summit for Democracy was not about defending democracy; rather, it was a geopolitical gambit to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives. As such, the question as to why democracy is undergoing [an alarming decline across the world](#) was simply left hanging in the air.

What really accounts for the spread of authoritarianism over the last few decades? And how does it differ from the forms of political authoritarianism that were prevalent during the Cold War era?

Today's authoritarianism (often called "authoritarian populism") is a complex phenomenon, with unique economic, cultural, political and social dimensions. Thus, while the ideological location of "authoritarian populism" is to be found on the far right of the political spectrum, there are important differences with regard to policymaking between regimes such as Victor Orbán's in Hungary and Donald Trump's during his four-year reign.

Different political contexts also play a key role in the resurgence of authoritarianism. Thus, while the rise of the new radical right in Europe is directly linked to the decline of the left on the continent, in Latin America, by contrast, the radical right has grown in a period of sharp electoral gains by the left.

Nonetheless, what bonds authoritarian leaders in today's world is their affinity for forms of political behavior that result in repressive measures, undermine all forms of collective decision-making — and indeed of the democratic process itself — and lead to the formation of autocratic regimes. In addition, all of the above leaders employ a rhetoric that can be loosely defined as xenophobic, if not outright racist, while seeking at the same time to gain popular support by using an ideology of extreme nationalism and emphasizing "law and order" as the basis for their political legitimacy.

Yet, we also need to understand how today's authoritarian regimes are different from those in the past. They are run by leaders who enjoy considerable support among the citizens of their respective countries. The new generation of authoritarian leaders rose to power not through *coups d'état* but by elections and

with vows to transform the existing socio-political order. They offered quick and easy solutions to social and economic problems, and managed to build a strong level of support among working class and nonurban populations, while at the same time enhancing the links of the state with the dominant capitalist classes in the domestic economy.

Take, for instance, the case of Orbán in Hungary, who was not invited to Biden's Democracy Summit, as his policies make him a pariah within the European Union.

On the economic front, Orbán developed a set of unorthodox but populist programs that came to be known as "[Orbánomics](#)." Briefly, "Orbánomics" combine policies of increased wages, low interest rates, high value-added taxes, initially high taxes in sectors of the economy controlled by foreign capital with the aim to drive foreign players away so the industries would pass into the hands of the domestic capitalist class (corporate tax in Hungary is now among the lowest in all of Europe, but value-added taxes remain the highest in the world), and an extensive workfare program for unemployed Hungarians. It's an economic program that can easily appeal to the average citizens, especially when compared to what they had experienced in the early years of the transition to post-communism where the ideology of the free market ran amok.

Of course, the developments on the political front [do not go unnoticed either by average Hungarians](#). Orbán has been remaking the Hungarian state in his own image since he took charge of the country in 2010. He filled the judiciary with members of his own party, rewrote the constitution, installed party apparatchiks into key agencies and institutions, introduced a school curriculum built around national identity and Christian cultural values, launched a war on the media and actually placed hundreds of independent media outlets into the hands of his cronies, and created an immense security apparatus at the border in order to keep away immigrants and refugees. Pro-Orbán newspapers and magazines are in the habit of even publishing the names of people considered to be enemies of the Hungarian state.

Hungary is clearly not a democracy, yet Orbán's authoritarian politics has more supporters than one cares to acknowledge. For many citizens, Orbán's regime is the protector of Hungary's national interests and identity from the globalizing impacts of a ruthless capitalist economic system. Different political forces inside Hungary have forged an alliance to challenge him ahead of next year's elections,

but it would not be a shock if Orbán continues in office after April 2022. As part of his strategy to entice voters to stay loyal to his party, he has launched [a massive public spending campaign](#) which includes, among other things, a huge tax rebate for families and an extra month's worth of pensions. He is also trying to create national hysteria by accusing the EU and the U.S. of [planning election interference](#).

Viktor Orbán is a textbook case of how “authoritarian populism” works in today’s world where the economics of global neoliberalism have left nation-states at the mercy of powerful market forces, eroded social institutions and deprived people of their national patrimony.

Orbán’s regime is not neoliberal per se. In actuality, Orbán’s politics constitute a reaction to neoliberal intensifications via the creation of a post-neoliberal regime which, [“merges authoritarianism, racist and patriarchal nationalism, clientelism, and partial neoliberalization,”](#) according to author and professor Dorit Geva. His regime is a far right alternative to global neoliberalism.

No doubt, this is what Trump tried to emulate from the moment he emerged on the political scene, but obviously without any interest in adopting the full package of Orbán’s “economic nationalism.”

Indeed, the spread of “authoritarian populism” is intimately connected to the intensifications of the neoliberal project in almost every case study that one wishes to examine, no matter the geographical location. In Central and Eastern Europe, where either illiberal programs or outright authoritarian rule extend from Hungary and Poland to Serbia, Bulgaria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, drastic neoliberal measures were introduced with complete disregard for the national patrimony and community well-being. Austerity, privatization, deregulation, the degrading of labor, the marketization of social relations, and the transfer of wealth from the bottom to the top, all of which constitute the economic and political aims of the neoliberal project, created massive inequalities and pushed a large portion of the population at the margins of society. These developments, combined with a growing feeling of alienation in their own country due to the dominance of foreign economic influence, made many an easy target for right-wing populists, especially in light of the decline of the parties of the traditional left. As far as immigration goes, as documented by researchers Anthony Edo and Yvonne Giesing, there is [“no mechanical link between the rise of immigration and](#)

[that of extreme right-wing parties.](#)” The key driver behind the rise of authoritarian populism is neoliberalism and its economic, social and cultural consequences.

Indeed, we see a similar trend in most countries of the European Union today, including France, Germany, Spain and Italy. Authoritarian or illiberal parties are gaining ground virtually everywhere in the Western world as the destructive consequences of neoliberalism become ever more pronounced and the left continues to lose ground.

Interestingly enough, in Latin America, on the other hand, the resurgence of the extreme right takes place in a period when [average voters are electing and reelecting leftist governments.](#) The aim there on the part of extreme right-wing parties is clear and straightforward: defend neoliberal capitalism by preventing socialists and radical leftist parties from making further inroads and turning the tide against change.

In both cases, however, it is the intensification of the contradictions of the global neoliberal project that is propelling the shift toward illiberal democracy and authoritarian populism. Neoliberalism is deeply inimical to democracy. It is actually drawn toward authoritarian politics because, as [Noam Chomsky notes](#), it undermines democratic governance at the national and international level through the “transferring [of] policy-making to private tyrannies that are completely unaccountable to the public.”

The implementation of the neoliberal project is thus anything but a politically neutral process. It requires the full utilization of both the repressive and the ideological apparatuses of the state in order to secure, maintain and reproduce its hegemony in class divided societies. The use of state repression and propaganda have been absolutely critical to the success of global neoliberalism. As such, authoritarianism is just a symptom of neoliberalism — a fact that neither Biden nor any of the invitees to his Democracy Summit dared to acknowledge.

What the future has in store for democracy is of course impossible to predict, although authoritarianism is likely to stay with us for as long as neoliberalism remains alive. It is of some consolation, however, that “authoritarian populism” no longer has a global leader. The defeat of Donald Trump in the 2020 U.S. presidential election was a major, if only temporary, blow to global

authoritarianism. This is because Trump not only practiced authoritarian politics himself, but warmly embraced scores of authoritarian leaders during his four years in office, thereby granting immense political legitimacy to the growing trend toward illiberal democracy. This was indeed a most interesting and rather unique development in the annals of U.S. politics in that, unlike most of his predecessors in the White House, who always sided with dictators and authoritarian rulers willing to cater to U.S. interests, Trump displayed support and admiration for authoritarian leaders (Putin and Erdoğan, in particular) who could be considered anything but allies of the United States.

Yet, it is quite conceivable that Trump may return to the White House if he decides to run in 2024. The Democrats appear incapable or unwilling to safeguard what is left of democracy in the U.S. Their failure so far to pass a voting rights bill is quite discouraging, while [the wave of mobilization at grassroots levels among Republicans](#) seeking offices to supervise elections is a bad omen of things to come. The Democratic Party's failure to advance an economic and social agenda that curtails the worst excesses of capitalism may create grounds for the further advancement of authoritarianism.

The weakening of democracy and the spread of authoritarian politics in many parts of the world is intrinsically linked to the contradictions of the global neoliberal project. For the progressive forces, therefore, restoring democracy entails putting an end to the neoliberal nightmare that has plagued the world for the past 40 years. Without undoing neoliberalism, and all other things being equal, the slide further and further toward authoritarianism is a distinct possibility.

*Copyright © Truthout.* May not be reprinted without [permission](#).

*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).

---

# **With The Failure of Politics, People Are Waking Up To The Realization That They Have A World To Win**



*CJ*

*Polychroniou*

People everywhere are waking up to the realization that they must fight to organize the world in such a way that there is a sustainable future for humanity and the planet.

Last month's COP26 climate summit at Glasgow ended as a complete flop. While some have hailed as success the mere inclusion of the phrase "unabated coal should be phased down" in the final agreement, the fact of the matter is that the transition from fossil fuels to clean energy remains a distant dream. It should also be obvious to all that the climate deal reached at COP26 in no way prevents

planetary temperature from crossing the 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold.

But let's be blunt about rising global temperatures. Thanks to the failure of politics with regard to global warming, the critical threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius will be reached or exceeded within the next couple of decades under all emissions scenarios considered, according to [IPCCS' latest findings](#). The only question is whether we can prevent the planet from getting even hotter—potentially passing 2 degrees or even 3 degrees Celsius.

Indeed, our national leaders have failed us on climate change, and we know the reasons why.

I explained this in a recent Op-Ed for Al Jazeera English.

“First, leaders sit on climate negotiating tables with the intent to advance an agenda that serves above all their own national interests rather than the health of our planet. Their mindset is still guided by the principles of “political realism” and political short-termism. This is why their words are not matching up with their actions.

Thus, Joe Biden can make a moral pronouncement to world leaders at COP26 in Glasgow that the US will lead the fight against the climate crisis “by example”, but, less than two weeks later, his administration auctions oil and gas leases in the Gulf of Mexico.

Second, the nation-state remains the primary actor in world affairs, so there are no international enforcement mechanisms with regard to pledges about cutting emissions. International cooperation, let alone solidarity, is extremely difficult to attain under the existing political order, and as leading international affairs scholar Richard Falk has argued, “Only a transnational ethos of human solidarity based on the genuine search for win/win solutions at home and transnationally can respond effectively to the magnitude and diversity of growing climate change challenges.”

Third, “the logic of capitalism” guides the world economy. With profit-maximization as the ultimate motive, capitalism is toxic for the environment, especially in its neoliberal version, with a strong emphasis on deregulation and privatization. Under such a socioeconomic system, it is highly unlikely that the [political establishment](#) will dare to embark on a climate action course that might prove detrimental to powerful economic interests.”

But all is not yet lost. Climate activism is now a global movement, and it is surely our only way out of the climate conundrum.

An estimated 100,000 people marched in Glasgow, and tens of thousands in other cities around the world, demanding bold action at the COP26 climate conference. Global warming demonstrations are filled with people of all ages and walks of life. Scores of scientists were [arrested](#) during the COP26 summit for carrying out various acts of civil disobedience.

To be sure, real leadership at the Glasgow summit was on display by the thousands of activists who [took to the streets](#)—not by the diplomats inside the halls of the Scottish Event Campus.

Moreover, we should not overlook the fact that some progress has indeed been made in the fight against global warming. The European Union is trying to make more than 100 cities carbon neutral by 2030. In Latin America and the Caribbean, in Asia and the Pacific, hundreds of climate projects have been introduced to combat fight the climate crisis.

Progressive economists, like those at the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) of the University of Massachusetts–Amherst, are taking real steps to help us combat global warming by producing highly detailed climate stabilization programs that drive sustainability while boosting employment. Indeed, Robert Pollin and some of his co-workers at [PERI](#) have brought the Green New Deal project to the forefront of public consciousness in scores of U.S. states. They are also hard at work now to spread it to other countries of the world.

Within the same context, organizations such as ReImagine Appalachia in the Ohio River Valley are laying the groundwork for a post-fossil fuel economy. Through both grassroots and grasstops initiatives, ReImagine Appalachia has engaged a wide variety of stakeholders in a shared vision of building a sustainable future based on clean and renewable energy sources and investments in the natural infrastructure to support “carbon farming,” but also through the creation of good union jobs for low-wage workers and by ensuring a just transition for all towards an environmentally sustainable economy, including of course workers in the extractive industries. As Amanda Woodrum, Senior Researcher, Policy Matters Ohio, and Co-Director, Project to ReImagine Appalachia likes to say, this is the only way that “Appalachia stays on the climate table, otherwise it will be on the menu.”



In the state with the largest economy in the United States, a detailed project of building a clean-energy infrastructure and reducing emissions by 50 percent as of 2030 and achieving a zero-emissions economy by 2045 has received strong support by more than 20 major unions across the state, including the United Steel Workers Locals 5, 675 and 1945 (who represent workers in the fossil fuel supply chain). The latest union to endorse the California Climate Jobs Plan, outlined in Program for Economic Recovery and Clean Energy Transition in California by Robert Pollin and his co-workers at PERI, is the San Francisco Region of the Inland Boatman's Union.

Indeed, labor activism in California is in the midst of a dramatic resurgence, with key labor union leaders and organizers such as, among others, Tracey Brieger, Dave Campbell, Norman Rogers, and Veronica Wilson, keen to continue the legacy of Tony Mazzocchi of the Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union. Mazzocchi was one of the earliest environmental activist leaders who advocated the idea of just transition for workers in carbon-intensive industries. His view, which is at the core of "Just Transition," was that [helping](#) displaced workers should not be seen as philanthropy or welfare. According to Mazzocchi, those who had worked to "provide the world with the energy and the materials it needs deserve a helping hand to make a new start in life."

There is no shortage of activism in today's world. The Green New Deal Network, a coalition of 15 progressive organizations working together with the explicit aim of mobilizing grassroots power in order to advance the vision of the Green New Deal across key states, while also applying pressure at the federal level, is yet another case emblematic of the important shift taking place in a world where the conditions for the transition to a sustainable and just future are being so blatantly ignored by the political establishment.

People everywhere are waking up to the realization that they must fight to organize the world in such a way that there is a sustainable future for humanity and the planet. They know that they have a world to win.

*Our work is licensed under Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0). Feel free to republish and share widely.*

Source:

<https://www.commondreams.org/failure-politics-people-are-waking-realization-the>

[y-have-world-win](#)

[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 [The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic and the Urgent Need for Social Change](#) (A collection of interviews with Noam Chomsky; Haymarket Books, 2021), and [Economics and the Left: Interviews with Progressive Economists](#) (Verso, 2021).