

The War In Ukraine Pushes The World Closer To The Edge Of A Climate Precipice

Putin's war in Ukraine, which could last for years, is in fact an absolute godsent to the most destructive forces on the planet, namely the arms industry and the fossil fuel companies.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine constitutes a crime of aggression under international law. Putin's regime launched an attack on a sovereign country that posed no direct threat to the Russian Federation. Russian forces have pounded cities into submission, thousands of civilians have been killed, and millions have fled as refugees.

The war on Ukraine has also fueled a food crisis in developing countries across the world and added to the widespread inflation in food prices. Russia and Ukraine export more than a quarter of the world's wheat. But blockades and sanctions are causing wheat shortages in many [Middle East and African countries](#).

However, the business of war is profitable. Putin's war in Ukraine, which could last for years, is in fact an absolute godsent to the most destructive forces on the planet, namely the arms industry and the fossil fuel companies.

Military expenditure, which reached an all-time high of \$2.1 trillion in [2021](#), will surely rise much further as several European countries have already made plans to beef up their armed forces in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In a historic vote, the German parliament voted for a constitutional amendment to create a [\\$100 billion euro](#) (\$112 billion) fund to modernize the country's armed forces. The bulk of the money will go toward the purchase of American-made F-35 fighter jets. German chancellor Olaf Scholtz also promised that Germany would spend more than 2 percent of its gross national product on the military. In real terms, Germany's annual defense spending would increase by 50 percent in 2022 alone," according to [Alexandra Marksteiner](#), researcher at the SIPRI Military Expenditure and Arms Production Program. "This would catapult Germany towards the top of the list of the world's largest military spenders. All else being

equal, Germany would rank third—up from seventh in 2020—behind the United States and China and ahead of India and Russia.”

Belgium, Italy, Norway, Poland, Romania, and Sweden have also announced a boost to their [defense spendings](#). Indeed, Putin’s invasion of Ukraine has managed to revive a “brain-dead” NATO. Even [Nordic states](#) with a long history of neutrality are now eager to join the transatlantic alliance.

In the US, where annual increases to the defense budget are routine, the war in Ukraine has created strong bipartisan support for more military spending. The [Senate Armed Services Committee](#) on June 16 voted 23-3 to boost funding for military spending by \$45 billion over the Biden administration’s budget request. If accepted, the bill would raise the defense budget for the fiscal year 2023 to over \$817 billion.

The war in Ukraine has also reinvigorated the fossil fuel industry and put climate action and clean energy on the back burner. With gas prices going through the roof, the Biden administration is doing everything possible to boost domestic oil production, which includes issuing drilling permits on federal lands and ordering an unprecedented release of oil from US reserves.

Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Biden had also urged OPEC and its allies to boost oil output in an effort to curb soaring gasoline prices. [Biden’s plea](#) fell on deaf ears, but his plan to visit the Middle East next month seems to have produced a change of heart for [OPEC](#) as it has just announced a hike in oil production.

Europe’s response to the energy impacts of the war in Ukraine is also shortsighted. Instead of boosting investments on clean energy as part of its goal to break free from Russian fossil fuels, the European Union simply opted to pursue new energy arrangements such as increasing imports of gas from Norway, importing liquified natural gas (LNG) from places like Australia, Qatar, and the United States, and building more LNG terminals. Natural gas may be producing less greenhouse gases than oil and coal, but it is not environmentally friendly.

Worse still, Europe has decided to turn to [coal](#) for power generation after Russia’s state-owned energy giant Gazprom decided to curb gas supplies to several European Union countries, including Germany.

It is probably still not too late to rescue the planet. But time is surely running out, and no one should expect politicians and bureaucrats to do what must be done to save humanity from climate doom. We can still rescue this planet from global warming through the power that citizens united can have in forcing change.

At this historic juncture, and while we need to end the brutal war in Ukraine without any further delay, concerned citizens worldwide must embrace wholeheartedly the [Global Green New Deal](#) project. There is no other viable alternative for a sustainable future.

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).

Frank Bovenkerk & Jan Rath - Lodewijk Brunt ~ Flaneur in toga

Lodewijk  Brunt

Er is al een tijdje niks verschenen op de blog van onze vader Lo die in 2020 uit ons leven verdween. Dat vinden wij soms zonde van zo'n omvangrijk en divers document. Lodewijk's oude studievriend en collega Frank Bovenkerk heeft samen met Jan Rath (opvolger van Lodewijk als professor stadsstudies) een uitvoerig en mooi resumé geschreven over het werkzame leven van Lo. Wij willen dat graag plaatsen als aanvulling op al het overige. Beide heren zijn grondig te werk gegaan en hebben zich ook verdiept in de periode nadat Frank en Lo elkaar een beetje uit het oog zijn verloren. Wij, als zoons van Lo, kunnen ons helemaal vinden in de feiten en hoe Frank en Jan het hebben opgeschreven. Vooral het nogal onvoorspelbare karakter van onze vader wordt raak beschreven en iedereen die

hem goed kende herkent deze kant van hem wel. Ook de gedrevenheid in zijn wetenschap en vooral zijn grote passie, de stad (en dan vooral Amsterdam), komen in het stuk heel mooi naar voren. Na het lezen van het stuk hebben we toch weer opnieuw bewondering voor hem gekregen en we missen hem nog iedere dag. Papa Lo was trots geweest op dit in memoriam. Wij hopen dat de bezoekers die dit stuk lezen dat met evenveel genoeg doen als ondergetekenden.

Tibor & Omar Brunt

Zie: http://www.lodewijkbrunt.nl/Lodewijk_Brunt_flaneur_in_toga_2022.pdf

NATO Membership May Spell The End Of Finland And Sweden As Social Democracies



Heikki Patomäki - Photo:
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Russia's invasion of Ukraine was a godsend for the North Atlantic Treaty

Organization (NATO), which had been declared “brain dead” by French President Emmanuel Macron as recently as 2019. Now, NATO has not only gained a new lease on life but also is expected to grow, with Finland and Sweden inching closer to NATO membership.

In fact, Putin’s criminal attack on Ukraine has managed to keep Europe within the sphere of U.S. hegemony and thus to halt any aspirations that Europeans may have had of seeing the continent shift toward greater autonomy.

In the interview that follows, Finnish political scientist Heikki Patomäki provides a critical look into the reasons why Finland and Sweden have opted to join NATO and the potential consequences for Nordic social democracy. Patomäki’s views have been demonized for simply going against the frenzied dictates enforced by Western governments and the corporate media regarding proper responses to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Patomäki is professor of global politics and research director of the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies at the University of Helsinki. He is a member of the Finnish Academy of Sciences and Letters and author of scores of books and academic articles.

C.J. Polychroniou: Heikki, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has reinvigorated NATO. Indeed, a new era seems to be underway as Finland and Sweden have decided to end decades of neutrality and join the transatlantic alliance. Let’s talk about Finland, which has a long and unique relationship with Russia on account of its history. Why does Finland want to join NATO? Is there really a security concern? What are the domestic debates surrounding its membership in NATO?

Heikki Patomäki: A simple but very incomplete answer is that the actions of Putin’s regime have caused Finland to join NATO. The first peak of support for NATO membership was in 2014-2015, but especially the impact of the 2022 invasion has been dramatic. While a significant part of the political elite has favored Finnish NATO membership for years either publicly or privately, for the bulk of the population the main motivation is now primarily fear. Most lay proponents of NATO seem to think membership will deter Russia from attacking Finland, which of course presupposes that such an attack is an imminent possibility. In their eyes, the North Atlantic alliance is like a big father with big guns who comes to protect us if needed. I think that is a rather primitive argument, even if somewhat understandable under the circumstances.

Finns — like many Europeans — seem to be relating themselves to this war in a

very different way than to say the war in Syria or Yemen, or the wars in Iraq (2003-2011, 2013-2017). An aspect of this is clearly related to Eurocentrism: Ukraine is in Europe, and this war is close to us. The distance from Helsinki to Kyiv is about the same as that to the northernmost part of Finland. The invasion of Ukraine evokes historical memories of the Winter War (1939-40) and Russia as the eternal enemy. This evocation constitutes a regressive historical moment involving turning to stories that were prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s when the right was defining Finland as the outermost post of Western civilization against the “barbarism” of Russian Bolshevism. The current understanding is in sharp contrast to the developments after the Second World War when a new cooperative understanding of Finland’s eastern neighbor evolved, despite very different social systems. What I hear now is Western Cold War mentality: The Russians are not only inherently bad but there may be no way we can ever cooperate with them again.

At a deeper level, the impact of the Russian invasion cannot be disentangled from longer-term processes of political change. Responses to the invasion in Ukraine stem in important part from gradual changes in the taken-for-granted background of social understandings, media representations and political rhetoric, which have prepared the ground for what can be seen as a further shift to the right cutting across all political parties. In the 1990s, the identity of Finland was redefined as a Western country, and as a member of the EU, to replace the earlier idea of a neutral social-democratic Nordic country, though the two coexisted for some time. Neoliberalization in turn has gradually changed meanings, mentalities, practices and institutions in Finland, paving the way to the rise of nationalist-authoritarian populism in the 2010s that followed the global financial crisis of 2008-2009 and its aftermath, including the Euro crisis. Some details may be peculiar to Finland, but otherwise, these processes are common across the interconnected world.

Since 1994, Finland and Sweden have participated in NATO’s Partnership for Peace plan. Particularly the Finnish armed forces have been matched with the NATO systems, culminating in a recent decision to buy 64 nuclear-weapons compatible F-35 fighters from the U.S. In the 2000s and 2010s, both countries participated in NATO’s “peace-support” operations and concluded NATO host nation support agreements. Hence, the invasion and the consequent turn in public opinion have merely enabled and triggered the ultimate step in the long process

of integration with NATO, namely formal membership.

How would Finnish and Swedish accession to NATO contribute to European security?

Despite the long process of integration with NATO, the step of formal membership is not insignificant. It has potentially far-reaching implications for international relations in Europe and globally. It is prone to spell the end to Nordic progressive internationalism, at least for now.

Whereas during the Cold War the Nordic countries achieved a pluralist and non-military security community amongst themselves and promoted solidarity and common good in their external relations, the step of joining NATO is accompanied by the militarization of society and belief in the capacity of the military might prevent war through superior deterrence. Ultimately, this step is based on the theory of deterrence — including nuclear deterrence — that relies on the abstract calculative logic of self-interested and strategic rational actors. The shift resonates with a wider ideational shift toward the logic of rational choice and optimization under constraints, which is the basis of mainstream neoliberal economics. The concept of common or public good has disappeared from these discussions, except in the form of stability to be achieved by employing deterrence. The term deterrence means to frighten and to fill the other, who is feared, with fear. The ultimate form of this kind of deterrence is MAD, Mutually Assured Destruction. Whereas the Cold War-era neutrality was understood, at least at times, as an attempt to transform the worldwide conflict threatening humanity, the current response stems from a rather narrow self-regarding perspective that is committed to the theory of deterrence. Moreover, the fear of Russia includes a simplistic Manichean story about a hero fighting for freedom and democracy against an evil empire.

It is evident that Russia has started a highly counterproductive war, the byproducts of which now include Finnish and Swedish membership in NATO. A problem is that this membership is in turn a step in the process of escalation of the conflict between Russia and NATO and, so far to a lesser extent, between Russia and the EU. The NATO expansion eastward has been a key issue in the conflict that has escalated step by step since the 1990s. The problem is not only that Finnish and Swedish NATO membership threatens to further escalate the NATO-Russia conflict. This decision will also reinforce the EU's reliance on

Washington. A more global problem is that this step is part of a process in which the world is increasingly divided into two camps in the world economy characterized by trade wars and weaponization of interdependence. Concerns about the effects of the expansion of Western military alliances are widely shared not only in Russia but also in the Global East and South. Moreover, this is no different from Australians and Americans being concerned about the alliance of the Solomon Islands with China. Current alliance formations and reformations are reminiscent of processes that led to the First World War. In the end looms the possibility of a global military catastrophe. Even if this does not happen immediately, such events are part of the development towards a catastrophe in the next 10-20 years — unless the course of world history is altered, for example by a new non-aligned movement.

Russia has threatened to retaliate over membership move on the part of Finland and Sweden. Why is Russia terrified of Finland in particular joining NATO, and how could it retaliate?

The Russian perspective is relatively clear. Russia has been opposed to NATO expansion all the way through. For example, in the 1990s President Boris Yeltsin was often considered Western-minded, yet at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe conference in Budapest in December 1994, he had a public outcry over plans to expand NATO. In various contexts, Yeltsin used consistently words such as “humiliation” and “fraud” to describe plans to extend NATO to the countries of Eastern (Central) Europe. Although in 2000-2001 Putin had discussions about the possibility of Russia joining NATO, what he seemed to have had in mind was the transformation of NATO into something more akin to the idea of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

With increasing alienation between Russia and the neoliberal West in the 2000s, in Russia NATO has more and more often been framed as a security threat. Finland has more than 1300 kilometers (km) of border with Russia and is located close to its main centers, in particular St. Petersburg (only 300 km from Helsinki), Russia’s Northern Fleet’s headquarters and main base in the Kola peninsula (similarly close to the Finnish border), and Moscow (1.5 hours flight from Helsinki). Depending on the specific conditions of Finnish membership, membership may mean NATO military installations directly on the western side of Russia and an expansion of territory that would in effect be under U.S. military command in case of a war. The Russian military planners will have to respond by

reorganizing their capabilities one way or another.

Nonetheless, the word “retaliation” in your question seems a bit too strong. This is even though for example Maria Zakharova, the spokesperson of the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, has talked about “surprising military countermeasures and actions.” Mostly the Putin regime appears to have adopted a line according to which Finnish NATO membership does not matter that much, not least because Finland was already so close to NATO. The downplaying of the importance of formal membership is in some contrast to the mutual understandings that prevailed until late 2021 and may indicate that Russian decision makers failed to anticipate this consequence of their invasion.

Moreover, any forceful interference — whether taking the form of manufactured migration flows, cyberattacks, or missile strikes — would be very counterproductive. Such an interference could only serve to further strengthen the already strong Russophobia and Russia-hatred among the population and its support for NATO membership. The mood now is fairly belligerent and many Finns back the idea of “defeating” Russia in Ukraine by military means, whatever that may take or imply.

Finland and Sweden are often described as being welfare capitalist societies, both still practicing a watered-down version of the Nordic model, which shows that economic prosperity can go hand in hand with the social welfare state. In fact, Finland has been named the happiest country in the world by the World Happiness Report for several years in a row. Do you think that Finland’s decision to join NATO would undermine what is left of the social democratic model?

While in terms of income (less so in terms of wealth distribution) Finland remains a relatively egalitarian country, the continuity to the era of social democracy is limited to certain functions of the democratic welfare state model, especially health and education. Both have been transformed in the neoliberal era, yet all citizens continue to have access to fairly inexpensive public health care and free education.

However, the health care system is increasingly dual track, part private, part semi-public, the latter involving a lot of private outsourcing. The educational system has been made more responsive to and selective in relation to the social background of pupils and students. Also, it has been reorganized following New

Public Management and the pedagogical ideas premised on the innate capacities of the young people. Nonetheless, education remains free to all Finns and citizens of the EU, even at the university level. (Fees have been introduced to overseas students.)

What is striking but not widely discussed is the fact that there has been no real economic growth in Finland since 2007-2008. Yes, it is true that Finland remains prosperous and that in that sense economic prosperity can go hand in hand with the remains of the social welfare state. Nonetheless, the overall picture is complex. It is also true as you say that Finland has been named the happiest country in the world by the World Happiness Report for several years in a row. Happiness in these reports is a composite index, it does not refer to "happiness" as a feeling. This has been a continuing source of amusement among Finns, most of whom do not feel particularly "happy." For example, suicide in Finland takes place at a higher rate than the European Union average.

It goes without saying that under these circumstances, what is left of the social democratic model is contested. Consider the case of the Left Alliance. The current Left Alliance is a moderate and culturally liberal social democratic party that has focused on domestic affairs, especially on social security, health, education and identity politics (for example LGBTQ issues), and to a degree also on national economic policy. The party is strongly in favor of active climate policy, but possible measures and political differences are seen primarily in national terms. All this is fine but also rather limited. Foreign and security policy has been largely left to other parties. The EU lies in the background, and the future of the union is not really discussed. For example, the Left Alliance has tacitly approved the idea that Finland is part of the "frugal four" in the EU. The lack of European and global vision explains why the party has now seemed so weak on the issue of NATO membership.

Traditionally, the Left Alliance has been strongly opposed to NATO membership but was divided in the parliamentary vote. Yet only a few Left Alliance MPs voted against the proposal of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's government. (The Left Alliance is part of the government coalition.) I hasten to add that the government decided already in December 2021, to buy 64 F-35 combat aircrafts from the U.S. at the price of at least 10 billion euros, while within the government, the Left Alliance is struggling to get a few extra tens of millions of euros to a particular social purpose. (Ten million is 1/1000 of 10 billion.) In the 1990s, the GDP share

of military expenditure could have been as low as 1.1 percent but is now close to 2 percent (the NATO norm). For one, the director of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs is proposing that the GDP share should lie somewhere between 3 percent and 4 percent.

It seems to me that after their decisions to join NATO, Finland and Sweden are on the wrong side of history. For all I know, these decisions spell the end of the Nordic social democratic ideal.

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Organizers Are Demanding A Green New Deal For The Gulf South



Jesse George - New Orleans Policy Director for the Alliance for Affordable Energy. Photo: <https://www.all4energy.org>

The Gulf Coast is home to “over 47% of total petroleum refining capacity ... as well as 51% of total U.S. natural gas processing plant capacity,” [according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration](#). Given that the burning of fossil fuels is the primary cause of the climate crisis, the Gulf Coast is a primary site driving global warming — and revealing its impacts. Extreme weather has become quite common in the entire region and sea levels are expected to rise between 14 and 18 inches by 2050, [according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#).

In this context, the Green New Deal project proposed by progressive activists and lawmakers carries special weight for sustainability in the Gulf Coast. Much of the Gulf South region of the United States — Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida — is politically conservative, which means the fight against the fossil-fuel economy is a truly uphill battle. Nonetheless, activism for transformative change is quite widespread throughout the Gulf Coast region. There are hundreds of organizations in the region committed to the fight against the climate crisis, even though they may not be nationally known and surely do not get the attention

they deserve from corporate-owned media.

The [Gulf South for a Green New Deal](#) (GS4GND) is a regional formation of some 300 organizations working towards climate, racial, and economic justice across the Gulf South. It was launched in May 2019, with hundreds of attendees representing tribal nations, neighborhood associations, student groups and community organizations. A few months later, GS4GND produced a policy platform outlining what a Green New Deal should entail in order to be successful in the Gulf South.

On June 4, people from across the Gulf Coast will gather in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, for the [Gulf Gathering for Climate Justice and Joy](#). Ahead of this event, *Truthout* interviewed Jesse George, the New Orleans Policy Director for the Alliance for Affordable Energy. In the interview below, George discusses the importance of organizing and the need for a just transition in the Gulf Coast. He also explains the obstacles facing organizers in their fight against the powerful corporate interests entrenched in the Gulf South. This fight draws inspiration from the “rich legacy of liberation” in the region, George noted.

C. J. Polychroniou: What would a just transition look like in the Gulf South?

Jesse George: For generations the fossil fuel industry has degraded our land, air, and water across the Gulf South. As we face stronger and more frequent storms, ever accelerating land loss, and the compounding effects of climate change, it is critical that we transition from a fossil fuel-based economy to a renewable energy future that prioritizes the needs of Gulf South residents, especially the Black and Indigenous communities who have paid most dearly in this extractive economy.

Across the region, corporate interests have told Gulf South residents that they have but two choices — surrender their resources to industry in exchange for promised (but never realized) prosperity or risk complete economic destruction. And now, as we seek to protect our homes and communities from the worsening impacts of climate change, polluters are ready with another set of lies that could cost us our lives — dangerous and unproven technologies backed by false promises like carbon capture and biomass. The truth is that polluting industries have offered little in the way of economic security and their latest scheme to continue extracting the region’s resources will do nothing but line the pockets of the very executives responsible for polluting our land, air and waterways.

But a just transition — one that uplifts the workers and frontline communities that have shouldered the burdens of the petrochemical industry — is possible and presents tremendous opportunities here in Louisiana and the entire Gulf South. For example, Louisiana has long been known as an energy state, and that doesn't have to change. We just have to change the ways we make that energy. Across the Gulf South there is tremendous potential for offshore wind, and yet we've seen practically no development. The infrastructure and workforce that currently services offshore oil rigs could easily be transitioned to installing and maintaining offshore wind turbines. A just transition means paying for job training so that those workers can make the transition to the renewable energy future. We have a duty to ensure the economic benefits of the new renewable energy economy don't just flow upwards but benefit the people who have suffered most severely from the impacts of the extractive economy.

And finally, a just transition means building climate resistant communities. Last year Hurricane Ida, one of the strongest hurricanes in recorded history, ripped through south Louisiana before making its way northward retaining enough strength to flood New York City subways. Our energy grid failed and folks were left for weeks, even months, without power in extreme heat. People died. Renewable energy, particularly local solar where folks are equipped with panels and batteries that feed into microgrids, could save lives in an event like this. We have the technology. We just need to build the political power to transform our economy.

Why is it important to organize as a region? What unites the region?

The Gulf and other waterways literally connect our region like the circulatory system in a human body. We share many of the same struggles — from extractive petrochemical industries to continual climate disaster, to the fight against the false solution of carbon capture. If we share the same struggles, we should stand shoulder to shoulder in facing them. For too long our region has been treated as a sacrifice zone by industry and our elected officials are all too ready to auction off our resources to the highest bidder.

Two years ago, a pipe carrying compressed carbon dioxide ruptured in Yazoo County, Mississippi, a majority Black county. The burst pipe filled the area with noxious gas and sent people to the hospital. What happened in our neighboring state could be a tragic harbinger of what's to come to other parts of the region if

we fail to stop the false promise that is carbon capture. The whole idea of carbon capture and storage is an industry lie. There is no evidence that long-term carbon capture and underground storage works. The few completed carbon capture projects aren't removing carbon from the air, they're capturing just a small percentage of the carbon a facility is actively emitting. In the instances where the carbon capture projects have not failed completely, they have come nowhere close to their touted carbon capture goals.

And yet, Louisiana governor John Bel Edwards and President Joe Biden are rallying behind carbon capture technology and essentially signing a permission slip for polluting industries to continue business as usual. It is essential that we stand in solidarity with residents from across the Gulf South to share knowledge and ensure that industry can't shuffle false promises from one place to another. The health of our region depends on our ability to work together to secure a just climate future.

What obstacles do organizers in the Gulf South face?

Petrochemical and extractive industries have a vise-grip on the Gulf South. The idea of our region being a sacrifice zone becomes self-fulfilling as industrial expansion continues unabated. Those who would maintain the status quo have a lot of money and power. They have bought off politicians from both major parties.

The corporate interests fighting to maintain the status quo are entrenched and they've been spreading lies for generations. For years, they've convinced us that we have no choice but to surrender our resources to them. Industry has done a very thorough job of scaring people. They've scared everyday people into thinking these extractive industries are the only source of steady employment in the region. Furthermore, industry has our elected leaders shaking in their boots too afraid that hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign donations will be turned against them should officials have the nerve to stand up to polluters.

And these extractive industries have maintained this multi-generation scare campaign on lies. They've told us they're the only economic option for the region. They've told us industry isn't responsible for elevated cancer risks and other poor health outcomes. They've told us that their ill-fated plans to capture the very emissions they create and pump them underground is safe. And now they're telling us complete lies about renewable energy options that could employ

thousands and drastically reduce carbon emissions. The oil and gas and petrochemical industries don't want to cede control of our region and they're not going to let it go easily.

The Gulf Gathering for Climate Justice and Joy is free and open to the public including folks who may not already be involved in the climate fight, so what do you hope attendees leave with?

We want attendees to leave the gathering with a sense of hope and a vision for the future of our region where human life and health are valued above corporate profits. We hope attendees will leave with an understanding that a just and joyous climate future is possible through our collective action.

So many forces in our contemporary society are at work to atomize people — from the gig economy where everybody's got their own hustle to society's movement away from shared workspace to the isolation of internet culture. For the last two years, we've been even more isolated as a result of the pandemic. There's a lot to keep people apart from each other and when people are forced apart it's only natural that we feel powerless. Our hope is that in coming together at the gathering folks will feel their power and see that change is possible. We want folks to know they're not alone in knowing that things need to change and we want them to find an organizing home in Gulf South for a Green New Deal.

How does the gathering fit into the legacy of resistance in the Gulf South?

Our region is home of the Civil Rights movement; the German Coast Uprising, the largest rebellion of enslaved people in U.S. history; Native resistance; marronage; anti-colonial efforts; and more. Throughout history, our ancestors have stood up to oppressive systems. Gulf South for a Green New Deal, as a Black- and Indigenous-led formation, draws on that rich legacy of liberation.

And like movements before, ours is centered in joy and hope for a brighter future.

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Chomsky: We Must Insist That Nuclear Warfare Is An Unthinkable Policy



Noam Chomsky

The war in Ukraine is now in its fourth month, but there is no sign of a ceasefire

or resolution anywhere in sight. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has ruled out a ceasefire or concessions, yet he maintains that only diplomacy can end the war. In the meantime, Russian forces are trying to capture eastern Ukraine, while the policy of the United States is to provide military support to Zelenskyy's government for as long as it might take to weaken Russia in hope that regime change will come to Moscow.

These developments do not bode well either for Ukraine or for the world at large, argues Noam Chomsky, a public intellectual regarded by millions of people as a national and international treasure. In this new and exclusive interview for *Truthout*, Chomsky urges the forces capable of ending the war to devote their energy to finding constructive ways to put a halt to the unfolding tragedies. In addition, he analyzes the new and highly dangerous global order that is taking shape. Perhaps to the surprise of many, especially considering the ongoing war in Ukraine, he does not describe the U.S.-Russia confrontation as the central element of the new global order in the making. Chomsky is institute professor and professor of linguistics at MIT and currently laureate professor at the University of Arizona, and has published some 150 books in linguistics, political and social thought, political economy, media studies, U.S. foreign policy and international affairs.

C.J. Polychroniou: After months of fighting, there is still very little hope of peace in Ukraine. Russia is now refocusing its efforts on taking control of the east and south of the country with the likely intent of incorporating them into the Russian Federation, while the West has signaled that it will step up military support for Ukraine. In the light of these developments, Ukrainian officials have ruled out a ceasefire or concessions to Moscow, although President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also went on record saying that only diplomacy can end the war. Don't these two positions cancel each other out? Doesn't a mutually acceptable agreement for a war to end always contain concessions? Indeed, back in March, the Ukrainian government had signaled its intention that it was willing to make big concessions for the war to end. So, what's going on? Could it be that neither side is fully invested in peace?

Noam Chomsky: I'll come back to the questions, but we should carefully consider the stakes. They are very high. They go far beyond Ukraine, desperate and tragic as the situation is there. Anyone with a moral bone in their body will want to think through the issues carefully, without heroic posturing.

Let's consider what is at stake.

First, of course, is Putin's invasion of Ukraine, a crime (to repeat once again) that can be compared to the U.S. invasion of Iraq or the Hitler-Stalin invasion of Poland, the kind of crimes against peace for which Nazi war criminals were hanged — though only the defeated are subject to punishment in what we call "civilization." In Ukraine itself, there will be a terrible toll as long as the war persists.

There are broader consequences, which are truly colossal. That's no exaggeration.

One is that tens of millions of people in Asia, Africa and the Middle East are literally facing starvation as the war proceeds, cutting off desperately needed agricultural supplies from the Black Sea region, the primary supplier for many countries, including some already facing utter disaster, like Yemen. Will return to how that is being handled.

A second is the growing threat of terminal nuclear war. It is all too easy to construct plausible scenarios that lead to a rapid climb up the escalation ladder. To take one, right now the U.S. is sending advanced anti-ship missiles to Ukraine. The flagship of the Russian fleet has already been sunk. Suppose more of the fleet is attacked. How does Russia then react? And what follows?

To mention another scenario, so far Russia has refrained from attacking the supply lines used to ship heavy armaments to Ukraine. Suppose it does so, placing it in direct confrontation with NATO — meaning the U.S. We can leave the rest to the imagination.

Other proposals are circulating that would very likely lead to nuclear war — which means the end, for all of us, facts that do not seem to be properly understood. One is the widely voiced call for a no-fly zone, which means attacking anti-aircraft installations inside Russia. The extreme danger of such proposals is understood by some, notably the Pentagon, which so far has been able to veto the most dangerous proposals. For how long in the prevailing mood?

These are horrendous prospects. Prospects: what *might* happen. When we look at what actually *is* happening, it gets worse. The Ukraine invasion has reversed the much-too-limited efforts to address global warming — which will soon become

global frying. Prior to the invasion, some steps were being taken to avert catastrophe. Now that has all been thrown into reverse. If that continues, we're done.

One day the IPCC issues another severe warning that if we are to survive, we must start right now to reduce use of fossil fuels. Right now, no delay. The next day President Biden announces vast new expansion of fossil fuel production.

Biden's call to increase fossil fuel production is sheer political theater. It has nothing to do with today's fuel prices and inflation, as claimed. It will be years before the poisons reach the market — years that could be spent on moving the world rapidly to renewable energy. That's perfectly feasible, but barely discussed in the mainstream. There's no need to comment here. The topic has recently been [expertly analyzed by economist Robert Pollin](#) in another of his essential contributions to understanding this critical issue of survival and acting on that understanding.

It is crystal clear that settling the Ukraine crisis is of extraordinary significance, not just for Ukraine itself but because of the calamitous consequences beyond if the war persists.

What then can we do to facilitate ending the tragedy? Let's begin with virtual truism. The war can end in one of two ways: Either there will be a diplomatic settlement, or one side will capitulate. The horror will go on unless it ends with a diplomatic settlement or capitulation.

That at least should be beyond discussion.

A diplomatic settlement differs from capitulation in one crucial respect: Each side accepts it as tolerable. That's true by definition, so it is beyond discussion.

Proceeding, a diplomatic settlement must offer Putin some kind of escape hatch — what is now disdainfully called an “off-ramp” or “appeasement” by those who prefer to prolong the war.

That much is understood even by the most dedicated Russia-haters, at least those who can entertain some thought in their minds beyond punishing the reviled enemy. One prominent example is the distinguished foreign policy scholar Graham Allison of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, who also

has long direct experience in military affairs. Five years ago, he instructed us that it was then clear that Russia as a whole is a “demonic” society and “deserves to be strangled.” Today he adds that few can doubt that Putin is a “[demon](#),” radically unlike any U.S. leader, who at worst only make mistakes, in his view.

Yet even Allison argues that we must contain our righteous anger and bring the war to a quick end by diplomatic means. The reason is that if the mad demon “is forced to choose between losing and escalating the level of violence and destruction, then, if he’s a rational actor, he’s going to choose the latter” — and we may all be dead, not just Ukrainians.

Putin is a rational actor, Allison argues. And if he is not, all discussion is useless because he can destroy Ukraine and maybe even blow up the world at any moment — an eventuality we cannot prevent by any means that won’t destroy us all.

Proceeding with truism, to oppose or even act to delay a diplomatic settlement is to call for prolonging the war with its grim consequences for Ukraine and beyond. This stand constitutes a ghastly experiment: Let’s see whether Putin will slink away quietly in total defeat, or whether he will prolong the war with all its horrors, or even use the weapons that he indisputably has to devastate Ukraine and to set the stage for terminal war.

All of this seems obvious enough. Or it should, but not in the current climate of hysteria, where such near truisms elicit a great flood of utterly irrational reactions: *The monster Putin won’t agree, it’s appeasement, what about Munich, we have to establish our own red lines and keep to them whatever the monster says, etc.*

There is no need to dignify such outpourings with a response. They all amount to saying: Let’s not try, and instead undertake the ghastly experiment.

The ghastly experiment is operative U.S. policy, and is supported by a wide range of opinion, always with noble rhetoric about how we must stand up for principle and not permit crime to go unpunished. When we [hear this from strong supporters of U.S. crimes](#), as we commonly do, we can dismiss it as sheer cynicism, the Western counterpart to the most vulgar apparatchiks of the Soviet years, eager to eloquently denounce Western crimes, fully supportive of their own. We also hear it from opponents of U.S. crimes, from people who surely do

not want to carry out the ghastly experiment that they are advocating. Here other issues arise: the rising tide of irrationality that is undermining any hope for serious discourse — a necessity if Ukraine is to be spared indescribable tragedy, and even if the human experiment is to persist much longer.

If we can escape cynicism and irrationality, the humane choice for the U.S. and the West is straightforward: seek to facilitate a diplomatic settlement, or at least don't undermine the option.

On this matter, official Western opinion is split. France, Germany and Italy have been [calling for negotiations](#) to establish a ceasefire and move toward a diplomatic settlement. The U.S. and Britain, the West's two warrior states, object. Their position is that [the war must proceed](#): the ghastly experiment.

The longstanding U.S. policy of undermining diplomacy, which we have reviewed in detail in earlier discussions, was presented in sharper form a few weeks ago at a meeting of NATO powers and others organized by Washington at the U.S. airbase in Ramstein, Germany. The U.S. issued the marching orders: The war must be continued so as to harm Russia. That is the widely advocated "Afghan model" that we have discussed: In the words of the definitive scholarly study of the topic, it is the policy of "fighting Russia to the last Afghan" while seeking to delay Russian withdrawal and to undermine the UN diplomatic efforts that finally brought the tragedy to an end.

Explaining U.S.-NATO goals at Ramstein, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin [said](#) that "we want to see Russia weakened to the degree that it can't do the kinds of things that it has done in invading Ukraine."

Let's think about it. How do we ensure that Russia can never again invade another country? We put aside here the unthinkable question of whether reshaping U.S. policy might contribute to this end, for example, examining Washington's openly declared refusal to consider any Russian security concerns and many other actions that we have discussed.

To achieve the announced goal, it seems that we must at least reenact something like the Versailles Treaty, which sought to ensure that Germany would not be able to go to war again.

But Versailles did not go far enough, as was soon made clear. It follows that the

new version being planned must “strangle the demon” in ways that go beyond the Versailles effort to control the Huns. Perhaps something like the [Morgenthau Plan](#).

That is the logic of the pronouncements. Even if we don’t take the words seriously and give them a limited interpretation, the policy entails prolonging the war, whatever the consequences are for Ukrainians and the “collateral damage” beyond: mass starvation, possible terminal war, continued destruction of the environment that sustains life.

Narrower questions of a similar sort arise with regard to the blockade, with its lethal effects in the Global South. Right now, Ukrainian ports are blockaded by the Russian Navy, preventing desperately needed exports. What can be done about it?

As always, there are two directions to explore: military or diplomatic. “War/War or Jaw/Jaw” in the phrase attributed to Churchill, who assigned priority to the latter.

War/War is official U.S. policy: Send advanced anti-ship missiles to force Russia to stop blockade of ports. Beyond the Russian flagship, more can be sunk. Will the Russians observe quietly? Maybe. How would the U.S. react in similar circumstances? We can put that aside.

Another possibility, [proposed by the Wall Street Journal editors](#), is “to use warships to escort merchant ships out of the Black Sea.” The editors assure us that it would conform to international law, and that Russians will stop at nothing. So, if they react, we can proclaim proudly that we upheld international law as all goes up in flames.

The editors observe that there are precedents: “The U.S. has marshalled allies for such a mission twice in recent decades. In the late 1980s the U.S. reflagged and protected Kuwaiti oil tankers as they sailed out of the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq tanker war.”

That is correct, though there is a small oversight. The U.S. did indeed intervene directly to provide crucial support for Reagan’s good friend Saddam Hussein in his invasion of Iran. That was after supporting Saddam’s chemical warfare that killed hundreds of thousands of Iranians, and even charging Iran for Saddam’s

massacre of Kurds with chemical warfare. Iran was the demon of the day. A fine precedent.

Those are options for ending the blockade, keeping to convention by restricting attention to force rather than possible peaceful steps.

Are there any? One cannot know without thinking about them, looking at what is transpiring, and trying. It may be of relevance that Russia did propose something of the sort, though in our increasingly totalitarian culture, it can be reported only at the extreme margins. Quoting from a [libertarian website](#):

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko ... [argued] his country is not solely responsible for the burgeoning food emergency while pointing to Western sanctions blocking the export of grain and fertilizers.

“You have to not only appeal to the Russian Federation but also look deeply at the whole complex of reasons that caused the current food crisis. [Sanctions] interfere with normal free trade, encompassing food products including wheat, fertilizers and others,” Russian Deputy Foreign Minister [Andrey Rudenko said](#).

Is it worth considering? Not in our culture, which automatically reaches for the revolver.

The reflexive preference for violence, and its grim consequences, have not been overlooked abroad. That’s common in the Global South, which has ample experience with Western practice, but even among allies. The editor of the Australian international affairs journal *Arena* [deplores the rigid censorship and intolerance of even mild dissent in U.S. media](#), concluding that “This means it is almost impossible within mainstream opinion to simultaneously acknowledge Putin’s insupportable actions *and* forge a path out of the war that does not involve escalation, and the further destruction of Ukraine.”

Quite correct. And unless we can escape this self-imposed trap, we are likely to march on to annihilation. It is all reminiscent of the early days of World War I when the Great Powers enthusiastically undertook a self-destructive war, but this time with incomparably more severe consequences lurking not far in the distance.

I’ve said nothing about what Ukrainians should do, for the simple and sufficient reason that it’s not our business. If they opt for the ghastly experiment, that’s

their right. It's also their right to request weapons to defend themselves from murderous aggression.

Here we return to what is our business: ourselves. How should we respond to these requests? I'll repeat in a moment my personal belief, but here too a little honesty wouldn't hurt. There are many ringing declarations upholding the sacred principle that victims of criminal assault must be supported in their just demand for weapons to defend themselves. It is easy to show that those who issue them don't believe a word of what they are saying, and in fact, almost always, strongly support providing weapons and crucial diplomatic support to the aggressor. To take just the most obvious case, where are the calls to provide Palestinians with weapons to defend themselves from half a century of brutal criminal occupation in violation of Security Council orders and international law — or even to withdraw the decisive U.S. support for these crimes?

One can, of course, read the reports of U.S.-backed settler-IDF atrocities in the Israeli press, in the daily columns of the great journalist Gideon Levy. And we can read the [withering reports](#) by another honorable Israeli journalist, Amira Hass, reviewing the bitter condemnations of the ecological damage caused by the “demonic” Russians in Ukraine, which somehow miss the Israeli attack on Gaza last May, when “Israeli shells ignited hundreds of tons of pesticides, seeds, fertilizers, other chemicals, nylon and plastic sheeting, and plastic piping in a warehouse in the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahia.” The shelling ignited 50 tons of hazardous substances, with lethal effects on the shattered population, which is living in conditions of bare survival, international agencies report, after decades of U.S.-backed Israeli sadism. It is “chemical warfare by indirect means,” the highly reputable Palestinian legal research and activism agency al-Haq reports, after extensive investigation.

None of this, and vastly more, inspires any word in the mainstream about ending huge U.S. support for the murderous occupier, or of course for any means of defense.

But enough of such outrageous “whataboutism,” otherwise known as elementary honesty, and a common theme outside of our tightly controlled doctrinal system. How should the principle apply in the unique case of Ukraine, where the U.S. for once opposes aggression? My own view, to repeat, is that the Ukrainian request for weapons should be honored, with caution to bar shipments that will escalate

the criminal assault, punishing Ukrainians even more, with potential cataclysmic effects beyond.

If the war in Ukraine can be ended through diplomacy, a peace deal could take many forms. The diplomatic solution advanced by many experts is the one based on a Ukrainian treaty of neutrality while Russia drops its objections to Ukraine's membership in the EU, although the road to membership will inevitably be very long. However, there is one scenario which is rarely discussed, yet this is where things could be headed. This is Graham Allison's "Korean scenario," where Ukraine is divided into two parts without a formal treaty. Do you regard this as a likely or possible scenario?

It is one of a number of possible very ugly outcomes. Speculation seems to me rather idle. Better, I think, to devote our energy to thinking of constructive ways to overcome the developing tragedies — which, again, go far beyond Ukraine.

We might even envision a broader framework, something like the "common European home" with no military alliances proposed by Mikhail Gorbachev as an appropriate framework of world order after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Or we might pick up some of the early wording of the Partnership for Peace, initiated by Washington in the same years, as when President Clinton in 1994 assured Boris Yeltsin that "the broader, higher goal [is] European security, unity and integration - a goal I know you share."

These promising prospects for peaceful integration were soon undercut, however, by [Clinton's plans for NATO expansion](#), over strong Russian objections, long preceding Putin.

Such hopes can be revived, to the great benefit of Europe, Russia and world peace generally. They might have been revived by Putin had he pursued Macron's tentative initiatives towards accommodation instead of foolishly choosing criminal aggression. But they are not necessarily dead.

It's useful to recall some history. For centuries, Europe was the most vicious place on earth. For French and Germans, the highest goal in life was to slaughter one another. As recently as my childhood, it seemed unimaginable that it could ever end. A few years later, it did end, and they have since been close allies, pursuing common goals in a radical reversal of a long history of brutal conflict. Diplomatic successes need not be impossible to achieve.

It is now a commonplace that the world has entered a new Cold War. In fact, even the once-unthinkable scenario of using nuclear weapons in warfare is no longer taboo talk. Have we entered an era of confrontation between Russia and the West, a geostrategic and political rivalry reminiscent of the Cold War?

Nuclear warfare had better become taboo talk, and unthinkable policy. We should be working hard to restore the arms control regime that was virtually dismantled by Bush II and Trump, who didn't have quite enough time to complete the job but came close. Biden was able to rescue the last major relic, New Start, just days before its expiration.

The arms control regime should then be extended, looking forward to the day when the nuclear powers will join the UN Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, now in force.

Other measures can be taken to alleviate the threat, among them implementing Nuclear Weapons-Free Zones (NWFZ). They exist in much the world, but are blocked by U.S. insistence on maintaining nuclear weapons facilities within them. The most important would be a NWFZ in the Middle East. That would end the alleged Iranian nuclear threat and eliminate any thin pretext for the criminal U.S.-Israeli bombings, assassinations and sabotage in Iran. That crucial advance in world peace is, however, blocked by the U.S. alone.

The reason is not obscure: It would interfere with Washington's protection of Israel's huge nuclear arsenal. That has to be kept in the dark. If exposed, U.S. law would come into play, threatening Washington's extraordinary support for Israel's illegal occupation and constant crimes — another topic that is unmentionable in polite society.

All steps should be taken to remove the scourge of nuclear weapons from the earth, before they destroy all of us.

In the world system that is taking shape, the confrontation with Russia is something of a sideshow. Putin has handed Washington a marvelous gift by turning Europe into a virtual U.S. vassal, cutting off the prospects that Europe might become an independent "third force" in international affairs. A consequence is that the fading Russian kleptocracy, with its huge stock of natural resources, is being incorporated into the Chinese-dominated zone. This growing system of development and loans stretches over Central Asia and reaches to the

Middle East through the UAE and Maritime Silk Road, with tentacles stretching to Africa and even to Washington's "little region over here," as FDR's Secretary of War Henry Stimson described Latin America while calling for dismantling of all regional associations except for our own.

It is the "China threat" that is the centerpiece of U.S. strategy. The threat is enhanced if resource-rich Russia is incorporated as a junior partner.

The U.S. is now vigorously reacting to what it calls "Chinese aggression," such as devoting state resources to developing advanced technology and internal repression. The reaction, initiated by Trump, has been carried forward by Biden's policy of "encirclement" based on a ring of "sentinel states" off the coast of China. These are armed with advanced weapons, recently upgraded to high-precision weapons, aimed at China. The "defense" is backed by a fleet of invulnerable nuclear submarines that can destroy not just China but the world many times over. Since that is not good enough, they are now being replaced as part of the enormous Trump-Biden military expansion.

The stern U.S. reaction is understandable. "China, unlike Russia, is the only country powerful enough to challenge U.S. dominance on the world stage," Secretary of State Antony Blinken [announced](#) in describing this intolerable threat to world order (aka U.S. dominance).

While we talk of "isolating Russia," if not "strangling" this "demonic" society, most of the world is keeping its ties open to Russia and to the China-dominated global system. It is also watching, bemused, as the U.S. destroys itself from within.

Meanwhile the U.S. is developing new alliances, which will presumably strengthen in November if the GOP takes over Congress and manages to gain long-term control of the political system through its quite open efforts to undermine political democracy.

One such alliance is being firmed up right now with the racist self-declared "illiberal democracy" of Hungary, which has crushed free speech and independent cultural and political institutions and is worshipped by leading figures of the GOP from Trump to media star Tucker Carlson. Steps toward that goal were taken a few days ago at the conference of far right elements in Europe that met in Budapest, where the star attraction was the Conservative Political

Action Conference, a core element of the Republican Party.

The alliance between the U.S. and the European extreme right has a natural ally in the Abraham alliance forged by Trump and Jared Kushner. This widely hailed alliance formalized the tacit relations between Israel and the most reactionary states of the MENA (Middle East-North Africa) region. Israel and Hungary already have close relations, based on shared racist values and a sense of grievance for being shunned by more liberal elements in Europe. Another natural partner is today's India, where Prime Minister Modi is shattering Indian secular democracy and establishing a Hindu ethnocracy, bitterly repressing the Muslim population, and extending India's domains with his brutal occupation of Kashmir.

The U.S. is already virtually alone in recognizing the two existing illegal MENA occupations in violation of Security Council orders: Israel's annexation of the Syrian Golan Heights and of vastly expanded Greater Jerusalem, and Morocco's annexation of Western Sahara to extend its near monopoly of irreplaceable phosphate reserves. With the GOP in power, the U.S. might complete the picture by recognizing Hindu India's violent takeover of Kashmir.

A new global order is taking shape, but the U.S.-Russia confrontation is not its central element.

Speaking of a new Cold War, I must say I am in utter disbelief by the delirious reaction on the part of so many in the U.S. to analyses seeking to provide background to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the same is true in connection with voices calling for diplomacy to end the war. They conflate explanation and justification and willfully ignore historical facts, such as the decision of the U.S. to expand NATO eastward without consideration to Russia's security concerns. And it isn't as if this decision was greeted at the time with approval by leading diplomats and foreign affairs experts. Former U.S. envoy to the Soviet Union Jack F. Matlock Jr. and former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger warned against NATO expansion and Ukraine's inclusion. George Kennan's reaction to the Senate's 1998 ratification of NATO eastward expansion up to the borders of Russia was even more blunt: "I think it is the beginning of a new cold war.... I think the Russians will gradually react quite adversely.... I think it is a tragic mistake. There was no reason for this whatsoever.... Of course there is going to be a bad reaction from Russia, and then [the Nato expanders] will say that we always told you that is how the Russians are - but this is just wrong."

Were these top U.S. diplomats Russian pawns, as is often said today of anyone offering background information why Russia has invaded Ukraine? I like to have your thoughts on this matter.

You can add others who delivered stern warnings to Washington that it was reckless and needlessly provocative to ignore Russia's announced security concerns, including current CIA Director William Burns and his predecessor Stansfield Turner, even hawks like Paul Nitze, in fact almost the whole of the diplomatic corps who had any deep knowledge of Russia. Those warnings were particularly strong with regard to Russia's concerns, well before Putin and including every Russian leader, over incorporation into NATO of Georgia and Ukraine. These are Russia's geostrategic heartland as is evident by a look at a topographic map and recent history, Operation Barbarossa.

Are they all Russian pawns? I suppose that can be claimed in today's climate of frenzied irrationality, a danger to ourselves and the world.

It's useful to have a look at chapters of history that are far enough back so that we can consider them with some degree of detachment. An obvious choice, as mentioned earlier, is the First World War. It is now recognized that it was a terrible war of futility and stupidity in which none of the agents had a tenable stand.

That's now. Not at the time. As the great powers of the day stumbled into war, the educated classes in each proclaimed the nobility of the cause of their own state. A famous manifesto of prominent German intellectuals appealed to the West to support the land of Kant, Goethe, Beethoven, and other leading figures of civilization. Their counterparts in France and Britain did the same, as did the most distinguished American intellectuals when Woodrow Wilson joined the war shortly after having won the 1916 election on a platform of Peace without Victory.

Not everyone took part in the celebration of the grandeur of their own state. In England, Bertrand Russell dared to question the party line; in Germany, he was joined by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht; in the U.S., by Eugene Debs. All were imprisoned. Some, like Randolph Bourne in the U.S., escaped that fate. Bourne was only barred from all liberal journals.

This pattern is not a departure from the historical norm. It pretty much is the norm, regrettably.

The World War I experience did provide important lessons. That was recognized very quickly. Two highly influential examples are Walter Lippmann and Edward Bernays. Lippmann went on to become a most prominent U.S. 20th century public intellectual. Bernays became one of the founders and intellectual leaders of the huge public relations industry, the world's major propaganda agency, devoted to undermining markets by creating uninformed consumers who will make irrational choices and to fostering the unbridled consumerism that ranks alongside the fossil fuel industries as a threat to survival.

Lippmann and Bernays were Wilson-Roosevelt-Kennedy liberals. They were also members of the propaganda agency established by President Wilson to convert a pacifist population to raging anti-German fanatics, the Creel Committee on Public Information, a properly Orwellian title. Both were highly impressed by its success in “manufacture of consent” (Lippmann), “engineering of consent” (Bernays). They recognized this to be a “new art in the practice of democracy,” a means to ensure that the “bewildered herd” — the general population — can be “put in their place” as mere “spectators,” and will not intrude into domains where they do not belong: policy decisions. These must be reserved for the “intelligent minority,” “the technocratic and policy-oriented intellectuals” in the Camelot version.

That is pretty much reigning liberal democratic theory, which Lippmann and Bernays helped forge. The conceptions are by no means new. They trace back to the early democratic revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries in England and then its U.S. colony. They were invigorated by the World War I experience.

But while the masses may be controlled with “necessary illusions” and “emotionally potent oversimplifications” (in the words of Reinhold Niebuhr, venerated as the “theologian of the liberal establishment”), there is another problem: the “value-oriented intellectuals” who dare to raise questions about U.S. policy that go beyond tactical decisions. They can no longer be jailed, as during World War I, so those in power now seek to expel them from the public domain in other ways.

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