Burkina Faso Ejects French Troops

Vijay Prashad

On January 18, 2023, the government of Burkina Faso made a decision to ask the French military forces to depart from the country within a month. This decision was made by the government of Captain Ibrahim Traoré, who staged the second coup of 2022 in Burkina Faso in September to remove Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, who had seized power in a coup d'état in January. Traoré, now the interim president of Burkina Faso, said that Damiba, who is in exile in Togo, had not fulfilled the objectives of the Patriotic Movement for Safeguarding and Restoration, the name of their military group. Traoré's government accused Damiba of not being able to stem the insurgency in the country's north and of colluding with the French (alleging that Damiba had taken refuge in the French military base at Kamboinsin to launch a strike against the coup within a coup).

France entered the Sahel region in 2013 to prevent the southern movement of jihadist elements strengthened by the war in Libya, prosecuted by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In the past few years, anti-French sentiment has deepened in North Africa and the Sahel. It was this sentiment that provoked the coups in Mali (August 2020 and May 2021), Guinea (September 2021), and then in Burkina Faso (January 2022 and September 2022). In February 2022, Mali's government ejected the French military, accusing French forces of committing atrocities against civilians and colluding with jihadi insurgents. Burkina Faso has now joined Mali.

The ejection of France does not mean that there will be no NATO countries in the region. Both the United States and Britain have a large footprint from Morocco to

Niger, with the United States trying to draw African countries into its contest against China and Russia. Regular trips by U.S. military leaders—such as U.S. Marine Corps General Michael Langley (commander of U.S. Africa Command) to Gabon in mid-January – and by U.S. civilian leaders—like Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen to Senegal, South Africa, and Zambia—are part of a full-court press to ensure that African states forge closer ties with the United States and its allies over China. The designation of Russia's Wagner Group—which is said to be operating in the Sahel—as a "transnational criminal organization " by the United States and the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, held in mid-December, are both attempts to draw African states into a new cold war.

Almost half of the Burkinabé population lives below the poverty line, and "more than 630,000 people are on the brink of starvation," in the country, according to the UN. The country is, however, not poor with its gold export reaching $7.19 billion in 2020. These gains do not go to the Burkinabé people but go to the large mining companies. Ejection of the French military will not be the answer to these deep-seated problems faced by Burkina Faso.

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This article was produced by Globetrotter.

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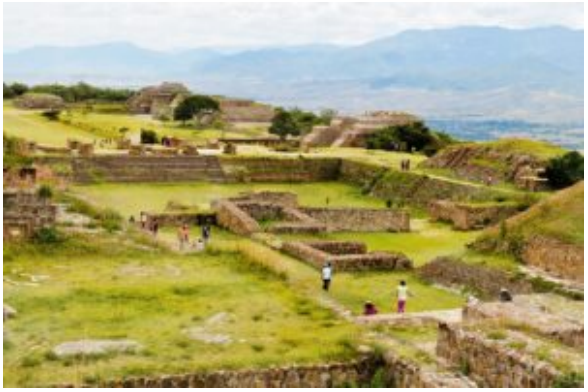
Source: Globetrotter

An Ancient Recipe For Social Success



Zona Arqueológica Monte Albán Vista – Photo: wikimedia commons

New evidence and understandings about the structure of successful early societies across Asia, Africa, and the Western Hemisphere are sweeping away the popular assumption that early societies tended toward autocracy and despotism.

Archaeology has a more valuable story to tell: Collective action and localized economic production are a recipe for sustainability and broader well-being. The Mesoamerican city of Monte Albán, which was a major regional urban center for 1,300 years, is a shining example. It is a powerful case study that early investments in public infrastructure and goods foster longer-term sustainability.

There is a rich vein of insight here for some of the most pressing challenges faced by humanity: billions of people living in poverty, and collapsing social structures in the developing world. And in the wealthy industrialized world, many are increasingly disillusioned by the flaws in our political and economic models.

But if we're going to use the models from the ancient past, can we be confident about how early societies really operated?

Researchers have begun to identify archaeological evidence that works as indicators for political and social behaviors and institutions:

– Is there evidence of extreme wealth disparity or equality in lifestyle or burial?

– Does monumental architecture foster exclusivity (elite tombs, aggrandizing monuments, evidence of dynastic legitimation) or access (e.g., open plazas, wide access ways, community temples)?
– Are palaces prominent or is it not clear where the leader resided?
– Does art emphasize lineal descent, divine kingship, and royal patron deities or does it feature more abstract themes such as fertility or integrative cosmological principles?

There is a lot we can determine from a society's tendency toward the first or second option in each of these questions about whether it was more autocratic or associated with collective/good governance.

In a study of 26 early urban centers in Mesoamerica, Monte Albán was one of 12 that was characterized as a collectively organized city based on a series of indicators. Prior to the city's abandonment, Monte Albán was not highly unequal: there were few, if any, lavish tombs, no great caches of household riches or other evidence of extreme wealth differences, and no large, ornate palace that was unequivocally the ruler's residence.

From early in the site's history, the city's core was centered on a large plaza that could have accommodated a significant proportion of the site's population. Flattening the hill's rocky top and then defining and creating this large open space entailed planning, coordination, and cooperation. Until very late in the city's history, material representations of rulers were relatively rare, and there is an overall lack of ruler aggrandizement. During the city's first four centuries (500–100 BCE), there were few depictions of seemingly important individuals or leaders. Rule was largely faceless.

How did it happen?

In this light, let's travel to the early sedentary villages (c. 1500–500 BCE) in the Valley of Oaxaca—the largest expanse of flat land in Mexico's Southern Highlands. They were situated on or near well-watered land.

Around 500 BCE, however, a new hilltop center, Monte Albán, was established at the nexus of the valley's three arms, where agriculture was far riskier due to unreliable rainfall and a dearth of permanent water sources. During the era of its establishment, not only was Monte Albán larger than any earlier community in the region, but many other settlers moved into the rural area around Monte Albán.

This marked shift in settlement patterns and the underlying processes associated with the foundation of Monte Albán have long been debated. How can we account for the immigration of people, some likely from beyond the region itself, to an area where they faced greater risks of crop failure?

One perspective, reliant on uniform models of premodern states as despotic, viewed the process from a basically top-down lens; leaders coerced their subjects to move near the capital to provide sustenance for the new center.

Yet more recent research has found that governance at Monte Albán was generally more collective than autocratic, and in its growth period, productive activities were collective, centered in domestic units and not managed from above.

By the time Monte Albán was established in the Valley of Oaxaca, more than a thousand years had passed since foragers transitioned from mobile lifeways to sedentary communities. Maize, beans, and squash, which had been domesticated prior to village formation, were key elements of an agricultural economy, with maize providing the bulk of calories. Early villagers also exploited a mosaic of other natural resources including clay for making ceramic vessels and figurines, stone for making tools and ornaments, and plant materials for processing into a range of woven products.

The shift to sedentary life was a long social process through which formerly dispersed populations not only adjusted but committed to living in larger communities and interacting with more people on a daily basis.

The Valley of Oaxaca has a climate that is semiarid, rainfall is unpredictable and spatially patchy across the region, and not all sectors of the valley floor receive the minimum annual precipitation necessary for reliable rainfall farming of maize, the region’s staple and culturally most important crop.

The prime factor that determines the productivity of maize is the availability of water, and a diversity of water management practices have been used since prehispanic times. These manipulations, which increase agricultural yields, include wells and pot irrigation, check dams, and small-scale canals, all of which were easily managed or implemented at the household level.

The Valley of Oaxaca was a core politico-economic region. Prior to Monte Albán’s

founding, most of the populace resided in one of three clusters of settlements that were separated from the others by largely unoccupied areas, including the center of the valley where Monte Albán was later situated. In each arm, a cluster of smaller communities surrounded one larger settlement that had special functions and served as the “head towns” of small competing polities.

This millennial pattern was broken when Monte Albán was built on a steep hilltop in the center of the valley. The settlement’s establishment and rapid growth in size and monumentality set off a dynamic episode of innovation and change that included demographic, dietary, and other economic shifts. Populations grew rapidly not only at the new center, which became the largest and most monumental city in the valley’s early history, but also in the surrounding countryside. The center and rural communities were integrated through an emergent market network that provisioned the city.

This dramatic episode of change required the coordination of labor to build the new city. The rocky hilltop was flattened into a large main plaza with monumental buildings constructed along its edges. The scale and orientation of this central plaza represent a key transition from prior community plans in the region. Residences for the city’s burgeoning population were constructed on the steep slopes of the hill by creating flattened spaces, or terraces, shored up by stone and earthen retaining walls, each of which sustained a domestic unit.

The allocation of the hill’s apex for civic-ceremonial space and the lower slopes for commoner residences was a blueprint for a broad social accord. Built environments are not neutral, but political, and Monte Albán’s footprint with a large, relatively open central space and little display of hierarchical leaders points to a collective arrangement.

The city’s concentrated residential precincts comprised strings of artificially flattened terraces that shared long retaining walls. Construction of the terraces required allotments of domestic labor to clear trees, flatten steep inclinations, erect stone walls to retain flat spaces where houses would be built, and construct drainage channels to divert rainwater from living spaces. The construction, sharing, and maintenance of front retaining walls involved high degrees of interhousehold cooperation between neighbors.

Additionally, commoners adopted construction techniques and basic ceramic

wares that previously were the domain of high-status families. In the early city, most houses included contiguous rooms with plaster floors, often constructed around a patio; they were built with adobe bricks on stone foundations instead of the mud and thatch typical of earlier commoner houses. The pottery wares that previously were largely used by higher-status families or as ceremonial vessels became more broadly distributed in the centuries after Monte Albán was established. This level of cooperation and coordination is evidence of a social charter or norms, in which a wider array of residents had access to what previously had been higher-status materials and goods.

No large-scale production has been uncovered, and there is no indication of central-governmental food storage at Monte Albán, as one might expect with top-down economic control or redistribution.

Economic production at Monte Albán was situated in domestic contexts. Instead of being coerced to move to Monte Albán, people were attracted to the city. Monte Albán was settled by a sizable group, possibly as large as 1,000 people, and rapidly grew to about 5,000 people within a few hundred years. Populations also increased in the rural areas around Monte Albán, and the annual rate of population growth in the valley exceeded what could have been maintained by natural increase alone. Populations expanded again in and around Monte Albán after c. 300 BCE. The threefold growth was too large to be accounted for by local, "natural growth," so that people must have been drawn to Monte Albán and the valley from more distant, extra-regional locations.

Evidence indicates that the agricultural catchment for feeding Monte Albán likely extended 20 kilometers from the city. The market and exchange networks that moved food to the city created a high degree of interconnection among small settlements and Monte Albán. This interdependence required cooperation, infrastructure, and institutions that together provided the means of moving food and distributing seasonal surpluses.

Prior to Monte Albán, early "head towns" were generally positioned adjacent to good farmland. But the new city was located in an area of the valley where agriculture was riskier and largely dependent on unpredictable rainfall. Why would people move to a place where they faced a high risk of crop failure, where they could have been taxed more highly, and where, if governance were coercive, they had little voice? Such a scenario seems improbable, and it is far more likely

that people moved to Monte Albán to take advantage of economic opportunities, a parallel to most migrants in the world today.

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Source: Independent Media Institute

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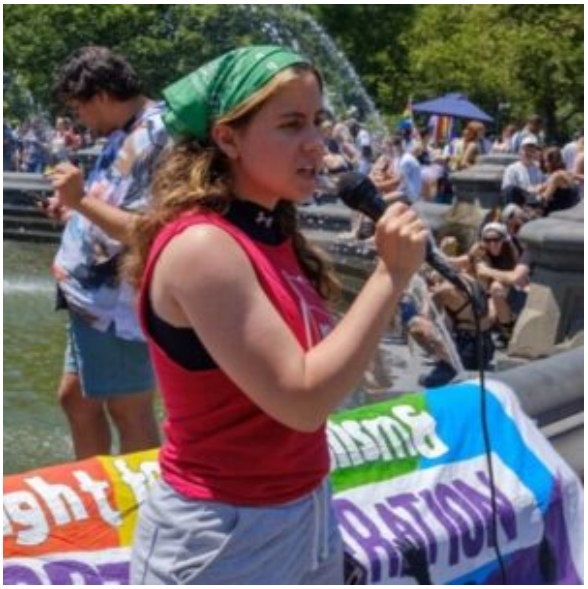
The U.S. Blockade Of Cuba Hurts Medical Patients In Both Countries



Natalia Marques – Photo Twitter

The blockade of Cuba limits its ability to share its scientific and technological advances with the rest of the world.

Scientists in Cuba believe that the breakthroughs they have made in the health care and technology sectors should be used to save and improve lives beyond the country's borders. This is why the island nation has developed important scientific and medical partnerships with organizations and governments across the globe, including with those in Mexico, Palestine, Angola, Colombia, Iran, and Brazil. However, such collaborations are difficult due to the blockade imposed on Cuba by the United States, which has now been in place for the last six decades.

In a conference, "Building Our Future," held in Havana in November 2022, which brought together youth from Cuba and the United States, scientists at the Cuban Center of Molecular Immunology (CIM) stated during a presentation that the blockade hurts the people of the United States, too. By lifting the sanctions against Cuba, the scientists argued, the people of the United States could have access to life-saving treatments being developed in Cuba, especially against diseases such as diabetes, which ravage working-class communities each year.

A Cure for Diabetes

Cuban scientists have developed both a lung cancer vaccine and a groundbreaking diabetes treatment. The new diabetes treatment, Heberprot-P, developed by the Cuban Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CIGB), can reduce leg amputations of people with diabetic foot ulcers by more than four times. The medication contains a recombinant human epidermal growth factor that, when injected into a foot ulcer, accelerates its healing process, thereby, reducing diabetes-related amputations. And yet, despite the fact that the medication has been registered in Cuba since 2006, and has been registered in several other countries since, people in the United States are unable to get access to Heberprot-P.

Diabetes was the eighth leading cause of death in the United States in 2020, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, killing more than 100,000 patients in that year. "Foot ulcers are among the most common complications of patients who have diabetes," which can escalate into lower limb

amputations, according to a report in the National Center for Biotechnology Information. Each year, around 73,000 "non-traumatic lower extremity amputations" are performed on people who have diabetes in the U.S. These amputations occur at a disproportionate rate depending on the race of a patient, being far more prevalent among Black and Brown people suffering from diabetes. Many point to racial economic disparities and systemic medical racism as the reason for this.

"If you go into low-income African American neighborhoods, it is a war zone… You see people wheeling themselves around in wheelchairs," Dr. Dean Schillinger, a medical professor at the University of California-San Francisco, told KHN. According to the KHN article, "Amputations are considered a 'mega-disparity' and dwarf nearly every other health disparity by race and ethnicity."

The life expectancy of a patient with post-diabetic lower limb amputation is significantly reduced, according to various reports. "[P]atients with diabetes-related amputations have a high risk of mortality, with a five-year survival rate of 40–48 percent regardless of the etiology of the amputation." Heberprot-P could help tens of thousands of patients avoid such amputations, however, due to the blockade, U.S. patients cannot access this treatment. People in the U.S. have a vested interest in dismantling the U.S. blockade of Cuba.

"So after five years [post-amputation], that's the most you can live, and we are preventing that from happening," said Rydell Alvarez Arzola, a researcher at CIM, in a presentation given to the U.S. and Cuban youth during the conference in Havana. "And that also is something that could bring both of our peoples [in Cuba and the U.S.] together to fight… to eliminate [the blockade]."

Cuban Health Care Under Blockade

Perhaps one of Cuba's proudest achievements is a world-renowned health care system that has thrived despite economic devastation and a 60-year-long blockade.

After the fall of Cuba's primary trading partner, the Soviet Union, in 1991, the island saw a GDP decrease of 35 percent over three years, blackouts, and a nosedive in caloric intake. Yet, despite these overwhelming challenges, Cuba never wavered in its commitment to providing universal health care. Universal health care, or access to free and quality health care for all, is a long-standing

demand of people's movements in the United States that has never been implemented largely due to the for-profit model of the health care industry and enormous corporate interests in the sector.

As other nations were enacting neoliberal austerity measures, which drastically cut social services in the 1980s and 1990s, Cuba's public health care spending increased by 13 percent from 1990 to 1994. Cuba successfully raised its doctor-to-patient ratio to one doctor for every 202 Cubans in the mid-1990s, a far better statistic than the United States' ratio of one doctor for every 300 people, according to a 2004 census.

As the blockade begins its seventh decade, Cuba is not only upholding universal health care but also continues to be at the forefront of scientific developments globally.

This was evident during the COVID-19 crisis. Cuba, faced with the inability to purchase vaccines developed by U.S. pharmaceutical companies due to the U.S. blockade, developed five vaccines. The nation not only achieved its goal of creating one of the most effective COVID-19 vaccines but also launched the first mass COVID-19 vaccination campaign for children from two to 18 years old in September 2021.

To Share Knowledge Without Restrictions

Despite its achievements, Cuban health care still faces serious, life-threatening limitations due to the economic blockade. CIM, for example, has struggled to find international companies willing to carry out vital services for them. Claudia Plasencia, a CIM researcher, explained during the conference that CIM had signed a contract with a German gene synthesis company which later backed out because it had signed a new contract with a U.S. company. "They could not keep processing our samples, they could not keep doing business with Cuba," Plasencia said.

Arzola explained how it is virtually impossible to purchase top-of-the-line equipment due to trade restrictions. "A flow cytometer is a machine that costs a quarter-million dollars… even if my lab has the money, I cannot buy the best machine in the world, which is from the U.S., everyone knows that," he said. Even if CIM were to buy such a machine from a third party, it cannot utilize the repair services from the United States. "I cannot buy these machines even if I have the

money, because I would not be able to fix them. You cannot spend a quarter-million dollars every six months [buying a new machine]… even though you know that this [machine] is the best for your patients."

I spoke to Marianniz Diaz, a young woman scientist at CIM. When asked what we in the U.S. could do to help CIM's scientists, her answer was straightforward: "The principal thing you can do is eliminate the blockade."

"I would like us to have an interaction without restrictions, so we [Cuba and the U.S.] can share our science, our products, [and] our knowledge," she said.

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Source: Globetrotter

The Role Of The Brazilian Military In The Coup Attempt

Pedro Marin – revista opera

The far-right mob that invaded the federal building, Congress, and the Supreme Court and vandalized government buildings at Three Powers Plaza in Brasília on

January 8, demanded a "military intervention" in Brazil. They had set up camps that had assembled in front of army barracks throughout the country since November demanding the "military to overturn" the election of Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (known as Lula). On November 11, 2022, the commanders of the armed forces released a note giving the coup camps a safe haven—not only physically but also legally. It is important to note two elements of that document: first, the commanders stated, through an illogical interpretation, that the camps in favor of a coup were legal because the protesters were peaceful, and that "both possible restrictions on rights by public agents and possible excesses committed in demonstrations" would be reprehensible, despite the fact that demanding the military to stage a coup is a crime (Article 286). In practice, the commanders of the three armed forces acted as constitutional interpreters, defending the democratic legitimacy of the coup camps and saying, in advance, that any measure taken by the institutions against the camps would be considered illegal by them.

The second element of the note made reference to the concept of "moderating power." Reaffirming their commitment to the Brazilian people, the commanders said the armed forces were "always present and moderators in the most important moments of our history." The moderating power was introduced as part of the constitution of 1824, based on the ideas of Benjamin Constant, who predicted that to avoid "anarchy" that marked the concept of the three branches of the government, it would be necessary to grant one of the powers (in Brazil, the monarch) a fourth power, capable of solving institutional disagreements.

On January 2, when Lula's Minister of Defense José Múcio ideas that he considered the camps to be a "manifestation of democracy," and that he had "friends and relatives" who were part of these camps, he was only repeating what the military had been saying since November.

Brazil has a long history of military intervention in politics. The Brazilian republic was founded through a military coup in 1889. From then until 1989, Brazil experienced at least 15 coups d'état attempts, of which five were successful: including a 21-year-long military dictatorship. After the fall of the dictatorship, in 1985, there was an expectation among Brazilians that civilian control would be established over the military and that respect for democracy would prevail among them. But the redemocratization process itself was controlled by the outgoing military government, through a "slow, gradual, and safe political opening," in the

words of then-military President Ernesto Geisel, and the pressure of the army on the Constituent Assembly that wrote the 1988 constitution guaranteed them the role of "[guarantors] of the powers and defenders of law and order."

During Lula's first two terms (from 2003 to 2011) as president, the military adopted a lobbying strategy in dealing with the government. Since the impeachment of former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff in 2016, however, they seem to have returned to the forefront of politics. Statements encouraging coups began to emerge from among the reserve and active military personnel, without punishment, and even the then-commander of the armed forces, General Eduardo Villâs Boas, stated in a tweet that he "repudiates impunity" when the Supreme Court was preparing to decide on a *habeas corpus* petition filed by Lula in 2018. Villâs Boas later would describe his tweet as an "alert." The army took important positions in former President Michel Temer's government and expanded its political participation under the government of former President Jair Bolsonaro, and has continuously threatened the electoral process in 2022.

On January 8, as the governmental buildings in Brasília were vandalized by the angry mob, a Law and Order Guarantee (GLO) decree was discussed and 2,500 military personnel were mobilized, ready to respond to the escalating situation. If such a decree had been signed, the armed forces would have been responsible for controlling the security of Brazil's federal capital. Lula, instead, decreed a federal intervention "in the area of security in the Federal District," appointing Ricardo Capelli, executive secretary of the Ministry of Justice, to command it. The president later declared that if he had carried out a GLO, "then the coup that these people wanted would be taking place."

The involvement of the military in the acts of January 8 is being investigated. Many reserve members of the armed forces participated in the acts. The reasons why the Presidential Guard Battalion, the army battalion responsible for the security of the Planalto Palace, did not prevent the demonstrators from invading the government headquarters is also under investigation. "There were a lot of conniving people. There were a lot of people from the [police] conniving. A lot of people from the armed forces here were conniving. I am convinced that the door of the Planalto Palace was opened for these people to enter because there are no broken doors. This means that someone facilitated their entry," said Lula.

After the establishment of the federal intervention, the security forces, led by the

intervenor Ricardo Capelli, repressed and arrested the coup demonstrators.. The army mobilized armored vehicles to block and prevent the police from entering the camp and arresting those responsible on January 8. According to the Washington Post, senior army commander, General Júlio César de Arruda, told the Minister of Justice Flávio Dino: "You are not going to arrest people here." The police were only allowed to enter the camp the next day.

This incident is just a manifestation of what the armed forces have been saying since November 2022: that they consider themselves a moderating power and that they will not allow—even after the destruction on January 8—"public agents" to carry out any act they consider a "restriction of rights" of the coup demonstrators.

The army gave a safe haven to the coup demonstrators before and after they vandalized the buildings in Brasília and while they were asking for an army intervention against the president. At the same time, it was unable to protect the presidential palace from such a crowd. This sends a clear message about who the army was trying to defend and what it considers its true mission.

In Brazil, it becomes more and more urgent that the masses, who shouted in chorus "No amnesty!" for Bolsonaro during Lula's inauguration on January 1, 2023, include the military in their demand.

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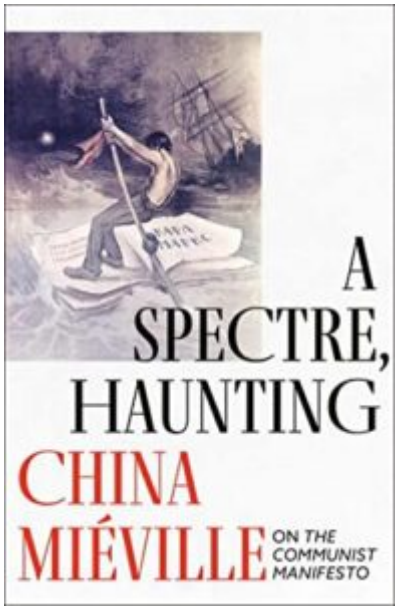
This article was produced by Globetrotter in partnership with Revista Opera.

Pedro Marin is the editor-in-chief and founder of Revista Opera. Previously, he was a correspondent in Venezuela for Revista Opera and a columnist and international correspondent in Brazil for a German publication. He is the author of *Golpe é Guerra—teses para enterrar 2016*, on the impeachment of Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff, and coauthor of *Carta no Coturno—A volta do Partido Fardado no Brasil*, on the role of the military in Brazilian politics.

Source: Globetrotter

China Miéville: Marx's Communist Manifesto Has Much To Teach Us In 2023



"The Communist Manifesto" is one of the most widely read political documents in the history of the world. It influenced millions of people against capitalist oppression and toward a more just and humane social order. It is also a brilliant display of literary and poetic expression by its author, the German revolutionary philosopher Karl Marx, which few, if any, political commentators since have been able to match. But is "The Communist Manifesto" politically relevant today? The renowned British and *New York Times*-bestselling author of "weird fiction" and non-fiction books China Miéville thinks so, which is why he wrote his latest book, *A Spectre, Haunting: On the Communist Manifesto*, published in May 2022 by Haymarket Books. The book, incidentally, has been described — correctly so, I might add — as "a lyrical introduction and a spirited defense of the modern world's most influential political document."

Miéville studied at Cambridge University and received a Ph.D. in international relations from the London School of Economics. He has published scores of highly acclaimed fiction works, such as *King Rat* (1998), which was nominated for both the International Horror Guild and Bram Stoker Awards for best first novel; *Perdido Street Station* (2000), which won the 2001 Arthur C. Clarke award for best science fiction and a 2001 British Fantasy Award; *Iron Council* (2004), winner of the Arthur C. Clarke award and the Locus Award for Best Fantasy Novel; *The City & the City* (2009), a further winner of an Arthur C. Clarke award, Hugo Award and World Fantasy Award for Best Novel; and *The Last Days of a New Paris* (2016). A self-proclaimed Marxist, Miéville has also published *Between Equal Rights: A Marxist Theory of International Law* and *October: The Story of the Russian Revolution*.

In this exclusive interview for *Truthout*, Miéville discusses his latest book, why it's

still important to engage with "The Communist Manifesto" and why we must approach ecological catastrophe with radical theory.

C. J. Polychroniou: "The Communist Manifesto," originally known as the "Manifesto of the Communist Party," was written by Karl Marx with the assistance of Friedrich Engels and published in London on February 21, 1848. Its original aim was to serve "as a complete theoretical and practical party program" for the Communist League, but ultimately became the principal political pamphlet for the European communist parties in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is also widely recognized as one of the most important and influential political documents in the history of the world. Of course, history has taken a very different route from that envisioned by Marx and Engels. True, communism (or some variant of it!) was tried out in different parts of the world, but capitalism still reigns supreme. With that in mind, what prompted you to write a book on "The Communist Manifesto" in the second decade of the 21st century? Historical curiosity or political relevance?

China Miéville: There's no necessary contradiction between the two, of course. I do think that the manifesto should be an object of historical curiosity to anyone interested in the shaping of the modern world, and/or of great and historical ideas. And to that extent, I'm well aware that plenty of potential readers of *A Spectre, Haunting* will be highly skeptical about communism in any form, and thus of the modern applicability of the book.

Part of the argument is that it is still worth engaging with the manifesto. To preempt the second half of this answer, I disagree with that sense that it's a purely historical curiosity, for reasons that I try to make clear in the book. But I've also long been frustrated by the profoundly dunderheaded and either bad faith or ignorant (or both) nature of the so-called debates around the manifesto. One of the ideas of this book is to say precisely to people who do *not* see the pamphlet as politically relevant that the great majority of the arguments usually adduced for that position are just intellectually lazy and embarrassing, and that surely it is critics who should give their intellectual and political opponents the courtesy of taking them on at their strongest, and with the most curious and generous and engaged reading, rather than airily reciting completely unthinking bromides and nostrums. I hope if I were to pronounce on a book with which I profoundly disagreed, I would try to engage with it seriously.

All of which is to say that I hope *A Spectre, Haunting* invites an engagement from people who profoundly disagree with me, and with the manifesto, at a serious, interesting and worthy level. In other words, even if you don't find anything politically relevant in the manifesto, you can't, surely, dismiss its historical and social importance, and if the book does nothing else than to plead for a more serious discussion of it at that level, I would be pleased. Because — again, as I try to say and illustrate in *A Spectre, Haunting*, and with some honorable exceptions — most of the discussions of the manifesto from its critics, including very celebrated critics and those who, I think, should know far better, is based on piss-poor and miserly reading.

Of course, on top of that, I absolutely do think that the manifesto remains politically relevant. Indeed, inspirational. Not that I have, or anyone should have, an uncritical or dogmatic relationship to it. In the book, I try to make clear the various ways in which, and issues on which, I think the manifesto is inadequate, or contradictory, or simply wrong. But for me, the manifesto read as it deserves to be read, flawed and rushed and partial as it is, is a work of incredible political importance — as well as great literary urgency and beauty.

Every day, capitalism proves that it is absolutely indifferent to human flourishing, or life, and therefore it really shouldn't be a surprise that so many of the grotesque and monstrous phenomena of our society — inequality, racism, misogyny, imperialism, ecological catastrophe, mass extinction, mass unnecessary death — are inextricable from capitalism. The demand for a system that prioritizes human need over profit is a demand for the end of capitalism. We can debate what that might look like, but if we take seriously the idea that the only way to get to a world fit to live in is to get beyond capitalism, we have to move beyond the "common sense" — which is to say, the deadening propaganda — that it is "obviously" impossible to have anything other than capitalism. The manifesto's unremitting insistence on the dynamics of class history that got us here, and its ruthless denaturalizing and questioning of supposedly eternal truths, all in the service of liberation, is profoundly important.

"Workers of All Countries, Unite" is one of the most fundamental political slogans of "The Communist Manifesto." Was this a call for world revolution or merely political rhetoric? Indeed, there is an entire genre of political writing devoted to the idea that Marx was actually in favor of restricting immigration (Irish immigration, as a case in point) because it was driving down wages for (English)

workers. Do you have any thoughts on this matter? Would Marx be favoring immigration restrictions today?

It was certainly not "mere" rhetoric, though it was part of a rhetorical masterwork. But it was rhetoric deployed as part of — whether you agree with it or not — an absolutely sincere political project, a commitment to world revolution. On the vexed question of Marx and immigration: Mature Marx was absolutely and explicitly clear that English workers' racism against Irish workers was a profound plank in their own oppression and had to be overcome before political liberation could be pursued. In addition, he and Engels were unstintingly suspicious of the bourgeois state, which of course is the proponent, perpetrator and police of immigration controls. I think Marx and Engels would treat immigration restrictions today with the contempt and suspicion that, as tools predicated on and bolstering racism, and that undermine the international solidarity of the working class — which, the manifesto insists, "has no country" — they deserve. That said, it's worth stressing that I'm very suspicious of the kind of apologetic theology approach to Marxism that tries to derive a political position today from what Marx would or would not have thought. First of all, the judgment of what he "would have thought" (which has a discomfiting hagiographical ring to it) always involves an act of historical translation at very best, and violence at worst: because context is everything. Fredric Jameson is right: always historicize. Secondly, because it's hardly surprising that one could find in Marxism as a system an indispensable tool for analysis, and also disagree with Marx — even if we could be confident in what he would say — in particular concrete instances. The key points are what the truth is, and what is the best political approach in principle and strategically and tactically. Without question, finding as I do such great resources in the Marxist tradition, I think that Marx's opinions are crucial data with regard to that, but it's perfectly possible to cleave to the method and tradition, and yet to disagree with Marx on this or that.

As noted earlier, communism was tried out in different parts of the world throughout the 20th century. From your own perspective, was Marx's vision of communism realized in any form or shape under "actually existing socialism" regimes?

Simply put, no. That's not an adequate answer, of course. And to be clear, though I do go into this a little bit in my book, in-depth of the "actually existing socialisms" is some way beyond its remit, so I'm not pretending to have made a

conclusive argument on this issue. What I do want to do is stress what I think should be a given starting point for any good-faith debate, but which absolutely isn't, which is that seeing those regimes as "communist" *simply because they say so* is absolutely absurd. It's absurd whether that's from the side of critics, who use it to argue that communism is inevitably oppressive, or from the side of apologists and partisans, who take the side of those regimes out of some commitment to something called "communism." Again, I make no bones about the fact that I find "The Communist Manifesto" to be an inspirational text, but even if you are purely and deeply critical of it, it is simply embarrassingly ignorant not to engage with the fact that there have, for over a hundred years, been debates within Marxism over exactly what the shape of political fidelity to the manifesto should look like, and indeed over the directions taken by the various regimes traceable to the Russian Revolution of 1917, in one form or another. Whatever you think of any of the various sides in any of these debates, to argue in ignorance of all those incredibly critical communist currents implacably set against the dead hand of Stalinism just won't do.

I try to make the case in the book that inextricable from the vision in the manifesto is a grassroots democratic control of society, a democracy infinitely greater than any of the etiolated versions we've hitherto seen. And that the structural antipathy of actually existing socialism — to varying degrees, to be sure, and taking highly different shapes — sets it against the vision of the manifesto. I try to at least advert to the specific historical circumstances that I think gave rise to this tragedy. And, to repeat myself, to have a good-faith debate about whether or not my analysis is correct is one thing, and I welcome it, including with those profoundly opposed to my position. But simply to gesture vaguely at Stalinism and say that it disproves the manifesto is just intellectually embarrassing and, again, incurious.

Be that as it may, Marx's vision of a future social and economic order beyond capitalism has come under criticism by ecological economists because it is supposedly driven by technological determinism and human domination over nature. In sum, Marx's vision of communism as a form of human development is deemed unsustainable in the eyes of those who embrace the "degrowth" perspective due to its treatment of natural conditions as effectively unlimited. Personally, I find this criticism quite puzzling since both Marx and Engels treated humans and nature as "not separate things" and even defined communism as the

“unity of being of man with nature.” Do you agree with those who view “The Communist Manifesto” as embracing an essentially anti-ecological view?

This is one of those instances in which I take a position somewhat analogous to Victor Serge’s position with regard to the Bolsheviks and Stalinism (to echo your previous question). He said: “It is often said that ‘the germ of all Stalinism was in Bolshevism at its beginning.’ Well, I have no objection. Only, Bolshevism also contained many other germs, a mass of other germs, and those who lived through the enthusiasm of the first years of the first victorious socialist revolution ought not to forget it. To judge the living man by the death germs which the autopsy reveals in the corpse — and which he may have carried in him since his birth — is that very sensible?”

I agree with you, in that a rigorous analysis of Marx’s and Engels’s position does indeed stress their view of the false distinction between nature and humanity, and to that extent you could even say nature and society. I think there is much fertile ground for an ecologically conscious democratic communism in notions such as the fulfillment of “species-being,” and in Marx’s conception of the “irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism” under capitalism, that John Bellamy Foster calls the “metabolic rift,” and the ecological catastrophe concomitant on it. All of which said, I think there are also germs of a somewhat less nuanced Prometheanism in the manifesto. (I’m not at all averse to a Prometheanism worthy of the name, but many tendencies so-glossed lean toward a kind of vulgar productivism.) The manifesto’s visions of a post-scarcity classless society are bracing and inspiring and convincing to me. But they can be — not must be, but can be and have been — interpreted in ways that, from my perspective, are predicated on a vaguely utopian position about the social good of “human ingenuity” nebulously inextricable from productivism, as manifested in what is sometimes called ecomodernism (though I wish it were another label).

This is an argument that I and my comrades in the Salvage Collective engaged with in our short book *The Tragedy of the Worker*, and the perspective therein informs this book on the manifesto. Relatedly, I think any thinking inspired by the manifesto that understates the task of repair and salvage necessary in any post-capitalist world, given the ecological depredations of capitalism and the dynamics of ecological crisis already in place, is not being realistic. What that doesn’t mean is either the stasis of despair — I think despair gets a bad rap, but I’m pro what John Berger called “undefeated despair” rather than surrender — or a belief in

the necessity of some ascetic communism, against which the manifesto explicitly set itself. And I think it was right to do so, on ethical and analytical grounds.

One of the few positive things about the recent years is that a sense of the pressing nature of ecological catastrophe is clear and present, and embedding into radical theory in a very positive way. So, to return to your question: No, I certainly don't think "The Communist Manifesto" is intrinsically ecologically vulgar or worse. But nor do I think that, in this epoch, we can do without posing such questions explicitly as part of a radical left agenda, and mindful that the work of repair capitalism will bequeath us will be enormous.

Conversely, I should add, I think any attempt to forge an ecological politics that is *not* predicated on an analysis that capitalism's prioritization of profit over need, and the urgent human necessity of moving beyond capitalism, to a true democracy of grassroots control, is on a hiding to nothing.

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A Criminal Attack On Democracy: Why Brazil's Fascists Should Not Get Amnesty

Gabriel Rocha Gaspar

From all the excited cries echoing from the red tide that took over Brasília during Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's (known as Lula) inauguration as the Brazilian President on January 1, 2023, the most significant—and challenging, especially from the institutional stance of the new government—was the call for "no amnesty!" The crowds chanting those words were referring to the crimes perpetrated by the military dictatorship in Brazil from 1964 to 1985 that still remain unpunished. Lula paused his speech, to let the voices be heard, and followed up with a strong but restrained message about accountability.

Lula's restraint shows his respect for the civic limitation of the executive, standing in sharp contrast to former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's notion of statesmanship. After all, one of the characteristics that allow us to properly qualify "Bolsonarismo" as fascism is the deliberate amalgamation between the institutional exercise of power and counter-institutional militancy. As a president, Bolsonaro went beyond mixing those roles; he occupied the state in constant opposition against the state itself. He constantly attributed his ineptitude as a leader to the restrictions imposed by the democratic institutions of the republic.

While Bolsonaro projected an image of being a strongman in front of cameras,

which eventually helped him climb the ladder of power, he maintained a low profile in Congress and his three-decade-long congressional tenure is a testament to his political and administrative irrelevance. His weak exercise of power revealed his inadequacy as a leader when he finally took over as president. Bolsonaro catapulted to notoriety when he cast his vote for impeaching former President Dilma Rousseff in 2016.

Before casting his vote, Bolsonaro took that opportunity to pay homage to Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, "convicted of torture" during the military dictatorship, whom he jestingly referred to as "the dread of Dilma Rousseff!"; Ustra was responsible for systematically torturing the former head of state when she, then a young Marxist guerrilla, was jailed by the dictatorship. From that day until Bolsonaro's last public appearance—after which he fled the country to make his way to Orlando, Florida before Lula's inauguration—the only opportunity he ever had to stage his electoral persona was by instigating his supporters through incendiary speeches. That combination led to an impotent government, run by someone who encouraged his supporters to cheer for him using the ridiculously macho nickname "*Imbrochável*," which translates to "unfloppable."

By endorsing the need for accountability while respecting the solemnity of the presidency and allowing people to call for "no amnesty," Lula restores some normality to the dichotomy that exists between the representative/represented within the framework of a liberal bourgeois democracy. A small gesture, but one that will help establish the necessary institutional trust for fascism to be scrutinized. Now, the ball is in the court of the organized left; the urgency and radicality of the accountability depend on its ability to theoretically and politically consubstantiate the slogan "no amnesty."

No amnesty for whom? And for what? What kind of justice should be served to the enemies of the working class? To the former health minister who, claiming to be an expert in logistics, turned Manaus, the capital city of Amazonas into a "herd immunity test laboratory" to deal with a collapsing health care system during the peak of the COVID outbreak in Brazil; To the former environment minister who sanctioned the brutal colonization of Indigenous lands by changing environmental legislation; To a government who supported expanding civilian access to army-level weaponry; To the national gun manufacturer who endorsed such political aberration and promoted weapons sale; To the health insurance company that conducted unconsented drug tests on elderly citizens, while espousing to the

motto, "death is a form of discharge"; To Bolsonaro himself, who among so many crimes, decided to repeatedly deny science and advertise hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin as cures to COVID-19; To the chancellor who used the Itamaraty (Brazil's equivalent of the U.S. State Department) to intentionally marginalize Brazil in the international community; To the media owners who endorsed or tolerated all that misanthropy, whitewashing fascist rhetoric, and offered a megaphone for amplifying racism, sexism, LGBT phobia, and, underlying them all, the brutal classicism.

The list goes on. There are so many crimes, so many delinquent individuals and corporations, and so many victims—starting with the deaths of innocent people because of COVID and the trauma suffered by their families and spreading to all vulnerable populations: Indigenous people, the Black population, Maroons, and LGBTQIA+—that a dedicated agency to investigate and prosecute them all is necessary. Perhaps the substance we must inject into the cry for "no amnesty" is the establishment of a special court. As suggested by professor Lincoln Secco, that should be the Manaus Tribunal, named after the city that was used as a testing ground for Bolsonaro's anti-vax propaganda, where patients were left to die at the height of the COVID pandemic. And hopefully, the Manaus Tribunal, observing all the rites, all the civility, and all the legal requirements will be capable of bringing about the historic outcome the Constitutional Assembly of 1988 fell short of delivering: close the doors of Brazilian institutions to fascism, forever.

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